

# **The Four E Disciple Making Plan Series**

## **Walk in Jesus: Progression of the Christian Life (Col. 2:6-7)**

---

**By**  
**Andy Davis**

### **At A Glance:**

- I. Introduction**
- II. Theme Verse: Colossians 2:6-7**
- III. Expose**
- IV. Educate**
- V. Equip**
- VI. Engage**
- VII. Conclusion**

---

*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.*

---

# Walk in Jesus: Progression of the Christian Life

## I. Introduction

- A. Illustration: Lost in the Christian Life (image of taking a walk around the trail by the Mill Pond)
1. Stepping into the church can feel like entering a whole different and unfamiliar world. Attending church and becoming part of a group of people that is busy with all sorts of activities can feel like jumping into a fast-moving river. Immediately you start getting carried along, doing what everyone else is doing, but not understanding why everything is being done the way it is as you try to figure out how you are supposed to act and what you are supposed to be doing.
  2. Have you ever felt lost in the Christian life? I know I have, and I grew up in church. I attended church and participated in spiritual activities for years without knowing what I was supposed to be doing. I was living my Christian life “aimlessly” (1 Cor. 9:26). I didn’t really understand the purpose behind what I was doing or the direction that I should be moving. I simply did what I did because I was told to. I was very busy doing lots of activities, but I never knew the purpose for those activities. I didn’t know how to live my life in partnership with Jesus.
  3. I discovered going through the motions of Christianity did not satisfy my soul. Even though I was doing all the “right” things like attending church regularly, reading my Bible, praying, serving others as I had opportunity, and conforming my behavior to the Bible’s standards, I knew there had to be more to the Christian life.
  4. Despite doing all these things, I eventually realized what the problem was. My heart was not really set on pursuing God (Dt. 4:29). I was relating to God half-heartedly at best. In fact, I knew deep down other life pursuits were more important to me than God. However, when I became intentional about pursuing Jesus and purposeful in the way I was living my Christian life, everything changed and, over time, God started to fill up my empty soul.
- B. The Christian life is designed by God to be pursued intentionally and purposefully. Going through the motions is not enough. God wants our hearts. He wants us to love Him with everything we have. Just as athletes train to be the best and to position themselves for victory so too disciples should pursue Jesus to be successful in the Christian life. Spiritual training is necessary for effective Christian living. A life that is pleasing to God will not just happen.
- C. Since this is the way the Christian life works, it is very exciting to be presenting a disciple making plan that has been worked on for the past few years that is ready to be made available to you. Here at Community Alliance Church, we want to be intentional about what we do and the activities we engage in. We are calling this new and central initiative The Four E disciple making plan based on Colossians 2:6-7.

## II. Theme Verse

- A. Although we’ve presented what we call The Four E’s in the past, available in the *Introduction to the Four E’s* sermon series, it will be helpful for us to review the Four E’s before describing our disciple making plan. Colossians is an influence book of the Bible for Community Alliance

Church. We have drawn our theme verses out of this letter for our mission statement and our primary disciple making plan. CAC's mission statement theme verse is Colossians 1:28 which provides us the direction and focus for everything we do. We want to create spiritually mature disciples using wise Biblical instruction. In addition to our mission statement, The Four E disciple making plan that has been developed also finds its theme verse in the book of Colossians. We love this Jesus centered book!

- B. The theme verse for our disciple making plan is,

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, <sup>7</sup> having been firmly rooted and *now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and* overflowing with gratitude. (Col. 2:6-7)

