



SATURATE

STUDY GUIDE

The person and work of Jesus cannot remain as a mere mental construct, separate from the rest of life. The gospel changes us. It gives us new identities, goals, and pursuits. Jesus' past, present, and future work redefines how we think, live, work, and act. Because of the gospel, we are disciples of Jesus. By the power of God, the life of a Christian is a life of learning from Jesus, following him, and "growing up in every way into him" (Eph 4:15). In other words, the life of a follower of Jesus is a life of obeying Jesus.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

When he called the first of his disciples, he said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). They had been fishermen, but Jesus was calling them to fish for people. They responded by leaving everything—their families, their careers, their futures—to follow Jesus. It started in a boat and went out to the world. Those first disciples radically recentered everything in their lives around Jesus, his teaching, and his mission. Their lives became all about Jesus! He was that important to them.

Then, after he had trained them for more than three years, suffered and died for their sins, and risen from the grave, Jesus told them to meet him on a mountain before he ascended to heaven. On that mountain, he was going to give his final commission to them to make disciples of all people groups. Just as Jesus had called them to follow him, be changed by him, and obey him, he sent them out to call others to follow him as well. He was going to send them to the ends of the earth so that Jesus saturation might happen.

So, they met Jesus on the mountain and worshiped him there, but some still doubted (Matt. 28:16-17). They were in, but not all in. Slow down and don't miss this: Jesus's disciples had seen everything they needed to see. Jesus had taught them all he needed to teach them. And they had experienced all they needed to experience with Jesus! And yet, some were still doubting. This is good news for us! Though we've walked with Jesus for years, we can still struggle with doubts.

We're not alone! The disciples were still in process—a process that would last their lifetimes. And the same is true of us. That is what discipleship is all about. It is the ongoing process of submitting all of life to Jesus and seeing him saturate your entire life and world with his presence and power. It's a process of daily growing in your awareness of your need for him in the everyday stuff of life. It is walking with Jesus, being filled with Jesus, and being led by Jesus in every place and in every way.

Read the previous paragraph again—it's a helpful definition of discipleship!

PAYING IT FORWARD

Once we start to realize that discipleship is an everyday, all-of-life process for our own lives, we're halfway to understanding God's call. The other half of that call is seen most clearly in the great commission, where God calls his people—all his people—to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Part of our own discipleship is "paying it forward": seeing God not only work in us, for our own discipleship, but also seeing him work through us, for others' discipleship. In fact, the Apostle Paul tells us that a primary way we grow into maturity in

Christ is through “speaking the truth in love” to and with each other (Eph 4:15- 16). God didn’t design discipleship to primarily happen alone.

All-of-life discipleship—learning to follow, trust, and obey Jesus in the everyday stuff of life, and training others to do the same—requires submitting to and obeying God’s Word in three key environments: life on life, life in community, and life on mission.

LIFE ON LIFE

God’s means of [your growth, redemption, and] restoration is putting others in your life who are committed to bringing your brokenness out into the open and bringing the gospel of Jesus to bear on it. The layers with which we’ve covered ourselves have to be pulled back, and we can’t do that kind of work alone. We have to get close. We have to be seen and known. This is what we call life-on-life discipleship—life that is lived up close so that we are visible and accessible to one another, so that others can gently peel back the layers and join us in our restoration.

Jesus lived life with his disciples. He was close enough to really know them. He observed what they believed by watching how they lived. He became closely acquainted with their brokenness so that he could see their wrong thinking, wrong believing, and wrong acting. They were exposed. And as they were exposed, Jesus helped them to be restored.

LIFE IN COMMUNITY

If you look at the life and ministry of Jesus, and subsequently the ministry of the apostle Paul, you certainly will not come to the conclusion that one-on-one discipleship is best. Jesus disciplined his followers while they experienced life together in community. We know they “got it” because the story of how they continued to live tells us they were devoted to one another in the day-to-day stuff of everyday life. Jesus’s way of discipleship cannot happen in one-on-one meetings alone.

The church is Jesus’ body. It has many parts, but it is one body, so it takes many of us committed to each other’s development to help us each become more like Jesus. We all need many people who love Jesus around us to do this. Every person in Christ’s body is meant to work this way. You are meant to play a part in equipping and encouraging others. God intends for all of us to actively engage in disciple-making in light of our unique design so that we both do the work and equip others to do it.

LIFE ON MISSION

Jesus didn’t say, “Show up to class and I will train you.” Nor did he say, “Attend synagogue and that will be sufficient.” No, he called the disciples to join him on the mission (“Follow me”), and while they were on the mission with him, he trained them to be disciple-makers (“I will make you fishers of men”).

In other words, Jesus taught them the basics of making disciples while they were on the mission of making disciples. They could observe everything Jesus said and did. They could see how he rebuked the religious leaders who tried to make it harder for people to come to God. They were able to watch his compassion and care of people being ruined by sin. They couldn’t overlook his willingness to heal and help the broken. And the power he exerted over demons was clearly on display. They listened, watched, and learned in the everyday stuff of life. After a while, he invited them to share in some of the work he was doing. Sure, they messed up, a lot, but he was there to help, to correct, to clean up—to train them—while they were on his mission. They were in a disciple-making residency with Jesus.

After the disciples had spent time watching, learning, and practicing under Jesus’ watchful eye, he sent them out to begin to practice what he had taught them. He did not send them out alone; they went together. Then they returned and reported to Jesus what they had experienced. All did not go perfectly. So he trained them in the areas of their

weaknesses and failures. He did this kind of ongoing training with them for more than three years. As a result, when he finally ascended to heaven, they had been prepared to fulfill the mission. The best training for mission happens while on mission.

NORTH RIDGE COMMUNITIES

The necessity of these three environments is the basis for what we are calling “North Ridge Communities.” The Christian life—and the gospel identities and rhythms we’ll start to consider next week—cannot be lived alone, nor can it be carried out as one person among several dozen or a few thousand, which is the context of many American church gatherings. Instead, the best venue for living as disciples of Jesus happens in the context of a few other disciples, mutually committed to growing each other’s lives and faith, pursuing God’s mission together.

These North Ridge Communities are not programs of a church; they are the Church. In other words, the way God intends his people to live and thrive as disciples of Jesus is in the context of a community, growing in the gospel and on mission together. It’s in this type of community that life on life, life in community, and life on mission discipleship most easily happen.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Circle the discipleship environment most familiar to you. In the space below, explain why. Put a box around the environment in which you’re least comfortable? Why?

Life on life

Life in community

Life on mission

2. What experience have you had “speaking the truth in love” with other followers of Jesus?

3. Are you currently on mission with others, together discovering your need for God’s power and grace? If so, who are those you’re on mission with? If not, are there areas of your life where growth/discipleship are lacking, which would be well served by such a group?