

Discipleship 101: Become A Disciple

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[0 : 00] Well, welcome here for this Sunday, February 20th. And as many of you know, I was in Vancouver this week participating in the Ordination Preparation Workshop.

That's why they use acronyms, OPW, for our denomination. And one thing I'm going to share with you right off the bat is that, there it is, part of the process when you become a pastor with our denomination is you start at the very beginning with what's called NMO.

Another acronym. New Ministers Orientation. And that's also in Vancouver. So a group of us, a large group of us, now this is three years ago for me, gathered in Vancouver.

There was probably 40 of us or so to have this orientation time, this time of fellowship together, this time of encouragement and learning as new pastors in the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada.

And so Larry Schramm, who's on the far left, the very tall guy who used to be an RCMP officer, imagine being pulled over by that gentleman in uniform, and yet he's a gentle giant.

[1 : 04] He's awesome. So Larry said to me, he said, Kent, you may not know this, but he said, remember the size of your New Ministers Orientation class? And I said, yep.

It was great. It was awesome. And he said, at least half of those people are no longer either in ministry or in our denomination. Wow.

So he named people that I remember connecting with, that I had friendships with, that formed there. And he said, not in ministry anymore.

Not in our denomination anymore. And then he said to me, not only that, but our denomination, most denominations in Canada, certainly, and likely in the U.S. as well, are seeing massive attrition rates.

Massive. From pastors who were a few years from retirement saying, I am done. I'm done. I have to get out now. To folks who came out of seminary, who were, I mean, I'm not bright-eyed and bushy-tailed in terms of that, because I, as you know, I had a whole career before, but people who have come out of Bible school or out of seminary into ministry, feeling, feeling pumped, feeling excited, and then feeling discouraged, whether by COVID or whatever happened, and are gone.

[2 : 25] Have pulled the chute, as I like to say sometimes. And so pray for God's people. Pray for other churches and people who have been called to serve and are discouraged.

And I'm standing here, not feeling discouraged. I'm feeling encouraged. I'm feeling passionate about what I believe God is still going to do. What God is doing.

What God is going to do right here. COVID has been a punch in the face, hasn't it? Over and over and over. But it will not win. Ultimately, God wins.

And we'll get through it together. But that's the reality. It's out there. There are a lot of people who are calling it a day. And it's sad.

So on to the good news. So, I don't know if I've ever used this expression, but has God ever winked at you? Have you ever been going through your day and God did something, something happened in your day that was absolutely astronomically impossible for it to occur.

[3 : 31] And yet it did. So for me, this happened the day I flew to Vancouver. So, my cab arrived early. So, first of all, I left home early, got to Edmonton International.

I had already checked in, went into security, was waiting in the line, realistically, probably about an hour before I planned to be there. So, I'm standing waiting in the line, just thinking, you know, thinking pleasant thoughts in my head or whatever, super bored.

And I, all of a sudden, I looked at the person, the back of the head of the person in front of me and I went, that's somebody I know. It's going to take me a minute.

So, I was thinking, there's no way it could be who I think it is. No way. That's, I mean, it's impossible. What are the odds? So, we come around the queue and he turns towards me and faces

me, masked, both of us, right?

And his eyes get big and my eyes get big. It was Ibrahim Samrain from the Christian Arabic church that meets at Bramard. And it was like, God just, God's going, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

[4 : 38] Because Ibrahim said, where are you going? And I said, where are you going? And he was going to Kelowna and I was going to Vancouver. And folks, like, I could have missed him easily, easily, if I had been 10 minutes later in that line.

And yet, we ran into each other and said, and we're able to bless each other on our journeys and connect. And it was, it was really cool and it felt like God going, have a nice day, right?

It was very cool. So anyway, this is going to be a long Sunday because this isn't even the sermon yet. So this picture on the screen, but I'm super excited. So these people are great.

So this picture on the screen is the group that met in Vancouver. And sometimes our, our ordination classes are larger. Sometimes they've been, I think last year was about 20 or 25 and they did it all on Zoom.

So we were able to meet in person, which was great. So you've got Larry Schramm. This is in the newsletter as well, but Larry Schramm is our regional minister of BC and the Yukon.

[5 : 41] Then Jasper Song is a pastor in Vancouver. There's that guy in Plaid. Then there's Greg Pearson. Greg is a pastor at First Baptist in Victoria.

Then there's Fay Reynolds, who some of you know, Pat, Fay says to say hi to you. So Fay Reynolds is the director of ministries with our denomination. Then there is Diana Zhao.

And Diana is at a church that ministers to people with special needs, Down syndrome, autism, things like that in Vancouver. And then Tim Challen is the pastor of Verdon Baptist in the small town, Verdon, Manitoba.

