

# All Disciples Grow (Part 2)

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 30 August 2026

Preacher: Brett Sanders

[0:00] This week we're going to continue in our discipleship pathway as we continue talking about the fact that disciples grow. This week our passage is going to be from Romans, the end of chapter 11 and the beginning of chapter 12.

And so if you have a copy of God's Word, I want to invite you to go ahead and make your way with me to Romans chapter 11, the end of the passage there. But as you're turning to Romans chapter 11, I want you to think about something with me for just a moment.

When was the last time that you went outside and just looked up at the stars? Where you just went outside and were just amazed by God's creation?

And I'm not talking about, you know, a glance up as you're driving down the road and looking out the window. But when you're at a place where there's very little light pollution, there's hardly any lights that are around, it's a clear, beautiful night.

And then you just look up and think, wow, that's a lot of stars. You know, hopefully most of us at some point in our lives have done that. But as I was thinking about that this week, I was reminded of the fact that there's only a few handful of stars that we can actually see.

[1:23] In fact, there's only about 9,096 stars that we can see with a human eye. Now, I don't know how they came up with that number. I don't know what scientist was out there counting. Can I see that?

I don't know. But apparently there's about just over 9,000 stars that we can see with a naked eye. Now, that's northern hemisphere, southern hemisphere, different times of the night.

So at any one given moment, there's about 2,500 stars that we're able to see with the naked eye.

But even if you are able to see all 9,000 of them at one time that we can see from Earth, that would only be a fraction of the total number of stars that are there.

In fact, the fraction would be 1 in 100 quintillion number of stars that we can actually see. And I don't know about you, but numbers like this, I can't even comprehend.

That's a fraction of the number of stars that scientists estimate that they're, and this is a conservative estimate, they estimate that we can see between 1 and 3 septillion stars.

[2:32] Now, I know you're all math wizards out there, and you know exactly what 1 septillion is. But just for those of you who may not, that is 1 with 24 zeros behind it.

1 with 24 zeros. And just a, for me, that's just a number on a piece. I can't comprehend that. And so another way to think of it is think of it like this.

If you were to count to a million, just one second at a time, you know, 1, 2, 3, 4, all the way to a million, never stop, never sleep, never do anything, always one second, or counting one for every second, then it would take you roughly 11 days to count to a million.

Now, if you were to count to a billion at the same rate, it would take you roughly 31 years and 8 months to count to a billion.

And so now, I want you to just think of a number in your mind of what you think it would take to count to a trillion. So we have a million 11 days, a billion 31 years, 8 months.

[3:41] How long in your mind are you thinking right now to count to a trillion? Because it would take 32,000 years of constantly counting to get to a trillion.

That's hard to understand. That's hard to comprehend. But then to think that we have 1 to 3 septillion stars, I can't even begin to comprehend that.

And then each star, thinking about the energy that each star has, each star produces about, on average, the equivalent to 6 trillion atom bombs every second.

I heard that in my mind. I don't know if you're like me, but I heard that in my mind immediately went, well, I wonder how long one second of the sun's energy, how long that would power Earth.

With the amount of energy that we're using right now, how long could one second of the sun's energy power the Earth? So I looked it up, and apparently I'm not the only one who was wondering this, because there was an answer.

[4:43] And what, according to one source, one second of the sun's total output could power our modern civilization for over 500,000 years.

Imagine that. One second, and let's just say, let's say they get it wrong by half. Let's say they're 250,000 years off.

That's still amazing. Let's say that they were completely off, and they were 499,000 years off. If the sun's power could power Earth, the amount of that it's putting off for 1,000 years, that would be tremendous.

Every second it's putting this off. And so it's amazing for us to think about. And what is crazy is that the number of known stars and galaxies is constantly increasing.

Scientists are constantly finding new galaxies, finding new stars. The universe is big. In fact, it's so big it's hard to comprehend. But what is even harder to comprehend is the fact that we serve a God so powerful that He speaks that into existence.

[5:56] That there was nothing. God speaks, and everything is formed. More stars than we could ever imagine. More power than we could ever comprehend.

More galaxies than we even know about right now. He speaks, and the worlds are formed. It's amazing for us to think about that. And so as we think about this, this is what I want you to have in mind as we read our passage of Scripture today.

