

The Responsibilities of the Church: Discipling

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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For those of you who are guests with us at our conference, we're going to let you eavesdrop on a series that we're involved in as a church. The Lord has been sending us so many new people in recent years and so I felt that it was time for us to go back and kind of rebuild the foundations a little bit and cover some of the basic principles and truths and doctrines and issues that this church has been built on for all of its 40 years. I've been here 28 years, the church has been here 40 years and we believe there are some biblical principles upon which this ministry has flourished. And so for the last number of months I've been going back through some of those foundation stones and sort of resetting them again and we've had a wonderful time in the doing of that. We have many new Christians in our congregation, many who are young in the faith and who need to understand the foundational truth. And I didn't know how long I would spend in this series. I really didn't think it would go this long but I think this is message number 43 or something like that, so we've been at it quite a while going over these foundational truths.

We've built this series around the idea of the anatomy of the church which is a theme that I have referred to through the years but this has been a sort of a fresh look at that. We've taken the metaphor of the church as a body which the Apostle Paul likes to use in the New Testament, making the church analogous to a body with Christ as the head and the body functioning in response to His leadership. And we've extended that metaphor a little bit. We took a look at the skeleton in the body, the doctrinal foundation that gives the body its form and its rigidity and its substance. And then we looked at the internal organs of the body which are the spiritual attitudes that carry its life, things like faith and obedience and love and humility and forgiveness and we devoted ourselves to all of those matters. And now we're in the third phase of this extended metaphor of the body of Christ and we're looking at the muscles of the body.

When the church operates, what does it do? How does it function? What is the church doing when its in action? Not its doctrinal foundations, not its internal attitudes, but its actual activities. What does the church do? And we've talked about preaching and teaching and fellowship, things like that that are essential to the life of the church. We've talked about baptism. Those are matters of the functioning of the church. As we've gone along in this series we find ourselves today with a very important theme which has been essential to the life of this church, certainly since I became a part of it in 1969 and that is the function of discipleship...the function of discipleship. This is a very basic thing and yet a very important aspect of church life.

In Matthew chapter 28 as the gospel of Matthew comes to a close, in verses 19 and 20 the words of our Lord are given in what is commonly called "The Great Commission." That great commission is this, "Go therefore and make disciples." That sort of sums it all up. We're in the process of making disciples. Now a disciple is the Greek word *mathetes* which means learner. We're in the process of reproducing ourselves, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all things that I've commanded you and lo, I'm with you always even to the end of the age. So we go and in order to make a disciple, to make a learner, we have to bring them the gospel, lead them to Christ and then teach them to observe all things that the Lord has commanded us. We are in the reproduction business.

In 2 Timothy chapter 2, this same matter is addressed by the Apostle Paul who reminds Timothy, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." And Paul is saying...I taught you, you teach faithful men, and they'll teach others also. And there are four generations...Paul to Timothy to faithful men to others also. There is a sense in which we are in a reproductive process, a process of passing on the life, passing on the truth.

In Ephesians chapter 4, again this image of reproduction is delineated by the Apostle Paul who said that He gave...that is the Lord did...to the church apostles and prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service. We equip the saints, the saints do the work of service or ministry. And what does that do? It builds up the body of Christ until we all come to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

So we're engaged in a reproductive process. We are not an end in itself and we are merely a means to keep the process moving. In Acts 1, you'll remember, that Luke started out by saying, "The former previous letter have I written, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and to teach." And certainly while we extol the finished work of Christ on the cross, there was a work that Jesus began and didn't finish and that is the work of passing on the truth and reproducing disciples. He chose His, He asked His to reproduce and here we are generations later in the flow.

Life...one of the properties of life...has the characteristic of being able to reproduce itself. When something is alive it is reproducing itself. And certainly as Christians who live, we should be doing the very same thing. We've always made it a strong emphasis in our church that individual people should be reproducing themselves in others' lives. You need to be in a discipling relationship where somebody is influencing you toward Christ's likeness and where you're influencing someone else in that same path. But to deny yourself that is to deny one of the properties that's inherent in your spiritual life and that is the ability to reproduce.

