
Call to Discipleship

1. Intro & Context - #10yearchallenge

- In recent times one of the latest social media fads has been this thing called #10yearchallenge
- Been on FB, Twitter, Instagram
- People simply post two images of themselves - usually side by side - which were taken at least ten years apart
- The point is to see how much you've changed / or not changed over the years
- For example
 - Mark Zuckerberg – Founder and CEO Facebook
 - Lionel Messi – great Argentine footballer
 - Actress Reece Witherspoon
 - Don't if you saw my post on Facebook ... but this was my #10yearschallenge post
 - As you can see ... not much has changed 😊
- Reason I raise this is because this term we are looking at the theme of ***discipleship***
- Our mission here at C@P is 'we live to be and make disciples of Jesus'
- Over the next 10 weeks we're going to be exploring what it means to be and make disciples
- Because
 - if this is what we are on about
 - if this is the reason we exist
 - Then we not only want to be fair dinkum about it
 - We want to be focused on getting on with this mission
 - And being equipped for it
- And so while Facebook, Instagram and Twitter might have had the #10yearchallenge ... this term at C@P we're going to have the #10weekdiscipleshipchallenge
- And the idea is ... that after 10 weeks looking at God's word and meditating on what it means to be and make disciples ... there will be a change in you and I
 - For some it may only be a small change, not very noticeable
 - For others it will be a much more significant and perceptible change
 - For some it will be that you become a disciple of Jesus for the very first time > that's a huge change!

- For others it will be a deeper conviction about what it means to BE a disciple of Jesus
- For others ... and I pray this is the case for many of you ... it will be a greater desire and willingness to make disciples
- So there's the challenge – our #10weekdiscipleshipchallenge

- Today ... I want to set the foundation for the rest of the series
 - If we're going to look at what it means to be and make disciples ... we need to be clear on
 - what discipleship means
 - who are we disciples of
 - why is discipleship relevant
- Today our theme is the Call to Discipleship

PRAY

2. Centre of Discipleship

- When Jesus began his earthly ministry ... he called people to follow him
- For three years this motley crew of fishermen, tax collectors, women and other misfits followed Jesus
 - Watching him perform countless miracles
 - Listening to him teach about the KOH
- Initially they weren't sure what to make of Jesus
 - Often asked ... who is this man?
 - Luke 7:49 – "Who is this who even forgives sins?"
 - Luke 8:25 – "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."
- In that sense ... the disciples are like any one here today who's here checking out Jesus and the claims of Christianity ... trying to work out "who is this Jesus bloke and should I take him seriously?"

- Eventually, after about 2 years of this ... it finally comes to a head and Jesus asks his disciples in 9:18
 - "Who do the crowds say I am?"
 - They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."
- Clearly there was mixed opinions about who Jesus truly was
- Then Jesus said to them
 - "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

- "Forget about what others think ... what's more important is what do you think?"
- "You've seen the evidence, you've seen the miracles, you've heard my teaching ... what do you conclude from all of that?"
- Peter answered, "You are the Christ [Messiah] of God."

- Finally!
 - After all this time ... the disciples finally see Jesus for who he truly is
 - HE is the Christ > HE is the Messiah
 - Jesus is the rescuing king God promised to send throughout the Old Testament who would save God's people and restore them back to God
- After 2 years of seeing Jesus in flesh and witnessing all the did with their own eyes ... they were finally able to see the truth of who Jesus is – God's Christ ... the Messiah ... the one who's came to save

- What's surprising is what Jesus says next
- Because in the very next verse Jesus says this
 - *"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*

- You see, the Jews had been waiting for the Christ
 - But their expectations of what the Christ would do were completely off track
 - You see the Jews were expecting a king like King David
 - Political or military ruler > one who would conquer the Romans, unite Israel once more and restore the nation to its glory days like in Kings David and Solomon's day

- But that's not the type of Christ Jesus came to be
- They've misunderstood Jesus identity
- So he needs teach them what it means for him to be the Christ
 - Not a victorious warrior king
 - But a humble servant king
 - A king who would suffer and be rejected by his people
 - A king who would be executed and die on a cross

Illustration – Mistaken Identity

- I read a story recently of an Irish couple who were celebrating their anniversary in a fancy restaurant in Dublin

- They look over and recognise Bono, the lead singer of U2, having dinner with a male friend
- They were big fans and they wanted to go over and say "hello" and ask for a photo
- Bono went to the toilet so they decided to go ask his friend if Bono would be ok with a few photos and his friend said "Yes"
- So Bono comes back and agrees
- The couple stand next to Bono as his friend takes the photos and then they go sit and finish their meal while Bono and his friend leave
- Afterwards ... the couple go to pay but the restaurant says their meal has been paid for!
- They ask if Bono had paid for them and the restaurant says, "No, his friend, Bruce Springsteen has paid for you."!
- The couple had clearly failed to recognise who it was before them

