

Called to be a disciple

Welcome back to Walking with Purpose! The name “John Wooden” may not be a familiar one to you, but this coach won many college basketball national championships. When he was asked, “What does it take to make a winning team?” he listed 3 things:

- 1) Get the players good condition;
- 2) Teach them the fundamentals; and
- 3) Teach them to play together as a team

I pray that in your Christian life, you are in good condition, or a right relationship, with Jesus Christ. That’s the first step, or foundation, of being a disciple...and you can’t go on to maturity without it. We’ve also been talking about how to play together as a team...living in “fellowship” with each other. Today we’re going to begin talking about what it means to be a disciple...how to learn the fundamentals our heavenly “coach” wants to teach us!

Those players on Wooden’s team know that their coach expects them to give 110% on the court. It will take sacrifice and sweat. Likewise, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer has said, “Salvation is free ... but *discipleship* will cost you your life.”



Fellowship

1. Have you ever played a team sport? Describe that experience.
2. Describe a teacher or coach who played an important role in your life.



Discipleship

“Discipleship” is the fourth reason for which *you* were created! But what does the word “discipleship” mean? Well, the Webster dictionary defines a “disciple” as: one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another; a convinced adherent of an individual. It’s also a synonym of a “follower”, which is defined as: one in the service of another; one that imitates another...and here’s my favorite: “one that *chases*.”

Of course, whenever you are *chasing* something, you are leaving things behind in pursuit of something you deem more necessary to your life, happiness and well-being! There's a leaving of the mundane in pursuit of something better! And the great news is that Christ promises that when we seek Him with all our heart, we *will* find Him!

Let's imagine a situation where a homeless man is begging on the streets. A well-dressed man in a long limousine pulls up next to him and offers him a job as vice-president of his company. You might say, "That is ridiculous; nothing like that would ever happen." Yet that is exactly what God has done for us. He rescued us from the gutter. We were homeless and he gave us a new home. We were the rejects of the world, but he gave us self-respect. We had nothing, but he gave us everything. He asks us to be a part of his kingdom and wants to put us to work. He wants to train us Himself and give us all the know-how in order to be productive.

But, now, let's say that the homeless man sneers at him and rejects the offer for several reasons. First, he will have to give up what is familiar to him. Obviously, it is a terrible life, but it is the only life he knows how to live. Secondly, he has a few possessions which he pushes around in a cart, and the few clothes he owns are on his back. And one of the conditions the man in the limousine makes is that the man must leave everything and get into the limousine. The third reason is that the man will actually have to work and accept responsibility. Life on the street was bad, but at least no one expected anything from him. No one expected him to be any different. So he turns from the man in the expensive suit and shuffles down the street hoping for a warm grate that he can sleep on for the night.

Does the man in the story understand what he has given up? He would have had a home, a job, a purpose, a great bank account, and a high position in an important business. But he passed it up to keep what he had. How foolish. This is why Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it". Dallas Willard reminds us that if we are going to talk about the cost of discipleship, ***we ought to balance it by talking about the cost of non-discipleship.***

Are you like the homeless man? When Christ comes to ask you to die to yourself and give up your old life, you refuse? You think about all the stuff in your cart that you will have to give up. You may be miserable, but at least you are used to it, and you know how to get by. You are not sure you would know what to do if you really died to your old life. Besides, you don't want to put forth the effort to change. You don't want the responsibility of being fully committed to the Christian life. But what if you understood that you were in line to inherit the business? You were not just a partner, you were an heir. And the reason you were selected was that the man in the limousine, unknown to you, was really your father who had searched until he found you? He knew your potential. He understood what you were capable of. He wanted to call you more than vice-president; he wanted to call you son. Turn with me to Romans 8:16-17 as we read it

together. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

There is both a price and a promise for those who choose to be Christ’s disciples

One June, Carlos and his wife Sylvia, were escorted to their hotel’s fancy bridal suite in the wee hours of the morning. In the suite they saw a sofa, chairs, and table, but where was the bed? Then they discovered the sofa was a hide-a-bed, with a lumpy mattress and sagging springs. They spent a fitful night and woke up in the morning with sore backs. The new husband went to the hotel desk and gave full vent of his frustration to the management.. "But did you open *the door* in the room?" asked the clerk. Carlos went back to the room and opened the door they had thought was a closet. There, complete with fruit baskets and chocolates, was a beautiful bedroom! Opening all the doors in a honeymoon suite is like obeying all the words of Jesus. It’s learning from Him and committing to His cause and business. Discipleship is the door to happiness.

I love reading about how Jesus called his first disciples. Turn with me to Mark chapter 1, verses 14-20 as we see how a few of them left their old lives. “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.” In chapter 2, Jesus recruits Levi in much the same way. He was sitting at the despised tax collector’s booth when Jesus called him and Levi immediately got up and followed. Each of the disciples had to leave something behind, and so must we: our agenda, our preferences, our time, habits, and maybe even our very lives. But when we chase after what truly matters and commit ourselves to the cause of Christ, we will echo the words of Paul found in Philippians 3:7 and 8: “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of *knowing* Christ Jesus our Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”

One day Rabbi Barukh’s grandson, Yehiel, was playing hide-and-seek with another boy. He hid himself well and waited for his playmate to find him. After 20 minutes, he peeked out of his secret hiding place, saw no one, and pulled his head back inside. After waiting a very long time, he came out of his hiding place, but the other boy was nowhere to be seen. It was then that little Yehiel realized that his playmate hadn’t been looking for him from the very beginning! Crying, he ran to his grandfather and complained of his

faithless friend. Tears brimmed in the rabbi's eyes as he realize, God says the same thing: ***"No one wants to seek me."***

Brothers and sisters, starting today, let's be different! There's an incredible job and ministry, yet more importantly – relationship – that your Heavenly Father has for you! Let's chase Him, learn from Him, and find lives infused with His purpose!



Ministry

3. Read Mark 4:33-34. How did Jesus relate to His disciples? How does this encourage you?
4. What life situation, occupation or commitments do you find yourself in now? How do you think God is calling you as His disciple?
5. If you fully commit to being His disciple, how can you envision your life and/or priorities changing?
6. Read Luke 9:62. How is half-hearted dedication to His cause an insult to God?
7. Read Matthew 8:18-22. What do you think Jesus meant in verse 22?

What things clamor for attention in your life? How do you feel your Teacher wants you to prioritize your time and affection?



Evangelism

8. Read Mark 1:16-20. What was Jesus' goal for the disciples (verse 17)?
Who will you spend time with this week who doesn't know Christ personally?
How can you envision God using *you* to be a "fisher of men"?
9. What one step will you take this week to reach out and "cast a line" to that person?



Worship

10. Read Matthew 11:28-30. As you pray for each other and those you know who are unsaved, thank God for the *rest* and *peace* that being His disciple brings!