

The Fundamentals

Lesson 7 – No Solo Missions (Discipleship / Fellowship)

John 15:13

Here we are once again at the end of a study series. Perhaps it no longer needs to be said because it's become your habit ... Before you begin this final lesson, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with knowledge and wisdom as you turn to the pages of God's word and let the joy of his presence be your delight.

Now, open your Bible.

In this study, we have gone through six top needs for a believer who claims to be following Christ: (1) Quiet Time; (2) Meditating on God's Word; (3) Praying According to God's Word; (4) Worshiping in God's Word; (5) Serving; and (6) Giving. Now we are going to wrap it up with a lesson that encompasses our life with Christ.

When a person joins any branch of the military, it is said that they get incredibly close to the people they are serving with. So much so that their family will be shocked at how tight they've become with their fellow soldiers. The more danger a soldier is in, the closer they get connected to the ones they are fighting alongside of. These men lose friends. They see men injured for life. They go through a lot together, to say the least. A soldier who goes into battle becomes more connected with the men he is in battle with than his own family. This incredible bond of connection and closeness happens within all branches of the military but especially with the guys serving on the front line.

The closeness and bond begins to form in our soldiers from the very beginning when they start training with one another at boot camp. There is no individual training in boot camp. As a matter of fact, the military starts out breaking them down first so they can grow them back up as a unit. As these men are being trained alongside each other, they are growing connected to one another. They don't grow them up individually and they certainly don't serve their individual needs. It's quite the opposite. Instead they make the soldiers as a unit. They make them one with one another. This oneness and connection happens before they go into battle and it certainly increases when they engage in battle.

As these men are training alongside each other at boot camp and then when they are serving alongside each other in battle, they begin to trust one another. They begin to rely on one another. They begin to depend on one another. They learn to be there for one another. No matter what. There are no solo missions on the battlefield. Our soldiers have one commitment that no soldier stands alone. This commitment is a huge part of what brings these guys home from the battle and it is a huge part of what brings them victory. Their commitment is to each other and because of the fact that they are built up together as a unit, as a fighting unit, they are committed to each other in the battlefield. No soldier stands alone.

There are no solo missions in the military; likewise there are no solo missions in the Christian life. We are in a battle. Revelation 12:17 says “Then the dragon (enemy of God) was enraged at the woman (Israel) and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring (believers in Christ) – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (that’s us).” As Christians, we need to understand that the battle we are in every day is actually greater (eternally) than the battle our soldiers are in who fight on the front lines. If we would understand this, then we would understand that since there are no solo missions in a military battle, then certainly there should be no solo missions in serving the Lord.

Read Galatians 5:17 (NLT) and Ephesians 6:10-12. Who is our battle with?

Indeed we are in a battle, but the battle is not against one another but it is with our flesh (sinful nature) and with the evil of this world, against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. For these very reasons, we *cannot* fight this battle alone. We cannot go it alone. We need others along side of us.

God’s word has something to say about not going it alone. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-32.

Look at again at verses 12, 14 and 20. What are these verses telling us?

Read verse 27 and personalize it to you.

If we have been a believer for awhile and around the church, we know we’ve been created as a body. We know that we are a part of the body. No believer can function as a body themselves. We all are a *part* of the body. There are many parts to the body. One part cannot do it on its own. We cannot do it alone or on our own; it’s not possible. We need committed relationships working together in order to function as the body of Christ. We need to be intimately connected with fellow believers in order to accomplish the mission that Christ has given us. There are no solo missions following the Lord.

John 15:13 exemplifies the statement that there are to be no solo missions in the Christian life and how we are to be incredibly connected and committed to one another. Whether

we see it or experience or not, this is what Christ made His church to be: *Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

Let's illustrate our need for one another and not going it alone. The health club industry is a billion dollar industry partly because nine out of ten people who want to exercise regularly can't do it alone. *Ninety percent* of people who actually want to exercise can't do it alone. Since the average person cannot maintain an exercise program alone, they join a gym. People attend a gym so they can achieve their goals in community. Most will go to the gym with a partner to work out together so they push each other, so they encourage each other, and so they can hold each other accountable. However, it's not just in exercise that we need someone along side of us but it's also in the other things we do in life that we need to have someone beside us. In many areas, we need someone motivating us and keeping us accountable – we need someone telling us “you can do it” or “let's do this together.”

