

What's The Deal At Stone Creek Church Part 11

Intentional Discipleship

1 Corinthians 9:26-27a, Proverbs 27:17

Memory Verses: Proverbs 27:17

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

What's the deal at Stone Creek Church? Who are we and what are we all about? In order to answer that question we can first start with our vision statement. **Depending on Christ we will reach our world with the Gospel to see lives completely transformed.** Which leads us to our three main tenets; depending, reaching, and transformation. Which leads us to our six core values. We depend on Christ through a reliance upon the word, consistent prayer and authentic worship. And, we will reach our world through relational outreach and strategic missions. Throw in a couple of finer points such Biblical teaching and preaching, Christ focused ordinances, Familial Fellowship, Gracious giving, and Servant Leadership and you can see how we put all of this into action. But there is still something missing isn't there! Intentional discipleship! You see, none of the rest of this is possible unless we are growing in our spiritual maturity in Christ. None of this is possible if we don't understand how to be transformed.

That is why today we come to our sixth and final core value where we hope to see lives completely transformed through intentional discipleship. **Romans 12:2** reminds us that as believers we should no longer conform to the ways of this world, but we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds. **Colossians 1:10** tells us what a transformed life looks like; when we walk in a manner worthy of Christ and pleasing to Him by bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God. According to **Ephesians 2:13** transformation involves those who were once far from God being "drawn near" to Him through the blood of Christ. We see the evidence of transformation within us as we take one small step after one small step towards Christ and away from the world. **2 Corinthians 3:18** tells us that little by little we are being transformed into the likeness and glory of Christ. In a nut shell, to be transformed is to die to your old self and be reborn with Christ at the reigns. **Galatians 2:20** puts it like this...

The life of every Christian is about two things. First, go and make disciples and second, be transformed as a disciple! As you grow in personal discipleship you are more equipped to make disciples. The more you step out in faith to make disciples the more you are personally disciplined. Transformation is only possible when we are faithful to do both the work of personal discipleship in our own lives and disciple making in

the lives of others.

This is why we are dedicated to intentional discipleship here at Stone Creek Church! We believe that transformation doesn't just happen. It's not a magical thing that just happens passively. Yes, God works in us through the Holy Spirit to sanctify us, but we also must be dedicated to the work of sanctification. **1 Corinthians 9:26-27** makes this crystal clear. As a believer I cannot just aimlessly wander through my Christian life with no care for my spiritual maturity. Rather, I must discipline my flesh and keep it under control in order to represent Christ adequately.

It's kind of like my first job. When I was 15 I began working at a clothing department store called Hamricks. My job was to help people who wandered into the children's department and if there were no customers I was to constantly fold clothes. It was crazy boring. Basically, my job was to look busy. One day, it was a slow day, as most days were, and so I decided to go into the break room and read a magazine to pass the time. Unfortunately, after about 30 minutes my supervisor came looking for me and found me slacking! She got mad at me for not working and so I said something to the effect of, there's nothing to do! She responded, well if there's nothing to do then I guess there's no reason to keep you around. And that's how I lost my first job.

The point is this... if we have "accepted the job of a Christian" but don't do the work... there's no reason for us to be around either! Even if it's boring, and even if it's hard, we must be busy about our own spiritual growth!

And, in the same way we are to intentionally disciple ourselves, we are also called to disciple others. **Proverbs 27:17** makes this point when it says, as iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another. **2 Timothy 2:2** also tells us that we are to entrust discipleship to those who will disciple others.

It's kind of like my second job. When I was 16 I began working with my brother at a small amusement center called Hickory Dickory Dock. They had bumper cars, putt putt, and arcade, and laser tag! Me and my brother ran the laser tag together. I loved that job. Why? Well, I did get to play all the games and laser tag I wanted, but more than that I had my brother there to keep me company, show me the ropes, and you know... train me in the ways of all things laser tag! Shortly after my brother quit I was fired! In order to stay on the straight and narrow, we need support, we need a brother!

