

We Proclaim Christ

Westview Church | 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 | Pastor Brett Toney | March 29, 2026

The Blessing of Disciple-Making

A fundamental aspect of following Christ in all of life is making disciples. Of course you need to *be* a disciple and that happens by *being* discipled, but you must also turn to *beget* disciples. The whole thrust of the Great Commission is the command to make disciples. We struggle with the specifics though. Yes, we baptize and teach them to obey Jesus' commands. But the nuts and bolts of it feels less tangible. How do you go about this ministry of multiplying and maturing followers of Christ? Let me state plainly up front here, brothers and sisters: if you are over 30, have been following Christ for 10 years, and have been in a healthy church for most of that time, it is time you take up the mantle of responsibility. You need to look behind you to see who needs *your* investment rather than constantly looking ahead to who will invest in *you*. Take Jesus at his word when he promised, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). You will benefit more by giving in the work of disciple-making than receiving from someone else's efforts in your life.

To aid you in this disciple-making work, there are three principles for a confident minister of the New Covenant in our passage this morning. If you have beheld the glory of the Lord by the presence of the Spirit in your life, you are so duly commissioned. The overarching concept in 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 is that the New Covenant minister does not lose heart in this ministry of cosmic conflict. We don't lose heart! But not because of us—not because we are sufficient for this work (2:16). No, rather because we are made sufficient by God (3:5-6). So, we are confident in the truth as we engage in the cosmic conflict of proclaiming Christ.

Be Confident in the Truth (2 Corinthians 4:1-2)

Paul circles back to the end of chapter two here in v.1. He said in 2:17 that he's been commissioned by God for this New Covenant ministry that he went on to describe in chapter three. This ministry is his—and ours—just like every other good thing we have: “by the mercy of God.” We do not deserve it. We are not sufficient for it. *But God*. He poured out mercy in our redemption, and he heaped on all the more mercy by letting *us* be contributors in the advance of the gospel. And because all is from him and through him and to him: We. Do. Not. Lose. Heart. There are ample reasons to be discouraged or even fearful in the difficult work of making disciples. It is tough slogging. It is very often slow work. But because of the mercy of God and the surpassing glory of this New Covenant and sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit and the glory of God we gaze upon in the face of Jesus Christ—we don't lose heart! The first marathon I ran, I didn't train enough for it. Not even half way through, it got rough. I lost heart. But Aaron was with me the whole way to help me finish. It was mercy. How much more do we have going for us in this long race of the Christian life in the ministry Christ has commissioned us for?

We have every reason to be confident in the truth of the gospel. Such confidence is in God that leads us to join Paul and “[renounce] disgraceful, underhanded ways.” We don't make strides in this work of discipling by confidence in ourselves or our tactics. Any hidden way of shame is disowned. We don't use craftiness to get people to follow Jesus. We don't tamper with God's Word. Those are satanic means. The Serpent in the Garden was crafty by going to Eve. He tampered with God's Word when he said, “Did God *actually* say ... ?” (Genesis 3:1). This is why a central value we have here at Westview is “gospel growth.” We make and mature disciples “by the open statement of the truth.” We are saved and sanctified by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We're guided by the principle: What you win them with is what you win them to. If we get people to join us in worship through gimmicks and entertainment, guess what they will want more of? This is why, in part, we are committed to congregational singing; to equipping our members for the work of the ministry and not just multiplying programs for you to attend; to Scripture-saturated everything. We want to behold the glory of the Lord that we might become like him. As you go about making disciples, whether in your family, with your colleagues, or with your Discipleship Group—don't shy away from the power of God in the gospel. Be confident in the truth that Jesus saves sinners. Be confident that the Spirit will use the Word to do the work. Be so confident, making use of such boldness (cf. 3:12), that you gladly share Christ in the sight of God to everyone. When someone in your Discipleship Group is venting about his or her spouse, press in by asking, "How did *you* respond? What were *you* wanting?" And connect that response to a passage of Scripture and the gospel. Commend what aligns and correct what is amiss. You do that with the Word and assurance of the gospel.

