

# The Ministry Of Discipling

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     And while you turn, let me remind you that the goal of this ongoing series, the Church Essentials Series, is to think through as a church body what the Bible says are the essentials for being a healthy church.
- And there's so many things that we could include with that, which is why this will be an ongoing series for a long time, Lord willing, in the life of our church. This particular set of studies here through November focus on what it means to be a discipling church.
- A discipling church. And that's a very broad topic. There's a lot of directions we could go with that. This could be a series that went on and on and on. But we're really trying to narrow our focus in these three lessons.
- Really, when we look at the New Testament, there's a sense in which the New Testament itself is really one giant manual for discipleship. And discipling. Starting with the four Gospels, and you understand what it even means to be a disciple as we're following Christ.
- And then you have different doctrinal treatises throughout the New Testament, like Romans and other things, that help us understand the doctrinal stuff. But then there's all of these letters to the churches.
- [ 1 : 1 5 ]     All these letters to the churches that the apostles were writing and compiling and sending out. And they were all about how to interact with one another. How to do the work of evangelism. How to build one another up in this church community.
- This covenant community of God's people. And it's all with the anticipation of what is to come. All of us looking ahead. Looking forward to the establishment of God's kingdom.
- And of course, we long for that. So the New Testament, really, in general, no matter where you go, you're going to find this. It's really what the New Testament does for us. But as we narrow our focus in these three lessons, there's three questions we're asking in essence.
- First question is, is this really necessary? Is it really necessary to be a discipling church or to care about discipleship or to care about those things? At least in so much that we would set aside three Sunday nights to specifically come back together just to think about that.
- And of course, we answered that question last week with the mandate of discipleship. But there's two other questions we're going to ask. The next question is, who is ultimately responsible for this?
- [ 2 : 3 1 ]     When it comes to the ministry of discipling within the church, who is it actually? We see it as a necessary thing now. We've seen the mandate.
- But ultimately, whose shoulders does this fall on? Is it the pastors of the church? Is it lay leaders in the church? Is it the general members of the church?
- Who exactly is supposed to shoulder the responsibility of this ministry? Hopefully, that's one of the questions that we'll answer tonight. And then there's a third question that we're going to get to two weeks from tonight, Lord willing, which is, what are some ways that we can actually be faithful to do this?

So, is it necessary? Who's responsible for it? And if it is necessary and we're all responsible for it, how do we do it? How do we do it? So, we'll put some shoe leather to it maybe here in just a couple of weeks.

But before we get there and dive in, let's just review just a little bit from last week. First, with our definitions that we're using throughout the series. Really, two definitions. The first one is a simple definition of discipleship.

[ 3 : 34 ] Here's what it means. Mind-blowing. It means to follow Christ. Right? Simple. Discipleship is how this whole idea applies to us personally.

This is the noun form of the word. It is, we are disciples. We follow Christ. All right? So, that's a simple definition we're working with in our understanding.

And then there's discipling. Discipling. That's the verb form that we're dealing with, which means to help other people follow Christ. Helping others follow Christ. So, both of those things are at play.

You can't help other people follow Christ unless you're a follower of Christ yourself. So, it starts there. Starts with the gospel. Starts with Christ's mandate for discipleship in the sense of his call to discipleship.

And we've talked about that a lot in Mark's gospel. But then it moves on from there to his mandate in the sense of we are responsible for helping other people follow Christ.

[ 4 : 32 ] Helping others follow Christ. And we looked at that specifically last Sunday from Matthew 28 and the Great Commission where Jesus explicitly commands that we make disciples of all nations.

Make disciples of all nations. And one part of that that we didn't really discuss last week is the all nations part. That's a pretty significant part of this, isn't it? And we didn't deal with it very much.

And it's not my purpose tonight either. But we need to keep that in the back of our minds. What is it actually that God has commanded us to do? It's fresh in my mind at the moment because I've just spent all this time at Laurel this weekend where their whole focus is on missions.

And, you know, we think about mission all the time as far as our local mission, the community engagement that we have here in Cornelius and the people that are around us wherever it is that you may live.