So this is the group that met this week. Larry and Pat were kind of, or Larry and Pat are right here. Larry and Fay were our facilitators.

So they led the group. They taught us. They led us through all our mock interview sessions. So we all submitted ordination papers. We all read each other's papers.

[6 : 39] We all prepared questions for one another. We each presented at this. And then we're, I said last Sunday, grilled, kinda, by one another. So it was a time of nerves and anxiety a little bit, but also challenge and encouragement.

So we were able to really sharpen each other. We prayed together and had meals together and laughed together and cried together, had communion together. It was awesome. So these are, these are good, good people.

And ladies and gentlemen, you're our ordination class of 2022. So the next steps now for us is that we need to revise paper, our papers, and submit them at the end of March.

I, we each have a regional interview with our area ministers of our region. And then in May, we have the actual interview. So between 15 and 20 people in a room, and any of you can come to this if you want.

It's in Calgary, May 25th. There will be a group of 15 to 20 people on the ordination exam. So they will have all read our papers.

[7 : 44] We stand like this. They are like this. And they can ask us whatever they want.

Clarification, challenge questions, anything like that. And so at the end of that process, it'll either be, yes, we recommend this person for ordination in their local church, or the other two options are, not yet, we'd recommend some other things, or we don't feel comfortable with that at this time.

So what Larry and Fay said to us is, you wouldn't be here if we had any concerns for down the road. But this is still a preparation process for us to, to kind of get our feet wet, and, and, and work through some things.

So we're not as terrified in May. But it was a challenging and encouraging time of learning and affirming each other. And now, again, that's for that formal preparation for the appearance in May. I actually even had a slightly harrowing water, late night waterfront walk by myself, which I can tell you one day, it was not the smartest thing I've ever done, and ended up at the chiropractor when I got home.

But anyway, long story. So I encourage you to pray for these people. I encourage you to pray for ordination candidates. We've all passed this step, but there's more to be done.

[9 : 04] So I pray for, I ask you to pray for them to be encouraged, for them in their ministries.

Again, that they would, would feel God's presence, and that they would, would feel encouraged as

this process continues.

So, just a, not so quick update for you on that front. So this morning, we're continuing in our sermon series called Discipleship 101. And through this series, we have been, and we're going to continue to look at the importance of discipleship, both in our individual lives, and in our life as a church.

So, let's, just a few reminders, a few refreshers. Discipleship, we've talked about, is a journey of growth and learning for us as individuals. But it's also a journey that we take together as we're disciplined by other people.

And then also, we seek, or we should seek, to support and encourage other people yet, on their own discipleship journey. So it's a very active process, not a passive process.

Discipleship. So this morning, the Apostle Peter, wrote two books in the Bible, that bear his name. Points, for anyone who can name them.

[10:25] Thank you. First and second Peter. Those are the easy ones. Well, they're all pretty easy. The book of Acts, tells us that one time when Peter preached, 3,000 people, turned to Jesus Christ, and were saved.

The Apostle John, wrote three books of the Bible. Do you know those? Come on. Yeah, that's the easy one.

One more. Nope. One, first second, did you say first, second, third John? Len? Okay, first, second, third John, there's three. Yep. And then Revelation. Absolutely.

Yes, the one that's named after him. Vern said, yeah, that's like the first and second Peter. Yeah, that's a gimme. That's three points. So, James, along with Peter and John, formed Jesus' inner circle.

They served and learned directly from Jesus. That's incredibly humbling. And they saw Jesus glorified. And Andrew was another apostle who was known for introducing people to Jesus.

[11:36] So, we're going to read a bit of their story in Matthew 4, verses 18 to 22. And you can follow along or listen as I read that. As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew.

They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Come, come follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men. At once, they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets.

Jesus called them, and immediately, they left their father and followed him. Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

These were four men that God used to turn the world upside down during their time. And we should also be able to recognize the ripples that their ministry at that time created and continues to have as it's felt and continues to spread around the world to this day by the grace of God.

[12:56] So I don't know about you, but I usually don't think of these great figures of the Bible, these great historical figures, as average dudes.

And yet, they were. They absolutely were. But this story that we're looking at this morning is where it all began for them, these average guys.

And you know what made them great? We can say, well, they wrote all these books, but you know what made them great at the beginning? Well, it was pretty simple, actually.

They heard Jesus, they obeyed Jesus, and they followed him. That's it. And so I know I'm in the presence of pretty humble folk here this morning, but there's potential for greatness in God's eyes when we make that commitment or when we renew that commitment to him.