- Same was true for the disciples
- They had recognised Jesus as the Christ
 - But they didn't understand what type of Christ he'd come to be
 - And so Jesus needs to re-orientate their thinking to understand that as the Christ he has come to die and rise again
 - Three times he will tell them he has to suffer and die
 - Because the only way that the sin of humankind could ever be atoned for was if God himself, in the person of his son, took the punishment for sin and paid the ransom price to set us free
- Jesus leaves us and his disciples with no doubt ... for him to be the Christ and therefore rescue God's people as promised ... he **must** suffer and die

Application

- At the centre of Christian discipleship is Jesus Christ
- And there are two key things we need to note here
 - The first is that we recognise Jesus is God's Christ
 - Like the disciples it might take you some time to investigate, consider and conclude this to be the case
 - But the reality is the disciples lived and breathed three years with Jesus ... they were there ... and this was their conclusion
 - And the question there in v20 – "who do you say that I am?" is written as much to record those events 2000 years ago ... as it is to challenge you and I to answer that question
 - "Who do **you** say that I am?"

- Do you recognise Jesus as the Christ of God ... or do you think he is something else?
- CS Lewis is famous for saying that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord
 - He either truly is the Christ of God and therefore Lord of all
 - Or he was spectacularly misguided
 - Or he was deliberately misleading
- Peter and the disciples said ... "you are the Christ"
- Not only do we need to recognise Jesus is the Christ ... the second thing is we need to recognise what he came to do
- Christian discipleship understands that
 - Our sinful nature means we are in desperate need of rescuing
 - We cannot do anything of our own accord to be right with God
 - Therefore, we all need Jesus Christ who came and suffered in our place on the cross
- The Christ at the centre of Christian discipleship is a suffering saviour
 - **Our** suffering saviour
 - **Your** suffering saviour
- Christian discipleship means a recognition of your deep and desperate need you have your sin forgiven and your relationship with God restored
- We must see this is fundamental to who Jesus is ... and if we fail to recognise Jesus for who he is ... we'll be like that couple in Ireland
 - Totally misunderstanding who we are dealing with and what he came to do

3. Call of Discipleship

- With Jesus identity and mission now on the table ... the very next thing Jesus does is call his disciples to follow him
- Now to be fair they have been following him for 2 years already
- But now they finally get who he is and what he has come to do ... he calls them again
- Have a look at v23
- *Then he said to them all:*
 - *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*
- Having made it clear he's the Christ ... and making it clear he's going to suffer and die ... he basically says to everyone around him
 - "Ok now you know who I am"

- "Now you know where I'm going and what I've come to do"
- "I want you to come follow me"
- "If it wasn't clear 2 years ago ... it is now"
- "And now that you know ... I want you to hear my call to follow me and be my disciples"
- Because ...
 - if Jesus truly is the Christ
 - if Jesus truly did suffer and die to pay the ransom price for sin
 - Then ... he has the authority and right to call people to follow him and be his disciples
 - Jesus coming to earth and his death on the cross was not just an event in history for us to recall or debate or observe from a distance
 - It was for the purpose of calling people to himself so they might be saved for eternity
- And so having established his identity, authority and mission ... he quite rightly calls people to follow him

Application

- Jesus doesn't call people to have an association with him
- He doesn't call people to be acquaintances with him
- He doesn't call people just to know him
- He calls people to follow him and he his disciples
- What that means is ...
 - you can't be a Christian and sit on the fence with Jesus
 - you can't be a Christian and be detached from Jesus
 - you can't treat Jesus like some genie you keep in a bottle that you only pull out in times of trouble
- He calls you and I to recognise him for who he is ... and hear his call to follow him and be his disciple
- Who he is and what's he's done demands a response
- And as the one who has all God's authority ... and as the one who holds your eternal future in his hands ... he says to you and I ... come follow me
- Notice ... it's not a demand
 - It's not a mandate
 - He's not a dictator tell you what you can and can't do
- It's an invitation ... come and be my disciple.

4. Core of Discipleship

- As the Christ of God, Jesus is at the **centre** of Christian discipleship
- Because he is the Christ, he has the authority to **call** everyone to follow him and be his disciple
- Final point we see today is the **core** of Discipleship ... what's it mean to follow the Christ and be his disciple?

- And its heart ... it's about submitting our lives to Jesus
 - *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"*

- Here Jesus says ...
 - If you want to follow me ...
 - If you want to be one of my disciples
 - If you want to enjoy the benefits of the ransom price I'm going to pay ...
 - then you **must** deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me'

- **Deny yourself**
- Being a disciple of Jesus means denying yourself
 - Life is no longer centered around your whims and desires ... instead you start living life with Jesus at the centre
 - We shift from doing our will to doing God's will
 - He dictates the drum beat of life that we march to ... not us

- **Take up your cross**
- If that's not radical enough, Jesus also says ... *take up your cross*
 - In Jesus time the image of someone taking up their cross ... is the image of a condemned man carrying his own cross beam to his crucifixion ... just as Jesus would soon do as the suffering saviour
 - Jesus means that in following him we must go through a death like experience as we hand over our life to him
- In following Jesus, we effectively die to self
 - Every day is a daily laying down of our lives in submission to the one who calls us to follow him

