



Tenacious Training in Deliberate Discipleship

SEVEN STEPS TOWARD DISCIPLESHIP

- Pastor Bob Froese



A special thank you to Jenni Albrecht, David Froese, and Ruth Froese for taking notes and formulating them into this booklet, to Lisa Schmidt for proofreading, to Shawn O'Connor for creating the cover, to Laura Sitzman for printing, and to the Tuesday Bible Study Ladies for collating and binding.
~Pastor Bob



DELIBERATE DISCIPLESHIP

Seven Steps Toward Discipleship

Our intense focus was on “Deliberate Discipleship” at Faith Fellowship Church in 2007. On Wednesday evenings during the summer, we spent seven weeks studying correlations found in Jesus’ teachings whereby He trained his disciples in disciple-making. That series birthed this practical study booklet, designed to help us step out of the abstract!

Use this booklet as a practical tool when working with a discipleship partner. Commit to meeting together once a week for seven weeks, and work together on the following four steps:

1. **READ IT**
Prior to meeting, read the Scriptures listed.
2. **MEDITATE ON IT**
Read this section together, out loud.
3. **GRASP IT**
Discuss the questions making sure to grasp each concept.
4. **LIVE IT**
Complete the questions and talk about your answers.

Why must we choose to make disciples? Because we must be willing to do what God has commanded us, and that is to “Go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19).

-Pastor Bob Froese

Session One

COUNTING THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

READ IT

Matthew 3:15-17
 Matthew 11:25-30
 John 8:31-32
 2 Corinthians 6:11-18
 Proverbs 23:7

MEDITATE ON IT

Put your pointer fingers onto your temples, then pull them out so you can see how much space is between them. This is the size of the battle ground! It’s where the battle for discipleship is won. “As a man thinks, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7).

If we are self-motivated, we will fall. If we bow before God, we stand as giants before men. Read John 8:31-32 to see that only the Word of God adjusts our thinking and liberates us from man-made doctrine, setting us free from bondage to rules and regulations. Proverbs 13:15 says that the way of the transgressor is hard. Do our lives reflect that we are being led by Scripture, gladly bowing before God?

Jesus asks nothing of us without providing the strength to perform. In Matthew 11:30, we read that Jesus' yoke is easy and His burden is light. When we submit to our own affections and desires, we make our burden heavy. Discouragement and unrest will meet those trying to combine the heavy yoke of the world with the light yoke of Christ. The commands of Jesus are only hard to those trying to resist. How can we get under the easy yoke of Christ instead of resisting? Christ's call to follow Him is a bidding to come and die; when we're dead to self, we won't resist.

In the U.S. Army, soldiers going into battle are trained to think of themselves as already dead. Likewise, we need to consider ourselves already dead, submitting to Christ as Lord, obeying God's commands in the Bible.

Our biggest battle is ourselves, as self-sufficiency, self-righteousness, and complacency take their stand on the battleground of our minds. Proverbs 20:27 teaches that the lamp of the Lord searches the inner depths of the heart. In thinking about issues of the battle, we must become aware of the two opposing sides: Having people think less of us and more of God through our obedience to God's Word *versus* people pleasing, success, and money making. The Bible is the one and only gauge of God by which disciples of Christ measure their lives. Will you choose to no longer use the world's gauges, but instead the gauge of God? This is the basis for Christianity and discipleship.

Christ expects, commands, and deserves no less than our absolute best. At conversion, we stop seeking our own will and begin seeking Christ's will (Matt 12:50). Romans 12:1-3 speaks of how we are to sacrifice ourselves, as a one-time event with ongoing ramifications. Whenever we aren't seeking Christ's will, we must repent. Repentance means to have a change of mind regarding our past life of sin, and turn to trust God for a new life of forgiveness. Repentance prepares people to become disciples. When we admit that there is nothing we can do but trust God to grant us forgiveness, we have yielded to God.

God desires a personal relationship with us. It is up to

us to desire a personal relationship with God above all else. If we simply have a checklist of things to do, we are like the Pharisees and God is not pleased. God will be glorified when we have a love relationship with Him, desiring to spend time with Him studying the Bible and praying, obeying with our actions and not just intentions, and serving Him wherever He asks. In order to turn from our sinful ways and become a new creation, we must deny ourselves daily, take up our cross, and follow God. As disciples, changes will occur that include, but are not limited to: use of finances and time, male leadership in the home and church, Christ-like character in considering others more important, and devotion to Christ evidenced through serving in the local church.

In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus gives us the command to make disciples, not to save people. For those who choose to follow Christ, baptism is the first step of a life of obedience as His disciple. Then, we are to teach disciples to observe the whole Bible. The first thing to change in discipleship is the way we think. Only then, will other changes arise that cause our life to align with the Word of God. As long as we have confidence in self, we will continue to trust in ourselves and will not yield our will to God. As our inner desires go, so our actions will follow. When our core desires are set upon selfish desires that become idols, we are not teachable, or able to teach. The entire purpose of becoming a disciple of God is to glorify Him and teach others, who in turn, are able to learn and then disciple others.

