

# PATHWAY

A PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP,  
ALONG THE NARROW WAY

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- This Pathway resource is free! It is not for sale and should not be sold. It is for anyone, anywhere to use for discipleship. May God use it to multiply your labors and exalt the name of Jesus!
- Titles included in the resource guide are not an explicit endorsement of those works. They have been vetted and are scripturally sound and Christ glorifying. They are also written, as is Pathway, by imperfect people. Jesus is the final authority, His person and His word.
- All scripture is taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted and used with the express permission of the publishers.

## Pathway // Introduction

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:19,20

Throughout the history of the church many men and women have endeavored to answer the call of Jesus to make disciples. There have also been countless books and resources written, innumerable hours spent, to try and inspire the church to be a disciple-making community. And yet, it seems that more often than not, these attempts failed or have been short lived.

Today, if you talk very long to passionate believers, the subject of discipleship will surely come up. There will be almost universal agreement that discipleship is crucial for church growth, that it is integral for deep abiding community, and that they don't see many churches or Christians discipling well. Where is the break down? Where is the disconnect between the hundreds if not thousands of great books on discipling and the fruitful practice of it in the church?

We've been asking ourselves the same questions.

So what makes this resource different? What makes us think we can find a way to reconnect the church with the command to make disciples? We're not exactly sure. And yet we are hopeful. Hopeful that the Spirit has on these pages connected most of the most important thoughts about discipleship and helped us present them in a way that is straightforward, simple, and inspiring. And more than a system of discipleship, we hope this resource will be a filter you can see your life through. A way for you to bring your life, your passions, your resources, your time, in alignment with the call of every believer to be a disciple-maker.

But before we can make disciples, even before we can be disciplined ourselves, we must hold fast to our First Love. This resource (and all the others) is useless without love, without a deep and abiding connection to your Creator, to your Heavenly Father, to Jesus, to His Spirit. And it is out of the overflow of that First Love that we submit to the painful process of discipleship, and then in that same love we undertake the arduous task of disciple-making. The first section of this book is all about our First Love. And throughout the rest of the book there are little vignettes called "First Love Check-Ups" to remind us how and why we make disciples.

So where do we begin? Together, in Christ. One body, under His perfect Headship. And with much prayer, with critical study of what the Word says about these things, with complete and constant dependance on the Spirit of God, and with eyes wide open. This won't be easy, the cost will be great. We must all decide before we begin, if being a disciple, and becoming a disciple who makes other disciples, is worth that cost.

The cover of this resource says this is “a path of discipleship”. There are many other great books and resources to use in discipling others. There is a robust list of those at the end of this book. We believe the words contained here will augment and supplement whatever path of discipleship you choose. However you disciple, it must be organic, contextualized, relational, and as a community. And it must be practical. Making disciples is not primarily a theological enterprise, nor even primarily a religious discipline. It is at its core primarily doing life with people we love, but with the intentionality of helping them become fully formed in Christ and equipping them to do the same for others. Making disciples is sharing meals and meeting needs, it’s studying the word and worshipping together, it’s serving shoulder to shoulder and growing deep into the Lord as a community, and doing so with the intention of becoming more like Christ.

At the end of every lesson there are opportunities for reflection and application, for intentionality in forming a plan to practice these disciplines.

Above all else, our pathway must be firmly rooted in the Word and led by the Spirit. And it **MUST** be along the Narrow Way. Our heart’s desire is that this gospel resource will inspire you to make disciples, and that it will help you inspire others to do the same.

This is a sacred undertaking, one impossible in our own strength. And yet we have been commanded by Christ to do this very thing. And He who calls us equips us, and He who commands us gives us His strength. The Church was made for this. By His Spirit in her, she can do this! And she must!

May God make us a disciple-making generation. And may the next generation be the same. And again, and again, in perpetuity, until His glorious return! Amen!

**Pathway // Section 1 // Our First Love // Lesson 1**

Scripture says: God is Holy (Isaiah 6:3), God is Just (Duet. 32:4), God is Worthy (Rev. 4:1), God is Judge (Psalm 50:6), God is One (Duet. 6:4), God is Merciful (Exodus 34:6), God is Righteous (Jeremiah 12:1), and God is Love (1 John 4:7,8). These unconditional statements about God are interchangeable and never contradictory. They describe His person, His nature, His character, His will, His works, and His desires.

What are some attributes of God’s love?

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What ways does God express His love for and to us?

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Unconditional statements about God are often commands for His people: *“be holy as God is holy”* Lev. 11:44. This is also true in of love. *“We love because he first loved us”*. 1 John 4:19.

In what ways do we as believers express love toward God? Toward others?

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Throughout scripture God is just as concerned with the motives behind His people's obedience as in the obedience itself.

- Isaiah 29:13 *And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me.*
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*
- Revelation 2:2-4 (Jesus says) *"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*

**Reflection and Application:**

In what ways do we obey God, but with hearts motivated by something other than love for Him and His people?

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What are some reasons we leave our First Love?

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How can our First Love be restored?

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## Pathway // Section 1 // Our First Love // Lesson 2

Scripture says: God's love is perfect, unfailing, unfathomable, unending, stronger than death and fear, and nothing can separate us from it. He shows us that love in infinite ways, and most clearly and abundantly through the giving of His Son. In Christ, as His church, we are the beloved, the Bride of the Lamb who was slain to express God's Eternal love. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 describes the nature of love, both God's love for us and the way we are to love others with the love He first showed us. Read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4-8 now.

What attribute of God's love do you cherish most? Why?

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What attribute of God's love do you find hardest to receive? Why?

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The bible describes the way we as believers should love. Jesus said in John 15:9,12 *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love..."* *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* We can and should love as God loves, as Christ loves. We can only do so by abiding in Him. That is: the continual, perpetual state of intimate communion with Him. And from that place of abiding our love looks like this:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4-8
- *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."* John 15:13
- *Let love be genuine (without hypocrisy). Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.* Romans 12:9
- *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony (unity).* Colossians 3:14
- *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly (fervently), since love covers a multitude of sins.* 1 Peter 4:8

What attribute of love is easiest for you to practice? Hardest? Why?

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**Reflection and Application:**

Paul succinctly sums up the entire activity of the church this way: *Let all that you do be done in love.* 1 Corinthians 16:14

Who do you find hardest to love? Why?

