

How We Make Disciples: Reviewing the Three C's Series

Conduct: Act Like Jesus (1 Peter 1:15-16)

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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Conduct: Act Like Jesus

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Surprise Snack

1. Mandi plans her main grocery trips ahead of time since it usually involves driving to Marshfield or EauClaire. Usually, these trips require half a day to complete along with her other shopping. From time to time, I get surprised when she brings me back a special treat that she knows I like. Her kind actions are something she just does without being asked.
2. On one such occasion, I received a bag of buffalo flavored Synder's pretzel bites. They are the best buffalo flavored snack out there when it comes to artificial buffalo flavoring. They come in just ahead of Doritos buffalo flavored chips.
3. I don't have these pretzel bites very often due to the price. Mandi must have noticed they were on sale. Mandi intentionally knew my personal preferences, paid attention to the situation around her, intentionally decided to act in a way that she knew I would like, and gave of herself on my behalf. I very much appreciated the actions that brought these wonderful, tasty treats to my palate.

B. All of us have probably experienced being on the receiving end of someone else's actions, in a positive way. Hopefully, we appreciate it when other people do serve us through their kind actions. As disciples, we can do this for God. He can be on the receiving end of our actions in a positive way. The more we love God, the more we will want to do this. Not only can we do this, but it is also our life purpose to serve God with our actions. When we do, we discover we also benefit in the process.

C. Our culture even has a saying that reflects the notion we are talking about: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Enough people have experienced the joy and satisfaction from serving others with their actions that this fact has been enshrined with a popular saying. While we act so others will benefit, we are encouraged in the process. There is a deep sense of satisfaction and joy that comes from helping others. This joy that makes us feel good is longer lasting (it can always be appreciated from memory) than the temporary happiness that comes from acting for our own personal benefit. A lifetime of service to God through our actions, paradoxically, becomes a higher quality of life than a self-indulgent one.

D. As we've been reviewing Community Alliance Church's updated mission statement, we've seen the central role the first two C's play in the ministry of Jesus: "Transforming convictions, character, and conduct to those of Jesus." Jesus focused a lot of His attention on His teaching and preaching work to impact the way people think—convictions. At the same time, Jesus repeatedly talked about the heart and what was happening inside a person—character. Next, we are going to see Jesus giving lots of instructions about how people should act—conduct. Each of the three C's is a major element of discipleship.

E. By using the same categories as each of the C's has been introduced throughout these series, we will be taking an overview look at what the Bible teaches about the conduct of a disciple. Too often, Christians think the Christian life is primarily about what they believe. If a person has

the right views about Jesus, God must be pleased with them. While this way of thinking is common, it is mistaken. The Christian life requires much more of a person than simply having the right views about Jesus. Passivity is not acceptable. Disciples must put their devotion to Jesus into action in their daily lives for its authenticity to be demonstrated.

II. Command

- A. As in the case of convictions and character, there is also a command given to humanity from God regarding their conduct. One version of this divine command is found in 1 Pet. 1:14-16:
- ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”
- B. In typical Hebrew style, Peter presents an idea using an image so his readers might be able to visualize what he is communicating. How should a disciple act? They should think of their behavior in terms of “obedient children” (v. 14).¹ Every parent knows the difference between an obedient child and the behavior of a child whose will differs from the parent’s will.² A rebellious child usually puts up a good fight to avoid doing what the parents say when it is something they don’t want to do. Usually, the first response out of the child’s mouth will be, “Why?” Unless the parent proves the validity of what they told the child to do, the child will not listen. On the other hand, an obedient child listens right away and with ease. The contrast between the two is divisive. Peter wants disciples to have the image of an obedient child in mind as they think about their own behaviors toward God.
- C. Once this picture is firmly in place, Peter gives us the divine command: “like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior” (v. 15). The Christian life is to impact every single action a disciple performs. All our behavior is to be holy. No action is to be left out of the scope of being holy. To be holy is to have the characteristics of moral and relational purity toward God.³ The idea of holiness is further explained with another point of reference, “like the Holy One who called you” (v. 15). Disciples are to be holy the way God is holy. It is likely Peter got this concept directly from Jesus (Mt. 5:48). Disciples are commanded to act as God Himself acts!
- D. This holiness is contrasted from “the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance” (v. 14). The opposite of holiness is indulging self-focused desires—desires that were the driving force in our lives before we understood who Jesus is and the difference He is to make in our lives. The actions of disciples should not be similar to the pattern of individuals who don’t know or obey God. If a disciples’ life looks just like the secular community around him, there is a big problem happening. There will be a noticeable difference between the lives of those who belong to God and those who don’t.
- E. The justification for this command is found in the words, “because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’” (v. 16). The reason disciples are to follow this command is because God

¹ Obedience means to be in the state of submissive conformity to the law, custom, or practice of an authority. Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on 1 Peter 1:14 “obedient”

² Matthew 21:28-32

³ Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on 1 Peter 1:15 “holy”

Himself requires it in His Word. God doesn't just make this command once, He does so on multiple occasions (Lev. 11:44, 45, 19:2, 20:7, 26, Ex. 19:6). Peter uses the word of God to justify the validity of this command regarding behavior.