GRASP IT

1. Where does the battle regarding being a disciple of Christ take place (paragraph 1)?
2. What is it like to be yoked with Jesus according to Matthew 11:30 (paragraph 3)?
3. What makes the commands of Jesus hard to obey (paragraph 3)?
4. What is the gauge of God that tells us whether we are following Him or the world around us (paragraph 5)?
5. What is repentance (paragraph 6)?
6. What does a love relationship with God look like (paragraph 7)?
7. What is the first step of obedience a disciple of Christ should take (paragraph 8)?
8. What is the first thing that needs to change when we become a disciple of Christ (paragraph 9)?

LIVE IT

1. What do you do that you perceive as righteous, a way of gaining entrance into heaven?
2. Do you personally desire a relationship with God above anything else? How does this show up in your daily life?
3. If our personal actions do not merit salvation, why should we submit our actions to God's Word?
4. In a short paragraph, define repentance in your life.

PRAY & PRAISE**Session Two****FUNDAMENTAL
CHANGE IN
THINKING****READ IT**

Matthew 14:27-30

Luke 9:23

Luke 24:27, 44-45

John 1:30-34

2 Corinthians 5:17

MEDITATE ON IT

What is discipleship? To become disciples of Jesus Christ, we must first know Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior, without whom we are dead because of our sins (Romans 5:12). Discipleship is encouragement, exhortation, and accountability. Encouragement includes coming alongside and praying. An example of encouragement is when more experienced Christians teach younger Christians— such as experienced Moms coming alongside younger Moms to help them understand practical ways to: 1) love their husbands, 2) love their children, and 3) be homemakers (Titus 2:3-5). Discipleship is also exhortation, which is a focus on response. An example is when a mother tells a son to clean his

room, and then checks on the results. Discipleship also includes accountability, which is keeping each other responsible to commitments that have been made.

Christians are Christians by virtue of the finished work of Christ on the cross. God cannot look at or touch sin (James 1:13). We must realize that God could not even look at His own Son Jesus when He carried the sin of the world. When God looks at us, the only way we can be saved from His just judgment is when Christ steps in between and says He has paid our penalty on the cross. When we stand before God someday, and He asks why He should let us into His perfect heaven, the only acceptable answer will be the work of Jesus' death on the cross as payment in full for our sins.

What was the most difficult thing for Jesus to do? Take up His cross and carry it. We must realize that we need the forgiveness that comes from Jesus Christ through the cross, and we must take up the cross daily (Luke 9:23). When we think we are good, we do not realize we need a Savior. It's the man who realizes he is drowning that cries out and reaches for the life preserver. If we tell others about what good things we do, we don't glorify God. On the other hand, if we present to the world our forgiveness through the cross, we do glorify God. In order to turn from prideful ways to glorifying God, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross *daily*, and follow Jesus.

Jesus says, "Follow Me", but we excuse ourselves, saying we have business to take care of. The difference between the man in Luke 9:57 and Peter in Matthew 14:27-30 is that Peter is waiting for God's call, while the other man is defining how he wants to follow. Isaiah realizes he is a sinner, saying, "Send me where-ever" (Isaiah 6). Just because our circumstance or ministry is not what we'd like it to be, does not mean God is calling us elsewhere. When men get into trouble at work, and find another city where there is work they can do, it does not mean that God is sending them there. They have not changed and the same problem will re-occur. They need to have patience to sort out the mess they

are in, through a fresh influx of the Holy Spirit and a dose of humility.

When God does call us, then we need to say yes. He needs to be bigger and we need to be smaller. It takes attachment to and faith in an unchanging Christ to be able to become smaller, to be able to change with confidence. When change involves both stopping one activity and starting another activity, something is still missing. We can talk about change in the biblical terms of putting off and putting on, but still a key ingredient is missing. What is it? The need to renew the mind according to Scripture (Ephesians 4:22-24). ***Change in thinking is the fundamental foundation for change in action.***

Change is the result of a personal relationship with Jesus. The personal relationship with Jesus includes:

1. ***Drawing near to God in prayer*** (Hebrews 4:16).
If we want to be reliant upon God, we must pray. We cannot have a relationship with someone with whom we spend no time.
2. ***Fellowshipping with other believers*** (1 John 1:7; 1 John 4:7-12; Galatians 6:1-5). If you are struggling with another person, your relationship with Christ is struggling. Forgiveness is necessary for fellowship. We must learn to love and forgive others because Christ first loved and forgave us. People will know we are followers of Christ because of our love (1 John 4:7-12). We must learn to show this love by being firm about what God says, in prodding one another to be obedient as opposed to letting sin go on without standing up for what is right. We must choose to love, realizing that Christ not only died for our sins, but He also rose again from the dead, and thus we must bow before our Living Lord. If we serve ourselves, we have not become a new creation.

