
MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL GENERATIONS

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

FALL 2023

MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL GENERATIONS

We stand at a crossroads in our culture. I fervently believe that the Lord is calling his church to actively pursue and make disciples of the rising generation of young adults—Generation Z. What we will cover in this study pertains to Generation Z from a cultural perspective. Still, the discipling competencies explored can and should be considered transferrable to our own lives and every generation to come. At its core, this study is meant to identify for us who we are in Christ and how he changes everything! From there, I pray that we respond faithfully to Jesus's call upon our lives—that we Make Disciples of All Generations.

Coram Deo,

RJ Voorhees

Spiritual Development Pastor
FBC Tuscaloosa, AL

SESSION 1

MAGNIFY

***OH COME, LET US WORSHIP AND
BOW DOWN; LET US KNEEL
BEFORE THE LORD, OUR MAKER!
(PSALM 95:6)***

Session 1: Magnify

Introduction

This Cultural Moment: A Snapshot of a Rising Generation and a Pressing Need

There are currently six living generations in America.¹ Think about that for a moment! Have you ever considered the opportunities such a situation provides for the church? We live in an unprecedented time where younger generations have easy access to their forebears and the ability to communicate with them more effectively than ever before. The possibility of investing in younger generations for the sake of God's Kingdom is astounding and exciting. But are we equipped to do so? Are we ready to take the necessary steps to consider our biblical call to make disciples, not just of all nations, but all generations? Based on current cultural trends, the church needs to heed its call.

Having previously served in college ministry for over a decade in different capacities, I encountered two generations of students. The first comprised Millennials, or Generation Y. Most recently, I had the privilege of serving Generation Z (Gen Z). As generations go, most research institutes vary somewhat on the year ranges that constitute a generation. For our purposes, however, we will consider Millennials as born between 1981 and 1996 and Gen Z as those born between 1997 and 2012.²

Gen Z will be our generation of focus as they comprise current pre-teens, teenagers, college-aged adults, and recent college graduates entering the workforce. Gen Z constitutes nearly 21 percent of the U.S. population and follows only the Millennial generation in its size.³ In other words, Gen Z is large and has already become influential in our society. It has been estimated that Gen Z accounts for 40 percent of all consumers in the U.S. and their consumption of social media, marketable goods, etc., does not merely influence culture but constitutes our culture.⁴ All of this leads us to conclude that Gen Z is a generation the church needs to engage. And not merely because of their cultural influence but because of what has influenced them.

Those of Generation Z are coming into their own at a time that situates them as those who encompass the first post-Christian generation in the United States. Current college-aged adults are part of Generation Z (Gen Z) and tend to be the children of Generation X and older millennials, whom research has depicted

1. Pew Trust, "Defining Our Six Generations," Author Unknown, accessed Jul 13, 2023. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/data-visualizations/2019/defining-our-six-generations>

2. Pew Research Center, "Defining generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," Michael Dimock, accessed July 12, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>

3. Statista, "Resident population in the United States in 2022, by Generation," Statista Research Team, accessed July 13, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/797321/us-population-by-generation/#:~:text=Generation%20Z%20is%20the%20most,are%20said%20to%20be%20the>

4. James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2017), 37.

as increasingly religiously unaffiliated, or apathetic.⁵ In other words, college-aged Gen Z adults have grown up in increasingly religiously apathetic homes, and the effect is noticeable. Young adults 18 to 22 years old are twice as likely to say they are atheists as older adults, and only three in five identify as Christian compared to two-thirds of older adults.⁶ Considering this—along with recent research that suggests that an increasing number of those who identify as evangelical Christians do not consider the Bible as authoritative, Jesus as divine, or that faith in Jesus is the only way of salvation according to God’s sovereign will⁷—we stand at a moment in time where faithful witness and a desire to make disciples is potentially more critical than ever.

Another concern of note is the relational well-being of Gen Z young adults. Gen Z is the “connected generation,” as they have never been without the internet. Members of Gen Z exhibit hyper-connectivity with others through social media outlets and consider themselves globally minded.⁸ However, Gen Z’ers often describe themselves as lonely, anxious, and looking for answers.⁹ The emotional health of Gen Z was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collected at the two-year mark of the pandemic suggests nearly half (47 percent) of young people are moderately or severely depressed, and over half are moderately or extremely anxious (55 percent).¹⁰

On a positive note, Gen Z is considered spiritually minded and open to spiritual matters. Their spiritual starting point vastly differs from previous generations in that they have not received even rudimentary education concerning the Bible, Christianity, or a Christian worldview. Even those who consider themselves highly religious, even Christians, explore religion differently than previous generations. They are less and less concerned with identifying with a particular faith system or traditional spiritual practices.¹¹

We can conclude that current college-aged adults and others of Gen Z are less likely to engage with the gospel. Much of this disconnect is due to the generation’s parents becoming less spiritually and religiously concerned and a lack of exposure to others of faith who could educate them regarding biblical principles, worldview, and the gospel itself. The current college-aged adult population is a proverbial harvest the Lord is waiting to send workers into. The question then becomes: Are we those the Lord should send to make disciples of

5. White, *Meet Generation Z*, 23.

6. Barna Group, ed., *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (USA: Barna Group, 2018), 14.

7. The State of Theology, “Key Findings,” last modified September 2022, accessed July 13, 2023, https://thestateoftheology.com/?_hsmi=227131954&_hsenc=p2ANqtz_NajmpX7hv7d5PNue8sURomwc3HQ_2Zd3gXgzAxTrR6-el5oGGbaivHCHoUi3ibWbIBKiMmh9ub4AGIib4_WOBR-h_YeDUoH7V8D8s4MjajQt401M.

8. Barna Group and World Vision International, *The Connected Generation: How Christian Leaders Around the World Can Strengthen Faith and Well-Being Among 18-35-Year-Olds*, 2019, 16.

9. Barna Group and World Vision International.

10. Springtide Research Institute, “State of Religion and Young People: Mental Health – What Faith Leaders Need to Know,” Kindle, Location 13.

11. Springtide Research Institute, “State of Religion and Young People,” location 31.

this generation? Are we equipped to know ourselves as faithful disciples of Jesus to where we can make disciples of this vital generation?

There is no perfect people or generation. Each generation has its own issues and blind spots, and that is why the church is at its best when generations have the opportunity to engage one another, learn from each other and seek to encourage and empower each other for the sake of the gospel.¹² The overarching objective of this course is to provide an understanding of what a disciple of Christ is (no matter when they were born), the defining characteristics of a faithful pursuit of Christ in the life of a disciple, and how each disciple is called to make disciples. The goal is to provide a primer, or a schematic of sorts, that will encourage you in your own walk of faith—help you to better understand your identity as a follower of Jesus and how to grow in spiritual maturity, etc. Ultimately, my prayer is that a better understanding of who you are in Christ as his disciple will lead you to invest in the lives of others for the sake of spiritual multiplication, especially with those of Generation Z.

Gen Z needs the gospel. **And the church needs Gen Z.**

Our Path of Equipping:

We will utilize familiar terminology as we discover some essentials for making disciples. Our times together will be framed within the four “M’s” of our mission statement here at FBC Tuscaloosa: Magnify, Mature, Minister, and Multiply.

Magnify points us to the centrality of Christ, the gospel's importance, and the Lord's glory in the life of the disciple.

Mature refers to the reality of the believer’s life in Christ—an utter transformation through the Holy Spirit and a call and a responsibility to grow in Christ’s likeness according to God’s Word.

Minister reflects an exhibition and exposition of our growth in faith. It is a mindset and heart posture of service, selflessness, and compassion.

Multiply is the area of response to Jesus’s work in our lives and hearts through our obedience to his call in the Great Commission to “go and make disciples” (Matt 28:18-20).

12. Nick and Marjorie Allan, *XYZ of Discipleship: Understanding and Reaching Generations Y & Z* (Place of publication not identified: MALCOLM DOWN Publishing L, 2020), 28.

Terms to Know:

We are already using familiar terminology to frame our discussion of the essentials of being and making disciples. However, we also need to define some terms that will be necessary as we move forward.

Essential - something that is “inherent” or maybe even more helpful, “basic, indispensable, necessary.”¹³

Competency - possessing competence, or sufficient knowledge or skill regarding specific topics, trades, or arenas of thought.¹⁴

Disciple - one who has been regenerated in spirit through faith in Christ for the forgiveness of his/her sin (i.e., “born again”),¹⁵ and who has been set apart as an apprentice to Jesus¹⁶. He or she is one who submits fully to the teachings, commandments, and example of Christ¹⁷—and who is called to participate in the mission of God wherein believers faithfully share the gospel so others might become disciples.¹⁸

Discipler or Disciplemaker - a disciple committed to investing in the spiritual lives of fellow believers, and potential believers in Jesus.

Discipleship or Disciplemaking - Each can be defined as the activity of “intentionally equipping believers with the Word of God through accountable relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit to replicate faithful followers of Jesus.”¹⁹ We will use these terms interchangeably.

Essential Discipleship Competencies - the necessary, indispensable elements of knowledge, skill, and character required for a disciple of Jesus to equip other followers of Christ to mature in faith and make disciples themselves.

13. Merriam-Webster.com. “Essential.” Accessed June 26, 2023. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/essential>.

14. Merriam-Webster.com. “Competency.” Accessed June 26, 2023. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/essential>.

15. John 3:3, 7; Ezek. 36:26-27; Acts 14:21; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25; Jas. 1:18; See also Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*, Exponential Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 47. and Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2014).

16. Willard, *The Great Omission*, 6.

17. Matt. 4:19, cf. John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, First Edition (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2019). Comer discusses the idea of Jesus’s invitation to “take up his yoke” as one where the disciple is called to “travel through life at his (Jesus’s) side, learning from him how to shoulder the weight of life.”

18. Matt. 28:18-20, Col. 1:28. See also Bob McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World: Why Some Disciple-Makers Reproduce When Others Fail*. (Birmingham, AL: Multiplication Press, 2013), 65 where he discusses following Jesus necessarily requires fishing for men.

19. Robby Gallaty et al., *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 19.

MAGNIFY

The Westminster Shorter and Longer Catechisms both begin with a fundamental question:

“What is the chief end of man?”

The answer is profound:

“To glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

The glory of the Lord is the purpose of all creation²⁰, but especially for the creation that bears his image.

Humanity is unique in the eyes of God and possesses traits that reflect God, unlike any other creature.²¹

Humanity’s very existence brings the Lord glory, but his unique creation being in right relationship and enjoying him forever brings him greater glory still.

The Lord desires his own glory, but our enjoyment of him, too.

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- WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU STOPPED TO THINK ABOUT HOW WE ARE MEANT TO ENJOY THE LORD? HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU TO REMEMBER THAT WE GET TO ENJOY GOD?
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Our enjoyment of the Lord is bound in our acknowledgment of his holiness, righteousness, and glory. **In other words, we enjoy and magnify God most when we know God’s character.**

God’s Character in Action: The Gospel

The creation account in Genesis 1 and 2 depicts how the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) experienced God and could commune with and enjoy him and all that he provided for them.

20. Romans 11:36; Revelation 4:11

21. Genesis 1:26-27.

However, in Genesis 3, we read of how they chose to seek their own glory versus magnifying the Lord's and ushered in the great fall of humanity and the advent of sin.

