

“THE CHURCH ON PURPOSE”

“On Purpose In Discipleship”

Scripture Reading – Luke, 14:25-35

Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish’.

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure heap; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear”.

‘Jesus came to the disciples and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.’

Matthew, 28:18-20, NIV






This series is based on the example of the Early Christian Church.

‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.’

Acts, 2:42-47, NIV

In Acts, 2:40-47, we read of five purposes God desires for his Church:

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	<u>EVANGELISM</u>	(Acts, 2:40-41)
	<u>DISCIPLESHIP</u>	(Acts, 2:42)
	<u>FELLOWSHIP</u>	(Acts, 2:42, 44, 46)
	<u>MINISTRY</u>	(Acts, 2:45)
	<u>WORSHIP</u>	(Acts, 2:42, 46-47)

In this series, we will concentrate on this amazing summary of the Early Church.

When they actively engaged in EVANGELISM, DISCIPLESHIP, FELLOWSHIP, MINISTRY, and WORSHIP, what was the result? **‘THE LORD ADDED TO THEIR NUMBER DAILY THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED’.**

If we do as they did, cannot our same Lord add to our number **‘THOSE WHO ARE BEING SAVED’?**

“ON PURPOSE IN DISCIPLESHIP”

If the Church is called to reach people for Jesus, then it must also be responsible to teach people how to become like Jesus and to live like Jesus...

‘Jesus came to the disciples and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.’

Matthew, 28:18-20, NIV

If there is a faithful proclamation of the Gospel, there must be a programme to faithfully teach and train those who respond to Christ's claim on their lives. In other words, after the salvation experience, we should lead people on towards holiness. That process is called DISCIPLESHIP.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Dictionary: “Follower of a leader, teacher etc...”

Encarta: “Follower of a person or an idea; someone who strongly believes in the teachings of a leader, a philosophy, a religion, and tries to act accordingly”

Thesaurus: “Believer, devotee, follower, learner, pupil, scholar, student, supporter”

In simple terms, a disciple is a learner. A disciple is one who learns the teachings of his master.

“Conversion without discipleship is openly implied in much of our evangelical teaching. It has become strangely possible to be Christ's disciple without taking up the cross.”

C D Alexander

“Discipleship is the process of helping people become more like Jesus in their thoughts, feelings, and actions.”

Rick Warren

1. THE CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

'Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple".'

Luke, 14:25-26, NIV

THERE CAN BE NO RIVAL

'Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple".'

Luke, 14:26, NIV

Frequently the criticism the Christian Church had to endure from both the Romans and the Jews was that this new 'religion' destroyed family life. Of course, it was inevitable, especially when some members of the family became Christians and others did not.

'Jesus said, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man's enemies will be the members of his own household".'

Matthew, 10:34-36, NIV

The key to living as a true disciple is having proper priorities.

It is the difference between knowing what is vital and what is important, although everything seems vital at the time. Family life is important, but honouring God is always vital. It is the life of a disciple. Who is NUMBER ONE in your life? Who has primary place? For the true disciple the answer is easy, even if living it is sometimes difficult: Jesus has primary place.

The Rich Young Ruler wanted discipleship on his own terms, but Jesus said to him, *"I tell you the truth, no-one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life"'*.

Mark, 10:29-30, NIV

THERE CAN BE NO REFUSAL

'Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me... And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple".'

Luke, 9:23; 14:27, NIV

What 'CROSS' was Jesus talking about?

"I carry a cross in my pocket as a simple reminder to me, of the fact that I'm a Christian wherever I may be." But, the cross is not a comforter to us.

"You do not know the crosses that I have to bear – Auntie Betty, children, illnesses." But the cross is not our burdens.

'The old rugged cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt and violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times, who took up his cross and started down the road, had already said good-bye to his family and friends. He was not coming back. He was going to have it all ended. The old cross made no compromise; it spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely, and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.'

A W Tozer

Am I willing to take up this rugged cross daily? This symbol of death to self?

To experience the abrupt and violent end of my life?

To experience the end of my desires, my wants, my will?

To experience all this without a murmur?

Am I willing to take up this rugged cross daily?

To say good-bye to my family and friends, and head down the road knowing that I am never coming back again?

To take the no-compromising, no-modifying, no-sparing way of the cross?

Am I willing to die? On that cross? Every day?

'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.'

Galatians, 2:20, NIV

THERE CAN BE NO RETURN

'Jesus said, "No-one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God".'

Luke, 9:62, NIV

This involves a total dedication.

You cannot 'pick and choose' the where or the when in following Jesus Christ. When we are truly following God, he often takes us to difficult and unexpected places.

Look closely at the experience of Jesus:

In the River Jordan... he experienced a Baptism of Repentance.

In the Desert Wilderness... Satan attacked him to the point of death.

