

The Greatest Story (Part 50):

The Discipline of Discipleship

2 Peter 1:3-15

Memory Verses: 2 Peter 1:10

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Last week we looked at **Hebrews 10** and saw that when our faith begins to waiver we can hold fast because Jesus won't ever forsake us and the Church won't ever forget us. You can be assured that no matter how far you fall or how hard you run... if you are a believer then Jesus will not let you go and neither will those of us in this room! You can take that promise to the bank.

But this morning we want to show you another way to make sure that your life refrains from wavering. Discipline. The more you are disciplined in your walk with Christ the greater your perseverance will be for Christ. Those who tend to fall away the easiest are those who treat Christianity like a 9 to 5 job.

I will confess.... I have had a membership to Planet Fitness since I came to Danville over three years ago. That's around 39 months, 1000 plus days. And, how many times have I been to the gym.... maybe 15? I don't know... I go so sparsely that I can't even remember the last time I was there. I keep the membership because I know I should go and I know I'll go eventually. I'll go tomorrow. Always tomorrow.

Does this describe your discipleship? You know that you should dive deeper in your walk with Christ. You know that you should be reading the word daily... if not multiple times a day. You know that you should be praying daily... if not multiple times throughout the day. You know you should be in a small group... you know you should be more involved with the body of Christ, the church.... you know that you should be serving more... giving more.... worshipping more. But you don't. And you don't feel too bad about it.... as long as you keep your membership.

And it is for this very reason that here at Stone Creek Church we don't use terms like membership. We can't allow you to be a member of this church like I'm a member at the gym. We can't allow you to claim to be a part of something when you rarely participate.... we can't allow you to neglect the disciplines of discipleship and claim to be a disciple.

No, here we are called covenant partners. We are not customers or clients or consumers.... we are partners together for the sake of our vision of reaching our world with the Gospel to see lives completely transformed. We are in covenant with one another. We have committed before God to one another in this church that we will give to one another, grow with one another, love one another, care for one another,

encourage one another, push one another, keep one another accountable, pray for one another, and bear with one another in love.... even in the hard times.... we will not forsake one another! We are covenant partners!

And so what does that mean.... it means that when you say you are a part of this gym... to this church.... you are going to have to work out... and we are going to do everything we can to push you! As covenant partners for the sake of the Gospel we must... we have to.... do everything we can to push one another towards maturity in Christ and to be disciplined in their discipleship because when believers are disciplined in their discipleship they are effective and fruitful and unwavering.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 gives us the example of an athlete as a metaphor for spiritual discipleship. Listen to what it says. "I discipline my body and keep it under control for the sake of the Gospel." As believers we are called to be disciplined in the art of discipleship for the sake of the Gospel. **Discipleship is beating our bodies into submission so we can be effective in bringing Christ glory.** So are you ready to be disciplined in the art of discipleship? This morning we are going to look at a passage of scripture that shows us the reason for discipleship... the work of discipleship... and a reminder to be disciple-makers. So go ahead and turn with me to **2 Peter 1:3-15** and this morning we will see that... **As Athletes Train Their Bodies For Physical Excellence So Must Followers of Christ Be Disciplined For Spiritual Maturity .**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First, let's look at **The Reason For Discipleship: The Glory of Christ (vs3-5a)**. Look again at **verse 3**. We have been called to his own glory and excellence. This is the purpose of all of mankind and in order for us as believers to achieve such a lofty goal... we need to be equipped. We cannot such a thing as reveal the glory and excellence of our Lord on our own. That is why we see in **verses 3-5** that we are granted provisions to aid us in our quest to bring him glory.

Notice in **vs3** that we have been granted divine power. The power of Christ lives within us through the Holy Spirit and it supplies us with all we need to live life and be godly. The power of Christ in you gives you the means to take life head on and overcome all obstacles for the glory of God.

But not only are we granted power... but look at **vs4**; we have also been granted the precious promises of Christ. These promises are numerous to be sure... but the greatest promise he has given us is that we will be granted abundant life now and eternal glorified life forever. We are partakers of his divine nature. Meaning... as we live for Christ now we are partaking of his divine nature as we yield to the Holy Spirit living within us... but in the future we will be changed into his very likeness. What a powerful promise indeed.

But also... vs4 shows us that we have been granted an escape from the corruption of sin. Meaning that no matter what temptations Satan, or this world, or even our own flesh, put in front of us... we can escape them in this life... and in the life to come we will be completely free from the penalty of sin which is hell. We've been set free from sin and hell forever.

These are some incredible benefits... all given to us for one purpose... to bring God glory and excellence. These benefits are not for our benefit as much as they are to help us to achieve our life long conquest of living for Jesus and making him known.