GRASP IT

3. **Worshipping God.** John 4:23-24 says we must worship God in spirit and truth, which means living obediently to God in our inner man (spirit) and outer actions (truth). If we truly trust Christ as our Savior, we will become a new creation and view the world in a different manner, desiring to do God's will, instead of being forced to - because we worship God instead of our desires.

4. **Digging into God's Word** (Hebrews 4:12; Luke 24:27). If we are not in the Word, we are not letting God into the game. Apart from God's Word as our base, we stand on shaky ground. The Holy Spirit will not do what Jesus would not do (bark wildly, roar on floor). As a church, we stand on the Word of God alone, and not on any person's opinion. Opinions divide the church, and doctrine ("Thus saith the Lord...") is what unites us. We must learn to be gentle, which means we don't ram our opinions down others' throats. Rather, we use the Word of God as the basis for what we believe, demonstrating a fundamental change in thinking.

1. What are three aspects of discipleship (paragraph 1)?

2. What is the only way by which we are saved (paragraph 2)?

3. What must we take up daily from Luke 9:23 (paragraph 3)?

4. What is the difference between the man in Luke 9:57 and Peter in Matthew 14:27-30 (paragraph 4)?

5. What are the three things necessary for change from Ephesians 4:22-24 (paragraph 5)?

6. Four aspects of a personal relationship with Jesus:
 - a. How do we draw near to God?

 - b. What do we do with other believers?

 - c. Who do we worship and how?

 - d. What do we dig into?

LIVE IT

1. How can we manifest a personal love relationship with God?
2. At what point in your life did you become a new creation?
3. What is the difference between the old and new man?
4. In a short paragraph, how is becoming a new creation evidenced in your life?

PRAY & PRAISE

Session Three

**COMPLETE
SURRENDER****READ IT**

Matthew 4:19
Matthew 12:46-50
Matthew 16:13-20
Matthew 23:13-15
Luke 12:48

MEDITATE ON IT

One Sunday we had a guest at Faith Fellowship Church, the father of one of the men in our body. The son later sent an email saying his Dad was so convicted of sin by the message he heard at FFC, that he went back to his home state, looked up the 9marks website and found a church that would preach the truth about sin. He was convicted by hearing about his sin. When a pastor speaks about sin, people are either offended or convicted if the sin he has spoken of looks like their life.

Discipleship is not an intelligible “program” for a way of life, nor is it a list of goals or ideals to strive for. Rather, discipleship is an act of obedience based on Scripture, not on “offers” we make to God. Man is looking for

signs or magic, Jesus wants a heart of belief that surrenders through obedience (Matthew 4:19). Surrendering to God doesn't mean looking for a checklist, it begins with admitting there is nothing we can do but trust God to grant us forgiveness and serve Him as He tells us.

We can try to separate Jesus' call and our following, but Christ makes it clear from the start that His Word is not abstract doctrine, rather concrete re-creation of the whole life of man. Abstract ideas cannot be followed in personal obedience, and obedience can't remain an abstract idea. Surrender has to involve concrete following of Christ, in reliance on the grace of Jesus. With an abstract idea it is possible to acquire formal knowledge or understanding about God, become enthusiastic about that knowledge, and perhaps even *work* at putting that knowledge into practice. Some examples of this are: trusting in religion that focuses on good works, or defining obedience based on personal preferences.

In Matthew 16:16, Jesus asked Peter who Peter thought He was. Peter gave Jesus the right answer—He is Christ the Son of the Living God. Jesus summons us, not as a teacher or some good person to pattern our lives after, but as Christ the Son of God. Abstract knowledge of God, without concrete relationship with the living Christ that evidences itself in following Him, is not discipleship. Following Jesus will evidence itself in harmonious living, free of strife and worry. If that isn't happening, our faith is an abstraction and useless.

Our continued growth as Jesus' disciples involves repentance. Repentance means having a change of mind regarding our past life of sin (such as strife and worry), and turning to Christ for new life and forgiveness. At conversion, people are flipped, no longer seeking personal will but Christ's will (Matthew 12:50). As long as we have confidence in self, we will not yield our will to God. As long as we think we can do it, our thinking is unbiblical. As long as we're set on our own desires, we're not teachable (2 Corinthians 7:9-11; Galatians 5:24-25). Godly sorrow means we hate *our* sinful, self-centered hearts. No longer will we want

to do what we want to do and have God bless it. We must live every day realizing that Christ not only died for our sins, but He also rose again from the dead, and thus we must surrender our every desire to our Living Lord. If we serve ourselves, we have not surrendered; we have not become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Through today's widespread call for tolerance, justification of the sinner has degenerated to justification of sin. Rather than confess sin, we justify it. Why do people run from Christ's church? In Matthew 16:18, Jesus responds to Peter's recognition of Him as Christ, Son of the Living God, with the promise that He will build His church against which the gate of Hell will not prevail. People run because of unconfessed sin and guilt of which they don't want to be convicted. What are we to present to them? The message of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness found only in Him.

