

learn, love, and live

the heart of discipleship

show slide 1:

How would you sum up the heart of discipleship in just three words? Consider these: Learn, love, and live.

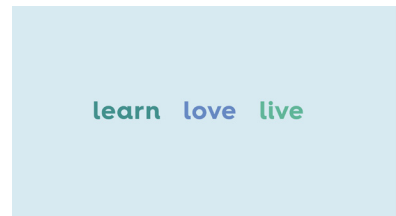


slide 1

show slide 2:

Those three words capture the essence of our mission as disciple makers of any age. We want people to learn who God is. We want them to develop a genuine love for Him because of who He is and what He has done. And we want to help them to live for God, showing their love for Him with their whole lives.

But how do we know this to be true? Often when we think of discipleship, we look at it from the perspective of learning—formal instruction in the essential truths of the Christian faith. And discipleship certainly is that. But it's more than learning. It's living the truth as well; obeying God's commands is the ultimate response of what we learn. But in between those is love, something so important that Jesus said it was the first and greatest of all the commandments: to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).



slide 2

True discipleship, discipleship as Jesus understands it, has love for God at its foundation. Love that is based upon what we know about God, His nature, His character, and His plans for this world. Love that expresses itself in how we live in this world right now. And as we make disciples, that is our goal, to help people to learn the gospel story of Scripture, to grow in their love for the Author of the story, and then live out their part in God's ongoing gospel story. To learn, love, and live.

This three-part discipleship structure is woven into what is considered the seminal passage on discipleship, especially discipling children: Deuteronomy 6:4–9. This passage, known as the Shema, focuses on discipleship in the home, but its principles apply to discipleship in all contexts and for all ages.

show slide 3:

The Shema begins, “Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

The foundation of the Shema, of discipleship, is knowing who God is. That’s what “orthodoxy” is all about: believing the truth about God.

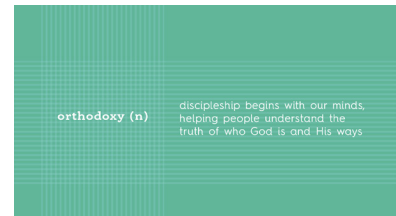


slide 3

show slide 4:

Discipleship begins with our minds. We need to help people understand who God is and His ways. We need to help them engage their minds, to think deeply, about the gospel.

But discipleship isn’t simply about transferring information. It doesn’t stop at the head, but goes on to deal with the heart. This is what we see as the Shema continues in Deuteronomy 6:5 and 6.

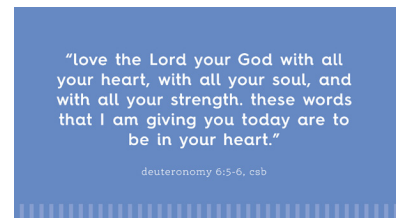


slide 4

show slide 5:

It says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart.”

God’s intention is that the truth of who He is and the beauty of what He has done to restore our broken relationship with Him should stir our affections for Him and others. This is why Jesus pointed to the commands to love God and love others as the two greatest in Scripture. Love is the divinely appointed conduit for us to take what we know and put it into practice.



slide 5

show slide 6:

As critical as this part of discipleship is, it is often neglected for some reason. The tendency is to move straight from learning to living, which robs people of the beauty of the gospel and the opportunity to rightly engage their feelings called orthopathy.



slide 6

Being moved deeply—filled with gratitude, love, and awe—is the only reasonable response to what we learn. We don't just target the head, then, we also go after the heart. But if discipleship ended here, it would be incomplete. Love is not love without action.

The Shema begins by telling us who God is. It continues with a call to love the God we know. It concludes this way:

show slide 7:

“Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates.”

“repeat them to your children. talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates.”

deuteronomy 6:7-9, ccb

slide 7

Knowing and loving God rightly will result in living rightly, called orthopraxy. What we believe about God and our love for Him will show in how we live before a watching world.

show slide 8:

Living as God's people on mission is a requirement of all who believe, a test to determine if a person actually has learned and loved.

This is what Jesus had in mind when He explained what separates the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus pointed to each group's action as the reason they were either saved or they perished. Jesus was not teaching a works-based salvation in this passage, but rather He was assuming a holistic discipleship process.

orthopraxy (n)

discipleship is ultimately expressed not just in our knowledge or our emotions, but in our actions, as we live as God's people in the world

slide 8

His unspoken premise was that the righteous will do what they do because they know and love Him. It will be their natural and reasonable response to being in relationship with God.

The opposite is just as true: it is unreasonable to contend that a person is a disciple of Jesus if he or she fails to live any differently.

Our goal is not just to aim for the heads and hearts of those we are discipling, but also for their hands. We want people to live differently because of what they have come to learn and who they have come to love.

show slide 9:

This is what discipleship is all about for every person and every age in the church. It is holistic in nature, shaping the head, heart, and hands of the believer. It affects what we know, what we love, and the way we live. That's what discipleship is all about because it's what the gospel is all about. The gospel reveals the greatness of God and the depths to which He goes to save sinners, sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross and rise again. It creates a love for God in everyone who believes that is uncontainable.

The gospel changes lives and invites us to be a part of seeing more lives changed by its power. That's the heart of discipleship.

That's what the church, and the world, needs right now. And that's what God wants us to share with everyone around us.

this is what discipleship is all about. It is holistic in nature, shaping the head, heart, and hands of the believer.

slide 9

show slide 10 & discuss the following:

- Where do you see this discipleship model naturally occurring in your ministry?
- Which of these three aspects are you most naturally drawn to? Which do you see as being a challenge?
- How do you hope intentionally focusing on these three aspects will affect your ministry?

discussion time

slide 10