The point is this... you can't be discipled unless you intentionally work towards it, and you can't be discipled unless others are intentional to work on you! **If Discipleship Isn't Intentional, Transformation Will Be Unlikely.** So, I'm going to ask my son Canaan to come on up here and help me with this first point.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

Canaan: the first thing we need to see when it comes to transformation and intentional discipleship is... **We Must Be Intentional In Personal Discipleship**. Again, **1 Corinthians 9:27a** says that I must discipline or disciple my self to remain qualified – to walk worthy of the calling I have in Christ. Right? And, so, what does that mean? How do I discipline myself. A good verse to measure ourselves against would be **Matthew 16:24**. Here we see 3 ways we discipline ourselves as disciples of Christ who follow Him! We must deny ourselves, die to ourselves, and depend on Christ. Let's take these one at a time!

First, we must deny self. Personal discipleship means intentionally denying yourself. Let's look at some verses. **Luke 16:13** says that we can't serve two masters because if we do we will love one and hate the other. If we love stuff, money, sin... we will hate God! **1 John 2:15** backs that up when it says do not love the things of the world, if you love the world you won't love God! The only safe thing to do is to follow **Luke 14:33**; renounce all that you have. We must deny ourselves.

We must deny ourselves sin. This is elementary. If we've been in church for any amount of time we know what sin is and we know how to stay away from it. So just stop; stop lying, stop stealing, stop hating, stop committing adultery; just say no to what you already know is wrong.

We must deny ourselves indulgence. This one is a little more nuanced. This one includes gray areas where we are afforded some flexibility as long as we can exercise our christian freedoms in moderation. We must deny ourselves from drinking too much, eating too much, binging television, chasing after riches, and building bigger barns to store up more meaningless stuff. Moderation is key.

We must deny ourselves in order to worship Christ. It's simple, the less we have the more we must depend upon Christ. Francis Chan has said that we should, "give enough away so we must depend on Christ to meet our needs." When we deny ourselves certain things we will naturally focus more on Christ. For instance, the less we have to entertain us the more we will spend with Christ in the Word and prayer.

We must deny ourselves in order to give to others. Plainly put; the less you spend on yourself the more you can give to the church, to the poor, to missionaries, and to those in need.

And remember, this isn't a suggestion, this is the command of Christ. Deny yourself! **You can either deny yourself or you can deny Christ; denying yourself takes Christ, denying Christ takes nothing.**

Secondly, we must die to self. Personal discipleship means intentionally dying to yourself. **Matthew 16:24** says to take up our cross and we know that taking up our cross means that we are to die to

ourselves. **Galatians 2:20** tells me that my life is not mine anymore, rather Christ lives his life through me now. To be a disciple of Christ, to be involved in personal discipleship I must die to my dreams and my goals. I've had aspirations and dreams, but those no longer matter. If you've had aspirations and dreams that you've been chasing in your flesh; perhaps to be a lawyer, or to graduate from college, or to play in the NBA, or to have a big house, etc... you need to recognize that God may have other plans. If God has other plans and dreams for your life then you have to be willing to say, I'm okay with that. Wherever you lead I will go. I will no longer go my own way, Jesus, now I'll go your way!

What does it mean to die to myself? Look at **Luke 14:26**. It means that I must hate own family and own life. Not really hate like we know the word hate, but dying to self means that Jesus is first. It means that Jesus is more important than your family, and more important than your own life! Jesus trumps tradition. Jesus trumps comfort. Jesus trumps safety! Dying to myself means it's no longer about me... it's only about Jesus! **When you learn to die to your own will, you can be raised to a new life focused on Christ.**

We must deny ourselves, we must die to ourselves, and we must depend on Christ. Personal discipleship means intentionally depending on Christ. Look with me at **Hebrews 5:13-14**. Look, most of us are living on milk because we are spiritual babies. But what we need is solid food; meat for true spiritual growth and maturity. How do we eat it? It takes constant practice.

