



Shelby Christian Church

FOLLOWING JESUS: GROWING WITH EACH OTHER

MATTHEW 28:18-20, ACTS 2:42-47, EPHESIANS 4:13-16, 2 TIMOTHY 2:1-2 * 4/26/2026

MAIN POINT

One of the best ways discipleship happens is in small groups.

INTRODUCTION

Think back to your high school or college years—what team or group did you love being part of? What lessons from that experience still shape you today?

Jesus came with a mission big enough to embrace the entire world (John 3:16), yet He chose to begin that mission with a small group. He invested deeply in twelve disciples—men who, aside from one, believed in Him and committed themselves to learning how to love God wholeheartedly and love others with sincerity.

Two thousand years later, the church still grows the same way it started: through small groups of people who learn, grow, and follow Jesus together. Small groups remain one of the most effective environments for discipleship and spiritual transformation.

Let's look at four passages of Scripture that show why small groups are such a powerful setting for becoming more like Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 28:18-20

Why is Jesus' authority important before giving this command?

What is the difference between making converts and making disciples?

What does it mean to baptize "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"?

How would you describe what it means to "teach them to obey" everything Jesus commanded?

Why do you think Jesus emphasizes His continual presence with His followers?

In what ways does the Great Commission function as the mission statement for your small group?

Whatever hesitation or uncertainty the disciples may have felt, Jesus gave them a straightforward picture of what it means to "make disciples of all nations." Their assignment involved three actions: going, baptizing, and teaching.

Going means taking initiative—seeking people out rather than waiting for them to come to you.

Baptizing means sharing the gospel clearly and faithfully so that the Holy Spirit draws people to trust Jesus and publicly declare His lordship and salvation through baptism.

Teaching means walking with believers as they grow, helping them learn to obey everything Jesus taught throughout Scripture.

Jesus also assured them that His presence—through the Holy Spirit—would remain with them “to the end of the age.” That promise extends to every discipleship group today. Each small group is a continuation of that first circle of disciples, carrying the same mission forward.

Their commission is our Great Commission. Our purpose as followers of Christ hasn’t changed: we are called to make disciples of all nations by going wherever we can, baptizing those who believe, and teaching God’s Word so that people grow into lifelong obedience to Jesus.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:42-47

Imagine your church suddenly welcomed hundreds of new believers after a gospel rally. Over the next few months, what steps should the church take to help these new Christians grow as disciples? Be as specific as you can.

How does being part of a small group help believers devote themselves to God’s Word, build genuine community, grow in prayer, and serve others?

The Book of Acts records the story of the early church—from the moment the Holy Spirit filled the believers in Jerusalem to the two years Paul spent in Rome boldly preaching the gospel while under house arrest (Acts 28:30–31). Acts 2:42–47 gives us a snapshot of how the early church disciplined the three thousand new believers who came to faith on the day the Spirit was poured out.

The phrase “devoted themselves” (Acts 2:42) speaks of passion, commitment, and priority. For these early Christians, discipleship wasn’t optional—it was essential. Their devotion expressed itself in four key practices: learning the apostles’ teaching (Scripture), fellowship (building community), breaking bread (sharing life and meeting needs), and prayer (both individually and together).

Every day, believers gathered in larger settings at the temple and in smaller gatherings from house to house. Their deep commitment to one another became visible as those with resources willingly shared with anyone in need. The authenticity of their community made such an impact that unbelievers took notice—and more people came to faith daily. Their discipleship naturally overflowed into effective evangelism.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 4:13-16.

What do you think “unity of the faith” looks like in practical terms?

What does it mean to have the “fullness of Christ” as the standard?

Why is spiritual instability compared to waves and wind?

How can false teaching subtly influence believers today?

Why is both truth and love essential—not just one or the other?

What does this passage teach about every believer’s role in the church?

In Ephesians 4:13, Paul defines the ultimate aim of discipleship as growing into spiritual maturity—measured by nothing less than the fullness of Christ. This is why God gives the church gifted leaders: to equip every believer for ministry and to build up the body of Christ (4:12).

Paul emphasizes that this growth is a shared journey. He uses group-oriented language: “until we all reach unity” (4:13), “we will no longer be little children” (4:14), and “let us grow in every way” (4:15). He pictures the church as a body that grows stronger and more Christlike as each part works together in love. At the same time, he makes it clear that every individual believer has a role to play—each one contributing to the health and maturity of the whole (4:16).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 TIMOTHY 2:1-2

What does it mean to be “strengthened by grace” rather than relying on yourself?

Why is it important that the message is passed on through “faithful people”?

What qualities do you think define someone as “reliable” or “able to teach others”?

How does this passage illustrate a pattern of multiplication (Paul → Timothy → others → others)?

Why is intentional discipleship essential for the health of the church?

Paul reminded Timothy that a lasting and fruitful ministry didn’t depend on Paul being physically present. Timothy’s strength had to come from “the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Paul also wanted Timothy to understand that even if he himself faced death—as Paul now did—the gospel would continue. Its future didn’t rest on any one person.

Because of this, Paul urged Timothy to train faithful disciples who would, in turn, train others. Timothy was to embrace a multiplication model of discipleship. Through intentional mentoring, he could invest in at least two emerging leaders. Those leaders could each disciple two more, resulting in four—and the pattern would continue from there.

