

# Habits of a healthy church: Disciples Making Disciples

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now we turn to the preaching of God's Word. We're going to be looking at a passage from 2 Timothy 2, verses 1-7 this evening.

As you turn there, there is a new obsession in the Knowlton household. It is the Rubik's Cube. I know this toy has been around for 30 plus years now, but it's as if it was just invented. Based on the amount of time my kids are playing it. Okay, my oldest in particular has developed a profound addiction to the extent that she is told not to bring it to the dinner table or go to bed with it at night.

But after a few weeks of playing with it on her own, realized this was a little too tricky. So, of course, turning to YouTube where you can find the solution to anything, she found some helpful hints on how to solve the Rubik's Cube and has since become a master at doing so.

And so now the task is to see how quickly you can solve the Rubik's Cube. But not that alone. What's been interesting to watch is her desire to teach everyone else in the house how to solve the Rubik's Cube.

[ 1 : 03 ] She has sat me down on multiple occasions in order to try to teach me this methodology. Unfortunately, I have yet to be successful, but her persistence is admirable.

Not only does she want to enjoy this herself, she wants to pass it on. And so that's what we're going to be talking about tonight, this idea of discipleship. We've been talking the last several weeks as we've been going through this series about habits of a healthy church.

And so tonight we conclude this series looking at discipleship. Not only being disciples, but also making disciples. And so we all likely know the story in the Bible of Jesus and his 12 disciples that he had.

Jesus, these 12 served as Jesus' inner circle. They went with him and did ministry with him. They spent time with him both publicly and privately. They learned from him and were loved by him. But the tension that they received from Jesus, of course, was not meant to be exclusive. We know that after Jesus' resurrection and prior to his ascension, he gives his disciples a command.

[ 2 : 12 ] He gives them the great commission. Of course, we know. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always, even until the end of the age. And so in the same way that these disciples were fed and were taught by Jesus, now they were commanded to do likewise to those around them.

They were called not only to be disciples, but to make disciples. And so that command that was followed by the New Testament church, and that is certainly a command that we follow as well today.

And so that's what we're going to consider. How are we called to be disciples, and how are we also called to be disciple makers? And we see this in our text this evening, 2 Timothy 2, verses 1 through 7.

And I'll be reading from the ESV. You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, in which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, and trust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

[ 3 : 20 ] Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 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. This is the word of the Lord. Pray with me. Lord, I thank you for the privilege to be able to preach your word this evening. Lord, I ask that you empower me through your spirit, that I may speak with warmth and clarity. God, we desire to receive your divine truth this evening. And so may we both be convicted and comforted by your word. Through our time together, may we be edified and you be glorified, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Now, if you're not familiar with this passage or even the book of 2 Timothy, this was a letter written by Paul to Timothy, a young man who was one of Paul's disciples who was serving in Ephesus at the time.

[ 4 : 43 ] Now, this was actually Paul's last letter that's included in the Bible. So it's somewhat of a farewell address. And we see that play out in this passage. You see, Paul at the time was imprisoned in Rome.

He knew that his death was imminent. His days of ministry were numbered. But not only that, the church in Ephesus was struggling at the time. Many were starting to drift from the gospel. This was a place that had previously been really the epicenter for the spread of the gospel. Gospel expansion was occurring, and now it's at risk of dying out. And so Paul is rightly concerned for the protection and the promotion of the gospel.

So he wants to give Timothy some final instructions in what was his last letter. And so we see three commands that are given by Paul to Timothy, and these commands are going to serve as points for my sermon this evening.

And they are this, to be strengthened, to entrust, and to suffer. One, be strengthened. Two, entrust. Three, suffer.

[ 5 : 47 ] So we're going to take those one at a time. First, we're going to read verse one again. You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Now, it probably would have been an easier mnemonic just to say, to be strong, rather than to be strengthened.

In fact, if you have the ESV, that's how this verb is translated, to be strong. However, the ESV, which I wanted to use tonight, is actually a more accurate translation because it says, be strengthened.

This verb in the Greek uses the passive voice. And so if we put on our grammar school caps, and remember the difference between active and passive. Active verb is when the subject of the verb is the one doing the action.

In a passive verb, the action is being done upon the subject of the verb. So Paul isn't saying here, you be strong, or you strengthen yourself.

He's saying, be strengthened. Receive strength from outside yourself. And so I think this is vitally important as we take a look at this passage, this active command to be strong.

[ 6 : 55 ] This is the mentality that we normally see in society around us, right? To work hard, to be the best version of you. To study hard so you can get good grades, so you can get a good job.