That same commitment that Peter, John, James, and Andrew made. And when we started our series two weeks ago, we considered the question, what is a Christian?

[14:04] Maybe you remember that. We came to the conclusion that a Christian is someone who hears the good news of Jesus Christ, believes this good news, turns from where they were going, remember our repent theme, theme, turns from where they were going before towards the Lord, and then they experience the grace of God.

And when that process happens, we recognize that that person becomes a disciple. Disciple. And then we built on that last week when we considered the question, what is a disciple?

A disciple is, we agreed, a what? Do you remember? Follower. A disciple is a follower and a Christian disciple, particularly, a follower of Jesus Christ.

Someone who denies themselves and makes Jesus the number one priority in their lives. Someone who is totally committed to Jesus and his call on them.

Someone who does what Jesus calls them to do and seeks to become who he has called them to be. So with that foundation laid for us, I want to see what early discipleship looked like up close.

[15 : 31] And our sermon this morning is titled Become a Disciple. Our guides for that are these four average dudes, James, John, Peter, and Andrew that we hear about in Matthew 4.

And this morning we're going to take a look at the steps they took that day to become disciples of Jesus. And we're going to consider then what those same steps could look like for us today, for us, in our own lives.

The first step when we become a disciple is to answer the call. We learn in Matthew 4 verses 19 and then 21 that Peter, Andrew, James, and John were not religious leaders.

Right? They were not scholars or experts in the law. They were hardworking, sweaty, rough-handed, maybe rough-languaged perhaps, stinky, probably, fishermen.

Right? These were blue-collar average guys. And you may have heard the saying before, author Rick Yancey was the originator of this expression, God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called.

[16 : 57] And I can tell you, friends, that is absolutely my story. Jesus saw something in these men. He saw beneath the surface to who they were but he also saw who they could, who they would become.

He saw their potential. Jesus saw the potential, what they would become, and it's critical for us to remember that Jesus can and will use anyone who answers his call.

Anyone. Have you ever, as we reflect on this story this morning, have you ever chuckled or kind of been impressed by the picture we get here?

Jesus called and these guys answered immediately. Like, there's no hesitation here. There's no weighing options. There's no, I need to finish the work day.

Just leave me a voicemail and I'll get back to you. They answered. They didn't know what they would be doing. They didn't know where they would be going, but they listened and obeyed.

[18 : 04] It's that simple. But then we recognize what an adventure this would be for them. And that before long these simple fishermen, these average guys, would become leaders in the early church.

Agents of God's message to all creation. That's potential, right? Do you feel at times like you're just going through the motions?

Do you feel like you get up and you do your routine for the day? Maybe you don't feel like you have an important role? You don't feel like you're living your life in a way that makes a difference?

My friends, if you are a Christian, if you have answered that call in your life, God sees something in you. He didn't just save you.

I think our gospel tends to stop there often. He has a plan and he has a purpose for your life.

There's a lot more to happen, a lot more to come.

[19 : 14] And he has called you. He's called you specifically. But I have to warn you of something, and maybe you've experienced this to some extent in your own life.

Making a total commitment to Jesus will change your life forever. Three words that I don't recommend unless you're serious.

Jesus, use me. He'll do it. When you ask God to direct your steps, and I can guarantee, as many of you have heard my story, speaking from experience, you will never be bored.

If you answer and yield and submit, you'll never be bored. So the second step when we become a disciple is to drop your nets.

We read this morning that when Jesus called these men, they literally dropped their nets. And so I mean it in a literal way, but I also mean it in a more metaphorical way as well.

[20 : 34] So I can't say, let's start literal, I can't say for sure, but nets probably would have been expensive, right? It's like saying to Larry, I've got a bunch of tools in the back of my van, I'm just going to drop all this stuff.

It has value, right? It costs money to buy, to make, to use. They are essential tools of the trade. And so for fishermen, we recognize nets would have been the essential thing, next to a boat and water, that you would need to be a successful fisherman, right?

no boats, no nets, no fish. It's pretty simple math. And we need to recognize here that they weren't just stopping work for the day, right?

They weren't just saying, okay, Lord, you can have the evening, and then 8 a.m. I need to be back here. They were walking away from everything. They were walking away from security and safety and a lifestyle they knew, a trade they knew.

They recognized, we need to recognize, that the future would no longer be in their own hands. They were giving up control as they knew it. But we read in this passage that they heard the call and they made their choice almost immediately.

[21 : 59] They let go of their lives and they put their trust in Jesus. Can you recognize things in your life that may represent nets?

Things to which you are clinging that Jesus may be calling you to lay down. We've talked before about the sense, in some ways a false sense of responsibility that we have to provide for ourselves, to provide for our own needs, to provide for the needs of the people for whom we are responsible. And those are valid concerns and they're human concerns. But God is not calling us to drop everything and hope for the best.

