



INTRODUCTION

I. WELCOME & OPENING DISCUSSION.

II. RESTATEMENT OF VALUES.

1. The gospel is the centre of all of our teaching.
2. We want to evaluate our church's health on the basis of whether the gospel is clear and applied in all ministry.
3. We will evaluate leaders on the basis of their ability to know, tell, and apply the gospel.

III. GOSPEL MEDITATION. [\(You can find the pdf here\)](#)

I. DISCIPLESHIP IN COMMUNITY.

A. INSTRUCTION.

One of the most common misconceptions about being a disciple of Jesus Christ, is that involvement in the family He has created is voluntary and optional. It isn't. It is mandatory. But many followers do not understand this, and many times, do not have reasons or biblical basis when responding to others who ask for their reasoning. Typically, Christians think of making disciples as an aspect of Christian church, but not as the primary context of discipleship. Further, many churches function as though discipleship is something that is done on an individual, or one on one setting. There simply is no good biblical example of this happening. So how did we get to the point where it seems natural to build discipleship outside of the context of community?

1. Definition. Language is important. The word that is translated, 'church' in the New Testament is, 'ekklesia'. It's found 100 times in the New Testament and is a word that is a compound of two Greek words: (ek), which means 'called' and (kaleo) which means, 'out of' or 'from'. Together, the meaning is, "an assembly or gathering of citizens called out from their homes in some public place." In other words, the very definition requires some form of community in the definition! Not only that, but when we receive salvation, we become part of the church. We often misuse the word, 'church' in our every day vernacular. We want to remind you that it is impossible to, 'go to church', because if you are a disciple of Jesus, 'you are the church!'

2. Example. Jesus did disciple individuals, but much of his discipleship was done in the context of a group.



- ❑ As the Church develops, as told in the book of Acts, one could describe the church as a local entity, as in, there is, ' . . . the church in their house'. (Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19). The Church is also described as, 'ekklesia' in a city. (1 Corinthians 1:2,2, 2 Cor. 1:1 and Thess. 1:1) The Church is also described as 'ekklesia' in a region. (Acts 9:31) Finally, the Church is described as 'ekklesia' globally or universally. (Ephesians 5:25, 1 Corinthians 12:28).
- ❑ Jesus spoke and taught to a group of disciples on Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5:1-29)

3. Culture. The fact that community has not seemed part of the discipleship process in the past few decades can actually be traced back to a period in human history called, 'The Enlightenment'. Although it would be dangerous to simplify this movement, one of the main premises that surfaced was the importance of the individual. While certainly an important advance in philosophy in its time, this movement was the start away from community and toward the autonomy of the individual to decide what was important and what was not. It was the seedbed for what would become consumerism and a serious distrust of anything institutional. As Christians, it is impossible for us not to be affected by this, and our understanding of community has been seriously hindered by the negative influence of the Enlightenment. We now think primarily in the category of the individual rather than the community, something that did not exist until about 400 years ago.

B. EXERCISE #1:

What we want to do in this exercise, is to help you build a case for the importance of discipleship in the context of community. In this exercise, you will need to think a bit like a defense attorney or an assistant to one. In a case brought to trial, it is important to consider not only arguments supporting your case, but also arguments that could potentially defeat it as well. Really, this is an exercise to help understand reasons and understandings that Christians want to give in order to minimize the communal aspect of

Many self-proclaimed Christians claim that community is helpful, but would never say that it is a necessary part of Christian life. Other Christians would say it is necessary, but in reality, community does not function as a necessary part of their life. Your task in this exercise is to look at what the Bible says about the role of the faith community in the life of a believer in Jesus Christ. As you work your way through each group of verses, record your thoughts with summary statements of your findings.

A. Metaphors of community. What metaphors do these verses use to describe the church? How do those metaphors help us to understand the role of community?

- ❑ 1 Peter 2:9.
- ❑ Colossians 2:6, 1:18, 2:2
- ❑ Ephesians 4:13,14



- Matthew 12:46-50, 1 Timothy 5:1-12, 2 Corinthians 6:18

B. Purpose of community. How do these verses clarify the purpose of community?

- Matthew 28:19
- John 13:34/35
- 1 Peter 2:5
- Hebrews 10:23-25
- Ephesians 4:15/16, 1 Corinthians 14:12

C. Qualities of Christian community.

- Colossians 3:12-16
- 1 Corinthians 12:24-26

D. Final statement of position for or against community?

Possible Positions of argument: Which of these best summarizes your position? How are you able to defend your position? How will you defend your position from Scripture and experience?

Statements for the Defense.

- 1. We believe that discipleship is best done in community.** Disciples of Jesus grow best in the soil of community.
- 2. We believe that discipleship and community are linked.** Disciples of Jesus should grow and be in community.
- 3. We believe that we cannot properly be discipled without community.** Disciples of Jesus will only grow to a certain point without community.
- 4. We believe it is impossible to be disciples without community because the nature of discipleship is communal.** Disciples of Jesus cannot be disciples without community.

