**The Disciple Challenge**
***The Foundation***

- This is part two of this new series all about discipleship. The Disciple Challenge! Remember when there were so many Facebook challenges? The ice bucket challenge, the running into snow wearing shorts challenge, whatever that was called, for some reason I only remember the cold ones. Maybe because I'm scarred from them. Being a Youth Pastor at the time of course I partook in them all. But this is the most important challenge you will ever receive and you don't even have to film yourself doing it. Live like Jesus, be a disciple!

- Remember the question of this series is not: do you believe in Jesus, but are you an imitator of Jesus. It's so funny I think we make that question the test for asking people in conversation too. I'm always so quick to ask: do you believe in Jesus? Do you go to church? But it's so much more than belief! The Bible tells us even the demons believe in Jesus. Look at how it is worded in the book of James, who is the brother of Jesus:

**James 2:19: " You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror." NLT**

- I love how that is worded, you believe? Good for you! Belief is certainly so important. But we need more! Yes we can confess Jesus as The Lord of our lives but in the practical day to day of life do we actually look like? Are we truly following Jesus? Are we surrendering every area of our lives to Him? Giving God control not trying to keep it for ourselves? Are you truly a disciple? That is the challenge!

***Belief is the starting point but discipleship is the journey.***

- In the New Testament there is no such thing as a believer who is not a disciple. It's a wonder why that has become so common today. We don't read about it in scripture. A disciple is so much more than just a believer, they were biblically and still are now learners, an apprentice, someone who anchors their entire life around following the way of Jesus. They think how Jesus thought, speak like He spoke, live how He lived, and disciples obey what Jesus said no matter the cost.

- Remember the call of Jesus to His disciples is: “Come Follow Me!” Not simply come admire me on Sundays, watch me sometimes, follow my word sometimes, it’s Follow Me always. Remember the words of Jesus in Luke…

**Luke 9:23: “Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” NIV**

- I think the deep down truth so many Christians won’t admit is they always want Jesus as our Savior but not always our Lord. They want forgiveness but not formation. We want the resurrection power in our lives without the daily crucifixion of our fleshly desires. But that is why we are taking the challenge together because I believe at some point if not this point we have all been there. So together we are chasing the real thing! Not surface level, but deep change!

***If we want our life to look like Jesus we have to build ourselves on the firm foundation of Jesus!***

- This is about building our life in a way that can actually stand and withstand. Our faith isn’t proven by how loud you sing in worship, how high your hands are lifted or how well you follow the motions with us. It is proven by how well you stand firm in Christ when the storms come. Today we are going to talk about what the foundation of a disciple is built with. We defined Discipleship last week now we are going to build ourselves the foundation of a true disciple!

- The fact is you can have good intentions, the right motivations, the right dreams, goals, the right heart but if you are building it all on the wrong foundation it won’t last. None of it will. Jesus taught about this in Matthew chapter 7, it was the final point in His famous Sermon on The Mount, let’s read it…

**Matthew 7:24-25: “24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.” NIV**

- I love how Jesus emphasizes at the start it’s not just hearing His words. Hearing the Words of Jesus is good but you can’t stop there. Too often we stop there. We listen to the Words of God but that’s it. Jesus stays the people who hear Him and then take it a step further and put the words into practice!

That's what we are going to do right? Jesus says they are like the wise man who builds his house on the rock.

- Then comes the storms, the rising streams, the blustering winds, and it all beats against the house. And I know the common thought: we all think following Jesus automatically keeps all storms of life away! It's our spiritual storm repellent! That is a misconception that leads to so many people falling away from faith. When you think following Jesus keeps storms from hitting your house you are never prepared.

- The reality is following Jesus keeps us standing firm in the middle of storms hitting our home. They will hit! The winds and waves will crash against your home, sometimes devastatingly hard, but our foundation of Jesus keeps us standing firm! Jesus isn't promising us immunity from trauma and trouble but Jesus promises us stability through trauma and trouble! But unfortunately we read the next two verses and see what happens when we stop at just hearing the words and not implementing them.

**Matthew 7:26-27: "26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." NIV**

- Here is the kicker. Both builders in this analogy hears the same words. They both hear the exact same words from Jesus, but not only that, they experience the same weather! The same bluster winds and waves, troubles and traumas. And even beyond that they both built something that looked similar on the outside. They both built houses, structures. But there is a key difference: the unseen foundation. The same rain hit both, the same water streams rushed up, the same wind blew up against that house, and this second house fell with a great big boom!