When a baby is born, we wait anxiously to hear a cry. That cry involves breath and life. The baby breathes, receives food, is given love, and grows. In the same way, saved people begin to breathe new life in Christ, are fed by the Word of God, are loved through the fellowship of the church, and grow. Just as the body needs to eat, drink, and exercise, disciples of Jesus must ingest the lessons in discipleship and exercise what has been learned in order to continue growing.

We must be disciple makers to be obedient to Christ's commands. We must be diligent to teach others the narrow road of being a disciple of God. If we tell others to convert by saying a prayer, but we don't train them over a long period of time, we will make them sons of hell, and we ourselves will be sons of hell (Matthew 23:13-15). We must train and equip new believers with the goal that they will be better followers of Christ than we are.

God is glorified only when we serve Him as He tells us. We're finished serving when the Master says so. Are we telling God what we want to do, or are we surrendering to Him?

GRASP IT

1. What does surrender begin with (paragraph 2)?
2. What does surrender involve (paragraph 3)?
3. What does repentance mean (paragraph 5)?
4. What does godly sorrow mean (2 Corinthians 7:11, paragraph 5)?
5. Why do people run from Christ's church (paragraph 7)?
6. How do new Christians grow (paragraph 8)?
7. What is the danger of teaching someone to say a prayer for salvation without discipleship (paragraph 9)?

LIVE IT

1. What would hold you back from sharing the truth of the gospel?
2. Who will you encourage to be faithful to teach others and make disciples?
3. In whose strength can these things be accomplished?
4. In a short paragraph, who will you share the gospel with and follow up with teaching from God's truths?

PRAY & PRAISE**Session Four****ONLY THOSE
WHO OBEY
CAN BELIEVE****READ IT**

Matthew 14:27-30

Matthew 19:16-22

Mark 1:15

Luke 17:1-10

MEDITATE ON IT

Are you a take charge, “Type A” personality? When you’re at a traffic light and your car dies, you know how sometimes the people behind you honk, as if that will get things moving? Well, did you hear about the guy who got out of his stalled car, stalked up to guy in the car behind him who was honking and said, “How about you try to start my car, and I’ll honk your horn for you?”

We laugh, but it’s important to recognize that if we are complaining about something, we’re probably rationalizing something. Complaining is a sign of deliberate or unconscious disobedience, which we then try to rationalize. Rationalization goes hand-in-hand with self-imparted forgiveness. The danger in self-imparted forgiveness is that it

confirms or justifies a disobedient mindset and unbelief. Saying “I’ve lost the faith I once had” is problematic, because it’s not those who believe that obey, it’s those that obey who believe.

We run into difficulty obeying due to the guilt of sin, when we try keeping some part of our life under our own control rather than letting go and crucifying self. The remedy is to tear yourself from all attachments and follow Christ. We don’t tell a coach or a teacher what we will do, rather we say, “You’re the Master, you called, and I’ll come.” Peter said to Jesus, “If it’s you, call and I’ll come.” Jesus said, “Come,” and Peter stepped out on the water. Then he became afraid, began to sink, and cried out to the Savior. Jesus immediately stretched out His hand! Like Peter, we take our eyes off Jesus and put them on the problems of day and begin to sink.

The first step is what matters most, like Peter stepping out of the boat. Think of young believers soaking up His Word. Those who obey have faith. Those who will not obey become hardened in unbelief, sometimes even under the guise of feigned humility and obedience. Remember, self-imparted forgiveness confirms us in our disobedience.

When we complain, we are loitering discontentedly around the edges of the land of unbelief, peeking in to see if maybe it’s better on the other side after all. We begin with simple questions—Why aren’t things clearer in Scripture? How could God allow something bad to happen? Should women lead at home or church if men won’t?

Be careful not to ask questions that halt obedience, as the rich young ruler did in Matthew 19:16-22. His questions revealed piety shaped by self and centered in self. He tried to evade the revealed will of God by focusing on things he was doing, because he didn’t like God’s claim on his obedience. We too are faced with issues that we prefer to ask questions about rather than simply obeying the revealed will of God. It’s time to drop those issues and follow this simple formula: trust and obey. Get up and get busy obeying.

If we are asking what we should obey, the devil him-

self lurks behind that question. In Genesis 3 he put into the mind of man the question, “Has God said?” Doubt and reflection must not take the place of spontaneous obedience. Take a lesson from Bobby Orr, a high scoring hockey player, who was questioned about decisions being made about his team. His reply was, “I’m paid to play, not think.” In churches, people hear a sermon that steps on their toes, and say, “What do you think?” instead of making a change. It is the devil who tempts us to pose problems and escape the necessity of obedience.

