



Message: Disciple of Christ

Passage: Mark 8:34-38, Matthew 28:18-20, Eph 4:7-16, John 17:24

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Pro 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.

Today, our goal is to see from scripture what it means to be a disciple of Jesus the Christ. The aim, or the *why* of discipleship I believe is stated in our stated purpose: *We were created to behold, delight in, and display the glory of God.*

We have a biblical theology of discipleship; we see it in Genesis 1 and it is completed in Revelation 22. It began when God created mankind in His image, and gave him dominion of the earth. He made a covenant in the Garden, walked with Adam and Eve in fellowship with them, and commanded them to multiply and fill the earth. God, Himself, taught Adam how to think, feel, and do.

That covenant was broken, and instead of being a disciple of God, mankind turned away to darkness. We saw this in Genesis 4, with Cain. Evil became widespread and in Genesis 6 God flooded the earth. Of course, evil survived passed the flood, for Noah and his family carried it in their DNA. As you trace the history of the people of Israel, you see examples of Moses raising up Joshua, Eli disciplined Samuel, Elijah disciplined Elijah. Also of note is when leadership failed, and there was no discipleship. At the end of the book of Judges, it is stated that there was no king and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Proverbs 14:12 commented on that: *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*

Jesus disciplined the 12 apostles, and when he ascended, he commanded them to do the same. Paul disciplined Timothy, and commanded him to disciple others who will do the same. It is tradition that John disciplined Ignatius and Polycarp. All Christian discipleship moves towards one end. We see this in Revelation 22 the glorification of Jesus the Son of God, at the gathering of His bride. That is why the purpose—the intended end of our discipleship is summed up in our purpose statement: *to behold, delight in, and display the glory of God.*

BUT — *What is it to be a disciple? And How does one become a disciple?* A disciple is a follower, pupil, or student. This naturally implies that there is a teacher to whom we submit ourselves. We are disciples of Jesus the Christ. He is our Teacher! The 12 disciples of his day knew this was not a casual undertaking, but a life devoted to following Jesus, literally around the countryside, living with

him, learning from him, and becoming like him. Jesus taught the 12 to think the way he thought, feel the way he felt, and do the things he did. And then he commanded them to do the same for all who would come and believe through their testimony, and establish the church.

I want to preach from these four points to give a Biblical-Theological understanding of discipleship: *Discipleship is*

To the Person of Jesus the Christ

In Submission to His Lordship

Growing into His likeness

To the praise and display of His glory (John 17:24 / Revelation 22:1-5)

Each point is derived from a passage in the New Testament. We will begin in Mark 8:34-38, and first identify the *whom* of our discipleship. Let's read, then pray and ask the Lord Jesus to open our hearts and minds to his words.

[Discipleship is] To the Person of Jesus the Christ (Mark 8) - Mark 8:34-38:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [35] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. [36] For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? [37] For what can a man give in return for his soul? [38] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (PRAY)

Discipleship is *not* ultimately about *doing the right thing*, but it is about *knowing and loving* the right person. We do not preach morality, we preach Christ and the glory of His gospel! Do you see the central figure in this passage? It is not you, it's Jesus! And the delineating factor between those who would have life and those who won't is relational. Look at verse 38— *“for whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man (Jesus), will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”* Do you identify yourself with the person of Jesus or are you ashamed of him? At work, are you willing to be known as a Christian- a Christ follower? Do you identify yourself with his gospel, his teaching, his words? Do you believe that you were once lost in darkness, following your own desires in this world, apart from God, a child of wrath, deserving death, and yet now, by the grace and mercy of God, you have been saved from the wrath you deserved by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ? Do you now submit yourself to his teachings, his gospel, his word, and proclaim them as your way of life? Do you place yourself beneath Christ as a learner, a student, a disciple? Do you take up

the cross, literally an instrument of death, and die to your own pattern of thought, your own way of life— in exchange for his?

Or are you ashamed of His words? There are some pretty hard sayings in gospels. Are you a fair-weather fan of Jesus? Would you rather pick and choose what you would want to believe of Christ and his words, and therefore live in the world just as you would before hearing his gospel? Jesus didn't leave that as an option. There are no Christians who are not disciples. Those who choose not to put themselves under the person of Christ, identifying with him in their life and death, with his gospel and his words will forfeit their soul. One may gain all the pleasure and treasure of the world, but what profit is that in comparison with the *soul*? Jesus made clear in this passage— choose living for the world, or choose to live for me. Discipleship is living *to the person* Jesus the Christ.

Those who understand the gospel, who understand they were dead in their sin, without spiritual hope, and have come to see the glory of Jesus the Son of God who loved them, and saved them, have only one option. To give themselves fully to Jesus. They understand they have been bought by the blood of their Savior and belong to Him.