Statements for the Prosecution

- 1. We believe discipleship is best done individually.** Community *does not help* disciples grow, but detracts from discipleship.
- 2. We believe discipleship is possible without community.** Community helps disciples grow, but it is *not necessary* to that growth.
- 3. We believe that discipleship is possible without community, but is *aided* by community.** Community *can be useful* to disciples, but is still possible without it.



4. We believe that discipleship is possible without community, but is *greatly helped* by community.

Community is really important to a disciples growth, but is still possible without it.

D. Possible reasons why disciples might not have community.

1. I've been hurt by community, and I cannot be hurt again.
2. The community that I was involved with is too exclusive. Although I would agree that community is helpful to my growth as a Christian, there are too many problems with how and why the community is formed and maintained.
3. The community that I want to be part of does not exist, or doesn't meet my standards for community. People are not allowed to be real to themselves and their problems, and they do not accept anyone who does not hold the same convictions about community that I do.
4. The community that should exist would take too much time to develop and interferes with my plans for my life. I have no margin in my schedule to be involved in the community that I desire.
5. God doesn't really care about community like He cares about me as an individual.

What did you discover about the difficulty of discipleship in community in this exercise?

BREAK!

II. GROUP DISCIPLESHIP REAL TIME.

A. INSTRUCTION.

Although we may believe that the church (or family) may be integral to discipleship, we may have never actually experienced many of the benefits of being in true community.

1. Discipleship by speaking the truth in love. (This doesn't mean saying the hard things only, but actually reminding each other of where the gospel is powerful. This is why Bible study is often more powerful in a community setting, rather than simply on an individual level. Even if we have study materials to aid our individual study time, those materials were developed by other individuals.

2. Discipleship by asking. Humble inquiry. In his outstanding leadership book, Edgar Shein points out what he senses is a key to helping people develop. His book has huge relevance to building a discipleship culture in our community.

' . . . we must become better at asking and do less telling in a culture that overvalues telling. It has always bothered me how even ordinary conversations tend to be defined by what we tell rather than by what we ask. Questions are taken for granted rather than given a starring



role in the human drama. Yet all my teaching and consulting experience has taught me what builds a relationship, what solves problems, what moves things forward is *asking the right questions*. . . . Humble inquiry is the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person.” (Edgar Shein, *Humble Inquiry*, Beret-Koehler: Oakland, 2013, p. 2,3)

The technique Jesus used so often was a question. Even when Jesus was asked a question, He often responded with a clarifying question of His own. Here are some examples found in Scripture: (And this is just in the Gospel according to Matthew!)

- ‘Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?’ (Matthew 8:26)
- ‘Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say ‘Rise and walk’? (Matthew 8:5)
- ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ (Matthew 9:28)
- ‘Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?’ (Matthew 10:11)
- ‘Who is my mother and brothers?’ (Matthew 12:48)
- ‘What do you think, Simon?’ (Matthew 17:25)
- ‘Have you not read?’ (Matthew 12:3, 19:4, 21:16, 21:42)
- ‘Why do you ask me about what is good?’ (Matthew 19:17)
- ‘What do you want?’ (Matthew 20:21)
- ‘Why do you put me to the test?’ (Matthew 22:18)
- ‘Whose likeness and inscription is this? (Matthew 22:20)
- ‘Why do you trouble the woman?’ (Matthew 26:10)
- ‘So, could you not watch with me one hour?’ (Matthew 26:40)

Doesn’t Jesus sound like a master counsellor? It is no wonder that one of the names that God names Jesus is, ‘Wonderful Counsellor’. (Isaiah 9:6) When Jesus explains to his disciples that it is better for Him to go because it means that all disciples will receive the Holy Spirit in abundance, He describes His Holy Spirit as, ‘ . . . another Helper (also translated Counsellor), to be with you forever . . . ’ (John 14:16)

So many opportunities for discipleship are missed because we are not willing to take the time to ask a good question or take the time to listen to the real answer. The beauty in a question oriented discipleship, is that you do not actually have to have answers to be helpful. Even if you have the answers to a question (and there is certainly a place for this), it is often more impactful to allow for a fellow disciple to arrive at their own conclusions, rather than receive a bunch of answers. In fact, sometimes, your answers can act like barriers to someone’s growth as a disciple. You would be well served as a disciple-maker to spend time developing your question-asking arsenal, rather than developing your content oriented answers as a disciple. You can lead a Bible study that you know nothing about, merely by being an intentional question asker. You can come across as friendly, just by



asking good questions of total strangers. You can learn a lot about how to bring the gospel in this city by asking questions of people regarding topics that you know nothing about. Below are some questions you may consider using in your discipling relationships.