It's the exact same thing in the Christian life. Just as ninety percent of people can't exercise alone, the percentage of Christians who can't follow Jesus Christ alone is probably at ninety percent as well.

We can check this percentage with not only the life of some other Christians we know, but we can check it with our own life. When we get saved, we leave the ungodly life we've been living and then our life radically changes. In the time after we get saved, there can be some seasons in our lives when we don't have anyone following Jesus with us. There are times when we find ourselves not having any close committed relationships with people who are also following Jesus. Whenever we are in one of those seasons (when we're on a solo mission), there is no spiritual growth occurring in our lives. When there is no spiritual growth occurring, what happens is we have the tendency to revert back to our natural state– which is a sinner. We become more and more consumed with self, sin and things of the world. We've all been there. Just like ninety percent of people can't exercise alone, it's probably safe to say that ninety percent of Christians cannot grow in their relationship with Christ alone. The truth of the matter is that we all need others to come along side of us in order for us to grow spiritually.

Paul also connected physical exercise with spiritual growth. Read 1Timothy 4:7. What is the key word in the last part of this verse about being Godly?

The Greek word for train/exercise is where we get our word gymnasium. Now read 1Timothy 4:8. What is Paul saying that is more valuable than physical training?

There is some value to physical training but more important than being physically fit is being spiritually fit. Paul exhorts young Timothy to train himself for godliness. Likewise, we need to be in that same kind of spiritual training. We need to join a spiritual gym.

The problem is that ninety percent of us cannot train or exercise alone. Not physically and not spiritually. We need someone to come along side of us to provide us with motivation, encouragement, and accountability. We need a spiritual partner to train with. We need someone who wants to know Jesus as much or more than we want to know Jesus. Think of it like this: if you want a gym training partner that's going to motivate you and get you into shape, you're not gonna pick an out of shape partner who would rather sit on the couch and eat ice cream. You're going to pick a training partner who is physically fit and who will encourage you to have a salad and who will drive you to the gym and get you on the treadmill for 20 minutes. In our spiritual life, it is very similar. It's not very wise to go to a person who is drinking, using drugs, looking at porn, cussing all of the time and ask that person to help you follow Jesus. It's wiser to pick a spiritual training partner who desires to follow Jesus at least at your level (or one who is at a greater level) and connect yourself to that person.

We need to join ourselves to a spiritually fit Christian who is following Jesus. We need to come along side of that person and develop a relationship. We need to hang out with them and call each other when we have questions. We need a spiritually fit partner that can point us to scripture and who will pray with us and for us. We need a spiritual training partner who will help us exercise ourselves for Godliness. It's mandatory. We cannot go it alone. Left to do it on our own, we simply won't.

All through the Bible we see the believers in committed relationships that bring spiritual growth. We see it all through the scriptures but seldom do we see it in the church. Seldom do we see people in the church who say I am committed to this person because they are helping me follow Jesus. I am growing spiritually because of my commitment to this relationship. Paul is our greatest New Testament example.

Write out 1 Corinthians 11:1.

The Amplified Bible translates it like this: "Pattern yourselves after me [follow my example], as I imitate and follow Christ (the Messiah)." Paul is saying he is following Christ and if anyone wants to follow Christ, then they can follow him as he is following Christ.

All through the New Testament and Old Testament alike, you can name a person and almost always find a committed relationship that person had which was the cause of their spiritual growth. In the Old Testament, in the early days of Abraham, Enoch and Noah, if

that relationship was not with a person, then it was with God. Likewise, we need strong relationships with other believers where we are committed to following Jesus together. It's not just enough to know that person from afar. It must be a personal relationship where you can reach out to them, someone you can call, someone you can hang out with. You need a spiritual partner who is following Christ, you can be with at Bible studies with and whom you can learn from. We need someone to help us follow Jesus. It's just like exercise; as we follow Jesus together, we prod one another, and we spur one another on. We motivate. We encourage.