And sometimes we think a little more broadly than that. But we don't regularly, or at least I don't regularly, think about this responsibility in the terms of all nations.

[ 5 : 41 ] And it was just so nice. You guys met or were at least introduced to Himit Patel and Becky Patel on Friday night who have been missionaries to India, his home country.

It's an amazing story. Himit came to America to serve in the United States military. He wasn't even a citizen of the United States. Like it was really, I didn't even know you could do that. But apparently that's how it worked.

And he was stationed in Goldsboro, North Carolina. And as a young adult serving in the military, he was led to Christ out of Hinduism by Baptist pastor there in Goldsboro.

And so he stuck around and he was discipled there. And then just the Lord put a burden on his heart to go back to India, the place he had escaped by actually serving in the military. And he spent the, since 1994 is when he went back.

And he's been there since 1994 planting churches throughout the country of India. And it's just so helpful to be around people like that. You know, a couple weeks ago we read Val and Angela's most recent letter.

[ 6 : 46 ] I think it was the weekend you guys were in the mountains actually. I read their prayer letter that they had sent out. It's helpful for us to remember those things. That our responsibility in making disciples, it's not just about what we're doing here.

But we need to keep the world in mind. We want to have a heart for that. We want to see the world one to Christ. And we want to be involved in that in whatever way that we can be.

Whether it's financial or whether it's through prayer support. Maybe it's through asking the Lord to send us on short-term or long-term missions to go and take the gospel.

But we need to keep it in mind, right? So last week we talked about that, the mandate making disciples. And we discovered that discipling is not merely a strategy for growing the church.

But it's actually a command of the Lord that must be obeyed. And we said that there's four things with that in relation to the Great Commission. That to make disciples requires intentionality.

[ 7 : 44 ] Nobody does it on accident. You have to do it on purpose. It involves evangelism. That's where it starts. After our own conversion to Christ, it starts by actually taking the gospel to others.

Winning other people to Christ. And we talked about that a lot throughout this whole weekend. But then it requires teaching. That was the third dynamic. Make disciples by going.

That's the intentionality. Baptizing them. That's the evangelism. Teaching them. Teaching them everything that I have commanded you. That's where our relationship to one another comes in.

Because once someone has been evangelized, they are then, according to Acts 2, brought into the partnership, the koinonia of the church. And therefore, our responsibility hasn't ended just because they've accepted Christ.

It's actually only begun. Because it's only at that point that we actually begin to do real, long-term, hands-on, discipling work in the life of that person.

[ 8 : 40 ] And they, in turn, in our lives as well. Of course, it's two ways there. So it's intentional. There's evangelism. It's evangelistic. It requires teaching. And then the fourth thing with that was that it's empowered by Christ.

And there's a great promise to that. Jesus says, I'm with you always to the end of the age. There's tremendous encouragement with them. Encouragement and peace that comes from them.

Now, the reason I go through that review with you right now is because the mandate lays the foundation for everything else that we talk about tonight and then in two weeks from now for the final lesson.

It's not a separate thing. These things actually build on one another so that the ministry and the methods of discipling also demand initiative.

They include evangelism. They require teaching. And they're only fruitful as Christ in his grace through the power of the Holy Spirit does his work through us.

[ 9 : 45 ] Right? And so we want to work hard to do all these things. We want to come up with the right strategies. We want to study the right things. I mean, I just commended a book to you that you could read that might would help you frame your mind around some of the things even in a practical sense that we need to be doing with one another and with the people around us.

And we can come up with all the strategies. But the strategies are really pointless without the power of God. We need the Spirit of God that requires prayer, persistence, reliance, and dependence on him.

And it's not the power is not in our strategy. It's not in our apologetics. It's not in our merely in our intellectual understanding of the scripture. The power is actually the Holy Spirit's work being accomplished through us as we commit ourselves to discipling one another and evangelizing the world and evangelizing the people around us.

So it's important. These things lay that groundwork for us. So last week, the focus was really mainly on the evangelistic element of discipling. But tonight, I really want to turn the focus more on discipling one another within the context of the church.

Okay? Within the context of the church. And so what the ministry or what is the ministry of discipling and who is responsible for it are the questions that I would like for us to try to answer.

