



DISCIPLESHIP WITH THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

Overview

This guide is based on a sermon from Titus 1:1, exploring how Paul introduces himself not by his social status or accomplishments, but by his identity in God, his calling as an apostle, and his mission to proclaim truth. Using the dramatic contrast between Saul the persecutor and Paul the apostle, the sermon challenges every believer to examine who or what they are enslaved to, what their calling is, and how they are actively living out their mission.

Key Takeaways

- Paul's self-introduction reveals a radical transformation -- from a powerful, feared persecutor of Christians to a willing slave of God. This transformation was not the result of trying harder, but of a direct encounter with Jesus Christ.
- An encounter with Jesus changes the heart. Behavioral change that lasts does not come from greater willpower or self-discipline. It comes from genuinely knowing Jesus.
- The greatest lie the American church believes is that Jesus primarily wants to give his followers an easier, more comfortable life. Jesus himself is the prize, not the circumstances he can improve.
- Every believer has been created on purpose for a purpose. God calls every person, not just a select few. The calling may shift with seasons of life, but it is always present.
- The mission is the practical, daily expression of the calling. Knowing your calling means nothing if you are not taking active steps to live it out.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. When you introduce yourself to someone new, what do you typically lead with -- your name, your job, your family, your hometown? What does that reveal about how you see yourself?
2. Before diving into the sermon content, what is one thing you already knew about the apostle Paul, and one thing you learned or were reminded of from this message?

Section 1: An Encounter with Jesus Changes the Heart

1. The sermon walks through the story of Saul -- a man who held the coats of Stephen's killers and actively pursued the arrest and death of Christians -- and traces his transformation into Paul, a man who immediately began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God. What stands out most to you about that contrast?
2. The pastor said, "Some of you don't need to try harder. You need an encounter with the living Son of God." Has there been a moment in your life where you stopped straining and simply encountered Jesus? What did that look like?
3. Reagan's testimony was referenced briefly -- she described a moment where she felt God say she had been seeking solutions but he wanted her to seek his face. How often do you find yourself

bringing God a list of problems to fix rather than simply seeking him? What makes that shift difficult?

Section 2: Who or What Am I a Slave To?

1. Romans 6:16 teaches that you become a slave to whatever you choose to obey. Without getting into specifics you are not comfortable sharing, what are some common things -- habits, fears, opinions of others, comfort -- that quietly demand obedience from people today?
2. The sermon made this statement: "The only way to experience the freedom that you long for is actually to become a slave of God." How does that idea challenge or reshape the way you think about freedom?
3. What is the difference between someone who calls themselves a Christian and someone who could honestly call themselves a slave of God? What does daily life look like for each?

Section 3: What Is My Calling?

1. Ephesians 2:10 describes believers as God's masterpiece, created to do good things he planned long ago. Do you currently have a clear sense of what your calling is in this season of life? If yes, share it. If not, what is making it hard to identify?
2. The pastor made the point that calling can change with seasons of life. He described his calling 15 years ago as leading worship and serving his pastor faithfully, while his calling today centers on discipling his family and pastoring his congregation. How have you seen your own calling shift over time?
3. He also said that for the men in the room, part of the calling is clear regardless of season: disciple your family, lead them in the ways of Jesus. How does that land with you? What makes that feel easy or difficult in your current situation?

Section 4: What Is My Mission?

1. The pastor described the mission as the practical steps taken to fulfill the calling. He used the example of someone who claimed to feel called to the nations but had not yet gotten a passport. Where in your own life might there be a gap between what you say you are called to and what you are actually doing about it?
2. He encouraged families to start simply -- sit down one day a week and open the Bible together, even if you do not have all the answers. What is one small, concrete step your group members could take this week to move toward their calling?
3. The sermon closed with this reminder: "He doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called." Is there an area of calling in your life where you have been waiting until you feel more ready or more equipped? What would it look like to take a step anyway?

Practical Applications

This week, individually:

- Spend time in honest reflection on the three questions from the sermon: Who or what am I a slave to? What is my calling in this season? What practical steps make up my mission right now?
- If you have never had a moment of genuine encounter with Jesus -- not just church attendance or moral effort, but a real meeting with him -- make that the focus of your prayer this week. Ask him to make himself known to you.

This week, for families:

- If you are not already leading any kind of spiritual conversation in your home, pick one evening this week to sit down with your family and read a passage of Scripture

together. It does not need to be long or polished. Open the Bible, read it, and ask what stands out to everyone.

As a group:

- Consider holding one another accountable to the three questions over the coming weeks. Check in at the start of your next meeting: Did anyone identify their calling more clearly? Did anyone take a step toward their mission?

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying specifically for three things:

1. That each person would have a genuine, ongoing encounter with Jesus that changes their heart from the inside out rather than relying on willpower or behavior management.
2. That each person would gain clarity about their calling in this specific season of life.
3. That each person would take at least one practical step this week to live out their mission, however small that step may be.