

UNIT 2 - BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR LIFE-ON-LIFE MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

True conviction leads to action

TRUTH

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

IN BIBLE

In this unit we will look at the biblical foundation for Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship and consider what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. With Jesus and His disciples as our model, we will also look at the why of Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship. Because it is important to know what the Scriptures say, there are more verses in this unit than most. From our biblical study you will be presented with a working definition of Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship.

Most Christians, pastors and leaders would agree that disciple-making – helping people become mature and equipped followers of Jesus – is biblical. As you begin this unit, think about this next question. If the majority of Christians know disciple-making is biblical, why do so few pastors, leaders and churches actually practice it in an intentional, incarnational and effective way? The purpose of this unit is to fortify a true conviction that will lead to action.

Luke 9:23-25

What is a disciple? What characterizes a disciple?

Luke 10:1-12

Jesus sent out 72 disciples to go before Him. What did Jesus tell these disciples to do?

Luke 8:1-3; 23:49, 55

Who else followed Jesus and ministered with the 12 disciples?

As Jesus was taking ordinary men and women and making them into disciple-makers, what are some of the ways He taught them to observe all that He commanded?

Matthew 4:19; Mark 3:14; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8 – When Jesus calls and commissions His disciples, He lays a foundation for what discipleship will look like.

What recurring themes do you see in these passages that help us understand Jesus' discipleship?

2 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 – Though the word discipleship is not used in these passages, they reflect some important discipleship principles in the ministry of the church after the life of Christ.

List some of the key principles you observe.

Acts 20:1-6 – This passage gives us a glimpse of Paul’s long-term relationships to develop leaders. 4 He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus (Romans 16:21) from Berea, Aristarchus (Acts 19:29, 27:2; Colossians 4:10) and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe (Romans 16:23), Timothy also, and Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7- 9; 2 Timothy 4:12) and Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20) from the province of Asia. 5 These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). 6 But we sailed from Philippi after the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

If you are interested, look up some of the cross references above and make some observations about Paul’s relationship with each of these men.

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Read the following foundational verses and describe the characteristics that make a Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship movement. This will require some reflection. An example would be Mark 3:14: “Disciples were chosen to be with Him.”

Matthew 4:19-22

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Matthew 28:18-20

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Luke 6:40

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Acts 4:13

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Acts 4:32-37

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Colossians 1:28-29

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1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

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2 Timothy 2:1-2

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TO SUMMARIZE

We can see throughout the Scriptures that discipleship is a biblical concept and is, in fact, the very mission of the church. A brief survey of the Scriptures reveals a few key concepts that help us understand what discipleship is. These concepts can be summarized in a pattern of life: with and sent, as well as a calling: follow me.

First, let's look at the pattern of life: with and sent. God with His people is a central theme in all of Scripture. Even before the creation of the world, we have a picture of this with-ness in the Trinity. The early church fathers described this as an eternal dance of the Father, Son and Spirit sharing mutual love, honor, happiness, joy and respect. After creation, we have another beautiful picture of withness as God walks with Adam and Eve in the garden.

We can even see the beginnings of God's mission to send His people here in what some have called the cultural mandate found in Genesis 1:28; in His first words to the newly created man and woman, He tells them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. They are created by God and then sent to fill the earth. In Genesis 3, when sin enters the world through man's rebellion, the withness of God with man is broken and their sent-ness is cursed. Sinful man can no longer be in the presence of a holy God and their labor both in filling and subduing the earth is now painful and toilsome. But, Genesis 3 is not the end of the story; God is carrying out His plan of redemption through His presence with His people.

We see this with His covenant promises to Abraham in Genesis 12-17 as God leads Abraham on a tour of the land that His offspring will be given and declares His intention to be their God – which as we will see, implies that He will be with them. The future people of Israel will be sent into the Promised Land as a holy nation, to be attractive to the world around so that others might be drawn into the people of God. We see it again with Moses in several powerful pictures. First God promises to be with Moses as he is sent to deliver the people from their bondage in Egypt. Next, we see God's presence with His people as He leads them by pillar of cloud and pillar of fire out of their Egyptian slavery and through the wilderness.