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Where do you find it hardest to “do all things in love”? Why?

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How can you practice practical love for those “hard” people this week?

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How can you practice practical love in those “hard” places this week?

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### Pathway // Section 1 // Our First Love // Lesson 3

Jesus distilled the entire scriptures down to two commands, both involved love.

*And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall 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: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:28-31

What does it mean to love God with ALL our heart?

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What does it mean to love God with ALL our soul?

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What does it mean to love God with ALL our mind?

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What does it mean to love God with ALL our strength?

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What does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves?

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You've probably heard it said "love is a verb". Love is certainly action, doing, working. Love is HARD work! And it is THE sacred work of the Gospel. Thankfully, our work in Christ comes from the finished and complete work of the Cross. We rest in that. We also work from that rest, from His grace, His power in us. And yet it is still work, it requires sacrifice and sweat, and sometimes blood and tears. In our weakness to love well, His love remains perfect toward us and in us, and by His grace He loves through us.

**Reflection and Application:**

What area of your life do you find it hardest to love God with "all of you"? Why?

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What practical things can you do to be all in with your love in that area? What resources do you need to make it happen?

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## Pathway // Section 1 // Our First Love // Lesson 4

What does loving Jesus look like? Jesus said if you love me you will keep my commandments (John 14:15) and you will feed my sheep (John 21). Loving God requires obedience and action. But obedience and action divorced from love cease to be God's works, no matter how good they are.

What are Christ's explicit (clear, specific, direct) commandments to the individual believer?

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What are Christ's explicit commandments to the church?

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Jesus said: *"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."* Believers are called first to follow Jesus as disciples and then having been discipled, to make disciples. In Matthew 28:16-20 Jesus commands those disciples who love Him to: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:19,20

What does it mean to be a disciple?

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As we progress along the Pathway we will spend time together understanding the nature of what it means to be a disciple. And even more time on what it means to be a disciple-maker. And yet we must never forget our First Love, we must never submit to discipleship or make disciples without love. Everything we do must be done in love. Our lives must be ordered to our First Love.

**Reflection and Application:**

What does it mean to have our life re-ordered to our First Love?

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What does it mean to have our jobs re-ordered to our First Love?

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What does it mean to have our relationships re-ordered to our First Love?

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What does it mean to have our church re-ordered to our First Love?

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## Pathway // Section 2 // Discipleship // Lesson 5

Perhaps like many of us, your first introduction to the gospel was primarily that salvation was being offered by God through Jesus and that if you believe, you will be saved. And perhaps there was some emphasis on “good” works after your conversion, but perhaps not a lot of talk about DISCIPLESHIP. And perhaps “disciple” was used interchangeably with the phrase “follower of Christ” or “Christian” without a lot of insight into what it actually meant to be a disciple.

What words, phrases, images do you use to describe what it means to be a disciple?

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These are the things Jesus says about being his disciple:

*Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.” Matthew 8:19-22*

*Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.” Luke 9:23,24*

*Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:25,26*

*“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:33*

*Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Matthew 16:24*

*“And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Matthew 10:38*

Are the words, phrases, images Jesus uses similar to yours? What surprises you most?

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**Reflection and Application:**

What does it mean to take up our cross?

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What does it look like to deny ourselves?

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Is the cost to be a disciple worth it to you? Why or why not?

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How can you practically take up your cross this week?

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## Pathway // Section 2 // Discipleship // Lesson 6

Salvation is miraculously and astonishingly free for us! Although of course it came at an enormous price for God. As we read the words of Jesus in the last lesson, there is however a cost of discipleship, a huge cost for us. In Luke 14:28-30 Jesus told a parable about cost: *“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”*

**As we learn what it means to be a disciple, we must consider the cost. And we must each ask ourselves if following our First Love is worth that cost? And if so, are we willing to pay it?**

Jesus loved the Father, and He modeled perfectly paying the cost. And it wasn't just on the cross that Jesus paid that price, but throughout His earthly ministry we saw Him laying down His life, denying Himself for the sake of making disciples and loving the Father.

In what specific ways did Jesus deny Himself?

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Jesus is both the first Disciple and the first Disciple-maker. In fact, inherent in some of His first interactions with people was the call to *“follow me and I will make you fishers of men”*. Jesus was both “catching” disciples and teaching those disciples to “catch” men too. Discipling wasn't a destination, but was a life-long journey that ran simultaneously parallel to disciple-making.



As we look to Jesus our prime and perfect example of both disciple and disciple-maker, it is imperative that we not only hold fast to His model, but also to His motives. Discipleship must be out of the overflow of our First Love relationship with God and our love for those we disciple. Jesus loved His disciples. Scripture says *“No greater love has a man than this, than He lay down his life for his friends”*. Jesus laid down His life to express the love of the Father for the world. Jesus also laid down His life to express His love for His bride, that is His church. And Jesus laid down His life in obedience to His Father, whom He loved, and proved that love by obedience, even unto death.

In Matthew 4 the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The devil offered Jesus a shortcut to power, a way to circumvent the cross. Jesus chose to do the will of the Father, no matter the cost. In Matthew 26:39 at the Garden of Gethsemane, as the day of His crucifixion rapidly approached, Jesus fell on His face and prayed, *“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”* Jesus submitted His will to the Father’s, He chose the path of the disciple over the path of earthly power. He chose the narrow way of Life even though it meant death. And He did so for Love’s sake. And in these things He set the perfect example for us.

**Reflection and Application:**

What area(s) of your life hold the most conflict between your will and the Father’s will? Why?

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What area(s) of your life do you find it hardest to deny your flesh? Why?

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We each carry our cross, but we do so in community. Is someone walking with you in your areas of greatest struggle and temptation? If not, who can? What do you need most from them?

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**Pathway // Section 2 // Discipleship // Lesson 7**

What brings you the greatest joy?

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The author of Hebrews wrote: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* Hebrews 12:1,2

What was the joy that caused Jesus to endure the cross?