As we begin at the end of Romans chapter 11, starting in verse 33, and making our way through Romans 12. I want you to think about how big God is as we consider these words.

It says this, Oh, the depth and the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways.

For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Or who has given Him a gift that He may be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

[7:02] To Him be glory forever. Amen. And He goes on to say, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, you ought not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. If prophecy in proportion to our faith, in service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, the one who acts, who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

[8:26] I believe that this passage that we see here, and we could continue reading through the end of Romans, to be quite frank, but we're going to stop here for our purposes this morning.

I believe this passage shows us a great deal about what it means to grow in our relationship with the Lord. There's some key elements here that remind us of things that we need to consider as we grow in our relationship with the Lord.

And so I believe this passage shows us a great deal when it comes to growing the relationship with the Lord. And to begin with, we are reminded that disciples grow by seeing God.

Disciples grow by seeing God. It says, You see, verses 33 through 36 here come at a really interesting point in the book of Romans.

If we were studying all the way through the book of Romans, and we got to this section of Scripture, each of you would notice something very different at this point. You would notice a change in Paul's writing.

[9:39] Up until this point, he has been laying out theology for us. He's been showing us over and over again the importance of knowing truth, the importance of applying truth, the importance of knowing who we are, that we're sinners, about how Jesus came, and how he fulfills the Old

Testament.

And now he's just talked about how the nation of Israel is grafted into this, and their part, and their role to play in this. And he's been explaining all of these theological things to us.

And he gets to this point, and there's a change. In fact, James Montgomery Boyce, when he was talking about this section, he says it's like he moves into a doxology. He goes from all of this theology into worship.

And the way he does this, I love how the ESV and many other English translations capture it here. And they just simply say, Oh, oh, the riches. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

It is a moment where they just praise God. You see, the gospel should always lead us to an O. To an O, how wonderful. Oh, how great.

[10:46] And so when I ask you, and I want you to consider, when was the last time that you were thinking about God, that you were thinking about salvation, that you were thinking about who you are in Christ, and just said, Oh, praise God.

Oh, the depths of his goodness. Oh, how wonderful his love is. Oh, how great and powerful the God we serve is. You see, when it comes to God, the more we know about who he is, the more we grow in that relationship.

As we see God more and more clearly for who he is, the deeper we grow in our trust, the deeper we grow in our faith, the deeper we grow in our obedience.

We are reminded here that by seeing God, we grow in our relationship. By seeing God's greatness, we grow, and it leads us to worship him.

I was listening to a song this week that was, essentially, it was singing Psalm 34. And it put Psalm 34 to music, and it was basically just singing through Psalm 34.

[11:54] And there was a phrase that kept coming up in this song that is actually a, just a direct quotation of Psalm 34:3. And it begins with O.

Another O, and it says, Oh, magnify the Lord with me. And it just kept coming up and coming up. And the more that I thought about it, essentially, this is what I mean when I say disciples grow by seeing.

We grow as we see and magnify the Lord. John Piper, he makes a very wonderful observation when it comes to magnifying the Lord and what it means to magnify the Lord.

And so I want you to consider what he says today. He says this. He says, There's two kinds of magnifying, microscope magnifying and telescope magnifying.

The one makes a small thing look bigger than it is. The other makes a big thing begin to look as big as it really is.

[12:56] We are not called to be microscopes. We are called to be telescopes. Christians are not called to be con men who magnify their product out of proportion to reality when they know that their competitor's product is far superior.

There is nothing and nobody superior to God. And so by calling those who love God, by calling those who love God is to make his greatness become and begin to look as great as it really is. He says, The whole duty of the Christian can be summed up in this. Feel, think, and act in a way that will make God look as great as he really is.

Be a telescope for the world of the infinite starry wealth of the glory of God. This is what it means for Christians to magnify God. But you can't magnify what you haven't seen or what you quickly forget. It's impossible for us to magnify the Lord to help others to see him for who he truly is if we haven't seen him ourselves or if we quickly forget what we have learned.

[14:08] What we must do is to begin to see God for who he really is. That means studying his word. It means reading theology. It means taking apologetics class.