We can begin to grasp how crucial God's presence is for His people in Exodus 33:1-16. Moses' words in verse 15 are a powerful summary: "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here." For Moses, it is not worth all the blessings of God if they do not have God Himself with them. Moses is also given instructions for the building of the tabernacle, God's dwelling place in the midst of His people, which is further demonstrated in the building and inauguration of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7). In both occasions, by pillars of cloud and fire, we see God's presence descend in the midst of His people. We could continue to trace God's promises of presence that accompany the people's mission throughout the Scriptures (Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, David, Solomon, Isaiah and Jeremiah are just a few examples), but space does not permit; so let's take a moment to focus on the fulfillment of the promises.

The prophet Isaiah foretells the coming of the Messiah who will be called Immanuel, which means God with us. Jesus shows up in the flesh, sent by God the Father. He is Immanuel (Matthew 1:23), sent to be with His people, to accomplish redemption and bring His people back into the with-ness they were designed for. Finally, God with His people again! But then Jesus says something unexpected to His disciples: "It is to your advantage that I go away. . ." (John 16:7). What? How can this be to their advantage? Because He is sending them out to be a holy nation, to proclaim the Gospel to the nations by word and deed, making disciples of all nations. In order for them to carry out their mission as the people of God, He will be with them always (Matthew 28:20), and in a way never before imagined. The presence of God – the Holy Spirit – will dwell in His people.

In Acts 2, the pillar of fire returns, but not in front of God's people or on the physical temple; this time it descends on each of their heads. God's people have become His temple, His dwelling place on earth. Their sent-ness is empowered by God's presence with – now in – them. But even this is not the end of the story. Revelation 21:3 paints the picture; picking up on the language of God's covenant with Abraham as we are promised ultimate with-ness for all of eternity: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

The other key concept that we see running through the Scriptures that helps us understand discipleship is the call to follow. To be a follower means that a person walks with and imitates the one whom they follow. Ultimately, the people of God are called to be followers of God. We see this constantly in the Old Testament (cf. Deuteronomy 10:12, 13:1-4; Isaiah 26:7-8).

Michael J. Wilkins, in his book *Following the Master* (pp. 58-59) says it well: "Following God is understood in a metaphorical sense of walking in the ways of God. Because God is holy, Israel is to be holy (Leviticus 11:44-45). Walking with God points to human life as a journey with God." When God's people follow Him, when we are "holy as He is holy," we are living out what it means to be His image bearers as we reflect His character in the world.

At this point, you may be asking, What does all this have to do with discipleship? When Jesus showed up on the scene in the first century, discipleship was already a cultural form of education. It was not a new thing; many great teachers and philosophers had disciples. But as in other areas of Jesus' life and ministry, we see Him take on the cultural form, expand and redefine it. And He does it first with the call: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). In this short little sentence, Jesus brings together the concepts of following God, with-ness and sent-ness as He lives out the definition for discipleship. Jesus' ultimate mission was to accomplish redemption for His people, but He also shows us what it looks like to be followers of God and demonstrates it through discipleship; then He commands His disciples to partner with Him in His redemptive work and disciple the nations.

It is clear as we continue to read the New Testament that Jesus' pattern of ministry was put into practice by His followers. This "follow me" concept was taken on in the imitation language of the New Testament, which may best be summed up in 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (see also: 1 Corinthians 4:16; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:7; Hebrews 6:12; 3 John 11).

We see this with/sent and follow me pattern demonstrated in the discipleship of the church throughout the New Testament. We can see it with Barnabas and Paul (Acts 11:25-26), with Barnabas and Mark (Acts 15:37-39), Paul and Timothy (Acts 16:3; 2 Timothy 2:2), and many others (see especially Acts 20:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:8).

So then, what is a disciple? A disciple is a follower. All Christians are Jesus' disciples, but we can also be disciples of others as they follow Christ and we can disciple others as we follow Christ. In Luke 9:23-24, we can see that the characteristics of a disciple are that they deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Jesus. Jesus then says that a true follower loses his life for Jesus' sake.