- C. In this passage the apostle Paul provides four distinct stages of spiritual development—also called spiritual formation.<sup>1</sup> Here we find a Biblical blueprint for the Christian life and how people move through it.<sup>2</sup> Those who are attached to Jesus in a healthy way, have their lives transformed. There is a particular kind of lifestyle that springs from a real connection to Jesus (“so walk in Him”, v. 6)—a life that is pleasing to Jesus, bears fruit, and increases our knowledge of God (Col. 1:10). Participating in the Christian life in a healthy way will bring about these qualities of life. This type of lifestyle is described as developing in different stages. This overview gives us four distinct stages of spiritual growth that a person moves through as they are transformed to be like Jesus. The Christian life plays out as described because individuals have a true knowledge of God through Jesus (Col. 2:1-4). Disciples who have an accurate understanding of spiritual knowledge will live the way Paul is describing.
- D. A person begins their Jesus journey by responding to Jesus in a positive way and receiving Him as the boss of their life (“have received Christ Jesus the Lord”, v. 6). As a person learns about Jesus, they come to understand the claims Jesus made about Himself. They accept the message of Jesus as the true message that comes from God. Jesus is accepted as the divine authority of their life. Recognizing this, a person surrenders themselves and submits their life to the message of Jesus and begin putting His words into practice in their lives. This first stage of receiving Jesus we call the Expose stage of the Christian life. People need to realize who Jesus is and why He's important.
- E. Once a person turns their life direction toward Jesus and starts taking steps to follow Him, they develop a deeper commitment to Jesus (“having been firmly rooted”, v. 7). A strong foundation is laid for the Christian life as disciples learn to be nourished by Jesus. As a plant becomes fixed in the ground so disciples are planted in Jesus so they can survive and flourish.<sup>3</sup> Individuals develop an attachment to Jesus that is strong enough to endure the difficulties and hardships that come along with following Jesus. An attitude of trust in Jesus is strengthened. Disciples in this stage refuse to abandon Jesus and walk away from Him because they have come to understand how important Jesus' influence on their life really is. At CAC, we call this

<sup>1</sup> See the sermon series *Jesus Centered Relationships* and the message with the title “Building Stable Disciples” and the series *Living for Jesus* with the message “How to Remain Spiritually Focused” for more on this verse.

<sup>2</sup> Another critical passage that provides an overview and summary of the Christian life is 2 Peter 1:4-8. See the sermon series *The Path of Spiritual Growth*.

<sup>3</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Colossians 2:7 “having been firmly rooted”

foundational stage of the Christian life the Educate stage. People need to possess a clear understanding of what Jesus taught and how Jesus lived.

- F. After a stable foundation is established in a person's life that helps them remain connected to Jesus over time, they are given what they need to move forward ("now being built up in Him", v. 7). Just because an individual is committed to staying with Jesus throughout their life doesn't mean all the work is done. Remember that Jesus desires spiritually mature disciples. Once disciples are committed to sticking with Jesus over time, they can be equipped to follow Jesus' example to become the person God wants them to be as He works in them. Here, disciples are given what they need to live the way Jesus lived while on earth. They learn to take what they know of Jesus and how He lived and start to imitate His way of life. This is what we call the Equip stage. People need to develop the knowledge and skills to follow Jesus' way of life.
- G. The fourth developmental stage of the Christian life occurs when disciples are mature and fully expressing the ways of Jesus in their life ("and established in your faith", v. 7). These mature disciples are stable in living like Jesus. They are engaging their world the way Jesus did and are living a life of service to Him as they invest in the kingdom of God on earth. These disciples have as their primary objective in life to be spiritually fruitful and produce fruit that lasts. They are being used by God to make a positive impact on others for Jesus. We call this the Engage stage of the Christian life. People need to adopt the intention to help others live like Jesus.
- H. This passage provides us with the Four E framework for understanding the progression of the Christian life. These four spiritual development stages are connected to instruction ("just as you were instructed", v. 7). Biblical instruction helps disciples move through these stages of spiritual growth so that disciples live day to day following Jesus' example. They do this with a God honoring attitude ("overflowing with gratitude", v. 7). As disciples experience the work of God in their life, they are thankful for everything God is doing in them.