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In his 3rd letter, John wrote: *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.* Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. It comes naturally to us through abiding in the vine, in being rooted in Christ. Joy is not a feeling, nor an abstraction, it is made of heavenly stuff, it is eternal and indestructible. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Hebrews 12 reveals how powerful joy can be as a motivator and a sustainer: *For the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured the cross.* The joy before us is first to honor our First Love, and then to disciple others into maturity in Christ, into making disciples of their own. What parent doesn't want their child to grow up and have a life of purpose, to have a family of their own? What joy that brings a parent to see their children thrive, to see them grow in maturity and wisdom. We should desire the same for our spiritual children. And just like biological parents, we must nurture, guide, teach, and direct them as they grow. And we do this in community, by the Spirit. Motivated by love, and joy, but with intention: to make disciples that become disciple-makers.

Back to Hebrews. *We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.* Not just the saints who have gone before, but the community of believers that surround us today. We carry our cross in community. It was meant to be done no other way. And carrying our cross, enduring the crucifixion of our flesh, is primarily *laying aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely.* We do so by the example Jesus set, and the work He does in us, a work He will finish: *And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.*

**Reflection and Application:**

What are the weights, the sins “that cling so closely”? Do you have someone you can confess to? Someone who can walk with you in accountability?

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How can we practically reorder our affections to find joy in what Jesus found joy?

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How can we have joy in carrying our cross?

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## Pathway // Section 2 // Discipleship // Lesson 8

We have been using the word discipleship to encompass: becoming a disciple, living as a disciple, and making disciples who make disciples. Two other key aspects of discipleship are discipline (correction), and the disciplines (fasting, prayer, etc.). In this lesson we will look at “discipline” and in the next couple lessons we will look at what is commonly referred to as “The Spiritual Disciplines”

Hebrews 12:6 says: *“For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”* And continues in vs 8: *“If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”*

Discipline can be hard to accept, it can be discouraging, even worse, it can cause us to question God’s love. And yet Hebrews plainly tells us it is because of God’s love that He disciplines us, that it is part of being His child, and that left without discipline we aren’t His children.

Use 5 “negative” ( ex. uncomfortable) and 5 “positive” ( ex. builds character) words or phrases to describe discipline. Which were easier to come up with?

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Being a disciple is submitting to the Lordship of Christ in every area of our lives. Those areas of our lives that we withhold from Him will ultimately need His discipline. And yet He corrects us in love, as a Father who seeks the very best for His children.

What are some ways God disciplines us? How might He use others to do so?

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Proverbs 22:6 says: *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* This is true of our natural children and is true for us as spiritual children. If from the beginning of our journey as a disciple we submit willingly to correction, we will find it keeps our feet on the narrow way. And if we submit to correction joyfully, we will find it keeps us close to the Father's heart.

**Reflection and Application:**

It is almost impossible to separate our thoughts of discipline from the experiences of discipline with our earthly parents. If they disciplined in anger, or were abusive, this conversation can feel unsafe. And if you were wrongly disciplined in an ungodly or spiritually controlling manner by other Christians, that can further complicate your thoughts and feelings on discipline. Take some time to reflect on how you've experienced discipline and how that affected you negatively or positively. Are there still unresolved hurts? Were there transformative lessons?

How does past discipline, parental or spiritual, affect your receiving of discipline from God?

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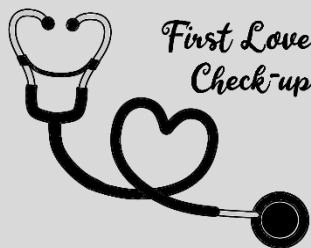
How has God disciplined you? In that moment, how did it make you feel about God, yourself, and your relationship with Him? Does discipline from God make you feel more or less loved?

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God the Father loves you, accepts you completely in Christ. His love for you remains unchanged based on your performance as a disciple. He sees the right-living and good-works of the Perfect Disciple when He looks at you. We submit to discipleship not to attain love and acceptance, but because we already are loved and accepted.

## Pathway // Section 2 // Discipleship // Lesson 9

2 Timothy 1:7 proclaims: *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* Spiritual Disciplines (such as bible reading, fasting, prayer), by the work of the Spirit in us, lead to self-control. As disciples we do these things out of obedience, but only by His grace. It is crucial that we realize Spiritual disciplines are not works of the flesh, but are by the Spirit in us that gives us His power to do them. Colossians 2:20-23 makes this abundantly clear:

*If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*

Though Spiritual Disciplines are not works of the flesh, they are still works, and they are the part of the lifestyle and practice of discipleship. They are the re-ordering of our lives to Heaven’s Kingdom culture. Christ modeled them perfectly, we look first at His example in all these things. Some of the Spiritual Disciplines are: bible study, prayer, fasting, confession, worship, fellowship, rest, celebration, service, generosity, solitude, and disciple-making.

Give several examples of Christ “practicing” the Spiritual Disciplines.

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Consider the list of Spiritual disciplines above. Which do you believe is the most important? Least? Why?

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What other Spiritual Disciplines might we add to that list?

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Which of the Disciplines listed above are for the soul (mind, will, and emotions) and which are for the flesh? A Discipline can go in both columns. Make sure to add the ones we listed.

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**Reflection and Application:**

Which Discipline is easiest for you? Hardest? Why?

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Which Discipline do you want to practice with more intention and regularity? What are the practical ways others can help?

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## Pathway // Section 2 // Discipleship // Lesson 10

Let's look deeper at the Spiritual Disciplines, specifically the Discipline of prayer.

We were made for community, and though many of the Disciplines are individual practices, they are best lived out in Christian community. And, all of the Disciplines can be practiced communally. Corporate prayer should be just as much a regular part of the life of disciples as individual prayer. The power of encouragement and accountability in the practice of the Disciplines is incalculable. We will be much more committed to a Disciplines lifestyle if we are practicing them as part of a community of disciples. Prayer is no exception.

The Discipline of prayer is the lifeblood of our relationship with our First Love. It is not only a primary way the Spirit communicates to our spirit, but it is one of the miraculous ways we are filled with His power and lavished by His love. Let's look at how Jesus prayed. Read Matthew 26: 36-46.

What are your biggest take-aways from the way Jesus prayed in the garden?

