

BIBLICAL MENTORING

Step 1: The Heart of a Mentor

*Session 1:
Why discipleship?*

Welcome on this journey of learning why and how Jesus made disciples and what His call to discipleship means for us, His followers. This session is the first step that, we pray, will deepen the way you look at the life God has given and the calling you have received to walk alongside others and help them take their next step of maturing in their faith.

As you move through this study, please consider two goals:

1. We want to help you embrace the truth that in Christ you have everything you need for life and that nothing can separate you from God's love. Our relationship with Christ transforms every area of our lives!
2. We want to help you experience and witness life transformed in Jesus. The life-change God wants to bring is not something that happens in a vacuum. We are called to live in God's present kingdom and help others do the same. One way we help others is through mentoring, which is a relational form of discipleship. It is amazing to consider, but you can be part of His plan to mold you and those around you more clearly into His image.

Discipleship is a love relationship that changes how we relate to God and others

The dictionary defines the word disciple as: *one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another: a convinced adherent of a school or individual.*

So for a Christian, a disciple is one who is convinced of the truths Jesus brings and who is learning to emulate Christ in every facet of life. In his first epistle, John tells us that we love God and others because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). It stands to reason, then, that increasing our experience with God's love will help us deepen the expression of our own love for Him and others. One way to do this is by learning to see how He has loved us over the years.

Discussion

- When did you first encounter God in a way that changed you (your thoughts, habits, beliefs)? What was the encounter like and what was the result?

- Who was instrumental in pointing you toward a relationship with Jesus? Have there been others along the way who have encouraged you to become more like Christ? What was it about them that persuaded you of their love and concern for you?

Loving as God Loves

In our culture I can talk about my love for key lime pie in one moment and my love for my wife in the next. Our use of the word love can be so broadly applied that it helps if we focus our definition. The New Testament authors were also forced to focus their definition of love and they did so by looking at the teaching and life of one person: Jesus.

This focus on Jesus as love's definition and model was no surprise; Jesus told them to do it. Just hours before His arrest Jesus said to His disciples,

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other” (John 13:34 NLT).

For years I missed our Lord's point. Long before Jesus spoke these words the Mosaic Law already commanded them to love. So why is this a new command? The answer is found in the modifier. We love according to Jesus' example. So how did Jesus love and what was His motivation?

We find the starting point for our answer inside a conversation Jesus had with a religious leader. One day a teacher of the law asked Him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” To this Jesus made His famous reply,

“The most important one...is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29-31).

Matthew 22:40 adds that all the law and the prophets hang on these two commands! If Jesus had been asked which one of these commands was more important than the other, He would have replied “Yes!” One’s love for God must be expressed by one’s love for people, and one’s love for people is another expression of one’s love for God. In both cases the love displayed is a reflection of Jesus’ love that exists deep within the disciple. It is internally motivated rather than externally required.

Let’s look at one of those people in scripture whose life was transformed by the love of Jesus. Read Mark 5:1-20.

Through this astonishing encounter with Jesus, the demon-possessed man was transformed! He was literally made new. On that day, the man became a disciple of Jesus.

Discussion

- Go back and read the end of the passage, Mark 5:18-20. Notice the man’s desire and Jesus’ response. Why do you think the man wanted to remain close to Jesus?

- Why do you think Jesus sent him back to his family, rather than allowing him into the boat to be trained at Jesus' feet with the other disciples? What do you think his life was like back home (what did he talk about? What conversations did he seek out?) Using the example of this transformed disciple, what might Jesus be saying to you about where and how you may serve Him?

The people of the area were terrified of Jesus and upset that He destroyed their livestock, so they pleaded with Him to leave. But the transformed demoniac went back home and to the surrounding towns, telling everyone about this Jesus who had completely changed his life. In fact, he is sometimes referred to as the first Gentile missionary. When Jesus returned to the area (as described in Mark 8), rather than plead for Him to leave, a crowd of more than 4,000 Gentiles gathered to see this Jewish rabbi.

Discussion

- What do you think led to that change of heart on the part of the people in the region?