In the *Heidelberg Catechism*, a teaching tool composed of questions and answers, the first question and answer is this:

1. Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. *That I am not my own,[1] but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death,[2] to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.[3] He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil.[5] He also preserves me in such a way[6] that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head;[7] indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.[8] Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life[9] and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him[10]*¹

You are discipled to the person of Jesus Christ.

Next, we are discipled in

Submission to His Lordship (Matthew 28:18-20)

Upon Jesus' death and resurrection, he commissioned his disciples to go make disciples! But those disciples belonged to Him, not the 12! Jesus is Lord, not us! Would you turn to Matthew 28:18–20. I want to make a few observations from this text and point out what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus.

[18] And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

- ***All Authority in heaven and on earth...*** The risen Son of God reigns supreme. He has authority over all kings, kingdoms, powers, principalities, man and beast. This means he has authority over you, my friend. There is no living being, man or spirit, outside his authority. No one has the power to exercise their autonomy over and against his. He Is LORD!
- ***Go make disciples...*** This was his command to his disciples. This was the instruction to the church, to learn Christ the way they learned him. To be taught to think, feel, and do as Christ. Not converts, but disciples. Not fans of Christ, but followers.
- ***Baptizing them...*** baptism is the outward expression of an inward reality. It is the physical expression of Mark 8, that we have picked up our cross and died to ourself, and are following him. The symbolism is this: as we go under the water, it represents having died and been buried with Christ. Coming out of the water, we symbolize being raised to new life with him as a new creation in the here and now, and our future resurrection with him for eternity. In doing so, we identify ourselves— wholly, in life and death, with Christ! In fact, we identify now as belonging to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit!
- ***Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded...*** This is the instruction of King Jesus who has all authority in heaven and earth: that we learn his law. We have given over our lives to Him, and now we become like the One we love. We *observe* his commands, which means we do what he had done. We teach as he taught. We love as He loved. We live as He lived.
- ***With the assurance of his presence...*** *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* Just as we are discipled *to* the person of Jesus, we have his presence with us, the Holy Spirit, to lead us, empower us, convict us of sin, assure our hearts of forgiveness, activate our faith, illuminate the scripture, encourage us, and intercede for us.

We have been commissioned to make disciples of Jesus, and disciples put themselves under the rule, the authority, of the King of heaven and earth. One who is not submissive to the Word, the law of Christ, is not a disciple.

[We are discipled in] Growing into his likeness (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. (ESV)

Jesus set the expectation that his disciples, yes, even you and I, would grow to be like him, our teacher. That is why we are called Christians— though the term was originally given as a point of sarcasm. We are to be *like Christ*.

There are several passages we could open that point to this reality. I want to look at Ephesians 4, as it outlines how we grow into his likeness through the gifts of the church. **Open to Ephesians 4:11–16**

[11] And he [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ [the church], [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [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 in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (ESV)

- *And he gave...* Gifts were given to people— apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints. This means we learn of Christ from other people in the church body. This requires humility, which is a characteristic of Christ. If you refuse to humble yourself to others inside the church body, then you are the person in Proverbs 12:1, who hates reproof. These are speaking gifts, teaching gifts, meant to equip you to do the work of the ministry.
- *Until we all attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.* We are discipled *to* a person. The aim of discipleship is that you know Christ! This is how we are to disciple: to show you the character, beauty, majesty of Christ and his gospel. That is why we teach how we teach here at Hope— Christ-centered expository teaching.
- *To mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* Just as children are to grow in maturity, so are you, Christian. Children are tossed to and fro, but as you grow you are to become firm in the knowledge of Christ. As you learn his thoughts, you think his thoughts, love how he loved, and do what he does!

- *Grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...* Discipleship is to a person!
- *So the body will grow and build itself up in love.* Discipleship is done in community. You cannot be a disciple if you are not living in community with fellow believers. This is one of many reasons our gathering as a church body is important. We hear the word, we respond in worship, but we do so together. We are called to live and serve together, to live life with one another. If we do not experience life together, how are we to build one another up in love? If we have no conflict with one another, how are we to speak the truth in love and grow into Him who is our head? How are you to mature, Christian, if you refuse to give yourself to the community of Christ, to learn of Him together, to be humble and open to correction, and mutually submit to His word together, and to submit to one another?

I tell you now, discipleship is unto Christ, but he has employed the means of other people to purify and perfect you. I know many who have left the church, or keep the body of believers at an arms length because they've been hurt. That is a normal part of life, dear friends. The church is not a perfect people, but a people being perfected by the word and love of Jesus our King. You, too, are being perfected, and often Jesus uses the sins and shortcomings of others to identify and purify the sin in our heart. If you remove yourself from the church body, you have removed yourself from the very community God has instituted for your good, and you have removed yourself from discipleship.