This is what Jesus modeled and commanded the apostles to do in the Great Commission. The apostles, in turn, discipled Jesus' way, and the spiritual generations we see in the rest of the New Testament did the same. Based on these foundational verses that you have studied, we see characteristics of Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship:

Mark 3:14 - Disciples were chosen to be with Him

Matthew 4:19-22 - Disciples followed to become fishers of men

Matthew 28:18-20 - Disciples were entrusted with a mission

Luke 6:40 - Disciples will become like their teacher Acts 4:13 - Transference of knowledge

Acts 4:32-37 - Life-on-Life happens in the context of community

Colossians 1:28-29 - The goal is spiritual maturity

1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 - Disciples ministered by sharing their lives and the Gospel

2 Timothy 2:1-2 - Discipleship can produce generations of spiritual multiplication

Based on the many examples and commands about Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship, here is a working definition:

Laboring in the lives of a few with the intention of imparting one's life, God's Word and the Gospel in such a way as to see them become mature and equipped followers of Christ, committed to doing the same in the lives of others.

From what we have studied so far, the why of Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship can be summarized in a few statements: Jesus did it, He had no plan B and He commands all true followers to make disciples. Motivated by Christ's love and growing in our understanding of what He taught and practiced, these are some implications and applications for the church today:

1. It is the most effective way to complete our assignment as a church as we follow Christ's model, the Great Commission, and 2 Timothy 2:1-2 to see spiritual multiplication of four generations and beyond.
2. It exposes the unbiblical practice of elevating the clergy over the laity and it involves all God's children in the building of His church. Making disciples is for all followers of Jesus, not just for some.
3. It reduces the need for expensive and ineffective church programs.
4. It offers the best way to foster high accountability in a safe environment of grace, truth and growth.
5. It creates an environment for careful pastoral care and shepherding.
6. It preserves the fruit of evangelistic efforts, as new believers will be most effectively matured and equipped to do the same with others.

7. It produces leaders for the church.

8. It is personal and relational. God is personal with us so that we can be personal and relational with others.

EQUIPPING

In this equipping section, we want to massage the truth so that it is understandable and usable. We will take the definition of Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship and process each significant aspect. This will help us develop and deepen our convictions so that obedient action takes place.

What mental pictures come to mind as you think about “laboring”?

What is the significance of laboring in the lives of a “few”?

What aspects of imparting one’s life are we interested in passing on?

What is significant about God’s Word and the Gospel in discipleship?

How you would describe a “mature and equipped follower of Christ”?

Why is being “committed to doing the same thing in the lives of others” so important?

What aspect of this definition gets you excited about being a part of this movement?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Discipleship Foundations Group meeting, reflect on the questions below. For this section, each person should be prepared to answer these three questions. These questions can be helpful for you to examine your life and ministry in light of the truths you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to deepen your conviction of the biblical foundation for Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship. We want to be held accountable to carrying out our Master’s command and the method of making mature and equipped followers of Jesus.

Where am I now? Rate the strength of your current conviction and practice of Christ’s Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship command. (Very Weak, Weak, Needs Strengthening, Strong, Very Strong

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Where would I like to be? Rate the strength of your desired conviction and practice of Christ’s life-on-life Missional Discipleship command. Very Weak, Weak, Needs Strengthening, Strong, Very Strong

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What are the next steps? Thinking about the next 10 Weeks, write down any questions which need to be answered, concerns you have, group discussions to have, training needs you have, and action steps you want to take.

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MISSION

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’”

Mark 1:17 (ESV)

At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and saw Peter and Andrew fishing with a net. Mark 1:17 records what Jesus said to them that day. Perhaps this verse is only a brief excerpt of a longer conversation, but it still captures in just a few words the essence of an essential command, a warm invitation and a hopeful promise. Did Jesus offer this invitation and promise only to twelve apostles? Doesn't He also promise to make every one of His followers fishers of men?

