

PERFECTLY



A SECOND PART SERIES IN JOHN

Disciples

In whatever culture a church finds itself in, it is commanded to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:16-20).

But what is a disciple?

A disciple is someone who aims to learn the ways, practices and wisdom of their teacher. In Colossians, we are told that we are to be “admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28). Note that no one is to be exempt from growing in their relationship with Christ. Growth and maturity is for everyone. It's a calling that we all receive and a task that we are not called to do on our own. As the apostle Paul continues, “to this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me” (Col. 1:29). Discipleship is all about drawing alongside one another and helping one another become more like Christ. We can all be involved in that.

Jesus not only taught his disciples through his words (Matt. 5:1-2), he also taught them his way of life. The goal for Jesus' followers was not just that they would know what Jesus knew but also live the way Jesus lived.

This is what it meant to be a disciple in the New Testament, submitting to the authority of a teacher, in order to learn from him and become like him. This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Today, the words submission, obedience and service are out of fashion. But I (Sam) am part of a generation who understood all about these words. We gritted our teeth, put up with life, waited for Jesus' return and got on with serving Jesus. But what we failed to understand was that our teacher took on the full weight of our sin and gave us the freedom to follow him. In him, we learn a new way of life, trusting that he knows more than anyone about how to live. We begin to discover rest for our souls as we submit our lives to Jesus.

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Making Disciples

The Great Commission also reminds us that we are charged with making disciples of all peoples. We are called to make trusted, passionate and committed followers of Jesus. We seek to help others learn to live the new way of life that the Lord Jesus commands his people to live and to give themselves sacrificially for the benefit of others, as Christ has done for us.

But it's also important to constantly remind ourselves that none of us are ultimately the Master. On this side of heaven we are, and will always be, on our learner's license. Because ultimately, what is a disciple? A disciple is a "forgiven sinner learning Christ in repentance and faith" as one writer once said.

Therefore, discipleship making is about helping one another grow closer to Christ. This takes time, patience and perseverance. It takes into account that as followers of the Lord Jesus we are all at different stages in our walk with Him. There is no one size fits all and so we must take this into account when seeking to disciple others.

For those who don't know Christ, we are to help them understand the gospel and hopefully see them move from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. For those in Christ, we seek to help each person press on towards maturity in Christ in every aspect of their lives. That will mean that our discipleship will inevitably always be personal.

As a church community, we should be asking one another: how can we help you grow in Christ? What is the next step that you need to take this year in your relationship with Christ and how can we be journeying alongside you as you take that step? To that end, we hope these studies, and your time together in your discipleship groups, will play a part in making this happen in your life this year.

**“ What is a disciple?
A forgiven sinner
learning Christ in
repentance and faith.**

MARCH
PERFECTLY ONE
STUDIES

“

*The glory that you have
given me I have given to
them, that they may be one
even as we are one, I in them
and you in me, that they may
become perfectly one.”*



WEEK 1 // COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY

ABIDE IN ME || 15:1-17

PAGE 6

WEEK 2 // DISCIPLESHIP STUDY

DISCIPLESHIP

PAGE 8

WEEK 3 // COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY

HE WILL GUIDE YOU || 16:5-15

PAGE 6

WEEK 4 // DISCIPLESHIP STUDY

THE GOSPEL

PAGE 10

WEEK 5 // COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY

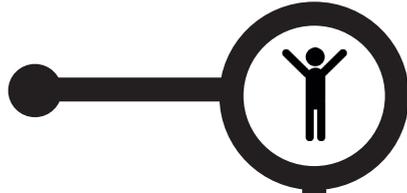
SANCTIFIED IN TRUTH || 17:6-19

PAGE 6

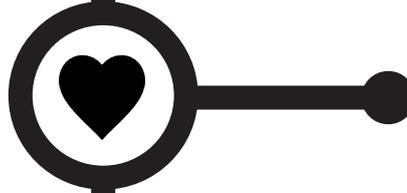


CARING FOR EACH OTHER

What are you thankful for this week?



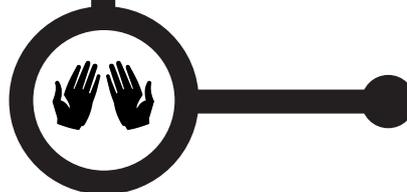
What burdens are currently on your heart?



What are some needs that we can meet in our community this week?



Spend some time bringing these things before our God in prayer.



STUDY QUESTIONS

Ask someone in your group to read the passage out loud

Close your Bibles. Have one member of the group retell the story in their own words. After they are finished, fill in any gaps they may have missed.

Open your Bibles and check if there's anything in the story you've forgotten.

After you've finished, work through these four questions together:

What does
this passage
tell us about
God?

What does
this passage
tell us about
ourselves?

What is this
passage asking
us to do?

Who can we
share this
message with
this week?



DISCIPLESHIP STUDY // WEEK 2

Aim: To read the gospel, hear each other's stories and be encouraged to live in gospel community.

Passage: Romans 1:1-6.

Question one:

How did you become a Christian?

Question two:

What part did the gospel play in your experience? Was it a sudden understanding or did it take a while?

Question three:

What impact has the gospel had on...

- (i) How you think about God?
- (ii) How you think about Christians?
- (iii) How you think about people in general?
- (iv) How you live life?

