

Fundamentals of Discipleship | Ben Carey

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Date: 01 July 2018

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. It says, You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. It says, No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

It is the hardworking farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. All right. Let me pray for a second.

Heavenly Father, thank you for all that you've done for us, Lord. Thank you that we can come here and worship you and learn more about you. Father, I pray that whatever I say, Lord, I hope that it comes from you.

And if I say anything that isn't from you, I pray that everyone won't forget it, and it's like it never happened. Because the only thing that I want, Lord, is for you to speak to people.

[1 : 17] And so I pray that I can give your word correctly and do it justice. Father, I pray that we take what we learn and we apply it in our lives. In your name we pray. Amen. So this was a difficult message to prepare.

And not necessarily academically or like dealing with the actual contents of it, because it's fairly basic. I'm not going to be covering anything that you guys haven't heard. But it was difficult because it was extremely convicting in that everything that, all the points that I'm going to be making, I struggle with myself.

So that was pretty hard. But, you know, sometimes we don't need to be taught anything, just reminded. So that's kind of my goal.

Because the theme, the main message that I wanted to get across today is about discipleship and stuff like that. But it's kind of ironic because I'm speaking to people who have disciplesd me.

So I don't know. It's kind of odd for me. But nonetheless, I think it's very important. So that's kind of what we're going to be doing. So the way that I wanted to approach it is that we're going to answer three questions from the text.

[2 : 40] So if you want to write these down, we're going to be answering, in terms of discipleship, what is it, speaking broadly? We're going to be answering why it matters and what does it look like.

Again, I just want to emphasize this is just broadly speaking in general because there are, you know, there are an infinite number of messages and lessons that we can pull from this text.

So I'm really just going to be scratching the surface. So discipleship, what is it? What does it mean to be a disciple?

So Webster's Dictionary describes it as one who accepts and assists the spreading the doctrines of another, such as Christianity. So that kind of hits the nail right on the head.

In our case, we believe and we teach and we spread the teachings of Jesus Christ in the gospel. First Corinthians 15, 3 through 4 really sums it up.

[3 : 37] It says, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

So that is the gospel in general. That is what we teach. That is what we believe. Everything that we teach here at Bethel is built upon the Bible. It is the measuring stick for truth in our lives.

We also teach that God loves you more than you can ever imagine and that he's worthy of praise. That's, that's, we'll be, we'll be, I'll come back to that later. But that's also an important thing to

mention.

It's really weird talking to you guys from this perspective. Normally I always look at you like from the side. So one thing that I, an important thing that I wanted to make is I wanted to ask, why is it important?

Why does it matter? Because if you're saved, you're not going to hell, you're going to heaven. So what's the point? Right? Why, why, why should you want to be a disciple?

[4 : 51] A good, a good disciple as well. I think that's key. I think that's really important. You don't just want to give somebody fire insurance to avoid going to hell.

You kind of missed the point, I think. So, let me pull this off a little quick. So, let's see.

So in Matthew 2.20, it's, Jesus commands that we must therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

So right there, that's an example of Christ telling us that we need to make disciples, whether we like it or not. And then also, in our text, it says, in verse 2, what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust the faithful men.

So, discipleship matters. Discipleship should matter to us because it matters to our God. He clearly tells us we need to go and make disciples. And just anecdotally speaking, the reason why you want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and not just focus on salvation, because, you know, we were just discussing in Sunday school whether or not, you know, does a true disciple show, or does a true believer show fruit and all this stuff.

[6 : 14] I'm not going to get into that, but just, Psalm 16:11. This is a good verse. It says, You make known to me the path of life.

You fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. It's just good to follow the Lord. It's so much better.

It's a really beautiful thing. God designed us in such a way that the more praise, the more honor, the more glory that we bring God, the more joy and peace and fulfillment we will experience in our life. And I see that in many people's lives. Not just, you know, we have it here in Scripture, but just speaking anecdotally, it's just, it is so much better to, if you believe that this is the Word of God and this is truth, then we should act accordingly.

