

What Jesus says about discipleship

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[0 : 0 0] now this time can we turn together to Matthew's gospel and chapter 28 we are thinking about what Jesus says about discipleship from verse 16 to the end but we'll read the whole chapter reminding ourselves that these words take place after the cross and after the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus so after the sabbath at dawn on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb there was a violent earthquake for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and going to the tomb rolled back the stone and sat on it his appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow the guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men the angel said to the women do not be afraid for I know that you're looking for Jesus who was crucified he is not here he has risen just as he said come and see the place where he lay then go quickly and tell his disciples he has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee there you will see him now I have told you so the women hurried away from the tomb afraid yet filled with joy and ran to tell his disciples suddenly Jesus met them greetings he said they came to him clasped his feet and worshiped him then Jesus said to them do not be afraid go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee there they will see me while the women were on their way some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened when the chief priests had met with the elders and devised the plan they gave the soldiers a large sum of money telling them you are to say his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep if this report gets the governor we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble so the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed and this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day then the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go when they saw him they worshipped him but some doubted then Jesus came to them and said all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me 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 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and surely I am with you always to the very end of the age

I wonder when you hear the word disciple or discipleship what thoughts come to mind as you're thinking about that let me share just for a moment the most stressful and discouraging job I ever had without going into the details it was a job where I was given no training I just told get on with it and do it maybe you've had that experience I knew that I had projects but I was given no timetable and then all of a sudden I would get a phone call saying I need it by the end of the day given no tools or support and expected to carry out the work discouraging demotivating stressful and short-lived many people perhaps view discipleship in that same way or living as a disciple in that same way we're not sure perhaps what we're speaking of when we speak about the life of a disciple we're not sure how to go about living for Jesus or for helping others to grow as disciples and we can find because in churches we talk about it because it's there in the Bible we could become demotivated perhaps we can feel guilty about it and if we don't get it we find that we are missing something that Jesus says is crucial to our purpose as his followers so today I hope that as we spend time in this crucial passage it will bring some clarity to us so that we have that sense of purpose as a church and as God's people perhaps when it comes to this text often known as the Great Commission we have another barrier another hurdle to jump last week we were in Mission Sunday and one of the things that that happens sometimes is this text can be used for mission purposes and so we can excuse ourselves and think well we're not the people going to the other side of the world therefore this has nothing to do with me or we can think this is a truth for some spiritual elite and that's not me therefore I can switch off and today again our aim is to show that in the wisdom and plan of God being a disciple who makes disciples it is to be a reality for every single Christian whoever we are however we're gifted and I want to encourage us as well because as we begin to think about the certain nuts and bolts of discipleship there's going to be ways I am sure that we are already doing it and perhaps we don't realize and I hope that as we think practically about thoughts on how to progress that we can be encouraged rather than demotivated but we do need to see the priority of discipleship Jesus assumes that from the beginning those who follow him will have that task of helping make other disciples and helping others to grow as followers of Jesus this is the call to his church that whole churches and individual church members would be helping others towards that goal described by Paul in

Colossians 1 of spiritual maturity being mature in Christ we also need to before we get into this we need to be aware that as churches we're swimming against the tide of culture because the message that we hear in in our culture and we receive it sometimes without even thinking about it is to be an individual and to think about self-fulfillment to come to any organization to come to any truth and think what's in it for me whereas Jesus calls us to himself and he connects us to one another and he says we need commitment to others first and so in a very real sense this goes against the grain of culture certainly here in the west and we need to be aware of that and we'll think about that again three simple questions to help us in our text one what is a disciple two what is discipleship three what does discipleship look like the first is very brief what is a disciple a couple of years ago as elders here we looked at a book called the vine project and there's a helpful definition of a disciple and it's up there on our screen a disciple is a forgiven sinner who is learning christ or following christ in repentance and faith and when we think about those first disciples the ones who spent time with jesus that was the pattern they were learners and jesus was their teacher and this wasn't just a classroom thing they followed jesus learning his words learning his wisdom learning from his way of life that was common in jesus day so it's much more than than teacher pupil as we have it in our school system now perhaps we could think helpfully of a a mentor and an apprentice perhaps on a building site perhaps someone with with skill and knowledge to impart helping someone younger to know what are the tools and how do i use them in the context of a church here's the bible here's how to read it helpfully in order to see more of jesus here's what obedience looks like in day to day life the pattern of the first disciples we read it in the gospels they heard jesus announce the kingdom of god is near repent and believe the good news and so they understand that jesus is god's king they understand they are called to to turn from their old way to turn from sin to trust in jesus to believe in him they also had that individual call come follow me it's a personal call from the lord jesus into a new relationship that's what every disciple receives whether that's first century or 21st century and what we see from the first disciples that they left their old way of life quite literally some of them leaving their fishing boats in order to follow jesus three years with him watching learning asking questions seeing how he lived hearing how he taught watching his powerful works understanding this is the christ the son of god and now they're being taught you're a disciple and your purpose is to make other disciples so a disciple is a forgiven sinner who is learning christ and repentance and faith and we want to share that so that others might become disciples also and that takes us to where we'll spend most of our time what is discipleship it's one of those words perhaps if you read christian books you've read it

