

Disciples Making Disciples

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[0:00] I'm sorry to burst your bubble, but I will be preaching yet again in Matthew.! We're just trying to squeeze all the juice out of this thing, you know? But if we preached on the last passage already, then what am I going to be preaching on?

Today's sermon will be out of the norm as I'll be preaching on the same exact text as last week, but really just focusing in on two words, two key words that we want to lead the church in. And those two key words are make disciples. To make disciples is what we want to lead the church in.

So I'll be preaching more of a topical, applicational sermon this morning, really building off of Sean's expositional sermon from last week. And we don't want to just fly over this quickly, but we want this command to shape us as a church, to infiltrate the culture of our church, so that when people think of Trinity Cambridge, they don't just say, oh, the music's really good, or the people are really friendly.

But when they describe us, they would say, man, that church is a disciple-making machine. But regardless of whether we preach a topical or expositional sermon, the best of what I have to say, of what any preacher has to say, it really just comes from God's word.

[1:31] So today, even today, it is right and appropriate for us to open up our Bibles and to hear from him. Let's open up our Bibles to Matthew 28, verses 16 to 20.

If you are in need of a Bible, a physical copy, feel free to raise your hand, and we'll be happy to get you a Bible that you could take home with you, use for now. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Heavenly Father, this is your church. these are your people. I pray that you would speak to us and address us from your word today so that we feel the call to be faithful to our ministries, to your church, to your people.

that as you've commanded us to make disciples, that you would stir up a fire, a passion, a desire to do that, to do that very thing, to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Father, I pray that you would help us to see rightly that we are small, we are insufficient for this task, but that in this time that you would expand our vision of you so that you would not be a small God but a big God and a God who has promised to use us, broken vessels, weak vessels, but nonetheless, you have assured us that you will be with us until the end of the age and from that, we feel the confidence to be able to go forth and be faithful to the call that you have, you have, you've called on us, you've placed on us, Lord.

[3:22] We pray that you would help us to be faithful disciples to the, to the little sprouts that you have put in our midst.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. To honor God's word, let us rise, if you are able. Starting off in Matthew 28, verse 16.

Now the, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, 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. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. I don't think what I'm about to say is overstated or sensational.

[4:40] We have a discipleship crisis in American Christianity. We have a discipleship crisis in American Christianity.

For the past couple of years, Ligonier Ministries and LifeWay Research has teamed up to conduct a survey to figure out what do Americans really believe about God.

Specifically, they targeted and focused on a group who have self-identified as evangelicals. And so, this is our camp.

These are our people. But yet, hear what the state of their beliefs are from a survey from last year.

To this statement, God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism.

47% of evangelicals agree to that statement. Half of evangelicals believe that you could be a Muslim, you could be a Jew, and believe that Jesus was not God, believe that Jesus did not die for our sins, to the acceptance, to the glory of God.

[6:04] Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature. It's another statement. More than half of the Christians surveyed, 53%, don't think that you need the atoning sacrifice of Jesus because you yourself are good enough.

53% would agree to that statement. Or every Christian has an obligation to join a local church. One third, one third of confessing evangelicals would disagree with that.

One in three think that church is just completely unnecessary. And it's not just basic theology that we are lacking in. We also lack faithful obedience.

Scripture teaches us that it is more blessed to give than to receive and to live a life of radical generosity. And yet, it's surveyed that less than or more than half of evangelicals give less than 1% of their annual income away.

And it's no secret that the church has a pervasive problem with poor news. In other surveys, 64% of born-again Christian men and even 44% of women admit to struggling with pornography regularly.

[7:30] Or take divorce and remarriage. A Barna study found that born-again Christians divorce at the exact same rate as the national average.

It's virtually indistinguishable. And those statistics can paint Christians in a bad light, but it doesn't tell you the whole picture.

Because what the data does not tell you is that those in the church who are spiritually engaged, who are active in the church, consistent in Bible reading, they have radically different numbers.

As an example, the generosity levels among evangelicals who read their Bibles daily are 582% higher than those who never read their Bible ever.

One national study found that young people who rarely or never attend religious services saw their pornography use increase nearly twice as fast as those who attended frequently.

