

“Spiritual Discipline, then, is developing soul reflexes so that we know how to live. We discipline ourselves to develop soul memory in normal times so that we’ll be equipped for the times so the times of high demand or deep crisis.”

Douglas Rumford

Discipling - Spiritual Discipline

Desire: To be in a relationship where I am encouraged or where I encourage another to become an apprentice of Jesus.

Definition: Discipling is the process of equipping and training and encouraging another in his or her apprenticeship to Jesus. It means journeying with and helping another to grow in knowledge as well as the virtues and character of Christ.

In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus tells his followers that they are to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Making disciples is the God-given agenda for the church. That agenda is more than “saving souls.” It involves helping people make the transformational journey into Christlikeness. Disciple makers give light and hope and help to those willing to be intentional about their growth.

Discipling typically happens when believers meet around the word of God to spur on another on to love and good deeds. Often a more mature Christian disciplines a younger one in a Paul-Timothy relationship. But it is also possible for a group of two or three peers to disciple one another through meeting and studying together. Though the Holy Spirit is ultimately responsible for a disciple’s growth, the disciplemaker has a part to play. Disciplemakers seek to help others grow in loving God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. Discipling someone includes introducing them to a number of spiritual practices, relationships and experiences that can help them mature in their faith. A discipling relationship may focus on Bible Study, lectio, book discussions, varieties of Prayer, lifestyle choices, mentoring in areas of service, stewardship, hospitality, self-care and witness.

Just as parents long to see their children reach their potential, so disciplemakers long for the world to experience the impact of lives apprenticed to Jesus. The book of Acts records how the Holy Spirit “turned the world upside down” through the lives of Jesus’ first disciples. Jesus is still looking for disciples. And the Holy Spirit is still able to turn the world around through lives of people committed to keeping company with Jesus.

Reflection Questions

1. What do you think the difference is between being a Christian and being a disciple?
2. Talk to God about the desires and fears you have related to being a disciple of Jesus.
3. Discipline and Disciple come from the same root word. What sort of reaction do you have to the word *discipline*?
4. Does being a disciplined apprentice of Jesus appeal to you? Why or why not?
5. Who do you want to become? What do you want to be remembered for when you die?
6. How are you intentionally partnering with God to become who he intended you to be?

Spiritual Exercises

1. To discover where you are in your discipleship journey, draw a lifeline marking out seven year segments. In each segment write down the factors that shaped your growth in Christ. Are there particular disciplines that formed you? Have the disciplines changed with the seasons of your life? Where are there gaps in knowledge or experience in your journey?
2. What disciplines resonate with the desires of your heart today?
 - Do you sense God Calling you into a new practice, relationship or experience that can help you grow as a disciple?
3. How would you describe the people who have helped you grow in your spiritual journey?
 - What particular gift did they give to you?
 - What have you learned from them about yourself and God about each person?
 - How can you express your thanks to each of these people?
4. Who have you intentionally given yourself to for the sake of their growth in Christ? List their names. Beside each name write what it was like for you to walk with them. Where were you challenged? How did you experience God in each relationship?
5. If you have children at home, consider how you are reflecting the life of Jesus in your interaction at home. What would you like for them to learn about Jesus from you?
 - Imagine Jesus in each of the rooms of your house. What is he enjoying?
 - Who is he caring for?

- How can you thoughtfully model the virtues of Jesus' life in your relationships with your children?

Resources on Discipling

Discipleship Essentials by Greg Ogden

The Good and Beautiful Life: Putting on the Character of Christ by James Bryan Smith

Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Christ by Kyle Idleman

Reference

Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us
(IVP Books, Illinois 2005) page 155-157