

Message & Mission | Discipleship | Encouragement

Date: May 21, 2023

Text: Various

Welcome

I love you.

Open your bibles to

(1 Thessalonians 2:6-12, NIV)

Thank you Keith for calling us to keep watch over our hearts and guard against discord and dissension in the body.

As apostles of [Messiah]....9....***we preached the gospel*** of God ***to you.*** 10 You are

witnesses, and so is God, of how ***holy, righteous and blameless we were among you***

who believed. 11 For you know that ***we dealt with each of you*** as a father deals with his

own children, 12 ***encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God***

who calls you ***into his kingdom and glory.***

This is God's word.

Intro

We took a break last week, but for 8 weeks we've been working through the **Message and the Mission** of our church.

After Jesus' ascension, the apostles preached one message:

- 1) **The Restoration of All Things at the Day of the Lord**
- 2) **The Hope of the Messiah**
- 3) **The Cross and Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins**
- 4) **All confirmed by the Resurrection of the Dead**

Jesus said, "**You will be my witnesses (Acts 1:8).**" and **this** is what they bore witness to.

And based on that **message**, they lived on a certain **mission**:

- 1) **Worship:**
- 2) **Discipleship;**
- 3) **Evangelism;**

Discipleship

And last time I preached we looked at discipleship; *following Jesus on the narrow path;* unto and according to our destiny of the coming age, through

- **Martyrdom**
- **Obedience**
- **Self-denial**

Discipleship Culture

And today I wanna work through how we cultivate this sort of culture *in our church.*

So it's not just that

- Larry is following Jesus on the narrow path unto and according to his destiny in the coming age through martyrdom, obedience, and self denial,
- And Gaye's doing that
- Robert's doing that

But all of us encouraging one another on that path.

This is the **secondary purpose** of the church.

Primary is worship; pledging love, trust, and loyalty to God.

But second, and flowing out of that worship is this: walking and encouraging one another on the narrow path.

We do discipleship **together** and take responsibility for each other.

This is obvious, but we still need to say it.

The apostles had no grid for a solitary believer following Jesus apart from the community of disciples.

The letters are written to “y’all.”

(Php 1:6, CSB)

6 I am sure of this, that **he who started a good work** (He who called you to follow Him on the narrow path that leads to life) in **[y’all]** will carry it on to **completion** (and what’s Paul’s understanding of completion?) until **the day** of Christ Jesus.

The narrow path unto eternal life.

“Y’all” are gonna walk this path.

(Phil. 2:12–16, ESV)

Therefore, my beloved, **as [y’all] have always obeyed** (discipleship is obedience) **....work out [y’all’s] own salvation** with **fear and trembling**,

Walk soberly and watchfully on the path.

- Don't let each other drift over to that wide road that leads to death,
- but TOGETHER work this thing out.

(ESV 2 Peter 1:3-12)

His **divine power** has granted to us **all things that pertain to life** and godliness, (everything we need to walk that narrow path unto eternal life, He’s provided for us by giving us His very Spirit) **4.... he has granted to us his precious and very great promises**, (the regathering of Israel, the the glorification of Jerusalem, the resurrection of the dead, the restoration of all things) **so that through them** (through faith, trusting God to make good on His promises) **you may become partakers of the divine nature....** (you will be resurrected like Jesus is resurrected),

5 For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith** (You believe the gospel of the Kingdom, now gird yourselves up to walk the path that leads to it) **with virtue.... knowledge**, 6 **self-control**.... steadfastness,... godliness, 7 **brotherly affection**,.... love.

In the community

- that's been given the Spirit by faith
- that's believing the promises,
- you work these things out together
- with love for each other.

10 Therefore, (CSB: **brothers and sisters**) , **be all the more diligent** (do it on purpose) **to make your calling** (to inherit eternal life) **and election sure**, for if **[y'all] practice** these qualities **[y'all]** will never fall. 11 For **in this way**

In this church culture **that encourages one another in virtue and knowledge** and self-control and godliness, etc.

there will be richly provided for **[y'all]** (what? What's the end game of a church that encourages one another in discipleship?) an **entrance into the eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We're not in the kingdom now. But Peter says that through

- The Spirit
- And believing the promises
- And through the supplementing of each other with all the godly aspects listed there
- We will enter it when it comes.

Eschatology drives discipleship and discipleship is a corporate act.

It's a "y'all" act.

You have no hope of inheriting eternal life by yourself. The encouragement from the one another is absolutely essential.

So how do we do it?

1) Keep Hope Central

First, we keep hope central. We keep the goal central. We keep eternal life central.

(Heb 10:23-39, CSB)

23 Let **us** hold on to the confession of **our hope** (resurrection, etc) **without wavering**, since he who promised **is faithful**.