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From the Perfect Disciple, our First Love, we learn how to pray, not just the words, but the posture, and the Discipline. Though Jesus went to the garden in community (vs. 36), He sought solitude to pray. Away from distraction, alone with His Father. In vs. 39 Matthew writes "He fell on his face and prayed". His prayer was an act of passion, of urgency, of purpose. Matthew continues: "not as I will, but as you will." Christ submitted Himself completely to the Father, albeit with great anguish. As Christ was resisting that anguish, he was persisting in prayer. In vs. 44 we read "leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again." Christ knew God heard Him, and yet He still pressed in, prayed without ceasing.

In all these ways, by Grace, disciples should follow Christ in the Discipline of prayer.

**Reflection and Application:**

The Discipline of prayer in Christ’s life was consistently defined by these 6 attributes: solitude, intention, submission, praying God’s will, faith, and perseverance.

Which of these attribute(s) of Christ’s prayer life are hardest for you? Why?

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Which of these attribute(s) of Christ’s prayer life come most naturally for you? Why?

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Which of these attribute(s) of Christ’s prayer life do you want to practice with more intention and regularity? What are the practical ways others can help?

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May we always be astounded that the God who made the universe chooses to speak with us. May we ever be in awe that the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Eternal One, invites us into conversation with Him. And may we never forget that when we pray, by His grace we can hear His voice, and by His Spirit we can discern His will. Communication is the lifeblood of any human relationship, how much more so in our relationship with our Heavenly Father.



## Pathway // Section 2 // Discipleship // Lesson 11

In Luke 9:23 Jesus said: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Disciples deny themselves *daily*. Carry their cross *daily*. Follow Jesus *daily*. Discipleship is truly a 24/7, 365 endeavor. Each morning when we wake we choose to follow, choose the narrow way, choose self-denial. Each morning we put on the full armor of Christ and we put on our cross. Our cross serves many purposes, but perhaps the most practical and helpful, is the reminder: *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.* Galatians 2:20

This daily obedience to Christ might be described as "lifestyle discipleship". When we as God's children take seriously Christ's call to follow Him along the narrow way, to be His disciples, our entire life will look different. We will live for things above, we will desire things above, we will seek first His Kingdom, we will no longer live for ourselves. Every single aspect of His life *in us* will be lived *through us*.

Practically, what does carrying your cross look like for you on a daily basis?

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Where do you find it hardest to practice self-denial?

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We submit to discipleship because it is the call of duty for the disciple. And our hearts should do so, compelled by His love for us, and our love for Him. The verse above from Galatians reminds us clearly what motivated Jesus: ***Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.***

“Carrying our cross” was a term that carried great weight for Christ’s first disciples. They witnessed crucifixions, they saw the grotesque torture it was. But the vast majority of 21st Century Christians have never experienced the gruesomeness of a cross, and the phrase “carrying our cross” has perhaps become more a metaphor for self-denial. May we be assured it is still a call to die, a call to martyrdom for many. Those first disciples would have shuddered at the phrase, it is the cost they counted, and that we count, before we follow. And a daily one.

**Reflection and Application:**

Jesus died on Calvary, but He lived a lifestyle of carrying His cross. What ways did He do so?

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Do you see carrying your cross, self-denial, as an expression of your love to Jesus? Why or why not?

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The call of discipleship is a daily call, how can you practically reorder your life around this call?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 12

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15,16, and Luke 24:44-49) is the call of EVERY believer to go into all the world and make disciples.

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* Matthew 28:19,20

Perhaps you’ve heard a statement such as: “The highest call for a woman is to be a mother.” Or “The highest callings are those of the five-fold ministry.” To be sure, all of those are sacred. But our foremost call as disciples is to be disciple-makers. So if we are a mom or dad, we are first a disciple-maker, one who also raises our children to be disciple-makers. If we are a preacher, we are a disciple-maker who preaches. If we are a doctor, we are a disciple-maker who heals. If we are an artist, a disciple-maker who creates.

Do you believe you are called to be a disciple-maker? Why or why not?

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How can disciple-making become a function or even the focus of your vocation?

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The Great Commission is the supreme work of the church in the world and the primary way Christ advances His kingdom on earth. Disciple-making is the way the church reproduces, the way she organically grows.

The Great Commission is a Great Co-Mission, the task of the church in which we co-labor together. And it is a Co-Mission with Christ. It is His continuing mission, the one He is actively doing through His church by His Spirit.

How is the Great Commission best fulfilled in community?

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**Reflection and Application:**

Disciple-making involves going, discipling, baptizing, and teaching. Which of these is the easiest for you and why?

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Out of going, discipling, baptizing, and teaching, which of these is the hardest for you and why?

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How can others practically help you to grow in the areas of disciple-making you feel least gifted or qualified?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 13

The Great Commission is found in similar form in Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15,16 and Luke 24:44-49. Please read each account now.

What are Christ's commands to His disciples found in these three passages?

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John's gospel contains the Great Commission too, albeit in a more subtle way:

*On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.**"* John 20:19-21

How was Jesus sent by the Father? How are we sent in the same way?

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Consider the following scriptures and the correlation between how Christ was sent and how we are sent.

- Jesus was sent from above (John 3:16,17,34), we are born again from above (John 3:3 NRSV) and then sent.
- Jesus was sent in Love (John 3:16), we are sent in Love (John 15:12, Galatians 5:14).

- Jesus was sent, full of the power of the Spirit (4:14-19), we are filled with power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8) and then sent.
- Jesus was sent with a purpose (Luke 4:18,19, John 3:16), we are sent with a purpose (the Great Commission).

We cannot fulfill the Great Commission any other way but the Way of Christ: from above, full of love, full of the Spirit and power, and aligned to the purposes of His will.

**Reflection and Application:**

What does it mean to be born again from above?

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Why is love so important in the work of the Great Commission?

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Why is it crucial that we are full of the Spirit in the work of the Great Commission?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 14

We said in the last lesson that the Great Commission is a co-mission with Christ. That He is continuing the work He started, through His church, by His Spirit. So we have both Jesus as the perfect example of living the Great Commission, and we have been given His Spirit to accomplish that same work in His power! Let's spend some time getting to know the Holy Spirit.

We may be tempted to think of the Holy Spirit as merely a divine force, but Scripture reveals the Holy Spirit as God. And in the same way the Father and the Son are "persons", so is the Holy Spirit.

Do you think of the Holy Spirit as a person? Why or why not?