Now the question certainly comes up, at this point, how do I do that? And if we think that witnessing is really challenging and sometimes feel inadequate to present the gospel, how can we really feel adequate or how can we understand what's involved in this whole process of discipling someone? I am asked very often what discipling material do you use, what kind of a curriculum do you use? What is your standard procedure for discipleship? Because our church is known for this and I always have to answer by saying, "Well, we don't really have a set pattern in terms of curriculum, but we do have a biblical understanding of what discipleship is that can unfold itself in many different contexts, in many different relationships." And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning. I want to show you the components of a discipling relationship. I'm not so concerned about a formula. I'm not so concerned about defining for you the absolute content for that. I'm not so concerned about giving you curriculum. I want you, however, to understand what discipling is about in terms of its inherent character.

If I could sum it up I would say this. Discipling someone is building a friendship with a spiritual purpose. It's building a friendship with a spiritual purpose. But I want to delineate that and sort of sort that out in some very definable components and in order to do that I want to have you turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 4...1 Corinthians chapter 4. You might read through this section and not stop and think about discipleship but it is really one of the very fine New Testament texts around which to center this discussion. First Corinthians chapter 4 and I want to read for you verses 14 to 21...1 Corinthians 4:14 to 21. "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children; for if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. I exhort you, therefore, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ just as I teach everywhere in every church. Now some have become arrogant as though I were not coming to you, but I will come to you soon if the Lord wills and I shall find out not the words of those who are arrogant but their power; for the Kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness?"

Here in this passage we find Paul at his discipling best. And rather than explicitly stating the character of discipleship, it is implicitly contained in what he says here to the Corinthians. But backing up for just a moment into chapter 3, if I can draw your attention to verse 5. We tend to think of the Apostle Paul as a celebrity of sorts, as a man who would be esteemed and exalted and lifted up and to whom all of us would like to render service. But he tended to view himself as nothing. And in verse 5 he says, "What then is Apollos and what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one I planted Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants or the one who waters is anything but God who causes the growth."

Here you have a heart attitude of a man that makes him into the discipler that he is. And it is this idea that he is nothing, that he is nothing, neither is the one who plants or the one who waters anything. Paul had no personal agenda. He had no personal career, plan, goal or process. Paul was not interested in accomplishing whatever he thought would be most beneficial to him. The Apostle Paul was a servant and viewed himself as nothing.

Coming over in to chapter 4 following this attitude of humility, we come in to verse 1 of chapter 4 and Paul says, "Let a man regard us in this manner." In other words, when...when you're assessing Paul, here's how you should assess me. When you write my epitaph, put this...that I was a servant of Christ...a servant of Christ. Some translations say minister but actually the word is *huperetes*. It's a very interesting Greek word translated servant most often, but it actually means an under-rower, the low rower in the Greek. In that ancient time they had these massive hulking wooden triremes, they were called, and they had three...three decks down in the hold of the ship where three sets of galley slaves sat with an oar in their hand protruding out of the hulk of the ship and there they would...they would row those oars hour upon hour, the most menial slavish-kind of employment possible. Paul says...When you consider me, don't just consider me a servant, but consider me a third-level galley slave. One who, believe me, had no will and no opinion as far as anybody was concerned. Simply doing the most menial duty imaginable with the greatest amount of effort and the least amount of reward.

Then Paul says in verse 1, "Consider us also as stewards of the mysteries of God." And a steward was one who didn't own anything but who managed what somebody else owned for the benefit of the owner and all of the people in the owner's care. Paul said, "I don't manage my own life, I don't operate my own life, I don't formulate my own life. I have been given a stewardship. I have been made responsible to dispense what belongs to someone else for the benefit of those about whom He cares.

All of that simply to say Paul sees himself as a servant, as a slave, as nothing, as the lowest simply doing what he is required to do. And in verse 2 it says, "It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy or faithful. And to me it's a very small thing that I should be examined by you or by any human court." I'm not looking for human approval. I don't even examine myself. In verse 5 he says, "I do all of this for the approval of the Lord and the Lord alone." He was humble in every sense of the word. He even gets sarcastic later in that chapter in speaking of his own humility in verse 10, he says, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise. We are weak but you are strong; you are distinguished and we are without honor. To the present hour we are both hungry and thirsty and poorly clothed and roughly treated and homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; and when we're persecuted, we endure; and when we're slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum, the dregs of all things, even until now." This is Paul's assessment of himself as over against the arrogance and the pride of the carnal Corinthians.