What is the first step of discipleship within the church? Perhaps the greatest failure of the American Church is that Christian men have not been spiritual leaders of their families, leading in times of devotion, prayer, and service in the church. Leadership begins within families, with ruling in the home by taking the Word of God and correcting things that are out of line. Once that is taken care of, church leadership will be much easier. Men are to lead the church and teach younger men to be serious about serious things (Titus 2:2).

Women are to teach and lead the younger women in loving their husbands, loving their children, and keeping their homes in that order (Titus 2:3-5). It is the man’s responsibility to set things straight in the home (Ephesians 5:25-28). An observable danger is when women cry foul about their feelings being hurt.

The church is to have organized leadership with male Elders and Deacons who fit the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 2. These men must take charge and lead using Scripture as their basis, or the church will surely falter, having women and children ruling (Isaiah 3:12). The firmness of these men to stand on the Word of God is vital to the health of the church so that the devil’s ploy of confusion is not given ground.

GRASP IT

1. What is complaining a sign of (paragraph 2)?
2. What is the remedy to the guilt of sin (paragraph 3)?
3. If obedience shows that we have faith, what is the most important step to take (paragraph 4)?
4. When we want to ask questions rather than obey, what simple formula should we follow (paragraph 6)?
5. Who tempts us to pose problems and escape the necessity of obedience (paragraph 7)?
6. What is the first step of discipleship within the church (paragraph 8)?
7. What are older women to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5, paragraph 9)?
8. What two aspects of leadership are required for a church (1 Timothy 2, paragraph 10)?

LIVE IT

1. How can we as individuals support the leadership of the church?
2. Who is to be the leader of the home?
3. What is the role of the wife?
4. In a short paragraph, what does church leadership consist of?

PRAY & PRAISE

Session Five

**CHRIST'S
CALL TO
FELLOWSHIP
WITH HIM****READ IT**

Matthew 9:9-13

Luke 14:15-24

Luke 18:18-23

John 6:2

John 10:3-5

John 14:21-24

MEDITATE ON IT

It was suppertime, and little Jesse was in a pickle. She had eaten her hot dog already and now she wanted to obey her Dad by eating the bun, but clearly she was frightened about something. You see, she was doing very well in learning to read, and well, that bun package was right there in front of her on the table, and it was giving her a big problem. She could read that it said HOT on the bag. She did not want to eat something that was too HOT, and besides, it looked to her like the content of that bag was for dogs..... oh my.....finally Dad understood and let her eat the hot dog without the bun.

Or, how about the guy that wouldn't stop staring at the frozen orange juice container, because it clearly said "concentrate" on it.....

Isn't it so true that a text without a context is a pre-text? God has spoken to us through His Word, and we study the Bible to renew our minds. If not, opinions take over, and we make decisions based on our personal worldview and presuppositions. What is a worldview? The spectacles through which we look to see things. We must reevaluate our presuppositions and worldview, with the bottom line being response to God. To have a Christian worldview, we must view our circumstances through the lens of Scripture, and filter our thoughts through the grid of God's Word.

Is Christ's call to fellowship with Him a command or a challenge? In the last ten years, it's become very popular in pulpits to speak of challenges rather than commands. Does Christ really want us to obey? Does Jesus mean business? If we're called to *follow* Jesus, we must *obey* Him (John 10:3-5). What does that entail? Legalism says we must do something for our salvation—Jesus plus something. Asceticism focuses on what we can't do—such as the idea that women wearing makeup is sinful. (If the barn needs painting, go ahead and paint it.) Gnosticism sets the Word of God aside and says that God speaks to an individual in a way no one else can grasp.

Obedience to Jesus is not motivated by the unbiblical idea that it will bring salvation. It is not motivated by following rules and regulations as a virtue in and of itself. It is not motivated by a mystic inner voice. ***Our obedience has to be motivated by love for Jesus, with recognition that obedience is not optional (John 14:21).***

Sammy's Dad told him to go to bed. As Sammy moved in the direction of his bedroom, his thoughts went like this, "Dad doesn't want me to be tired, so he's telling me to go to bed, but what he doesn't realize is that I'm less tired when I play outside. So, I would achieve the goal he wants for me if I go outside rather than going to bed." Then, Sammy changed direction and went outside to play, justify-

ing his actions as obedient. Scripture also gives us an example of a man who justified his actions as obedient. The rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-23, said he already did all the good things, and went away without obeying what Jesus wanted him to do. Matthew however, left the tax booth and followed Jesus in Matthew 9:9-13. Peter, in Matthew 14:26-33, stepped out of the boat, walked on the sea, and risked his life to follow Jesus. We all want to walk on water. What is the thing that's required? It takes reliance upon, clinging to, and recognition of our desperate need for the Word of God. Does God's Word provide you greater security than all the other security in the world?