He's calling us to drop everything and put our trust in him. And he will show up. I guarantee it.

People tend to rely on their own abilities.

And maybe that's true for you. It's been true for me. We rely on our own abilities, our own strengths, our own money, our own initiative to make things happen.

[23 : 10] we hold on to the past and we can be afraid to step out of our comfort zone. Can you recognize that for yourself?

Our culture praises people who are self-made. Praises people who carve their own path in life. But it often seems that those people's lives are still empty.

Right? They're still striving, they're still seeking, they're still aching. Because there's only one thing that can fill that need, can answer that need, can supply for your needs.

People still experience a longing that they can't satisfy on their own. And that's where addiction comes in. People are self-medicating and self-soothing.

And it's just an endless cycle. Because that's not where true peace and satisfaction come. I know many of you have heard the call of Jesus in your life and have walked away from other things to follow him.

[24 : 19] I've heard those stories. But I have a question for all of us this morning. If we've laid down our nets in the past, are we still willing to do that? Or are we willing to recognize the new nets we picked up in exchange?

are you still putting your faith and trust and all that you are into God's hands? The third step when we become a disciple is get out of the boat.

When we read about James and John jumping out of the boat when Jesus called them, I can remember ever since I was little thinking, holy cow, were they in the middle of the Sea of Galilee? They just jumped right out of the boat? Probably they were close to shore, right? They were getting their nets ready, but maybe. I've wondered that, as I said, ever since I was little, and talk about a literal leap of faith, right?

To jump out of the boat, right out of the boat. They made a decision to follow Jesus' call, but it took intention on their part. Jesus called and waited.

[25 : 32] He didn't call and say, yeah, come on, it'll be fine. Yeah, no problem. We're going to a five-star place down the road. We'll stay there. You'll be comfy. It'll be great.

But remember, and we've said this before, that Jesus will call us, but then we have a choice. Do we answer the call? Or not?

We need to take action in ourselves. And God, God, through the power of the Holy Spirit in us will encourage us, will urge us to make the right decision.

But ultimately, the choice is still up to us. We need to move in the direction Jesus is calling us. And quite often, it could involve moving out of our comfort zone, way out of our comfort zone at times.

It may mean, quite literally, that God is calling us to get out of the boat. Let go of what we understand as normal, what we understand as comfortable.

[26 : 39] Friends, our faith isn't real until we get out of the boat and follow Jesus. What would our country look like?

What would our families look like? What would our church look like if Christians acted on their faith and truly follow Jesus?

It's a challenge, but it's something I want you to keep in mind. This is one of those, if you remember nothing else from this sermon, think about that.

What would it look like if you trusted with get out of the boat kind of trust? trust? So speaking of getting out of the boat, we have the story of Peter, right?

Jesus called, and while everyone else debated, Peter literally stepped out in faith in the middle of the Sea of Galilee.

[27 : 46] Talk about faith, right? And as followers of Jesus, we're called to risk everything for him. Why? Because he gave everything for us.

Jesus gave his life for each of us. And you can say, well, yeah, but he rose again, and it's all good. the pain of crucifixion, the humiliation that he suffered for you and for me, that should count for something, shouldn't it?

So do we live our lives in a literal and utter fall on our face way of gratitude? an attitude that should be evident in every moment of our lives?

Do we do that? The fourth and final step when we become a disciple is walking with Jesus.

When Peter, Andrew, James, and John made the decision to follow Jesus, he became an intimate part of their lives. They were literally with him.

[29 : 12] Sure, they were physically close to him, but they also drew closer to him spiritually as well. And friends, we have that same opportunity.

The lives of these four men began to be shaped by the one they followed. And in their commitment to him, these early disciples people's gradually became more and more like Jesus.

And their lives were changed forever. forever. In that ordination group picture, after each of us presented, there were opportunities to encourage one another, to give suggestions for how we could change our approach or different things.

And I, one of my classmates finished his presentation, and Larry said, are there any specific ways you would affirm this person?

And I said, you smell like Jesus to me. The sense of Christ's presence in people's lives is powerful.

[30 : 36] And it's reality-altering for people who don't know him. I've told you a story before of a good friend of mine in university who said to me once, I don't believe what you believe, but he said, you act completely in line with what you say you believe.

And he said, I just want to encourage you in that because he said, I may not believe, but someone else might, and you could be the one who makes that change in their life.

So friends, that's what I want to encourage you is that following Jesus is recognizable in others. It absolutely is. And everything we've looked at this morning, that is how you become a disciple.

Amen.