Write out Proverbs 27:17.

Write out Romans 1:11-12.

We need to help one another grow in a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. We need one another. We need to have committed relationships to help one another grow in our walk with Christ. We need to have those people in our lives that are helping us grow in our Christian walk and, prayerfully, we need to be that kind of person to someone else. There are no solo missions. We don't grow in a vacuum.

Write out Hebrews 10:24.

Now answer this question: Do I have this type of relationship with someone in my life?

If you do not have a relationship with someone whom you are motivating (stirring up) to acts of love or good works, then establish one. If you do have such a relationship, continue to ask yourself on a daily basis how you can stir up in that person something to help them follow Jesus. Be a person who is constantly thinking of someone in your life who you can motivate to follow Jesus and stir up in that person acts of love and good works. And if you have such a person in your life that is doing that for you by calling or texting you, then praise and thank God for them. Then follow their example and do that

for someone else. Commit yourself to a friendship like that where you and that person actually know one of the reasons you know each other is so you can encourage each other to follow the Lord. If we will make a commitment to that kind of a relationship with another person, our spiritual life will take off.

Go back to Hebrews 10 and look at verse 25.

What are we told that we are not to give up doing? _____

What are we told we should do to one another? _____

We need to be encouraging one another. Yes, Sundays are good and we shouldn't give up on meeting together on Sundays. But Sundays do not in any way, scripturally, replace the need for you to have a committed relationship with another Christian who is helping you, and whom you are helping, follow Christ. These are discipling relationships. We need someone that we can say, "This is the person that I am encouraging and this is the person who is encouraging me." And, we must not neglect meeting together either on Sundays or in Bible studies.

We all know this: going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a cheeseburger. Yet we are commanded in scripture to continue to gather together. However, that is not what makes us a Christian. What makes us a Christian is growing in a personal relationship with Christ. Ninety percent of us can't do that alone, including going to church, because our culture has deceived us into thinking that church is a spectator sport. We come to church like we watch the big screen at home. We come to watch and be entertained. We've been taught to be entertained so we come to church with the expectation to be entertained. It's not bad that we are coming to church but it doesn't make us a Christian. Following Jesus Christ as your Lord makes you a Christian.

How do we make Jesus Christ our Lord? We do it by getting someone else in our life to help us learn how to make Him our Lord. Someone who will encourage us to read the Bible, who will encourage us to pray, who will ask us what we are going through and then one who will search the scriptures with us to seek what God has to say about it. We need someone who will tell us what we are doing is not Godly. We need someone to let us know when we are stumbling or sinning.

The Bible is full of commandments and examples of people following Jesus in close community, in relationship with other people. None of the disciples would have made it without Jesus encouraging them. Without Jesus pouring his life into them and being graceful and merciful and helping them, the disciples would have been out of the training because they wouldn't have been able to do it themselves. Barnabas, in the book of Acts, (his name means Son of Encouragement,) is a great example of what an incredible encourager looks like. We can't even begin to list the number of people Paul encouraged,

especially young believers. Let's not forget all of the Old Testament relationships that were absolutely built upon these types of committed relationships. Moses and Aaron. Moses and Joshua. Joshua and Caleb. Naomi and Ruth. David and Jonathan. Elijah and Elisha. All of these relationships prove to us that if God has something for you in your life, he will always put someone in your life to strengthen you, to help you, to guide you, to encourage you.

Watch for these kinds of relationships in your own life because it's how God works. Why? Because this race we are running is a marathon. It is not a sprint. Our nature is to fall out of the race. We all know people that used to go to church and have stopped following Jesus as their Savior. Maybe we've been that person. Our nature is to fall out of the race, not continue to press on in the race. When Paul told Timothy to train and exercise himself for godliness in 1 Timothy 4:7, he used those specific words because Paul knew the Christian life we are living is a race!

Praise God that his word encourages us to stay in the race.

In 2 Timothy 4:7, what must we do to finish the race?

