

Essentials for A Discipling Community - Part 2

I. REVIEW: THOP AS A DISCIPLING COMMUNITY

- A. As a discipling community our vision is to ***host*** the presence of Jesus in the power of His Spirit, ***maturing in*** and ***demonstrating*** His teachings and nature.
- B. With the aim of putting this vision in action we pursue to ***advance*** *unceasing prayer and worship*, ***proclaim*** the gospel of the Kingdom, ***equip*** laborers for the return of Christ.
- C. We recognize that THOP has different faces, affecting how different people relate to us. We hold these three in tension. Not emphasizing one over the others, but seeking to fully embrace the values each expression adds to the other.
1. We are a ***house of prayer*** — we steward a space and times for devotion, worship and intercession. We partner with the Lord in calling watchmen (those that are willing) to take their station in prophetic watching, praying and proclaiming. (Isa. 62, Lk. 2)
 2. We are a ***missions base*** — we are a training and sending hub mobilizing laborers to fulfill Christ’s commission locally and internationally. (Matt. 28)
 3. We are ***growing*** into a ***local church*** — as the Lord releases grace and gifting, we commit to the NT pattern for vision, values, and authority. This may be expressed in multiplying house-church plants. (Acts 2, 20)
- D. With this in mind, last week I shared how I’ve come to observe how we have allowed worldly values to cause us to deviate from The Way according to the Scriptures—in which we find sufficient counsel in hope to obtain Christ’s call to spiritual maturity, missional fruitfulness and increasing in the knowledge of God.
- E. Our values of comfort, consumerism, independence (even from God), recognition, influence, power, etc., have impacted how we have approached spiritual family, discipleship, kingdom living and ministry.
- F. I believe not only in our community but throughout the Church worldwide, the Spirit of the Lord is leading us back to ***ancient paths***. To fulfill Christ’s commission, we are to corporately invest in spiritual transformation, formation and maturity, equipped for the work of the ministry, discern and accomplish the will of God, to building one another up filled with all the fullness of God (*guided by the Spirit and Scriptures*).

“Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls...” (Jer. 6:16)

“28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke

upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)

- G. Proceeding from the outpouring of the Spirit, the church began to demonstrate (under the guidance of the apostles and elders) the ways and culture of God’s kingdom, a new creation community and family, a prophetic view into the coming age. New creation in the early church was demonstrated in their culture and lifestyle displayed collectively.

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

- H. Last time, we took notice first of the disciples’ devotion, and the value it still carries for every disciple no matter the generation. As noted by Luke, they devoted themselves or “gave full attention to…” to four items: 1. ***the teaching of the apostles***, 2. ***to the common life***, 3. ***to breaking bread*** (communion with Christ and one another), 4. ***to [the] prayer(s)***.

II. ESSENTIAL # 2: THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD: PREACHING AND TEACHING

- A. Jesus The Messiah humbly traveled preaching the kingdom, and teaching the word of God. This He did with 70+ disciples (120 or more). Luke’s gospel said a great multitude followed Him to receive teaching and be healed. (Lk. 9

- B. The early church most likely operated like a rabbinic school and the apostles were their rabbis (teachers). This in effect is the great commission being fulfilled through the apostles and elders.

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)

“And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. 19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.]]” (Mk. 16:16-20)

44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,

47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Lk. 24:44-49)

“6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Act 1:6-8)

- C. The apostles and elders baptized in the Holy Spirit were not only seeing demonstrations of power to confirm their claim of being witnesses of The Resurrected Man and His coming kingdom, but more so the gospel itself (as noted in Mark’s gospel). This is probably why Luke notes it in his summary of what it was like as they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching.

“43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.” (Acts 2:43)

“8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.” (Acts 7:8) [Note: Stephen a deacon saw accompanying demonstrations of power as he preached the message. It wasn’t to confirm his apostleship.)

“2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Cor. 2:2-5)

- D. In Acts 6:1–6 the Greek-speaking Jewish widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. This pressing need clamored for the apostles' attention. Serving in this capacity considerably conflicted with what they felt their highest priority was in order to continue in fulfilling the charge of Christ. They didn’t undervalue the need for making sure the distribution was done equitably however contended for their focus and time being *devoted* to preaching the gospel and making disciples—teaching all to obey the commands of Christ.

“Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:1-4)

III. THE INTENT AND GLORY OF THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

- A. By the Spirit, the ministry of the word is God’s intended instrument (and thus the preacher/ teacher) *to provide a vivid, mind-renewing, heart-transforming view into the colorful landscape of God glorious nature, ways, plans and workings.* The purpose of preaching is to present the glory and gospel about Jesus and the coming kingdom in such a way that a spiritual “seeing” happens—a seeing so powerful that the hearers-seers are “transformed into the same image
- B. Paul directly links the Church’s beholding of God’s glory and subsequently spiritual transformation (measure by measure) to the faithfulness and fruitfulness of the ministry of the word (preaching and teaching)..

“7 Now if the ministry of death...came with such glory...8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?...18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor. 3:7-8, 18)

“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word [undermining the work of the Spirit and intended glorifying]...3 And even if our gospel [our proclaiming/our preaching] is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ [through preaching], who is the image of God. 5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ [beheld through the work of Spirit-anointed preaching].