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Consider the following statements about the Holy Spirit:

- **The Holy Spirit is referred to as "he" or "who", terms reserved a person.** Romans 8:11, John 5:6, I Corinthians 2:12, II Timothy 1:14, John 14:26, Romans 8:16, Romans 8:26.
- **The Spirit loves.** Romans 15:30
- **The Spirit has a mind.** Romans 8:27
- **The Spirit speaks.** Acts 8:29, Acts 10:19, Acts 11:12, Acts 13:2, Acts 21:11, I Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 3:7-8, Revelation 2:7, Revelation 22:17
- **The Spirit can be lied to, can be tested.** Acts 5:3,9
- **The Spirit is a witness.** Acts 5:32
- **The Spirit can be grieved.** Ephesians 4:30

What attribute of the person of the Holy Spirit do you cherish most? Why?

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Ephesians 1:14 tells us the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our salvation, and that by Him we are adopted into God’s family, by Him we call the Father “Abba”, by Him we can know we are God’s children. Romans 8:15-17

Of utmost importance to being a healthy disciple and making healthy disciples is to know we are loved by the Father, that we are first His children. The Spirit works in us to convince us we are our Father’s cherished children.

**Reflection and Application:**

Abba is a term of affection much like “dada”. How does this level of intimacy with our Father affect the way we view discipleship?

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Giving up control, submitting to Christ as Lord can be scary. How does knowing you are a cherished child remove anxiety and fear in being disciplined?

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Hebrews 4:16 says those in Christ can boldly come before the throne of Grace. How does being a cherished child of the Father give you confidence in discipling others?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 15

Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission, He said “go make disciples of all nations”. But in Acts 1:3-5 He said “wait” in Jerusalem, and do not depart from there.

*He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them **not to depart** from Jerusalem, but to **wait** for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

Jesus never expected, nor desired His disciples to try to fulfill the Great Commission without first being empowered by the Holy Spirit. In fact Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1:8 “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*”

How does the Spirit empower disciples to fulfill the Great Commission?

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Throughout the New Testament we see the Holy Spirit doing mighty works in and through individual disciples and in Christ’s church. He is the person of God actively working moment by moment throughout church history and until the end of the age. Consider these scriptures describing the works of the Holy Spirit:

- **The Spirit teaches.** John 14:26, Luke 12:12
- **The Spirit convicts.** John 16:8
- **The Spirit intercedes.** Romans 8:26
- **The Spirit leads.** Matthew 4:1
- **The Spirit gives life.** John 6:63
- **The Spirit fills.** Acts 2:4
- **The Spirit produces fruit.** Galatians 5:22,23
- **The Spirit searches.** I Corinthians 2:10
- **The Spirit bears witness.** I John 5:6
- **The Spirit sanctifies.** Romans 15:16

In Luke 4:18,19 Jesus proclaimed: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”* The Spirit empowered Jesus to do His work on earth and does the same for His church.

**Reflection and Application:**

Which work(s) of the Spirit do you value most in your personal relationship with Jesus? Why?

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Which work(s) of the Spirit do you value most in your Christian community? Why?

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Which work(s) of the Spirit do you believe is most valuable in fulfilling the Great Commission? Why?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 16

Acts 1:8 *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

The Holy Spirit is the power to fulfill the Great Commission. He also gives individual believers, various gifts to strengthen the church and do the hard work of disciple-making.

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11*

Do you believe you have been given a spiritual gift(s)? If yes, what do you believe that gift(s) is?

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Spiritual gifts are given to be used, and though sacred, they are a means to an end: the Great Commission, the building of the church. We must never lose sight of the Giver of gifts and become focused on the gift itself. But how do we know what our gifts are?

- 1. Pray.** Ask the Giver of the Gifts to show you what gift(s) He has given you.
- 2. Ask a trusted brother or sister in the Lord.** Others may see what we cannot see. Also, if you are being disciplined by someone, ask them to pray with you, to help you discern your gift(s).
- 3. Look at what you already do naturally in community.** Do you find deep fulfillment in serving? In showing mercy? In teaching? That may a sign of your gift(s).

Just as every disciple is given gifts, we are also uniquely fitted into the body of Christ. Read how Paul describes it beautifully in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. We each have different roles, different talents, but we have One Lord, and one mission. And EVERYTHING we do is for the glory of Christ alone.

Which part of the body do you see yourself as? Example, are you “hands”, serving in physical ways? How has God used you in that capacity?

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**Reflection and Application:**

Of the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, which has God used through a fellow disciple to impact you in a powerful way? Describe the impact on your spiritual walk.

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Which gift(s) of the Spirit do you believe have the most value in fulfilling the Great Commission? Why?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 17

We discussed the value and necessity of “discipline” in a previous lesson. As disciple-makers our willingness to accept, heed and practice the correction we receive has a huge effect on those we disciple. Proverbs 10:17 says: *Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.* Those we are discipling are watching us closely, watching how we submit to discipline. They also see the good fruit of that discipline in our lives.

At times, the Spirit may use us to discipline others. 2 Timothy 4:2 says: *Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* As disciple-makers we must be ready, willing, and able to reprove and rebuke others. We do this in love, by the Spirit, as a parent nurtures a child, “with complete patience”. Our desire is to see those we are discipling become mature in Christ. As Paul wrote in Colossians 1:28: *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

When you are corrected or reprimanded, how does it make you feel? Explain.

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Many of us avoid conflict and confrontation of any sort. Is it easy or hard for you to correct another believer? Why or why not?

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As disciple-makers our goal is to present those we disciple as mature in Christ. Though we are not a parent to those fellow believers, God alone is their Father, we love and protect them with a parent’s heart. And just as earthly children develop according to certain expected targets, disciples should be maturing along a trajectory. So when we disciple it is with intentionality, by teaching them all things. For example, we teach prayer and fasting, gentleness and self-control, and as we do, we are always taking stock of where those we disciple are underdeveloped. Then we’ll spend more time gently encouraging them in those areas.

This is all done as unto the Lord, with fear and trembling and much prayer. These are His disciples, we are merely stewarding them to maturity. And even in that the Holy Spirit does the work.

We can be tempted to micro-manage the behavior of those we disciple. This is not the way of Christ, and can become spiritual manipulation. We want those we disciple to become fully dependent on the Holy Spirit, to hear His voice and respond. We are merely assistant teachers, first modeling true discipleship, and using wise and loving words to inspire others along the narrow way. And only when necessary do we reprimand, and always with His mercy.

