

Discipleship 101: Making Disciples

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Easter Sunday, April 17th. And when I woke up this morning, I walked through the hallway and there's our front door glass is frosted.

Literally, I guess now, is frosted so you can't see through it. We have curtains in our kitchen, but something in my brain said it seems whiter outside than I expected.

And so I opened the curtain and went, oh, I guess that was spring already. But it reminded me of something that my dad always used to say. It was that he was good for quips, so he would just wise turns of phrase and things like that, things that made him chuckle.

But he used to say, spring has sprung, the grass has riz. I wonder where the flowers is. And I thought that popped into my head this morning, seeing that snow. And I thought, hmm, I guess that was spring.

So this morning, we are concluding our sermon series, Discipleship 101. And through this series, we've considered the importance of discipleship, both in our individual lives and in our life as a church.

[1 : 08] And we've considered that discipleship is both a journey of growth and learning for us as individuals, but it's also a journey that we take together in community as we're disciplined by other people.

And I want you to see this graphic one more time. I promise, it's the last time. And of course, by now, you know what it's called. It's called the Disciples' Cross.

Thank you. And it's a teaching tool that's been designed to help us become a disciple of Jesus Christ. And so maybe you're now thinking, shouldn't he be giving an Easter message this morning? Like, why are we doing this again? Well, my friends, this is actually the ultimate Easter message. And you'll see why I say that as we continue this morning.

Because it was never Jesus' intention for us to just become converts. He wants us to turn to him. He wants us to accept him as our Lord and Savior, without question.

[2 : 13] He wants us to be saved. And that's the greatest decision, personally, that we can ever make in our lives. But Jesus doesn't just want us to be saved and then sit on the sidelines.

You've heard me say that before. He calls us to become disciples and then to get in the game. So that's why we've spent these past two months in this series.

Because it is so important. It's critically important for us. And I know that we've repeated a lot of things. But there has been method to my madness. And I actually had a chat with someone and they said, The repetition is important because it's emphasizing, it's anchoring these ideas in my mind.

And so, my friends, what it comes down to is I want you to be grounded. I want you to be committed and sold out disciples of Jesus Christ. My goal is that you become that kind of disciple.

So that people now in your life, as well as people that will come after you in future generations, will be impacted by your discipleship journey.

[3 : 27] So we're going to quickly review the disciples' cross one last time. So we start by looking at the middle. And the focus there is Jesus.

Jesus is the center of our lives. And he has to be, number one, our top priority. Because our lives and decisions we make need to be centered on him.

The way that we live our lives every day needs to be centered on him. And we must take up our crosses daily, as he called us to do, and follow him. You simply can't be a disciple of Jesus if Jesus isn't the focus of your life.

So as we build the vertical axis on the disciples' journey, we begin at the bottom, anchored in the word of God, the Bible. We must be grounded in the word of God.

We can't know God. We can't follow Jesus or hear from God without being anchored to his word. And hopefully, that seems completely logical to you.

[4 : 38] And as we've recognized, we spend time with the people who mean the most to us. We spend time with them in daily conversation, in daily interaction and relationship.

And it's no different, should be no different, for our relationship with the Lord. The top of the vertical axis, then, represents our relationship upward to God through prayer.

Prayer is our conversation with God. And like being connected to the Bible, prayer has to be a daily part of our discipleship journey as well. Prayer is our conversation with God.

It's an honor and privilege. I hope we recognize that for us to be in relationship with, be in conversation with the creator of all things. God wants to hear from us.

And he loves it when we come to him, when we praise him, when we thank him for who he is and what he has done. He wants us to agree with him about our sin and the damage that our sinful choices can cause to both us and other people.

[5 : 51] He wants us to trust him so that we come to him first with our needs. We don't try and figure it out on our own, but we seek him first. And then he wants us to step into the lives of other people as well as we lift them up in prayer.

And that's a big part of our lives. That's a big part, I believe, of our ministry here. Is that we are constantly, if you look at the newsletter, if you're involved in the prayer chain, we are constantly lifting people up in prayer.

And then as we've also learned, God has more in mind for us than solely focusing on him. And that's where we get to the horizontal axis of the disciples' cross.

God wants us to have meaningful relationship with each other. Because we were created for fellowship. We were created for community. God wants us to be part of a group of people where we support one another.

Where we stand together. Where we can be safe to struggle. Safe to question. Safe to worry and wonder. And here at Braemar, we are seeking to be a family like that.

[7 : 05] A place where every disciple is part of a larger group of disciples. A community. And then there's the other side of the horizontal axis.

And that is the fruit-bearing side. You may remember talking about it that way. Where the focus is on our witness. And as we make Jesus the center of our lives, he starts working in us.

As we're grounded in the word, we begin to recognize his voice in our lives more and more. As we're praying, we begin to ask God more for the things that he wants rather than what we want.

And we've also recognized that what God wants is more people to turn to him. More disciples. And so the more we're grounded in community and fellowship, the more the Holy Spirit shines through us.

And that's what we're grounded in the world. And that's what we're grounded in the world. And that's what we're grounded in the world. And that really starts to catch people's attention. When we're aligned with God and his will, we have opportunities to tell other people why we're different.

[8 : 20] What it is that has changed us. And that is our witness. And then as we explored last week, serving others, seeking to put their needs and welfare before our own, that is true service.

