

The Activity of Discipleship

The ACTIVITY of Discipleship (Pt. 1)

March 20, 2022

Series Outline: 3 Main Headings

- (1) The Aim of Discipleship
- (2) The Activity of Discipleship
- (3) The Aroma of Discipleship

INTRO ...Discipleship Learned from a Vine ...or... "PLANT-BASED Discipleship"

John 15:1-11 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

...There Are CONDITIONS in This Passage! ...There are Outcomes that are DEPENDENT on Certain INPUTS! ...there are "IF's" and "Unless's" and "Cannot's"

“The third element of the parable presents believers’ responsibility. In order to bear fruit as living branches, Christians are commanded to abide in Christ.” **Richard Phillips**, *John*, Reformed Expository Commentary

Fruitful Discipleship **REQUIRES**

Abiding and Obeying

...There is a “featured condition” in Jesus’ statement on being disciples— “If you abide in me”

...The Actions of Abiding & Obeying are Connected to Experiencing the Love of God

...Love & Joy are connected by Jesus to Abiding and Obeying!

“Jesus claimed to be the ‘true’ vine of God. Where Israel was a working model, Jesus was the reality itself. ...The gardener had grafted them into the new and true vine. Now, in Christ, they had all the resources they would need in order to bear fruit. The way to being fruitful then was by their union with Christ, by drawing on his life, and by experiencing the Father’s pruning of their lives.” **Sinclair Ferguson**, *Maturity*, p. 36

...the Bible’s language weaves in and out of God’s actions and our actions—without making one or the other irrelevant.

The third element of the parable presents believers’ responsibility. In order to bear fruit as living branches, Christians are commanded to abide in Christ.” **Richard Phillips**, Reformed Expository Commentary

“I suspect that the main reason for the neglect of this doctrine in evangelical circles today is that pastors and teachers and writers are afraid of compromising the great doctrine of justification by faith alone. If we can please God by works, doesn’t that sound like justification by works?

No, it does not, or else the New Testament authors would not put so much emphasis on telling Christians to please God by their obedience! ...Justification by faith alone does not mean that we are sanctified by faith alone, because in sanctification, active obedience on our part is required.

And justification by faith alone does not mean that we please God in our daily lives by faith alone, for obedience to God is also required. And justification by faith alone does not mean that our daily relationship with God depends on faith alone, for our obedience is also important." ... "If we boldly teach that justified Christians can and should seek to please God by their obedience, we will not obscure justification by faith alone! Zeal to protect one great biblical teaching should never cause us to neglect another great biblical teaching. In fact if we fear to teach something that is clearly taught in the New Testament, we probably need exactly that teaching to keep us from an unbalanced and misleading emphasis on the doctrine we are zealous to protect." **Wayne Grudem**, "Pleasing God by Our Obedience" (from "For the Fame of God's Name", p. 278)

...An Historic Resistance to "Works" and "Doing"

— But I Want to Grow! ...I want to Image God's Glory into Creation! ...OK, then DO THIS....

John 15 is profound and compelling for other reasons. It deals with the union between Christ and his followers, a union apart from which they can bear no fruit (15:4f.). Whatever is involved in this intimacy between Christ and Christians, it stands at the heart of spiritual vitality. Small wonder that John 15 has been for many centuries a favorite passage among believers." **D.A. Carson**, "The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus", p. 104

...But John 15 is not the only place where God makes an important connection between His Actions, Our Actions, and Our Vitality!

God's Actions that Lead to Our Actions...

Eph 4:1-2 | therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

Eph 4:17 - 5:3 that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ ... ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

But That's Not Where Ephesians Starts ...it Starts by Featuring GOD!

Eph 1:3-11 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

...Paul uses "WALK" and "Put-Off/Put-On where Jesus used "Abide & Obey" in His Plant-Based-Discipleship

Romans Follows the Same Pattern

Romans 12:1-2 | appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Rom 12:1-2 ...this "Hinge Point" that connects the Rich Indicatives of God's Grace to the Important Imperatives of Human Responsibility

...In Rom 1-2 ...Man is Depraved and Not Capable of Responding to God

...in Rom 3 ...Salvation is a GIFT received by man; a justification based on the Life & Death of Christ

...in Rom 6 ...A new identity in and with Christ is accomplished by GOD on our behalf

...in Rom 9-11 ...All this happens as a result of God's SOVEREIGN GRACE

...in Rom 12 ...HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY is
Featured!

- Where John's language is "abiding and obeying" ...Paul's language is "presenting"
- Where John's language is "bearing fruit" (growing) ...Paul's language is "renewal" (transformation)

LCC, What Are You Doing?

AIM = (1) to Glorify God ... (2) by Growing and
Bearing the Fruit of His Image
in and Through Us

ACTIVITY (Abiding) = 7 Priority Activities Observed in
the N.T. (Our Hills to Die on)