[8:37] Or sociologist Bradley White writes, analysis shows that the number of divorces is nearly double for those who are disengaged in the church versus those who are actively engaged.

So what do those numbers tell us? It's the same population, those who are self-identifying as Christians, as evangelicals, and yet their differences could not be more pronounced.

One group is not actively being disciplined while the other is being actively disciplined by the church, by scripture, by the ordinary means of grace that God has established.

And their differences cannot be more pronounced. The investment shows these two groups produce wildly different fruit. So I think that tells us that we have an incredible dearth of deep discipleship in the American church.

church. The solution then to reverse this crisis is rather simple. We are to make disciples and we are to do it in Jesus' way.

[9:52] By the grace, by the power of Jesus Christ, our chief, our great discipler, we are to make mature disciples of Jesus Christ by teaching them to follow everything that he has commanded us.

That's the main goal of my sermon, to help us do that, to be faithful to that call. So to help us understand how to make disciples, we are going to survey scripture to answer these three simple questions about disciple making.

What does it mean to make disciples? What do we mean when we say that? Why? Why do we have to make disciples? disciples and how? How can we practically, even this very week, make disciples?

The Great Commission is the foundational text that has fueled mission efforts all across the world. And rightfully so. To make disciples means that we must share the gospel and by the power of the Spirit lead them to make public profession of their faith by getting baptized.

Acts 14, 21 also uses the same verb to make disciples to describe Paul and Barnabas as they travel to the city called Derbe. And they preach the gospel there for the very first time.

[11:15] So integral to disciple making is evangelism, right? Outward discipleship. And time and time again you have heard from this very pulpit the application, the call to be bold, to overcome our fear of man and to share the good news to our unbelieving friends, neighbors, our families.

We talk about evangelism, we pray for evangelism, we teach about evangelism, we allocate church budget towards evangelism. Evangelism is an indispensable part to fulfill the Great Commission. but evangelism alone cannot capture the totality of what it means to make disciples.

For the work of discipling does not stop when someone gets a little wet when they get baptized. If you remember last week, Sean helpfully observed how the main verb in the Great Commission is to make disciples, right?

That's the main command, the main imperative, but it also has all these other words around it to explain what it means to make disciples.

[12:36] You have all these verbal adjectives, right? Going, baptizing, and the third and final one is teaching, to teach. At its very core, what discipling means is to teach, to teach our disciples to obey what?

All that Jesus has commanded us. We are to obey, we are to teach them to obey every single one of Jesus' commands. But how can they obey his commands if they don't even know them?

And how are they to know them if we don't teach them from his word? So we ought to teach people what and how to obey Jesus in accordance to God's word.

But the word provides more than just the what's and the how's to obey Jesus in everything. But arguably more importantly, it teaches us the why's.

Our disciples need to have a robust theology and an understanding of who God is, who we are, what sin is, what righteousness looks like.

[13:51] They need to be able to see and understand the world in the same way that God sees and understands the world. In other words, they need to be disciplined to have a biblical worldview and a value system, not just one that's imported in from the rest of this world.

And that's precisely why Paul says in Romans 12 too, Paul teaches us, not to be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The Bible, you guys know, isn't a rule book, a handbook that tells us exactly what to do in every single situation. But if we are steeped in the word of God, if our disciples have the word of God part of them, if it's part of their natural reasoning and thinking, then they're going to be able to discern the will of God and obey him in all scenarios.

And so the word of God not only informs, but it actually forms us into mature disciples of Jesus Christ. But it's not just teaching them to know rightly, but they have to love rightly.

Jesus claimed that all of the law can be summed up into two simple commands. To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

[15:24] That's the whole of the law, to love, to cherish, to treasure, to adore Jesus with every fiber of your being. That's the whole of the law.

And so if our disciples, if we are to teach our disciples to obey everything that Jesus has commanded, it must entail passing on to others an adoration, a treasuring of Christ.

Well, I could teach theology, I can teach doctrine, but how do you teach someone to love something? We do it all the time.