You see, Paul saw himself as a lowly, lowly servant. He was considered as the scum of the world, the off scouring, the filth you scrape off the bottom, the dregs. But it was precisely that that made him the discipler that he was because if you're going to be a discipler, it's about giving your life away. If you're going to have an impact on other people, it's all about giving your life up for somebody else. I don't know that there's another illustration in the New Testament that's as replete and comprehensive of this kind of self-giving as the Apostle Paul. And, of course, he had the mind of Christ which was a mind that held not on to what it had a right to but gave it up, as Philippians 2 said. And he followed in the path of his Lord.

I guess all of that leads up to the verse 14 where we start with discussions of discipleship, but before you can get there it's necessary to understand the attitude of the heart that's preliminary to this, an attitude of humility and selflessness which is willing to abandon itself for someone else. That's what makes effective discipleship.

Now, there are six components in the life of a discipler. There are six components in the relationship that he must build with someone he wants to reproduce, or she wants to reproduce. Let's start at the beginning. First of all, if you want to reproduce yourself and disciple someone it starts when you beget. It starts when you beget someone. That is to say when you lead someone to Christ. Now that's not to say that you may not pick up someone in your life and disciple them that someone else led to Christ. But certainly discipleship starts at this point, they must come to the Lord. And in the case of the Apostle Paul, he had been the instrument by which God had brought the Corinthians to salvation. And I will say to you that there is no bond in a discipling relationship that is as strong as the bond between the person who was led to Christ and the person who led them to Christ. When you get into a discipling relationship with someone that God used you to bring to saving faith in the gospel, there is a tremendous bond and that was characteristic of Paul.

Let's look at verse 15. "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." That's why in verse 14 he calls them children. Here is where the process of discipleship begins. It begins when you are a spiritual father. It begins when you lead someone to the knowledge of Christ. There is a bond at that point that is a very, very important bond. We've often tried to emphasize through the years that it's not adequate to lead someone to Christ and leave them alone. When you lead someone to Christ, like bringing a baby into the world, they need care and you as their spiritual parent should be there if it is at all possible to provide that care. Paul in verse 15 points this out by saying, "If you were to have ten thousand..." is what the word is in the Greek, and ten thousand is the word used because it's the...it's the highest number in the Greek language for which there is a word, but I think it's appropriately translated here as to its intent. If you were to have ten thousand tutors, countless, innumerable tutors, no matter how many of them you had, the word tutor is *paidagogos*, and it refers

to a moral guardian, a slave that a family would hire to become the moral guardian of their children. This was common in ancient times. People were concerned about their children and how their children would be raised and they wanted them to learn morality and they wanted them to learn wisdom and they wanted them to learn religion, whatever it was that was important to the family. And so they would hire these *paidagogos*, they would hire these educated trained slaves who would be the moral guardians of their children.

Today, you know, our culture is more interested in a...in fitness gurus and personal trainers and coaches and all of that, whereas in ancient times there was a real interest in making sure that your child had a traveling tutor that taught your child necessary matters of life in the world and wisdom and morality. And he says...Look, you may have innumerable of those kinds of people in your life, you may have many moral guardians, you may have many tutors, many people who come along to instruct you in this and that and give you their wisdom. All of that is fine and good, but no matter how many of those you have you will not have many fathers. Implication...you'll only have one. You can have a lot of people interested in your life but only one through whom you were brought to birth. And he says, "In Christ Jesus I...that's emphatic in the Greek...I became your father through the gospel." I came, I preached the gospel, I became your spiritual father. That's where discipling begins. When Jesus said, "Go into all the world and make disciples," the first thing He said was, "Baptizing them," which is synonymous with leading them to salvation. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were linked by birth.

The story of that birth of the Corinthian church is found in Acts 18. If you want to turn to it for a moment I will briefly read it to you just so you have it in your mind. Acts 18:1, "After these things, he left Athens and went to Corinth, found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome." They met there in the synagogue because they worked at the same trade. "He stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers, or leather workers." So Paul is in Corinth. He's met these...these Jews, Aquila and Priscilla, they're together. He was reasoning, verse 4, in the synagogue every Sabbath trying to persuade Jews and Greeks, persuading them, of course, about the gospel. "When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the Word." Up to that point he had to do other things like leather work and tent-making. "He solemnly then was testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. When they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles.' He departed from there, went to the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized." Now there you have the foundation of the Corinthian church.