Join a life group. Join a Sunday school class and begin to see God for who he really is and let that spur your spiritual growth with him. You see, growing in our knowledge and understanding of God will lead to deeper trust.

It will lead to deeper faith. It will lead to more obedience. The more, think about it like this, the more you know about me, the more I'm going to let you down. The more that you know about me, the more you're going to think, why did we ever call him to be our pastor?

Why is he in this? The more you know about me, the more that I'm going to let you down. But with God, the more that we see him for who he truly is, the more knowledge we have about him, the

more that we can magnify him, the more that we can take something infinitely big, focus in on a part of it, and see how big he truly is, then the more we understand, the more worthy you will find him to be.

And so this brings us to the next way that we see disciples grow. And so we see disciples grow by seeing God, but also disciples grow by transformation. They grow by transformation.

[15:30] This is what Dr. Mewborn was reading for us earlier. He said in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

What Paul is saying and reminding us here is that we are called to give our whole self to God.

We're called to give our entire self to God.

Paul is calling us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. It highlights a confusion that many people would have had with believers at this time. You see, for Paul to say to present your body as a living sacrifice, meaning to give your whole life to God, would have been something far different than they were accustomed to hearing.

You see, they would have been just fine if Paul had said, you know what? Why don't you come to the temple, offer some sacrifices, do your duty, and then as you leave, you can go back to living however you want to live.

[16:49] That would have been understandable to them. That would have been something they were accustomed to doing. But Paul's saying something far deeper here, far more impactful. He's saying to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

He's saying don't compartmentalize your faith to one area of your life and then live completely different. But a relationship with the Lord, a relationship with Jesus, leads to a transformed life, leads to a life of offering yourself as a living sacrifice.

We do not somehow give our spirits to Him without giving our lives to Him as well. Presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice ultimately leads to what Paul describes here as this transformed life. You see, transformation is a change that takes place. It means that your life is different. It's more than a change of action here and there, but it's a change of heart.

It's a change of desire. Jerry Bridges, in *Growing Your Faith*, he describes it as having Christ-like convictions. He describes this transformation of developing Christ-like convictions and he says it this way.

[18:05] He says, if we're going to grow into Christ-likeness through exposure to God's Word, one of the things that we must do is to develop Bible-based convictions.

A conviction is a determinant of belief. something you believe so strongly that it affects the way that you live. He said, someone has observed a belief is what you hold, but a conviction is what holds you.

He says, you may live contrary to what you believe, but you cannot live contrary to your convictions. Sure, there may be times when you act contrary to your convictions, but your convictions are what will pull you back in, what will bring you back.

Having convictions and being transformed is not something that you stumble upon. Paul says here to offer yourself as a living sacrifice. This isn't something that just happens naturally, but it's something we're intentional with, we're purposeful with.

We intend to grow in our Christ-likeness. We intend to live a transformed life. We can do this by memorizing Scripture or carrying cards around with us that help us to remember Scripture.

[19:23] Jacob just recently got a cell phone and I walked by the other day and looked at his locked screen and on there it had a verse of the day. It's an app that constantly has a new verse of the day that gets put on there.

What a great way to have this in our lives. What a great way to grow in our knowledge of Him. We set up times where we are committed to doing this.

Committed to reading His Word, committed to praying, we purposefully choose what we will fill our minds with. If left to ourselves, oftentimes what ends up happening is we fill our minds with things that are just entertaining, that actually remove ourselves from reality.

Whether it be watching a show at night and don't get me wrong, I enjoy TV as much as the next person. But that can't be our escape. That can't be what we, our default goes back to.

Oftentimes we find ourselves just scrolling through social media. And if social media is something that you enjoy looking at, enjoy interacting with, then let me give you a kind of a tip here when it comes to spending time with God.

[20:35] Remove your phone from the equation. Just go ahead and set it off somewhere else because oftentimes we'll find ourselves starting with good intentions and finding our way right back to just scrolling mindlessly through different things.

What we must understand is to develop convictions that lead to a transformed life, we must be intentional. The passage tells us that by doing so, we're going to accomplish something. We're going to discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable, what He wants us to be doing, which brings us to the final way that I want us to consider that disciples grow from this passage today.