Adam and Eve chose to disobey the Lord, ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and sought "to be like God." Because of their choice, and how that inherited nature leads to our sinful choices every day, right relationship with our Creator has been interrupted ever since.

Humanity's self-glorification and sin created the need for redemption.

In his letter to the Roman church, the Apostle Paul states in the fifth chapter that *"sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."*²²

He clarifies in chapter 5 what he has already described as the state of humanity in chapter 3:23, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

In 3:23, Paul expounds upon Psalms 14 and 53, which he quotes in 3:11-12:

*"None is righteous, no, not one;
no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one."*

The effect of humanity's fall is seismic. You and I, in our flesh, fall short of what God intended for us. **We fall short of his glory, which means we cannot commune with him properly or glorify his name as we should.** We miss out on God and the goodness he desires to share with us.

All that we know in this life that is good comes from the Lord because he is good and gracious.

In **Psalm 16**, David acknowledges this truth. He writes:

22. Romans 5:12; See also verses 17-18.

*“Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2 I say to the Lord, “**You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you**” ...
5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
7 I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.^[d]
8 I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^[e] rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.^[f]
11 **You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**”²³*

In God’s presence, we experience the fullness of Joy.

However, sin separates us from knowing his goodness, experiencing his glory, or properly glorifying him.

Though the Lord is the giver of good things, his glory also rests in his righteousness and holiness.

Exodus 34:6-7a states:

The Lord passed before him (Moses) and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty...”

God has shown humanity steadfast love and incredible patience in his goodness and mercy. However, he will not tolerate sin. **He desires to eradicate sin.**

23. Psalm 16: 1-2, 5-11. Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quoted is from the English Standard Version.

This is part of his character.

The existence of sin in humanity requires a way of redemption in God's eyes so that we may walk in righteousness and be made right with him.

God will by no means clear the guilty. However, mercifully, the Lord has seen fit to make a way on our behalf.

Returning to **Romans 5**, hear Paul's description of God's character and his provision in **verses 6-11**:

*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God **through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.***

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- WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO PAUL'S WORDS IN ROMANS 5:6-11? HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE HELP YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD DESIRES FOR US?
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Jesus: At the Center of Salvation

The good news contained in Romans 5:6-11 is **the gospel**.

Even in the midst of our rebellion and rejection of God's goodness, he shows his love toward us and makes a sacrifice on our behalf. **He offers his Son, Jesus, to justify humanity and provide the means of our redemption.** God has seen fit to provide the way of reconciliation to himself on our behalf—if we believe.

This is indeed good news!

And what is so integral to this truth is the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Lord provided **the exclusive means of salvation through his Son, Jesus.**

Jesus is the eternally existent Son of God, who is one with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He was incarnated in the flesh and lived a perfectly obedient and sinless life. Jesus had “to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). Through Jesus’s sacrifice upon the cross, sinful humanity finds redemption and a reconciled relationship with God.²⁴

When Jesus sacrificed himself for sinful humanity, his blood paid the price for the redemption of mankind’s sin-debt in the eyes of God the Father.²⁵ Jesus took on all of humanity in the incarnation to redeem the whole man through his sacrifice.²⁶

It is because of Jesus we have access to right relationship with God.

Jesus is quite literally at the center of our salvation. You and I would have no hope of redemption if it weren’t for the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

God chose to offer redemption to humanity through Jesus. He desires that we know him, commune with him, and enjoy him—but make no mistake...all that God accomplishes on our behalf through his Son is meant to glorify his name.

Throughout Scripture, when the Lord acts on behalf of his people, it is for their good and for his glory.

Take for example Psalm 106:1-8:

***Praise the Lord!
Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!***

24. “Article II B: God the Son,” *The Baptist Faith and Message*, The Southern Baptist Convention, accessed November 1, 2022, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#ii>.

25. Heb. 5:9 and 9:12 are especially helpful here.

26. “Article IV: Salvation,” *The Baptist Faith and Message*, The Southern Baptist Convention, Accessed November 1, 2022, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#ii>

- ² *Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord,
or declare all his praise?*
- ³ *Blessed are they who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times!*
- ⁴ *Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people;
help me when you save them,^[a]*
- ⁵ *that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory with your inheritance.*
- ⁶ *Both we and our fathers have sinned;
we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness.*
- ⁷ *Our fathers, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider your wondrous works;
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.*
- ⁸ ***Yet he saved them for his name's sake,
that he might make known his mighty power.***

The Lord cares for his people even when they do not care for him. It is his character and rooted in his glory. The same can be noted of Christ coming on our behalf.

Consider Ephesians 2:4-9:

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the **great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses,** made us alive together with Christ—**by grace you have been saved**— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **For by grace you have been saved through faith.** And this is not your own doing; it is **the gift of God,** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand,** that we should walk in them.*

It is at the initiative of God and according to his grace that salvation comes to humanity through Jesus.

We see a merging here, in the person and ministry of Jesus, of the glory of God—exhibited through his purposes—and the centrality of Jesus for our salvation.

Jesus himself understood this.

In **John 17**, Jesus prays in the presence of his disciples:

*“Father, the hour has come; **glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.**”²⁷*

Jesus understands that everything he is meant to do brings him and his Father glory. It is from that glory, the very nature of God, that the power for humanity’s salvation is extended.

Jesus’s ability to offer redemption, salvation, and eternal life originates in his authority “over all flesh.”

Not only do his words speak to his personal divinity, but Jesus also acknowledges that he is the exclusive avenue for humanity’s salvation.

He is the one who gives eternal life. And eternal life, as he prays to the Father, is knowing God and his only true Son. **In this sense, eternal life is an invitation to commune with the Lord in a relationship much like Adam and Eve had initially.**

The eternal life offered through Jesus is reconciliation!

Earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus says something similar that is helpful here:

*“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. **From now on you do know him and have seen him.**”²⁸*

Jesus again links the knowledge of the Father and himself to truth and life. He is the way of returning to God. **Jesus is the way of salvation. He is at the center of every believer’s life and story. And as such, he is worthy of our praise!**

27. John 17:1b-5.

28. John 14:6-7.

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- HOW DOES UNDERSTANDING WHO JESUS IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US LEAD YOU TO WORSHIP HIM? HOW DOES IT ENCOURAGE YOU IN HOW YOU WANT TO INVEST IN OTHERS WITH THIS GOOD NEWS?
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Jesus: The Original Disciplemaker

Because Jesus is at the center of our salvation, we must grasp that our lives are meant to be centered upon him when we put our faith in him.

At conversion, when one believes in Christ for his or her salvation, a disciple is made.

Every believer in Jesus is his disciple. They are born again²⁹ and set apart for the Lord's purposes in this earthly life.

In **2 Corinthians 5**, the Apostle Paul connects new spiritual life with new purpose:

*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that **those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.***³⁰

Disciples have a new life in Christ that is meant **for** Christ.

Living as a disciple means living with Christ as our highest priority—**THE** priority of our lives. In the original Greek, a **disciple**, or *mathētēs* (μαθητής), is “one who learns through instruction under a teacher” and has a committed attachment to a teacher, an adherent to the teacher’s life and instruction.³¹

29. For more on this, see John 3 and Jesus's interactions with Nicodemus.

30. 2 Cor. 5:14-15.

31. Frederick W. Danker and Kathryn Krug, "μαθητής," *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 220.

To be a disciple in biblical times meant adopting the teacher's lifestyle, instruction, and philosophy. In other words, a disciple sought to find a teacher **to become like the teacher**.

Simply put, a disciple of Jesus seeks to know and follow Jesus—to be more and more like him.³²

- **Can you remember a time in your life when you met, revered, or learned under someone that made you want to be like them? If so, what was that like? Did you find yourself taking on some of their characteristics? Opinions?**

The word “disciple” and its variations can be found 266 times in the New Testament, most of which are in the Gospels. In those contexts, living as a disciple means abandoning the things of the world and following Jesus.³³

In **Luke 14:26-27** Jesus states:

²⁶“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Hatred is used as a comparative term here. We are meant to consider our level of affection for loved ones in this life as hatred **versus** our affection and dedication to Jesus.³⁴

Jesus is to mean that much to us!

Jesus calls each believer to die to themselves and pursue him. **We lay down our earthly desires, ambitions, etc., to pursue his purposes and his glory.** In doing so, we better know who God created us to be.

J.T. English of Storyline Church in CO notes:

32. Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 27.

33. Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2013), 22.

34. *Ibid.*, 23.

*According to Jesus, discipleship is not about self-actualization or self-preservation; it is about self-denial. **You will know yourself the most when you are carrying your cross.** All of our self-actualized visions of discipleship and our own little kingdoms need to crumble and be crucified if the kingdom of God is going to reign in our lives. True self-knowledge comes not through being true to yourself but through denying yourself...True discipleship is not more than Jesus, but more of Jesus...Christ is the One who gets all the glory.³⁵*

Born-again disciples of Jesus walk in transformation and a new identity that removes the focus from our earthly desires, ambitions, etc., and instead aligns us with Christ's purposes for the world, and he receives the glory!

Paul continues in **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **All this is from God,** who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. **Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.***

The disciple's transformation includes the call to be an ambassador for Christ, who proclaims the gospel and magnifies his name.

Psalm 69:30 states:

*I will praise the name of God with a song;
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.*

As ambassadors of Jesus, we have the privilege of magnifying the name of the Lord. It is important to note that **we are not trying to make a small god look bigger or more important.**

No, it is like **John Piper** says, "**We are not called to be microscopes. We are called to be telescopes...the calling of those who love God is to make his greatness begin to look as great as it really is.**"³⁶

35. J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2020), 27, 36.

36. John Piper, "How to Magnify God," *Desiring God*, accessed July 20, 2023. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-magnify-god>

In other words, disciples point to the glory of God and just how enjoyable he is!

Jesus made the first disciples. He invited them to follow him—to submit to his authority intellectually and spiritually. He invited them to be shaped and changed by him—new creations that grow in his likeness. He also invited them to join him in his mission to extend salvation to all who would believe—to be ambassadors of the gospel, and to make more disciples.

As we conclude this session, let's return to Jesus's prayer in **John 17**:

As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 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. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 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.³⁷

The glory Jesus gives to his disciples originates from the Father. If you recall from earlier in Jesus's prayer, he asks to receive glory to glorify the Father.³⁸ The implication is the same for Jesus's disciples.

Disciples receive the glory of Jesus in order to *Magnify* his name through faithful obedience—this includes desiring to know him more deeply and to grow in faith (*Mature*), to reflect better his likeness in service of others (*Minister*), and to fulfill the call to make other disciples (*Multiply*).

We will explore these other essential competencies in the coming sessions, but remember, due to Christ's glory, we are invited to be one with Christ and one with one another. We are unified in purpose and opportunity to magnify the name of the Lord, bringing him glory and enjoying him together forever.

37. John 17:18-23.

38. John 17:1.

SESSION 2

MATURE

***FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD,
YOUR SANCTIFICATION...***

(1 THESS. 4:3)

Session 2: Mature

Objective: *To introduce participants to the need for maturing in faith as a disciple of Jesus and how maturity aids in making other disciples—especially the emerging young adult generation (Gen Z).*

Introduction and Review

Last session, we discovered how the life of a follower of Jesus, **a disciple**, is to be centered around the person, ministry, and victory of Jesus Christ as he bore the weight of humanity's sin to redeem us in the eyes of God.

