

Discipleship in Community: Following Jesus Together

I. GAINING VISION FOR THE MILLENNIUM

- A. One of the most provoking thoughts of this week is, “You have a forty year vision rather than an a thousand year vision.” There is not only vision for the end of the age, but also the age to come.

“It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.” (Isa. 2:2-5)

“It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.” (Micah 4:1-5)

- B. What are we to do?

1. We look upward and forward: We must gain God’s vision for renewal, justice and righteousness through Jesus.

“13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matt. 24:13-14)

“29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they

will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matt. 25:29-31)

“44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Matt. 24:44)

“31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... 45 Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matt. 25:31-34, 45-46)

2. We look outward: Through Jesus and Jesus through His Spirit and His Spirit through the Church

“34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn 13:24-25)

“11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. 12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” (Jn 14:11-14)

“17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (Jn 14:17)

““I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit...26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. ” (Jn 15:1-2, 26-27)

“7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. “ (Jn 16:7-11)

3. Looking inward: Life unto Father, through Jesus, by the Spirit.

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.” 5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him...15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. ” (Jn. 14:1-7,, 15-17)

“26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, [by the Spirit, unto the Father, through Jesus] he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (Jn 14:26-27)

II. A NEW WINESKIN: ELEMENTS OF COMMUNAL DISCIPLESHIP

A. First works are embrace this three inward movements:

1. Identity in Jesus...

“17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor. 5:17)

“7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Eph 1:7-10)

“14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Rom 8:14-17)

2. Practicing Jesus...

“8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:8-10)

“24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matt. 7:24)

“19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:19)

“18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:18-20)

3. Conforming to the nature of Jesus...

“29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” (Rom. 8:29-30)

“12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (Eph. 4:12-13)

B. Engaging in eight essential activities in community:

1. Devotion

42 They all gave full attention to (devoted themselves; ESV) the teaching of the apostles and to the common life [fellowship], to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:42 NTE)

““When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.” (Acts 11:23)

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith...” (Acts 14:21-22)

“When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.” (Acts 15:31-32)

“37 You shall love the LORD...with all your heart... 38This is the first and great commandment.” (Mt. 22:37-38)

2. Discussion: post major teachings moments, the disciples turn aside and discuss the teachings with Jesus.

“As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. (Mk. 4:10; cf. Mk. 7:17; Mk. 9:28)

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“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” (Acts 17:11)

3. Formation (Biblical training) and Transformation (spiritual renewal)

“28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” (Col. 1:28)

“13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Eph 4:13-16)

“12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers (skills) of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Heb. 5:12-14)

4. Spiritual gifts

“11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Eph. 4:16)

“4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

"27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues." (1 Cor. 12:27-28)

5. Fellowship in the light (love and vulnerability)

"5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

"16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (Jas. 5:16)

6. Endurance (To stand firm in Christ)

"58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Cor. 15:58)

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." (Gal. 5:1)

"10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:10-12)

"27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. 29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, 30 engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have." (Phil. 1:27-30)

"15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our

Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. (2 Th. 2:15-17)

7. Multiplication

"9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands..." (Rev. 7:9)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16)

"13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:13-17)

"40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls...47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. " (Acts 2:40-41, 47)

"For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." (Acts 13:47)

"Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him." (Psa. 2:10-12)

III. A CHRISTOCENTRIC SPIRITUAL FAMILY

- A. We must exercise carefulness in how we build: first ministry to the Lord (foundation is a proper understanding of Jesus), then ministry to one another, and to the world.

"11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done." (1 Cor. 3:11-13)

" 17 And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be

called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” (Mk. 11:17)

“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: “I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your wine for which you have labored; but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.” Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples. Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.” And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken. (Isa. 62)

- B. Christ is our chief. He is The Leader, The Head and Preeminent One that proceeds all things. Therefore we seek to discern His will that we may readily obey Him. (Matt. 16:16-19; Eph. 1:22, 2:20, 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:6-7, 5:4)
- C. Christ is Our Teacher, He teaches us wisdom and guides us into the truth by His Spirit. Therefore, we seek His wisdom and revelation in all things through prayer and through the faithful searching of His Word. (John 13:13-14, 14:6, 14:26, 16:12-15; Col. 2:2; Heb 1:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:15, 3:16-17)
- D. Christ is our Friend he understands us and comforts us. Therefore we walk with confidence that we are not only under Him, or in His ways but with Him in agreement and experience His kindness and love as a friend. (Ecc. 4:9-10; Jn. 15:12-15; Jas. 2:23, 4:4)
- E. Christ is our Beloved, our Bridegroom that we long for. Therefore we draw near to Him with promised and assured intimacy with His heart, as we await the marriage feast when we are joined with Him fully and forever. (Isa. 61:10, 62:5, Matt. 25:1; Rev. 19:9)
- F. We are a value-driven community:

1. LOVE

- a. We commit to practicing love for Christ and love toward one another. (Matt. 22:36-40; Jn. 13:31-35).

2. INTIMACY WITH GOD

- a. We pursue intimacy with the Lord, in the fellowship of the Spirit and the truth of His word as we commune with Him in prayer and worship. (Jn. 14:21; Jas. 4:8-10).

3. FAITHFULNESS

- a. We commit to faithfulness to God in loving obedience and devotion to biblical instruction. (Matt 7:24; Jn. 14:21; 15:9-11).

4. HUMILITY

- a. We pursue to live in the spirit of Jesus as humble, gentle and honoring peacemakers. (Matt. 5:9; Phil. 2:3-8).

5. SERMON ON THE MOUNT LIFESTYLE

- a. We are practitioners of the way of Jesus. (Matt. 5-7)

6. JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

- a. We agents of justice and advocates of righteousness. We adopt and plead on behalf of the weak and hopeless. (Isa. 1:16-17, Mic. 6:8)

