

Goal of Discipleship

1. Intro & Context - #10yearchallenge

- Jordan was telling us last week one of his good friends at school has the goal of getting into medicine and so needs a 99.?? ATAR this year
- As a result, he has disciplined himself to be extremely dedicated and focused in his studies to ensure he will achieve his goal
- His A+ average last year and recent exam results would indicate he's on track to reach his goal

- Virtually every person or organisation that achieves outstanding results in life have goals they target
- Whether that's
 - A listed company aiming for a particular earnings per share
 - An athlete aiming to win a gold medal
 - Charity trying to hit its funding target
 - Phone company wanting to be first to market with new technology

- What about a Christian?
- What's the goal of discipleship?

- This term we're looking the theme of discipleship
- Our mission at C@P is *'we live to be and make disciples of Jesus'*
- And so, we want to start the year with the right focus, the right priority
- And so, we're going to explore what it means to be and make disciples
- But more than that
- Our prayer this term is that we will all be transformed in some way this term
 - That we wouldn't just come away with more knowledge and understanding
 - But that we would be transformed and moulded
 - That there would be some noticeable change in us

- Last week spoke about the #10weekchallenge of discipleship
- I asked you to imagine
 - a photo of your discipleship last week when we started the series
 - a photo of your discipleship once we finish the series at end of the term
 - what would be different?
 - how would you have grown?
 - what would have changed?

- Last week we looked at the Call to Discipleship

- Jesus is the Christ who suffers and is at the centre of Xn discipleship
- He calls people to follow him as his disciples
- Discipleship means giving up your life for Jesus, but it's totally worth it

- Today exploring the Goal of Discipleship
- If we are to following Jesus and be his disciples
 - Where are we going?
 - What's the destination?
 - What's the goal that we are aiming for?

PRAY

2. Yoke of discipleship

- In Matt 11:28 Jesus says
 - ²⁸ *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*
- These verses are a wonderful contrast to what we looked at last week in Luke 9:23 where Jesus said, *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*
- Here Jesus shows that when you come to him and follow him and that he will give you rest
 - Not rest from labour or work ...but rest for your soul
 - There is a letting go of burdens and weariness and anxiety that is experienced when a person becomes a disciple of Jesus

- However, that promise is not without condition
- For Jesus says in v29
 - ²⁹ *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me*
 - Disciples of Jesus are to yoke themselves to Jesus
 - If you want rest for your soul ... Jesus says you must yoke yourself to me

- What is a yoke?
 - Yoke is a wooden beam often placed across the necks of two beasts of burden > ox, cow, horse
 - Often, they were yoked to a plough or cart to pull it along
 - By yoking the two animals together, they would work together to pull in the same direction

- But also, in biblical times and in more recent times where slavery has been prevalent, yokes were often put on slaves¹
- And so, to 'take the yoke' was a metaphor
 - for service and submission and obedience ...
 - for accepting the authority of another – like
 - oxen are yoked together to plough in the service of their owner,
 - or slaves who bear the yoke of their master
- And so, when Jesus says 'take my yoke upon you' ... he is inviting people to come follow him, serve him, and submit to him

- But notice there's a purpose of goal of yoking oneself to Jesus
 - For he says ... *Take my yoke upon you and **learn** from me*
 - Jesus wants his disciples to come alongside him, walk with him and learn from him

- In the original language, the word 'learn' has the same root as the word 'disciple'²
 - And so it's no surprise then that the word disciple literally means 'learn through instruction'
 - A disciple is a learner or a student > someone who is apprenticed to a teacher to learn from him

- And so, if a disciple is a learner ... you could say 'discipleship' is 'learnership'
- And therefore, to be a follower of Jesus ... is to be a disciple and therefore a learner
- It is not enough to indicate that you would like to be a follower of Jesus
- No, being a disciple means taking the yoke and therefore – the submitting of oneself to learn from and follow the ways of their master and teacher ... the Lord Jesus

Illustration

- Luke Skywalker 'yoking' himself to Obi Wan Kenobe or Yoda and learning how to be a Jedi Knight
- Ralph Macchio yoking himself to Mr Miyagi and learning how to be the Karate Kid > [wax on wax off]

Application

¹ Deut 28:48

² μάθετε & μαθηται (learn & disciple)

- The thing or the person that is going to influence you most in life is the thing or person you yoke yourself to
- It's one of the reasons why as parents we want our kids choose their friends wisely
 - Because if they yoke themselves to the wrong friends, they can be led astray and down dangerous paths
- One of the reasons why rugby league players are often so keen to play under coach Wayne Bennett
 - Because if they want to become the best footballer they can, they need learn from the best coach in the business
 - So, they yoke themselves to him and his club