We noted that the purpose of all of creation, but especially the life of a disciple, is meant to magnify the Lord Jesus through acknowledgment of his glory. Disciples share in Jesus's glory, as he bestows it on them, to invite others to know him as Lord and Savior.

Born-again disciples of Jesus should **walk in transformation and a new identity that removes the focus from their earthly desires, ambitions, etc., and instead aligns them with Christ's purposes for the world, and he receives the glory!**

Investing our lives in the lives of Gen Z young adults is increasingly vital. A better understanding of how Christ is central to our spiritual rebirth and salvation—and worthy of all glory—brings us to our time together in this session, where we focus on the biblical call to progressively resemble Jesus in our everyday lives...or **MATURE in our faith.**

Cultural Focus: Why This Matters for Gen Z

Remember, Gen Z is considered the first post-Christian generation in the United States.

The trusted adults in Gen Z's lives have not invested in them spiritually. Now, as Gen Z rises into adulthood, the spiritual reality of the generation has come into view. **Gen Z is spiritually illiterate.**

James Emery White notes in his book *Meet Generation Z*:

“Perhaps the most defining mark of the members of Generation Z, in terms of their spiritual lives, is their spiritual illiteracy...They do not know what the Bible says. They do not know the basics of Christian belief or theology. They do not know what the cross is about. They do not know what it

means to worship...They don't even have a memory of the gospel...As a result, there is a profound spiritual emptiness.”¹

Gen Z's spiritual illiteracy is due to a lack of faithful disciples of Jesus calling them to their true purpose in Christ. Generation Z is known as incredibly spiritual. However, it is difficult to ground oneself spiritually—to define oneself and one's purpose—without grasping truth.

This is where disciples of Jesus come in. Followers of Christ who are older, wiser, and more experienced in life and faith can influence the rising generation of young adults in critical fashion. **We can point them to Jesus.**

Research shows that Gen Z'ers who are engaged in their Christian faith have a greater sense of self. Those who consider themselves to be “engaged Christians” are more likely than the average Gen Z'er to consider their religious beliefs as “very important to their identity.”²

According to Barna's research the difference is staggering—89% of engaged Gen Z Christians consider their religious beliefs to be personally shaping versus just 28% of the average Gen Z'er.³

But what defines an “engaged Christian” in Generation Z?

David Kinnaman, president of Barna Research defines an engaged Christian as a **resilient disciple**. He clarifies that a resilient disciple:

- 1) Attends church regularly and engages with their church more than just attending worship services.
- 2) Trusts firmly in the authority of the Bible.
- 3) Is committed to Jesus personally and affirms he was crucified and raised from the dead to conquer sin and death.
- 4) Expresses a desire to transform society as an expression of their faith.⁴

Three areas where resilient faith thrives involve the investment of others—especially elders in the faith:

- **Experiencing Jesus** – a desire to remove distractions from pursuing closeness with Jesus.

1. James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2017), 139.

2. Barna Group, ed., *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (USA: Barna Group, 2018), 43.

3. Ibid.

4. David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock as quoted in Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Volume 2 Caring for Young Souls and Cultivating Resilience*, 2018, 62.

- **Cultural discernment**- a community-based learning environment that sits under the authority of the Bible to navigate culture.
- **Meaningful intergenerational relationships** – the need for devotion to other believers Gen Z'ers would like to become.⁵

Resilient Gen Z disciples have a greater sense of well-being, satisfaction in life, and safety than those who have left the Christian faith.⁶ They are more likely to have someone encouraging them to grow spiritually—or **MATURE** in their faith (84% versus 39% of others who label themselves Christian).⁷ They are also much more likely to have an older believer in their life they consider a mentor in the faith.⁸

- TAKE A MOMENT TO DISCUSS WHAT WE HAVE JUST COVERED. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT STRIKES YOU SPECIFICALLY? WHAT PART COULD YOU PLAY IN THE LIFE OF A GEN Z YOUNG ADULT?
-

Why is all this information on Gen Z pertinent to our discussion in this session?

It is challenging to make resilient disciples of Gen Z'ers, who are maturing in their faith, if we aren't MATURING spiritually ourselves. And we need to be about making disciples of Gen Z!

In this session's remaining time, we will survey the essential discipling competency **MATURE** to clarify how each believer is meant to grow in faith and the likeness of Christ.

MATURE

- WHEN YOU THINK OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY, WHAT COMES TO MIND? WHAT IS INVOLVED? IS THERE A PARTICULAR PERSON THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT SOMEONE WHO IS MATURE SPIRITUALLY? WHAT SETS THEM APART?

A Spiritual Reality: The Work of the Holy Spirit

5. Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, 62.
6. Ibid., 64.
7. Barna Group and World Vision International, *The Connected Generation: How Christian Leaders Around the World Can Strengthen Faith and Well-Being Among 18-35-Year-Olds*, 2019, 100.
8. Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z: Volume 2*, 65.

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” – Ezekiel 36:26-28

When a person places their trust in Jesus for salvation, they’re spiritually reborn.⁹ The Holy Spirit draws the unbeliever to the gospel's truth and glorifies Jesus by indwelling and securing those the Father has given to Jesus by faith.¹⁰ **The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life and unites the believer with Christ.**¹¹

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life and heart of the believer (or disciple) enacts **spiritual transformation**. The Spirit encourages the disciple to walk in the Lord’s statutes—to obey his commands and to walk in the newness of life.

The Holy Spirit frees disciples from slavery to sin and fear of death and invites them to walk in their new identity in Jesus Christ.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in **Romans 8:12-17a**:

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but **you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”** **The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...**

A couple of implications are attached to the disciple’s new identity as an heir with Christ:

- Putting to death the deeds of the body
- Do not fall back into the fear of spiritual death.

The implications are not passive on the part of the disciple. Instead, they are an invitation to pursue conformity to the likeness of Christ through the work, power, and leadership of the Holy Spirit.¹²

9. John 3:3, 5-6.

10. John 16:13-15; Romans 8:38-39.

11. John 6:63.

12. Romans 8:29. See also Ephesians 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Conforming to Christ's likeness emphasizes the disciple's need to know and walk with the Lord. Jesus walks with the Father and the Holy Spirit and invites his followers to do likewise in him.

Let's look at Jesus's words in **John 15:1-11**:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ **Abide in me, and I in you. 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. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.** ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ **By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.** ⁹ **As the Father has loved me, so have I 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 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

To **abide means to remain fixed, stable and consistent.**¹³ We can think of it as "putting down roots," or even finding our dwelling place with Jesus. What is so important about abiding in Christ is what results in the disciple's life—fruit.

The fruit of the disciple's life is not his own doing but results from its attachment to the vine. The Father is glorified when the vine produces fruit; to produce fruit, disciples must dwell in Christ's love and keep his commandments. **Our obedience is fruit.**

Jesus wants disciples to have intimacy with him (*to abide in him*), but also obey him (*bear much fruit*). And to **MATURE** in faith means to grow as obedient, productive branches. **The Holy Spirit helps us be productive.**

The passage we just covered in John 15 is sandwiched between two other passages (in John 14 and 16) where Jesus shares that God the Father will send a Helper—the Holy Spirit—to teach all things and bring all that Jesus taught to remembrance.

13. Kevin Blackwell and Randy Norris, *Cultivate Disciplemaking* (Birmingham, AL: Make & Teach Discipleship Resources, 2022), 63.

It is the Holy Spirit who guides disciples into all truth and who convicts the world concerning sin.¹⁴ **Jesus apparently wants us to understand that all he desires regarding intimacy with and obedience to him is established, empowered, and sustained by the Holy Spirit.**

- BASED ON WHAT WE HAVE JUST COVERED, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE IN THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE? IN YOUR OWN WORDS, HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING IN YOUR HEART AND LIFE SINCE COMING TO FAITH IN JESUS?

A Spiritual Partnership: Humanity's Responsibility to Mature

Before we move to some very practical application, it would be helpful for us to understand better why disciples of Jesus are expected to mature in their faith. **To paint the picture, all we need to do is look to Scripture.**

Here is just a sampling of passages that call for disciples to actively grow in their faith—in other words, commands to obey:

- *As obedient children* (let's remember our new identity as adopted sons of God in Christ), **do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.** (1 Peter 1:14-15)
- **Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.** (Romans 12:1-2)
- *But that is not the way you learned Christ!*— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to **put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.** (Ephesians 4:20-24)
- *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.* (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

14. John 16:8-9.

- **Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.** Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:11b-12)
-

- TAKE A MOMENT, AND AROUND YOUR TABLES, LIST SOME OF THE “ACTION PHRASES” USED IN THESE PASSAGES. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING ACTION? WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE ACTIONS?
-

It is clear from these passages that disciples of Christ are meant to assume responsibility for their maturation in faith. None of these commands nor human responsibility negates what the Holy Spirit achieves in the hearts of the faithful; rather, the Holy Spirit enables the believer to grow. **It is a partnership that every disciple is invited into.**

More than this, **it is the Lord’s invitation to taste and see that He is good.**¹⁵ No one ever “arrives” when it comes to maturing in faith in this life. No matter what stage of spiritual maturity one may be in, even the most mature among us have only begun to taste the grace of God.¹⁶

HABITS FOR HOLINESS

But how can we best MATURE in our faith? What practices can we utilize to pursue intimacy with Christ and better prepare ourselves to obey his commands? Within the history of the church, several practices have been distilled into lists of varying lengths, all described as *Spiritual Disciplines*.

These disciplines help position disciples to receive what the Lord desires to bestow. **Think of it as branches preparing to host and nurture the fruit the Vine desires to produce through them.**

Donald Whitney is helpful. He states, “*Think of the Spiritual Disciplines as ways we can place ourselves in the path of God’s grace.*”¹⁷

15. Psalm 34:8.

16. David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus Through the Spiritual Disciplines: Study Guide* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 24.

17. Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Revised and Updated (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 13.

By undertaking these disciplines, disciples do not seek to force Jesus's hand, but put themselves "along the paths of grace where we can be expectant of his blessing."¹⁸

To place ourselves along the path of grace, we will examine habits for holiness that fall into three primary categories:¹⁹

- God's Voice
- God's Ear
- God's Body

What we cover here is by no means exhaustive, but hopefully it is a springboard toward a life devoted to maturing in faith.

GOD'S VOICE: The Word of God

The fundamental means of God's ongoing grace, through his Spirit, in the life of the Christian and the life of the church is God's self-expression in his Word, in the gospel, perfectly kept for us and on display in all its textures, riches, and hues in the external written word of the Scriptures. –David Mathis, *Habits of Grace*²⁰

God's Voice is integral for the disciple of Christ to grow spiritually. Placing oneself under the Bible's teaching and the influence of the Holy Spirit through Scripture is invaluable for maturing in faith and developing intimacy with the Lord.

Donald Whitney describes sitting under God's voice as **Bible Intake**.

And he describes five ways to intake the Bible:²¹

- 1) Hearing the Word
- 2) Reading the Word
- 3) Studying the Word
- 4) Memorizing the Word
- 5) Meditating on the Word
- 6) Applying the Word

We won't delve too deeply into each of these practices, but an overview should help us understand the importance of hearing the voice of God through his written Word.

18. Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 29.

19. It should be noted that this portion of the study relies heavily upon the work of David Mathis as presented in *Habits of Grace*, along with the work of Donald Whitney in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*.

20. Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 40–41.

21. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 23.

HEARING THE WORD should be considered the most accessible form of Bible intake as it is merely hearing the Word of God taught, read aloud, or spoken about.

Hearing God's Word directly influences faith. **Romans 10:17** states, "***So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.***"

An essential aspect of this form of intake is that it's best undertaken **in the local church where the Word of God is faithfully preached.**

This discipline, then, also requires disciples to commit to attending a local church and investing in a gospel-centered community of believers.

READING THE WORD. This one seems obvious. But if we are honest with ourselves, disciples must read God's Word more regularly.

If disciples better understood the preciousness of Scripture, maybe the desire to spend time in God's Word would grow.

Hear how the Psalmist views the Word of God:

***"Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation.
100 I understand more than the aged,^[a]
for I keep your precepts.
101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
102 I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me.
103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104 Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way."***
(Psalm 119:97-104)

-
- HOW DO YOU VIEW THE BIBLE? WOULD YOU SAY YOUR FIRST THOUGHT IS THAT IT IS PRECIOUS TO YOU? WHAT COULD VIEWING THE WORD OF GOD IN THIS WAY DO TO HELP YOU MATURE IN FAITH?
-

David Mathis writes,

At the end of the day, there is simply no replacement for finding a regular time and place, blocking out distractions, putting your nose in the text, and letting your mind and heart be led and captured and thrilled by God himself communicating to us in his objective written Word.²²

Meeting this goal takes discipline and prioritization, but it is worth it!

◇ **Some steps to consider about READING THE WORD:**

A) Find the time.

- a. Whitney suggests scheduling it in your calendar much like an important concert or game you've been wanting to go to, or if you're dating someone, an important date night you've been waiting to schedule.

B) Adopt a reading plan.

- a. If you don't want a rigid structure all you need to do is read three chapters in the OT and three in the NT everyday to read through the Bible in a year.
- b. In the back of your booklet, you will also find some resources about reading plans, etc. to help you.

C) Make some notes from the reading—highlights the Holy Spirit has impressed upon your heart and mind.

The truth is that the more time we spend reading the Word of God, the more the truths of God will integrate into our everyday lives.

Your insight into Scripture will deepen, and you will become more and more like Jesus as you apply the Word's truth in your life.

STUDYING THE WORD is different than just reading the Word.

Reading takes you on a flyover of the Word of God and reveals significant themes and grand structures. But if we were to study the Lord's Word more closely at an unhurried pace, we would surely begin seeing more details missed during our flyovers.

22. Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 45.

Studying is like digging in the earth to find treasure, whereas reading is raking the topsoil to find the best places to dig.²³

Occasionally, disciples must linger over specific passages to mine the depths of what the Lord has given us in his Word.

MEMORIZING THE WORD is a vital aspect of Bible intake.

The psalmist encourages believers to “store up God’s Word in their hearts so they might not sin against him.”²⁴

Memorizing Scripture is practical. When the Word of God is stored in the brain of disciples, the Holy Spirit can access that knowledge to aid them in times of need or discernment.

-
- WE SEEK TO KNOW THE MIND OF GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE TO GROW IN INTIMACY WITH HIM. THINK ABOUT A CLOSE FRIEND, OR SPOUSE, ETC. WHAT HAVE YOU MEMORIZED ABOUT THEM? WHY WAS IT VITAL FOR YOU TO REMEMBER THESE THINGS? WHY IS MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE ESSENTIAL FOR INTIMACY WITH THE LORD?
-

MEDITATING ON GOD’S WORD is not to be confused with Eastern spiritualist practices or New Age religions. No. Scripturally speaking, meditation is filling one’s mind with the truths of God to actively engage God’s thoughts and apply them to our lives. Consider God’s words to Joshua in **Joshua 1:8**:

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Joshua’s success as the leader of Israel following the death of Moses hinged upon his affection for and application of God’s Word in obedience. God expected Joshua to know his Word intimately because knowing God’s Word leads to more profound, more intimate knowledge of the person of God.

Meditation helps disciples be conformed to Christ’s character. Think of Paul’s words to the Philippian church:

23. Mathis, 51.
24. Psalm 119:11

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”²⁵

Lastly, **APPLYING GOD’S WORD** is simply enacting or following through on what God’s Word teaches us.

James 1:22-25 states:

“...be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

The more we spend time in God's Word, reading, studying, memorizing and meditating, the more we will ascertain how God's Word can be applied in everyday situations.

The Psalmist simply says ***“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”***

The Holy Spirit is ready and willing to apply the truth of God’s Word to guide us every day.

GOD’S EAR: The Call to Pray and Spend Time with God

We have the ear of God through prayer.²⁶

For disciples to have God’s ear, he has given it. He is the initiator. He makes prayer possible.

God has spoken through his Word and has now opened his ear to us. So, prayer, for disciples of Christ, is not merely a conversation with God, but a response to who God is and how he has initiated a relationship with us!²⁷

Prayer originates in our adoration of the Lord and leads to us laying our requests before him. However, prayer is more than just a practice.

25. Philippians 4:8

26. Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 95.

27. Mathis, 94.

Prayer is an orientation of the disciple's life in recognition of dependence upon the Lord and humble submission to his purposes. As an orientation, it must be constant in the disciple's life. Disciples are meant to devote themselves to prayer out of devotion and without ceasing.²⁸

Prayer is about having more of God and continually relating to him—on our own and with others.²⁹ All of this transforms us more into the image of Jesus.³⁰

Praying On One's Own:

In Matthew 6:5-6 we hear Jesus state:

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The temptation of the human heart is to garner personal attention and the affection of others, but, as we just learned, prayer is directed affection, attention, and adoration to the Lord in response to all he does on our behalf. He gives his ear, and we get to speak with him.

Getting alone with God to pray also helps us focus on the Lord and strengthens our character.

Tim Keller notes:

The infallible test of spiritual integrity, Jesus says, is your private prayer life. Many people will pray when they are required by cultural or social expectations, or perhaps by the anxiety caused by troubling circumstances. Those with a genuinely lived relationship with God as Father, however, will inwardly want to pray and therefore will pray even though nothing on the outside is pressing them to do so.³¹

Private prayer was an essential practice of Jesus, so his disciples, conformed to his image, likewise need to spend time with God alone.

28. Acts 1:14; Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18.

29. Ibid., 96.

30. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 80.

31. Timothy Keller as quoted by David Mathis in *Habits of Grace*, 101.

Some Suggestions for Private Prayer:³²

- 1) Create Your Closet – find a regular place as your go-to spot for private prayer
- 2) Begin with Bible – utilize your devotion time in God’s Word to hear from him, meditate upon his Word and allow that to lead into your time of prayer.
- 3) Adore, Confess, Thank, Ask – be mindful to adore God first, confess your sins and failings, give thanks for his grace and mercy, and then petition the Lord for your own requests and requests for others.
- 4) Pray Freely – honestly express your desires, your burdens, and your hopes, but also ask the Lord to shape your desires.
- 5) Keep it Fresh – utilize journaling, Fasting, and silence and solitude to sharpen your affections for the Lord.

Praying Often and with Others

“Everywhere God is, prayer is. Since God is everywhere and infinitely great, prayer must be all pervasive in our lives” – Tim Keller

The practice of communal prayer is powerful and necessary because if we are to pray without ceasing, there are moments when we cannot and should not escape to our prayer closets.

There are numerous biblical examples of communal prayer. The book of Acts overflows with such accounts. **Communal prayer allows disciples to express unity in devotion to the Lord and his purposes but also provides the opportunity to share our needs with one another.**

In communal prayer, we can invite others into our lives to share our burdens and likewise. Praying together can increase our joy, unite us, and increase our collective faith as we seek the Lord, asking for his movement amid his people for his purposes.

-
- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PRAYER LIFE? HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED THE PRIVILEGE IT IS THAT WE “HAVE GOD’S EAR”? HOW HAS WHAT WE HAVE DISCUSSED ABOUT PRAYER AFFIRMED OR CHALLENGED YOU PERSONALLY?
-

32. Adapted from Mathis, 103-5.

GOD'S BODY: The Importance of Other Disciples

In Romans 12:4-5, the Apostle Paul notes,

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Based upon this (and other passages), followers of Jesus must recognize that they are **each part of the Body of Christ**. The Lord has given disciples specific roles and gifts to contribute to his Church during their lifetimes. Each member is essential, and the body does not function correctly without each member.

Disciples are meant to include other disciples in their lives. This can happen in many ways, and more specifics of how this plays out in the life of disciples will be covered in the following session, but **one of the most visible and meaningful is corporate worship**.

In other words, **disciples are meant to be involved in a local church and participate in the discipline of worshiping with others**.

Up to this point, attention has been given primarily to practices of personal devotion. Still, the fact is that **disciples were made to worship Jesus together, to live lives of obedience together**.

When we look to the close of Scripture, the image we see is not one of disciples lining up to have their personal time with the Lord. No, the image depicted is of a great multitude from every ethnicity gathering around the throne of God, praising his name.³³

Donald Whitney states, *"There's an element of worship and Christianity that cannot be experienced in private worship or by watching worship. There are some graces and blessings that God gives only in 'meeting together' with other believers."*³⁴

Disciples gather to hear God's Word preached, sing his praises, and participate in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. They do so out of obedience. They do so to encourage each other in the faith.

Hebrews 10:24-25 speaks to the importance of disciples gathering:

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not

33. Revelation 7:9-10.

34. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 111.

neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The public aspect of corporate worship denotes the importance of the body of Christ as a whole. No disciple was meant to pursue Jesus on their own. Humans are relational beings created in the image of a Triune God.

God uses other disciples to help us grow in faith.

The Greek word *koinonia* denotes commonality, partnership, and fellowship.³⁵ It is the word used to describe the experience of Jesus’s disciples—especially those in the early church.

“Fellowship,” the koinonia bond of disciples, does not merely describe opportunities to gather socially in Jesus’s name but paints the picture of those who share a Savior and their Savior’s mission.

Our fellowship feeds our obedience to the Lord’s purposes, and he uses disciples’ fellowship to shape and mature them in faith.

No disciple is meant to journey alone in this life. In fact, the Lord intends for other believers to help us MATURE in faith.

In our next session, we will explore the essential competency of **MINISTER**, where we will lay out more about doing life together in Jesus’s name.

35. Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 145.

SESSION 3 MINISTER

***...BUT WHOEVER WOULD BE GREAT
AMONG YOU MUST BE YOUR
SERVANT, AND WHOEVER WOULD
BE FIRST AMONG YOU MUST BE
SLAVE OF ALL.
(MARK 10:43B-44)***

Session 3: MINISTER

Objective: *To introduce participants to the essential competency of MINISTER—serving others in Jesus's name for the purpose of his glory, developing biblical community, and inviting others to experience his goodness.*

Introduction and Review

In our last session, we discovered that **spiritual maturity is both the result of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a disciple, but also the intentional partnering with the Holy Spirit to grow in Christlikeness.** By practicing disciplines that place us in the path of God's grace, we are better equipped and more available to produce the spiritual fruit the Lord desires from his disciples.