In Capernaum... he bravely preached the Good News of the Kingdom.

In Nazareth... he preached at home and they wanted to kill him.

I heard a voice so gently calling: take up thy cross and follow me.

A tempest on my heart was falling, a living cross this was to be;

I struggled sore, I struggled vainly, no other light my eyes could see.

I'll follow thee, of life the giver, I'll follow thee, suffering redeemer,

I'll follow thee, deny thee never, by thy grace I'll follow thee.

*I heard his voice unto me saying: take up thy cross and follow me.
My heart is thine, now thee obeying, speak all thy will, dear Lord, to me.
Make weakness strength, thy power now give me,
And from this hour I'll follow thee.*

Agnes Heathcote, SASB 490:1-2

2. THE CHURCH OF DISCIPLESHIP

'Jesus came to the disciples and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age".'

Matthew, 28:18-20, NIV

Discipleship, by definition, involves Discipline.

"The disciple is one who has come to terms with his ignorance, superstition, and sin, to find learning, truth, and forgiveness, from the Saviour."

IS ON PURPOSE IN GOD'S WORD

Jesus warned against the yeast of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees practiced a legalistic living of God's Word, but instead of allowing the Word to change their lives, they became wrapped up and then trapped in it.

'When a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy".'

Luke, 12:1, NIV

The problem with the Pharisees was simple: they knew a lot about God's Word, but knew little about living in God's Word. Because of this, Jesus warned the religious authorities of his day because they wrongly applied the Word of God.

'Jesus said, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God".'

Matthew, 22:29, NIV

KNOWING GOD'S WORD

'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.'

II Timothy 2:15, NIV

"It is not what I do not know about God's Word that bothers me, but what I do know is what bothers me."

Mark Twain

'We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.'

"THE SALVATION ARMY ARTICLES OF FAITH", Doctrine 1

DOING GOD'S WORD

'Jesus said, "These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me".'

Mark, 7:6, NIV

Jesus spoke of those who hear the words and put them into practice.

The one who hears and does is like a wise man, who builds on the rock.

The one who hears and does not do is like a foolish man, who builds on the sand.

'Do not merely listen to the word, and deceive yourselves. Do what it says.'

James, 1:22, NIV



IS ON PURPOSE IN PRAYER

'One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples".'

Luke, 11:1, NIV

Note that the disciples of Jesus needed to be taught how to pray!

Teach me how to love thee, teach me how to pray.

Teach me how to love thee, better day by day.

Unknown, SACS 105


How did Jesus teach his disciples to pray?

'Jesus said to his disciples, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation".'

Luke, 11:2-4, NIV

In THE LORD'S PRAYER, Jesus gave us the perfect pattern for prayer.

 WHO DO YOU PRAY TO? God the Father.

 WHAT DO YOU PRAY FOR? God's will, provision, and protection.

 WHY DO YOU PRAY? God's forgiveness and the grace to forgive others.

Some have a tendency to make prayer an 'emergency exit' from times of trouble.

'One day, a primary school class went on a field trip to a local fire station. After the children had the opportunity to examine the fire engines, the fire-fighters equipment and their station, one of the firemen began to talk about fire safety. He said, "If you think your house is on fire, the first thing you should do is go to the door and feel it to see if it is hot".

He continued, "The second thing you should do is to fall to your knees". He asked, "Does anyone know why you should get on your knees?" One little boy in the front raised his hand and said, "You get on your knees so you can pray that God will rescue you!"

Many consider prayer to be a magic lamp to get you out of trouble.

'For most of us, our spiritual nature is so weak and impotent that we are incapable of engaging in the simplest form of spiritual efforts... like a few moments of prayer... for any prolonged period, and our Christian nature exerts virtually no influence on our day to day living.'

Skip Kazmarek

*Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death; he enters Heaven with prayer.*

*O thou by whom we come to God, the life, the truth, the way!
The path of prayer thyself hast trod: Lord, teach us how to pray!*

James Montgomery, SASB 625:5-6



IS ON PURPOSE IN LOVE

"The most important commandment", said Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'. The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. There is no commandment greater than these".'

Mark, 12:29-30, NIV

Our lives should be disciplined to love God and then love one another.

'Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.'

1 John, 4:7-8, NIV

'I am thirty years of age, the age at which Christ began his mission. Now no more childish things, no more vain things.'

Florence Nightingale

Many years after she wrote this in her diary, and she had ended her heroic life of service as an example to many, Nightingale was asked to give an explanation for why she had accomplished so much. She said, "I can only give one explanation: I have kept nothing back from God".

*All my days and all my hours, all my will and all my powers,
All the passion of my soul, not a fragment but the whole
Shall be thine, dear Lord, shall be thine, dear Lord.*

Edward H Joy, SACS 32

To this purpose, let us live so we may be able to say, **"Discipleship? We did it On Purpose!"**