To work hard at your job so you can get a promotion. To be emotionally stable so you can avoid depression or anxiety. To make more money so you can have greater security in life.

It's all about self-empowerment and self-improvement. And unfortunately, we see this notion creep into the church as well. But this isn't what Paul is saying to Timothy.

He's not saying, Jesus saved you, so you need to be strong and prove yourself to God. He's not saying, Jesus died on the cross, so now you need to work in order to maintain your salvation.

No, he's not saying, be strong. He's saying, be strengthened. And so we look to see, what are we supposed to be strengthened by? Very clearly, by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[ 7 : 56 ] We are strengthened by grace. And so if you've been around the church long enough, you probably have a definition in your mind of what grace is. Grace is favor in the absence of merit.

Or perhaps even better, grace is favor in the presence of demerit. And while these are absolutely true, we are saved by God's grace, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

This passage shows us something even more about grace. That grace is not simply just a disposition that we as believers have. It's not just a gift that we received sometime in the past at the point of conversion.

We see here that grace is an ongoing means of empowerment. And we see Paul really talks about this often. I want to look at just a couple other passages where Paul talks about this grace that we

have in our lives.

First, 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8 says this. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

[ 8 : 59 ] Here's another verse, 1 Corinthians 15, 10. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace towards me was not in vain.

On the contrary, I work harder than any of them. Though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. So Paul is very clear. God's grace should abound in us.

God's grace empowers us. God's grace enables us to live and follow after him. And so if you're like me, I'm a big fan of podcasts.

Rather, when I walk around town or I ride a bike, I usually listen to a podcast rather than music. And if you know how podcasts work, though you can download a single episode of something, usually if there's a podcast you like, you just click the subscribe button.

And so when podcasts, new ones are released, it goes automatically to your phone for you to listen to. Unfortunately for me, because of the fact that I subscribe to so many podcasts, I never have the time to listen to them all.

[ 9 : 59 ] So they start building up and building up and building up until I have to delete them because I've taken up all the space on my phone. And so grace functions in a similar way. Much like a subscription, we keep receiving more and more of this grace.

It's not a one-time gift. It's a continuous, overwhelming stream. And so that's why this verb, to be strengthened, is in the present tense. It's not that we are strengthened just at the point of conversion.

It's not that we're strengthened every once in a while. It's that we are strengthened continually, daily strengthened by the grace of God. And so grace is the means of strength.

What is the source of strength in this passage? It tells us, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The source of our strength is Christ.

And so what does that mean to be in Christ? Just like grace, if you've been around the church, it's kind of common Christian jargon, right? To talk about living in Christ. This is one of Paul's favorite phrases that he uses over and over again in his letters.

[ 11 : 03 ] And it's actually, if we go back to the chapter preceding our passage in 2 Timothy chapter 1, we get a great explanation from Paul as to what it looks like to live in Christ.

So 2 Timothy chapter 1 verses 8 through 10 says this. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And so to be in Christ means to be in union and communion with him, which is brought about by the all-encompassing work of God. Look at the work of God that's done, that is mentioned in this passage.

First, he saved us. He called us. He gave us his purpose and his grace in Christ. When did he do this? Before the ages began. This grace was ours from the beginning of time, and now it's fully revealed through the incarnation of Christ, who died and rose from the dead, defeating death, bringing us life and light to all his people.

And so to be strengthened by grace means to be fully reliant on the complete and ongoing work of Christ. To be in Christ means that we are brought in relationship with him in such a way that what is true of Christ becomes true of us.

[ 12 : 45 ] His grace and his power becomes our experience and our possession. And so this is really the essence of being a disciple, that we are to abide in Christ, that we totally rely on the work of Christ who saved us and sustained us and equipped us and enabled us to live for him.

And so this is really key. I don't want to breeze by this because this is really when we talk about discipleship, we can also often forget about this first part, what is most important in being a disciple. It's a good thing to talk about discipleship, about sharing the gospel and teaching and training others. But we must first remember that it is, we are called to be rooted in Christ, to hunger after him, to cling to him.

All our efforts to make disciples will be in vain. There will be nothing more than religious charade if we are not first grounded in Christ. And so that's the first command, to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ.

And so why do we need to be strengthened? Paul tells us in his second command, which is to entrust. Look at verse 2. 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.

[14:04] And so Paul reminds us that we are strengthened by the grace of Christ in order that we can share this grace with others. I mentioned at the beginning that the church in Ephesus was struggling.