Throughout this year, the Mission section of The Journey has sought to motivate and equip you to become more effective in your mission as a fisher of men through word and deed. In the orientation material for The Journey, you read that learning to effectively share your faith is a key component in becoming a mature and equipped follower of Christ. Just as physical exercise produces physical development, your engagement in the mission to make the gospel known through word and deed is a spiritual exercise that drives spiritual hunger and thirst for God's Word and prayer, and these in turn drive spiritual growth. This is why The Journey has placed such a high priority on using life-on-life missional discipleship to better equip you to become a fisher of men. As a follower of Christ, you are called by Him and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a participant in the expansion of the Kingdom of God, and this ultimately feeds your soul so that you reach new depths of faith, hope, love, and joy in the Lord Jesus. Let's review what you have learned about taking up Christ's mission so far:

1. Living – You learned that Christ's mission is to make His gospel known to all people. Those who receive His gospel become motivated and empowered by it to become participants in His mission. Therefore, His followers' mission is to make the gospel known through word and deed to the least and lost across the street where they live, work, and play, across the track to those who may be culturally or economically distant, and across the ocean.

2. Praying – You learned to develop the grace commitment of daily prayer for the individuals or groups to whom you want to make the gospel known. Your prayers are never wasted because God has chosen to expand His Kingdom through the instrument of your prayers. As you pray faithfully and fervently, you can expect God to answer by providing you with fruitful opportunities to make the gospel known through word and deed.

3. Serving – You learned that missional living includes demonstrating the gospel through service to the least and the lost. You and your Journey Group partnered together to get a taste of what it's like to engage in missional service. Whether as individuals or in teams, missional followers of Christ pray for and look for opportunities to demonstrate the power of the gospel to those in need.

4. Telling – You learned to tell a brief, attractive story about your spiritual journey and how you came to trust in Jesus. The genuineness of your own story is a powerful tool for those who engage in missional living. Perhaps you have had an opportunity to tell your story to someone on your prayer list. If not, keep praying for and looking for an opportunity. Remember the promise, *"I will make you become fishers of men"* (Mark 1:17).

5. Dialoguing – You learned a non-threatening approach for bringing spiritual life into conversations so that you could introduce The Answer and invite someone to investigate spiritual life with you using the Life Issues booklets.

This is great equipping, right? But it means nothing if you aren't actively engaged in missional living. Being a missional follower of Christ requires being just as intentional about the missional aspect of your spiritual life as you are about your personal worship. To develop the habit of personal worship, you must have a simple plan (when? where? what? how?) and set aside a specific time. It has to be on your daily calendar. In the same way, if you are going to grow in missional living, you have to plan for it. This includes creating a simple plan to make the gospel known to specific people, setting aside time for those activities, and sometimes even earmarking a portion of your budget.

But let's face it, many Christians feel apprehensive about sharing their faith (word) and just never seem to get around to demonstrating their faith (deed). They worry about the awkwardness, being perceived negatively, or just flat out being rejected. These are legitimate concerns. And, in reality, there are very few Christians who have a natural boldness and skill at engaging people in spiritual conversation, or a natural love of serving others. As a result, many Christians aren't mindful to look for opportunities and they devote little or no thought to living missionally. But since Scripture is clear that God both calls and equips His people to be active in making the gospel known, any concerns you have should not prevent you from seeking to live the most effective missional life you can. As you intentionally devote yourself to missional praying, serving, telling, and conversing, you will begin to become aware of the opportunities God is placing in your way, and He will use your personality, life experience, and devotion to make you a uniquely effective fisher of men.

During this section of The Journey, you will be challenged to create and follow through on a simple plan to make the gospel known through word and deed. However, your Mission assignment for this week is only to do a little self-examination via the questions on the next page. Be prepared to share your thoughts at your next Journey Group meeting.

How have you been actively engaged in missional living, praying, serving, telling, and conversing during this year in The Journey? Be specific.

What are the most significant obstacles you face that prevent you from being more engaged in missional living?

What do you believe needs to change in your life for you to be more intentional and more engaged in missional living?

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SUPPLICATION

“A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’ 8(For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 9The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?’ (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

John 4:7-10 (ESV)

When you pray, do you realize who you are praying to? Like the woman at the well, we need to recognize who we direct our prayers to. God has spiritual gifts He is willing to give us. If you are a parent or grandparent, ask God to give you wisdom and understanding to influence your children in a godly way. Ask Jesus to fill you with living water.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

My prayer request regarding living a missional life:

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Prayer requests from others in my group:

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