"The Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer but go on speaking and do not be silent for I am with you, and no man will attack you for I have many people in this city.' He settled there a year and six months after that teaching the Word of God among them." Paul was God's instrument to bring them to salvation. No matter how many moral guardians, how many instructors, how many teachers, how many future pastors, how many people telling them this and that, they would only have one spiritual father. Paul called the Galatians "my little children." He said of Onesimus, the runaway slave, that he is "my son begotten in my chains." He called Timothy "his son in the faith." He called Titus "his son in the faith." Even the Apostle John calls his disciples "children."

So, through the gospel, the preaching of the gospel, Paul became their spiritual father. And, beloved, that's really where the relationship begins. If we're going to be disciplers we need to be available to let the Lord use us to lead people to Christ. That means we need to sow seed, according to Matthew 13. We need to throw that seed of the gospel and let it find the good soil that has been prepared by the Holy Spirit. We can't plow soil, that's the Holy Spirit's work, but we can sure throw seed and we need to do that faithfully. We'll talk in the future about this matter of evangelism as another one of the muscles, or functions of the church. But suffice it at this point to say the discipling process begins when somebody comes to Christ. And when you're the person that leads them to Christ, there is a bond there, there is a spiritual familial bond there that is not like anything else and it's on that that you begin to build a discipling relationship.

Secondly, another feature of discipleship...first of all, he begets and secondly, he loves...he loves. And this is just briefly noted in verse 14 when he says, "I don't write these things to shame you but to admonish you as my beloved children." This introduces us to the attitude that Paul had toward the Corinthians. And, frankly, we could have justified almost any attitude that he had. He could have been upset. He could have been hostile. He could have been angry. He could have been disappointed. He...he could have been outright indifferent to them because of their iniquity and the breadth and height and depth of it. But what he does identify here is his love for them. And I just want to suggest to you very simply from that statement by the Apostle Paul that that is the heart and soul of the necessary attitude in being an effective discipler. They were children of his love and they continued to be that even though they turned on him. And as we know from our study of 2 Corinthians, they were mercilessly cruel to the Apostle Paul. When the false teachers came in and assassinated Paul's character, they bought into it. They turned against Paul. They were arrogant against him, as pointed out even in this passage. They were hostile toward him. They criticized him mercilessly. They believed the lies that he was in the ministry for money, and sexual favors for...from women, that he had a hidden life of shame. That he was a fraud and a charlatan and a fake and lacked the right papers and the right credentials and the right authenticity. They believed all the lies. And yet this man loved them so greatly.

Let me show you that in 2 Corinthians chapter 6. You don't effectively disciple people unless you love them because you have to get past all the difficulties and you have to get past your own agenda and your own world and your own activities to give yourself a way to people who don't always give you the return you would like. And that calls for the deepest and truest kind of love, the *agape* love. It's that kind of love, by the way, that's behind the word "beloved," *agapetosis* the word...full, rich and deep concern. But notice chapter 6 of 2 Corinthians verse 11. What crushed Paul was this unrequited love. He had lavished the love of sacrifice on the Corinthians. He had brought them the gospel against persecution. He had stayed for 18 more months and preached and taught them faithfully and they had turned on him. And so in verse 11 of chapter 6 he says, "Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide." He's just...he's just tearing open his heart before them and saying...Look, there are no secrets, there is no graph, there's no hidden shame, there's no underlying agenda. My heart is wide open. This is the expression of his love. "You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections." There's nothing I've done to cause this breach. It's your own restrained affection that has caused this. "Now in a like exchange since my heart is open wide to you I speak as to children, open wide to us also."

He is feeling the pain of a parent who has a rebellious child. And he's saying to his child like a parent would say, "I've opened my heart to you, I've poured out my love, I've given you everything I have to give. Could you please open your heart and return my affection?" That...that's the pain that he's feeling as he writes that.