Though it had been a place where missionaries had been sent and sent out to see the spread of the gospel, now people were leaving the church. Many were leaving the faith.

And so Paul not only wanted to see the gospel preserved in this generation, he wanted to see it passed on to future generations as well. It's a desire that we see repeated throughout the Bible. The Old Testament text that we looked at from Deuteronomy 6.

It's Moses giving God's command to his people. And what does he say? He says to follow these commands, that you may do them, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your sons and your sons' sons, by keeping all these commands and statutes, which I command you all the days of your life.

They wanted to see God's commands and his statutes, the people of Israel continue to follow after God. And so what does Paul here in this passage want to see passed on?

[15:11] He says, He's basically saying the whole gospel. All that I have spent my life teaching you about who Jesus is and what he has done.

This isn't a secret. This isn't a private revelation that Paul is conveying to Timothy. No, this is the entire, the whole counsel of God, which he has preached since his time of conversion.

A great phrase that I see Paul repeat, both in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy here. He says it in the preceding chapter. He talks about this message being the good deposit.

And it's this good deposit that was entrusted to him. It's this good deposit that he's entrusted to Timothy and wants to see entrusted to others as well. And so when I was in law school, I had to take a class called Wills, Trusts, and Estates.

It was not one of my favorite classes. I really don't remember much about it. I couldn't even tell you who taught the class. But there's one thing that I remember from the class is that a trustee, his primary responsibility and his duty is to the beneficiary of an estate.

[16:23] So the trustee is someone who is named within the trust, who is responsible for something that is not his, whether it's money or land, some sort of possession, some sort of asset, and he's controlling it for the benefit of the person named in the trust, the beneficiary.

And so we've probably heard stories about trustees mismanaging money or not doing what they're supposed to do, this legal responsibility that they have to the beneficiary. This is really what Paul is talking about here, this image of a trustee.

Paul is a trustee of God's invaluable treasure, this good deposit, and it's not meant for him alone. That's what he's trying to tell Timothy here. It's not his to hoard.

It's not his to keep. As a trustee, it was his duty to protect it and to share it with others because it's those who hear the gospel. They are the ones that are the beneficiaries, you and me.

And as we share it with others, there will be others that reap the benefit forever. And so we see this progression that occurs in these couple chapters of Paul sharing the gospel, and we see this gospel replicated and shared and shared generation upon generation.

[17:36] Looking back at chapter 1, verse 12, Jesus entrusted this gospel to Paul. Paul then, in verse 14, entrusts it to Timothy. Looking at verse 2, Paul instructs Timothy to entrust it to faithful men who will then entrust it to others.

We see this replication and this multiplication going on of the gospel. And so have you ever thought yourself about your own gospel lineage, your own gospel family tree, if you will?

Who was it that invested in you who shared the gospel with you, who discipled you in the faith? Do you ever think, who was the person who invested in that person?

And who is the person who invested in that person? And then thinking back about yourself. Who are you going to invest in?

Who are you going to give this good deposit to? Because this message doesn't stop with us. We are trustees of the gospel. There are more and more beneficiaries to be had.

[ 18 : 41 ] And so now, not only does Paul talk about this duty of discipleship as intended for those in leadership.

Let's look. You may think that, as he says, this gospel is to be entrusted to faithful men who can teach. And so as we look at that, and if you know these pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, you may think, well, does that really mean me?

Because I'm not an elder. I'm not a leader within the church. So maybe I'm off the hook. But that's not what Paul is saying here. Because if we look further into these pastoral epistles, if we turn to Titus 2, Paul's writing about the duty of discipleship that's intended for everyone within the church. And he speaks specifically to different people within the church, different groups of people. To old men, he says, to teach what accords with sound doctrine. To women, he says, to teach what is good and train younger women.

To young men, to be a model of good works. In your teaching, show integrity and dignity. To bond servants, show all good faith so that in everything you may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

[ 19 : 55 ] So it's our duty as disciples to entrust this good deposit to others that we may see the spread of the gospel. And so this brings us then to Paul's third command, to suffer.

Why do we need to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus to entrust this message to others? Because it's hard work. Because we should expect to suffer in it.

Paul, in these last verses, he gives three metaphors for how we should suffer. He looks at a soldier and an athlete and a farmer. And I want to look at each one of these specifically because they really highlight a specific discipline that we need to have as believers and as disciples.

So let's consider the soldier first. Verse three. Share in the suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

I recently watched a documentary about something called Reception Day that took place at Westminster Military Academy or not Westminster, West Point Military Academy in the U.S.