**Reflection and Application:**

A younger believer you have been discipling has been inconsistent in reading the Word, how could you, in love, offer some instruction to them?

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A younger believer you have been discipling has become prideful and controlling in their relationships with other believers, how could you, in love, offer some correction to them?

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A younger believer you have been discipling has been sinning publicly, how could you, in love, reprimand to them? If they don't heed your reprove, what is your next step(s)?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 18

We discussed the value and necessity of “the Spiritual Disciplines” in a previous lesson. These are not optional for the disciple. They are commanded in Scripture. Below are those commands.

- **bible study:** Joshua 1:8; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Timothy 4:13
- **prayer:** Matthew 6:5-14; Thessalonians 3:1,2; James 5:16;
- **fasting:** Luke 4:2-4; Matthew 6:16-18; Acts 13:2-4
- **confession:** 1 Timothy 6:12,13; 2 Timothy 2:19; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9
- **worship:** Luke 4:8; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 12:28; Hebrews 13:15
- **fellowship:** 1 Corinthians 4:26; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 10:24,25
- **rest:** Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 6:31; Psalm 37:7; Psalm 23:1-3; Isaiah 30:15
- **celebration:** Psalm 105:1,2; Psalm 118:24; Philippians 4:4; 1 Peter 1:8,9
- **service:** Matthew 20:26-28; John 13:12-14; Galatians 5:13-14 & 6:2,10; 1 Peter 4:10
- **generosity:** Luke 12:33; 2 Corinthians 9:11; 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- **silence and solitude:** Matthew 6:6; Matthew 14:23; Psalm 62:1
- **disciple-making:** Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8

As disciple-makers our lives need to be ordered to the Great Commission. The Disciplines keep us focused on Christ, on His work on earth. Disciplines re-align our will with His. They re-order our lives, our allegiances, our resources, our churches to His Kingdom.

Perhaps you’ve never thought of the disciplines as commands. In what practical ways will you re-order your life to make room for them?

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As we practice the Disciplines, those we are discipling see the fruit of them in our lives. We are modeling how to practically incorporate the Disciplines into our daily rhythms. Which Discipline(s) do you do well? How has it positively influenced other believers?

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Though the Disciplines are not optional for the disciple, we are not micro-managing the schedule of those whom we disciple. But we are inviting them into our lives, and alongside us, as we faithfully practice Disciplines. We help them see the merits of the Disciplines, primarily the way Jesus lived them, and we model them with intention and joy. Ultimately those we disciple must believe the Disciplines are commanded of disciples, and they must come to value the Disciplines themselves.

How can you invite others into the Disciplines with you?

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**Reflection and Application:**

The Disciplines are aptly named, they require sacrifice. How can you model sacrificial living for those you disciple?

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How would you encourage someone you are discipling who is struggling to see the value in the Spiritual Disciplines?

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**Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 19**

Deuteronomy 6:6,7 says: *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

Disciple-making is done “along the way”. In other words, in our lives there are many things we already do, so we invite others into those things with us. Or we do those things with them. For example, every day we eat. A meal is a beautiful and practical opportunity for intentional fellowship, to invite people into our lives, to our table, and grow deep in relationship with each other. We need to slow down and be present. People need to feel seen and heard, time together communicates how much we value them

We also go to school, or take kids to school. Go to work, or run a business. We graduate, we celebrate, new life or a life well lived. We get sick, we experience loss, we grieve. In all these things we are meant to do life together. When we walk closely with others, when we are intentionally discipling them, they see how we live a Christ glorifying life moment by moment. And because of proximity, closeness in being together, we can take every opportunity to teach, encourage, and inspire.

Discipleship will often look “ordinary” in spite of the extraordinary and miraculous outcomes. What daily things can you invite others into? How can you make room for intentionality in discipleship in those ordinary moments?

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How can you come alongside others in their busy lives? How can you walk with intention while they are “along their way”?

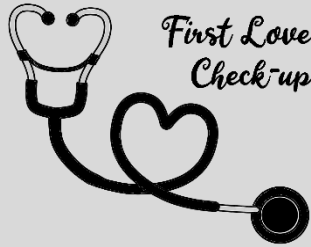
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*First Love  
Check-up*

Discipleship is relational. It is the organic overflow of friendship. Jesus walked in relationship with His disciples. Jesus said: *“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”* John 15:15.

We aren't checking boxes, doing discipleship for merit badges. We are loving people into wholeness in Christ. We cannot lose sight of this. We are called to love one another, and because of that love, serve one another. Just as Christ first loved us, served us, laid down His life for us. *No greater love has a man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.* John 15:13. As disciples we are called to lay down our lives, not just for Christ, but for others

**Reflection and Application:**

What practical ways can you express Christ-like love to those you are discipling?

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What practical ways can you lay down your life for those you are discipling?

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We can be private people, valuing our personal space above all else. Or we can be uncomfortable ever being alone. Living in a Great Commission community means finding a balance between the messiness of a life together and times of solitude and reflection. There is no magic ratio, no sacred daily schedule we can implement universally. The life together, the Great Commission community must be led of the Spirit in all these things. But we must value them and make space for them.

**Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 20**

Disciple-making is first relational, an act of giving ourselves generously and freely to one another. As with any great relationship, true discipleship begins with authenticity. We will never be perfect disciples or perfect disciple-makers, but we must resist the urge to curate our lives, to wear masks, to hide our mess. Those in Christ are family, with all the imperfections families have. We each have scars, past mistakes, things we wrestle with. These do not define us, but they are part of us, and in the hands of a Holy God, used for our sanctification. Christ loved us as we were, and transformed us by that love. Disciple-making is the same, transformational by His love in and through us.

True discipleship also resists any tendency toward superficiality. We must go deep with each other for the sacred work of discipleship to take place, for that work to hold fast. Our discipleship should be marked by regular confession, vulnerability, openness, and honesty. These are the fundamental building blocks of trust. People crave a place to be themselves, we must create a safe and trusted space for them to do so.

Of confession, vulnerability, openness, and honesty, which one(s) is the hardest for you? Why? The easiest? Why?

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Of confession, vulnerability, openness, and honesty, which one(s) do you believe is most crucial for disciple-making?

