

Get Serious. About Discipleship. – Mk 1:14-20

Last week I introduced our **Get Serious** theme for the year from 1 Tim 4:7-8 (quote)

Train yourself for godliness – strive and toil for it to the point of weariness/exhaustion

In Jesus' day, that training for godliness was called discipleship

That's going to be the focus of our time this morning – Get Serious About Discipleship

But before we get to our text this morning, I want to give you an overview of D

Discipleship comes from the word disciple – pupil or learner or follower

Someone who strongly believes in the teaching of a leader, philosophy, or religion, and tries to act according to those teachings

So when it comes to Christianity, a disciple is someone who follows and imitates the teachings and example of Jesus Christ

Which means that . . .

Discipleship is the life-long process of becoming more like Christ in knowledge, character, and deeds.

Unlike school, D doesn't take break for summer

There's no Christmas vacation or Spring Break from your training

And there's no end to it

While you still have life and breath – D continues, your training continues; It's life-long

It's the life-long process of *learning* all that God wants you to know – becoming like Christ in his knowledge

Being all that God wants you to be – becoming like Christ in his character (love, compassion, mercy, justice, godliness, etc)

Doing all that God wants you to do – becoming like Christ in his deeds

That kind of D was a common thing in the Jewish culture of Jesus' day

Young children, if they could be spared from the family work, would sit at the feet of the local rabbi every day, to hear his teaching

They would begin their D process by memorizing the Torah, the first 5 books of the OT

If you were really good, the best of the best, you might be chosen by the rabbi to live with him and follow him wherever he went . . .

With the intent to be just like him and pass on his teachings

So in order to learn, be, and do all that he wanted, just like he did – you lived, breathed, and ate with the guy 24/7 . . .

Hoping to pick up his knowledge, his character, and his deeds

It was discipleship via *relationship*

That's exactly the kind of D Christ calls us to – D via relationship

He calls us to a life-long *relationship* with him, in order to know what he knows, be like he is, and do what he does

That's biblical discipleship

In order to flesh that out, turn to **Mk 1:14-20** (read it)

If you're going to get serious about discipleship, you must first . . .

Step 1 – Repent and believe (v14-15)

There's no such thing as a disciple who hasn't repented of his sin

There's no such thing as a disciple who doesn't believe in Jesus and all that he did

Repent means to change your mind about the direction you're going in life, and go the opposite way

In the NT, it always involves a radical turn from sin, to live for God

As in – do a u-turn right in the middle of the meridian of your life, go opposite direction

Why? Because apart from repentance, there's no forgiveness of sins

And apart from forgiveness, there's no reconciliation w/ God – you're separated fr him

And apart from being reconciled to God, there's no avoiding hell

Did you know that?

That God in his holiness cannot stand you in your sinfulness?

That because of who he is, and who you are, there are grave consequences for your sin, apart from repentance

*My Dad shot a skunk in our shed one time when I was growing up

Problem was – he couldn't get it out after he shot it

It receded back into a hole in the far reaches of the shed, and it was impossible to get near it due to the spray

He tried, but he couldn't tolerate the stench in his nostrils, nor the burn in his eyes

So he waited and stayed away, just like God waits and stays away from us in our sin

But as the days went by, it only got worse, because added to the initial spay that lingered in the air, was the stench of rotting flesh

The combination was putrefying

So much so that it was physically impossible to go anywhere near the shed, let alone *inside* near the skunk – even if you plugged your nose, your eyes would water

It finally got so bad, that Dad devised an elaborate hook on the end of a very long pole, and by holding his breath in short spurts, with tears rolling down his face, he dragged the skunk out of the shed and into the woods, never to see it again

That's how God is with our sin – he cannot stand it and will not tolerate it

His perfect holiness will not allow it in his presence

Therefore it separates us from him

And if it goes unconfessed, if you never turn to God, asking forgiveness for how you've offended him and failed to magnify him with your life . . .