- What was the first Gentile missionary's motivation to tell everyone about what happened to him?

- Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a. Why is love the only proper motivation for being a disciple and what role does community play in teaching us how to love?

In other places Jesus taught that love is an action more than a feeling. It is a choice to seek the well-being of other people. When Jesus told His disciples that they were to serve one another He was telling them to put other's interests ahead of their own (Mark 10:41-45; John 13:1-17). But His example went way beyond their close group of friends. Jesus pushed the boundaries out further by saying,

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you...Do to others as you would have them do to you.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them.... And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners,’ expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:27-36).

This is astounding! Genuine love for God and neighbor means seeking the well-being of others, which includes those who are out to harm you or have no way to repay you. Why would He ask such a counterintuitive thing? Jesus wants us to love in this way because this kind of radical love reflects the character of our heavenly Father and shows that we are a member of His family. Paul summarized it in this way to the disciples in the Ephesus church,

“Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.” (Ephesians 5:1-2)

From the very depth of your being, and without regard for self or equity, love God and others in a way that expresses God's extravagant grace and generous mercy. Stop and read that last sentence again. I don't know about you, but that one stops me in my tracks. Is this even possible?

Remember that Jesus did not just say these things; He lived them. He modeled what He taught as He consistently moved toward the marginalized and the under-resourced. When His enemies came against Him, rather than rise up and overwhelm them with His power, He surrendered Himself to them, entrusting the outcome to His Father's loving will.

Discussion

- What parts of this description of love make you uncomfortable? If you agree that it is accurate, what part of this will be the biggest challenge for you? Why?
- When we compare the expectation (imitate God's love) with the reality (how I love) we always find a gap. Read Colossians 3:12-17 and discuss how a person can "put on" the attributes of Jesus.
- When it comes to becoming internally motivated by love, what is God's part? What is our part?

Jesus is our definition of and model for love. As “...*the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being...*” (Hebrews 1:3), Jesus was sent by the Father into the world so that the world might gain a clear picture of who God is and what He offers through the Good News. Yes, Jesus did come to get us to heaven but He also (and more completely) came to get heaven into us by making us holy and empowering us to walk with Him and become like Him now...today...this very moment!

In John 20:21 Jesus said, “*As the Father has sent me, I send you.*” The One with all authority—who was sent by the Father to reveal God’s loving gospel through His teaching and life—has sent us to do the same. As disciples who are trained to be fully like our teacher (Luke 6:40), the love of God in Christ becomes the foundation for the transformation Jesus wants to make in our lives, and our motivation for expressing His love to others. As He Himself has said, “*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*” (John 13:35 NLT)

Conclusion

Consistently loving like God loves is not a present reality for us. Knowing that we will blow it, it’s good to remember that our current goal is not perfection, it is direction. Perfection will come when Christ returns and completes His good work in us (Philippians 1:6). For now, we live in a grace that guarantees that nothing, not even our failures, can separate us from God’s love (Romans 8:38-39).

Why Discipleship? Because motivated by love, meeting other Christians where they are and helping them take the next step of integrating their faith more deeply into their lives is God’s plan for transforming us into His image and training us to live in His kingdom.

Review the Points to Ponder and Close in Prayer

POINTS TO PONDER

This week, take time with the Lord to consider the following questions and engage with scripture. Be prepared to discuss your answers when we next meet.

Look at the two options below, select the one that seems most appropriate for you and sit silently before the Lord, asking Jesus to show you the barriers that keep you from receiving or expressing the fullness of His love. Write down whatever comes to mind.

- **Receiving Love:** “God loves you.” This truth is so powerful that it should touch us at the core of our being and influence the way we live in this world. If you struggle to truly believe God’s love for you, then ask the Lord to reveal the circumstantial or personal barriers that keep you from receiving the fullness of God’s love.
- **Expressing Love:** Experiencing God’s love for ourselves changes the way we live and challenges us to show that love to others, no matter who they are. What are the circumstantial or personal barriers that keep you from expressing God’s love for others in your family? In your church? In the world?



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