And that is this, not only do disciples grow by seeing God, not only do they grow by being transformed, but we also see here very clearly that disciples grow by doing.

Disciples grow by doing. Now we're not talking about being saved by doing. Your actions, your things you do cannot save anyone, but we can grow with our actions.

[21:46] We can grow by doing. Verses 3 through 8 it says, For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not how have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individual members one of another.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. What a powerful reminder there. We've been given these gifts, let us use them.

If prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, one who leads with zeal, and the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

This passage reminds us as disciples, we must have a right understanding of who we are. We're not to think too highly of ourselves, that we've done this on our own, that we can save ourselves, that we can do all these things, but rather we are to think with sober judgment.

[23:13] In other words, with clarity, we are to think of who we are. We are to think accurately, not too highly nor too low. This morning, in our early service, we sang a song that had this phrase in there, that just really spoke to me, as we think about this.

It said, Two wonders here that I confess, my worth and my unworthiness. We are to think rightly about ourselves. We are to understand that we are sinners, and that we have been saved.

The late Tim Keller, he shows how properly understanding the gospel gives us this clear understanding of who we are. He says this, he says, He also says, And the gospel prevents us thinking we're more lowly than we ought.

We are saved sinners. We are loved, and we are valued in the gaze of the only one whose opinion ultimately matters.

And so what we see here very clearly is that as believers, we have several things in common. One, that we are sinners. That's every single one of us. But that sin is what doesn't define us anymore.

[24:42] What Christ has done for us defines us. So we understand our unworthiness, but we also understand our worthiness, that we are children of God, called to live for Him.

And one way we do this is by using our gifts and abilities that God has given to us. We recognize that all believers have some things in common.

We are sinners. And if we're believers, then we have something else in common. We are saved by God's grace. But we are all different in the sense that we have different gifts and abilities.

We grow individually, and we grow as a church by using these gifts. As individuals, we grow in our relationship with the Lord. We grow in our trust.

We grow with our understanding as we serve Him, as we do what He's called us to do. But also corporately, as a church, we grow by everyone using the gifts that God has given to them.

[25:45] You see, more knowledge is never the end goal of spiritual growth. It's not that we just become smarter sinners. It's not that we just read His Word, understand God more clearly so that we can be smarter sinners.

It's that we're growing in our relationship. Rather, we want that knowledge to lead to a changed life, a life of doing and obedience.

We want that knowledge to lead us to be more obedient. But we also understand that action and obedience are more than just the result of our knowledge.

They also help us to grow. Yes, knowledge and obedience comes from understanding God more clearly. Obedience and action, they come from that, but they also, then in turn, help us to grow.

One of the things that I have found is that most people say they want to be obedient to God. At least, at least when people come to church, most people tell me I want to be obedient to God.

[26 : 50] Most people that come in here on Sunday mornings or Wednesday nights, if you were to ask them, do you want to follow God's will for your life? Do you want to follow His plan for your life?

Most people would say, yes, absolutely. But what I've also found is that so many people who say they want to follow God's will for their life have no idea what God's will for their life actually is.

And so I hope this morning we can clear some of that up for us. I hope we're able to see more clearly what the passage has to tell us. They have no idea what His will is.

And so I want us to look at that today. You see, we speak of finding God's will oftentimes we speak of finding His will like it's lost or something.

Like we have to go out there and search and figure out what it is because nobody knows what His will for us is. When in actuality, the Bible gives us some pretty clear things that are a part of God's will.

[27 : 51] In fact, just looking at a couple things, we know that God desires lost people to be saved. 2 Peter 3.9 says this, It seems very clear that part of God's will, part of His wish here, is that people would come to know Him.

That lost people would come to faith in Him. But we also know from Scripture that God has called us as believers to be a part of this. If you've been reconciled, then you've been given to the ministry of reconciliation.

And so we know that God wants us to be a part of sharing this gospel message. And so it's very clear from Scripture that God's will for your life is to be a part of reaching the nations, of sharing the gospel message with those who are lost and dying in need of, whether it's somebody you work with who lives across the street with you, or somebody who's on the other side of the world.

We see very clearly that God's will for us, His plan for our lives, is to be about reaching the nations. Part of God's way of teaching us is leading us through obedience.