[ 11 : 09 ] Okay? So to do that, we're going to spend some time here in Ephesians chapter 4. And I opened with a question last week. I want to open with another one this week. And I want you to think about the people that have impacted you the most in your walk with Christ.

Okay? Just think about maybe bring to your mind, you know, maybe one or two people that you would say, of all the people in my life, this is the person that has impacted me the greatest in knowing Christ.

Okay? In following him. Okay? Got that person in your mind? At least somebody, a general thought. Now, how many of you would raise your hand and you say, the person that came to my mind is or was my pastor?

They were my pastor. That's not a trick question. I promise. All right. Nobody. How many of you would raise your hand and say, that person was not a pastor of mine? We're not a pastor. All right?

Okay. I want you to think about, everybody raised their hand that the person that's impacted the most was not a pastor. I want you to think about that. The person that has helped you follow Christ the most is not the person that we often think of as being the one that's responsible for discipling.

[ 12 : 20 ] That's an amazing testimony to the way that God uses the church, other believers, to build us up in Christ. It's not that our pastors don't matter.

And it's not that they don't have this responsibility. I have a cheat code built into my discipleship because the most impactful person in my life was my dad, but he's also my pastor, so it doesn't really count.

But it wasn't really the, it wasn't dad's ministry from the pulpit that has impacted me the most. It's dad's ministry at home that has impacted me the most. And so the fact that all of us would raise our hands and say, the person that's impacted me the most in terms of my walk with Christ and helping me follow Jesus the best was not actually my pastor, shows us that the responsibility for this does not just rely on my shoulders.

We each have this responsibility to one another. And don't ever underestimate the impact that you have on the person sitting next to you at church or the person that you're taking to coffee or going to lunch or just the simple conversations that you may have.

You never know the impact that that's helping, that it's having on someone, how you're actually helping someone follow Christ in the way that you speak to them, in the way that you encourage them.

[ 13 : 36 ] And so as we get into Ephesians 4, Paul really deals with that. He's telling us about both responsibilities, the responsibility of pastors and then the responsibility of members.

And we're going to get to that in just a second. Here at the beginning of Ephesians, the first three chapters, Paul is giving an explanation of the gospel. In fact, you're open there. Actually, flip back to chapter two first.

Of course, he's in chapter one. Then there's that just glorious description of the everlasting love of God and the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. And then there's the thanksgiving for all of that.

But he's really explaining the gospel and its impact. And when you get to verse 11, read with me there in chapter two, verse 11. Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision.

Gentiles and Jews is the dynamic here, which is made by flesh, in the flesh by hands. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope without God in the world.

[ 14 : 44 ] But now in Christ, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Verse 14, for he himself is our peace who has made us both.

Who's the both? The Gentiles that were far off and the circumcision, the Jews who had received the covenants and had received the promises and the works. He has made us both through Christ one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself what?

One new man in place of two. So making peace. And that he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And he came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to those who were near. For through him, we both have access in one spirit to the father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

This is amazing. It's what the gospel does. Here on one end of the equation, we have the Gentiles who in the old covenant were alienated completely from the promises of God. They were on the outside of the covenant.

[ 16 : 06 ] And then there's Israel who were a little bit self-deceived by what it actually meant to be the covenant people of God. And then we see Christ come into the equation. What does he do? He brings these enemies that have this dividing wall of hostility between them.

He brings these enemies through the sacrifice of his flesh on the cross. He unites them together because both of them were outside of the covenant of God, the spiritual covenant that is.

The ethnicity in and of itself doesn't mean anything. They both needed to be reconciled to God first. And that in reconciling them to God, he brought them together as we talked about this morning.

It's really amazing as we think about that. He broke down the hostility. He created peace in this relationship. Why? In order that he could have one church.

One church. And then he describes it there in verse 19. As all of them being fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

[ 17 : 09 ] There's three dynamics to this household here. There's Christ the cornerstone, he says. It starts with him. It ends with him. But then there's the foundation of this church.

This one church, unified church that Christ is building. It starts with Christ in the gospel. And then there's the foundation that is laid. And he says the foundation is laid by the apostles and the prophets.