### III. Expose

- A. Now that we know these four spiritual development stages are grounded in Scripture, let's take a closer look at each one to help us understand how the Christian life progresses. The soul of every person has specific spiritual needs at each stage of formation when met causes them to progress forward in the Christian life. When a person's current spiritual needs are not met, they will get stuck in their forward movement and remain where they are until those needs are provided—this is how spiritual growth works. Through our disciple making plan we hope to continually help people to maintain forward movement in their Christian life. In the Expose stage, we want to help people encounter and respond to Jesus.
- B. To receive Jesus is to formally receive authoritative teaching as from an approved source.<sup>4</sup> Jesus tells us the way things are. He explains the nature of reality truthfully from the perspective of God. The words of Jesus are accepted as the true words of God,

<sup>16</sup> So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not My own, but His who sent Me. <sup>17</sup> If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know about the teaching, whether it is of God, or I am speaking from Myself." (Jn. 7:16-17)

---

<sup>4</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Colossians 2:6 "you have received"

- C. Those who put Jesus' words into action with sincerity will discover that Jesus is communicating the message of God. The purpose of the Expose stage of disciple making is to help people encounter Jesus by hearing His message and observing the way He lived so that they can discover the magnitude of who Jesus is. All this is done with the hope that people will feel the weight of the significance of Jesus and learn to love Him. The final part of this stage is for people to put their trust in Jesus (called faith) by putting the fate of their soul and life in His hands knowing that Jesus is the only One who can provide forgiveness for the wrongs they have done.
- D. This stage of development is effectively summarized by Jesus as,
  - <sup>40</sup> For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (Jn. 6:40)
- E. Jesus claims to have the power and position to raise the entire human race back to life at the end of this age! That a truly remarkable claim coming from Jesus. Notice, God the Father wants everyone to become familiar enough with Jesus that they can observe His message and life ("everyone who sees the Son", v. 40). Helping people observe Jesus and look at Him with attention is critical. When people are exposed to Jesus, they will have to decide how to respond to Him. Every person will either accept Jesus as He presented Himself to the world or reject Him by developing some other opinion about who Jesus is. Those who respond positively to Jesus by believing in Him, accepting Him as the person He claimed to be, will be rewarded with a resurrection of life ("and believes in Him", v. 40). All this happens during the Expose stage.
- F. The primary way people meet Jesus is through learning from the historically accurate information we have on the life of Jesus recorded in the primary source historical documents called the Gospels,
  - <sup>30</sup> So then, many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name. (Jn. 20:31)
- G. In the Expose stage of disciple making, we can help people who don't know anything about Jesus or who don't have an accurate picture of who Jesus is according to Bible learn more about who Jesus is and what He taught. We can encourage people to shape their convictions about Jesus around the best information we have about Him—found in the Gospels. We can challenge people's misunderstandings about Jesus, encourage them to think more carefully about what Jesus said, and present others a wonderful picture of Jesus being the divine King of our world.

#### IV. Educate

- A. Just as a plant receives nourishment by their roots being set in good soil, so disciples have a foundation of finding nourishment from Jesus. In the Educate stage, disciples receive spiritual nourishment from Jesus as they observe Him through His teachings and His lifestyle—learning from Him. New disciples personally connect with Jesus so they can be transformed by Him. They keep looking to Jesus to teach them how to live their lives. By spending time with Jesus through the Bible, with the right attitudes, disciples will be learning Jesus' way of life and benefit from Him.
- B. Here is how Jesus invited people to follow Him,

<sup>28</sup> Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.<sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Mt. 11:28-29)

- C. Young and inexperienced disciples need to develop a secure attachment to Jesus that is strong enough to withstand the challenges and difficulties that come along with following Jesus. They need roots that go deep enough to withstand the wind and the weeds. This is the essence of the Educate stage. We get a picture of what happens in this season of the Christian life through the experience of the disciples. Jesus gave a very challenging teaching to the crowd about finding life and spiritual nourishment in Him. This point of finding life in Jesus was so troublesome that many who were following Jesus for awhile turned back because they couldn't accept what Jesus was saying. In this context Jesus confronted the disciples,
 