- F. God wants us to be different—to be set apart for His purposes and service. Christians should live differently than everyone else around them because of the impact Jesus makes in their lives. Disciples stand out from a crowd because they have devoted themselves to doing what God wants them to do.
- G. Jesus provided an everyday example of what holy actions might look like for disciples. Jesus was invited to a meal at the house of a prominent religious leader, a Pharisee (Lk. 14:1). Jesus told the people at that meal that when they host a luncheon or a dinner, they shouldn't invite their friends to the meal; instead, they should invite people who are too poor or physically unable to host a meal at their house (Lk. 14:12-14). Jesus doesn't want there to be any opportunity for the person hosting the meal to be paid back. Holy actions include living generously without the expectation of repayment. Living in such a way is motivated by opportunities to get heavenly rewards. While social etiquette dictates there ought to be a give and take in all relationships, Jesus says the disciple should simply give to others without expecting any return. Instead of a give and take dynamic, Jesus wants disciples to have an "always give to others" understanding of relationships. This is holiness in action in a practical, everyday experience that imitates the behaviors of God.

III. Goal

- A. As disciples respond to this command and live in obedience to it, what will be the results? The answer comes right from the lips of Jesus: ¹⁶"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Mt. 5:16). The purpose behind the command of holy actions is for the purpose of God's people acting in such a way that their lives naturally bring glory to God. They become living testimonies to the transformational power of God. They are God's walking billboard that advertises His message and character. As disciples obey the command to be holy, disciples communicate to the world who God wants them to be and are living examples of what God's power can accomplish in their lives as well. Disciples show the world, just as Jesus' living example did, who God wants everyone to be and who they can be with the help of God.
- B. The goal of acting the way Jesus instructs is that others will, "see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven". As disciples act in a way that imitates God's actions, it appears people will intuitively know who to give the credit to. Disciples will be acting in a non-natural human way so that credit will go to whom it belongs: God. God is the One who works in every disciple's life so they can act the way they do. The depth of moral goodness being put on display does not come from the disciple but from the result of God's work in their lives.
- C. We get a good example of how this should work from Peter Himself. Peter gives credit to God for the miracle of a lame man being able to walk (Ac. 3:1-13). Peter tells those who were amazed that it wasn't his power or moral goodness that caused the man to walk, but rather God the Father honored Jesus by making the lame man able to walk again. Like Peter, we should be quick to give credit where credit is due not for miracles, but for our good actions.

IV. Description

- A. Anyone who has tried to act the way God acts will immediately notice a difficulty: imitating Jesus is not easy. Even with good intentions, the right actions are not always done. When a person wants to do the right thing, they aren't always able to do the right thing in the moment. The Bible tells us that good actions don't just happen automatically when a person wants to do the right thing. We need to be equipped to act as God wants us to:
- ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- B. This passage describes the process a disciple goes through to, "be adequate, equipped for every good work" (v. 17). While being prepared for every good work is the objective, other requirements happen first for this to happen. The process of being able to do the good deeds God has prepared for us to do (Eph. 2:10) begins by spending time in "Scripture" (v. 16). Disciples must respond to the Bible in specific ways if they are to be ready to do every good action God asks of them.
- C. The Bible's purpose, and that which it has the power to accomplish, is "teaching". The word of God instructs and educates disciples so they will know how God wants them to live. In Scripture, God specifically lays out His desires, expectations, and standards for those who want to please Him. God tells His people what their lives are to look like. Instead of making all kinds of assumptions about God or listening to all the different opinions of various religious teachers, disciples can learn accurately what God says and wants from His own Word.
- D. The Bible also provides what is needed "for reproof" (v. 16). Disciples are shown how they are living contrary to God's ways through His Word. Scripture is so powerful it can even assess our thoughts and motives (Heb. 4:12). The Bible shows disciples where they are in the wrong. Disciples don't have to wonder what God's will is. They can know for certain when they are doing something God doesn't want them to do.
- E. God doesn't just want people to go through life feeling guilty. He wants them to fix what is wrong, which is why the Bible also can be used "for correction" (v. 16). God's Word doesn't just tell people what needs to be fixed, it provides what is needed to fix what is broken. God gives people the advice they need and a clear path to move from being in the wrong to living in a way that pleases God. Instead of lying, the Bible instructs disciples to tell the truth. Instead of being jealous, disciples are to realize God rewards even the smallest act of obedience toward Him, which means everyone gets rightful credit for each act of faithfulness. There is no need for jealousy of any kind.
- F. Lastly, the Bible is also used, "for training in righteousness" (v. 16). Disciples can develop the skills and habits that promote godliness. The resources of God allow them to develop a disciplined life around the practices necessary for the Christian life. Scripture helps followers of Jesus to act in harmony with the standards of God. More than this, when the word of God is responded to the way God intends, God's people develop His very nature and character so that His way of life becomes a natural reaction for them. His commands are not burdensome for those who have the heart of God.