And so... verses 3-4 are just the intro... because verse 5 begins with "for this very reason." Everything that follows in verses 5-15 (which describes the discipline of discipleship) is because of two things... Christ has granted you the ability to achieve it and he wants you to achieve it for his glory! The reason for discipleship is because we are equipped for and challenged to live our lives for the one purpose of revealing the glory and excellence of Jesus Christ our Lord. This is exactly what Jesus himself says in **Matthew 28:18-19a** where he proclaims I have been given all authority (power) so therefore go and make disciples. Paul reiterates this in **Ephesians 1:19** where he says; Jesus' power is towards us according to the working of his great might ... his great glory. So don't let this escape you this morning.... you are able to be disciplined in discipleship because Jesus empowers you for it.... and it is how you bring glory to Christ and since that is your one purpose in this life you have to do it. **If our discipline in discipleship reflects Christ's glory... then we must be all the more compelled to be disciplined for his glory. As Athletes Train Their Bodies For Physical Excellence So Must Followers of Christ Be Disciplined For Spiritual Maturity.**

Secondly, we see... **The Work of Discipleship: Supplementing Your Faith (vs5-11)**. Look at **verse 5**. Discipleship is the means of supplementing you faith through your works. Don't be confused...discipleship doesn't produce faith for salvation. You aren't saved by your works but, your salvation will produce works. You don't do works to earn salvation... you do works for Jesus because you love him and want to see him glorified. **If we love Jesus, and he is our Lord, we will make every effort to show it through our lives.** So... what does it mean to make every effort? Think about it... what does it mean for you to make every effort to make the team, get the job, get the promotion, fix the car, build a new church building... it means everything you got right? It means to be disciplined, dedicated, and devoted.

We get a glimpse of what the early church took this to mean in **Acts 2:42-47**. Look with me. They were devoted to a few select things... their core values. They were devoted to the apostles teaching.

In our current context that would mean the Bible. They were devoted to prayer. Get this... the word of God read and preached.... and prayer corporately and personally were the things that they were devoted to. With every effort they dedicated themselves to these disciplines. But not just prayer and the word. They were dedicated to small group fellowship. Everyday they met in homes over meals praying, reading the word, worshipping, and encouraging one another. But it wasn't just an inward focus either... they were devoted to serving people... and giving to the poor... even to the point where they were selling their own possessions... houses... properties. I mean this is next level devotion. This was discipline.... this is what discipleship looks like. You see.... a devotion to these disciplines will reveal true godly qualities in our lives... without a devotion to the word, prayer, worship, service, giving, and fellowship we cannot be disciplined to have godly qualities.

Which brings us to **verses 5-7**. Here we see a list of godly qualities that we strive for in our discipleship journey. We are to discipline our bodies and souls to genuinely express these qualities. The first is the quality of virtue. Virtue means moral excellence. It means to be sinless, and above reproach. In **Ephesians 5:3** Paul says that we are not to have even a hint of immorality in our lives. We strive to be sinless and morally above reproach.

We add to virtue, knowledge. This goes straight back to the discipline of being devoted to the word. The more we read it, the more wisdom it gives us, the more we know how to live righteous lives of worship that brings Christ glory. In **John 8:31** Jesus says... if you abide in my word you are my disciples.

We add to knowledge, self-control. Self-control is the idea that we are in control of our actions and don't act like mindless animals drawn toward every natural inclination. This life will have all kinds of temptations but as we said earlier in this passage... Christ empowers us to overcome them. Paul reiterates this in **1 Cor 10:13** where he makes it clear that we are all tempted but God provides a way of escape if we choose to take it.

We add to self-control, steadfastness. This goes right back to what we talked about last week. Holding fast to our faith without wavering. When we are disciplined in the word and prayer... when we have virtue, knowledge, and self-control... then we are on a solid foundation where we cannot fall. Paul offers this encouragement in **Colossians 1:23**; continue in the faith, stable and not shifting.

We add to steadfastness, godliness. This means to simply be a bearer of the image of God. We are to imitate Christ in all things. **Ephesians 5:1-2** says to be imitators of Christ.

We add to godliness, brotherly affection. This, as we will discuss in more detail in our next point, is simply the act of disciple making. We have a brotherly affection for our faith family to the point where we fight for them and stir them up towards maturity in Christ. A good verse for this one is... 1

Thessalonians 2:8 we share ourselves with one another.

And we add to brotherly affection, love. Love is the key to bringing glory to Christ. Without it we are nothing... with it we can change the world. In fact Jesus himself says that it is the number one thing by which the world will know that you are his disciples... **John 13:34-35** – love as JC loved – by this all people will know you are my disciples.

These qualities define the personality and character of a follower of Christ. Get this... God isn't as glorified by what we say or what we might even do... but by who we genuinely are. And the only way to genuinely be this kind of a person is to be disciplined in your discipleship. As you might have picked up on.... these are very similar to fruits of the spirit found in **Galatians 5:22-23**. This also adds to the idea that the Holy Spirit is empowering us to live these out.