Churches today can follow a similar approach through small groups. A healthy, established group can encourage some of its mature members to launch a new group focused on reaching unbelievers with the gospel. Over time, that new group can do the same—starting another group—while the original group continues multiplying as well. This creates a growing network of disciples who make disciples.

APPLICATION

In what ways are you personally living out the command to “make disciples”?

Who in your life might God be calling you to invest in spiritually?

What fears or obstacles keep you from sharing your faith?

In what areas of your life do you see growth toward spiritual maturity?

Where might you still feel “tossed by the waves” spiritually?

How can you better guard yourself against false or misleading teaching?

What ideas from this study could best help your group strengthen its discipleship strategy?

What challenges would your group need to overcome to give birth to a new discipleship group?

In what ways can you take more responsibility for growing in discipleship?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

Matthew 28:18-20

28:18 Before the resurrection, Jesus had authority (7:29; 9:6,8; 11:27; 21:23). However, through the resurrection, the Father granted Him all authority over heaven and... earth, an authority far greater than that which Satan had vainly promised Him.

28:19 The command to extend their mission worldwide brings to a climax Matthew's repeated theme of Gentile participation in God's salvation. The inclusion of four Gentile women in Jesus' genealogy and the summons of the magi to worship the infant Christ foreshadowed the disciples' mission of making disciples of all nations. Baptism marked a person's entrance into the faith community. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is a reference to the Trinity. Matthew's language shows that a clear understanding of Jesus' nature and identity as God was required before baptism.

28:20 The Great Commission (vv. 19-20) is preceded by a reference to Jesus' authority and followed by the promise of Jesus' spiritual presence among us. Both are necessary if we are to fulfill our God-given mission.

Acts 2:42-47

2:42 These four practices: teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers provide insight into the priorities of early Christianity. These same practices should be considered normative for the church today. The apostles' teaching was probably similar to Peter's message at Pentecost. That is to say, it focused on making Christ known by appealing to eyewitness testimony and the prophecies of the OT. Early Christians gathered together regularly for edification, prayer, and exhortation. The breaking of bread probably included fellowship meals and participation in the Lord's Supper (1Co 11:17-34).

2:44-45 As part of their fellowship, the early church practiced a community of goods for a short time. Distribution to members of the faith community took place according to individual need. This practice did not last long, likely because it was logistically difficult and fraught with potential abuse (see chaps. 4-6).

2:46 Early Christian gatherings took place in two places: the temple complex and the homes of individual believers.

2:47 The early church was an evangelizing church. Luke recounted that every day the Lord added to those who were being saved. He did not say how this took place, but it appears that evangelism took place primarily through the gathering of Christians in the temple and in individual houses. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ were at the heart of early Christian preaching, which called for immediate response from anyone who listened.

Ephesians 4:13-16

4:13 Ministry is intended to move believers toward accomplishing three goals: (1) unity of faith and full knowledge of God's Son, (2) maturity, and (3) the fullness of Christ. Maturity and unity are measured in terms of the relationship of the body to the Head, Christ.

4:14 When the gifted people equip the church, the community of faith will evidence stability in precept and practice.

4:15 Speaking the truth in love can literally be translated "truthing in love." When a church is faithful to speak truth in love, it will have transparent relationships where people edify and benefit one another.

4:16 Ultimately the church will grow up into Christ in all aspects, with each part fitting together and supporting the other. Each member of the body must function properly if the body is to grow. We get our English word harmony from the Greek term translated fitted and knit together.

2 Timothy 2:1-2

2:1. Having just shared his disappointment over the growing apostasy spreading through Asia, Paul turned to Timothy and wrote, You then, my son, be strong. Difficult circumstances, our own weaknesses and fears, and the negative attitudes or unfaithfulness of others should not determine our course in life. Just as Paul wrote of the power which comes from the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 1:7), so now he wrote of the strength which comes from Jesus Christ.

No doubt Timothy knew, as Paul did, that he could not find adequate strength within himself to fulfill the responsibilities thrust upon him or to endure the hardships ahead. Our confidence and ability to live successfully as followers of Christ comes when we are strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Paul knew that God's grace not only saves us; it enables us to carry out the life of faithful obedience.

2:2. Our own relationship with Christ Jesus must be developing in trust and dependence before we can expect to influence others for his kingdom. The perpetual strength of God's grace would enable Timothy to fulfill his tasks. Timothy must not only guard the gospel; he must take the gospel and the apostolic instructions (things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses) and entrust [them] to reliable men.

Unlike the false teachers who claimed special revelation or secret knowledge, Paul's message stood in accord with all Scripture and in agreement with the apostles. What he received from the Lord he passed on in an open manner (1 Cor. 11:23). Likewise, Timothy received no inside information from Paul. The message was widely known, spoken of freely and before many witnesses.

In his assignment to entrust the gospel to other people, Timothy needed to observe in these believers the quality of adherence to God's truth. Reliability and trustworthiness in remaining true to the gospel were prerequisites.

Timothy must also seek those who evidenced a knowledge and ability to teach others. Paul wanted to establish people of godly character who possessed the aptitude for relating divine truth to everyday life, for clarifying ideas, and for maintaining purity in their instruction.