Why do you like that band or that sport? Or that hobby? Perhaps you really got into it yourself, but I'd bet for a lot of us, a lot of what we love is because we saw someone else love that thing first.

They walked us through why baseball is a beautiful game and why violin is just a beautiful instrument. Sometimes you need to watch someone love something so that you can love it yourself.

[16:37] And that's the effect that we ought to have in our disciples. Because really without it we lose all power for obeying.

I love this analogy from this author, Barry Cooper, who imagines a dancer. She's dancing beautifully with poise and style and grace.

More importantly, she's dancing with so much joy. You can just see it right on her face. She's just lost in the moment. And you look a little closer and you figure out why.

She's got some earbuds in. And she's listening to the music that she loves the most in this world. she's totally captured by what she is hearing.

Now a second person comes in and she watches the first person dance and she's so compelled that she thinks to herself, gee, I'd love to dance like that.

[17 : 45] So watching her, she tries to mimic her moves, her style, her grace. And maybe it works a little bit at first, but there's a clear difference and a clear problem.

She doesn't hear the music. The music isn't driving her dancing. And so the movement is clunky, hesitant, self-conscious.

It doesn't really seem like she's enjoying herself. And so all in all she just quits. She packs up her bags and goes home while the first one is still going strong.

Cooper continues, making disciples of Jesus Christ falls short of its goal. If all that we're telling people to do is to copy our moves, study the Bible, go evangelize, fight sin, go to church, pray more, while we do relatively little to help them hear the music, the beautiful music that must drive it all. It's the song of Christ, a love and an adoration of Christ. If we are teaching disciples to obey everything that Jesus has commanded, it must entail teaching others, helping others to love, adore Christ for who he really is.

[19 : 10] For without hearing that music, they're never going to last. And so we have knowledge, right? We have knowledge that blooms into love, that finally ought to produce the fruit of obedience.

We don't just make hearers of the law, but we make doers of the law, the whole law, not just the easy commands or our preferred commands, but all of Jesus' commands.

We teach them to obey. And there's a really part of your life where you can hang up a sign that says does not apply. Jesus' commands does not apply here.

How we should parent, how we should spend our money, how we should relate to our boss at work, Jesus has given us commands to obey, and so we teach others to do it all faithfully.

So in all things, we seek to make well-rounded disciples. By what? By addressing a disciple's head, heart, and hands. Head, heart, and hands.

[20 : 18] Without neglecting any, you have to address all three. If you only address the head, making sure that your disciple thinks all the right things, then you end up with a malformed, bobble-headed disciple.

One that's good at Bible trivia or theology quizzes, but has no love in his heart or service towards others. If you address only the heart, making sure that your disciple feels all the right things, then you end up with a malformed, big-hearted disciple, full of feelings, but easily carried about by every wind of doctrine, easily discouraged, easily deceived, or only really acting, one that acts only when he or she feels like it.

if you address the hands only, only making sure that your disciple does all the right things, then you have a malformed, busy-handed disciple, one who just does a bunch of stuff without really knowing why, or without any love.

Like a three-legged stool, we cannot take one leg without the whole thing toppling over. And so this is our goal, to do what Paul writes, when he writes in 1 Corinthians 1.28, him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. To present our disciples, to help each other be mature in Christ, is the goal that we strive for with all our energy and effort. That might sound like a lot to hold together, but don't let that scare you off from this desire to make disciples.

[22 : 09] And I love how Pastor Mark Dever puts it simply. It's simply, disciple making is simply helping others follow Jesus by doing deliberate spiritual good to them.

And with that broad kind of definition, there really is no single strategy in making disciples. From taking an unbeliever believer to a mature believer.

And so much of what goes on in the life of our own church, of many local churches, is fitting in that definition, is making disciples. You are discipling others at community group when you share a helpful insight, or when you model vulnerability.

You disciple others in the church when you model how to pray, when you go to prayer meetings, when you go to the Wednesday prayer meeting, or pre-service prayer. You even disciple others when you simply show up to church and sing as passionately as you can to the worship of God and other people can hear that.

And so I believe all, most if not all of you already engage in some form of discipleship, and you do it so well. But this morning I really want to highlight a particular form of discipleship.