[ 21 : 04 ] And this is when the new cadets were brought into the academy, their very first day. And it walked along with them in what they had to do. And it showed them they arrive and they go to this brief orientation and then they're given 60 seconds to say goodbye to their loved ones.

From there, they're given a bag where they put in, they're told to put in only certain possessions that they'll have for the next several weeks during basic training. And then they're marched to the barbershop where they all get their heads shaved.

They're put in companies. They are taught how to march and how to follow orders. And the day concludes with an oath ceremony that formally initiates the new class into West Point. And so what's the purpose of a reception day like this?

What's the purpose of a basic training that these soldiers go through? I think it's really to instill single-mindedness in these soldiers. It's the, it's the soldiers' duty to support and to defend enemies both foreign and domestic.

And so in order to do so, they can't be distracted by civilian pursuits. So things like family and comforts and possessions, these things are put aside in order that they may fulfill their duty to serve well.

[ 22 : 17 ] And so Paul is saying this is the mindset that we must have as disciples, that we must be single-minded. Our goal as disciples is to make disciples.

And so we need to think, what's, what's preventing us from doing that? How are we to demonstrate single-mindedness in our Christian life? Do we need to change the way that we spend our time or our money?

Are we more focused on protecting our comforts than pursuing kingdom-building activities? Just like a soldier is supposed to be distinct from a civilian, our lives also are supposed to look different than the lives of those around us who do not know Christ.

And so secondly then, the athlete, verse 5, an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. And so just like a soldier is to be single-minded, the athlete is supposed to be self-disciplined in how they race and how they train.

Maybe one of the most famous stories of a cheater in a marathon is a woman named Rosie Ruiz in the 1980 Boston Marathon. This is a woman who came across the finish line in a blazing two hours

and 31 minutes.

[ 23 : 33 ] This set an American record at the time. And though there was some suspicion as to whether she really ran the race, back in 1980, there weren't any sort of microchips that athletes wore. There were no cameras at every corner.

So it really, it took over a week to determine that she was actually not the winner, that she had cheated. There were some witnesses that came forward that said that she came out of the crowd at mile 25, so she ran one mile in order to win the Boston Marathon.

But Paul here is not only talking about competing according to the rules when we actually race, but also as we train. You see, in his time, there would have been Greek rule.

The Olympics would have taken place. There were actually professional athletes that would have trained for these competitions. And they had to follow a rule to prepare for 10 months before their competition.

They had to take an oath to Zeus that their preparation would be done properly. And so, we may know that the Edinburgh Marathon is next weekend, right? If any of us got up tomorrow and decided, huh, you know what?

[ 24 : 33 ] I may start training and run that thing next week. We'd all recognize that person as being a fool, right? Whether you run or not, we all know that training for a marathon takes time. You have a running schedule. You do tempo work.

You do long distance runs. You have to change your diet. And so, for us as believers, we know that when we see this command to be self-disciplined and to be obedient, there's nothing that we can do to earn God's favor by keeping these rules, but we do follow Christ's example as a guide for our conduct.

And so, we have to ask, are we self-disciplined as God's disciples? Are we spending time in the Word? Are we being faithful in prayer? Are we earnest in worship?

Because there's no shortcuts to cultivating a relationship with God like we just talked about. In order to be a disciple-maker, we must first abide in Christ. We also see there's no shortcuts in disciple-making either.

Think of all the time and energy churches and ministries have spent in trying to figure out ways to quickly and easily evangelize lost. You know, here's a track.

[ 25 : 45 ] Join this program. Come to this Bible study. And not say that those things are bad. Those can be very effective tools in sharing the gospel. But they should not be seen as in isolation.

They cannot be done or replace the need for participation on our part. Real, effective discipleship is going to be personal. And so, we think about wanting to teach someone from the Bible or instruct them how to read the Bible.

What's the best way to do that? is to read the Bible with them. You want to teach someone how to pray? Pray with them. Invite them into your own prayer life. You want to teach someone how to be a good husband or wife or father?

Invite them into your own home where you can model that for them. Are we self-disciplined enough in order to do this? That we may set aside time?

That we may prioritize relationships? That we may desire to invest in the next generation in such a way? Lastly, Paul describes a hard-working farmer.

[ 26 : 54 ] In verse 6, he says this, It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of crops. Now, I don't know if any of you have a vegetable garden. I've never really attempted a full-blown garden.

I've attempted an herb garden once or a herb garden, as you say here, and was only mildly successful. There's a lot of effort you put into planting the plants and watering them and protecting them from insects and the cold and the heat.

