

Growing One Another: Discipleship in The Church

Series Introduction

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven as the King who has all authority in heaven and on earth, he gave us a set of marching orders and called all Christians to be disciples and disciple-makers. The Bible teaches that growing as a Christ-follower and helping others grow is normal for the Christian life, not extraordinary. Thus, an Important mark of a healthy church is a pervasive concern for church growth as it is prescribed in the Bible. That means growing members, not necessarily growing numbers.

Some today think that a person can be a “baby Christian” for a whole lifetime. Growth is treated as an optional extra for zealous disciples, and helping others grow is only for professionals. But this is not the case... From a biblical perspective, growth is a sign of life. If a tree is alive, it grows. Being alive (born again/ regenerated/ saved) means growing, and growing means increasing and advancing, at least until death intercedes.

Paul hoped the Corinthians would grow in their faith (2 Cor 10:15), and that the Ephesians would “grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ” (Eph 4:15, Col 1:10, 2 Thess 1:3). Peter exhorted his readers “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Pet 2:2), and the Apostle to the Hebrews offers an uncomfortable exhortation in Hebrews 5 when he tells his readers that “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God...”

The church (us) has a responsibility to be growing people in grace. When you peer into the life of a church, you should see people maturing, seeking holiness, and influencing others to do the same... This could be seen in a variety of ways, but this is what we’re calling discipleship, and this is the focus of the entire study.

To be a disciple is to be a student, someone who learns from and imitates his teacher. As a disciple of Christ, we are all called to continually learn from Him and follow Him in every area of life. Practically speaking, this means that we need to realize that discipleship is a lifelong process. In this life, none of us is a finished product. We all need to continually progress as disciples.

Session One: *The Need for Discipleship*

Main Idea

None of us is perfect (nobody is entirely sanctified). We all need to grow as disciples of Christ.

- What was the last experience you had that showed you that you still have a lot to learn?

Digging In

In Philippians 3:8-11, Paul exclaims that everything that once caused him to be proud he now considers to have been a waste of time because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. He then explains why he has gladly lost all of that and more: it’s allowed him to know Christ, to share in His sufferings, and to attain the resurrection from the dead.

But in case anyone might think that Paul was saying that he had become completely mature, Paul continues...

Read Philippians 3:12-21

1. What does Paul say that he is not, and that he has not yet done (vs 12-13)?
 - a. If this is how the Apostle Paul viewed himself, what should our attitudes toward ourselves be?
2. What reason does Paul give for why he presses on to obtain a deeper knowledge of Christ (vs 12)?
 - a. What does this teach us about the basis and motivation of our growth as Christians?
3. What is the one thing that Paul does do (vs 13-14)?
4. What kind of imagery does Paul use in verses 13-14? What does it remind you of?
 - a. What does this teach us about the kind of effort we should spend on growing as Christians?
5. Whom does Paul instruct us to imitate in verse 17? (Hint: there are 2 answers)
 - a. What does this teach us about God's design for our growth as Christians?
 - b. What must happen in order for this to take place?
6. What is the threat Paul mentions to our faithfully following his and others' godly example (vs 18-19)?
 - a. Why does this threat make it especially important for us to follow godly examples?
7. List everything Paul says is true of Christians in verses 20-21... How do these realities encourage us to persevere in our discipleship?
8. How do you respond when a fellow believer corrects or rebukes you? What does this reveal about how you see yourself?
9. In this study, we've seen that all of us need to continually grow as disciples of Christ, and that we are to do so by seeking out and imitating godly examples... Can you list one or two people worth imitating? What Christ-like qualities in them is worth imitating?
10. Paul presents himself as an example to be imitated. A person could do this out of pride, but explain how one could also do this out of humility... (see 1 Cor 11:1)
11. Is your life one which younger Christians should imitate? If not, are you at becoming an example?
12. What is one practical way you can seek to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ this week?