Those of Generation Z who are resilient in their faith have grown so because of the investment of more mature disciples in their lives. The impetus for every follower of Jesus is to make disciples, and for disciples to make an impact in Generation Z, intentional pursuit of Christ and maturing in faith is necessary. **It is challenging to aid others toward spiritual maturity when we are not intentionally doing so ourselves.**

This session will focus on our third essential competency for making disciples—MINISTER. Disciples of Christ are to reflect his character. In **Mark 10**, Jesus responds to the innate desire in some of his disciples' minds to be great and powerful by clarifying his purpose and that of his disciples. Jesus says:

You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.¹

Disciples are meant to **MINISTER to and serve others.** As the body of Christ, disciples are to embody Jesus's care for others.

Cultural Focus: Why This Matters for Gen Z

In post-Christian communities, your words can be only as strong as your relationships. –Rosaria Butterfield²

1. Mark 10:42b-45.
2. Rosaria Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 40.

Relationships matter. They always have, but for Generation Z, authentic relationships are paramount.

Much of this has to do with the fact that, though Gen Z is considered the most connected generation (due to wireless internet and the prevalence of social media throughout their lifetime), loneliness and anxiety run rampant among current 13–25-year-olds. Technology has not helped nurture depth in relationships but provided greater access to connectational experiences. **One in three young people of Gen Z feel entirely alone, nearly 40% share that they have no one to talk to and feel left out, and 45% feel as if no one understands them.**³ Even more staggering is that those who participate in religious organizations report almost identical sentiments.⁴

It becomes clear, then, that merely participating in a religious community's activities is not the answer to helping Gen Z'ers feel connected.⁵ Participation and proximity to others do not automatically equate to relationships, connections, or a sense of belonging. Thus, **intentionality on the part of older, faithful disciples to connect with and care for others is critical to welcoming Gen Z into the body of Christ.**

Currently, 27% of young people have one or fewer adults in their life that they can turn to in times of need, or when they need to talk.⁶ Nearly one in four young adults who have never had an older mentor in their life struggle to find meaning or purpose.⁷ That number drops to just 6% with just one trusted adult relationship!⁸

Young adults who have just one trusted adult in their life are 50% less likely to experience severe isolation. They are four times more likely to feel understood overall if they have even just one trusted adult investing in their life.⁹

As creations who bear the image of the creator, we are communal beings who desire connection and belonging. And while the ultimate sense of purpose and belonging results from a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, disciples of Jesus have the opportunity to emulate Christ in how they treat one another, and those outside of the body of Christ.

In an era where relational dynamics are changing and authority structures are shifting, disciples need to accept the challenge of reaching out and caring for the

3. Josh Packard et al., *Belonging: Reconnecting America's Loneliest Generation* (Bloomington, MN: Springtide Research Institute, 2020), 16.

4. *Ibid.*, 19.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *The State of Religion & Young People 2020: Relational Authority* (Farmington, MN: Springtide Research Institute, 2020), 36.

7. *Ibid.*, 9.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Packard et al., *Belonging*, 48.

needs of Gen Z. Authority in a young person's life is no longer viewed intrinsically according to someone's title, education level, or even prior experience. **Authority for Gen Z is relational.**¹⁰ Relational authority grows through shared experiences and developed trust. Think of the opportunity Christians have to influence Gen Z with the truth of the gospel and the love of Jesus!

The Springtide Research Institute states that “belonging relationships” have specific qualities: *welcome, warmth, supportiveness, authenticity, vulnerability, honesty, curiosity, invitation, openness, and accountability.*¹¹ **Though this institute is a secular organization, their defining characteristics of belonging relationships expose the true longing of the human heart—what we were created to experience with our Father God and with one another in his name.**

The local church needs to be the place where isolated and lonely Gen Z'ers find trusted adults who love selflessly and show them Jesus. Disciples need to be intentional to seek out those of Gen Z who desire connection, love them, and invest in their lives selflessly.

We will explore how the essential competency of MINISTER is a call for every disciple's life. Through selfless care and love for those of Gen Z, disciples will have the opportunity to relay the truths of the gospel and see Gen Z'ers come to faith. **Let us be encouraged to learn more about the competency of MINISTER, understanding its importance—not only to our rising generation—but to the heart of God.**

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others. (Phil. 2:1-4)

-
- WHAT RESONATED WITH YOU MOST FROM WHAT WE JUST COVERED REGARDING GEN Z? WHEN YOU CONSIDER THOSE WHO HAVE INVESTED IN YOUR LIFE SPIRITUALLY, WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THEM THAT DREW YOU TO THEM AND SUSTAINED YOUR DESIRE TO LEARN FROM THEM, SHARE WITH THEM, ETC.?

MINISTER

10. *The State of Religion & Young People 2020*, 50.
11. Packard et al., *Belonging*, 53.

Transformed and Free to Serve

If you recall from our last session, the Holy Spirit transforms the disciple's heart from spiritually dead to fully alive. Spiritual life is freedom from the effects of sin and death. It is also the freedom to behold the glory of the Lord and be transformed into the image of Christ.¹²

Freedom from sin and the desire and ability to MATURE into Christlikeness reorients our posture toward this earthly life and those who surround us daily. The Apostle Paul states in **Galatians 5:13-14**:

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Paul reiterates the words of Jesus in Matthew 22 from his response to the Pharisees' questioning:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."¹³

Jesus not-so-subtly emphasizes that Scripture declares that all our affection, from our whole person (heart, soul, and mind), is to be directed to God. It is from that correct posture of worship and devotion that the second command is fueled. **Love of God makes love of others genuine.**

And Paul builds upon Jesus's words implying that spiritual freedom comes when full faith, trust, and affection are focused upon the Lord. That freedom, in turn, is not meant to be taken for granted but geared toward others in loving service.

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- HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THE LOVE OF GOD FUEL THE LOVE OF OTHERS IN YOUR OWN LIFE, OR IN THE LIFE OF SOMEONE YOU RESPECT IN THE FAITH? SHARE SOME MEMORIES OR EXAMPLES AROUND YOUR TABLES.
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12. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

13. Matthew 22:37b-40.

Service at the Heart of the Gospel: Jesus as Servant

Recall from earlier what Jesus shared with his disciples in Mark chapter 10—that he came not to be served but to serve. **He sacrificed himself for the many.**¹⁴

The heart of Christ is to do the will of his Father for the sake of his bride, the church.¹⁵

Isaiah 52 and 53 include one of the most significant passages in all of Scripture regarding who the Messiah would be and what his role must be to bring about the redemption of humanity.

READ Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

The Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah regarding “my servant,” who would make many to be accounted righteous and who makes intercession for the transgressors.

Jesus is the willing servant of God who has suffered on behalf of humanity yet achieved what we could never do on our own or for ourselves.

It is because of the sacrifice of Christ that you and I have access to right relationship with the Father, and **it is in that same spirit that Christ calls his disciples to follow him.**

In **Luke 9:23**, Jesus declares, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

His is not necessarily a call to face death for the salvation of others, but a death to self, selfishness, and self-centeredness, helping to focus on the needs of others.

Jesus calls his disciples to deny themselves and focus on him. **His call is an application of maturing in faith.** It is the partnership we get to participate in because of what he has achieved on our behalf.

Only through dying to self can one understand more of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins and see the gospel applied in our interactions with others.

Taking up our crosses and denying ourselves reflects the willing heart of Christ to make many “accounted as righteous.” It is the posture we have before the Lord and others that depicts for others the gracious, merciful, and loving heart of God for humanity.

14. Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45.

15. John 6:38, 17:4, 8.

In short, a posture of service and a willingness to MINISTER to the needs of others is one of the most explicit and tangible expressions of faith disciples possess through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

It is no coincidence that when disciples seek to mature in faith, most spiritual disciplines draw them outside of themselves to focus on the majesty of God and the inclusion of others in their lives.

It is difficult to serve others and exhibit the truth of the gospel if disciples only care for themselves and their own needs. Jesus came for the sake of the lost and to fulfill his Father's desire for humanity's redemption. **Jesus served. Jesus was selfless. The gospel declares this truth and calls us to conform to his likeness.**

-
- AROUND YOUR TABLES, READ JOHN 13:1-9, 12-17. HOW DOES THIS ACCOUNT OF JESUS'S INTERACTION WITH HIS DISCIPLES HELP YOU UNDERSTAND HOW JESUS SAW HIS MINISTRY AND ROLE AS MESSIAH? HOW DOES IT CHALLENGE AND ENCOURAGE YOU AS A DISCIPLE TODAY?
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Ministry: An Expectation of Every Disciple

In **Ephesians 2:10**, the Apostle Paul shares that disciples are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

And in **chapter 4** of that same letter, Paul notes:

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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..."¹⁶

These passages contain three critical implications:

- 1) Every disciple is meant for good works according to God's purposes.
- 2) Some disciples are appointed to specific offices to equip all saints (disciples) "for the work of ministry."
- 3) Disciples build up the body of Christ—the church—toward spiritual maturity.

16. Ephesians 4:11-13.

Ministry is expected of disciples. Disciples serve the Lord through good works that build up his church—in depth and breadth—through compassionate, selfless service. It is the work disciples are called to, no matter their respective earthly vocation.

Colossians 3:17, 23-24 are helpful verses to consider here:

*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him...
Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

Ministry (or Service) is offering our time, resources, and skill to benefit others, recognizing Christ's work in us and how he deserves our service. **Through service, disciples manifest the presence of God to others because we are his vehicle of blessing on earth.**¹⁷

Disciples continue serving others as they serve the Lord. And, incredibly, Jesus did not leave us to try and serve in our own devices or from our own power. He gave us a Helper.

Ministry: The Empowered Service of Disciples

In **John 14:15-17** Jesus relays an incredible truth to his first disciples:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

The Holy Spirit transforms the life of a disciple, confirms the disciple's identity as a new creation in Christ, and works to help disciples obey the commands of Jesus.

Jesus requires obedience as evidence of love for him but does not expect his disciples to be able to sustain such obedience on their own. He gives the Holy Spirit as our great Helper.

17. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 145.

It is no different in our call to serve selflessly. **The Holy Spirit gives gifts to every disciple to serve the church and minister to the needs of others.**

Consider the Apostle Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 12:4-11**:

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Like the notion in verse 7, where the gifts are given “for the common good” of those who comprise the church, Peter notes in **1 Peter 4:10** that **every believer receives at least one gift to use for serving one another and to steward God's grace in their lives properly.**

Other passages relay the same truth;¹⁸ thus, it is important for disciples to understand they are not called to fulfill the commands of Christ on their own or of their own power but to prioritize discovering their spiritual gifts to lovingly serve others.¹⁹

The Holy Spirit grants all disciples gifts to serve the Lord, his church, the lowly, and those who do not believe.

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- AROUND YOUR TABLES, READ DEUTERONOMY 10:12-13. HOW DOES THIS OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGE RELATE TO GOD'S EXPECTATIONS OF DISCIPLES? IN YOUR OWN WORDS, DESCRIBE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOVING GOD AND SERVING GOD. WHAT ABOUT LOVING OTHERS AND SERVING OTHERS?
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18. See Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:7-13, and, for further application of the spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 14:1-25.

19. Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2013), 27. See also 1 Corinthians 14:1.