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Jesus spent every day with His 12 disciples. He chose them to be “with Him” (Matthew 3:14). And within the twelve there were three that He was even more intimate and intentional with. We cannot hope to go deep in relationship with too many people at one time. We must choose quality over quantity, depth of connection over width of influence.

Peter, James, and John were His inner circle. These three disciples were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ transfiguration (Mark 9:2–3), they witnessed Jesus raise Jairus’s daughter from the dead (Luke 8:49–56), and accompanied Him while He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–38). These three witnessed Jesus’ greatest moments of glory and His darkest trials. They were His closest friends. He went deeper with them because He had chosen them for the leadership roles they would later occupy in the fledgling church.

**Reflection and Application:**

Vulnerability can be terrifying, what are some barriers you have when it comes to trusting?

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In detail, describe trustworthiness.

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Trust must be protected, how can you safeguard your relationships with those you disciple?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 21

Think of the scene in Matthew 16: 15-19 where Peter proclaims Jesus to be the Messiah and the beautiful affirmation Jesus gives of Peter. And then immediately, in Matthew 16: 21-23, Jesus rebukes Peter for not understanding that the Messiah must suffer. At this point Peter had walked intimately with Jesus for almost 2 years and he still struggled to get it right. Another time James and John asked Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire on an unbelieving people (Luke 9:53-55). Throughout His earthly ministry Christ's disciples struggled to understand. They were imperfect, rough around the edges, one minute inspired, the next distracted. Very much like us.

Disciple-making is messy, and hard. Real hard. There is no script and no manual. There is no timeline, that is, everyone matures at a different pace. We've talked about counting the cost. Part of being able to do that, is understanding what the true nature of that cost is. How much time, effort, resources, and emotional bandwidth discipling others will take.

Which of these do you value most: time, effort, resources, emotional bandwidth? Why?

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Which of these do you have the least of: time, effort, resources, emotional bandwidth? Why?

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If you were discipled well, someone spent much time, effort, resources, and emotional bandwidth on you. You were worth it. The cost was far exceeded by the value of the disciple you became. Spend some time this week reflecting on their sacrifices, and thanking God for His faithfulness to transform you.

While there is no script or manual for discipleship, there is the perfect example of the life of Jesus, His Holy Spirit who teaches, leads, and helps us, and the Holy Word that guides us, illuminates our path. Should we try and disciple any other way but the Way of Christ we will fail to make the sort of disciples He requires. Should we not rely utterly on the Holy Spirit in all things, we will again fail, catastrophically so. And should we not hold fast to the Word of life, we will find ourselves adrift, we may very well still make disciples, but they will be of another sort than those Christ made: The kind that changed the world.

And while there is no timeline, there is a trajectory of growth. Understanding grows, commitment grows, passion grows, and then it often wanes before growth begins again. There will be ups and downs, slow seasons, times when it feels that those you are discipling are going backwards. The frustration can be intense, and the tendency can be to assess blame. Remember this is Christ's work, He will finish what He started. (Hebrews 12:2).

**Reflection and Application:**

You know yourself better than anyone. In all honesty, what about disciple-making makes you the most anxious? What frustrates you the most? Why?

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We're in this together, we are meant to bear one another's burdens in love. How can we practically share time, effort, resources, emotional bandwidth in disciple-making?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 22

Before we are disciple-makers, we are daughters and sons. Our identity is children of the Heavenly Father, our work is disciple-making. Said another way, our calling is to be disciple-makers, but we are called His children. If we are not careful our identity can get wrapped up in making disciples and we can forget we are cherished by our Heavenly Father because of grace through faith and not because we are excelling at the Great Commission. And yet we *are* saved for good works. For this work. We are a family on Mission.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Do you struggle to separate your work from your worth? Explain.

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When you fail how does that affect your sense of self? When you succeed?

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We are called to oneness in Christ, but not sameness. In John 17, a passage we refer to as “the High Priestly prayer”, Jesus prayed three times that His disciples (across all time) would be one as He and the Father are one. Each of us is unique, and conformity to each other is not the goal of discipleship. But conformity to the image of Christ is (Romans 8:29). We have Him as the objective standard, the perfect ideal. So then we spur one another toward Christ, toward conformity to Him. This is the core objective of discipleship, Christ-likeness. And Christ was first His Father’s Son. At His baptism, before He did a single work, the Father said of Jesus, “This is my Son, whom I love, in who I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

Jesus submitted to the Father in all things. He was, as we have said, the First Disciple, that of His Father. In John 5:19, 20 Jesus said *“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.”*

In John 15:15 Jesus said of us: *“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”* What the Son saw the Father do, He did. And we as sons and daughters do the same. What Jesus heard the Father say, He tells us. And before we do a single work, we are sons and daughters, we are loved, and He is pleased with us, because we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

**Reflection and Application:**

How do children make disciples differently than servants?

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Read Romans 8:18-38. How are we conformed to the image of Christ?

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How do those means of conforming we described in the previous question, inform our disciple-making?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 23

Paul summed up the essence of disciple-making precisely, He said, *“Follow my example as I follow Christ.”* 1 Corinthians 11:1 NIV

As a disciple we walk the narrow way, eyes fixed on the horizon, where one day He will return. Our lives are re-ordered to the Great Commission, our time, resources, and energy are reserved for that sacred task. If someone is following us we are leading them in the right direction. Conversely, if we are seeking after earthly things, using our time, resources, and energy for personal agendas or pleasure, those following us will be led astray.

Every day Christ walked the earth, in everything He did, He was worthy to be followed, to be imitated. We are not perfect like Him, yet we have His perfect Spirit in us to empower us to live lives worthy of being followed.

Outside of the Scriptures, who have you followed that led you well? Explain.

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Consider your life. What are the areas if others followed it would lead them off the narrow way?

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Jesus lived every moment with intention, in submission to the Father, in obedience. By grace our lives must look the same. That is the call of the disciple, and the life worthy to be followed by those whom we disciple. So what does following look like practically?

**First we follow Christ.** We read, study, memorize His word. It begins to transform us into disciples. We pray, we learn to listen for His voice, and to receive the grace to obey. And as we grow, roots going deeper in Him, we obey with all our heart, mind, and strength.

