

## Keep It Up

Living a Life of Love

Colossians 3:12-17

August 28, 2022

### Opening Prayer

#### **Brently: A biblical frame of reference to think about discipleship (following Jesus)**

**Intro:** We believe that Jesus is King. We are His people who exist for His Kingdom and His Glory. We are called to live a life of love – to love Jesus, love His people, and pour His love on the world.

The process of discipleship is the process of more and more closely following after Jesus. It's being with Him and being like Him and doing the kinds of things that He did.

We wanted to come together as preaching pastors and share with you this morning how we understand the process of discipleship at Covenant Church. How do we as church family more and more closely follow after Jesus?

I'm going to start with Colossians 2:6-7 and then Rob and David are going to join the discussion.

#### Colossians 2.6-7

<sup>6</sup> So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

*Christ Jesus as Lord* – They had received/acknowledged Christ as Lord of their lives. Not Caesar as Lord, not self as Lord, Christ Jesus as Lord.

*Live in Him.* This implies submission to Him. Allegiance to Him – which brings joy in Him and peace in Him and power in Him. Continue to live In Him.

*Rooted* – Has a once for all feel. It's done. Live out what is true. Jesus has brought you from spiritual death to spiritual life. Your salvation is rooted in the work of Jesus on the cross. He will never let you go.

*Built up* – This has an ongoing feel. You are His work and you're still under construction. But the good news is that God almighty is at work building you up.

*Strengthened* in the faith you were taught – that is the body of truth taught by the disciples to the first century believers and revealed to us through the Bible. Through this truth we are strengthened.

*Overflowing with thankfulness* – Part of placing faith in Jesus is setting our eyes on Him. Setting our eyes on Him includes seeing His work and His goodness. See His work and His goodness will cause us to overflow with thankfulness. Our job as disciples is to keep looking at Jesus. As we do that, we will see His goodness and we will overflow with thankfulness.

God is drawing. God is working. You(we) are following. That's discipleship. It's about the work of Jesus and my(our) response. It's done (rest in peace and confidence). It's ongoing (never stop listening and following).

Characteristics of Discipleship (following Jesus):

Growth in discipleship is...

- Natural. Illustrate: Human body, plants
- Messy. Illustrate: Sippy cup

*Pastors Discuss*

### **Rob: Covenant's Discipleship Process**

A follower of Christ needs four things in order to grow—an authentic relationship with Jesus, a vision of what receiving God's life and entering God's kingdom means, the intention to pursue this life and the means to do so (tools, opportunities, people).

For decades Covenant has *focused* our efforts on providing the means for discipleship. But what would happen if we focused on providing the vision for life in God's kingdom and then encouraged an environment where people could live out their intention to pursue it? What would happen if we shifted the emphasis away from a checklist of things you must do to a vision of life in Christ in our world.

Just as it was in the early church, I think Christ-followers would be more eager to put aside the distractions of this world as they spur one another on to follow Jesus and to share His good news with others.

You can think of Covenant's discipleship process as a spectrum. On one side it is guided and structured as it covers the basics of what one needs to thrive in Christ. Thrive is the intended starting point here.

It moves from guided and structured on one end, to more organic and self-led on the other. As we grow in following Jesus, we know we can trust the Spirit to lead us to the things that will help us grow in faith and to the spiritual friends who will do that with us.

Spiritual friends are groups of two to twelve who desire to help each other live out the vision of life under King Jesus' authority, learning together how to follow Jesus well. Scripture teaches that life change happens best in the context of Christ-centered relationships and spiritual friendships provide that kind of relationship.

Our country provides many resources these spiritual friends can use. Which is best? Covenant leadership is working to create a list of what we see is the best of the best, covering a wide range of topics. So, rather than Covenant offering many classes you could attend that

might generally relate to what you specifically need for spiritual growth, we will be encouraging spiritual friends to choose what the Spirit is leading them toward and to engage that together.

How will you know what is best for you? We are also working on a spiritual assessment that you can use in two ways. First, by using this regularly (annually?) you can use it to measure your progress in following Jesus and living in His way. Second, as you recognize areas of growth, stagnation or slipping, it will open options of possible next steps in your pursuit of Christ.

In discipleship, one size does not fit all. We are all in different stages in our spiritual growth, and that growth is not linear. It feels cyclical, but it is not that either. How many times have you felt like you were back in the same place as you deal with the need for patience, or faith or courage or whatever it is that the Lord wants to work on in your life? ("I thought I learned this 20 years ago, but here I am again!")

Whenever I cycle around and revisit a theme or experience, I feel like I've been here before! But if you put this circle on its side you and look at it from this angle, you recognize that what we thought was a circle is actually a helix, a corkscrew. Sure it feels like we've been here before, but we haven't every been to this part of the corkscrew before. Each time we revisit a theme or experience we do so at a different level as a changed and transforming person.

Some in the church have visited the same topic but are at a higher place in the corkscrew; they can help us where we are. Others are visiting the same place and are at a lower place in the corkscrew; we can help them where they are. This interdependence in growth is what the Lord intends. It is here where our friends help us see what God is doing as we meet each other in these places and spur one another on to love and good deeds.

### *Pastors Discuss*

## **David—The Goal of Discipleship: Love**

Three years ago, Covenant's leadership was led by God to become a church known more for its love than for anything else - in our dealings with God, with each other, and with those God places around us, to be known for and defined by our love.

This isn't just some novel idea arrived at out of the blue by Covenant's leaders. We believe God by his Spirit took us back to the heart of the life God intends for us.

Listen to these passages that capture, in a variety of different ways, this calling that is at the center of the Christian life.

Our discipleship process centers on our calling to live a life of love

I Corinthians 8.1

While knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church

I Corinthians 13.1-3 (Message)

No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

not just focused on me and my growth – concerned not just with my own spiritual self-improvement but growing for the sake of others

## **Our Calling as Christ Followers**

**Live a life of love.** Ephesians 5.2

**Follow the way of love.** I Corinthians 14.1

**Do everything in love.** I Corinthians 16.14

**Clothe yourselves with love.** Colossians 3.14

**Excel in love.** I Thessalonians 4.10

**Continue in love.** I Timothy 2.15

**Pursue love.** I Timothy 6.11

**Walk in love.** II John 1.6

We have taken the first of those, the passage from Ephesians 5, to sum up the essence of our calling as a church:

**Live a life of love.** Ephesians 5.2

<sup>1</sup> Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**And that calling has three overlapping dimensions:**

### **The Three Dimensions of our Calling**

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#### **Love Jesus**

Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.  
Ephesians 6.24

#### **Love His People**

Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. John 13.34-35

#### **Pour Out His Love on the World**

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. James 2.8

Because living a life of love is our primary calling as Christians, learning to live a life of love is at the center of our discipleship efforts. We want to create a climate for spiritual growth that will help foster these three overlapping dimensions of our calling, believing that they express themselves in six important ways

## **The Six Expressions of our Calling**

### **Love Jesus**

- worshiping daily and weekly
- studying Scripture regularly

### **Love His People**

- participating in Christ-centered relationships
- using our gifts to serve the church family

### **Pour Out His Love on the World**

- loving our (literal) neighbors
- making a difference in the world

*Pastors Discuss*

## **Colossians 2.6-7**

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, *continue to live your lives in him*, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Jesus is leading. Jesus is working. We are following. Continue to live your life in him. Let's Keep it Up, together.

## **Closing Prayer**

### **Benediction**

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.