Engage in the Cosmic Conflict (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Being confident in the truth, you recognize that you are engaged in the cosmic conflict—v.3-4. Paul seems to be responding to unstated criticism here, that *he* has in some way veiled the gospel. Later in the letter, in 12:16, Paul reveals that the Corinthians were saying that he had done the very things he renounced. Such craftiness in his ministry had obstructed the gospel. To this accusation, Paul is saying, "By no means!" The gospel he proclaims is unveiled just like his own face. He shines forth with the gospel. If it is veiled at all, it's not because of Paul but because of "the god of this world." Satan has been given a measure of authority. He tried tempting Jesus with the offer of all the kingdoms of the world if only Jesus would worship him (cf. Luke 4:5-8). That is only a real temptation if Satan had the authority to deliver. We struggle

with this because of our own anti-supernatural worldview. In our work of discipling, we don't consider the supernatural *enough*. Satan is at work in this world. He has "blinded the minds of unbelievers," those "who are perishing."

He did this chiefly in the Garden with our first parents. And he does this in all who choose sin over faith in Christ. Those are the only two ways to live. Such people must be blind, because if they *did* see "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ," they would be "transformed into the same image" of God, who is Christ himself. And such people are even now perishing. Paul speaks of this as a present, ongoing reality. They are getting a foretaste of the judgment that awaits. Being given over to their sin *is* an act of judgment, of perishing (cf. Romans 1:24-32). This ministry we have by the mercy of God is not just playing around with religion and morality. We are engaged in the cosmic conflict of the ages. There is a supernatural, unseen battle going on even now. Christian, you have all the resources and weapons you need by God's mercy. Get out from behind cover and engage. There is no retreat. We must advance on the enemy with the open statement of the truth of the gospel. Always forward together in the Greatest Cause.

Proclaim Christ (2 Corinthians 4:5-6)

And the banner we wave is ever and always, "Christ!" If you will not lose heart, courageously engaging in the cosmic conflict, you will proclaim Christ. We don't proclaim ourselves. We don't impart *our* wisdom and cleverness. Paul is not contradicting himself between v.2 and v.5. "We would commend ourselves" by not proclaiming ourselves. We are commendable disciple-makers when we don't point disciples to look to us but to look to Christ. We are, as Paul says, "you servants for Jesus' sake." You slave away for Jesus' sake and the

good of those you disciple as you proclaim Christ. It takes work to know the Scriptures and to know those you disciple to connect the two. Your goal is show them Jesus in these pages.

It is chiefly *him* that we proclaim. It's not seven steps to a happier life. It's not your best life now. It's not a set of theological propositions. We preach a *person*. One church father made a keen observation about this verse writing, "[In the creation] indeed [God] said, 'Let it be,' and it was. But now He said nothing, but Himself *became* light for us; for the Apostle does not say, '[He] also now *commanded*,' but '[he] *Himself* shined.'"¹ We preach a person, Church. Then he spoke. Now *he* has shone in our hearts. In your discipling, be sure it is Jesus you are commending. Don't proclaim what Jesus can do for you. That was an error of the Palm Sunday crowd. They didn't want Jesus; they wanted what he could accomplish. They wanted a king to abolish the Romans. Don't proclaim a Christ for your own political ends.

And don't proclaim him in a manipulative way. In discipling our children, their disobedience needs correction. But too easily we respond because we are embarrassed or disrespected. We can invoke a Bible verse devoid of the person of Christ. And it can be religious manipulation and behavior modification. We want our kids to see Jesus. Their sin is not chiefly sin against you. They have been blinded and need to see "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It's hard. It takes time. It requires consistency. And it can be the same with adults. We want to tell that brother struggling with sexual immorality, "Just stop it." What he needs is to turn his gaze from smut to a vision of glory. No one needs more law; there's no power in that Old Covenant approach. We need to behold Jesus in his splendor and glory and how he surpasses all else. Because only he can so shine to overcome blindness and deliver from death and unbelief.

The Table

So, Church, we are confident in the truth as we engage in the cosmic conflict of proclaiming Christ. And the Table is a testimony that God will provide all you need to make disciples. He will provide you the nourishment by his grace. He will give daily bread to sustain you. Jesus will make good on his promise to grant you more than you give. So, do not lose heart, Christian. Stand firm in the confidence of the truth. Don't buy into the lie that you need to make the death and resurrection of Jesus, his summons to die to self and bear the cross, his call to repentance—don't buy the lie that you need to make the truth more palatable. You and I will not, by our own persuasiveness, bring someone into the Kingdom of God. Because we are engaged in a cosmic conflict. And fortunately for us, we have Christ on our side. So, don't hold back from proclaiming *him*. He is the one who spoke light into existence out of darkness, and he is the one who has shone in our hearts that we and all those who we disciple might be transfigured in beholding him.

¹Chrysostom via Hughes, 133, emphasis added