What should we practice? Well, it's not hard to know... it's what we've been talking about for 10 weeks already. It's our core values! First, we need to practice reading, studying, and memorizing the Word. Look at **Hebrews 5:13-14**... we must practice the word because we are called to be skilled in the word of righteousness. Second, we must practice prayer. Again, according to **Hebrews 5:13-14** we must practice prayer for power in discernment to distinguish good from evil.

And then of course the rest; we must practice personal, authentic worship from a place of joyful obedience. We must practice relational outreach through each one reach one, bless every home, three circles, and care portal. And we must practice strategic missions through prayers, and letters to our missionaries and by staying informed.

A good question here would be; do you have a personal discipleship plan? In other words, how are you going to practice these on the regular? Think about it. We've got a resource at the end of the service that will help! Just remember, **Like any athlete, if you want spiritual gains, you must work out your faith daily. If Discipleship Isn't Intentional Transformation Will Be Unlikely.**

The second thing we need to see when it comes to transformation

and intentional discipleship is... **We Must Be Intentional In Disciple Making.** **Proverbs 27:17** again tells us that iron sharpens iron. Another good verse would be **Eccl 4:9-12** which tells us that two or three is better than one because we can help each other. The point being, we cannot expect to see people disciplined, transformed, sanctified, or spiritually matured alone! This why the church exists. This is why we are strongly encouraged to not forsake fellowship with one another. We need one another to be who God wants us to be! We must be intentional.

We are intentional at Stone Creek to make disciples of the lost through relational outreach. Our church as a whole and each of us individually have a responsibility to do all we can to make disciples of the lost. But since we've covered this in great detail already, lets move on.

We are intentional at Stone Creek to make disciples of the saved through intentional discipleship programs. And we do this through three different stages. **Stage 1 - Sunday Worship – broad large group lecture based discipleship.** **Stage 2 - Small groups – easy, flexible, conversation based discipleship (10-15 people).** **Stage 3 – D-Groups – 1 year long, structured, focused, bible study, scripture memorization, accountability, and prayer (3-6 people).**

Listen, we have put in a lot of hard work to structure these programs for optimal transformation, but we need you to participate! We can't make disciples without people to disciple. And so, this morning we need someone to commit to Stage 1 and just be faithful on Sundays. There are others who need to commit to Stage 2 and just join a small group; either mine, Don's, or Jerri Lynn's. There are some who need to commit to Stage 3 and get in a D-group. Which stage are you going to commit to this morning?

Another structure of discipleship would be sideways, up, and down. Regardless of what stage of discipleship you are in at Stone Creek, every Christian is called to be a part of three different discipleship models. I call it the Paul, Barnabas, Timothy model. Everyone in this church should be a Paul and have sideways peer discipleship. For Paul it was guys like Silas, John Mark, Peter, and the Apostles. For you it could be a friend or people in your small group. Everyone should also be a Barnabas and be a mentor to someone below them. Paul was mentored by a man named Barnabas who showed him the ropes and journeyed through the early stages of being a Christian with him. Maybe this means teaching a kids class, bible study, d-group, or doing one on one mentorship. Lastly, everyone should be a Timothy. Timothy looked up to Paul and was his apprentice.

So, some questions? Who are you doing life together with? Who is teaching you? And who are you teaching? Are you even willing to be disciplined? Are you willing to disciple someone else? Listen, **We have a responsibility to Christ and to one another to be engaged in disciple**

making with one another. If Discipleship Isn't Intentional Transformation Will Be Unlikely.

Application

So, to end today I want to bring Canaan back up and I want him to answer this question; what has personal discipleship and disciple making looked like in your life and how have you been transformed by it?

Conclusion

So, will you commit to personal discipleship, to denying yourself, dying to yourself, and to depending on Christ daily? Will you commit to disciple making? To a small group or a d-group? If so here's what we want you to do. Today we have Personal Discipleship plans available for each and every one of you to fill out so that you can have a personalized plan of attack every single day for spiritual growth. Secondly, we would love for you to sign up for a small group or a D-group this morning.