

## Following Jesus, Together

### Ephesians 4:11-25

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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, 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. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

### What is Discipleship?

Jesus calls to men in boats and says, “Put down your nets and follow me, I will make you fishers of men.” And thus begins the movement of people being disciplined to follow after Jesus Christ. A *disciple* is a person who is following the ways and teachings of some one else. Disciples of Christ imitate Christ. As Christians we are called to make disciples of all nations by teaching them the word of Christ and bringing them into the church (Matt 28). We are to disciple people, that is, call them to follow us as we follow Christ (1 Cor 14)

### What is the goal of discipleship?

As Christians, we have been made alive by the Holy Spirit (Eph 2), and empowered by Him to put off our old, sinful ways of thinking and living, and to put on new, Christ-like ways of thinking and living. The goal of discipleship is to learn to live in the reality of the new self, to live a life of faith and repentance. To be renewed in our thinking so that we understand God personality and nature, who we are in light of who God is, and what is God will for us is (Rom 12).

### Who should disciple me?

God established his church as his body here on earth (all of Ephesians, particularly 4-5) with specific men to lead the church (1 Timothy 3). God gives us instructions on how we are to interact in the church (Rom 13-14, Eph 4-6, 1 Tim 5, Titus 2), and that includes who should disciple whom! Look at Titus 2 for a minute:

<sup>1</sup>You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. <sup>2</sup>Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

<sup>3</sup>Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. <sup>4</sup>Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup>to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

<sup>6</sup>Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. <sup>7</sup>In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness <sup>8</sup>and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

<sup>9</sup>Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, <sup>10</sup>and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. <sup>12</sup>It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

<sup>15</sup>These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

God gave us each part of the body of Christ to help the other parts live out the truth of who we are.

### **What does it mean to have a discipling relationship?**

Discipleship relationships are not easy to maintain. The main problem we all have is sin, even as believers. If we want to grow in spiritual maturity, confidence, joy, faith, love, purity, holiness, righteousness, and power, then by God's grace we must turn from sin more and more and turn to Jesus more and more. This is possible because, with God, all things are possible.

But because the problem is sin, it can be hard to maintain an honest relationship. We don't want to feel the shame that comes with being exposed. We don't want anyone to know that we're weak. We want to please other people, by showing how much we've grown. We don't want to burden others. In some cases, we don't really want to give up sinning.

But God has given us the same Spirit that knits our hearts together, so we can grow. Having a discipleship relationship, being discipled means:

1. Being honest about the ways we sin, and about our hopes for the future.
  - a. James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."
  - b. 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
2. Seeing one another as family, and loving one another accordingly.
  - a. 1 John 3:16 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."
3. Desiring to see the glory of God manifest in your spiritual sister, mother, daughter, brother, father, or friend.
  - a. Phil 1:3 "I thank my God every time I remember you."
  - b. See Paul's prayer for believers at the end of Eph 3.
4. Meeting together regularly, perhaps just for a time, perhaps long term, to discuss specific problems, hopes, and fears.

5. To pray for one another. Always. Constantly.
6. To help one another turn from sin and to the Savior for all the things we desire in life: peace, comfort, understanding, hope, freedom from pain and suffering, control, affection, affirmation, love, courage, strength, etc.

**What are some good resources to use as a jumping off point for discussions?**

1. Love Walked Among Us, by Paul Miller
2. How to Grow In Christ, by Jack Kinneer
3. Gospel Transformation Workbook from World Harvest Mission