You'll remain separated from him forever, spending eternity in hell

That's why the first step toward discipleship is genuine repentance –

Confessing your sins to God; Getting right with others

Ending your current lifestyle of sin; And receiving God's forgiveness

• Repent, Jesus said, and believe; That's the other side of the coin – *belief*

But not just belief in anything

You can believe whatever you want (many of you do) – but that doesn't make it true Nor does it do you any good if it's not true

Jesus said *believe in the gospel*, the Good News– the truth about who he is, what he did

Believe that Jesus is the Son of God, God in the flesh

That as a perfect sacrifice, unstained by sin *himself*, he died for the sins of the *world*,

including yours and mine
That he rose again to guarantee your life, forever and full
That's the gospel – believing that Jesus died for your sins, and rose again for your life
Only belief in the *gospel*, coupled *with* repentance, saves you from the consequences
and grip of sin in your life
Only belief *with* repentance leads to D – becoming more like Christ

Belief *without* repentance doesn't – that's just intellectualism
That's where many of you are – you've believed in the right facts for a long time
But you've never repented of your sin
You've never humbled yourself and acknowledged to God how you've failed to
honor him with your life
You've never been broken in godly sorrow and asked forgiveness
Repent *and* believe Jesus said

- Question is – do you? Do you believe? If so, have you? Have you repented?
Have you been reconciled to God?
If not, let's do it right now – *The kingdom of God is at hand* (15)
The power and presence of God is near, and available for all who believe and repent

If you've always believed, but never repented – do it now
If you've never believed and never repented, and you want to be a disciple – do a u-turn
in your life, and pray with me

Pray – see your holiness and my sinfulness like I've never seen it before
Repent of my sin – I'm sorry, please forgive me
Believe in the gospel – you died for me; Cleanse me and wash me
Turning fr my sin, my own desires – commit to live for you from now on
Come into my heart and take over – I want a relationship that leads to D
If you'd like for me to know – raise your hand and look at me
Finish prayer – Bless them; keep them on path of D; Make this day a turning point

That's step 1 – repent and believe
Step 2 – Change your focus (v16-20)

Speaking to everyone now, not just new believers – look at v16-20 (read it)
The first disciples were fishermen – presumably they had heard his message
But they had their *own* plan in life; they had their focus
And it didn't include Jesus; Their focus was fish

Jesus comes along and rocks their world by requiring a radical change of focus
“You're doing that (all well and good), but what about this?”
“You're all about fish, but what about *souls*”
His call on their life required a radical change of focus for them

So too, his call on your life, often requires a radical change of focus for you
Having invited him into your life, he wants you to live for him
Which for most of us means getting our eyes off ourselves, and onto him
Getting your eyes off of tasks, and on to people
Caring more about souls, than sales – a change of focus

Does that mean you have to quit your job? It could, but not necessarily
Nor does a change of focus include abdicating your family responsibilities
But God's call on your life *always* means changing your focus from whatever is most
important to *you*, to whatever is most important to *him*

- That's the way it was for Abraham when he left his homeland to go to Canaan
Moses when he left the pastures to go to Egypt – a change of focus
Nehemiah when he left the luxury of Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem
John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord; Peter to restore his loyalty to Christ
Paul to begin spreading the Word; Jesus to come to earth and give his life
D *always* requires a change of focus from whatever is most important to *you*, to whatever
is most important to *God*

You may not have to move from here to there, or quit your job, or put on camel skin
But if you're going to get serious about D, you must change your focus
Always; There is no middle ground
I wish there were because some of you will reject this teaching because it's too hard
Just like some of Jesus' hearers rejected it and stopped following him
Jn 6:66 – *After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him*
Don't go there; If God's calling you to change your focus, or even sharpen it – do it

- You can start by asking yourself – what do I spend my time on?
Are they bad things or good things?
And if they're good things, are they the best things?

Good things become bad things when they displace the best things
If you read a good book and never read the Bible – the book just became a bad thing
If you're in habit of forsaking church in favor of sports – sports just became a bad thing
Good things become bad things when they displace the best things
And it requires a change of focus to re-gain a D perspective

Maybe there's something nagging at you these days, that you know good and well you
need to change
Something that's out of kilter in your life; Something you've lost perspective on
If so, change it – don't ignore the call of Christ; Don't ignore the compulsion of God
Change your focus and get serious about D

Step 3 – Pay the price (v18,20)

Whatever it is, be ready and willing to pay the price of D (read 17-18)
First, they followed him *immediately*
Second, they left *everything* to do so – including their livelihood (nets, 18) and their
family (read 20)
Third, they traveled all over creation
They changed the *entire direction of their lives* in order to be his disciples
In order to become more like him in knowledge, character, and deeds

That's a huge sacrifice, cost, price to pay – but pay it they did
And they hadn't even heard **Mk 10:29-30** yet, where – *Jesus said, truly I say to you . . .*
No one who pays the price of discipleship will fall to be rewarded

They hadn't heard that yet; They didn't know the blessing that awaited them
Nor could they have known the full *price* they'd pay
But they responded immediately; gave up whatever was necessary; did whatever it took

Salvation is free, but discipleship may cost you everything

Salvation is a free gift of God as a result of his grace and your faith
There's nothing you can do to earn it