[23:33] And it's the one-on-one, one-on-a-few, life-on-life discipleship. When you think of an example of a disciple in Scripture, who do you think of?

I guess that many of us would first think of Jesus' twelve disciples. When Jesus, the eternal word of God, God in the flesh, he decided to begin a new religious movement that would spread to billions and billions of people, changing the course of world history as we know it, how many people did he think to call first to disciple?

It was twelve. It was just twelve people over three years. Not only that, but even within the twelve, he had an even more select group with the inner three, Peter, James, and John.

Then you have examples like Paul and Timothy. Spiritual father Paul invested in Timothy from a young age, really as a father figure, calling him my true child in the faith.

He brings Timothy alongside him on missionary journeys. He gives him direct and personal counsel on doctrine and character. He gives him a lot of leeway and a lot of room to just explore ministry.

[24:56] tree. He gives him real responsibility. Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos, examples of this kind of intimate, highly relational, intentional, life-on-life discipleship is woven throughout scripture.

And really that kind of apprenticeship, highly relational model of discipleship is the exact kind of practice, the early church adopted and implemented, integrated into the culture of their church.

And so making disciples requires this level of focused investment in just a few people. That's all you're called to do, just invest in a few people. Why?

And why does it require only a few people? Because they know, we know, that making a disciple is not like manufacturing a rushed, mass-produced item sold on Timu for a buck.

But making a disciple is more akin to the work of a master craftsman who is painstakingly slow, intense, careful.

[26:12] He pours his heart into this labor. If it's that much work, though, to make a single disciple, then why would we ever want to do this?

First, making disciples is required for all. When I first joined staff here at Trinity, one of my first personal projects, I guess, was to come up with a discipleship program.

The gist essentially would be to come up with a training program where we would hand select and train a specific group of guys and girls that we present to the church as quote-unquote the disciples. If you wanted to be discipled, then great. We have this list. Go and ask any of these girls, any of these guys. And as the pastoral team and I, we were just wrestling over that plan, we believe that the Lord led us not to implement that.

And I'm so glad that he did. Because looking back, I think it might have just reinforced this false belief that disciple-making is just reserved for the elite, for the all mature, the all wise, the Christian superheroes.

[27:39] Rather, making disciples disciples is a non-negotiable, non-optional task for every single one of us.

Put simply, disciples make disciples. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you have to be making disciples. Don't just take it from me, but hear scripture from Ephesians 4.

Paul writes that he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Christians, what is the ministry of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers? It's not that they are to do all the ministry themselves.

Rather, their ministry, Sean and my ministry, is to equip you for ministry. Do you know that you, Christian, yes you, you have a ministry that you are responsible for?

[29:02] Do you speak like that? Do you use that kind of vocabulary? Do you feel responsible for and pray for your personal ministry? Today, we stand on the shoulders of faithful men called the reformers from over 500 years ago who saw very clearly ministry is not limited to just the priesthood.

And Bible reading and Bible teaching should not and cannot be limited to just the priesthood. No, no, no. They saw that if a church operates under that belief that it's only the priesthood who is to do

all the work, really, then that church is an anemic shell of what it could be.

It is an atrophied, disjointed, unhealthy body. But this is what a healthy body is supposed to look like. Paul continues in Ephesians 4.

Rather, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. When each part, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow, so it builds itself up in love.

When each part, each part is growing properly, then the church flourishes. When each joint comes together held together by love and a mutual desire to help each other follow Jesus, then we will grow to a full stature in Christ.

[30:38] That's really what a culture of discipleship can do in the life of a local church. Secondly, why should we make disciples? Discipleship can change someone's life.

Why? Because we are far more impressionable than you might think. You might even consider yourself to be. Every conversation that you have with somebody, every time you model behavior for someone, they are, even just a little bit, shaped by it.

Daily, we are disciplined by the people around us. the messages that we hear and the screens that we watch. We pick up thought patterns and ideas and passions and loves and patterns of speech and even little habits from the people that are around us.

But the reality is that as Christians, we don't live in a neutral world. We live in a world that is ruled by the power, by the prince of the power of the air.