- **Follow Jesus**
- Finally disciples of Jesus are to follow him

- That is ...
 - They listen to his call
 - They obey his word
 - They submit to him

- **Illustration – Jason Bourne**
- [used before] In the last movie of the Bourne series there's this flash back to the time when Jason Bourne is first recruited into his role as an assassin for CIA
- As he finally commits himself to the programme and this new life as a CIA agent and agrees to let the CIA direct his new life ... he hands over his dog tags and he is given his new name
- His old self is as good as dead ... he becomes a new man ... with a new allegiance to a new boss who will direct his life

- Being a disciple of Jesus means you die to self

Application

- First thing to note here is that if you're going to be a disciple ... Jesus says this is what it's all about
- When you become a Christian ... you don't get the option to tick the box on this
 - It's not like buying a car or computer where you tick boxes for the optional extras you want
 - "Congratulations > you've become a Christian"
 - "Please tick the box for the options you would like"
 - "deny yourself, take your cross and follow me"
 - "Mmmm ... no thanks"
- No! That's box is automatically ticked for you
- Being my disciple says Jesus ... means submitting to me and my authority
- Whether that be in relation to your
 - Finances
 - Sexual desires
 - Use of time
 - Where you live
 - How you live
 - Your attitude to work
 - Your attitude to school
 - Ambitions

- When Jesus calls you to follow ... then every aspect of our life gets handed over to him
 - If you're a disciple of Jesus you can't go through life singing with Frank Sinatra ... 'I did it my way' ... because Jesus calls you to do it his way
- You start to get a picture here that following Jesus is no half-hearted measure – is it?
- Its radical stuff isn't it?
- Our world says love yourself, grab all you can and follow your heart
- Jesus says deny yourself, grab your cross and follow me
- That's what being my disciple is all about
- Now you might say ...
 - that's all a bit too radical > that's all a bit too serious
 - I don't think I'm up for all that
 - It's not worth it
- Have a look at what Jesus says next in v24-25
- Here he gives the disciples two compelling reasons why heeding his call to follow his is in fact worth it
- ***You will save your life***
- The first is there in v24 ... because you will save your life
 - *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.*
- Jesus is saying ...
 - if you choose not to follow me
 - if you want to preserve the life you live here and now ...
 - if you want to continue ruling your own life now ...
 - That's fine ...
 - But it will cost you > you will forfeit your life in eternity
- By choosing to rule our own life ... it might seem appealing for the here and now ... but the cost is enormous
- The person who makes such a choice has lost REAL life ... for they will never share in eternal salvation he offers
- On the other hand,

- the person who gives up their life to be Jesus' disciple...
- the one who denies themselves ... takes up their cross to follow Jesus
- Then ...
 - they will actually save their life
 - they'll receive real life > eternal life > life to the full
- **Your life has eternal value**
- The second reason following Jesus is worth it is in v25
 - *What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?*
- Jesus is saying here ...
 - there's no use gaining the world, if we forfeit our life in God's eternal kingdom
 - and there is nothing we can give to buy it back
- When the time comes for you to face your maker ... and you sit down before him on that great day of judgment ... you won't be able to bargain or trade with him anything we might have gained in this life ... for our eternal life
- **Illustration– Jeff Bezos**
- Take someone like Jeff Bezos
- He's an American technology entrepreneur, investor, and philanthropist
- Most famous for being the founder, chairman, CEO, and president of Amazon
- Built Amazon up from scratch
- Listed it on the stock exchange in 1997 ... now worth 1 trillion USD!
- Bezos himself is worth \$132.7 bn USD
- He's surpassed Bill Gates and Warren Buffett as the richest man in the world
- To give you some perspective
 - With that type wealth, Bezos could have bought every house sold in Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sydney for the last four years!
- But even with all the wealth that Bezos has accumulated and all the business success and accolades he's achieved in life ... is not as valuable as the offer of eternal life that God has given us through Jesus
- We can gain the WHOLE WORLD, Jesus says ... and it's worth **nothing** compared to the riches of eternal life
- When you do the cost / benefit analysis ... it's a no brainer

- We might gain
 - Possessions > comfort > material security > success > recognition from others > status > lifestyle
 - But when you forfeit eternal life ... all that is worthless ... you're eternally bankrupt
- Jesus says eternal life is what is of true value

5. Conclusion

- As we consider the #10weekschallenge of discipleship ... we're praying God will change and transform us as followers of Jesus
- The first step is recognising that at the **centre** of Christian discipleship is Jesus
- And as God's Christ he **calls** you and I to follow him and be his disciple
- But he's not only the one who calls you
- He's also the one who suffers and dies for you

- So even though path of discipleship is not an easy one ... you know it's worth it
- For even if you were to gain the whole world ... it would be a loss compared to saving your life when you hear the call of Jesus and follow him

PRAY