And why would he say that? Because at this point, they didn't have the completed canon of scripture. Who was it that was actually communicating this truth to the church in those times? It was the apostles.

It was the prophets that God had uniquely gifted in that age to speak his words before we had the scriptures completed. I think that's what prophecy was. Both of those things I don't think are active gifts within the church anymore.

They ended, I think, at that apostolic age. Because that's where the foundation was built. And the foundation is finished. It's been built. Because we have the scripture, right? And then what's the third dynamic?

[ 18 : 08 ] There's the cornerstone that is Christ. There's the foundation that is the apostles and the prophets. And then the whole structure, the structure that's being built up, is us. That's us.

We're the church being built up. This one church, unified church. That's significant as we get to chapter 4 because Paul's laying all of that groundwork first. Now get to chapter 4. And he's talking about the practical outworkings of the gospel.

And in the first seven verses, he is emphasizing the necessity of maintaining unity within the body. Look at verse 1. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

And what does he describe that as? Verse 2. With all humility, gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Why? Because there's one body. This is, think about how hard this would have been for them. Like this would have been hard.

[ 19 : 20 ] You're talking about historical enemies for thousands of years. And now you're talking about in one church. The church in Colossae, for example.

Where you have one person in the church who's actually the host of the church, Philemon. Who's a slave owner. And he's irritated because his slave ran away on him.

Well, he goes to Rome. And Paul finds him. Leads him to Christ. He becomes a faithful minister of the gospel. And Paul sends him back. And now existing in this same church is a slave owner named Philemon.

Who now, I think probably, is submitting himself to the pastoral leadership of his slave that abandoned him and ran away. That's hard.

And now you have on one side the Jews. And on the other side you have the Gentiles. These historic enemies. Active enemies. Everything about them was different. And yet God has brought them together.

[ 20 : 18 ] And Paul is saying, listen, because of what God has done in you in the gospel, the practical outworking of that means you need to maintain it. Maintain that spirit, the unity, the bond of peace.

Because there's one church. Not two. One. There's not a Gentile church in a Jewish church. There's one church. There's one spirit. Verse five. One Lord.

One faith. One baptism. One God and Father of all. Who is over all and through all and in all. And then he says that God has given grace to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gifts.

What is the grace and the gifts there for? To make us able to maintain humility and peace and unity.

The bond of peace and all of those things. Christ empowers us to do that. Because if it were just up to us, we couldn't. Right? We understand that. We couldn't do it. But God does this miraculous thing in the gospel.

[ 21 : 18 ] And he does this for us. Well, then we get to verses 11 through 16, which is where I want to focus. And it's within this context of oneness and unity that Paul addressed the ministry of the church and who he says is responsible for that ministry.

And what is that ministry that Paul then describes in verses 11 to 16? It's the ministry of discipling. It's the ministry of discipling. The ministry of discipling. Let's read the ministry of discipling.

This is a call back to verse 7. He gave the apostles. He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the church.

And it's the ministry of discipling.

So I want to look at these verses just here quickly.

[ 22 : 52 ] I'll leave 10 or 15 minutes here, okay? And I'll look at three things as it relates to the ministry of discipling. The ministry of discipling. Number one, let's see the personnel. The personnel.

Look again at verse 11. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.

So we immediately come here to the question of who is responsible for this. We understand the necessity of it, but who's actually responsible for bearing the burden of discipling within the church?

And we see Paul says there's two different categories here. There are church leaders and there are church members. And it's not that one is higher than the other or that one is superior to the other.

That's not what he means by this. He just means that there's different functions within the church. He says that God has given apostles and prophets that it's not a position in the church anymore, but it was in those days and that was necessary for them to understand.

[ 23 : 59 ] Then he says evangelist. An evangelist is not an office in the church. And when Paul talks about an evangelist, he's not talking about the guy that travels around in the tour bus or the 18-wheeler with the camper that comes in and preaches 10 sermons everywhere that he goes.

That's not what he's talking about. That's not what this is. This is a gift of the Holy Spirit where the Holy Spirit uniquely gifts certain individuals to have a clarity in preaching the gospel that results in a unique fruitfulness of people coming to Christ.