Ministry: Love in Action

Love is the hallmark of followers of Christ... Love for God, love for neighbor, and love for other disciples. Loving my neighbor is a natural outflow of my love for God. In addition, if I love God, then I want to spend time with Him and His children. – Earley and Dempsey²⁰

Earlier, we noted Jesus's words in **Matthew 22:37-39**:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

In our previous session covering how we MATURE in faith as disciples, we discussed numerous disciplines for increasing our affections for the Lord involving our whole person. As we look to apply the essential competency of MINISTER, it is vital for us to recognize that we also love God as we love our neighbor.

In Luke 10, Jesus encounters a lawyer who seeks to test him. It is a similar account to Matthew 22, but Jesus is asked a follow-up question in verse 29: "And who is my neighbor?" In response, Jesus then shares the famous parable of the Good Samaritan that ultimately teaches that our neighbors are those we encounter in our lives who are in need. **Considering the condition of the human heart without Christ, all are in need and require caring neighbors.**

Another way to think about it is that as disciples, new creations in Christ, the call to love our neighbor as ourselves is a call to walk in our identity as followers of Jesus. To follow Jesus is to love him and manifest his presence in the world around us—to love others.

Loving Our Neighbors in the Church

Jesus states in **John 13:34-35**:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

20. Earley and Dempsey, 27.

Disciples are set apart from the world through their obedience to and love of Christ. According to Jesus, one of the most apparent proofs of “disciple-hood” is how disciples love one another.

In loving one another, disciples submit to one another out of reverence for Christ²¹ and put others’ needs before their own. Selfless love is an act of worship included in the disciple’s pursuit of holiness and conformity to Christ.²²

Jesus uses other believers and unbelievers to shape us. Holiness is not meant to be experienced in isolation from other humans, constantly alone with God. No, we are better formed in Christ’s likeness in the real world of people.²³

We can see this take shape from the repeated use of two simple words in Scripture—“one another.”²⁴

Nearly fifty times in the New Testament, Jesus, and the Apostles relay how we are to care for one another, honor one another, bear with one another, sing to one another, and forgive one another. All these exhortations originate from the “grand, overarching, most-repeated one another,” love one another.²⁵ Loving one another is the exhortation that binds everything together in perfect harmony, promoting the unity disciples are called to nurture.²⁶

These exhortations create what is called “biblical community” among believers. One passage helps this idea become clearer and contains three “one anothers” itself.

Let’s explore **Colossians 3:5-17**. [Read the passage aloud.]

Verses 5-10 explain how Christ changes the life of the individual disciple and calls him to pursue a better way—a holy, more Christ-like way. The disciple is called to “put away” sins revolving around self and self-promotion. The “new self” is to “put on” the image of Christ. This includes understanding that Christ does not favor any ethnicity, gender, etc., but that Christ is **everything to** the disciple and **in every** disciple.

The “one anothers” are not exhaustive concerning our obligations to other Christians. Still, they provide a good illustration of life together under the lordship

²¹ Ephesians 5:21.

²² Romans 12:1-5.

²³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God’s New Society*, Revised edition (Downers Grove, IL, London: InterVarsity Press ; Inter-Varsity Press, 2020), 184.

²⁴ Scott Hubbard, Desiring God, “The Art of One-Anothering: How the Church Loves Like Christ.” <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-art-of-one-anothering>. Accessed August 9, 2023.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Colossians 3:14.

of Jesus and in the pattern of Jesus's character.²⁷ Note how verses 12-17, though they are commands for believers in community with one another, revolve around the word of Christ (v. 16), the peace of Christ (v. 15) and are meant to honor the name of Christ (v. 17). In other words, "the one-anothers are nothing less than the life of Christ at work in the people of Christ to the glory of Christ."²⁸

The "One-Anothers" can be distilled into five categories that can help us as disciples love our fellow disciples in the church:²⁹

1) Have the Mind of Christ

- The mind of Christ is the mind of humility.
 - **Philippians 2:3-7:**
 - *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*
 - **1 Peter 5:5:**
 - *You who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*
- *"Humility...clothes us with the attitude of Christ. Humility puts a pair of eyeglasses on the soul, allowing us to see others without the blurring of selfishness."³⁰*

2) Offer Christ's Welcome

- Christ's welcome is open-handed and open-hearted hospitality that invites others into transforming relationship, regardless of one's status.

27. Scott Hubbard, Desiring God, "The Art of One-Anothering: How the Church Loves Like Christ." <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-art-of-one-anothering>. Accessed August 9.

28. Ibid.

29. These categories have been adapted from Scott Hubbard's article "The Art of One-Anothering: How the Church Loves Like Christ" cited above.

30. Ibid.

- **Romans 12:16**
 - *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.*
- **Romans 15:7**
 - *Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.*
- **1 Peter 4:9**
 - *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

3) Speak Christ's Words

- Disciples are people enlivened by the imperishable Word of God, who have the great privilege and responsibility to speak that Word into the lives of others.
 - **Colossians 3:16**
 - *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.*
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:11**
 - *Encourage one another and build one another up.*
 - **Hebrews 3:13**
 - *Exhort one another every day.*

4) Exhibit Christ's Love

- *"As important as words are for a healthy Christian community, no community lives on words alone. Jesus did not just speak to people during his earthly ministry; he healed them and touched them and delivered them and ate with them. And so we, his disciples, are not mere mouths to one another, but also hands and feet and shoulders. We not only speak his love, but show it." – Scott Hubbard*
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:15**
 - *Always seek to do good to one another.*
 - **1 Peter 4:10**
 - *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another.*
 - **Galatians 6:1-2**
 - *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of*

gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

5) Give Christ's Grace

- Christ's grace is most poignantly felt in our lives through his forgiveness. It is the forgiving heart of Christ that disciples get to extend to others in Christian community. Through the hard work of doing life with other believers, we can show Christ's grace. Other believers will no doubt offend you, inadvertently use you, and even sometimes wound you. We get to love one another best and most meaningfully in the moments when we wrong one another, and we lovingly and patiently point each other back to Jesus.
 - **Ephesians 4:2-3**
 - ***...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***
 - **Ephesians 4:32**
 - ***Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.***

Loving Our Neighbors Outside the Church

Francis Chan in his book *Multiply* states:

Don't be overwhelmed by the task of ministering to others. It is just about faithfully serving the people God has placed in your life...Ministry sounds intimidating until you develop a realistic view of what ministry is really about...Do you know people who struggle with sin? Do you know people who are carrying burdens? If so, then your first steps toward ministry are easy: help them.³¹

Much like the Good Samaritan, disciples are meant to have compassion for those who do not believe what they believe or view the world the way they do. Just think of how the Lord views all of humanity! **He loves and cares about us whether we return our affections to him or not. Disciples are expected to treat others similarly.**

31. Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples*, First edition (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C Cook, 2012), 55.

Serving those who do not trust in Christ as their Savior allows disciples to exhibit Christ's love and compassion amid a broken world.

Romans 12:14-18 describes the disciple's service of others well:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

The compassionate service of those who do not share our faith in Christ reflects the desire to live in harmony with others and do what is honorable.

A heart that desires to MINISTER to others recognizes needs. The most extraordinary heart for ministry the world has ever known was that of Jesus. He saw the needs of others as opportunities to express the love of God and point them to the truth of the gospel. Disciples have the same opportunity to reflect God's care.

Every human has intrinsic worth—they are God's creation. **It is the privilege and responsibility of every disciple to seek to find how they might serve others, live peaceably with others, and always point to Jesus.**

In a world where a Christian worldview is viewed increasingly as a cultural faux pas, it is the responsibility of Jesus's disciples to be firm in conviction but generous in our time, understanding, and love. We can better understand this as having a heart for gospel-centered hospitality or a biblical sense of kindness.

Let's turn our attention to some suggestions for fostering gospel hospitality in our lives.³²

1) Default to Respecting Others

- If we believe that all of humanity bears the image of God, then disciples must begin at a place of respect. Though the person we might seek to minister to may hold very different opinions about life, culture, sexuality, the world, and even God, it is not our place to discount them immediately.

32. This list is adapted from Rosaria Butterfield in *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, pp 53-63.

- Disciples need to reclaim the truth that acceptance does NOT equal approval. We, as disciples, can point to greater truths through a life of patience, love, and caring acceptance.
- Rosaria Butterfield notes, “*Unbelievers need to see genuine acceptance from us. They need to see genuine love. They need to see that being made in the image of God is a higher calling, bestowing a greater dignity, than inventing your own rules for faith and life.*”³³

2) Pray to Be a Haven for Your Neighbors’ Hearts

- Ask the Lord to prepare us to be patient with our lost neighbor's sinful decisions, confessions, and desires—to be considered someone they consider safe. Remember how the Lord has been patient with us and called us to Himself at the right time according to his purposes. **Pray the Lord would use each of us as a catalyst for those “right time” moments in the life of our unbelieving neighbors—at work, in your actual neighborhood, or otherwise.**
- Pray, too, that the Lord will help us not view our neighbors as evangelistic projects but as those the Lord wants to redeem in his perfect timing.³⁴ This will help us to bear their burdens patiently without undue judgment or a sense of pressure.

3) Recognize the Difference Between Goodness and Holiness.

- As believers in Christ, we can celebrate the good things we see in the lives of unbelievers. **These good things are known as God’s common grace.** We can celebrate those things because we can honestly say they point to the goodness of God. That said, disciples cannot hold unbelievers to the standard of holiness Christ expects of his followers. So, don’t confuse goodness with holiness and shut unbelievers out when they do not “measure up” to the standard we know to be biblical. Instead, focus on the good things your unbelieving neighbors achieve, and allow those moments to spark gospel conversations.

33. Butterfield, 53.

34. Robby Gallaty and Chris Swain, *Replicate: How to Create a Culture of Disciple-Making Right Where You Are* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020), 240.

The essential competency of MINISTER outlines the disciple's opportunity to serve others and represent Christ in our world.

Service is the expectation of every disciple, as we have noted, but it is also the work of the Lord in the heart of his disciples to shift their perspective away from themselves toward others and others' needs.

This perspective is the basis of our final essential competency that we will explore in our next session: MULTIPLY.

To be disciples who MULTIPLY means being disciples who long to obey the Lord through ministering well to the needs of others but ultimately pointing others to the glorious truth of the gospel—that redemption is available in the person of Jesus Christ.

A selfless perspective focused upon others finding and trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior exhibits how the competency **MINISTER** feeds the call for every disciple to **MULTIPLY**.

SESSION 4 MULTIPLY

***“THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL, BUT
THE LABORERS ARE FEW.
THEREFORE, PRAY EARNESTLY TO
THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO
SEND OUT LABORERS INTO HIS
HARVEST.” (LUKE 10:2)***

Session 4: MULTIPLY

Objective: *To introduce participants to the essential disciplemaking competency MULTIPLY and how this applies to the current rising generation of young adults—Gen Z.*

Introduction and Review:

Last session, we examined the essential disciplemaking competency **MINISTER** exploring how disciples of Jesus are to emulate his compassion for the lost and his desire to serve God and others.

Noting the staggering rate of felt isolation among Gen Z'ers, we determined that caring for the rising generation of young adults is vital to the church's continued health. A ministry mindset among disciples fosters an “others-first” perspective. It reflects the heart of Christ toward humanity, which grants them an excellent opportunity to care for those of Gen Z.