- C. The ministry of the word is essential for the equipping of the saints. This ministry is not optional for any discipling community. Paul would even champion that without the ministry of the word how would the nations be made disciples, hearing of and receiving the saving mercy of God through Christ? On another occasion other than personal reputation of character, the ability to teach was imperative for those that would seek to be an elder/deacon.

“ 11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 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 [that is through the preaching of the word of Christ].” (Rom. 10:11-17)

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...(1 Tim. 3:1-2)

- D. John Piper states so well in his book *“Expository Exultation”*, “Essentially, God has appointed that there be teachers (elders) in the church (Eph. 4:11). He has required that they be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). This means that God designs for us to be helped by other human ministers of the word, not just by our own private reading and praying...God did not design Christians to be strong in faith and fervent in worship without other Christian ministers strengthening their soul...it is clear that perseverance in joyful, faithful holiness and worship depends on other Christians exhorting us again and again with the truth of God’s word. (pg. 100)

“12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.” (Heb. 3:12-14)

“18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”” (1 Cor. 12:18-21)

- E. Paul, would encourage Timothy to *devote* himself to preaching and teaching the word, training the body in sound doctrine. This is in the face of those that weren’t content with the ministry of the Word. He tells him to not only teach but be immersed, progress, be watchful of himself and on the teaching. He charges Tim to persist and if he persists this would turn out for salvation (in the deceptions of the age) for himself and those who had a receptive heart.

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared...11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching...15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Tim. 3:1-2, 11-16)

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim. 4:1-5)

- F. Paul gives a beautiful summary of the end goal of the apostolic ministry (generation to generation). We will look at two accounts to the Ephesians elders and church, in his farewell address and then in his letter.

“You yourselves know how I lived among you...20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom...27 I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:18-32)

1. Paul’s work among the Ephesians:
 - a. ***“declaring to you anything that was profitable...”***
 - b. ***“teaching you in public and from house to house...”***
 - c. ***“testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ...”***
 - d. ***[going] about proclaiming the kingdom [of God]***
 - e. ***“declaring...the whole counsel of God...”***
 - f. ***“for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.”***
2. Paul’s charge to the elders/deacons as an outcome of his ministry:
 - a. That they may ***“pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock...”***
 - b. To be able to discern and help the church overcome from those that would arise, ***“speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”***
 - c. To then release them (elders) ***“to God and to the word of his grace”***
 - d. Which would continue, ***“to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”***

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [leadership] 12 to equip the saints [1]for the work of ministry, [2]for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to [a]the unity of the faith [obedience] and [b]of the knowledge of the Son of God, [c] to mature manhood, [d] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children... 15 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. 4:11-16)

1. Paul states concerning the ways of Christ in governing and building up His body through a team of leaders. One part missional and another local.
 - a. Missional - apostles, prophets, evangelists
 - b. Local - prophets, shepherds, teachers
2. Their mission statement is ***“to equip the saints.”***
 - a. ***“for the work of ministry”***
 - b. ***“for building up the body of Christ”***
3. They do this work of equipping ***“until we all...”***
 - a. ***(attain) to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,***
 - b. ***(attain) mature manhood...the full measure of the stature of Christ — so that we may no longer be children*** (deceived by the storm of deception and confusion in the world)... ***“to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...”***
4. ***To the end that we being joined through Christ and held together by Christ...***
 - a. ***“by every joint with which it is equipped...”*** (when we are properly equipped in the ways and works of Christ we are a benefit to one another. Therefore...)
 - b. ***“when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”*** [released to God and the word of grace which is able to build us up and give us an inheritance amongst those being sanctified.)

IV. OUR RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

- A. There are three groups that currently exist in the church today:
 1. those that are equipped to equip (leaders/fivefold)

2. Those that are being equipped (children, young men/women cf. 1 Jn. 2)
3. Those that are sufficiently equipped that are either a. doing the work of the ministry or not (corporately benefiting the body (local church) and in your divinely assigned contexts — family, occupation, travels, etc.. (fathers/mothers)

“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” (1 Jn. 2:12-14)

- B. When we share and hear the word of God (with understanding and conviction by Holy Spirit), through reading/study and through the ministry of the word (sung, prayed, painted, preached, taught, etc) Jesus is clear on what our next steps must be: we must decided how we will build our lives. (cf. The Parable of the Sower - Matt. 13)

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. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” (Matt. 7:24-27)

- C. There is great reward when we choose to build together by devoting ourselves to the ministry of the word, greatest among them our eyes being filled with the fullness of the glory of God. In our to build this out in our lives as houses of intimacy, we must devote ourselves to hear-seeing (revelation), receiving, and obeying.

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. 14:15-17)

21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” (Jn. 14:21)

“It is only when we obey God’s laws that we can be quite sure that we really know him. The man who claims to know God but does not obey his laws is not only a liar but lives in self-delusion. In practice, the more a man learns to obey God’s laws the more truly and fully does he express his love for him. Obedience is the test of whether we really live “in God” or not. The life of a man who professes to be living in God must bear the stamp of Christ.” (1. Jn. 2:4-6 Phillips)