**Simultaneously, we follow other's as they follow Christ.** We learn as they rightly teach the Word. We ask them to teach us, to help us understand. We pay attention to the way they live and speak. We imitate their Godly example, and we accept training and correction.

**And then we tell others to follow us as we follow Christ.** We teach them God's word. We teach them to be dependent on the Holy Spirit. We live Godly lives, worthy of imitation. We encourage them, nurture them, train them to become disciple-makers themselves.

Paul said follow my "example" as I follow Christ. The goal is to make Christ followers, we are merely examples of how to do so. The invitation to others is: Follow Christ with me, and I will help you along the narrow way, we will help each other.

**Reflection and Application:**

Are you following Christ well? What areas of your life are not submitted to Him? Why?

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Are there disciples in your life whose example you can imitate? What do they do well?

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Are you inviting others to follow your example? If no, why not? If yes, what does that look like practically?

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## Pathway // Section 3 // Disciple-Making // Lesson 24

Eugene Peterson wrote a book called *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*. The very title of the book expresses much about the true nature of discipleship. We are in this for the long haul. This Great Commission is a marathon and not a sprint. We must slow down and go deep in discipleship.

So, how then do we not grow weary in the “long obedience” of the Great Commission?

Philippians 1:6 says: “*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*” Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. We begin the Great Commission from the finished work of the Cross. We are filled with His power to do the work. And when we are weak, His grace is made perfect in us.

Describe a time when you were weak, when His grace was made perfect in you, made you strong.

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Back to Philippians 1:6, it’s “*he who began a good work in **you***”. This “you” is in the second person plural. It properly translates, for us southerners, “He who began a good work in **y’all**”. This is Christ’s work in His church. As we’ve said, discipleship is meant to be done in community. We bear one another’s burdens, we share resources, we intercede for each other, and in every practical way, we divide the load. And it is by His strength in us that we do so.

Describe a time when you were weary and your church community bore your burden well.

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Discipling others is much like parenting, or perhaps more accurately, caretaking of God’s children who also happen to be our siblings. We are family, we invest in each other for no other earthly end but love and kinship.

Consider this, the average child leaves home at 25. That's a quarter century of investment in them by their parents. When we think of discipling others in terms of family, in years and not months, our "strategy" changes. We pay closer attention to the little things, we value consistency and organic growth. The local church community offers the kind of stability that is the fertile soil for that type of deep and steady growth. Those we disciple need a larger community of believers to watch and imitate. In the local church they can see all the gifts expressed. They can see people from all walks of life living out their faith. And so it's our responsibility to be a local church that is a Great Commission community, with a Great commission culture.

**Reflection and Application:**

How can we create a Great Commission culture in our local church?

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If discipleship becomes the primary focus of our church, how would we re-order our gatherings, our time, our activities, our resources?

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The end of the Great Commission in Matthew's gospel ends with a promise. Jesus says: *I will be with you until the end of the age*. Again, this "you" is in the second person plural. He is saying "I will be with **y'all**".

We have this hope, this security, this steadfastness in our sacred task, that He will be with *us* until the end of the age. And then, we get Him as our reward, for all of eternity! Let us bring many more disciples with us, to that family reunion, to that feast to end all feasts, the wedding supper of the Bride and the Lamb!

## Pathway Final Thoughts:

When we all live as disciple-makers, the focus shifts away from a few men and women leading the church, to all of us sharing the load. When the culture of the church shifts to a Great Commission culture, the focus shifts away from buildings and special events, to our homes and moment by moment life together. This shift toward a Great Commission lifestyle may be difficult at first, it will have a real cost in time and effort, and it will need to be very practical.

As the Holy Spirit reorders our lives to the Great Commission, we will have struggles, questions, maybe even a crisis or two. Let us lean into each other, bearing one another's burdens in love. And let us all be resources for one another, ask questions, share wisdom. Perhaps a fellow disciple has navigated a particularly difficult season before, the same one you now find yourself in. Perhaps they can give some insight by the Spirit. We need each other. We are meant to do the Great Commission together.

Finally, remember these five things.

Remember, the Great Commission, it is Christ's work. The work He started, the one He continues to do through His Church by His Spirit, the one He will finish. Take great confidence in that! And also be astounded by the incredible honor of doing His work with Him!

Remember, *we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* Ephesians 2:10 Those "good works" are the Great Commission. This is our purpose, our destiny on earth. This is our call, to be disciple-makers who make disciple-makers.

Remember, we never stop being disciplined or making disciples. We must ever be submitting to the Lordship of Christ. We are always being sanctified, being made daily more into the image of Christ. That work never stops as long as we live. And we never age out or graduate from the call to make disciples. It is our life's great work, and we leave that work ongoing, those we disciple carry it forward.

Remember our First Love. Every good work is worship to the One whose love made all of this possible. Every good work must be done from that same love. We must love the world, the way the Jesus loved the world. Loving sacrificially, laying down our lives. Proclaiming the truth in love, loving people to wholeness, to maturity in Christ. Love, God's perfect love is the narrow Way. His love expressed through the church is the Great Commission.

Remember, you are loved by us. You are part of a family with a loving Father. We need each other, and that interdependence isn't our weakness but our strength in Christ. So brothers and sisters, let us do this sacred and hard work together, for the glory of Christ alone!

## **Great Commission Resources**

### **On Discipleship:**

“The Cost of Discipleship” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“Emotionally Healthy Disciple” Peter Scazzero

“DiscipleShift” Jim Putnam

“Spiritual Discipleship” J. Oswald Sanders

“A Long Obedience in the Same Direction” Eugene Peterson

“Transforming Discipleship” Greg Ogden

“Transformational Discipleship” Eric Geiger

### **Discipleship Programs and Resources:**

“Multiply” Francis Chan

<http://multiplymovement.com/>

### **The Spiritual Disciplines:**

“Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth” Richard J. Foster

“Spiritual Disciplines: How to Become a Healthy Christian” Mason King

### **Books on Re-ordering Our Lives:**

“The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry” John Mark Comer

“Habits of the Household” J. W. Earley

“The Power of Habit” Charles Duhigg

“Atomic Habits” James Clear

“Present Over Perfect: Leaving Behind Frantic....” Shauna Niequist

“Effortless: Make It Easier to Do What Matters Most” Greg McKeown