We discussed how the Holy Spirit transforms the heart of every disciple, freeing them from the bondage of sin and self-centeredness. **The Holy Spirit conforms believers to Christ's image, fostering a heart toward loving God and loving others as themselves.** The great commandments are the foundation of God's expectation of his disciples—that they glorify him, serve one another, equip each other for ministry, love the lost, and proclaim the truth of the gospel.

J.T. English summarizes this notion well:

The Great Commission will be fulfilled by Great Commandment Christians. To be a Great Commandment Christian is to love God with your whole self and to love your neighbor. The Great Commission is to create Great Commandment Christians. The Great Commandment invites us to participate in the Great Commission, and the Great Commission invites us to participate in the Great Commandment.¹

As we begin our final session exploring what it means to be disciples who **MULTIPLY**, we will see it is the others-focused, loving perspective of Christ that drives disciples to reproduce themselves for the glory of the Lord. **Gen Z needs Jesus. Disciples need to make disciples of Gen Z.**

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- BEFORE WE DIVE IN, HOW DO YOU THINK THE QUOTE FROM J.T. ENGLISH RELATES TO MAKING DISCIPLES OF GEN Z'ERS? HOW DO YOU SEE THE GREAT COMMANDMENT IMPACTING HOW YOU COULD/SHOULD SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH A GEN Z YOUNG ADULT?
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1. J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2020), 161.

Cultural Focus: Why This Matters for Gen Z

At the outset of our study, we learned that Generation Z comprises the first post-Christian generation in the United States. Current college-aged adults are twice as likely to say they are atheists as older adults.²

Gen Z is considered spiritually minded and open to spiritual matters, though. Those who consider themselves highly religious, even Christians, explore religion differently than previous generations. They are less and less concerned with identifying with a particular faith system or traditional spiritual practices.³

Current college-aged adults and others of Gen Z are less likely to engage with the gospel due to their parents becoming less spiritually and religiously concerned. Gen Z is “spiritually illiterate,” lacking even rudimentary knowledge of the Bible, its teaching, Christian worldview, etc.⁴ Gen Z, overall, has not been exposed to the gospel or devoted disciples of Christ.

Yes, the current college-aged adult population is a proverbial harvest the Lord is waiting to send workers into. The question remains: Are we those the Lord should send to make disciples of this generation? The answer is and has always been “Yes.”

That said, **more mature disciples today must consider themselves missionaries—those who immerse themselves in a culture different from their own, who are willing to connect with the new culture for the sake of the lost.**⁵ This is not to suggest that disciples sacrifice in any way a Christian worldview or those biblical characteristics that identify them as Christ’s own. No. We call Gen Z’ers to the truth of the gospel that has transcended culture and time—not to the cultural traditions we may be accustomed to or prefer.

The missionary call to Gen Z requires disciples to be students of the culture, and to reason as Paul did on Mars Hill in Acts 17—contextualizing the gospel for those who have never been taught that the Bible has sixty-six books divided into the Old and New Testaments.⁶ Because Gen Z is spiritually illiterate, more patience is required. We will have to begin by answering more straightforward questions and introducing Gen Z’ers to what many of us would consider basic principles of Christianity.

2. Barna Group, ed., *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (USA: Barna Group, 2018), 14.

3. Springtide Research Institute, “State of Religion and Young People,” location 31.

4. James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2017), 139.

5. Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 107.

6. White, *Meet Generation Z*, 111.

None of this should scare us, though. In fact, we should consider it an exhortation to walk more closely with the Lord, as our everyday lives will matter as much, if not more, than our words. **Disciples must embody the gospel more than ever, but we must also be prepared to verbalize the gospel with sincerity.**

The **MULTIPLY** competency is integral to reaching Gen Z with the gospel. It requires we recognize that it is a convergence of all we have covered up to this point—that our lives **MAGNIFY** the Lord, that we **MATURE** in Christ’s likeness and not the world’s, and that we are to **MINISTER** to “the least of these” in every generation.

Let’s explore this essential competency together and learn how to invite others—especially Gen Z—to know the love, mercy, forgiveness, and redemption Jesus provides.

MULTIPLY

A Disciple’s Fruitful Life

During our session covering the **MATURE** competency, we briefly examined John 15, where Jesus shares his discourse about the vine and the branches.

Let’s return to **John 15:1-16** to see how each competency we have covered fits together with our final competency—**MULTIPLY**.

READ John 15:1-16.

In this discourse, **Jesus makes two significant points:**⁷

- 1) The proof of discipleship lies in bearing fruit (v.8)**
- 2) The power to bear fruit stems from Jesus as disciples stay connected to him.**

No Fruit? Not a Disciple

In **verse 8**, Jesus states:

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

7. Much of what is included in this section is inspired by Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2013), 106.

In our first session, we covered that *the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.*

According to Jesus, **we glorify God when our lives bear the fruit he desires.** When we do so, Jesus says we *prove to be* his disciples. In other words, **the measure of discipleship is bearing fruit.**⁸ It is also the purpose of being a disciple.

Jesus uses **present tense verbs** in his discourse about the vine and the branches, which suggests an expectation that disciples continuously bear fruit.⁹ It is a lifelong process.

But what does it mean to bear fruit? What fruit should disciples see growing in their lives?¹⁰

1) The Fruit of Christlike Love -

a. Verse 9:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

- The love of Christ flows from the vine into the branch and grows as fruit to be shared with others.

b. 1 John 3:7-8,15-16:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love... Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

2) The Fruit of the Spirit

a. Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

8. Earley and Dempsey, 106.

9. Ibid., 107.

10. Ibid., The following list is adapted from what Earley and Dempsey include on pp. 107-108 of *Disciple Making is...*

- As branches, disciples see the life of the vine, Jesus, stream through them and develop his character in their hearts and minds.

3) The Fruit of Spiritual Gifts

- a. We discussed these gifts in our previous session, but it is essential to remember that these gifts from the Holy Spirit are meant to edify the church. And when a disciple “discovers, develops, and uses his or her gift, the body of Christ grows stronger.”¹¹

4) The Fruit of New Disciples

- a. John 15:8 and 16:

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples...You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

- Jesus utilized the image of fruit and harvest to depict discipling. He does so earlier in John 4, too, following his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. He tells his first disciples:

*Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.*¹²

The fruit of new disciples informs the essential competency MULTIPLY. To MULTIPLY is the command of all disciples rooted in the love of God and the love of others. It brings the Lord glory, MAGNIFIES his name, and is strengthened as disciples MATURE in faith and grow in their desire to MINISTER to others’ needs.

MULTIPLY recognizes God’s command and humanity’s greatest need—redemption.

But before we explore MULTIPLY more in-depth, we must be reminded that **no disciple can bear fruit without the power extended from the vine.**

11. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...*, 107. See also Ephesians 4:12.

12. John 4:35-36. See also Luke 10:1-2.

How Do Disciples Stay Connected to the Vine?¹³

Well, Jesus shares three requirements in his discourse:

1) Abide in the Word of Christ

a. John 15:2-3 notes:

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

- Any green thumb knows well that pruning back vines often produces more fruit. Removing branches or stems that divert nutrients from heavily producing branches allows those healthier branches to produce even more.
- In the life of disciples, the Word of God is the tool of choice for the Holy Spirit to prune us. The Word of God cuts through distractions and restores our focus upon his goodness and purposes.¹⁴

b. John 8:31b-32:

If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

- Disciples are free to produce more because of God's Word shaping their lives as they abide in his Word.

2) Remember Our Absolute Dependence Upon the Lord

a. John 15:4-5:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

- "Self-sufficiency and independence will not produce spiritual fruit. Only the life of Jesus produces spiritual fruit. On their own, no disciple can fabricate or replicate the life of Jesus. The only way to produce fruit is to be so closely connected to Jesus, the Vine, that his life flows through you."¹⁵

13. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...*, 109–10. The list that follows the notation above has been adapted from these pages.

14. Hebrews 4:12.

15. Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...*, 111.

3) Die to Everything Other Than Christ

a. John 12:24-26:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

To be a disciple, we must abide in Jesus and bear spiritual fruit or MULTIPLY. It is our purpose and our Lord's commission for us.

- HOW DOES JESUS'S DISCOURSE IN JOHN 15 HELP YOU SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE "FOUR M'S," OR ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES FOR MAKING DISCIPLES?
- HOW HAS ABIDING IN JESUS IMPACTED YOUR LIFE, YOUR BEARING SPIRITUAL FRUIT?

{Note for discussion time:

- MATURE – vv. 4, 7, 10-11
 - MAGNIFY – v. 8, 14, 16
 - MINISTER – vv. 12-13
 - MULTIPLY – vv. 8, 16 }
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MULTIPLY: The Collective Call

In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus states:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

This passage, especially verses 19 and 20, is called the **Great Commission**. These words are **Jesus's collective call for his disciples to MULTIPLY**.

Jesus's commission outlines his disciples' purpose as we remain on this earth.

Bob McNabb states in *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World*:

We were born again to multiply. Our salvation doesn't just deliver us from our sins. It sets us free from living meaningless lives...Through spiritual multiplication, our limited years on earth can have an exponential and enduring influence on eternity.¹⁶

The collective call to MULTIPLY is also ***“a summons to partner with Jesus in changing the world.”***¹⁷

When disciples join this partnership, we experience a closeness with the Lord we would otherwise miss out on. Because when disciples obey the commands of Jesus, we grow in our love for him and our intimacy with him.¹⁸

Not only this, but disciples get to operate in Jesus's authority. Much like in his prayer in John 17, where Jesus notes the Father has ***“given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him,”***¹⁹ Jesus declares in his commission that ***“all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*** ***It is in Jesus's authority that disciples operate.***

Robby Gallaty is helpful here:

Jesus authorized us to make disciples. With this in mind, we can fearlessly invest in others, knowing Jesus has rubber-stamped our endeavors. Will it be difficult at times? Yes...I believe this is why he ended the Great Commission with these words: ‘And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’²⁰

Jesus is with us in his collective call for disciples to MULTIPLY. His presence spurs us forward and comforts us as we obediently partner with him.

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- **HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED HOW PARTICIPATING IN THE GREAT COMMISSION UNITES YOU MORE CLOSELY WITH JESUS? HOW DOES THE FACT THAT DISCIPLES UNDERTAKE THE GREAT COMMISSION IN CHRIST'S AUTHORITY AFFECT YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE?**
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Breaking Down the Collective Call:

16. Bob McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World: Why Some Disciple-Makers Reproduce When Others Fail*. (Birmingham, AL: Multiplication Press, 2013), 23.

17. Robby Gallaty and Chris Swain, *Replicate: How to Create a Culture of Disciple-Making Right Where You Are* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020), 51.

18. *Ibid.*, 54. See also John 14:23-24.

19. John 17:2.

20. Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 55.

Interestingly, the Great Commission's syntactical construction revolves around one primary phrase: ***“Make disciples of all nations.”***

In the original Greek, the word μαθητεύσατε (*mathayteusate*) is an imperative verb and should be considered the “driving force of the commission.”²¹ The other active words in the commission—*go, baptize, and teach*—are participles that derive their force from “make disciples.”²²

In other words, every sub-command in the commission is based on the primary command of making disciples of all nations. We go, we baptize, and we teach all to make disciples. In other words, these three are how disciples are made.

