

Discipleship Course: Class Six

November 10, 2024

INTRODUCTION

Memory Verse Work

- In pairs or as a table, review and quiz one another on the last memory verse: Ephesians 4:15-16.
- If there is time, review the first two as well: Matthew 28:18-20 and Colossians 1:28-29.

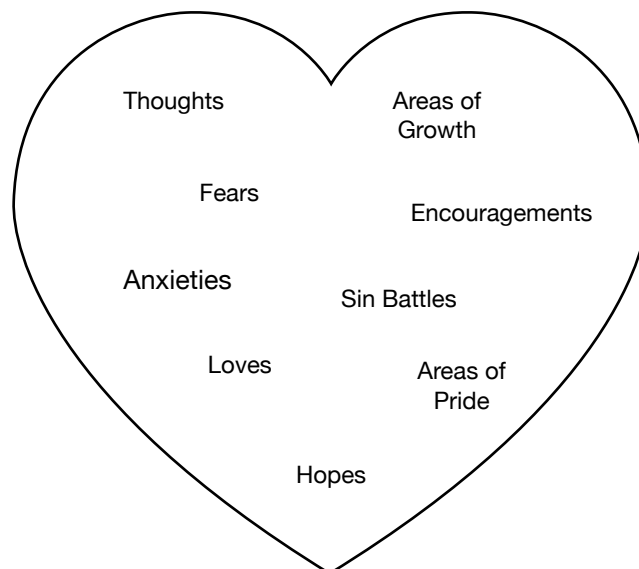
Quick Review

What is our definition of discipleship? Answer: Helping one another grow in Christ

We are in the section of our notes on *PRACTICING DISCIPLESHIP*. We are looking at keys to effectively discipling one another:

- I. The Gospel
- II. The Primary Tools: the Word of God and Prayer
- III. Relationship - Love

Remember: We want to know each other below the surface, so we can get from a general knowledge of one another to a more specific knowledge. We want to get under the hood and see what are the things that are the heart.



Building relationships with one another, where we know one another in such a way that we can speak into one another's lives and pray for one another, really comes down to one key ingredient: love. Love, as the Scriptures define and exemplify it, is the secret sauce to effective discipleship relationships.

A. The Priority of Love

The pervasiveness and priority of love is everywhere in the Scriptures:

John 13:34–35

[34] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [35] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (ESV)

- There are no disciples or discipleship, if there is no love
- Love is what Christ demonstrated (particularly at the cross). So, if we are true disciples, rooted in Him, then love for one another is the reality of our lives.
- Christ-like love, then, is what we pass down to one another in discipleship

Ephesians 4:15–16

[15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (ESV)

- We have talked a lot about the importance of teaching and encouraging one another in the Gospel/Word. We are to be “speaking the truth” to one another.
- But, according to this Scripture, we speak the truth “in love.”
- Truth is spoken. But never spoken from a self serving, prideful, or graceless motive. Truth is always spoken “in love.”
- It is then that the church “builds itself up in love.”

1 Timothy 1:5

[5] The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (ESV)

- As the apostle Paul instructed, encouraged, and admonished the church, the goal was love. He sought their greatest good with pure motives/clear conscience.
- This must be true with our discipleship as well

1 Cor 13:2 “And if I...but have not love, I am nothing.”

- We can have incredible spiritual gifts and abilities. But, it means nothing and I am nothing if there is no love.

- My gifts are not for me. They are not even for me to feel good about myself. My gifts are for the soul purpose of loving others above myself. So, the use or non-use of my gifts should be dictated by love.
- Love is the key. Others spiritual edification is the key.

B. The Nature of Love

Table Activity: Understanding Love

As a table, read the following passages and make some observations about the nature of love (i.e. what love is and what it looks like). Then, on the basis of what you observed about love, discuss how love should look in discipling relationships. Try to be specific, giving concrete examples.

John 13:1–17

[1] Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. [2] During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, [3] Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, [4] rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. [5] Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. [6] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" [7] Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." [8] Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." [9] Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" [10] Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." [11] For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." [12] When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? [13] You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. [14] If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. [15] For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. [16] Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. [17] If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (ESV)

1 John 3:16–18

[16] By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. [17] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (ESV)

Colossians 3:12–14

[12] Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

[14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (ESV)

White Board Discussion: The Opposite of Love

As a whole class, list out examples of what the opposite of love might look like in discipling relationships.

C. The Labor of Love

Truly dedicating ourselves to personally helping one another grow in Christ, when done in love, is costly. The apostle Paul said it clearly:

Colossians 1:28–29

[28] Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. [29] For this *I toil, struggling* with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (ESV)

- to toil means to labor to the point of exhaustion or weariness
- to struggle is the word, ἀγωνίζομαι, which is where we get the word, agonize. It is to labor fervently, to strive.
- You get the idea.
- And while we are to do this with Christ’s energy, it is very hard work.

Jesus, when he was preparing his disciples, gave this analogy about the right mentality:

Mark 10:42–45

[42] And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. [43] But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. [45] For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (ESV)

- This servant or “slave of all” mentality is what we are called to as we disciple one another.
- As we personally help one another grow in Christ, we see ourselves as below others, not above them. Serving them. Putting them above ourselves.
- This will be costly. Christ had this mentality and it cost him his life. He gave “his life as a ransom for many.”
- We are called to the same mentality.

I point this out to say that we should never fool ourselves into thinking that discipleship will be easy. No, it is laborious. And we will suffer, sometimes suffering reproach for our labors, as Christ did and as Christ’s servants did as well. So, prepare yourself for this.

But, of course, also know, that Christ will strengthen you, your reward with Christ is great, and there is tremendous reward in seeing God work in people’s lives.

So we have discussed three keys to effective discipleship:

- I. The Gospel
- II. The Primary Tools: the Word of God and Prayer
- III. Relationship: Love

Lets briefly discuss a final key:

IV. The Church

Discipleship is not a solo activity. There is no “solo lobo” (lone wolf) discipleship in the Bible. Discipleship is healthy and effective if it is done in the context of the local church.

There is no better passage that shows this, than Ephesians 4:11:16:

Ephesians 4:11–16

[11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (ESV)

How does this Scripture show us that discipleship is done in the context of the local church?

- Pastors and teachers equip the saints to do the work of minister (pastors/teachers of the church)
- Building up of the entire body is in view (not just individuals but “entire body”)
- Attaining the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (there is a corporate of unity and understanding)
- “the whole body” is in view as we speak the truth in love to one another
- Every joint that is equipped and working properly is what makes the body grow (interdependence)

Implications

- Be an active member of your church
- Allow your pastors/teachers to guide you
 - Come to them for advice
 - Ask them for key passages
 - Rely on them to help you with good resources
 - Take whatever equipping they offer you (from Sunday mornings to other classes)
- Submit to your leadership even when it is hard
- Never elevate or isolate yourself and your discipling ministries
- Stay in line with the doctrinal teaching and positions of your church, knowing that they are there to give you healthy guard rails
- If there is an area of doctrine or direction that you take exception with your church, keep trying to work it out, with a humble spirit
- Always seek to maintain unity in the body and to extend forgiveness when hurt
- Speak into one another lives, when it is hard, with a spirit of gentleness and humility