There are consequences with it. Listen to this. Psalm 63:3. It says, Actually, yeah, let me just read 63:3.

[7 : 26] Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live. In your name, I will lift up my hands. Because your steadfast love is better than life.

That's why. You know, like, the Lord is so good. That's why you should follow him. That's why you should want to know him. It's not dependent on, your salvation isn't dependent on it.

But I'm, it's just, he's worth it. So that is, to answer the question, why does it matter? It's because Christ tells us that we need to be a disciple and make disciples.

And also, we are just designed in such a way that we need to bring glory to God in order to have joy. The real, also, I'm not just going to fly through the three points, the three questions this quickly. The majority of the message will be spent answering the third question, which is, what does it look like? That's, that's, that's fair.

[8 : 29] That's a good question. So, if we go back to our text, you know, the first two verses were talking about discipleship and entrusting it to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

But sharing and suffering, no soldier gets entangled. You know, athletes, farmers. He makes interesting comparisons that I kind of wanted to touch upon and see what we can get out of it. So, verse three. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. I appreciated this because it kind of just lets us know up front.

It kind of sets the tone. Discipleship is hard. Following Christ is hard. Share in suffering are hardship. I think that's important to note. It kind of, you know, kills the prosperity gospel in such a way.

You know, share in suffering is a good soldier of Christ Jesus. And hopefully, later in the message, I'll talk about, you know, a good soldier versus a bad soldier. That's also pretty interesting.

[9 : 38] And we'll come back to it. But there's suffering. So, Ephesians 6:2 says, For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

That's spiritual warfare. So, when Paul makes this comparison to a soldier, I think it's fair. I think, biblically speaking, that's accurate.

We just kind of need to change our viewpoint. Because we don't think of us as soldiers necessarily. You know, but, you know, spiritually speaking, that's not the case.

We are. And so, based on that point, I was asking myself all sorts of these questions. Like, you know, soldiers care about the outcome of the battle.

They care how the war is going. That was interesting. I don't know if I asked myself that question too much. Is Bethel thriving? Or is Bethel dying? And what am I doing about it?

[10:44] That was pretty convicting. I don't know. That was really convicting. You know, just, uh... I was thinking about suffering and hardships and things like that.

And I didn't want to make the analogy of, you know, you're sitting on the bench and God wants you to get in the game and all this stuff. Because that's for children.

According to the Guardian, 128 Christians were killed in Egypt in 2017. Killed. It's not a game to them.

And so I was just thinking about it. Like, wow, like, these people died. Do I take it, do I approach it with that kind of seriousness? I, uh...

I don't know. So another point. Do you want to read verse 4? It says...

[11:45] One second. It says, No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. Man, oh man.

Okay. So... I read a commentary and he had a good note. And, uh... The commentator said that... The soldiers among the Romans were not permitted to engage in husbandry, merchandise, mechanical employments, or anything that might be inconsistent with their calling. So... So... They didn't do anything. They were soldiers. Soldiers were soldiers. Soldiers didn't have a part-time job. Hmm. And for me, the thing that I kept thinking about was being entangled.

Just distracted by comfort and security. And I feel like I fall victim to that so often. I don't think of myself as a soldier for Jesus Christ.

[12:51] You know, winning souls and trying to be a good, godly example so people can see the light in me. I just... I think about security and comfort and all these things that are just... You know, the American dream is a lie.

I know we've established that. We talk about that all the time. But, you know, I don't want to be a comfort-seeking, entertainment-addicted Christian put to sleep by the American dream.

I don't want that to be me. I don't want that to be you guys either. You know, we need to be aware. You know, do not get entangled in civilian pursuits. And, uh... You know, a good point of this is retirement.

I'm 22. I'm young. So... But... Relatively speaking. But, you know, the American dream is... Retirement is huge. You know, I've got to work really hard so when I'm 65 I can do...

What? Nothing? I don't know. I don't get it. But, like, that's what we spend so... That's what I feel like our culture is. We just gravitate towards that.

[13:56] To having a nest egg. To just being comfortable. And I feel like that can be so distracting for us. And that's... That's something that I think should be brought to our attention.