In chapter 11 and verse 11 of 2 Corinthians he again refers to this. He says, "Why?" and he's been asking a series of questions, "Well why, why am I being treated like this? Why are you turning on me? Because I do not love you? God knows I do." And here he calls on God Himself to attest to the validity of his love for these carnal Corinthians. "I do love you, God knows I love you." And then over in chapter 12 he really defines this love. Verse 14, "For the third time I'm ready to come to you. I'll not be a burden to you for I do not seek what is yours but you." I don't have any personal agenda, I don't want anything. "For children are not responsible to save up for their parents but parents for their children." I'm coming but it's not for my sake, as always it's for your sake. And verse 15, "I will most gladly spend and be expended, or be spent, for your souls." Therein is love. "Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his...what?...his life." I will spend everything I have and I will give my life for you. "If I love you the more am I to be loved the less?" Is this what I get for that?

This was crushing Paul, by the way. Crushing him to such a degree that back in chapter 2 he says in verse 12, "He came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was opened for me in the Lord." It wasn't a door opened by the advance committee, it was a door opened by the Lord, a real door, a door for the gospel. And you would assume that Paul would go through a door for the gospel opened by the Lord. After all, there was an open door in Ephesus and even though there were many

adversaries he stayed there. There's an open door in Troas but in verse 13 he said, "I had no rest for my spirit. Not finding Titus my brother, taking my leave of them I went to Macedonia." He turned his back on an open door and walked the other direction, left town without preaching the gospel. Why? Because Titus hadn't come. Why did he want Titus to come? Because Titus had a report from Corinth and until he heard whether or not they were going to restore their love for him, he had lost his heart for ministry. Now this is a man who could be crushed. And I say this to you that the more profoundly you love someone, the more likely they can hurt you and the more deeply. But that's the nature of being a discipler.

In chapter 7 of 2 Corinthians he said he was so upset that he was actually depressed. The word "depressed" is used in chapter 7 verse 6. He needed to be comforted by Titus in the midst of his depression over this unrequited love of the Corinthians.

Now here you're seeing discipleship at its premier. You beget and you love. And you love so profoundly that the vulnerability is great. You love so deeply and greatly that the potential for being hurt is there all the time.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 8 Paul opened up the element of love with regard to the Thessalonians. Listen to what he said, 1 Thessalonians 2:8. "Having thus a fond affection for you we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives because you had become very dear to us." This is love. Love, Paul says in chapter 2 of Philippians, looks not on its own things but on the things of others and considers others better than itself. Love is the kind of thing expressed in the self-emptying of Jesus who thought it not something to be grasped to be equal with God but set it aside and humbled Himself, took on the form of a man; was found in fashion like a man, was obedient to death, even the death of the cross...that kind of self-giving utter sacrificial love is the kind of thing that marks Paul's life. He says to the Philippians, "If I am offered on the sacrifice of your faith I rejoice. If I die getting the truth to you, sweet death." He said to the Galatians, "I bear in my body the marks of Jesus Christ." I have to take all the abuse to get the truth to you...but that's all right. And here you're seeing a model of the highest standard of discipleship, and that is it loves at such a profound level that it is willing to give itself up. To the Philippians he said, "I have you in my heart, you're always there." Later he said to them in chapter 1 verse 8, "I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."

I think we probably think of Paul as a...as a sort of a mind on legs. But he had a huge heart to go with his great mind and his heart had the great capacity to love and his love demonstrated itself in the passion to see God's people built up in the faith. It wasn't a sentimentalism, it wasn't a social sentimentalism, it wasn't a shallow kind of thing. It wasn't something that was causing him to be attracted to certain kind of people. It was rather a consuming desire, as he says in Galatians 4:19, that could be translated into birth pain. He felt like a mother trying to give birth suffering agony until

Christ was fully formed in his own. That was his passion. Anyone who is going to make an impact on people's lives and disciple them is going to have to have that kind of love that sets its own agenda, its own career goals, its own objectives aside and says, "I'll give myself up for you. I'll be there when you need me. I'll be there when I need to instruct you. I'll be there to strengthen you, to carry you and lead you."

Thirdly, another component in this discipling process...he begets, he loves, he admonishes. If you're going to be a spiritual father there must come admonishment. It's like a father at home. You bring your children into the world, you lavish them in love, but there also comes a time to admonish them. Verse 14 of 1 Corinthians 4, taking us back to our text, he says, "I do not write these things to shame you but to admonish you." I'm not trying to mock you. I'm not trying to crush you. I'm not trying to turn you into someone to be ridiculed. I'm not trying to make fun of you. I'm not...I'm not belittling you, but I am warning you.

