



# SESSION 4: DISCIPLESHIP

## INTRODUCTION: THE GREAT COMMISSION

*Matt 28:18-20* "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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."

The commission is not simply to convert people, or to care for them, but to make disciples. If you're watching together, it might be worth asking people for their thoughts on what this means before starting the video.

Question:

- How would you explain to a non-Christian what it means to be a disciple?

## WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Two common views of discipleship: GP & Personal Trainer.

### GP

GPs are people you access on demand when you need support or care, but they aren't normally expected or able to be proactive in checking up on how you're doing.

GPs focus on fixing things that are wrong, normally prompted by negative experiences such as pain on the part of the "patient". Their long-term goal is to keep you relatively comfortable and stop you dying.

### PERSONAL TRAINER

Personal Trainers have a different mandate. They also care about your health and want you to stay alive, but their long-term goal is a "stretch goal", set in collaboration with the client.



They are proactive, offer encouragement and challenge, and often probe into other areas of life in an effort to see all aspects of their client's life lining up in harmony.

#### LIFELONG LEARNING

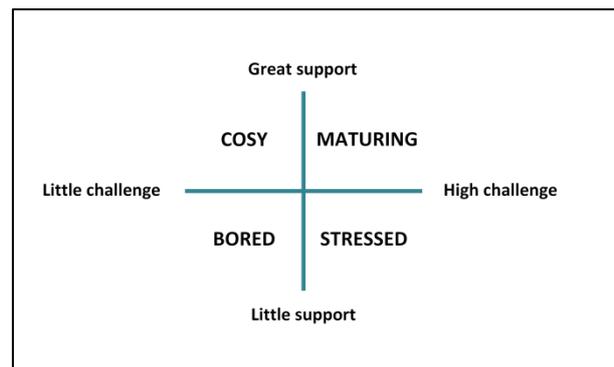
We don't grow out of being disciples. Through the book of Acts, we see many disciples (Peter, Paul, Phillip, Apollos, ...) continuing to learn more of what it looks like to follow God, and the epistles are full of instruction of how to continue growing in faith.

#### INVITATION AND CHALLENGE

Jesus brought both invitation and challenge in his interactions with his disciples.

Invitation:

- He had vision for them that went beyond their own.
- He encouraged and empowered them
- He spent a huge amount of his time with them



Challenge:

- "Get behind me Satan – your mindset is earthly not godly"
- Rebuking James & John for wanting to call down fire on the Samaritan village
- Asking leading questions that help them understand and draw them into participating in miracles
- He provoked them to work with people they disliked (e.g. other disciples)
- He served them radically, in a way that provoked them (esp. foot-washing)
- He gave them hands-on experience – "watch me, then I'll send you out"

Questions:

- *How would you characterise your experience of pastoral care in the church to date? Has it been similar to a GP and their patient, more like a Personal Trainer working with a client, or something else?*
- *What gifts, skills or abilities have you grown in because somebody has mentored or coached you in that?*

## Pastoral Training Course Level 1

### Session 4: Discipleship



Optional Activity for small groups (otherwise on your own):

Try to think of the last time that a brother or sister in Christ lovingly challenged or confronted you about an aspect of your life. Then discuss:

- *Can you remember one?*
- *If possible, relate the story.*
- *How did you respond at the time?*
- *Have you changed your thoughts, words or behaviour since then as a result?*



## HOW CAN WE REPRODUCE JESUS'S DISCIPLESHIP?

Discipleship can be worked out in different settings: the most common are small groups (e.g. triplets) and one-to-one mentoring relationships (sometimes called "personal pastoring")

To reproduce Jesus's style of discipleship in our own context, there are at least four things we need to practise:

### DRINK DEEPLY

We can't give out what we don't have.

- Jesus said that if we came to him and drank, rivers of living water would flow from us.
- If we pretend to be closer to God than we are, we will reproduce pretence.
- It's expressed in the phrase from aircraft safety briefings: "in the event of a loss of cabin pressure, put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others".
- Having said that, we're not trying to give *our* life to those we're discipling, but rather encouraging them to draw life from **the Lord**.

### DISCUSS EXPECTATIONS

Not everyone means the same thing by discipleship, and people may be after the "GP" model.

Discussing expectations up-front helps avoid these misunderstandings emerging later. In groups or one-on-one settings, ask what expectations people have, and be clear about what you're offering!

### DEAL WITH FEAR

Fear does not bring out godliness; rather, perfect love casts out fear. To be clear about our identity, and deal with the desire to be "people-pleasers", we need to:

- Draw our identity from being children of God, not from how others see us
- Look to him for affirmation
- Not seek out status or titles
- Understand the authority we have to speak into another believer's life as a brother or sister
- Understand and submit to how our church understands delegated authority from the leaders or elders of the church to our context (group / one-to-one)



We also need to deal with the fear of control:

- So for a start, we need to not be controlling!
- But it's helpful to name up-front that this is not about control, especially if their church background has led them to fear this.
- Fear of control will result in defensiveness, not openness.

#### DIG BENEATH THE SURFACE

When we observe something that needs challenge in someone's life, it's very rare that that's all there is to it: normally there's something underlying it. Jesus was the master of this – so often he didn't answer the question he was asked!

We could look at Luke 5:17-26 as another example, and note that:

- Jesus doesn't speak to the man first about his paralysis, but about his sins
- When the Pharisees and teachers are silent, Jesus reads what they are thinking, and speaks straight to their underlying attitude and disbelief

Good tools for going below the surface:

- Pray beforehand and ask God for helpful keys
- Ask questions, rather than leading with opinions or statements
- Remember – you're working *with* the person to help them to be self-aware, to bring all their life under the lordship of Christ, and to grow and mature in faith

Activity for small groups (or individual contexts)

Reflect on these four areas (drinking deeply, discussing expectations, dealing with fear, and digging beneath the surface) with regard to yourself and the discipleship you offer. Then discuss:

- *In which of these four areas do you most need to grow?*



## PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR HEALTHY DISCIPLESHIP

Build a bridge strong enough for truth:

- Take time to invest in relationship with people – not as a token effort, but because you care for them and love them.
- Strong relationship gives a strong platform for challenge when it's needed.

Get to the roots:

- Try to get to the roots of what's going on when you discuss a situation or issue.
- A really good tool: Tim Chester's "Four G's". These truths strike at the root of so much of our sin and so many of our hang-ups.
  - God is good – so I don't have to look for satisfaction elsewhere
  - God is great – so I don't have to be in control
  - God is gracious – so I don't have to prove myself
  - God is glorious – so I don't have to fear others
- Listen to the Holy Spirit
  - We may think we know someone, but God truly knows them
  - We will best bless someone by having an ear out for the Holy Spirit at all times
  - This is about *content*, *tone* and *timing* – what to say, how to say it, when or whether to say it.
- Act out of love
  - 1 Corinthians 13 – "if I have not love"
  - We love out of the overflow of God's love
  - We have to serve because we love the Lord, and we love his people.

The great "bonus promise" – as we disciple others to become more Christlike, we will ourselves become more Christlike too.