Now look at **verse 8**. These qualities within us will cause our actions and our words to be effective and fruitful in bringing Jesus Glory! Without them... without a genuine discipline and discipleship making these qualities real in our lives... we will be ineffective as believers. Without these disciplines and qualities we will never accomplish our vision and mission. If we aren't being disciplined in our discipleship we will fail. And get this... it's not just that we mature to a point where we don't need to be disciplined anymore. We never get to a point where we don't need the word, don't need prayer, don't need our small group.

Verse 8 makes it clear that they need to be increasing everyday.

Now look at **verses 9-10**. We see here that by being disciplined in our discipleship and by having these qualities in our lives... we not only prove to the world that our Lord is glorified and that we are his followers... but we prove it to ourselves. The greatest evidence in your life that you are a Christian is that you have these qualities in your life because of a disciplined discipleship. If we don't we are just like blind people who have forgotten their salvation all together. With them we cannot fall ... or waver in our faith... our faith is proven.

And then in **verse 11**... we see this awesome verse. Because of our faith proven through our discipleship we have a rich entrance into eternal life. Meaning... If you are disciplined in your faith, the way an athlete is disciplined in their training, you will run through the finish line a champion.... your entrance into the kingdom will be a rich... it will be a good finish with Jesus there to welcome you in “well done my good and faithful servant.” This is a huge encouragement to live a life of discipline and discipleship. You see... runners train for stamina, speed, and endurance... but do you know the main thing they are working for.... that last stretch. The need to have enough gas left in the tank and enough speed in their muscles to power down that main stretch. That final stretch needs to be their fastest of the entire race. They train for the final stretch so they can break that ribbon and be victorious. So why do we

discipline our bodies and souls and minds everyday? Because everyday may be the final stretch. Get this... **we should train everyday as if today is the final stretch**. Train... everyday... to supplement your faith in Christ so that you will have the disciplines and qualities evident in your life to bring Christ all the glory through your life. **As Athletes Train Their Bodies For Physical Excellence So Must Followers of Christ Be Disciplined For Spiritual Maturity**.

Lastly, we see... **The Reminder of Disciple Making: Stir One Another (vs12-15)**. Look here at our final verses. Peter's whole ministry has been making disciples... teaching these qualities and truths. And now... Peter knows he's about to die and his dying wish is that the church and his disciples would not forget this teaching. Even after his death he is putting things in place through the writing of this book to make sure they continue in their discipleship.

It's not enough to just work on your own personal discipleship... but you must be a disciple maker too. Peter was disciplined in his own walk but he was also committed to the same disciplines in the lives of his church family. We are called to make disciples just like Peter. Look at his desire... it's his dying wish to see his brothers and sisters disciplined. How much desire do you have to make disciples? Does it look like Peter?

Listen... making disciples is easy. It's as easy as stirring one another up towards these qualities and disciplines we've seen today. We don't nag each other... but we lovingly encourage one another to pray daily, read the word daily, fellowship with the church, refrain from sin, live godly lives, and represent Christ well. It looks like **2 Timothy 2:2** where Paul tells Timothy, his disciple, that whatever you have learned from me, teach to others so that they will teach others. Pass along what you have learned as you live life together. **1 Cor 11:1** is Paul telling his disciples to imitate him as he imitates Christ. That's it. Hey man... I know your are struggling with this issue... i've been there... but guess what... here's how Jesus overcame... here's how I've overcome and here's how you can to. It's that simple. Look at **2 Cor 5:20** which says; as an ambassador of God make his appeal through you... implore others on behalf of Christ. It's simple. **It's not whether or not you can make disciples... its whether or not you will.**

Discipleship isn't the easiest... it's beating our bodies into submission so we can be effective in bringing Christ glory – however it's easier when someone is there helping to encourage you in you walk. Everyone needs a disciple maker in their lives. Everyone needs to make disciples. **As Athletes Train Their Bodies For Physical Excellence So Must Followers of Christ Be Disciplined For Spiritual Maturity**

Application (Resolution, You)

So, the application is simple this morning... be dedicated to your own personal discipleship. Strive with everything within you to be morally excellent, filled with the word of God, self-controlled, steadfast in your faith, modeling Christ, and full of love for your church and the lost. And know that Christ himself has empowered you to do it.

Be devoted to bible study, prayer, fellowship with your small group, worship, giving and servitude.

And stir one another by being a disciple maker. The journey of discipleship is hard. It's a life long war. So you must fight for someone else's discipleship and they must fight for yours.

Conclusion

So how are you devoted to your own discipleship? Who are you discipling? This morning we want to present to you something we've produced here at our church... **A Personal Disciple Making plan**. We want to equip you to be discipled and become a disciple maker. This morning we want each of you to take one of these plans home with you and this week we want you to commit to filling it out. After you fill it out, share it with your small group or a friend and get some feedback. In this way... we will help you begin a plan of discipleship and begin the disciple making process.