By the way, 1 Corinthians is loaded with that. What is this word "I admonish"? It's *noutheteo* in the Greek and it's a word that we use a lot. It has even been transliterated so that it's sort of taken on a meaning of its own. But the word basically means "to warn someone." And that presupposes a problem with a negative consequence. You don't warn somebody unless you understand that they're doing something that has negative implications. If you keep going down that path, you're going to have this consequence. You warn your children not to go into the street because they'll get hit by a car. You warn your children not to touch the fire because they'll be burned. You warn your children to stay away from evil companions because they will be influenced by their evil. The concept of warning has the implied idea that you are proceeding in a direction with negative consequences. That's part of discipleship. You have to have the confrontational feature of discipleship as you do with your children. You can lavish love and affection on your children but if you don't confront them and warn them and protect them in that regard, your love will be abused and they will wander off into disaster.

So, Paul says, "I'm not writing these strong injunctions and exhortations in this epistle to shame you. I'm not trying to crush you. I'm not trying to destroy you. I'm not trying to mock you or ridicule you or belittle you. I am simply warning you that if you don't change your direction you will run into negative consequences, consequences you don't want." That's part of discipleship. That's part of a loving father's responsibility to his own children. One of the tragedies of the Old Testament is Eli and his wicked sons. And when you sum up the problems of Eli the high priest and his wicked sons who were committing fornication outside the door of the temple where their father was the high priest, they were wicked, wicked men, the sum of it all is 1 Samuel 3:13, "Eli did not restrain them." He failed literally to admonish. He failed to warn them. He never protected them from the consequence. He never admonished them. It's not to crush them but it is to warn them. Colossians 1 and verse 28 Paul sums up kind of a two-sided emphasis of his ministry. "We proclaim Him," that is Christ,

"admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom." And the end result, "We present every man perfect." It takes the positive side, it takes the negative side as well.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 as Paul addresses the same issue in verses 14 and 15 he says, "If anyone doesn't obey our instruction in this letter, anybody doesn't obey the Word of God, take special note of that man, don't associate with him so that he may be put to shame and yet do not regard him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother." You want him to feel shame but you don't want to destroy him in that. So while there is a certain amount of shame, you treat him as a brother, you treat him gently, you treat him lovingly like Galatians 6:1, "If he's overtaken in a fault, you restore him in a spirit of love and gentleness." We're not trying to crush that disciple. We're not trying to crush that spiritual child. But we certainly want to do the warning that is necessary. Effective discipleship involves admonishing.

Number four, and this is certainly crucial and may be in the very heart and soul the most necessary of these, although they are all equally important. This one ties it all together. Anyone who is an effective discipler begets, loves, admonishes and, fourthly, sets an example, or exemplifies. Verse 16, "I exhort you, therefore, be imitators of me." Here is Paul doing his discipling work and he is saying, "Just follow my life. Be imitators of me."

Boy, that puts some pressure on you, doesn't it? In chapter 11 and verse 1 he even said it in more strong terms, "Be imitators of me just as I also am of Christ." To be able to stand up and say, "You follow the pattern that I have set," the word is *mimēomai*, mimics. You mimic me. You pattern your life exactly after me because I'm patterning my life exactly after Christ. There's the heart...there's the heart of real integrity in discipleship. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 to be an example to the believers in word and deed and love and faith and spirit and purity. Set a pattern that people can follow.

When you disciple someone you're really getting alongside of them and showing them what a godly life looks like. You're teaching them how to react to the issues of life. You're teaching them a biblical and a spiritual and a godly world perspective. And you walk through the world with them. It's not a matter of lecturing at them, it's a matter of letting them see you walk through the world and find out how you respond to the things that aren't controlled or predicted. The things that you don't have any ability to determine or to handle that come into your life, that see your involuntary reactions, that see you react to this and that and the other situation, that's how you disciple someone by getting them alongside of you.