So it's the evangelist. So it's not necessarily that he means by evangelist. This is a leader in the church in the sense of an office of the church, but that the evangelist in many cases was the one that was responsible for bringing these people into the church through the faithful preaching of the gospel and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

So he says there's these people and they're doing this work. And then he says there's pastors and teachers. I'm making everybody mad. I should bring like food for the kids, like something that would help them like me whenever I'm doing this.

And so, but then he says that there is a responsibility here for the saints as well. And so, so who's really responsible? Everyone is. There's ditches on both sides of the road here.

[ 25 : 21 ] There is a hyper clericalism that we see most often in churches where there's the staff of the church that really does all the work and the people are reduced even not necessarily because it's always their heart to do this, but because it's how the staff functions, that the people are almost reduced as spectators.

They come and they're consumers in a sense. They come and they're a part of what's happening. They sit in the classes, they do the things. And I say all of that fully understanding that I am so guilty of this, incredibly guilty of this in our own church of doing this.

This hyper clericalism that just takes all the responsibility off of the church in order to make them as comfortable as they can be, shoulders all that over here. But what that ends up doing is actually prevents people from doing the work that God has called them to do in the church.

But then there's a ditch on the other side of the road, and it's an anti-clericalism that does the opposite. It actually kind of obliterates the whole idea and need for pastors and teachers in the church and sees them maybe as inferior in some way.

And so there's both things that we need to avoid. The bottom line here is that everyone is responsible for discipling. So first he mentions these pastor teachers, these pastor teachers.

[ 26 : 43 ] I take this that, and there's plenty of support for this. This isn't unique to me, but I take it that he's really referring to one particular gift or one particular office.

That he doesn't mean to say that there's shepherds and then there's teachers, but that in the church there are pastors who are shepherd teachers, pastor teachers. The two of those things go together.

You can't really separate them. And if you want to just separate them, it's not going to make that huge of a difference here to the text. But I think he's just referring here to the work of pastors in the church.

And what does he say is the responsibility of these pastors? The beginning of verse 12, that they are to equip the saints. Equip the saints.

How do pastor teachers equip the saints? It's in the phrase itself. They teach. There's a reason that when Paul starts writing about the qualifications for pastors and deacons and church leaders and all those kinds of things, there is one significant difference between what is given as a qualification for a pastor.

[ 27 : 52 ] There's only one that's gifting related, and it's that ability to teach. Why? Because that's the responsibility of the pastor, to equip the saints. And how do we equip the saints? Through the teaching of the Bible.

Alistair Begg said that the good pastor provides the best pasture by means of sound instruction. The good pastor provides the best pasture for the sheep by means of sound instruction.

You know what my role is primarily under God in this church is to teach you, to equip you in whatever way I can, to take the word with the giftings that the Lord has given me and try to help you understand it so that you can live it out and so that you can teach others.

That's my role. That doesn't exempt me from discipling. It is a part of discipling. Because before I'm a pastor, I'm a Christian. I'm a church member like you are. I'm submitted to you as you are submitted to me.

So it doesn't exempt me from anything. But there is a unique responsibility that I shoulder as a pastor to teach the church, to teach the word. And pastors need to be faithful to do that.

[ 29 : 07 ] And as the Lord builds our church and as he raises up leaders within our church, when it's time to start thinking about establishing elders and other pastors within our congregation, we're not thinking about those who are equipped with a great business mind or tremendous leadership skills.

We're thinking about those who can teach the word. Because that's what a pastor does. He teaches the word. Right? But then he says there's this second category. And it's not just that the pastor teachers are doing this work, but it's the church members that are doing this work.

He's equipping the saints. Equipping the saints to do what? The work of the ministry. But in the way that we use our language, we often apply that phrase, the work of the ministry, to the pastor of the church.

That the pastor does the work of the ministry, and we are the beneficiaries of the ministry that he works. But then Paul says, no, what the pastor teacher does is he actually equips the saints, the saved people, the believers in the church, so that they can do the work of the ministry.