<sup>67</sup> So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to leave also, do you?" <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> And we have *already* believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." (Jn. 6:67-69)
- D. Jesus is checking in on the level of commitment and trust the disciples have to determine if they are going to react to the difficult words He offered as others did ("You do not want to leave also, do you?", v. 67). When faced with the challenging nature of what it means to follow Jesus and accept all of His teachings, the disciples need to decide if they are going to stick with Jesus or abandon Him. Jesus was making statements that some people found offensive and unpleasant (Jn. 6:60-61).
- E. The disciples respond by continuing to cling to Jesus even when following Him gets difficult ("Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life", v. 68). Although the disciples find the teaching Jesus offered just as difficult as the crowd, their response is difficult. The disciples understand enough about Jesus to know He is pointing the way to life and His message can't be found anywhere else. Even while some of Jesus' teachings are challenging to accept, the disciples decided to stick with Jesus because the Holy Spirit enabled them to.
- F. At this stage disciples become fully convinced of the identity of Jesus which creates a firm commitment to Him ("we have already believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God", v. 69). While facing difficult and unappealing statements made by Jesus, the disciples continued with Him because of their firm conviction about the identity of Jesus being the chosen person through whom God is working.<sup>5</sup> The disciples know who Jesus is and they trust Him as a result. The disciples' commitment was stronger than the challenges being faced. This depth of trust in Jesus is the goal of the Educate stage. We can help disciples in this stage to develop a strong trust in Jesus and encourage them to keep following Jesus even when the road gets bumpy.

## V. Equip

- A. After a disciple is firmly rooted in their trust and commitment to Jesus, they are positioned to continue forward movement in the Christian life by building on their spiritual foundation. As

---

<sup>5</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on John 6:69 "Holy One"

they are finding nourishment in Jesus, they can be equipped to start living like Him. To be built up is to become nearer to fullness or completion in one's moral strength or one conscience.<sup>6</sup> Disciples are being developed and are in the process of becoming the full person God is shaping them to be. They are moving ever closer to maturity—becoming like Jesus in every area of life (Eph. 4:13, 15).

- B. When Jesus had finished teaching and training the disciples, He summarized His work in their life through washing their feet at the last meal they shared together (called The Last Supper),  
<sup>15</sup> For I gave you an example, so that you also would do just as I did for you. (Jn. 13:15)
- C. Jesus lived His life as an example so that disciples will imitate Him by doing for others what He did for them (“so that you also would do just as I did for you”, v. 15). As Jesus came to earth to serve others rather than be served, so too those who have been trained by Jesus should give their lives to others by serving them spiritually. This recurring theme is captured in the enactment of this principle as Jesus washes His disciples’ dirty feet. Disciples move past an intellectual understanding of Jesus, His teachings, and His way of life, to imitating it. Disciples act on what they know.
- D. This principle of following Jesus’ example is summarized this way,  
<sup>21</sup> For you have been called for this purpose, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you would follow in His steps, <sup>22</sup> He who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; <sup>23</sup> and while being abusively insulted, He did not insult in return; while suffering, He did not threaten, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; (1 Pet. 2:21-22)
- E. Disciples are both required and encouraged to follow in Jesus’ way of life so that they will act like Him (“so that you would follow in His steps”, v. 21). It is not enough to know how Jesus lived and what He taught, we must act on it, so we live consistently with Jesus’ example. Disciples follow Jesus’ example by avoiding sin, speaking truth, a willingness to suffer, enduring suffering, refusing to retaliate to wrong treatment, and an attitude of trust in God to deal with the wrongs they experience. All these behaviors follow in Jesus’ steps. All these behavioral qualities require a depth of character that is only possible through extended connection with Jesus. This type of life transformation needs the disciple to be built up in significant ways.
- F. The outcome of Jesus doing this work in our lives through the Spirit is,  
<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *that is*, Jesus our Lord, <sup>21</sup> equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20-21)<sup>7</sup>
- G. Disciples are being built so that they are equipped to do everything God wants them to do (“equip you in every good thing to do His will”, v. 21). As people mature in the Christian life, they are given what they need to live the way God wants them to live. Healthy disciples are ready and prepared to please God by acting how He desires. Growing disciples develop godly character and the skills needed to live a life of obedience to Jesus. Learn how to live like Jesus in

<sup>6</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Colossians 2:7 “being built up”

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:17

a practical way. We can also help disciples in this stage of development by giving them what they need to do what God wants them to do in their own unique life context. We need to know where people are at in their growth process and supply what is lacking so they can live a consistent and healthy Christian life.