perhaps you've heard it in sermons or in talks so i think about what that looks like what that means and in preparing for this i came across three different descriptions each of which is helpful i think in different ways again to go back to that book the vine project the image was of a disciples helping others to take steps closer to jesus helping others to make steps closer to jesus so that could be us encouraging someone who's already a christian by sharing what we've been learning so that someone else gets to learn that too so they're taking that step closer to jesus growing in love and knowledge and faith it could also be sharing with someone who's not yet a christian and perhaps we'll be the means of breaking down some of those barriers of resistance or perhaps helping someone to make that giant leap from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light so we're helping others make a step closer to jesus and mark dever who's a pastor in washington dc he talks about discipleship in the context of eternity preparing people for eternity in the day of judgment and he speaks of his especially his personal discipleship where he's not just when he's preaching but when he's sharing with people he speaks about leaving time bombs of grace because it's god's grace that grips our hearts that prioritizes eternity and so that's how he thinks of discipleship let me think about how i can share god's grace with someone today in time for the sake of eternity because that's the end goal of discipleship we want one another to be ready to meet jesus and to hear well done good and faithful servant that's what life is about ultimately and then there's a guy from the north of england a guy called lewis allen he speaks about discipleship as being an invitation into the joy of jesus and i love that because that involves us coming to experience joy as we worship as we spend time in god's word and prayer and then we're inviting others to that same joy and again that could be a christian could be a non-christian what's in common with all those those different descriptions is that jesus is the center a disciple of jesus is then looking out to other people to think how can i point them to jesus too that they can have what i have that's the pattern for churches churches built on jesus we should be looking outwards to serve others to point them in to jesus as hope and life and salvation it's a pattern for every christian as well now how do we see some of this in matthew 28 i want us to think first of all about the idea of authority that being a disciple and discipleship is about submitting to jesus as lord so if you have your bibles you can see this first of all in verse 16 where we discover the eleven disciples went to galilee to the mountain where jesus had told them to go so we've just heard about chief priests who are busy spinning a lie that jesus didn't really rise that his body was stolen but the disciples are not going to play that game they are going to be obedient to jesus so they go to the mountain further thinking about the authority of jesus verse 17 when they saw him they worshipped him jesus is not just a guru or a great teacher he is their lord and their god a disciple is one who acknowledges jesus is my lord and my god and then

listen to jesus words verse 18 jesus came to them and said all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me all authority in the universe given by the father to the son and the disciples recognize the authority of this crucified and risen lord who has now been called king of kings and lord of lords he is god's chosen king he is the one who reveals god's glory remember these disciples have witnessed some remarkable things they have witnessed their lord and their savior go to the cross for them they have seen the darkness fall they have seen jesus go under the thunder storm of the father's righteous anger against sin not for jesus sin but for your sin and mine they have seen jesus willingly give his life as a sacrifice as a substitute and now they have seen jesus rise in power and victory now they understand jesus is god's universal king declared by god as such through the resurrection and so disciples know that jesus is lord and we call others to that same recognition connected to that verse 19 therefore go and make disciples of all nations see jesus is universal lord therefore the church has a universal mission to announce to the world jesus is lord and that he is savior last week we were thinking about that reality in columbia and india and vietnam and thailand and galiseos and edinburgh whatever the church is whatever christians are we both believe and we teach jesus is lord and as such he is the only way to god perhaps this is a time to pause and to ask our response for those of us who are christians are we are we living and praying that others might submit to jesus as lord if you're not a christian here today ask god to reveal to you the reality of who jesus is explore the evidence that you might see jesus as lord moving from the idea of authority to the idea of command which is where jesus goes in verse 19 this command that we have there reminds us that disciples help others to learn christ 19 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 and teaching them to obey everything i have commanded you here is the marching orders of god's church this is our reason for existing that we would make disciples that we would invite and call people into this new relationship with jesus where he is teacher and lord and master and king that lives are lived to give glory to him rather than seek glory ourselves and to the church jesus has given two crucial things as we seek to make disciples one is the sign of baptism a gift to the church again if you were here last week one of the videos we watched was from a pastor in india matthew last week