An enemy that he is doing all that he can to disciple us away from Christ. What are you disciplined by? What are you disciplined by, friends?

[32:02] I can guarantee you that the American church lacks maturity and they gave the answers that they did in that earlier survey because they are more disciplined by TikTok influencers, novels like The Shack, and their Enneagram numbers than by their pastors and scripture and their church members.

But what is then the lifeline that we have as Christians in a world that is doing all that it can to destroy our faith? It is simply the discipleship of the church through the word.

You can have that kind of life-changing impact on somebody. Helping them follow Jesus better. And it's a myth.

You don't have to be an expert. You don't have to have a seminary degree to have this kind of impact. Pastor Tim Challies, he makes this helpful observation. The reality is that the great majority of the help people need or the counsel they seek do not require the input of experts, but merely of someone who loves God and has their Bible open.

Does it not astound you that God is so kind to use weak vessels like us that you could have that kind of outsized impact on someone's life?

[33:28] And honestly, I am a great example of that. I am exhibit A of the benefits of discipleship. I'm not much. But what I am today is by the grace of God through the ministry of specific men who have invested in me.

In me, if there are any right thoughts, any right loves, any right actions, it's simply because I caught that. I saw it modeled. I had it taught to me. I owe my life to the numerous men who have disciplined me.

Maybe one off, two off, reaching out to me, buying a meal, asking me how my walk with God is going. And I owe my life especially to the few specific men, both pastors and non-pastors, who have deeply, intentionally invested, poured into my life, talked with me for hours on end, who've dealt with my stupidity, who've answered my questions, who have laughed with me and cried with me. The reality is I hardly knew anything when I first came to Trinity. Sean and I reflected a little while back on a conversation we had when I was first beginning to be disciplined by Sean.

And I told him how I felt like I know so little of scripture. I don't know anything. I don't think I could be a pastor.

[34:59] I don't think I could pass these ordination exams. I think you got the wrong man, Sean. But I passed them. And I was ordained predominantly, I want to say, because of my bi-weekly Saturday morning meetings with Sean.

Honestly, I have been shaped more, formed more as a disciple and as a husband and as a father by those morning meetings more than just the seminary classes that I'm taking.

Looking back, it's astonishing to me how much that I could answer on my final oral exam at ordination simply on the basis of just remembering what Sean said that one time.

My own life has been transformed by discipleship. And God in his kindness could use you in the same exact way for another.

Speaking of church leadership, making disciples is the leadership pipeline. That's why we do it. Where else are we going to find our next pastor?

[36:08] Where else are we going to find our next missionary? Our next deacon or deaconess? Our ministry leaders. Establishing the culture of discipleship in our local church is setting up the necessary pipeline to be able to call faithful men and women to the work of ministry.

Unless you feel like this application of making disciples internally pulls us away from making disciples externally, I'd really just argue that it does the very opposite.

The church cannot make progress externally to the ends of the earth unless internally we are not making disciples mature enough to go. Outward mission and outward church planting, we have big dreams for that as a church, but that all depends on inward discipleship.

So maybe you are convinced that as a disciple of Jesus, you need to make disciples. I hope you even want to.

But you still nonetheless have this nagging feeling. This is way over my head. The excuses fly too easily off the tongue.

[37:29] I'm way too young for this. I don't know much. I'm not a good speaker and I'm not even a good enough Christian. I'm not impressive. Why would anyone listen to me?

That position of humility is appropriate. Who is adequate to make even a single disciple of Jesus Christ teaching them to obey all that he has commanded when we can't even do it ourselves? What qualifies a sinner like you and me to be able to do a work like this? What qualifications do you have? What qualifies us is not our skill, our righteousness, our knowledge, our personality, our wit, our education.

But what qualifies us is not what we have done, but what Christ has done for us, brothers and sisters. Because Christ has died for our sins.

We are no longer the old sinful man or woman, but you. You are a new creation. You were once enslaved to sin and trapped in the patterns of this world, but in place of what was old, Christ brought something new.