And so every member is a minister. And we're all gifted in different ways. We all build in different ways. But at the end of the day, we're all builders responsible for this work.

[ 30 : 25 ] Jonathan and I were having a conversation this week. I went to Keegan's. Keegan, my nephew, had a baseball game we went to, and we were riding in the truck with Ken, and we were talking about all kinds of stuff. But Jonathan told this story about a guy that's in his church now that had left another church, good church in the area, to come to Laurel.

And this has been a couple years later, and he starts telling him why he left the church. It's a good church. It was a church that was going through a season where there wasn't as much fruitfulness as there had been in other seasons.

We go through those times, right? That's just a normal part of the Christian life. And he said, I left that church because God's hand isn't on it anymore. And Jonathan said, What do you mean?

He said, God's hand's not on it anymore. We're not seeing people baptized every week, and there's fewer people that are actually being brought to the church, and all these kinds of things. He's seen all these tangible statistics, these metrics, and gauging success.

And he ends up saying at the end of the day that God's hand has been removed, not because he's not preaching the Bible, because he's preaching the Bible. Not because he's not faithful to shepherding, because he was faithful to shepherd. He says, God's hand was removed because I didn't see all the tangible evidence that I had seen at other times in my life.

[ 31 : 32 ] And my brother said gently and graciously, he responded with, Well, tell me, during that time frame where you experienced this drought in your church, how many people did you actually bring to the church? How many people did you actually take the gospel to?

How many people in the church did you actually encourage in their walk with Christ? And of course, his answer was, Well, no, no one. Why would he have that mindset? Because in his mind, it's not his responsibility to do the work of the ministry.

It's all about the guy that's up on the platform. But Paul says here, No, the work of the ministry is for all of us. All of us. We're responsible for it. So we see the personnel.

Number two, we see the work itself. The work itself. Look at 12 through 14. For the building of the body of Christ until we all maintain the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

And so if we're all responsible to do this work, what is the work itself? Well, we're told at the end of chapter or verse 12, the work of the ministry is the building up of the body of Christ.

[ 32 : 53 ] What's the body of Christ? We are. What's the building up of the body of Christ? Discipling. Discipling. That's the work. And he says there's two categories for the work.

First, there's an offensive category. Not offensive in the sense that we want to make people mad. Not that way. But offensive in the sense of like an athletic term. There's offense. Verse 13. What are we doing offensively in this work?

Well, if I can find it. Until we all maintain the unity of the faith. All is a key word there. The work's not done till we've all reached it. Till we're all at perfect unity.

Till we all have the knowledge of the Son of God. Till we've all been matured to manhood. To the measure, the stature, the fullness of Christ. When is the work done?

Well, never. Right? Not till we get to heaven. Because this discipling, this offensive work, we're building one another. We're encouraging the unity of the faith.

[ 33 : 55 ] We're encouraging people to know God, to follow Christ. But then there's a defensive part of the work. That's verse 14. So that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

So Paul understands here that there's great danger in the Christian life. And that if we're not being regularly engaged in discipling, not only to disciple others, but to actually be disciplined ourselves, what is it that happens?

We subject ourselves to these dangers. What are the dangers? Well, we become like children. Instead of mature manhood, we're like children who are tossed to and fro by the waves of unsound doctrine.

We start to believe things we shouldn't believe. We start to get carried away with charismatic figures. We start to get carried away with these schemes that are really deceitful, but they appeal to our flesh in some way.

And we see this. We see this all over the place. Every one of us have friends that are stooped in false doctrine because they're like children who aren't being built up in the Lord, but they're tossed to and fro with all of this stuff.

[ 35 : 05 ] Well, what's the solution to that? Discipling one another in the church. That's the solution. In this book, Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, they said this happens in our gatherings, but it also happens day by day as Christians speak the truth to each other and exhort one another to stay strong.

It happens in our homes as fathers bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. It happens in the world as we proclaim the excellencies of Christ before the nations and engage in gracious, salty conversations with outsiders or give gentle, respectful answers to insiders about the Christian home.

This doesn't happen on Sunday. This happens every day. Every day as we're engaged with one another. And if you'll just allow me to give you a practical point here before we finish, I want you to notice three C's here.