Philippians 3:17 Paul said, "Brethren, be followers together of me." Philippians 4:9, "The things you have both learned, received, heard and seen in me, do." That's where the rubber meets the road, isn't it? It's not so much just what I say, it's what I am. First Thessalonians 1:6, "And you became

followers of us." Second Thessalonians 3:9, "Have made ourselves an example unto you to follow us." Titus 2:7, "In all good things show yourself a pattern of good works." First Peter 5:3, "Be examples to the flock." And so it goes. Hebrews chapter 13, the end of the book of Hebrews, and verse 7, "Remember those who led you who spoke the Word of God to you and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." And it's a result-oriented concept there. You see the way they live and you see the way God blesses it. So follow their faith. That's a serious, serious heart of discipleship. It's integrity. Integrity is when every area of your life is consistent, when your theology, what you believe, is consistent with the way you conduct yourself and the way you express yourself in your teaching. What you say, what you do, what you are, are one and the same, that's integrated, that's integrity.

And it's not easy to set...that's why years ago in a Charles Schultz Peanuts cartoon there was a line that I've never forgotten. Snoopy said, "I hate being head beagle when every other beagle in the universe takes his clues from you." That's a touch role. And we understand the difficulties and the challenges of example. It's tough to be the pattern but it's so necessary...so necessary.

It was wonderful in the book of Acts when the pagans started calling the believers "Christians." It meant "little Christs." You were to live a life worth copying. So you want to set the example very, very carefully...very cautiously as to how you live so that you can see it reproduced in the one you love.

Number five, a discipler follows these characteristics and components: he begets, he loves, he admonishes, he sets an example. And number five, he teaches. All of the things I've said are absolutely crucial and so is this one because no one is going to live a godly life without a sound theology. So we find in verse 17, the end of the verse, Paul is talking about sending Timothy and what Timothy will tell them is the same thing, the end of verse 17, "That I teach everywhere in every church." Paul knew that there was no discipling without teaching because all of our living is built on a belief system. Whatever it is that you believe controls your life. And if you believe the Word of God, it has the great control that God wants it to have over your life. Example must be accompanied by instruction. It's not just example, it's precept, it's not just pattern. Teaching is foundational. Jesus came teaching. Paul came teaching. He said, "I've not failed to declare unto you the whole counsel of God," in Acts 20. He says take heed to your teaching. Preach the Word. Teach the Word. Desire the Word like a baby desires milk that you may grow by it. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, profitable to make the man of God complete because it instructs and it reproves and it corrects and it trains and it builds." Paul says to Timothy as we read earlier, "The things I've taught you, you teach others so they can teach others."

Teaching is at the heart of it. You are what you think, folks, you are what you think...absolutely. What goes on in your mind in terms of belief and conviction is the most controlling feature of your life and you must teach, you must pass on truth. Some of it you pass on directly, some of it you do

through giving your disciple tapes or books or taking them along with you to hear someone speak or teach. You must continually pour in the input. Teach them the truth so that they have a foundation for life.

Sometimes I'm asked, and I was again this week, by pastors what I do in my family to what I've done and what Patricia and I have done through the years to...to bring our children up in the Lord. And I can...I can go through all of these things, of course, with you. But in the end the great benefit that I have as a pastor and the great benefit that you have is the immense privilege of shaping my children through my own preaching because it is the content of their doctrine that is the controlling issue in their life. I can't undermine that by the example of my life and a lack of integrity or I'll cancel out the validity of truth. But where the consistency of truth and life comes together, the preacher has the added benefit of having his kids have to sit and listen to him all the time and being able to share in personal times so that they have a strong foundation in the truth. It's amazing how that foundation takes shape and becomes solid and you reach the point where your kids start spouting their theology at you as if you didn't know it. "Dad, do you realize that this is...so and so...and so?" Really, wow. It's wonderful to see it become theirs. I think one of the great privileges and one of the passions of my heart to teach sound doctrine is so that my family could learn it.

Well our time's getting away. Let me give you a last point here. A good discipler, one who is committed to discipleship does one other thing and that is he disciplines. And that's always a challenge. It's the same in parenting. You get to the point where you say to yourself, "All right, I've admonished and I've loved and I've taught and I've set an example and I've done all of this, and we've got a wayward child here. I'm afraid maybe if I get too aggressive I'll push him away." There's a little bit of battle. "Is this the right time to do that?"