Myself more than others, I'm sure. Also, being free to serve. That's the other thing. Because I was thinking about it myself. I was like, oh, man. Like, I don't really have anything going on.

But I'm pretty busy. Like, I don't have any kids. But I'm busy all the time. And I was thinking about... You know, I get all these thoughts. Like, oh, yeah. I should do this, that, or the other thing. You know, I would love to take, you know, so-and-so out for, like, dinner or whatever.

That'd be cool. But then, you know, oh, I get busy. Or I have this. Or I have studying. Or work. You know, this, that, and the other thing. I just get so busy. And it's like all of a sudden I don't have time to disciple these people.

And while I was studying for this, it was just like, ah, what is my goal? What is, what am I really doing? What's the priority in my life? I just get so entangled by these things that don't matter in the grand scheme of things.

[15:01] School matters. Work matters. But being free to serve. You know, so, like, VBS. This is an example. Like, we're going to have a VBS. That's after work.

And so it's like, I don't know. That's another thing where I just, it takes conscious effort to not be entangled by something else. And free up your time to serve the Lord. Youth group on Wednesday

nights.

It takes effort to maybe wake up in the morning to do homework so you can go in the evening. That's hard. That's, you know, but it's important.

You have to be free to serve. That's what I took away from. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. I cannot see the clock.

What time are we going to? What time should I stop? Okay. All right. Just a side note.

[15:58] I've done this. And one time it took me ten minutes. The other time it took me an hour. So I don't know. I don't know where this is going to land. I just get, I just. Yeah, please do.

So the other, the other part of that that I wanted to make a note of is aim to please. I was thinking about who do I aim to please? Like, you know, I definitely want to please my parents.

I want to please my boss. I want to please, you know, people that I work for and I'm around. But, you know, how often do I, you know, think about who am I pleasing with my actions?

You know, our creator, our savior has given us a task of eternal consequences. And I feel like that should be our priority.

We should be trying to please him because he's the one who matters. Everybody else takes second. And then, so going back, going back to verse three.

[16:59] Share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, or of Christ Jesus. So a good soldier versus a bad soldier. So, you know, these are things that a good soldier does. What does a bad soldier do? And I was thinking about it, and I was like, well, all right.

A bad soldier is, you know, a bad soldier is undisciplined. They're not fit. They're not prepared. Like, that's a bad soldier.

And that leads us to our next point in terms of the mindset of an athlete. Athletes, they have a training regimen. They have disciplines.

There are things that athletes do to make them better at what the tasks that they have. And so verse five. It says, an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

So we don't make up the rules. That's something that I need to get ingrained in my head. We don't make up the rules. There are rules. There are things that we should do and we need to do.

[17:59] And for, you know, for me specifically, I can't live the Christian life how I'd like to.

And I think that's worth noting as well, you know, unless he competes according to the rules. There are rules. There are things that we need to do. And so I was thinking, you know, so what is it?

What are some disciplines that we need to do? And this is one thing that has been really on my heart like the last couple years. And that is, and I've also noticed this from new Christians to old Christians.

Like this applies to everyone. And that is we need, we need to dedicate ourselves to the reading of scripture and prayer. And the older I get, the more and more I realize how vital that is.

Yeah. I wrote down this verse, but I don't think it's the best verse for this actually now I'm looking at it. But in 1 Timothy 4.13 it says, Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

[19:11] You know, and you think about how well Christ knew the scriptures. And you think about how often Christ got away alone to pray in public. And in private. Just, again, just anecdotally.

The people in my life who have had the biggest impact on me spiritually. They, they are constantly in the word. Constantly.

And that shows. You know, and it just, again, I do not read my Bible every single day. I have no excuse for that. There is nothing, there is nothing hindering me from that.

I am just lazy and undisciplined. But, you know, it just breaks my heart when I hear Christians say that they are not going to read the Bible because they have read it already and they know what happens.

That just breaks my heart. Because if that's you, you just, like, with all due respect and love, like, you just missed the point. We read our Bible to, to grow our relationship with Christ, to know him better, to understand him more.