How do we actually accomplish this work? What are we doing in this discipling? Three C's. Number one, conviction. Conviction. Conviction. What are we doing with one another?

Well, we want to help each other grow in our knowledge of God in the Bible. We help each other grow in our knowledge of God in the Bible. Number two, character. Character. We want to encourage each other to have a godly life that is in accord with sound doctrine.

[ 36 : 25 ] Character. Third C, competency. We want to teach one another how to take the word of God and actually disciple others. So we're going to reduce what our responsibility to one another is.

It's these three things. We want to help each other know God and know the Bible. We want to encourage one another, maybe even correct one another lovingly from time to time so that we're living godly lives that are in accord with sound doctrine.

And then we want to teach one another how to talk to others about the gospel. How to talk to others. And we're going to flesh that out in much more practical detail in a couple weeks. Finally, the manner. The manner of this ministry.

Verse 15. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ.

So how do we do all of this? Three things. Speak. Speak. We got to talk to each other.

[ 37 : 25 ] We got to talk to each other. There should never be somebody that ever comes into our church that sits in a chair and has a worship experience in our church without ever having a real conversation with someone else.

We ought to be looking for that. Remember the intentionality? We got to talk to each other. Exchange phone numbers. If you don't have somebody's phone number, grab it off a breeze. You all have an account there now?

Go exchange numbers tonight before you leave. Talk to one another. Text one another. Email one another. Tell people if you're introverted, tell them you're an introvert so they'll know to only do it sometimes.

Or not to overwhelm you. Or whatever. We have to talk. You can't speak the truth in love if you don't speak. We have to engage.

Truth. Truth. The content of our conversations has to be the Bible. Or at least based on the Scriptures.

[ 38 : 26 ] Not that we can't talk about anything else. That's not what I mean. Please don't misunderstand me. That's not what I mean. But we do need to be talking about the Scriptures. And whenever we are encouraging one another or counseling one another, it needs to be counsel that's based on the Bible.

Do you know how many Christian women have been encouraged by other Christian women to divorce their husbands because they think they're lousy in one way or another? That's not biblical counsel.

That's speaking to your friend. That's not speaking truth to your friend. There's lots of ways that we fall into this all the time, isn't there? We need to be careful. When we're actually speaking, we need to speak truth, which begins with the Word of God.

Then there's the third thing. Love. That's where it all starts and finishes. Love. In Colossians chapter 3, Paul talks about all of these things we are to put on as believers.

And then he says the belt of the garment that wraps all of this up is love for one another. Love for one another. So we speak the truth, but we have to do that speaking the truth in love.

[ 39 : 27 ] And that's where it gets difficult sometimes. Because if you're like me, you just like to speak truth. Right? You want to lay down the law. But he says we have to actually do this in love.

And then notice how the mandate plays its role here in this thought. To do that, to do this work, you have to be intentional. You're going to have to be evangelistic.

Maybe even evangelistic with people that tell you they're a Christian, but you can tell they don't actually know Christ. Or there's a false gospel that they've fallen into. You're going to have to be evangelistic in those conversations.

You're going to have to teach. You're going to have to be dependent on Christ. And then look how Paul summarizes it in verse 16. This is the last thing we're done. From whom the whole body joined together.

He's given an illustration. From whom the whole body joined together, held together by every joint with which it is equipped. It's been equipped by pastor teachers under the headship of Christ.

[ 40 : 30 ] Here's what he says. When each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it what?

Builds itself up in love. In other words, Paul says, whenever churches get this right, not when they're perfect, but when they get this right, they get this right, the body builds itself.

Builds itself. So he summarizes this whole thing as what? Discipling. Not from the stage to the floor, but from one another and to one another and with one another.

We're thinking about this culture and DNA of discipling in our church. We have to understand the mandate, but we need to start to understand the ministry of it too. We're all responsible for it. And what that ministry actually entails is speaking the word to one another.

Being faithful to that with one another. Following those three C's. And then in two weeks from now, what we're going to look at is methods. We're going to put some shoe leather to all of this to say, here's how we can do it.

[illegible]