Just listen to the Apostle Paul here, he'll help you. You have to discipline. In verse 18 he says, "Some have become arrogant, rebellious, arrogant, setting themselves up as against Paul as though I were not going to come. But I will come to you soon if the Lord wills and I'll find out not the words of those who are arrogant but their power for the Kingdom of God doesn't consist in words but in power." Boy, this is really strong talk. He's saying...All right, there are some of those arrogant guys that are standing up and they're standing against me and they're taking issue with me and they're disobedient to the truth which God has given you through me and they're not afraid because they say, 'He'll never come and face us, he hasn't got the courage to come and face us.' I will come and when I come, if the Lord wills, we'll find out who's hot air and who's got the power." That's what he's saying.

Pretty strong. The Kingdom of God is not just words and I bring the power of the Kingdom of God. What is the power of the Kingdom of God? The Spirit and truth. I come in the power of the Spirit and the power of the truth. We'll find out who's got the power if we have a meeting. Now what do you desire, verse 21? "Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness? You make

the choice."

Every good discipler carries a rod and he leaves it to his disciple to determine whether he needs to use it. You say, "What do you mean by that rod? What is that rod?" That rod is this, Matthew 18, "If your brother is in sin, go to him, right? Confront him. If he doesn't repent, take two or three witnesses. If he doesn't repent, tell the whole church. Send the whole church after him." That's the rod. "If he still doesn't repent, put him out." "Turn him over to Satan," 1 Corinthians 5 says, "so he can learn not to blaspheme." If he doesn't repent, don't eat with him. Confront him about his sin and admonish him but don't socialize. That's the rod. It's the rod of separation. If I have to, I'll come to the church and I'll confront you publicly about your sin-that's the rod. And if you don't repent when I confront you publicly, we'll put you out of the church. It's kind of a tough love at that point. "But whom the Lord loves He...what?...chastens and every son He scourges." "And it doesn't seem very enjoyable for the time but it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness," Hebrews 12 says. Ananias and Sapphira were killed by God in the Jerusalem church and everybody got the message that God was serious about holiness.

You do it with compassion, considering yourself lest you also be tempted, Paul said to the Galatians. You do it with gentleness, admonishing him as a brother but you use the rod when necessary. And there's a price to pay for iniquity and that is the breach of fellowship, the loss of the sweet communion until there is repentance. And then there's full restoration and forgiveness.

Now what you saw here really is something that you know about because this is almost like a parenting process, isn't it? When people talk about parenting, this is what they ought to talk about. There are lots of different techniques you can use for this and that aspect of parenting. Real spiritual parenting is a discipling process that flows right around these principles. And that's obvious from the text because he's using an analogy of a father and his children. If you want to be a discipler, you beget, you love, you admonish, you exemplify, you teach and you discipline.

Let me wrap it up. Verse 17, "For this reason in order to continue to disciple you and to bring you where you need to be, for this reason I have sent you Timothy." Stop right there. Now, he says you are so messed up, you've got so many sins, you've got so many problems, I am so concerned about you, I'm so grieved over you, my heart is so broken, I am so depressed and distressed and disappointed. It's a tragedy that this has happened. In fact, I am so concerned about this I am sending you Timothy.

And somebody is going to say, "Yeah, if you're so concerned why don't you come yourself?" Right? Look at verse 17, this is when you know you've done your discipling right. "I've sent you Timothy who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord and he will remind you of...what?...my ways which are in Christ."

You know what? He sent Timothy because Timothy was an exact duplicate. Jesus said, "When a man is fully disciplined he'll be like his teacher." You want to make your life count? You want to spread your life? You want to multiply your life? That's how you do it. Paul said this is so serious I have to send Timothy because he's a duplication. Nothing wrong with that, everything right about that. You know you've disciplined somebody when you can say, "I can't come, this is so serious but I can send him or her because they'll remind you of my ways." That's the real process. And that's what God has called us to. Now we're not all going to be Paul's...we're not all going to be able to raise up great men like Timothy, but we can all be involved in the reproduction process built around these principles. May God help us to be faithful to that. Join me in prayer.

Father, our morning has been so refreshing and exhilarating as we have lifted up our hearts in worship. And yet it has been so challenging and confronting as we consider how far short we fall from the task of reproducing ourselves. Lord, help us by the strength of Your Spirit to be so useful to You. First in our own families, with our own beloved children. And then in the family of God outside our families. Help us, Lord, to have these kinds of influences in the lives of others all for Your honor, all for Your glory and not ours. We're nothing but third-level galley slaves and content to be so and all the glory is Yours. And to that end we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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