A. Discipleship Questions. (For both yourself and others)

1. What do you love the most?
2. What do you feel like doing? Why?
3. Why do you think that?
4. What do you think you need? Why do you think you need it?
5. Are you asking my opinion?
6. What is influencing you to make this decision?
7. What are you afraid of? Why are you afraid of that happening?
8. What do you think Jesus says about this?
9. How does this affect you? Your family?
10. What do your friends/spouse/parents/children say about this issue?
11. What part of this are you struggling with the most? Why?
12. Why do you think you are angry?
13. Is there anyone you need to forgive?
14. Who would you want to talk to about this?
15. What would you say to, 'them' if they were standing here? Why can't you say that to them?
16. Who has influenced you in this decision/area?
17. What is holding you back from saying what you want to say or doing what you want to do?
18. What question do you really want answered?
19. "If I were approaching you with this challenge, what would you tell me to do?"
20. "What would happen if things were to continue the way they are?"
21. "What obstacles stand in the way of you being able to resolve this problem?"

B. Relationship Building Questions



1. What's your story?
2. How did you get to this point in your life?
3. What's on your mind lately?
4. What do you love about your job? What do you hate?
5. How did you get connected to this church?

B. EXERCISE #1

We'd like to engage you in an exercise that you may or may not be familiar with called, 'peer coaching'. Essentially, it is a soft way of describing it as, 'group counsel'. What is important in this exercise, is that you understand both the end goal of the exercise but also the process. Your task is to experience what it is like to have a group discipleship experience but could feel a bit like a peer counselling group.

i. DISCUSSION GUIDELINES:

1. One person in your group (could also be a couple) is in the, 'hotseat', where they are given the opportunity to solicit help from your group. The, 'hotseat' person(s) shares with the group a life issue that you are wrestling with. Examples of these issues could be, 'My 3 year old doesn't seem to want to eat what I put before her and I don't know what to do', or 'I have two great job offers, and I'm not sure which one to take'. It could also be a bit more vulnerable in that, 'I seem to be impatient in one certain area of my life, and I would like to learn how to be patient in that area.'
2. The exercise will consist of three rounds of conversation. In each round, every person in the group will be given the opportunity to ask one clarifying question regarding the issue of discipleship. An important tip here is to ask a clarifying question that cannot be answered yes or no. Adding phrases like, 'to what extent', or the 5 'w's are categorically more helpful than binary questions of yes or no. Each person in the group is only given one question per round, so choose your question carefully. (Facilitator's, be ruthless about this! Facilitator's will be given permission to cut off anyone who doesn't follow this guideline, and when you enter into this exercise, you are agreeing to allow your facilitator to stop you from asking more than your allotted question!)

The point of these questions is to help the 'hoseat' person(s) understand the real issue, and to attempt to allow them to arrive at their own solution as much as possible. Even if the initial question seems to have an easy answer to you, we must remind you to refrain from giving advice at all costs. Questions should not be in paragraph form, but fits into a sentence. This discipline is important to maintain throughout the exercise, as it will more likely help those in the 'hotseat' arrive at their own conclusions,



instead of being told what the answer is. It is also important to those who are not in the 'hotseat', as it is an opportunity to develop 'question asking' skills.

3. When each person in the group has asked their initial question, the facilitator will then ask, 'To what extent are you gaining clarity on your issue of discipleship?' This allows the 'hotseat' volunteer to clarify the initial issue, but also helps the question askers to focus their questions.

4. A second round of questions is then asked. By this time, the issue should be much more clearly defined, and question asking disciplers should take the opportunity to ask deeper questions, that are intended to get to the heart of the issue.

5. Once the second round of questions are finished, the facilitator should again ask question, 'To what extent have we clarified the issue for you?' At this point, (depending on the quality of questions, the depth of the issue, and the openness of the person(s) in the hotseat to speak honestly, the person(s) may feel they are satisfied with the clarity they desire. Therefore, the facilitator should ask, 'Would you like more questions to help with clarity?' If so, then continue with a third round of questions.

6. Lastly, the facilitator should ask, 'Would you be comfortable with each one of us giving you some counsel?' This shouldn't be viewed as an opportunity to lecture, but to give a short (emphasis on short), piece of advice based upon what you have heard the person(s) in the 'hotseat', share. It shouldn't be more than 3 sentences. Trust us, disciplining yourself to share your advice in 3 sentences isn't good for the 'hotseat' volunteer (they likely cannot take more than 5-6 people giving a paragraph of advice) it is also good for you, the question asker. And, if you feel you have nothing to add to the conversation, please don't! Most times, this advice isn't much better than the conclusion the volunteer(s) have arrived at. This advice can take the form of another question, and it should be coated by gospel centred discipleship motivation. Advice like, 'If I were in this situation, I would want to concentrate on this particular area of the issue', or, 'I would love to know more about why you think that', or, 'I've gone through a similar situation, and I found that it was important to think about _____, when figuring out this issue. The point isn't to show how much someone knows, but to be a helpful gospel counsel to those in your community.

7. When the exercise is complete, you should then pray for the person(s) and their issue.

8. After you have prayed, if there is time left over, you can discuss what the experience was like from both sides of the exercise. What would you change if you did the exercise next time? How could you make it a better experience? What would you change? What would you do again? We will hopefully have some time to discuss this as a larger group.

V. CONCLUSION.



In your groups, discuss the biggest take away from session 1? Why? If you're comfortable, be prepared to share with the large group.