- The thing or person you yoke yourself to is the thing that will shape and mold you as a person
- The question is ... who have you yoked yourself too?
 - Who or what are you learning from?
 - Who or what are you allowing to shape and mold you and your character?
- Have you yoked yourself to Jesus?
- Or have you yoked yourself to something else?
 - Career
 - Lifestyle dream
 - Another person
 - Political ideal
- Whatever it is that you're most committed to ... will influence what think, love and do

- Jesus says ... come and take my yoke upon you and **learn** from me
- For it's only when we yoke ourselves to Jesus and learn from him will we experience the rest for our souls

3. Goal of discipleship

- What was the goal of the discipleship the disciples are seeking to learn from Jesus?
- For sure there was a body of truth that they needed to learn from Jesus
- A critical aspect of Jesus mission was teaching the people and teaching the disciples about ...
 - God, his kingdom, himself at the Messiah, his mission and how people were to respond to him
- For example:

- *Matthew 5:1-2 – when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to **teach** them*
 - *Matthew 7:28-29 – When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his **teaching**, because he **taught** as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.*
 - *Matthew 11:1 After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to **teach** and preach in the towns of Galilee.*
- And so there was a body of knowledge that they need to learn and understand
 - However, in the case of the disciples the outcome of this learning was not simply the intellectual understanding of what they were taught ... like a Year 12 student needs to understand the HSC syllabus for Modern History or Physics
 - What the disciples were learning from Jesus was much more than that
 - It wasn't just knowledge they were learning ... it was a way of life based on the truths that Jesus taught them
 - The goal was not **only** to know what their teacher knew ... but to also be like their teacher ... to walk in his ways
 - They weren't just learning the subject ... they were also learning the person
 - This is in part why the learners followed their teacher around
 - They not only listened to his words, but they saw his words in action and in his life and they tried to learn that way of life by being with him constantly
 - And so, a disciple is someone who is devoted to learning Jesus
 - Which is why Jesus uses this powerful image of being yoked to him and learning from him
 - When you are yoked to someone else you must walk together in the same direction
 - You cannot be a disciple of Jesus and be yoked to him and walk in another direction to him

Illustration – Unequally Yoked

- The image this conjures up for me is of a mature ox being yoked with a young ox
 - The mature ox shows the younger one
 - How to do it
 - Where to go

- When to pull
- How hard to pull
- The younger one learns as it treads the path with the older ox

- And so, as disciples walk alongside Jesus ... taking his yoke upon them ... they learn to be like Jesus

- We see this reiterated elsewhere in the NT
 - Paul says in Romans 8:29
 - *For those God foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the likeness of his Son***
 - The apostle John says likewise in 1 John 2:6
 - *Whoever claims to live in him **must walk as Jesus did.***

- Another way of putting it is the goal of discipleship is
 - To grow in Christ-like-ness
 - To become mature in Christ
 - As we sang in our kids' song ... I want to be like Jesus

Application

- You can see how I have captured that in this slide
- The goal is for everyone to be moving metaphorically to the right towards the goal of maturity in Christ
- Now this is true regardless of where you are on that spectrum
 - Its true for the Christian and the non-Christian
 - Both need to move towards Christ, either
 - Moving towards Christ in conversion
 - Moving towards Christ in maturity

- So, as we think about what it means to be and make disciples of Jesus ...
 - Being a disciple of Jesus means you and I ought to be moving to the right
 - Making disciples means you and I helping others to move to the right
- Because the goal of discipleship is maturity in Christ

- This reality needs to be at the heart of everything we do ... both individually and collectively as a church
- So for instance, if you're a
 - GG leader
 - Youth group leader
 - Kids Church leader

- Mainly music leader
- Discipleship mentor
- Scripture teacher
 - Your goal is help those you are ministering to to move to the right
 - That's your primary goal
 - Asking yourself ...
 - "Where are the people at under my care" ... and
 - "In what way can I disciple them to grow in Christ-like-ness and be more like Jesus?"
- That's your goal
 - It's not just to run a group or a class or meet 1:1 and teach the Bible
 - That's good
 - But teaching the Bible is just the tool or the process ... its not the goal or end point
 - The goal we need to have in mind ...
 - "how can I help them move to the right and towards maturity in Christ?"
- If you're a parent
 - Your goal is to be constantly helping your kids move to the right and maturity in Christ
 - That's your primary goal
 - All other parenting goals are secondary
 - Whether that's
 - Teaching them to read and write
 - Learn complex calculus
 - How to engage socially
 - Teaching them to clean up, make their bed
 - Learning to cook
 - Persuading them that 5SOS is not the greatest Australian rock band because that title goes to ACDC
 - They're good goals ... but your primary task as a parent is helping your son or daughter become more like Jesus
- Because that's the goal of discipleship