[38:47] And gospel transformation has overtaken your life, flipped your life upside down. He has taken the heart of stone that was in your heart for, what, decades, and he's replaced it with a heart of flesh so that it's soft towards him.

That you love him and obey him. That's what qualifies you. What qualifies you is not that you are an impressive, put-together Christian that has all their ducks in order.

But that qualifies you is that when you approach Jesus, you do so rightly. Prostrate before him, grabbing not even his torso or his legs, his feet humbly, desperately, you approach in the right way. That's what people need to copy. That's what people need to model after. We want them to capture that vision and see Christ as the glorious God. What qualifies you is that Emmanuel, God with us, that he's promised to be with us to the end of the age in verse 20, that he is in the business of making disciples, that he is the one who does the magic of disciple making, that he is the one who does the heavy lifting.

1 Corinthians 3, I planted a Paulus water, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

[40:19] So knowing that discipleship is not about you, it's not about you. It's not, you're entirely replaceable. And that's something that I need to get more into my own thick skull.

But yet still knowing that God in his kindness chooses to work in and through you, that he wants to work in and through broken vessels, jars of clay like us, then we ought to put less stock, less and less stock on what we can do and what God can do in and through us.

So we go forth in faith to make disciples of Jesus Christ. It's okay, you want to be faithful, but how? How? What do I do? A few things I just want to recommend you quickly. If you've never been disciplined, the recommended first step is to find somebody of the same sex to disciple you.

And it's fine if you don't really know them all that well. If there's somebody out there in this very church whom you see that, if you just talked with them and read the Bible with them, that you learn a lot, ask them.

[41:30] Ask them to disciple you. And trust me, you all have a lot to learn. We all have a lot to learn. It comes with the territory of being sinners.

And while you're being disciplined, resist, if you feel that, if you resist the urge to just settle into being disciplined.

As if that's it. But use your being disciplined to then fuel you to make disciples. So then take the next step to find somebody of the same sex to disciple.

In his commentary in Matthew, D.A. Carson, he notes that, this is like the third time you've probably heard this, that the main emphasis is clearly on the verb make disciples, right? But we also should not neglect the participle going.

We are the ones to take the initiative in going to the nations and going to others in disciple making. Not just expecting things to just fall in our lap.

[42 : 36] So when you're looking and praying for someone to disciple, then find somebody that you're just a little bit ahead of, at least a little bit ahead of. You don't have to be light years ahead, but just a little bit ahead.

If you're a young believer, then you're a little bit ahead of your unbelieving friend. If you're five years out of college, then you're a little bit ahead of the recent grad.

If you're a parent of a teenager, you're a little bit ahead of the parent with a toddler. It's not just about age, though. Don't let them despise you for your youth. If you've been faithfully walking with the Lord and have faithfully studied the Bible for 10 years at age 30, you have a lot to teach the recent 60-year-old convert.

If they're humble enough to receive it. All right, speaking of which, evaluate. Evaluate whether that person you want to disciple is this acronym FAT, right?

Faithful, available, and teachable, right? It's an acronym. Pray about it and then simply ask. Hey, brother. Hey, sister.

[43 : 49] Would you want to just get together regularly with me and open up scripture and study it with me? It's not rocket science. Dive together into scripture.

Go slowly through a book of the Bible. Read a helpful Christian book if that's necessary. Pray together. And most importantly, enjoy and behold Jesus together.

Share an earbud with them so that they too can hear the music, that they would be compelled to love and cherish Christ. Next, disciple in the context of the local church.

Right? There are too many benefits of discipling within the local church. But really quickly, first, these are the people that you've already covenanted with. We haven't made a covenant promise with every Christian in this world.

But you have made a specific promise to these very people that you will help them follow Jesus. Secondly, it builds off of the discipleship structure that we have in the life of the church, right?

[44 : 52] The regular life of a church, which includes preaching and community groups, Sunday classes, prayer meetings, utilize it in your discipling. How much easier does the work of discipling become when you can just build off of that instead of reinventing the wheel?

You could say, hey, you know, let's go to this Christian formation class together. Oh, if you don't know how to pray and you want to learn, just come to a prayer meeting with me. Oh, what did you think about that sermon?