And we recognized it fairly fitting last Sunday that as we talked, it was Palm Sunday, leading towards Good Friday and today, Easter Sunday, we recognized the greatest act of service anyone has ever shown was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for you and for me.

Serving others no matter the cost. That is why Jesus came. That's why he gave everything. Why he died and rose again.

And that is what Easter is all about. Selfless service. No matter the cost. So it's fitting, I think, that we wrap this series, Discipleship 101, on Easter Sunday.

Because we're considering what it means to be making disciples. We read in Matthew 4, verses 18 and 19.

[9 : 40] 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, follow me, Jesus said. And I will send you out to fish for people. Have you ever considered that Peter and Andrew were not what we would consider to be Christians, as we would define that?

Pretty obvious, right? How could they be Christians when Jesus' ministry had just started? Christians are followers of Jesus. But they were early Christians. But for those brothers at that time, they didn't know him. What fairly little we know about them from Scripture. They may not have even been good Jewish boys in the traditional sense. But they definitely didn't know Jesus. They didn't believe in him. They weren't aware of who he was, what his purpose was, what his ministry was.

[10:45] Can you recognize that? That Jesus calls people who don't even know him yet. And maybe that's happened to you. Maybe that's your story, is that you were living your life.

La-di-da-di-da. And suddenly Jesus went, you, follow me now. So I grew up in, as many of you know, I grew up in a Christian family that came from a Christian family, that came from a Christian family.

And when one of my parents passed, I framed it in this way. I said, I come from a legacy of faith. So I come, and that's not, that's just my story.

But I also have friends who Jesus grabbed and pulled out of a situation and changed their life in this way, called someone who didn't know him.

But over time, we recognize that the disciples, that Peter and Andrew and others, as they followed Jesus, as they spent time with him and learned from him, Jesus began to reveal himself to them.

[11:50] He testified to who he was over and over. And they were there for that. They were firsthand. They had ringside seats to those events.

They were witnesses to who Jesus was. So as followers of Jesus, how do we make disciples? And you may say, well, that's witness.

We covered that already. But how do we make disciples? We show people who don't know Jesus what he looks like. And I'll explain that.

That is witnessing, absolutely. But that's letting people see Jesus in you and through you. Tell them who Jesus is to you.

Tell them what Jesus means to you, what he has done for you in your circumstances. Because when you testify to what God has done in your life, what Jesus has done in and for you, you can also talk about what he's doing right now.

[13:01] People want to know, oftentimes, why we're different, what our story is. And so continuing to talk about the disciples, we can recognize that after they spent time with him, they started to experience a bit of a breakthrough.

And we read about this in Matthew 16, verses 13 to 16. When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say the Son of Man is?

They replied, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. What about you, Jesus said?

Who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. After following Jesus, after serving alongside him, Peter and the other disciples came to recognize him as the Messiah, as their Lord and Savior.

[14:22] They came to believe in Jesus, came to trust him. And not everyone believed, we read that in Scripture, right? But they did. And friends, it will be the same for us.

When we allow Jesus to shape us, he will shine through us. And we will have some breakthroughs with other people. And not everyone will agree with what we say, not everyone will be a witness to what we believe, but some will.

And it's at that point that we have some disciples to make. We recognize Good Friday just a few days ago, and after spending three years with these men, we read in John 17, verses 7 to 8, that Jesus prayed this the night before he died.

Now they know everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them.

They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. Friends, Jesus had taught.

[15:44] He had modeled everything that the followers, his followers, needed to know to become disciples. He taught them with his words, grounded in the word of God.

He taught them how to connect with God by going to him in prayer. He taught them how to get along with each other, for the most part, and how to support each other by investing in fellowship.

And he taught them how to share the good news about himself by being a witness to others. He took these men from being fishermen, a tax collector, a thief, a zealot, various other origins, and these men became disciples.

And that's what we've been covering in this series. That's what we've covered thoroughly together. Because when we remain connected with the word, with prayer, with fellowship and witness, we become disciples too.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he left his disciples with a charge that we read about in Matthew 28, verses 18 to 20. Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[17:13] Therefore, here's the charge. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. Jesus was telling them to follow the example he had given them and to create more disciples.

So how did they do? Do you think they did all right? Well, you could say, I was thinking as I was writing this sermon, you could say the fact that we're all sitting here this morning, I'd say fairly successful 2,000 years later.

But let's read Acts 2, verse 14, verse 36, verse 41 and 42. And I'll break this up for us. Acts 2, verse 14.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd. Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you.

[18:29] Listen carefully to what I say. Verse 2, or chapter 2, verse 36. Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this.

God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. Chapter 2, verses 41 and 42.

Those who accepted this message were baptized. And about 3,000 were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

So do you think the disciples did what Jesus asked them to do? I would say they did. And the world has never been the same.

We've covered everything that we have in this series for a reason. we've repeated and reinforced concepts and practical applications over and over.

[19:39] And I said that there's been method to my madness, but what is that? I want to see you, each of you, become disciples.

I want you to continue to grow as disciples. And my goal has been to equip you for that journey. You have everything you need to become a disciple and everything you need to make disciples. Can you recognize that? My friends, this is your calling and it's mine to introduce more people to the good news of Jesus Christ and to declare this Easter story, the truth of this story, that is our new reality because Jesus is alive.

Making disciples, that's what Jesus created you for and saved you for. That's what Jesus gave himself for and what he is calling you to do. that is your call. Will you answer? Amen.