- G. Individuals who are submissive to God and respond to the Bible with an attitude of openness allow God to instruct them, point out their faults, show them how to correct what needs to be corrected, and move them to a lifestyle that obeys His standards. When people do this, they will be ready to do whatever God asks them to do. They will be capable of performing any good action God requires of them.

V. Result

- A. The Christian life is a never-ending cycle of personal spiritual growth. Growth to Christian maturity happens when knowledge increases faith (trust in God), faith transforms character, character produces action, and action promotes knowledge.⁴ When individual disciples follow this growth cycle and become deeply experienced in it, they will reach the intended end of the Christian life.
- B. The life of a mature disciples is summarized as:
- ¹⁹ Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.” ²⁰ Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (2 Tim. 2:19-21)
- C. Disciples are compared to fine china—the nice dishes that only get used on special occasions. They are the household items made of “gold and silver” (v. 20). Every household has nicer items that they take special care of—possessions that are more valuable than others. It could be a vehicle, a collection, a lawn tractor or tractor, coins, electronics, or some other item. These items are the first thing a person would protect if there was a fire. In God’s household, His treasured possessions are mature disciples. He calls them “a vessel for honor” (v. 21). These disciples belong to God as He, “knows those who are His” (v. 19), they “abstain from wickedness” (v. 19) and are “sanctified” (v. 21). These are the types of people God highly values.
- D. These mature disciples are highly valued by God because they have instrumental spiritual value—value in what they do and contribute. God can use them to do His work on earth since they are “useful to the Master” (v. 21) and “prepared for every good work” (v. 21). Mature disciples are fully qualified and trained, being able to carry out any mission God requires. They are the Navy Seals of the spiritual realm. If God wants someone to explain the gospel to a person who is spiritually interested in truth, these disciples have the knowledge to be effective in this type of conversation. If God plans to use a small group Bible study to reach into a neighborhood, sanctified disciples can seamlessly step into that role by communicating evangelistic studies drawing from their knowledge of God’s Word. If God performs the salvation miracle in an individual’s heart so they become a new Christian, there is now is a spiritual need for a more experienced Christian to teach this person the first steps in the Christian life; mature

⁴ Dr. Andrew Davis *An Infinite Journey: Growing Toward Christlikeness* (Greenville: Ambassador International, 2014), 418

disciples do this. If there is a young Christian with a passion to serve in the church, a mature Christian can come alongside them by providing guidance, support, and training to develop this young Christian, so they are serving God on their own. Not all Christians are prepared for every good work, but these mature Christians are, which makes them useful to God.

- E. The result of spiritual growth, maturity, and faithfulness in the Christian life is to equip individuals to carry out the work of God’s kingdom here on earth consistently and intentionally. This is how the gospel will spread and bear fruit. Through mature and equipped disciples, communities will be transformed, and the church will grow numerically as God’s influence expands its reach. God is seeking workers who are capable of doing what He asks according to their ability.

VI. Conclusion

- A. From the perspective of Jesus, it isn’t those who listen to His message that please God and are well off. Rather, it is those who respond to His message by putting His words into action that please God. Not everyone who professes allegiance to Jesus will enter the kingdom of heaven; only those who do the will of His Father.
- B. What makes a true Christian is being a person who acts on and lives out His teachings. As Jesus put it, “everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them” (Mt. 7:24) is a wise person who will pass safely through the day when all humanity stands accountable to God for the way they lived their lives.

VII. Questions for Further Thought

- A. Those who are familiar with life in the church, what has been your impression about the purpose of the Christian life? What does it lead to?
- B. How do these impressions compare with what you learned in this message?
- C. What reason did Jesus give for the Father loving Him (Jn. 15:10)? What does this mean for disciples remaining in the love of Jesus?
- D. In your opinion, what does it mean to live as a Christian? What behaviors do disciples practice regularly?
- E. What are some of the proper motivations for doing the right actions connected to the Christian life?
- F. What specific actions might you need to start doing or get more consistent at doing in order to live as an obedient child of God?