What gets in the way of not following in obedience? We reason. We listen to common sense. We don't believe, so we don't obey. We excuse ourselves from obedience by claiming that it would be legalism. We let our stuff, our work, our families have more impact than the Word of God. We say we can do as we please with a spirit of inner detachment as if our hearts can follow without our behaviors and thoughts following. But the rich young ruler was not capable of such inner detachment from riches and went away sorrowful—because he would not obey, he could not believe. In what ways are we trying to evade the obligation of single-minded literal obedience? Are we trying to tell God what we should do, like Sammy or the rich young ruler?

The bottom line is that the call of Jesus is obedience to the Word of God. Yet look at all the things that get in the way. What is the solution? Anticipate the end! Waiting for Christ with earnest expectation leads to single-minded understanding of His commands. We must live this life now for the eternal and heavenly kingdom of God. Each and every second must be focused on that time, and not for what we can obtain for ourselves, in an attempt to fulfill our selfish desires. The eternal kingdom cannot be shaken for it is not of this world. As subjects of God's kingdom we have the hope everlasting. Without this hope, what do we have? Temporal values that really have no meaning and will

quickly fade away. Our hope is in eternal life, serving our Lord Jesus. This hope, this eternal perspective is where our focus must be (Romans 15:4-6 & 13).

When we get our eyes off of Him and focus on ourselves, we get selfish and depressed. When we move away from our aim of proclaiming Christ, we enact laws. Then in our effort to combat “rules and regulation religion”, we land in the worst kind of legalism. By eliminating simple obedience, we drift into an un-evangelical interpretation of the Bible. We put on church faces that are different from our home faces. We focus on completing checklists rather than surrender to Christ. We set up unbiblical laws which deafen men to hearing the concrete call of Christ.

Taking time to reevaluate is crucial to us as believers, as we must judge ourselves in order that we will not be judged. If we constantly compare our lives to the life that Christ lived and not compare to other believers, we will have the proper perspective, and we will be able to serve Christ. Yet, obedience to the call of Jesus Christ never lies within our own power. Allegiance to Christ versus enslavement to self is always based not on our offer to Jesus, but always on His gracious offer to us (Matthew 19:23-26).

Our hope is in the day that Christ will return and take all of those Home who truly believe in Him (1 Peter 1:13). We must focus our thoughts and lives on our love relationship with Christ, eagerly looking forward to seeing Him in Heaven.

GRASP IT

1. What do we have to study in order to have a Christian worldview (paragraph 3)?
2. Is obedience to the Word of God optional (paragraph 4)?
3. What motivates us to obey (John 14:21, paragraph 5)?
4. What must we recognize our desperate need of, so that we don't try to justify our actions (paragraph 6)?
5. What must we focus on and wait for, in order to fellowship with Jesus (paragraph 8)?
6. How can allegiance to Christ win out over enslavement to self (paragraph 10)?
6. Where must we focus our thoughts (paragraph 11)?

LIVE IT

1. Why do we become selfish?
2. How can we avoid being selfish?
3. Who will you encourage today to keep their thoughts focused on Christ?
4. In a short paragraph, what is our view to be since we are a new creation in Christ?

PRAY & PRAISE

Session Six

PASSION AND PARTICIPATION

READ IT

Matthew 16:13-18
 Mark 8:31-38
 John 17:8
 Colossians 1:18
 1 Corinthians 10:31-33

MEDITATE ON IT

Once you hit forty, doctors prescribe blood-work every so often. So, you go to the lab and get it done, then the doctor calls to give you a report. Well, I had been to the lab, but I didn't think the doctor's report was a high priority, even when my doctor had left several messages on our answering machine, oh, let's say 5 or 6. Doctor Nick was quite adamant in these messages that I call him back. But, Doc put a whole new dimension on passionate pursuit of his patient when the phone woke me out of a deep sleep in the wee hours of the night. "Hi, this is Dr. Nick. Remember me? I'm calling to talk with you about that lab report." Doctor

Nick's passion got my attention! (By the way, it was a good report.)

How does the call of Christ connect with the passion of Christ? Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" Peter blurted out the truth, "You are Christ, Son of the Living God." Jesus said that was the fact upon which He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). Jesus will build His church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. How are we involved? We are simply tools in His hand, that He, the builder is using. Does the trowel tell the brick layer where and how to lay the brick? No. Does the hammer decide which nails to pound? No. As long as we are in the Spirit, we are safe, and not even hell can overtake us.

The religious leaders of Israel rejected Jesus and put Him on the cross. Mark 8 says that Jesus **MUST** suffer, be rejected, die, and rise again. We are called to deny self, pick up our cross, and follow Him. Taking up our cross means to be despised and rejected of men. When we want to tell God what to do or what we should do, that's not a godly mindset. We're like the little girl who balked when her mother told her to clean her room. When told that she must obey her mother, her response was, "You know, I just want to obey myself." Just like Jesus had to suffer, be rejected and die, so do we, even when we just want to obey ourselves. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "A disciple is a disciple of Jesus Christ only in so far as he shares His Lord's suffering, rejection, and crucifixion."