[18:02] they were baptizing new believers in the lord jesus and he spoke about them doing that to show that they now had a new walk and a new way of life that's a really helpful way for us to think about what baptism represents for the church baptism for a disciple is a sign of entrance into the kingdom it's a way of saying I want to publicly identify to show my loyalty to jesus as lord and king it is also a sign of repentance of leaving an old way of life behind of turning away from sin to follow god through faith in jesus so baptism is that very rich sign and symbol but then we're also told that disciples teach others to obey everything I have commanded you so in making disciples we are speaking god's word into the lives of others so we speak the good news of the gospel gospel to one another and to our world that the god who made us in love and grace sent his son to live a perfect life of obedience for us in our place because we cannot and we have not and that same lord jesus then died for us paying the price and penalty for our sin and then he rose for us and he is glorified for us he reigns as king to take his people to be with him forever jesus has come to save us to adopt us if we would have faith in him and so the church brings that good news along with that call from jesus to repent and to believe and so as we teach we must teach the gospel we must teach the good news but we also in our text here we teach everything that jesus has commanded that's really interesting isn't it that jesus focused on his commands we saw this three weeks ago now back in matthew chapter 5 verse 17 the sermon on mount jesus said i didn't come to abolish the law and the prophets i came to fulfill so jesus can point to obeying his commands because he's come to fulfill the old testament and when we think about the commands of jesus it's so helpful for us to think of those two great love commands love the lord your god with all your heart soul mind and strength to love your neighbor as yourself especially in matthew's gospel there's lots of teaching about practical holiness what does it look like day by day to live for jesus but think about those two headings love for god love for neighbor teaching not just as information transfer we're teaching to help people to obey so as disciples we're not just here's some information we're also wanting to model what following jesus looks like we want to be training people to understand here's what faith looks like in a family or in a workplace or on social media whatever it might be something we do in families with our children we don't just pass on instruction we look to model and to train and correct and instruct and so we should do in the church as well and then having given them this command jesus also wonderfully reminds his disciples

of his presence last words in this gospel from jesus and surely i am with you always to the very end of the age there was a great promise before jesus was born matthew chapter one verse 23 jesus would be emmanuel god who is with us jesus just about to leave and return to heaven says i am god with you always comforting presence of jesus remember he's told them following him is hard it's cross carrying but we don't do it alone jesus is with us by his spirit as we continue his mission and so we're reminded that part of being a disciple who makes disciples is to prayerfully depend on the lord jesus now what i want us to do for the rest of our time is to think about what does discipleship look like by way of summarizing where we've been so far disciples see and acknowledge the lordship of jesus and we live and serve with loyalty to jesus and we live enjoying fellowship with jesus and we invite and encourage others towards those same realities but now we need to think about what happens when the rubber hits the road how do we do this you know both inside these four walls and outside and perhaps as we sort of reflect a little further maybe to answer some of those questions and fears uncertainty that we sometimes have perhaps we still feel unsure of how to do it where to begin perhaps maybe we think well

I have nothing to offer in this I'm just a regular person so what we have to finish is five ideas all beginning with the same letter S hopefully it can stick in our head to help us realize that if we're a follower of Jesus we are a disciple and we're called to make and to grow other disciples that's our responsibility as a church collectively it's your responsibility and mine as an individual Christian that's going to look very different for us all because we all have different personalities different opportunities different responsibilities but they're priority and reality for all of us who are trusting Jesus first S discipleship looks like speaking God's truth if we are to be a disciple who is making other disciples a disciple who is encouraging others to move closer to Jesus we need to be speaking God's truth Jesus said teaching them to obey speak

