

**Discipling : Class 2, Why Become a Discippler?
December 15, 2002**

Theme: Exploring the Biblical underpinnings for a Christian's motivation to make disciples. Examining the larger "Whys?", before turning to practical suggestions.

Instructional Objective: Lord willing, the students will understand that the final point of all discipling is God's glory, that his glory is voluntarily tied to fruitful Christians, and that we can be tools that he uses to bring glory to himself BOTH through our personal growth in holiness and in the fruits of holiness that we help to produce in others. And finally, that the ultimate fruit of our labor in discipling should be an expansion or replication of our ministry as those we disciple become disciple-makers themselves, apart from us.

A. Why Disciple? For your Joy!

It may strike some folks as odd to say that a primary motive for our discipling of others should be the joy that we receive from that activity. But while there may be many ways that we could potentially pursue this joy wrongly, the fact remains that Scripture presents the joy of glorifying God as a legitimate and significant motivation in disciplers.

(Teacher Note: Give out copies of verses on slips of paper to early arrivals...make sure they have the NIV and are good readers. Instruct them to read the verse when it is called and to read slowly and loudly. Encourage them to spend time before class starts reading their verse and meditating on its meaning. This will make them much better readers)

1. Philippians 1:3-5
2. Philippians 4:1
3. Romans 16:19
4. 2 Corinthians 7:4, 13-16
5. Philippians 2:1-2
6. 1 Thess. 2:19-20
7. 2 John 1:4

Question – In all these verses, were Paul and John rejoicing because the people to whom they were writing were maturing, or were they rejoicing because they had a role in helping to bring them to maturity?

Response – Certainly there should be a pleasure for any Christian in seeing another believer prospering. But it does seem from these texts that there is a special encouragement that Paul and John are taking from the knowledge that THEY were personally used by God to help build up the brothers and sisters to whom they wrote. This is a good and Biblical encouragement that we should not be ashamed to cultivate and enjoy. Paul would often refer to his hearers as his "children in the Lord" and he seemed to take a deep and appropriate pleasure in seeing them prosper through the fruit of his ministry and the ongoing work of others.

Question – So is this sort of joy selfish, or does a joy in personally helping to mature disciples lead us to be captive to the behavior of men, to their growth or lack?

Response – If this was the sum total of what Paul and John (and others) took pleasure in, then yes it could lead to a wrong

Question – Does it lead to pride?

Response –

Summation:

1. Followers of Christ are presented as ones who rejoice to see other believers grow, and they may take special joy in seeing that growth occur as a result of involvement in their lives. This pleasure of laboring to see other people prosper spiritually through your involvement in their lives is one of the deepest and most foundational joys in the heart of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.
2. Growing believers as fruit of your ministry to them is a part of your glory and reward before Christ. Far from being wrong-headed, I would even say that if you do not take real pleasure in being used by God to encourage and build up other believers, then there is something wrong with you.
3. Our pleasure in seeing God use us to encourage and build up other believers is an important and Biblical motivation...but it is not the ultimate motivation.

B. Why Disciple? Finally, for God's glory!

We learn from God's word that the result of discipling is greater fruit from our lives and for His kingdom that leads to glory for God. To consider this idea carefully, we are going to spend the next few minutes looking carefully at a section of Scripture that explains this concept in wonderful detail...John chapter 15, verses 1 through 17.

Read John 15:1-8 (pause)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown in the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

There is a great deal we could profitably spend our time on in this passage. In the next few weeks we will have time to think more about what it means to remain in Christ as an avenue to fruitfulness. But right now I want us to look more at the final point of this section.

Question – What is it that Christ describes in the life of the believer that will bring glory to the Father?

Response – Our bearing much fruit. (We will discuss what that fruit IS in a moment.)

Question – And what will that fruitfulness demonstrate to a watching world?

Response – That we are true disciples of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Question – So then, what is this fruit that Jesus is speaking about?

Response – Well the text is not specific about what this means precisely, or if it is meant to be only one thing, or perhaps many things are intended here. However, we can get some pretty good insights into what meaning is intended by simply continuing to read verses 9 through 17. Here we see examples of the kind of fruit that Jesus has in mind, the fruit that should naturally flow from our being “in Christ” and how that fruit brings great glory to the Father.

(Read 9-17)

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

Clearly John chapter 15 is focused on the need to abide in Christ and on the love he has shown for us. But there is also a plain command for us in this passage too...we are told that we should love each other as Christ has loved us. So, it seems obvious that part of the fruit that is implied here is Love...Love for God that shows itself in love for each other. But let's think more carefully about just how Christ has loved us and how that may give us clues to the particular kind of “fruitful love” that we are called to display.

I. Jesus laid down his life for us.

First, in verse 12 we read that he loved us by laying down his life for us. Certainly we cannot lay down our lives for another with the saving effect that Christ alone could accomplish. Christ is the only begotten Son of God and his death accomplished a great atoning work that we can only marvel at, but never even mimic. Still it does seem that Christ would have us expend our lives for others in something of the same way that he did as well. So let's think about some of the other aspects of that loving act.

Question: With regard to doing good for humanity, what was the primary object of Jesus laying down his life for us? What was he accomplishing for those he had chosen by laying down His life?

Responses – To bring us to Father.

- So that we may share in the joy that Christ enjoys with the Father
- So that we can bear fruit
- So that our joy will be complete
- So that our enmity toward God would be replaced by love and friendship.

So it should be with us! We should lay down our lives for others with the deliberate intent of making ourselves a means that God may use to do these good things in the lives of others. We may never be called to die for other Christians, that is true. Some are called to pour out their lives as a drink offering on the altar of martyrdom, but the rest of us are also called to pour out their lives as well...one drop at a time. Day by day...pouring out our time, our energy to do real, eternal good for the believers that Jesus has placed around us. Jesus lay down his life to do eternal good for those he loved, we should pour out our lives for others, not simply to help them...but to try to help them eternally. Our fruit should be fruit that will last...forever.

II. Jesus made known to us all that he had learned from his Father.

Second, we read that another grand mark of Christ's love for His disciples is that he made known to them what he learned from the Father. One of the great marks of the love and friendship of Jesus for His disciples is that he opened up the truth and purposes of God to them. He shared with them the knowledge that came from the Father.

It is tragic that in our arrogant and individualistic culture many have lost the Biblical understanding that teaching is not essentially autocratic or rude...far from being arrogant, to lovingly teach another person about truths from Scripture is a supreme sign that you really love them and consider them your friend. We, who have learned some things from God, should love others and be their friends by sharing the truth of the Word with them as Christ has done so graciously for us.

If you set out to deliberately relate to another Christian, with the intent of doing them good spiritually, you are loving them and being a friend to them.

Conclusion:

1. To be fruitful in discipling we should focus on the fundamental motivation for discipling...our joy and God's glory.
2. If you don't find yourself wanting other Christians to grow through their contact with your life, then there is something wrong with you.
3. Things to do:
 - a. Meditate on the way discipling brings God glory

If you find that you are still not motivated to spend time encouraging other believers to grow in their love for God, then think about the way that discipling brings Glory to God.

- b. Determine to cultivate a taste for the joy of being a means God uses to bless and encourage others in Christ.