Jesus said that if we want to follow Him, we must deny self and take up our cross (Luke 9:23). Are you prepared to spurn all other offers and participate with Christ? It begins with denial of self. Denying self does not consist of isolated acts of denial of what we like. If we're choosing between a red car or a blue car, and we really like blue so we choose red, that's not denying self, that's asceticism. To deny self is to be aware **only** of Christ, and no more of self. It is to see **only** where He leads and no longer the road which we desire to travel, even if that means traveling a harder road. Will you follow where He leads?

Denying self is not a masking of our inner man, which adults learn do so well, saying, “I don’t care.” Only when we are oblivious to self do we bear the cross for Christ’s sake. The stuff of earth competes for allegiance to Christ, but taking up the cross means sharing His suffering to the last and to the full. We don’t have to look for it, our cross is right where we live and work. Here the choice must be made to deny self and pick up our cross. This is the tough part—choosing to participate by thinking right and then doing right, in the very situation where we find ourselves. We want to feel right first, then we’ll do and think right, but that’s not how it works. Feeling right comes as a result of obedience to Christ in thinking and doing right first.

The cross is laid on every Christian. In Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s famous words, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” Only when we are dead to personal desires and will, can we follow Christ. Daily, moment by moment, we must put off the old, renew the mind, and put on the new. If we don’t like this, we will start to look like the world around us. As a church, we can never compete with the world because we’ll lose every time. We must preach the truth as a group of merciful unified sinners, forgiven and forgiving in the grace of God.

As we deny self, we become bearers of each others’ burdens. The law of Christ is the law of love, “Love God...love your neighbor.” Passionate participation in Jesus Christ means that we forgive as we have been forgiven. When we can’t forgive someone else, it means we have no concept of Jesus’ forgiveness.

Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering of Christ. The cross is both Christ’s suffering and our triumph over suffering. He drank the cup of suffering, realizing it was His role. Do we look at suffering as some enemy? No, if it is our role to suffer, we are called to bear it in participation with Christ. Martin Luther put it this way: “It is I myself who instruct you by My Word and Spirit in the way you should go. Not the work which you choose, not the suffering you devise, but the road which is clean contrary to all that you choose, or contrive, or

desire—that is the road you must take. To that I call and to that you must be My disciple.”

Do you commit to submit? Whose passion do you want to participate in? Yours or Christ’s? How does one participate with Christ? Not by asking His help in your endeavors (that is mocking Him as if you could do it). In reality, there is nothing you can do without Him. To participate with Christ, you must say, “I need you,” as you submit to His power and allow Him to mold you to fit God’s glorious will. Even your good deeds, your best talents and abilities, are filthy rags. No one is any good apart from Jesus Christ, but in our weakness He is strong.

GRASP IT

1. How are we involved in the participation of the building of Christ's church (paragraph 2)?
2. In what way must we share the cross with Jesus (paragraph 3)?
3. What must we deny to participate with Christ (paragraph 4)?
4. If denying self begins with thinking right, what is the next step (paragraph 5)?
5. When we deny self, how will we respond to other people (paragraphs 6&7)?
6. How should we look at suffering (paragraph 8)?
7. How can we participate with Christ (paragraph 9)?

LIVE IT

1. Have you ever used the words "God told me..." and added something selfish on the end?
2. Do you seek wisdom from God's Word or do you use your opinions?
3. How will you personally seek God's will?
4. In a short paragraph, explain the difference between applying our lives to God's Word, and applying God's Word to our lives.

PRAY & PRAISE**Session Seven****AN
INDIVIDUAL
CALL AND
COMMITMENT****READ IT**

Matthew 10:34-39

Mark 10:28-31

John 8:32

John 14:6

1 Timothy 2:5

MEDITATE ON IT

The devil wants us to focus on horizontal relationships with other people rather than the vertical relationship with God. He uses a powerful weapon in attempting to accomplish this—political correctness. The strong influence of the media and culture has brought about doubt and deception in making bad look good and God's Word look antiquated and irrelevant. We must each individually ask the question, "Does this line up with the Bible?"

Christ's call makes us individuals. Tim is born into a large family of 10 children (we could jokingly say his family is its own nation). Tim could so easily choose to identify

first with his family, but he becomes an individual when he answers Christ's call. We are frightened of solitude, and want someone else with us to protect us from commitment to Christ in our unwillingness to stand alone before Jesus and make decisions with our eyes focused only on Him. We'd rather merge with society and our material environment to feel safe. Each of us becomes an individual at the moment of Christ's call, and then we tell others.... rather than others telling us we are Christians (Romans 10:9,10). Jesus Christ is the dividing line based on who does or does not individually follow His call. We are accountable individually.

We cannot tell Christ we will answer His call without breaking from the past. Baptism is the first break with ties from the past. Ongoing steps of obedience to Scripture are not legalism, as people sometimes claim, but the living of life as a new creation (John 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ sets up a barrier between man and his natural past life and that barrier is not legalism, but the person Jesus Christ. Jesus stands between us and God as mediator (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus Christ is so opposed by the world because He wins the battle for the direct hold on men, setting us free from the deception and bondage of sin.