## VI. Engage

- A. When a disciple is living the Christian life in a healthy way, they become capable of helping others become spiritually healthy as well. A spiritually fruitful life is one that is lived consistently while serving others for spiritual impact. To be established as a mature disciple means to become settled securely and unconditionally in the lifestyle of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> In short, knowledgeable and experienced disciples are consistent in their habits related to Jesus. They are steady and stay the course in their service of others and their participation in expanding the kingdom of God on earth through evangelism and discipleship.
- B. Jesus had a plan for His disciples from the very beginning,  
<sup>19</sup> And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of people." (Mt. 4:19)
- C. The purpose of following Jesus is clearly communicated in this passage ("Follow Me, and I will...", v. 19). Jesus promised to train His disciples to be able to fish for people in the sense that they will bring others into His kingdom through publicly communicating His message to the world ("make you fishers of people", v. 19). The disciples will "catch" people for God by introducing them to Jesus. While new people connect with Jesus on an individual level, we also see the apostles planting churches and working to help support new churches as another element of their kingdom work. Access to Jesus is made available as disciples catch people for God.
- D. A second task is given by Jesus as those who are following Him engage those around them,  
<sup>19</sup> Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."  
 (Mt. 28:19-20)
- E. Those who had been trained by Jesus were going to make more disciples ("Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations", v. 19). Disciples are made through Biblical instruction that leads to keeping Jesus' commands ("teaching them to follow all that I commanded you", v. 20). Again, we see an emphasis on the way people are acting daily. Disciples are taught how to live for God—this is the essence of Biblical instruction. In disciple making, people learn how to put Jesus' teachings into action by faithfully living before God and spiritually investing in others. Knowing the teachings and commands of Jesus is not enough, people must act on them. The truth of the Bible needs to be brought into the activities of everyday life.
- F. The disciples were effectively trained and prepared by Jesus to carry out the tasks He gave them to do. Since Jesus was going to be helping them all along the way, He made the following promise,

---

<sup>8</sup> Logos 10 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Colossians 2:7 "established"



<sup>16</sup> You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (Jn. 15:16)

- G. The disciples were going to be fruitful and the work they were doing was going to result in permanent transformation of other people (“that you would go and bear fruit”, v. 16). The work of the disciples, when done God’s way in God’s power, will be productive. Disciples actively participate in God’s activity in the world. Jesus guarantees the success of their effort (“that your fruit would remain”, v. 16). Those who belong to Jesus are uniquely positioned to give their life to that which will outlast this world—eternal impact. There is no greater legacy than partnering with God to impact the lives of others. The disciples conduct their kingdom expanding work with an attitude of dependence on Jesus (“so that whatever you ask for the Father in My name He may give to you”, v. 16).
- H. Healthy disciples can be trained to minister to and spiritually invest in others. Experienced disciples can show less experienced disciples how to impact the lives of other people for Jesus. We can help disciples in this stage of development by assisting them in developing kingdom building skills such as how to share their convictions about Jesus, navigating spiritual conversations, leading Bible studies, using their spiritual gifts effectively, being prepared to fulfill a specific role within the church, entrusting ministry to them, and reviewing their ministry experiences.

## VII. Conclusion

- A. Community Alliance Church’s understanding of the Christian life is articulated in the Four E’s of Expose, Educate, Equip, and Engage. This framework communicates our understanding of the Bible’s view of the beginning, progression, and desired outcome of the Christian life. The Christian life starts when people begin learning about the identity of Jesus and reaches maturity when disciples consistently invest in the lives of others.
- B. By using this understanding of the Christian life, we can have direction and purpose as we intentionally pursue Jesus. We have a path forward that can help us become a healthy and mature disciple. Once we’ve traveled this path ourselves, we can turn around and help others who are behind us traveling along the same route. In this way, God’s kingdom is built and expanded on earth.