

Starters or Refreshments: Week 5

Keep Going!

Aim this week: To look at what it means to be a disciple
To examine the importance of prayer and bible study in discipleship

What is a Disciple?

A disciple is one who learns. For those who followed Jesus as he toured Galilee teaching and preaching it was like serving a three year apprenticeship.

Look at some of the things they were called to do:

Follow Jesus. Did they hesitate?

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. *Mark 1 .16-18*

Associate with undesirables

15 And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax-collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax-collectors, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does he eat with tax-collectors and sinners?’ ¹⁷When Jesus heard this, he said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.’ *Mark 2 .15-17*

Do what Jesus does.

⁷He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.’ ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them. *Mark 6 .7-13*

Even at the end of the three years they were still learning because, as we saw last week, the Holy Spirit was there to guide, strengthen and inspire them.

Being a Disciple Today!

Jesus, in John's Gospel, gives us advice about being a disciple:

15 ¹ ‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³ You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹² ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. ¹⁸ ‘If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, “Servants are not greater than their master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. *John 15 .1-20*

Key Points:

verse 4 – What does it mean to feel at home?	verse 12 – love as I love. How?
verse 5 – what use is a branch unless it is joined?	verse 13 – sacrificial love
verse 6 – 7 – how do we avoid withering?	verse 14 – Do you you think of yourself as a friend of Jesus? What makes a friend of Jesus?
verse 9 – I'll do anything for one who loves me?	Verse 16 – chosen to bear fruit – what fruit?
verse 10 – obedience?	Verse 18 – 20 – expect to be treated like Jesus.
verse 11 – Joy! After cost comes the gain.	

Some people think that being a Christian is all about duty and responsibility. While Jesus does talk about obedience, keeping his law of love, he also talks about his living in us and we in him – experiencing his joy and love (vv 9,11). These are some of the rewards of discipleship.

A description of what it means to serve Christ is on the membership ticket of the Methodist Church

Worship within the local church, including regular sharing in Holy Communion, and through personal prayer.

Learning and Caring, through Bible Study and meeting for fellowship, so that I may grow in faith and support others in their discipleship.

Service, by being a good neighbour in the community, challenging injustice and using my resources to support the church in it's mission in the world.

Evangelism, through working out my faith in daily life and sharing Christ with others.

Discipleship affects the whole of our lives. Not just what we do on Sundays! Examples?

Avoiding Withering (John 15 .6-7) - Keeping Going: Bible Study, Prayer and Breaking Bread

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”
Acts 2 .42

Bible

“If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will make you free” *John 8 .31-32 (Jerusalem Bible)*

“Let the message of Christ in all its richness, find a home with you” *Colossians 3 .16 (Jerusalem Bible)*

What does the image of “being at home” with the word bring to mind?

Words of Jesus – nourish us, challenge us, help us grow, inspire, guide, comfort.

Finding time to “be at home”. Find a place for the Bible in your life.

Prayer

What is prayer? Different people have different ideas, experiences, ways of prayer.

“The goal of prayer is to enter into the condition of being unrestrainedly in love with God”

Martin Smith, The Word is very near you, DLT 1990

“Real prayer is not so much talking to God as just sharing God’s presence”

Malcolm Boyd, quoted from The Fire of Stillness and Silence, ed. Paul Harris, DLT, 1995

“Pray as you can and do not pray as you can’t. Take yourself as you can find yourself; start from that”

Dom John Chapman, quoted from The Fire of Stillness and Silence, (as above)

Breaking Bread

Time and time again the disciples met with Jesus and shared a meal. Often the words breaking bread are specifically used. The word “companion” comes from “com” = together and “panos” bread.

It is a time of fellowship and sharing. But Jesus also used it in a specific way. In sharing the sacrament of Communion we are companions of Jesus in a special way. “This is my Body”