I want to say a quick word about spiritual mentors. If what you've heard in being a disciple of Christ is that you don't need to put yourself under the love, mentorship, and authority of others in the church then you aren't hearing this message correctly. The biblical model is one of mentorship, discipleship. The aim is Christ, to know him, and the power of His resurrection. The path is humbling oneself before others and taking on the role of a learner.

I've had many mentors. Somehow, I knew from a young age that I would benefit from a multitude of counselors. The best of my mentors put 2 Cor 3:18 in practice— *“and we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of God, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”* They took me to the word and together we looked at the life of Jesus. They, like Jesus, were gentle, humble, lowly of heart. They had greater wisdom and understanding than I. Most times, I knew to listen to their wisdom, and sought to understand their thoughts, their view, and see how it aligned with scripture.

One of the best lessons I learned was submission, even when I thought my way was better. I submitted out of relationship. I submitted out of love for my mentor. Through my disagreement, the Lord was molding me to one who would lovingly submit to authority, so that I would one day lovingly submit to other authorities in my life. Church, there are those in this church body to whom I submit. I submit my wants and desires for the greater good of the church. And in doing so, I'm following the pattern of Jesus, who submitted his will to the Father's, as he prayed, "If possible, would you take this cup from me. Yet not my will, but yours be done."

Church, God has placed divine authority in the church, among the elders of the church. The church is called, in Hebrews 13, to submit to these authorities. If we are a stiff-necked people who will not submit in small things— not gospel issues, but minor issues, even if we think we are right, how are we to be a people who will submit to Jesus and his Lordship? If we don't submit to his divine oversight in his church, will we humbly take up our cross, which means death to ourself, and follow him? The answer is no! This has great application, for as we grow, and as you plant your roots here at Hope, you will continue to find things you think should be different! Maybe you don't like how communion is served, or the type of songs we sing, or the books in the foyer, or the children's ministry set up, or who does announcements, or how people are masking or not masking. Something I say, or the leadership will say, is going to make you upset! As far as the leadership goes, we upset ourselves with our own policies sometimes! But godly submission, loving submission, is a fruit of maturity in Christ. It is a result of knowing Christ, and becoming like him, who submitted himself to the Father's will, even to death on a cross.

Lastly, discipleship is...

To the praise and display of His glory (John 17:24 / Revelation 22:1-5)

Jesus prayed in John 17:20–26:

[20] “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, [21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, **so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.** [24] **Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.** [25] O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. [26] I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (ESV)

Jesus prayed that his disciples would see, would behold his glory. *What* glory is Jesus talking about?

Revelation 21:22–27

[22] And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. [23] And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. [24] By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, [25] and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. [26] They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. [27] But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (ESV)

Revelation 22:1–5

[1] Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb [2] through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. [3] No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. [4] They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. [5] And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. (ESV)

This is the end for which you are discipled— to behold him in his glory! This is the *why* of discipleship! That Christ would be glorified and you and I and all who have died to ourselves and call him Lord would be satisfied! All things are from Him and to him and through him! To be a disciple isn't ultimately about our character, but His glory, which shines through the transformation of our character! In dying to our life we reveal the greatness of our treasure, that his love is better than life, that in His presence there is fullness of joy, that there is nothing on earth we desire besides Christ!

I want to encourage you towards this application: place yourself under the discipleship of Christ through the church.

Find someone to submit yourself to and be mentored.

Submit yourself to one another...

Christ, the Son of God, though he owned and possessed all things, humbled himself and took on the form of a servant, and became obedient, even to the point of death. He modeled perfect submission to the father, being perfected in obedience to the Father.

It was his obedience that brought him to the cross as he prayed, not my will, but your will be done.

¹ [1] [I Cor. 6:19, 20](#) [2] [Rom. 14:7-9](#). [3] [I Cor. 3:23](#); [Tit. 2:14](#). [4] [I Pet. 1:18, 19](#); [I John 1:7](#); [2:2](#). [5] [John 8:34-36](#); [Heb. 2:14, 15](#); [I John 3:8](#). [6] [John 6:39, 40](#); [10:27-30](#); [II Thess. 3:3](#); [I Pet. 1:5](#). [7] [Matt. 10:29-31](#); [Luke 21:16-18](#). [8] [Rom. 8:28](#). [9] [Rom. 8:15, 16](#); [II Cor. 1:21, 22](#); [5:5](#); [Eph. 1:13, 14](#). [10] [Rom. 8:14](#).