4. Transformation of Discipleship

- So ...
 - the yoke of discipleship is a yoke of learnership
 - the goal of discipleship is to be like Jesus and become mature in Christ
 - the final point is the transformation of discipleship

- 2 Corinthians 3:18
 - *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

- That word 'transformed' there in the original language is μεταμορφόω
 - It's we're we get the word metamorphosis from
 - Paul's point is that when you are in Christ ... or when you are yoked to Christ ... you and I are metamorphosing
 - Not into butterflies ... but into Christ-like-ness

- And notice how Paul says ... we are 'being transformed'
- Learning Christ as with most forms of learning ... is an ongoing process
 - In the same way a maths student doesn't master extension mathematics on their first day of Year 12 ... so a disciple doesn't reach maturity in Christ the day they become a Christian
 - Learning to be like Jesus is a life-long project
 - There's a lifetime of transformation that needs to take a place for a person to become mature in Christ

- And that transformation has start somewhere
 - There needs to be a movement to the right
 - It starts with you hearing the gospel
 - The HS opening your eyes and heart its truth
 - And convicting you of your need to repent and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin
- That's a massive movement to the right
 - That's a movement from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of the son
 - That's a transformation of where a person
 - renounces the lie that they are at the centre of their life
 - they recognise the dark and lost state they were living in
 - they turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith as their master, saviour and teacher
 - That's a huge 'metamorphosis'

- If you recognise you haven't made that step yet ... then I want to urge you to make it
 - Put your trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins
 - Turn back from living life your way and yoke yourself to Jesus

- Come to him and find rest for your soul
- If you've recently made that step ... and aren't sure what the next step is ... let us know on the Comms Card ... we'd love to talk to you about what the next step might look like for you
- Now that step may happen very quickly ... a person hears the good news and immediately puts their trust in Jesus
- **Illustration - Paul James**
 - Birth of Murray > baptism > minister came to visit and spent time explaining the gospel > two ways to live
 - Asked Paul where he stood > somewhere on the middle > Gary – only thing in the middle is the carpet
 - That night Paul became a Christian
- For most people however ... it takes time as they move to the right towards maturity in Jesus, step by step
- But the timing is not so important
 - What is important is are you moving to the right ... to maturity in Christ?
- Of course, when a person repents and puts their faith in Jesus ... that's huge step
- But it's not the end ... because once a person yokes themselves to Jesus there are a thousand things God needs to work on and transform in your lives to grow you to be like Jesus
 - Things about your character
 - Things you need to understand
 - Things you need to repent of
 - Things you need to learn
 - Things you need to let go of from your old life before you followed Jesus
- But as you
 - yoke yourself to Jesus
 - as you walk the path of discipleship ... learning from your master
 - God will work in you to transform you into the likeness of his son

Application

- This term as we think about what it means for us to be and make disciples of Jesus ... I want challenge you with the #tenweekchallenge of discipleship

- If you're convinced Jesus is the Christ who suffered and died for the forgiveness of our sin and give you eternal life ... then that ought to demand a response shouldn't it?
- As I read the gospel and what Jesus taught his disciples ... it doesn't seem to me that you can believe the gospel and be content to trundle along in life being half-hearted about Jesus and being a Christian

- I want to challenge you [as I am being challenged too] to prayerfully identify the thing or things you need to work on to help you move to the right and maturity in Christ

- What is it for you?
 - Where do you need to grow?
 - What Christlike characteristic do you need to cultivate?
 - What skill do you need to learn?
 - What sin do you need to flee from?
 - Where would you like to challenge yourself?
 - What habit would you like to develop?
- It may not be obvious today
- Might become clearer as we go throughout the series

- Pray about it
 - When it does become clear, write it down
 - Share it with a friend
 - Get some help if needed
- See how you might take a step towards maturity in Christ

- Of course, in doing this ... we need to remember
 - That your salvation isn't riding on this
 - God's not going see how you go and give you a pass or a fail
 - If you've yoked yourself to Jesus ... you've already moved from death to life ... out of the darkness and into the light
 - The wonderful thing about being yoked to Jesus and learning from the great master and teacher is ... it's not a school where you pass on merit
 - Rather, it's a school where even though the pass mark is 100% ... the final exam has been done by the teacher

5. Conclusion

- Being a disciple means being a learner

- And as you yoke yourself to Jesus and learn from him ... this will continue to have a transforming effect on your life
- And as your heart and mind keep being renewed ...
 - it begins to be expressed in your actions and life, as you unlearn old ways and thinking,
 - and as you continue to rearrange and reshape and reorder your life in ways that are more and more like Jesus

PRAY