And so as we take steps in following what He's already called us to, He will lead us and show us other things. because it is true that some of the details and how this plays out in our life are unique to each and every individual.

[29 : 30] But how we know those things is by doing what He's already called us to do. I love this illustration. Some of you may have heard it before. I think it originally started with Adrian Rogers.

But he mentioned the fact that when we consider God's will, there's so many things that God has already called us to do. And so if we're really concerned about the specifics of what He's called us individually to do, then we need to start doing what He's already called us.

We need to start being a part of what He's already called us to do. And he said it like this. He says, when you're driving a car and when you're trying to steer a car and move it in a different direction, he says, is it easier to steer and turn the car when it's moving or when it's staying still?

And of course, if you've ever driven a car, it's far easier to steer it, to turn it when it's moving than when it's staying still.

It's really hard to get that car to go in a completely different direction if it's not already moving. And you see, in our Christian life, God has called us to follow His will.

[30 : 39] There's so many things that we already know that God is calling us to do. And if we want to find those specifics in other areas, it's a whole lot easier for God to guide and lead us if we're already doing what He's called us to do.

And so if you want to know those specifics, if you want to know those next steps, if you want to know what is next, then start doing what God has already called you to do and let Him lead, guide, and direct from there.

It's far easier to steer a car that is moving than is staying still. And so I want to challenge you to start moving today and let God guide you. What are some of the gifts that you've been given that you need to start using today?

What are some of those things that you need to be a part of your life today and start using? Often we want the whole picture before we take the first step, but rarely does it ever start that way.

Rarely does it ever start with seeing the whole picture. What first steps can you take today to use your unique gifts and abilities?

[31:43] Paul wants us to think of yourself with sober judgment with regard to gifts. But to begin with, we look at our hearts and we consider things.

We look at our feelings. It's a great place to start when it comes to figuring out our gifts and how we want to use them. What do I enjoy doing? Where do I naturally gravitate towards? Do you enjoy working with children?

Do you enjoy working with shut-ins? Do you enjoy working with the youth? Do you enjoy seeing needs and meeting the needs of the homeless? Do you enjoy different mercy ministries? Start with those things and then let God lead, guide, and direct you from there.

Maybe we need to just look at the needs around us. What problems and needs do I see? It's always amazing to me that so many people can walk into a room and see so many different needs.

For some it is, you know, there's nobody welcoming. For some there's somebody sitting beside themselves. For some it's something going on with the lighting or any number of different things.

[32:46] But God has given us these different abilities and a great place to start is looking at the needs that we see and begin meeting those. And as we do those things, as we start doing what God has called us to do, then He'll lead, guide, and direct us from there.

In short, when we look at this passage, we see that in order to grow, we must be amazed by God. We must see God for who He is.

And so I want to encourage you today to take time to think about who God is. Take time to reflect on the gospel and how it's changed your life. Make much of God.

Stand in awe of Him and be amazed by who He is. In order to grow, we also see we must be transformed. Offer your life to Him. Present your body as a living sacrifice, saying, God, there's not an area that you can't have.

It's all yours. Take it and use it. And finally, I want to encourage you to be obedient, to start doing. What has God called us all to do?

[33:52] He's called us all to make disciples, share the gospel with the lost and dying world. We know His will. Now I encourage you to start using your gifts and abilities to accomplish His will.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank You so very much for everything that You do for us each and every day.

Lord, we thank You for the gospel. We thank You for the way that it impacts our lives each and every day. We thank You for what it is that You've called us to do. We thank You for giving us different gifts and abilities that we can all use for the purpose of reaching a lost and dying world.

So Lord, give us the strength to do that. Give us the focus to do that. Give us the boldness to live for You in all that we say and do. And Lord, I pray that there's someone here today that needs to give their life to You, that needs to stand amazed for the first time at what You've done for them.

Lord, You give them the boldness to step forward. And Lord, I pray for the rest of us. You would give us the encouragement to be obedient, to start using our gifts and abilities, to start working for You and what You've called us to do.

[35:04] And we ask all these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen. I want to invite you to take your Baptist hymnal out and turn to hymn number 94. He is here.

And if the Lord is speaking this morning, I want you to respond as we stand together and sing.