What did you agree with or disagree with? And thirdly and importantly, discipling in the local church provides much-needed accountability. Discipleship is a great responsibility.

You're right to feel it. And you will be held accountable for the things that you do teach. Discipleship outside of a local church, it can drift into whatever the discipler prefers.

But discipling in the context of a local body where disciplers and disciples are accountable to the eldership, the shared common faith, and to the whole church body, that acts as a reliable safety net.

[46 : 02] So if you want accountability in discipling somebody, which I assure you, you want that, disciple them into the church. But also disciple them by opening up your life to them.

Right? Discipleship is best caught, not taught. And a cardinal rule of all writing is to show, not tell. Don't just explain what it means to be a faithful husband or a faithful wife, but show them.

Right? What better way to teach younger women to love their husband and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their husbands, as Titus 2 says, than to be invited into our homes.

What better way to teach a young man how to lead his family than just to invite him over and show him how you lead family worship? Maybe you feel like you're too busy to disciple someone right now.

But very easily, you can just invite him into what you've got going on in your life. Do you have to hit the grocery store? Do some yard work? Make your next year's budget? Do some yard work? [47 : 43] Do some yard work about discipleship? Do you get all fired up about it until you get slammed with four projects at work? Or the person that you're discipling cancels on you for the fifth time?

Or you feel like your discipling just doesn't have that much impact? Or even the person that you're discipling is continually pushing back on you, disagreeing with you, then I encourage you to disciple with perseverance. So much fruit can occur if you just persevere. Pastor David Mathis shares his experience about disciple making, and this is true of myself. A common denominator of my disciple making experience over the years has been that in the end, the investment proves manifestly more fruitful than it typically feels in the process. Of course, it can be wise to stop a discipling relationship. You need not needlessly push through. Know that you are not solely responsible for this person's salvation, right?

It takes a village. Someone else can come in and disciple that person, and if a relationship doesn't work out, a discipleship relationship doesn't work out, learn from it, and then simply move on to the next person. Don't stop making disciples after a few bumps in the road. And finally, don't stop making disciples even when you are not here. The pastoral team, we're under no illusion that many, if not most of you guys, will not be members at Trinity Cambridge for the next 10, 20, 30 years. We know that we are a church in a transient area. Many of you guys will go to different cities, different churches, even in different countries. Recently, again, we were lamenting together just how hard it is. And it is really hard to lose the people, to see them move away, and to lose them to other churches in other places. And yet we take solace that when you do go to these other churches, these other cities, in these other countries, you will carry the message of the gospel with you, and that you will be faithful to the task of making disciples. You will meet up with folks to study scripture, to pray, to disciple them, teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded. You will work to reverse this discipleship crisis that we have here in America for the glory of God by making mature disciples who obey everything. You will make disciples not to prove your worth, not to have God to finally accept you, but because you already have that assurance. You already have the assurance that God will walk with you until the end of the age, but you make disciples simply because you love Jesus.

And he, you know, he's just the best thing. And you want others to see that too. And so when I remember in heaven that I'll get to speak with all the people that you have disciplined, the people that you have encouraged and loved, poured your life into, and they share the testimony of your faithfulness, my heart fills with joy. So whether we are here in Cambridge, in San Diego, Tokyo, or Ankara, Turkey, right, we make it our lifelong aim to make disciples and to love him. Let's pray. Our heavenly Father, we do ask for your strength and power and grace to help us to be faithful to the task you have called us, that we would not look to the left, we would not look to the right, but that we would keep our eyes on the prize, that we would keep our eyes focused on the goal to be faithful to make disciples, to be your hands and feet here on earth. Lord, we are small and weak and foolish, and we make a mess of it so often. So Lord, please forgive us when we do. Please forgive us when we do. We've messed it up too often. But thank you, Lord, that you use, you invite us into the work of ministry.

[52 : 28] You're not just the frustrated dad who pulls away the tool from his son, saying, you're too slow, you're too incompetent, you're not good enough. But as a loving father, you invite us into the work, and you change us, transform us along the way. Thank you, Lord, for who you are and what you're doing. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.