Let's spend some time exploring these sub-commands in more detail.

“Go, therefore” ...Life on Mission

In Acts 1, Jesus shared with his first disciples just before he ascended into heaven:

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.²³

Much like the Great Commission, Jesus's power/authority is promised to his disciples (the presence of the Holy Spirit). **Jesus's language also suggests an assumption: “You will be my witnesses.”**

The tone here is not one where Jesus prays that we will obey. No, there is an *expectation* that his disciples will be his witnesses.

Let's also consider that in Matthew 28:19, the phrase “go, therefore,” is emphatic in a chronological sense and in its application.

Because “go” (πορευθέντες) is a participle, it carries the force of the primary verb in the sentence, thus “Go” is a command because “make disciples” is a command.

There is no sense of “when you get around to it” attached to Jesus's commission. His commission is always applicable chronologically, meaning we do not dictate

21. Ibid.

22. Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Dept. of Evangelism, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2019), 104. See also Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, *Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2005), 625.

23. Acts 1:8.

the “when” of going and making disciples; instead, we obey and make disciples...always.

Also, the primary imperative includes “all nations.” **Disciples are to *make disciples* or MULTIPLY, always in every corner of the globe.** In other words, disciples live their lives on mission no matter where they are and always with a concern for the nations.

Life on mission, or *missional living*, is a mindset or a posture every disciple must adopt. Missional living is understanding that the Great Commission is a priority. Disciples who live missionally understand the call to be witnesses in their homes, neighborhoods, home states, home countries, and to the ends of the earth—continually.

What does it mean to ***be a witness***, though?

This is where our essential competencies come together in the life of a disciple—because the whole life of a disciple is a witness to others.

A life progressively sanctified and shaped into the likeness of Jesus as we MATURE in faith speaks volumes to those around us. An awareness of the needs of others and a desire to MINISTER to others’ needs grants disciples opportunities in the lives of others to more explicitly share why their life looks so different from the world. And intentional opportunities to MULTIPLY necessarily include sharing the gospel and seeking to MAGNIFY Jesus and how he has redeemed us in the eyes of the Lord.

The Apostle Peter states in **1 Peter 2:9**:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

To ***witness*** is to **proclaim all the Lord has done in our lives**, having called us from the darkness of sin into the light of truth.

Notice that word *proclaim*.

In **Romans 10:17**, the Apostle Paul shares that “***faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ.***”

There is a famous quote, often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: “***Preach the gospel, and when necessary, use words.***”

The sentiment of this quote suggests the importance of the disciple's overall life and actions, which should not be discounted, especially when engaging Generation Z. But to make disciples, we must proclaim the gospel because “faith comes from hearing.”

Ed Stetzer is helpful here:

A godly life should serve as a witness for the message we proclaim. But without words, what can our actions point to but ourselves? A godly life cannot communicate the incarnation, Jesus’ substitution for sinners, or the hope of redemption by grace alone through faith alone. We can’t be good news, but we can herald it, sing it, speak it, and preach it to all who listen.²⁴

In other words, the fruit we bear in our lives should point people to Jesus, but our responsibility does not end there.²⁵

Let’s turn back to what Paul says before verse 17 in **Romans 10:13-15**:

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

Proclaiming or preaching the gospel is not just the responsibility of preachers behind pulpits but the call of every believer living missionally because all disciples are “sent-ones.”

Sharing the gospel is called evangelism. Evangelism tends to be a term that causes anxiety in disciples’ hearts and minds, and that is understandable as not everyone feels gifted when it comes to speaking with others about spiritual matters.

We also worry about presenting the gospel well or in a polished fashion. Though it is vital to be fluent in the gospel—knowing the truth of the gospel and how to relay that truth—successful evangelism is not dependent on any particular method. **Success in sharing the gospel lies in actually sharing the gospel with others.**

In the back of your participant guides, you will find some evangelism resources and presentation methods to better prepare you for sharing the gospel. These

24. Ed Stetzer, “Preach the Gospel, and Since It’s Necessary, Use Words,” Ligonier Ministries, June 1, 2012. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/preach-the-gospel-and-since-its-necessary-use-words>. Accessed August 15, 2023. Emphasis added.

25. Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 239.

methods are helpful, but every disciple should be able to share his or her personal testimony.

Our **personal testimony** is just the story of what Christ has done in our lives and is an impactful way to share the truth of salvation with others.

To be effective, our personal testimony does not have to be elaborate or super dramatic, but an honest reflection of what God has done in our life.

Our testimony should include three parts:²⁶

1) What my life was like before I came to faith in Christ

- Share what you were saved from—previous sins, lifestyle choices, idols, etc.

2) How I came to trust Christ as Savior

- Share what happened that sparked a change—someone sharing the gospel with you, hearing a message, reading a passage of Scripture, the prayers of others in your life, etc.

3) My life now that I follow Jesus

- How has your life changed now that God has saved you from slavery to sin, etc.

Sharing the gospel is the missionary call of every disciple. We are meant to actively pursue opportunities to share our hope in Jesus with others.

The call to be a witness is continuous and not bound by geography. Some are called to the nations and should be well-supported, but **all are called to always witness, regardless of location**. When we obey the Lord and share how he has brought us “out of darkness into marvelous light,” we bear fruit, bear witness to his goodness and mercy, and glorify him.

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- TAKE A MOMENT AND SHARE AROUND YOUR TABLES THE LAST TIME YOU SHARED THE GOSPEL WITH SOMEONE. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE FOR YOU? HOW DID YOU CHOOSE TO SHARE, I.E. DID YOU SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY, USE A TRACT, USE A PRESENTATION METHOD? (YOU MAY BE TEMPTED TO FEEL ASHAMED IF IT HAS BEEN A WHILE, OR YOU HAVEN'T EVER SHARED YOUR FAITH BEFORE. PLEASE DO NOT FEEL ASHAMED. WE ARE NOT HERE TO JUDGE BUT TO REJOICE IN WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE AND CAN DO THROUGH YOU. INSTEAD, BE ENCOURAGED BY ONE ANOTHER AND ALLOW THE STORIES OF OTHERS TO SPUR YOU FORWARD.)
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26. Adapted from Gallaty and Swain, 239.

“Baptizing them...”: A Life of Identification and Submission

Regarding baptism, the **Baptist Faith and Message 2000** states:

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. (Article VII)

As disciples “go and make disciples,” they are to *baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

John Piper notes that baptism is an act of recognition that all three persons of the Godhead—Father, Son and Spirit—are active in the spiritual rebirth of the disciple.²⁷ Disciples encourage new disciples to die to themselves and consider their rebirth into a life of willful submission to God the Father, through the Son, empowered to walk faithfully by the Spirit.

Baptism is identifying publicly with Jesus and the kingdom of God. Baptism is renouncing this world as our home and the things of this world as our gods/idols. We claim Christ unashamedly, no matter the cost.

In this way, baptism is symbolic of **Luke 14:27**:

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Baptism recognizes one’s freedom from sin and spiritual death through Christ.

Romans 6: 3-11 states:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self^[a] was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free^[b] from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised

27. John Piper, “Go and Make Disciples, Baptizing Them...” Desiring God.
<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/go-and-make-disciples-baptizing-them>. Accessed August 15, 2023.

from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Baptism declares that one wants to MATURE in Christ, die to sin, and grow in Christ's likeness. Disciples are alive to God in Christ Jesus!

Baptism declares a disciple's new identity in Jesus.

Romans 8:14-16:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

Simultaneous to being freed from the fear of sin and death, disciples are adopted as children of God.

In baptism, disciples declare they desire to "put on Christ" versus remaining the "old self."²⁸

When disciples encourage new disciples to be baptized, they invite them to identify with Christ and ultimately submit to him as part of the family of God.

In submission, disciples recognize the authority of Jesus, that he is worth everything, and that clinging to one's former life impedes walking in the freedom of redemption.

"Teaching Them to Observe...": A Life of Obedience

Conversion and baptism are essential, but so is the ongoing teaching of what Jesus taught. The new life of a disciple is a life of obedience to Jesus' commandments, or it is not a new life at all. It is worthless to acknowledge the lordship of Christ in baptism and then ignore his commandments. So all disciple-makers must be teachers, and disciples must be continual learners. –John Piper²⁹

28. Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 3:1-17.

29. John Piper, "Go and Make Disciples, Baptizing Them..." Desiring God.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/go-and-make-disciples-baptizing-them>. Accessed August 15, 2023.

When we read the last participle in the great commission, the command is to teach new disciples to **observe all that Jesus has commanded us**.

Note that Jesus did not say, “Teach all that I have commanded you.” No. He asks that when disciples make new disciples, they are sure to **train them to persevere in obedience**.³⁰

It is through this training that more mature disciples invite younger disciples under their wings to mentor them, train them, and encourage them in their faith.

Disciples guide new disciples through the Word of God to discover the commands of Christ,³¹ to exhort them to daily take up their cross and follow Jesus and challenge them to go forth and do likewise—make disciples themselves.

Consider Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Timothy:

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.³²

Paul has clearly mentored Timothy and now desires that he go and do the same. Timothy is to do so with many others (*men* is definitely plural), and they likewise!

Paul practiced multiplication. He preached the gospel, and he nurtured the faith of others. His desire to follow the Lord was based on gratitude and humility and by understanding his dependence on the Lord, Paul could exhort others to imitate him as he imitated Jesus.³³

We have the same call, and we have the same Jesus.

Conclusion: “Behold, I Am With You Always, To the End of the Age”

Consider how the Great Commission begins and how it ends: all authority is Jesus’s, and he is with us always.³⁴

What a promise!

30. Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 57.

31. In the appendix of the Participants’ Guide there is a summary collection of biblical commands adapted from Gallaty and Swain’s *Replicate*.

32. 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

33. 1 Corinthians 11:1

34. Gallaty and Swain, *Replicate*, 57.

Paul could confidently ask others to follow his lead as he followed the leadership of Jesus in his life because he knew the Lord was with him and possessed all authority.

The collective commission Jesus gives his disciples is clear: We are to MULTIPLY. We are invited into God's plan to redeem humanity, and Jesus does not leave us to our own devices but helps us bear fruit as we abide in him.

As we consider our commission generally, we must also consider how to undertake it strategically. Gen Z is full of young people who need the Lord and seek purpose and understanding.

It is no accident that we are alive as Gen Z is working to discover itself. We have learned of the need for guidance, genuine relationship, and authentic concern for a generation lacking trusted adults.

Could it be that we are alive, having been called to saving faith in Jesus "for such a time as this"?³⁵ For such a generation as this?

In the words of Jesus:

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.³⁶

May we pray that we and others seek to work the harvest that is Generation Z and those that follow until we draw our final breaths.

Let's pray in the vein of **Psalm 71:18**:

*So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might to another generation,
your power to all those to come.*

We have a call. We have an opportunity. **We can make disciples of all generations and proclaim the glory of the Lord to "all those to come."**

35. Esther 4:14.

36. Luke 10:2.

***AND JESUS CAME AND SAID TO THEM,
“ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON
EARTH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME. 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,
TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL
THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU. AND
BEHOLD, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, TO
THE END OF THE AGE.”***