And you realize at the end of the day what you have profited in produce you could have bought at the supermarket for a couple quid. And so, this is only talking about a square meter of land in your back garden, much less a whole farm.

My family and I, we went down to the Yorkshire Nails just last weekend. And it's easy to glamorize farm life, right? You see these sheep and these cows out in the fields, you see rows of crops growing, you think, ah, that would be kind of fun for a while to live as a farmer.

And then you realize all the effort that's needed in order to be a farmer. The truth is that the farmer is not hardworking, he's not going to be a farmer for very long. And so, likewise, we are called to

hard work for the sake of the gospel.

[ 28 : 06 ] Spiritual work is going to involve exertion. And so, Paul says this if we look at Galatians chapter 6, verses 7 through 9, Paul says this, Do not be deceived.

God is not mocked. For whatever one sows, that he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

And let us not grow weary of doing good. For in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So, pursuing holiness, sharing the gospel, making disciples, we recognize that this is hard work.

And so, all these metaphors of the athlete and the soldier and the farmer, they illustrate this whole hardness that's needed by all believers to be focused and self-disciplined and to be hardworking.

These are traits that if we don't possess them we shouldn't expect to see results. But we recognize again that this is why Christ has strengthened us with his grace.

[ 29 : 10 ] It's not only by his grace that we have the ability to serve and to suffer. It is by his grace that we can see results that we may reap reward. Each one of these metaphors, the soldier, the athlete, the farmer, we see a specific reward that they receive.

The soldier, it is to please his commander. The athlete is to receive the crown. The farmer is to have the first share of the crops. And it's all grace. We can't take credit for it.

We don't deserve it. Christ is the one who strengthened us to suffer by his grace and it is by his grace that we are blessed with results. And so we could really stop there and walk away with a charge to be disciples and make disciples.

But Paul gives us one last instruction in the passage in verse 7. He says this, to think over what I say for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

One of the commentators I read that, he said that a modern translation of this text would simply be Paul saying pay attention and listen up. If you're a parent, you may be used to using that phrase on your children.

[ 30 : 20 ] You give them instruction and realize it goes in one year and out the other. So before you give the instruction again, you make sure you have their attention. Listen to what I'm telling you. Pay attention to what I'm saying.

And so let's not walk out of here this evening without taking these commands to heart. We need to consider how does this apply to us? Certainly we've heard about being disciples and disciple makers again.

But what does this mean for each one of us? This is something that we're all called to as believers. And so do we desire to be strengthened by the grace of God to be faithful disciples?

Are we eager to entrust the gospel to the future generation? Are we willing to answer the call to suffer in doing so? Do we desire to see the gospel advance in our homes, in our churches, in our communities, within our families?

You know, we're in the middle of the Renew Buclue campaign right now. And certainly we desire to have a building that's welcoming and functioning to be able to do the preaching of God's word and do various ministries.

[ 31 : 25 ] But as has been said before, if our vision is simply just to make a more comfortable place for us, all our efforts are going to be in vain. When we talk about Renew Buclue, it's the renewal of our hearts.

It's the renewal of our relationship with God. It's the renewal of our commitment to love and serve our city. It's a renewal to see Christ's kingdom come. And so that's the true disciple of a disciple, the true desire of a disciple that we should have.

And so I want to end with a quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian. This is from his book, which I highly recommend, The Cost of Discipleship. And he says this, And if we answer the call to discipleship, where will it lead us?

What decisions and partings will it demand? To answer this question, we shall have to go to him, for only he knows the answer. Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him, knows the journey's end.

But we do know that it will be a road of boundless mercy. Discipleship means joy. Pray with me.

Lord, we thank you for the encouragement of your word this evening.

[ 32 : 44 ] We thank you for the privilege of being called disciples. And we know that it is not of our own strength, it is only by your grace that we may follow after you.

And so, Lord, we ask for your grace. May it abound in us. May we desire it richly in our lives to experience and to share with others.

May we take these commands of Paul to heart, to desire to entrust the gospel to others, to see your kingdom expand and the gospel multiplied.

And God, may we be willing to suffer to see this happen. To put our comforts aside that we may follow wholeheartedly after you.

God, we know that there is a extreme calling that looks very different from those in our secular world.

[ 33 : 49 ] And so, we ask for your help and your guidance. We ask, Lord, first and foremost, that you draw us close to yourself, that you give us a hunger for you, that we may follow after you and abide in you.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now we're going to sing our last hymn.