[20:16] And, I mean, you could, you'll never be able to understand the Bible completely. And so, that is a discipline that we should all undertake. I feel confident in that.

If you don't want to read, I've noticed this in myself. And I think, I think this is, this applies to everyone. If you don't want to read God's word, that's an attitude problem.

And, I need a different attitude when I think like that. However you want to say it, a different attitude, a different perspective, a different mindset. The bottom line is, if you don't want to read God's word, something's wrong.

And, yeah, I think, I think mature Christians, you know, I would say that mature Christians would agree with me.

It's vital. I mean, readers are leaders. If you don't read, you have no advantage over those who can't. People died for the Bible for a reason. If it is the word of God, again, we need to act accordingly.

[21 : 20] And then prayer. Like, prayer is probably the, yeah, prayer is a mystery to me. I don't, it's, it's incredible, you know, to have a direct line.

To be able to talk and come into the presence of the Alpha and the Omega. The creator of the universe. Every, every source of joy in my life he created.

And so for me to neglect, talk, and he, he wants to hear from me more than I want to talk to him.

And so just to think, to think that I just neglect that.

It's crazy. And you hear about, you know, what is it? In KC, they do like 24 hours of international, like day of prayer. They pray for like 24 hours. Yeah, when I hear things like that, you know, my first reaction is like, no way.

Like, no way I'm going to that. But then you talk to people who went. And they just, they can't stop talking about how, you know, how rich of an experience it was.

[22 : 20] And how incredible it was. And how, you know, they can't wait to go back. And that is a, that is a testament to prayer. And how important it is. And how sweet it is.

And it's something, you know, I take both of these things for granted. But prayer is something not to, not to take for granted. You know? Think about.

Yeah. Yeah. Let's see. And the last point.

I think I'm doing okay with time. I'm not sure. I can't even see the clock. So the last point I'm going to make is about the mindset of a farmer.

In verse 6. It says, it is the hardworking farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

[23 : 26] Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding and everything. That's interesting. There's a commentator who wrote this. Unlike the soldier and the athlete, there is nothing glamorous about the work a farmer does.

It is often tedious, boring, and unexciting. The nation's best farmer really isn't a celebrity, but he must work hard all the same.

That's true. So the main point that I got from this is that disciples of Jesus Christ should have a mindset of hard work and humility.

That's what I took away from it. Yeah. And the older I get, that's so true.

No one... The amount of work that you could do, no one is ever going to give you the just amount of... Like, if you're doing things for the Lord in order to gain praise or something like that, you'll have such a hard time with it, I've found.

[24 : 37] And it is hard work, isn't it? You know, that's the other thing. All these things are hard work. But, like, you know, prayer is a discipline. It's a labor.

Right? So is reading your Bible. And, you know, I mean, like, whether, you know, if you're at camp, camp's hard. It is hard. And if it's not hard, like, I don't know.

It is very difficult. And it's hard to be patient with people all the time. And, you know, if you really, truly sacrifice your life and your time and say, you know, Lord, whatever you do, whatever you want me to do, I'll do.

It's very difficult. You know, I don't, from what I've seen, I don't do it enough. Okay. So, if I could ask the musicians to come to the stage, I'm coming to the end of it.

Okay. And then the last point that I'll make is partaking of the fruits.

[25 : 42] And this just makes sense. If you're going to tell other people about Jesus Christ and why they should follow him and the goodness of it, you need to experience that for yourself. You need to be experiencing his love and his joy.

Because when you tell people about it, it will just mean that much more. So, all right. That's enough of that. That's all I have. So, I'll just close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, thank you for this time, Lord. Thank you that we can come together and learn about you. Thank you for your word, Lord. Thank you that we can read it and grow closer to you.

Thank you for prayer that we can come into your presence. And tell you about our day and make requests known and all these different things. Lord, just thank you for the body of believers here at Bethel and across the world.

Lord, thank you that we are our brethren. And that we will help each other and try to bring you glory. We pray these things in your name.

[26 : 51] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.