Read Hebrews 12:1. What slows us down? _____

How should we run the race? _____

Our Christian walk is a marathon race. It must be fought. It requires faithfulness. It requires a stripping off the sin that so easily trips us up. And it takes endurance. To run a race takes training.

But check it out! There is a reward to enduring and remaining faithful in the race. Read Philippians 3:14. What do we receive when we press on to reach the end of the race?

The prize is heavenly. Once we're done running this race, we'll be in heaven with our sweet Savior. Now that is a reward that is worth all the training!

However, we need a training partner to encourage us to train and remain faithful, and to endure the race when it gets hard because it's our nature to fall out of the race. The apostle Paul says it so well.

Read Galatians 6:8. What is the cause of our falling out of the race? _____

In Galatians 6:8, Paul sets out the opposites.

What is the result of satisfying our sinful nature? _____

What is the result of those who live to please the Spirit? _____

Paul says if you are running the race towards the flesh then that is what you are going to harvest. If you are running the race towards the spirit, that's what you are going to harvest. Seems to be a no brainer that we are to run our race towards the spirit but so often we fall out of the race because it's a marathon and we get tired and weary. That is why it is so important that we train ourselves for this marathon so that we can endure the race!

Write out Galatians 6:9.

We are going to get tired. We are going to want to give up and stop doing good. That is why we need a training partner. We need someone along side of us to encourage us when we become weary and tired and want to stop and drop out of the race. We need a partner in Christ to pull us back into training and into the race when we have dropped out. It is always too soon to give up! Hang in there. Don't give up. God promises that just at the right time, you will reap a harvest of blessing.

Paul encourages us not to get tired doing good. If we don't give up, we'll reap a harvest of blessing! So often what we need is for someone to take us by the lapels and say, "Listen keep following Christ. Don't give up. Don't let up. Don't back off. Don't give in. Keep training. Keep exercising. Remain faithful. Endure. Don't fall out of the race." We need someone in our lives to run the race with us, to motivate us and to keep us accountable to continue to run the race. Running is always better with a committed partner.

The best way for us to stay in the race is for us to be in a committed relationship with someone who can tell when we are falling out and who will actually reach out to us and say "Come on man, let's keep running the race. You can do it. Don't give up. Why would you fall out at this stage?" We can call that person a co-follower.

A co-follower is someone who is running the race with us. A co-follower is another person who is as committed, or is more committed than we are, to following Christ. We need a co-follower in our lives. We need to make sure we can scan our lives and say I've got these people in my life who want to follow Jesus as much as I do and I'm going to stay in touch with them. We need to be training ourselves for Godliness but we cannot do

it alone. We need a training partner. That is called a discipler. We need to be a training partner and we need a training partner so that we can say in our life we have people pressing us on to follow Christ.

We press on to follow Christ because it is God's purpose in our life to make us like Jesus. The Bible is clear about this.

Write out the first part of Romans 8:29.

Write out Colossians 3:10 (NLT).

Write out the portion of 2 Corinthians 3:18 that is relevant to us becoming like Christ.

God's purpose for our life is not to give us what we want. It's not to fulfill our wildest dreams. It's to make us like Jesus. To transform us more and more into the image of Christ.

How we see that happen in the Bible is within relationships. We call it one-anothering. One-anothering is what we are called to do in order for us to be transformed into the image of Christ. It's not memorizing large portions of the Bible. There are people who know the Bible really well but who don't even believe in God. There are plenty of people who know scripture but who certainly need to grow spiritually – people who know a lot of scripture but who don't look too much like Jesus.

Knowing scripture isn't how you grow spiritually. One-anothering is how you grow spiritually. Here's what happens. As we are one-anothering, as we are becoming more and more like Jesus, here's what it looks like: we're fellowshiping with one another, we're serving one-another, we're bearing one-another burdens, we're edifying and equipping one another, we're confessing our sins to one another, we're praying for one-another, we're encouraging, exhorting and admonishing one another, and most of all we are loving one another. (That is a short summary of the one-anothering.) If you are in a training (one-anothering) relationship, you should be able to look at that list and say yes

I'm doing that. Here's the kicker, in order to be one-anothering, we need to be in a personal one-on-one relationship or a small group.