Question four:

What is a gospel issue you are wrestling with right now?

Question five:

How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you?

How would others describe you?

Question six:

Read the excerpt on the next page.

What do you think of this vision of a gospel community? What excites or terrifies you about it?

"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Hebrews 3:13). Look at the phrase at the end of Hebrews 3:13: "the deceitfulness of sin". Another way of phrasing it would be "the misleading attractiveness of sin." Sin deceives us. It does not come straight up to us and say, "Hi, it's sin here! You do want me, don't you?" It deceives us. It creeps up on us, camouflaged. It seems so reasonable:

- "Of course you've got a right to be angry. They had no right to treat you like that!"
- "Of course you ought to sleep together. You've been going out for ages, and you are planning to get married."
- "Of course you should go out with him tonight. You need someone to show you some appreciation and care, and your husband never does."

It happens in so many other ways, but all are subtle and devious. Our hearts are hardened by sin's deceitfulness, which means that we are often the last ones to notice it. Fortunately, others can, and often do. That is one reason why being part of a gospel community is so vital. However, for this to help us to be more godly, we need a certain level of relationship. Relationships on a superficial level can hardly help us to spot sin as it creeps over our hearts. We need friendships that are real, meaningful and intimate. These cannot be an optional extra. We need friends to whom we can give a "fishing licence" by saying, "When you talk to me, fish. Find out what you can about my life." We need to give them permission to challenge us, and our promise to them is that we will make it relatively easy for them to do what has to be done. We need to open ourselves up to their encouragement and challenge, make ourselves vulnerable to them while our hearts are soft, so that when they begin to harden, people are in place to take appropriate action.

Living in community like this involves taking responsibility for one another: it is hard work, and it means that all of us have responsibility for everyone in our community. It means we each have a responsibility to help people to help us. It is not easy, but it is vital. These relationships are not those achieved by simply "going to church" with someone, but rather by living life alongside one another and sharing our lives all week long: we need to be spotting things that crop up in everyday life, not waiting for a crisis to present itself and then "being there for people" as they work through the issues. Each of us needs to seize the opportunity. We need to give up indulging one another and offering false reassurances and get into the habit of living in this authentic community so as to help keep one another from hardheartedness.

Adapted from "Gospel Change Porterbrook Learning"



DISCIPLESHIP STUDY // WEEK 4

Aim: To begin with the core of the gospel and tease out some of its implications.

Passage: John 1:1-18.

Question one:

The gospel means “good news”. What is the good news of this passage for you? Why?

Question two:

Jesus is essential to the gospel (it’s all about Him!). Three areas we could see Jesus’ work are...

(i) Dealing with the darkness of the world’s sin

(ii) Knowing God

(iii) Declaring the gospel (so others will know God)

(a) Which of the above are you most apathetic about / easily take for granted? Why?

(b) Which of these do you try to squeeze Jesus out of and take into your own hands? Why?

(c) How do you try to squeeze Jesus out?

Question three:

The antidote to all this is to come back empty-handed to the gospel once again and put ourselves in Jesus’ care afresh.

Read the excerpt on the next page

What is one aspect of the gospel and Jesus’ work that you would love to appreciate and dwell in more richly?

Question four:

Meeting in pairs or groups to remember the gospel and Jesus’ work is helpful for being continually “in it”. What encouragement can we get in the gospel day-to-day, moment-by-moment, without the help of others?

The centrality of the gospel for change

Paul writes, “the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth” (Col. 1:5-6). The language shows that we do not simply learn the gospel when we are converted and then move on from there. Instead, ongoing change also takes place by the gospel. It is only as we grow in our understanding of the gospel in all its vast implications and applications that we find our lives bearing fruit. We never grow beyond the gospel. It is what we need to hear and understand to become a Christian. It is also what we need to hear and understand in order to grow as a Christian. It is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16) — not just for the initiation of salvation, but for its completion as well. The gospel’s power is experienced as it is more profoundly believed and appropriated. Many of our problems arise from our failure to understand and apply the gospel. The key to continual and deeper spiritual renewal is the continual rediscovery of the never-ending depths of the gospel.

What is the gospel?

The gospel is this: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). We are so sinful, lost and helpless that only the life and death of the Son of God can save us. However, the gospel also says that those who believe in his life and death are now “holy and blameless and above reproach before him” (Col. 1:22-23). Another way of putting the gospel is this: *you are more sinful and flawed than you ever dared believe, yet at the same time you are more accepted and loved than you ever dared hope, because Jesus Christ lived and died in your place.* The gospel – as Martin Luther wrote – means we are “simul justus et peccator” — “both righteous and sinful simultaneously.” When we realise that we are still sinners, it humbles us and makes us recognise our limitations. When we realise we are, nevertheless, dearly loved children and holy in his sight on account of Christ, it exalts us and gives us confidence in the right place: Jesus Christ.

This acceptance which the gospel brings is not merely a new standing with God; acceptance entails an indwelling. God does not accept us and yet keep his distance from us. It is not an acceptance granted grudgingly. The gospel message is that Christ, by His Spirit, lives in us. He is our constant companion whose power is at work within us. The good news is that we are given the gift of radical acceptance and radical indwelling. This is possible by Christ’s work alone.



VILLAGE CHURCH
2017