Truth sets us free from the lies of sin, but we naturally hanker after a compromise. "There are some good things that come out of the world," we say. The Bible will never be absolute in our lives if that is our mindset.

Our relation to the world is built on illusions because direct relationships with others apart from Christ are impossible. To think that we can relate with others apart from Christ, His Word, and following Him is to deceive ourselves. God is love and is the source of our love. We have been deceived when we choose to make others the source of our love and return love only when others makes us feel lovable. The truth is that when God is the source of our love, we become conduits through which His love flows to others. Others become the object of love, rather than the source. Thus we can love our enemies as we become conduits through which God's love flows to those we come in contact with.

According to 1 John 4:7-12, there's a circle of love. God is love, God loves me, I receive God's love, I love others, and then I love God who loves me..... it's an unending circle. Most often we think that we break the circle of love when we don't love others. Really, we break it when we do not receive God's love. If you receive God's love, through confession and forgiveness of sin, you can love and forgive others, no matter what. This, then, is how we love God.

Sometimes we hear people talk about "soul-mates". How can we be soul-mates with another person? We can't know another's heart (1 Corinthians 2:11) and our hearts are deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). To have no barriers between two people, to have truly Christian fellowship, we need a mediator. Only as we see others through Christ's eyes can we truly have fellowship.

Political correctness promotes other false sources of love. We are bound to hate anything that hides truth, that promotes false sources of love. Whatever prevents us from standing alone before Christ must be hated for the sake of Christ. Justification of the sinner cannot spill over to justification of the sin.

How much does Christ want from us? Everything. We gain when we lose, if we are following Christ. For example, some of us have given up family to become part of Christ's church, as Jesus talked of in Mark 10:28-31. Have we gained? A thousand times, yes. Though we all have to enter discipleship alone, we don't remain alone. Our reward is the fellowship of the church. Then, let only Jesus the Mediator be the One through which relationships are built.

But does God really desire us to break relationships for Him? The story of Abraham gives us a dramatic picture. In Genesis 22:2, God told Abraham to take his only son and offer him as a burnt offering. Abraham must have wrestled convulsively alone under the stars in choosing to follow the call God had given him. Possibly such pain was not again repeated until One greater than Abraham sacrificed His Son. For Abraham to give himself up would surely have been much easier than the promised son he had waited for. God

only allowed Abraham to go through with it to the point of knowing that there would be no turning back. It's as if God wanted to remove from the temple of Abraham's heart anything that challenged his fear of God above all else. He wanted to know that Abraham would not withhold his son.

It knocks our socks off when we understand the seriousness and the severity of the call of Christ. His call is impossible to follow in our own strength. Being a disciple involves persecutions about which we must not complain because Jesus goes before us. Jesus, Jesus, who went to the cross. Only when we are filled with fear can we travel the road He calls us to follow. That fear is awe of His presence, apprehension that if we do not follow we will meet judgment, and appreciation of the joy, peace, and comfort found only in following Jesus Christ. In and of ourselves we can do nothing good and can have no unity. In Jesus Christ, all things are possible.

MEDITATE ON IT

1. Christ's call is to every individual. What makes us individuals (paragraph 2)?
2. How do we break from the past (paragraph 3)?
3. What does truth free us from (paragraph 4)?
4. When God is the source of our love, how can we respond to others (paragraph 5)?
5. What breaks the circle of love (paragraph 6)?
6. What is the only way we can be "soul-mates" (paragraph 7)?
7. How should we view the things that prevent us from standing alone before Christ (paragraph 8)?
8. How much does Christ want from us (paragraph 9)? Could that include giving up some relationships (paragraph 10)?
9. Is it possible to answer the call of Christ on our own? How is it possible (paragraph 11)?

LIVE IT

1. When did you personally answer Christ's call?
2. What evidence of following Christ's call can be seen in your relationships?
3. What relationships are on the altar of your heart, where you respond by caring more about what man thinks than about what God says?
4. In a short paragraph, describe Christ's call and commitment in your life, and how it includes disciple-making.

PRAY & PRAISE

Suggested reading for further help in
Deliberate Discipleship

Al & Lorraine Bloom, *One to One Discipling*,
(Multiplication Ministries, Vista CA, 1983).

Deitrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (Touchstone,
SCM Press Ltd., NY, 1959).

Wayne Haston, Ron Berus & ABWE's Core Ministries Insti-
tute Training Team, *The Way to Joy: Pursuing Basic Steps to
Discipleship*, (ABWE, Harrisburg, PA, 2005).

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, (Crossway
Books, Wheaton, IL, 2006).

Carl Wilson, *With Christ in the School of Disciple Building:
A Study of Christ's Method of Building Disciples*,
(Worldwide Discipleship Assoc. Books, Fayetteville, 1976).