

# Discipleship: Deep and Wide

## Acts 15.36-16.5

### Sermon Handout

“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.’” Matthew 28:18-20

Making disciples is the collective responsibility of all Christians **because only together** can we go both deep and wide in the mission of God.

Discipleship is a lifelong journey into the depths of maturity in Christ and into the breadth of Christ’s mission to the world.

“Discipleship isn’t a program or an event; it’s a way of life. It’s not for a limited time, but for our whole life. Discipleship isn’t for beginners alone; it’s for all believers for every day of their life. Discipleship isn’t just one of the things the church does; it is what the church does.” — Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*

#### I. A Sharp Disagreement: Deep or Wide? Acts 15.36-41

"And there arose such a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches." Acts 15:39-41

What we need to understand:

- This is a wisdom issue rather than a salvation issue.
- This seems to be a deep versus wide issue.

Disciple-making requires not just the birthing of lambs into the kingdom of God but the maturing of God’s sheep into godly, growing, and reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

For the apostle Paul, a willingness to suffer was a necessary qualification for missional leadership and partnership.

“For we know, brothers, love by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction...**And you**

**became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction,** with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.” 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7

"And also, we thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. **For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen** as they did from the Jews...” 1 Thessalonians 2:12-14

What Happened?

- The mission continued.
- The leadership expanded.
- The believers were strengthened.
- Paul and John Mark grew.

“Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:11

Remember: God’s ways are not our ways. **God faithfully advances His kingdom** wider and deeper through the limited perspective that each of us have in how to best advance the kingdom.

## **II. A Sweet Development: A Lifelong Gospel Partner - Acts 16:1-5**

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.” Acts 16:1-2

**What Do We Know About Timothy?**

- **Timothy was willing to count the cost of discipleship.**

“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:26

- **Timothy was uniquely fitted for Paul's strategic mission to take the gospel to Jews and Gentiles.**

“A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was Greek.” ( Acts 16:1)

- **Timothy was teachable. He was in need of a spiritual father.**

“To Timothy, my true child in the faith...” (1 Timothy 1:2)

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” (2 Timothy 1:4)

- **Timothy is credible and well-regarded.**

“He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium” (16:2)

- **Timothy was willing to make significant sacrificial adjustments for the sake of the gospel.** (16:3)

“For though I am free of all, I have made myself the servant of all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews, I became as a Jew in order to win Jews... To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law... that I might win those outside the law.” 1 Corinthians 9:19-21

- **Timothy deeply loves the church.**

“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.” Philippians 2:19-22

**Discipleship is deepening your love for Christ while growing increasingly like Christ as we carry out the mission of Christ.**

This is what we have modelled in Jesus:

“Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.” Hebrews 5:8

“Have this mind in yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.” Philippians 2:5-8

## Discipleship: Deep and Wide

*Acts 15:36–16:5*

1. According to Matthew 28:18–20, what does Jesus command His followers to do, and how does this shape our understanding of discipleship?
2. Bill Hull says discipleship “isn’t a program or event; it’s a way of life.” What does that mean in practical terms?
3. In Acts 15:36–41, what caused the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, and how did God use it for good?
4. What does this story teach us about God’s ability to advance His mission even through conflict or differing perspectives?
5. Why did Paul place such emphasis on suffering and endurance as part of discipleship (1 Thessalonians 1:4–7)?
6. How do we see the mission of God going both *deep* and *wide* through Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark?
7. In Acts 16:1–5, what qualities make Timothy an ideal disciple and ministry partner?
8. What does Timothy’s willingness to make sacrifices for the gospel reveal about his heart for Christ and others?
9. How does Paul’s relationship with Timothy model intergenerational discipleship in the church today?
10. What steps can you take this week to grow both deeper in your walk with Christ and wider in your impact for His mission?