God's truth that's why in our church we seek always and pray that we would always be rooted in and centered on God's word of truth anything else just will not serve us well that as a church we want to be proclaiming the good news of Jesus because that's what the church has done ever since you read the book of Acts Jesus returns to heaven sends the spirit and they're telling here is Jesus fulfillment of the old testament crucified died buried risen repent and believe we center our lives on the Bible because that's where we are instructed how do we live godly lives how do we live by faith until the return of Jesus that's that's the goal every day how do we do it we find it in God's word so as we speak God's truth thinking as a church this now that we have these formal teaching opportunities so

Sunday morning Sunday evening chance to worship together come under God's word together meet in the presence of God together junior church same thing our discipleship group that meet all during the week for different ages stages and different communities all of that is deliberately word based Bible based must always be so but so far that's just thinking about people like me who stand up here and talk to large crowds but we need to speak God's truth in everyday life together as well so let's think about what that can look like and again to encourage us that probably we're doing discipleship without necessarily thinking about it when we chat after the surveys will we talk about what we've been thinking about will we talk about what we've been reading about this week sometimes we find it really awkward to talk about faith naturally but I think it's really helpful for us to get there because then when we've got people who aren't

[27 : 06] Christians who may be interested what difference does it make they can hear it and they can see it when we read the Bible and pray as a family we're doing discipleship if you're part of a Christian book group if you find yourself texting a Bible verse talking about what it meant to you and wanting to share it with someone else if you're out on a walk with someone and you begin sharing about the big questions of God and faith if you take the time to write a card to someone where it contains Bible truth in all of those ways you're speaking God's truth and you're serving as a disciple and doing the work of discipleship and just imagine for a difference for a moment just what a difference it would make if in our families and our friendships and our Sundays they were full of saturated with the word of God if we read and discussed and studied and prayed and memorised what a difference it would make to our life together so discipleship looks like speaking

God's truth as we seek to live as disciples making disciples we need the spirit of God so the spirit is our second S because that's who we depend on must depend on in discipleship thinking about God's salvation the father is the one who sent the son in love to the world the son is the one who came and accomplished the work of redemption in his death and resurrection but in the spirit we need the spirit because the spirit is the one who applies that work to hearts and lives it's the spirit who gives the gift of new life it's the spirit who unites people to Jesus it's the spirit who transforms believers it's the spirit who speaks to us in the word that he inspired and so my point is simply this it's the spirit that works through his word it's the spirit that breathes new life it's not us therefore as much as we work we must also be praying if we are to be a church that makes disciples we must be praying talking individually and collectively to be a disciple you and

I must be dependent on God and the spirit of God to make disciples we need the spirit to work going through habits and routines and busyness as a church will not make disciples we need the spirit to work and breathe new life so we need to pray let me encourage you to think about what difference that might make to your habits and patterns to realize if I am sent as an ambassador of Jesus how am I going to pray so that I can do that well how am I going to pray for my church so that we're helped by the grace of God to do that well so we need the spirit of God and also as we go about the business of discipleship we do it as servants of God so this in some ways is the flip side to what we just thought about because it's through

Christians that God works largely in the business of discipleship making disciples is absolutely God's work but his means is through his people through his church and that should create a humble dignity in us I think humble because we are servants Jesus is Lord and master but there's dignity God chooses to work in and through people like us thinking about this idea of disciples making disciples as servants the vital principle I think is from Jesus himself remember Jesus said I didn't come to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many that's the savior we follow a servant savior and so we follow in that pattern we live as servants and here again is where this cuts across culture because a servant fundamentally is not and cannot be me focused a servant by definition must be others focused now do we see how that challenges our cultural views why do I go to church because it meets my need no we should be saying

I go to church because here's an opportunity for us together as the family of God here's the chance for me to invest in someone else by being in and participating in a local church or a discipleship group or whatever it might be but the challenge and the danger for us as the church is that we so receive the values of culture we're thinking about what's in it for me and what I'm getting out of it that we can become more like shoppers than servants that's not the pattern of a disciple and again perhaps that's something that we need to stop and reflect on so that we might constantly be pushing ourselves out of the comfort zone which is rooted in self where we're not thinking about the church being about my needs and preferences but how can I help how can I serve how can I encourage someone else when I'm here today in this building when I meet someone through the week so we make disciples as servants of