24 And **let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works**

25 not neglecting to gather together.... but **encouraging each other** (discipleship)

and all the more (and what's the reference point for our encouragement? **as you see**

the Day approaching....36 For [y'all] need **endurance** (cause it's a difficult and narrow

path) so that **after** you have done God's will (not before, after you've walked the narrow

path in this age), **[y'all] may receive what was promised**

(You may receive what you have hoped for, and faith will be sight)

Central to encouraging one another to follow Jesus with endurance; central to discipleship, **is hope in the Day of the Lord.**

(Ro 15:13, CSB)

13 Now may the God **of hope** fill **[y'all]** with all joy and peace as **[y'all]** believe so that

[y'all] may overflow **with (?) hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hope in this prayer concerns **verse 7-12**; Jesus is faithful to the promises made to Israel and Gentiles with faith will inherit it with them.

So he's praying that the community there would be **filled with that hope**, sort of as a capstone to the whole letter that's a pastoral encouragement to stay on the path.

So to stay on the narrow path HERE in Tonkawa, we have to keep hope central.

If the return of Jesus is minimized in our collective heart and mind, we're setting ourselves up to drift towards the broad path.

2) Gather

Second, to cultivate discipleship, to encourage one another on the narrow path, we gather.

(Heb. 10:24-25, CSB)

24 And let us consider how to **stir up one another to love and good works**

25 not neglecting to (?) gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but **encouraging each other...**

When we gather, we come to worship God and to encourage each other.

The aim of our meetings,

- whether Sunday worship,
- home groups,
- or prayer meetings,
- **is to encourage each other,**
- to stir up one another in worship and obedience to Jesus until the Day.

I need this Sunday meeting with these people to stay on the path.

I need my home group to stay on the path.

This is how God has designed it.

And this is why we've had someone testify to Home Groups each week, because we want you to hear that **IT'S ACTUALLY WORKING; that our gatherings are not in vain and are more than another social club, they're a tool in the Lord's hand to encourage discipleship.**

- Sean / Helen / Rachel

3) Strive for Unity

Third, vital to encouraging each other on the path to life is striving for unity.

(NIV Philippians 1:27-29)

Whatever happens, ***conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel*** of Christ.

Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know

that [y'all] stand firm ***in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel***

28...This is a sign.... ***that you will be saved***-- and that by God..

A good indicator as to whether we're on the path or not is the level of our contending for this thing together.

See Keith's sermon last week.

4) Cultivate Spiritual Gifts

The 4th way we encourage each other on the narrow path is through the Spirit's gifts.

(CSB 1 Cor. 1:6-8)

In this way, the testimony about Christ was ***confirmed among you***,⁷ so that you ***do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation*** (revealing/appearing) ***of our Lord Jesus Christ***.

So the gifts are given in light of Jesus' return.

8 He will also (through these gifts, do what?) ***strengthen [ya'll] to the end***, so that you will be ***blameless in the day*** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Does that make sense? That's what the gifts are for. In chapter 14 he'll say they are for

"12, edification of the church."

(Eph 5:15-21, CSB)

15 Pay careful attention, then, ***to how you walk*** (pay careful attention to the path you're on) 18...[not with] reckless living (broad path living), but ***be filled by the Spirit***...

The gift and gifts of the Spirit, administered through the church's different members,

1) to testify to the age to come (Heb 6), and

2) to encourage us to stay on the path that leads to life.

From the Spirit, through the members, we need:

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Faith
- Miracles
- Prophecy
- Discernments
- Languages
- Interpretation
- Serving
- Teaching
- Giving
- Mercy
- Etc.

5) Pray & Fast

Next, central to encouragement on the path to life is to fast and pray together.

The prayer Jesus taught is

a) Corporate

“Our Father”

b) Aimed at the coming Kingdom

“Kingdom come”

c) Discipleship/narrow path based

“Forgiveness...not going after temptation...”

Peter encourages disciples in this:

(1 Pe 4:7–8 NIV)

7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.

The Day of the Lord is coming.

Disciples have to watch and pray **so as to be ready.**

As disciples on the narrow path, we give ourselves to regular prayer privately and together, and **we wanna combine that with fasting, why?**

Because fasting drives us to weakness. And weakness drives us to prayer.

Fasting reminds us that we're not sufficient to stay on the narrow path ourselves, and

we need the power of the Spirit.

And when we recognize need, like children, we ask:

(CSB Rom. 8:22–26)

—we also **groan within ourselves**, eagerly waiting for adoption, **the redemption of our bodies.....**²⁶ In the same way **the Spirit also helps us in our weakness.**

because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings.