But discipleship – becoming like Christ in knowledge, character, and deeds – may cost you everything
It may cost you your friends – because you can no longer do the things they want to do
It may cost you your family – because they reject you for your beliefs
It may cost you your job – because you refuse to look the other way
It may cost you your comfort – because you're persecuted for your beliefs
It may cost you your life – because you take a stand for Christ

Your D may cost you *everything* – if it does, pay it
Pay it for the glory of God and the fame of his name
Pay it for the advance of the gospel and the sake of the lost
Pay the price – it'll be the cheapest joy and deepest satisfaction you've ever bought

- D may cost you everything, but if it doesn't, it *will* cost you your – time, money, energy, sleep, ease, popularity

The price you pay could be as simple as watching less TV
Or as complicated as being a cross-cultural missionary
It could be as subtle as memorizing a verse – Or as obvious as going to seminary
It could be as minor as getting up earlier every day – Or as major as fasting once a week
No matter what, if you're going to get serious about discipleship, there *will* be a price to pay – and you must be willing to pay it

Whether you knew if or not, that's what God called you to when first believed/repented
Salvation is free, but D may cost you everything
You can't by-pass the cost, and still get the goods – life to the full
By-pass the cost of discipline, and still get the satisfaction
By-pass the cost of commitment, and still get the contentment
By-pass the cost of obedience, and still get the blessing

You can't; And it's time to stop trying; To stop rationalizing
If you're going to get serious about D, pay the price
It's the only God-honoring, God-glorifying, all-satisfying thing to do

Fourth, if you're going to get serious about D . . .

Step 4 – Make a plan (v38-39)

A bit further down in this chapter, after the disciples had followed Jesus to the synagogue in Capernaum, and then the house of Simon and Andrew . . .
Jesus unfolds his plan (read 38)
That was the plan the Father gave to him – to go to the other towns and preach
And that was his plan for passing on his knowledge, character, deeds to the disciples

Barna Research Group analyzes trends in religious beliefs and practices

In a recent survey they documented something I think you already know – that most people *say* their faith matters, but few invest much energy in it
When they questioned born again adults (genuine believers) – found that only 1 out of 5 are actively engaged in some sort of discipleship activity, besides attending church
Illustrate (have groups of 5 stand up; 4 sit down)

- While most of us are lazy at heart, I don't think that's the reason so many are among the 4 and not the 1
Rather, I think the vast majority of you *want* to get serious about your discipleship, but don't know what to do
You don't know how; You don't know where to start; You don't have a plan
So with G as our goal, we're going to make a plan together – a D plan
Not all at once, but week by week

- A discipleship plan is to G (last week), like a training plan is to a weight goal
If you go to the gym and ask them to help you . . .
They're first going to establish a goal – like a weight goal, strength goal, shape goal
Then they're going to devise an exercise plan to help you reach that goal
Then you're going to do the actual exercises according to the plan, in order to strive for the goal
In our case – Godliness is the goal; D the plan; SD's the exercises/means to carry it out
Leave out any one of them – you'll *stall* out in your walk with Christ

You can have the greatest D plan in the whole world, and faithfully practice the SD's – but if you have no goal, you'll soon lose heart
Discipline without direction is drudgery – G must be your goal

Likewise, with G as your goal and a plan for D, you'll go nowhere if you don't show up at “God's gym” to carry it out – you must practice the SD's
Nor will G as your goal and SD's as your practice do you any good apart from a *plan* – because you'll meander from one thing to another, with little to show for it except for some soreness now and then – you must make a plan

So I want you to keep a running plan these next several weeks, from Sunday to Sunday
I'll remind you of it and maybe even put it in your notes
Call it **My Plan for Godliness**

We've already covered the first two steps

1. Get serious about it (godliness)

2. Commit to a plan

You can have the best plan in the world, but if you don't commit to it, it's for naught
That's what I want you to do right now
Commit that you will develop a plan over next couple of months; *And* carry it out

3. Establish a consistent time and place to meet with the Lord

That's what I want you to do this *week*
Find, establish, and commit to a consistent, dedicated time/place to meet w/ the Lord
Find 5 slots on 5 different days throughout the week
It could be the morning, it could be the evening

Whenever it is, make sure it fits your life and schedule

If your 2 year-old gets up at 5:30 every morning raring to go, don't think you're going to meet with the Lord at 5:45

Find a slot compatible with your stage of life and schedule – and stick to it

That's what it takes to Get Serious About Discipleship

Repent and believe; Change your focus; Pay the price; and Make a plan