[32 : 52] God again connected to that and very basic discipleship takes commitment so we need to fundamentally show up Edinburgh is many things but it is most definitely a horrible place to travel around isn't it and everybody with a car in this place knows how horrible it is so here's what I'm talking about simple encouragement see when someone fights through the pain barrier to get to church on a Sunday or to make time to get to a community group in the middle of the week that's a wonderful gift of sacrifice for the sake of others we can only serve people if we are ready to invest time and energy in them we can't be disciples making disciples if we're not ready to sacrifice and commit to show up to be present in the lives of others so again very practically think about your calendar this week is there room is there any margin in there or is built into the calendar room for disciple making in your calendar is being with

Christians a priority that's going to be reflected in our use of time this week how can we work into our natural rhythms of work and family the concept of making disciples of encouraging others to keep following Jesus think about our conversations again after church absolutely talk about sport but can we talk about the sermon as well when we're talking about our families can we be talking about our faith as well can we use our conversations to get to know someone new in our church so that we can encourage them to be growing in faith let me invite all of us to think about our connections and again here's perhaps a point of action who is even one person and pray that God will bring someone into your mind who's one person you could commit to I'm going to give time to meet with this person to encourage this person to share life with this person that could be someone in our family could be a friend could be as an older

Christian you find a younger Christian to invest in pray and then determine to show up and commit to that other person last thing to do with discipleship last stick with it because discipleship is a work of patience and perseverance and one of the models of discipleship that we find in the Bible is the idea of a parent and a child and what you find from a parent it is a lifelong commitment to see a child flourish to see a child mature to see a child grow in emotional health to be established and as parents we know that we will commit to that we would give anything for that for our kids and that's a great picture of discipleship that we would be committed for the long haul to helping one another to grow as mature

Christians helping one another to take baby steps of obedience helping one another to wrestle against sin to pursue wisdom in relationships to grow in God's grace and like kids who often stumble and fall and struggle and mess up Christian family sticks together and sticks with one another for the long haul so that together we might be presented fully mature in Christ imagine just as we Chloe imagine the power and beauty of this kind of church this kind of community where we are all really committed to the idea of discipleship not just what am I getting out of this but what are we getting out of this how are we growing together where we're opening our homes to share the gospel where parents are shepherding children to follow Jesus where older men and women are investing in younger men and women for the good of society and for the good of the church where

God's word is so clearly evidently central to our shared life where we're depending that sound like the kind of church that we want to be part of a church where we have a real sense of identity and a real sense of purpose and mission let's pray that we'd be that church that we would gladly live under the lordship of Jesus that we'd live with loyalty to Jesus and that we'd live enjoying relationship with Jesus and we'd be naturally joyfully helping one another to share that too let's pray together lord our god we thank you for the privilege of being followers of Jesus we thank you for the gift of faith that brings us into that new relationship gives us a new identity gives us a new purpose and calling for our life father we confess that sometimes we struggle sometimes we don't know where to begin sometimes it's not even something we think about sometimes we're so caught up in the here and now caught up in our own struggles and our own stuff that we don't think about eternity we don't think about presenting people fully mature in

[38 : 59] Christ with an eye on eternity we don't think about sacrificing and serving for others but Lord we pray that you would draw us back to yourself draw us into that vision of discipleship that Jesus handed down to his disciples and to the church Lord make us faithful to Jesus make us obedient to his commands give us that ability to speak God's truth to others help us to prayerfully depend on the spirit and in prayer Lord may we see you work in and through us as we look to work for you in our shared life together we pray in Jesus name Amen now we will shortly sing a section of Psalm 103 and while we are singing those who will share in the

Lord's Supper you can come down to the front and pick up bread and wine at the front which you can take back to your seats and we share together as we think about who is the Lord's Supper for think back to that definition of what is a disciple the Lord's Supper is for forgiven sinners who are learning and following Christ in repentance and faith this is something that we need to give strength to our faith to give us grace to enjoy fellowship with Jesus as we meet together around his table so we will stand together as our children come in and can I encourage folks to come and get the bread and wine as quickly as practically possible great let's stand together and let's sing Grab like o e envie dijo we to you a ok dedim