

Discipleship

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 5th Oct 2014

Intro

- Today look at the vision of our Church and every Church: to make disciples. We will today look at 'what is a disciple?'. We note that a disciple is a learner, a follower and a reproducer.

Read Matt 11:28

A learner

- 9x table. What if I said 'how much of Genesis chapter 1 can you quote?'. If we want to be a disciple we must be willing to become learners, learning Scripture, and learning from Jesus and one another. The Greek word used in the New Testament for disciple is *methetes*, which means pupil, or apprentice, a learner, someone willing to go through the discipline of learning.
- The disciples were disciplined followers of a teacher- Jesus. Jesus was their teacher, or 'Rabbi'. There were many such Rabbi's at the time of Jesus and there were disciples of various Rabbi's. John the Baptist had disciples (Mt 9:14), as did the Pharisees (Mt 22:16).
- In the passage we read (Matt 11:28) Jesus is inviting Jews who knew many different teachers (each with their own interpretations of God's Word) to choose Him and His teachings. A 'yoke' would be the teacher's own take on what God's Word says- their summary of the law. His yoke and burden was light in contrast with many other Rabbis who added a lot of extra laws and traditions which they said had been passed on 'orally' all the way back to Moses (but in reality were rules made up by men).
- So Jesus, Himself, was called 'Rabbi'- Aramaic word that meant 'rav'='master' (literally 'great one') and 'i'='my'; therefore 'my great one' or 'my master'. It was a term of respect used for a great teacher at the time by all (Jesus was called 'Rabbi' by many people: His disciples (Mark 9:5, Mark 11:21 etc.); Pharisees (John 3:1-2); John the Baptist's disciples (John 1:35-38); Common people (Mark 10:51, John 6:24-25); Torah teachers (Matthew 8:19); Herodians (Luke 3:12); and the Sadducees (Matthew 22:23-32). Additionally, he refers to himself by this title (John 13:12-14, Luke 22:10-11). (source: <http://www.fishingtheabyss.com/archives/199>).
- Although a Rabbi is now a term used to describe the leader of a synagogue in the time of Jesus it meant something quite different- it was a term of respect applied to someone who had great knowledge and wisdom in the Scriptures, could teach others and was living a life others wanted to imitate.
- In order to understand discipleship it's important to know the first century context. The tradition behind having disciples was thought to extend all the way back to when God first gave His law to Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. The Mishna (the Jewish oral teaching) at one place says this:
"Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua (his disciple) Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets, the prophets to the men of the Great Assembly. The Men of the Great Assembly said three things, 'Be deliberate in judgement, raise up many disciples, and make a fence for the Torah.'" (Pirkei Avot 1:1, 2)
- Galilee was well known for discipleship, more so than in Judea and this is
- The educational system in first century Israel was based around the Torah and led some to becoming disciples. This is how it worked:

- Ages 6-10- primary school for boys 7 girls- Beth Sepher (house of the book) in the Synagogue by a teacher of the law. From Torah taught Maths, Geography, History. Slate with honey on ('May the words of God be sweet to your taste, sweeter than honey to your mouth' -Psalm 119:103). Boys taught to memorise Torah off-by heart (this was aim by the time they were 12). Girls studied the Psalms, Proverbs, Deuteronomy and probably Leviticus- the parts of Scripture related to worship, as when they were older they would be responsible in the household for leading the family in worship (worship took place mainly in the home, only 3 times a year were they expected to go to the temple for Passover, Shavuot (Pentecost,Weeks), Sukkot (booths)) . Girls education would finish by the time they were twelve and once they had their first period they became eligible for marriage and usually married young. Women played a key role in teaching the Torah in the home to the children, especially when they were young -(2Tim 3:15; 1:5).
- If a boy knew the Torah by memory by age 12 he was able to carry on his learning, and at age 12 he would did his 'first' Passover- killing the lamb himself on behalf of his family. Although Jesus was God, He chose to limit Himself to learning as all humans have to, and so would have learned the first five books of Moses by heart by this time. Ages 12-15 secondary school (for boys who had learned Torah)- Beth Midrash (house of study). Did this part-time and also did the family trade, whatever that would be. Would study the rest of the Old Testament until they knew it off by heart and would also study the Mishnah (oral law).
- At 15 most boys were done, but a few could move on to next level- Beth Talmud (house of instruction/learning) full-time for ages 15-30. Continued to study the Old Testament but in addition to this the Talmud was studied (people's interpretations of the Bible) but now not in a Synagogue by Teachers of the Law but by a Rabbi, if the Rabbi would take them on. At this stage many would not be taken on because the Rabbi deemed them not ready for it- perhaps if they did not show enough understanding of how to link and interpret different scriptures etc. And they would be sent home to work their family business and pray that when they had kids perhaps one of their kids would become a rabbi. For those who were taken on they would be known as disciples (talmid, talmidim=plural is the Hebrew and thos literally meant a scholar or student). Only Rabbis with authority (such as Jesus) took on disciples in this way, the others were known as 'teachers of the law' and stayed teaching attached to a Synagogue, but the Rabbis with authority (s'micha) took disciples and had an itinerant ministry, and made interpretations of the law rather than repeating other's interpretations of it. Their disciples had to learn to memorise the Rabbi's teaching and be able to pass it on.- a good disciple aimed to be like a cistern (a water collector) and aimed not to miss a drop of what the teacher said. (We will look more at what was expected of the disciple or talmid in the second point of this message- being a follower).
- Most talmidim didn't make it to 30 years of age with their Rabbi, because most failed the grade at some point and would be sent back home to their home trade. However to those that did make it, they could become Rabbi's themselves with their own disciples (talmidim).
- Q. Are you still learning? My first year as a Christian, then plateau. Humility to learn- Don.
- Primary source is the Bible- primary revelation. Contains the very teaching of our Rabbi, Jesus. Better than a sermon, like honey. Inspired- 2Tim 3:16-17- divine inspiration, humans wrote, original without errors or omissions. O.T prophets wrote, predicting Jesus and confirmed by Jesus; N.T apostles wrote & those closely associated with them. This really is God's word to us and it its life.
- Word and the Spirit- not just bubble. Learn to memorise, mediate on, research,

listen to on audio (internet, concordance, Hebrew/Greek, Esword, Bible Gateway, Online Bible). Verse a day, passage a day, read through books, just get it in you. Bible notes-UCB, everyday with Jesus.

- Where is our hunger level compared to first century Jews? Let's repent about making excuses and craft out regular time in God's word.

A follower- Luke 6:40; Matt 10:24-25

- When we think of a disciple as a learner we are not just talking head knowledge- that is not discipleship, but discipleship is wanting to behave as the teacher does, knowing how they would react to situations and becoming like them as much as possible. Our aim is to become like our teacher- Jesus.
- One Church I was in there was a person who used to copy what others did in the church, in terms of body movements etc. he just loved to copy people. When people develop a rapport they start to mimic one another's gestures and postures without even realising it- happens with married couples (unless they've had a row!). Our aim is to so get to know Jesus that we behave like Him habitually- WWJD.
- The Hebrew verb 'to know' means more than head knowledge, it means an intimate knowledge. It was even used regarding sexual intercourse- to 'know' someone (Adam 'knew' Eve and she bore a child). So a disciple wanted to experience the truth, not just have head knowledge. Christian discipleship is about getting to know Christ better and becoming more like Him. Paul said in Romans 8:29 *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son* and 2Cor 3:18 *And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.* **When people look at your life do they see Jesus?**
- Disciples lived with their Rabbi and followed him around, serving him and watching how he reacted to things. In the Mishnah, concerning sages (Rabbis) it says: *Let your house be a meeting-house for the wise; and powder yourself in the dust of their feet; and drink their words with thirstiness.* Avot 1:4. This summed up the desire of a disciple to sit at the feet of their master, in humility listening to their wisdom (as did Mary to Jesus in Luke 10:39 & Paul to Gamaliel in Acts 22:3), but some would also say that it meant being so close to you master as he walked from town to town that you would be covered in the dust from his feet.
- Rabbi's chose people they believed could become like them- 'Take my yoke upon you' literally meant 'become like me' and was a common saying among the Rabbis. Do you believe you can become like Jesus? Jesus does, that's why He chose you, that's why He chose the 12 disciples. They hadn't passed all the grades, they were in many ways failures, but Jesus is skilled at taking the rejects and making them winners.
- Peter got out of the boat because whatever the master did they were to do. However, doubt made him sink- that doubt was probably in himself- the doubt that God can use me.
- That doubt would again surface when he let Jesus down and 3 times denied Him, even calling curses down upon himself. Jesus reinstated him- do you need to know that today- that Jesus reinstates you?
- These men chosen by Jesus had not completed their full time with a rabbi- they were not 30 years old, but only teenagers and in their twenties and were a motley crew from diverse backgrounds, but Jesus believed in them- start to believe that you too with God's help can live like Jesus in this world and make a difference in this generation.
- God's belief in you- Eph 2:10- chose you and planned good works for you to do. John 15:16 he chose us to bear good fruit- fruit which will last.
- Key for bearing fruit is to be with Jesus, like the disciples did- John 15:5-8 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do

nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

- We learn to live by the Spirit, allowing God's Spirit to fill us and empower us against sin and temptation- Rom 8:13- power of Spirit put to death misdeeds of the body; Gal 5:16 live by the Spirit and won't gratify the desires of the flesh; 2Cor 3:17 where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.
- Accountability- disciples didn't follow Jesus alone, but as part of a group- they learned from a group environment- this is Church. They fell out with each other and argued- this is Church.
- No great goal can really be achieved without sacrifice of some sort. Sacrifice- putting Jesus first- Lk 9:23-24- disciples must deny themselves and pick up cross and follow Jesus. Lk 14:25-35 hating parents, family and even own life to be Jesus' disciples & weighing cost before build tower. Hate=Hebrew idiom=to love less (i.e. no general way to make a comparison, but was the idiom 'this I love', 'this I hate' meaning I choose the former out of the two options). Same idiom is used in Mal 1:2-3 'Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated'. It means making God your priority.

A reproducer- Mt 4:19- fishers of men

- Matt 18:18-20- Great commission- go and make disciples of all nations- literally 'in your going'- therefore, not just missionaries but for all- in our daily lives make disciples.
- 2Tim 2:2- 'what you have heard from me.. entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others'.
- We reproduce after our own kind (Gen 1)- holiness breeds holiness, sin breeds sin- if we live like Jesus we will influence others to also want to live like Jesus.
- Disciples lived with an watched a Rabbi to become like him, but Paul didn't have his own disciples, instead all Christians were called disciples in the New Testament because there is only one Rabbi for us now- Jesus. However, Paul did ask people to imitate him as he followed Christ, i.e. 'join me as I follow Him'- 1Cor 11:1. Could we ask people to imitate our walk with God? What things would we want to change before we felt confident to say that?
- Application- be available- Don. We are all teachers in some ways, even if we are not out the front- there is someone watching you, and mimicking you, set them a good example. Be available to them. Pass on what you know or get fat.
- 2Tim 1:5- Tim's mother Eunice and grandmother Lois- teaching begins at home- don't rely on Sunday School for it all, but let the home be a place of study.
- Homegroups are to multiply- seeing potential new leaders as we grow. Become church plants eventually.
- In what ways have you multiplied yourself since becoming a Christian?
- See on, do one, teach one- ER 'I hear, I forget, I see, I remember, I do , I understand'. Getting hands dirty as we mentor people, train people. Jesus didn't give out lots of flyers but invested himself into a group of 12 people- discipleship involves all we have- Jesus' discipling the 12 involved extreme servant-hood, pouring out life into others, washing their feet, dying for others- are we prepared to do the same? Those 12 turned the world upside down!
- You are only as good as your successor- who are you passing the baton on to? Who can you invest quality time into?

Conclusion

If we really want to be disciples we need to take seriously the commitment to:

- Be a learner- study God's word
- Follow Jesus- become like Him
- Reproduce yourself- pass on the Baton- make more disciples

Song: *Make my life a prayer to you*