- Regular prayer: meetings, homegroups, Sunday
- Regular fasting: Mon eve-Tues eve

6) Instruction & Imitation

Saving the most important for last, discipleship is instructing each other, in word and example; imitation & instruction.

(Romans 15:4,14)

4 For whatever **was written** in former days (the Tanakh, Paul's scripture) **was written for**

(?) **our instruction** (for our training; for discipleship) **that through endurance and**

through **the encouragement of** (?) **the Scriptures** we might have **hope**. (hope in what?

Resurrection, eternal life, etc)

Paul understands God's means for our instruction, our endurance, and encouragement **to come from the scriptures.**

The scriptures are absolutely necessary for discipleship; that's why they were written.

But **who and how** does Paul assume this instruction, endurance, and encouragement from the scriptures will be disseminated?

What's his plan for the scripture to be cultivated among the church?

14 I myself am satisfied **about you**, [CSB, **my brothers & sisters**, that **you yourselves** are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and (?) **able to instruct one another.**

You. Not just pastors. Not just teachers.

The members. The one another.

Paul's (*and God's!*) plan for discipleship is not just for

- Joe to teach a class
- or for Josh to preach a sermon,
- it's for Sean to have a bible
- and Tyler to have a bible
- and for them to both read that bible
- and encourage each other with what they've read.

Instruction from the scriptures is necessary for discipleship.

(Hebrews 3:13-14)

13 But **encourage each other** every day,

Got it. With what? The promises of God. The truth that God is not a liar and is really going to raise us from the dead. Do that...) as long as it is called "today," (why?) that none of you **may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

(So that none of you lose your hope and drift towards the broad road)

14 For **we** have come to share in Christ, **if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.**

And the author of Hebrews assumes you're gonna hold on to that confidence and stay on that narrow path **because someone else is encouraging you in it.**

*"Imagine if all Christians, **as a normal part of their discipleship,** were caught up in a **web of regular bible reading**.....reading it with their children before bed, with their spouse over breakfast, with a non-Christian colleague at work once a week over lunch, with a new Christian for follow up once a fortnight for **mutual encouragement,** and with a mature Christian friend once a month for **mutual encouragement.** It would be **a chaotic web of personal relationships, prayer, and bible reading**-more of a movement than a program - but at another level it would be profoundly simple and **within the reach of all.***

So we wanna cultivate that here. We wanna plan to meet with each other to read the bible together.

And if you're like, ***"Ahh I don't know how to do that!"***

Go to our website or app, click **"Resources"** click **"Bible Study"** and then click on **"1 to 1 Bible Reading."**

But discipleship is not just instruction, we gotta see it done as well.

Discipleship is instruction ***and imitation.***

This is the apostles model:

(NIV 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12)

As apostles of Christ....9....**we preached the gospel** of God **to you** (instruction) .10 You are **witnesses**, and so is God, of how **holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.**

It's instruction & imitation.

“You guys not only heard our message, you saw us walk it out in integrity.”

And why did they do this?

12 **encouraging**, comforting and **urging you to live lives worthy of God** who calls you **into** (where does that narrow path lead?) **his kingdom** and glory.

They're encouraging & urging them to stay on the path through instruction AND imitation.

(NIV 2 Timothy 4:1-8)

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, **who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom,**

I give you this charge:

“Timothy, in view of the Day of the Lord”

2 **Preach the Word**...correct, rebuke and **encourage**-- with great patience and **careful instruction**....

“Teach like I taught Timothy AND live like I lived”

7 I have **fought the good fight**, I have **finished the race**, I have **kept the faith.**

“I have walked the narrow path!”

And where does the narrow path lead? To life!

8 Now there is ***in store for me*** (I don't have it now) ***the crown of righteousness***, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me (when?) ***on that day***-- and not only to me, but also ***to all who have longed for his appearing.***

(to all who have walked the narrow path like me, and set their hope fully on the grace that will be brought to them in the Day of Jesus Christ)

- Paul ***preached the word***,
- encouraged Timothy to ***preach the word***,
- and then says: ***“Also Look at my life! I’ve done it. I’ve walked this thing out. It’s possible. It’s possible to stay on the path, long for his appearing, and receive the reward.”***

Our discipleship of one another has to be both.

We teach towards the narrow path and we walk in it in view of one another.

And you know this is true.

None of us are following Jesus just because someone told us how, we’re following Jesus because someone showed us how.

(appropriate Derrick is here!) (caught more than taught)

This is our mission.

To walk the narrow path together, we

- 1) Keep Gospel Hope Central**
- 2) Commit to Gathering**
- 3) Strive for Unity**
- 4) Cultivate Spiritual Gifts**
- 5) Commit to Prayer & Fasting**
- 6) Instruct each other through word and deed.**

Close