Read the following scriptures and then write out the one-anothering act we are called to do in each scripture. As you write out the one-anothering act, ask yourself these questions: "If I was doing that, would I be becoming more like Jesus? Are these things occurring in my life? Am I growing spiritually in these areas?"

Romans 12:10 (what's the one-anothering act)

Romans 14:13 (what's the one-anothering act)

Romans 15:5 (what's the one-anothering act)

Romans 15:7 (what's the one-anothering act)

Galatians 5:13 (what's the one-anothering act)

Ephesians 4:2 (what's the one-anothering act)

Ephesians 4:32 (what's the one-anothering act)

Ephesians 5:21 (what's the one-anothering act)

Philippians 2:3 (what's the one-anothering act)

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (what's the one-anothering act)

James 5:16 (what's the one-anothering act)

1 Peter 1:22 (what's the one-anothering act)

1 Peter 4:9 (what's the one-anothering act)

1 Peter 4:10 (what's the one-anothering act)

1 Peter 5:5 (what's the one-anothering act)

Here's the point of these scriptures: Our spiritual growth occurs in the midst of one-anothering. If we are doing all of the above, then we are being transformed and conformed to the image of Jesus. We need to lay our life down for those around us. We need to begin serving. We need to begin loving. We need to begin forgiving. We need to begin bearing with others. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we need to be transformed to one-anothering. As you do God will stretch you, he'll transform you, he'll mold and shape you.

There is one of two places we should be in our Christian walk. We should either be helping someone else follow Jesus or someone else should be helping us follow Jesus. The writer of Hebrews is very concerned about the spiritual growth in the church.

Hebrews 5:12

: You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food.

Do you see here that the writer of Hebrews is putting us in one of two categories. Either we should be being a teacher or we should be being taught. This is the discipleship concept.

The last order we get from our Commander in Chief is found in Matthew 28:18-20. What is that order?

Jesus commands us to go and make disciples of all men. What are we told to do with those disciples in Matthew 28:19? _____

Jesus tells us to go make disciples and immerse them in the trinity and physically baptize them. Now look at Matthew 28:20. What final instructions are we given in the first sentence? _____

There are only two sides of the single command found in Matthew 28:18-20 to be on. Either you are being made a disciple or you are discipling. Either someone else is teaching you, immersing you in the trinity and teaching you what Jesus has commanded, or you are immersing someone else in the trinity and teaching them what Jesus has commanded. And here's the truth, we should all be both. We should be able to say I'm being taught and I'm teaching. I'm both a disciple and a discipler.

To end, answer these questions:

Who is helping me following Jesus? _____

Who am I helping follow Jesus? _____

If there is no one in your life helping you follow Jesus, find someone who will. Simply ask a fellow believer whom you know is following Christ to help you follow him.

If you love Jesus, you can help someone else love Jesus. If you are not helping someone follow Jesus, find someone you can help. The best place to start looking is your family and then your friends, then your co-church attenders, at work. Find someone because as you do God will change you, He'll transform you. You will be in the race because someone else is depending on you being in the race.

John 15:13 (ESV)

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

We were never meant to follow Jesus alone. There are no solo missions in this battle we are in. Don't go it alone. Be in fellowship with other believers. It's critical. It's needed.

Let's pray.

Father God, I thank you that you never leave me nor forsake me. I thank you that you have made me for fellowship with other believers. I thank you that you desire a personal relationship with me and that you desire that I be in personal relationships with others.

Jesus, if I am on a solo mission, I pray you will break my pride and give me the ability to allow someone into my life to come along side of me to train me, to encourage me, to help me follow you. Lord, I pray that you would bring someone into my life that I can come along side of to encourage and train to follow you. You are glorious. Transform and conform me into your image according to your good and perfect will for my life. Lord, give me the ability to endure this race by spending daily quiet time with you, by daily meditating on your word, by daily praying in your word, by daily worshiping in your word, by daily serving you and others, by consistently giving to you and those in need, and by remaining in fellowship with other believers. I love you Jesus. Thank you for drawing near to me in this study. Amen.