***So we can see the difference between the wise and the foolish isn't what they heard, it is what they did with what they heard.***

- I think of the youth group I taught and helped Pastor in Charlevoix. I was the middle school Pastor and I taught the same lessons to every middle schooler. This youth group was awesome we saw tons of kids move through it and I still follow many on social media but some still follow Jesus while others have certainly fallen away and it breaks my heart. The difference was what they did with what they heard. Even in my own family, I'm the baby of the family the third of three boys.

- I have two older brothers and neither of them are truly following Jesus like they should. We all shared the same home, my dad preached the same sermons to us all. Being PK's we got the sermons at home and at church. But my brothers did something different with the words than I did. As a Pastor I've seen people who have heard messages for many, many years, and they didn't put the words into practice. It's not the storms of life that put cracks in our home, the storms simply reveal them. The storms show our foundation.

- So often we think the problem of life is simply the wind, the rain, the storms, and storms aren't fun but Jesus is revealing to us the true problem isn't the storms of life it's so much deeper. The issue is what foundation have we been building on? If we have sandy foundation that doesn't support our home, it's because we didn't let Jesus build it in the first place.

- Have you ever watched a foundation for a home being built? There is this process called excavating. They have to dig out the ground get rid of the rocks, the soil, the debris to make a spot for the concrete slab to be poured. The foundation to be made. Spiritually there is a process of that too. Before a foundation can be built we have to allow Jesus to clear some things out of our hearts. We can't try to just lay the foundation on top of spiritual debris it won't withstand. We can believe in Jesus and never let Him excavate. Before God can truly build some things have to be torn down.

- We could be lifelong Christians who have maintained walls from our past and never let God tear them down and that is hindering the foundation process. ***Until we allow God tear those out of us He can't build the foundation. And until the foundation is laid nothing you build will last.*** That's why we see Christian's experience cycles of building spiritual structure but then a strong storm comes and it all crumbles and they have to start over. The foundation isn't truly there.

- And it so easy in life to build walls. We build spiritual and emotional walls to avoid feelings and hurts we don't want to deal with. But God wants to deal with those, heal you from those, and when the walls come down foundation can be built!

***God wants to dig down to the foundation, reveal truth, heal your wounds, transform us! But He can't get to the foundation when we have built immovable walls we aren't willing to let Him tear down and we then instead use those walls to keep God out.***

- And this morning I want to confront the walls this morning. We all build spiritual and emotional walls out of hurt and this morning we've got to tear them down! This is imperative if we want the kind of foundation Jesus is talking about there in His Sermon on the Mount. Don't worry we are going to get to the pillars of foundation every disciple meets but before we build foundation we need to some spiritual excavation! First type of wall we tend to build in our life…

***Walls That Hide***

- These are walls that keep people from seeing in, walls of secrecy that cover up the places we are too afraid to let people see. We smile and say we are fine but deep down there is something we are hiding. It could be a struggle, a pain, a wound, a trauma, something we'd rather bury then bring into the light.

**Proverbs 28:13: "People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy." NLT**

- That is not a suggestion that is a spiritual law. Whatever you work hard to cover will end up costing you. But the beautiful thing is when you confess it to God you find freedom! We can't hide anything from God anyway. And the thing is eventually even the things you try to hide will be found. In Luke Jesus warns the Pharisees of the things they speak in secret and think no one hears…

**Luke 12:1-3: "…He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops." NKJV**

- Everything secret in our lives will be known. The secrets that are good and the secrets that are bad. How you treat your spouse, your children, how you speak in the privacy of your home, not just secret sin will be revealed but everything will be. We cannot keep secrets or hide anything from God. God loves you too much to let you keep hiding and pretending. Regardless of if your secrets make you or break you, it will be known. What you hide will come to the surface.

***I think it's much better to let God deal with us in private with humility than God have to deal with it in public through humiliation.***

- The deeper you try to hide the cracks will widen and when the storm hits the cracks will break open and the walls you tried to build to hide something will be broken down and it will no longer be hidden. That's why confession is so powerful. When we confess to God our sins and mistakes its not about informing God, He already knows! It's about agreeing with what God already knows, it's breaking down the wall and saying: *"I'm done pretending God, I want to be healed from this!"*

***Walls That Imprison***

- We build these walls when we've been hurt, offended, betrayed, and instead of dealing with it we lock ourselves behind the walls. Some walls aren't built to hide ourselves from others but rather protect ourselves from being hurt again. But the tragedy is: what we build to protect us ends up trapping us. Some of us have been wounded, betrayed, overlooked, experienced church hurt, and so we close the gate, lock the door, put a wall around our heart. And at first it feels safe! No one can get in and hurt us but overtime you realize you actually can't get out either.

**Hebrews 12:15: "Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many." NLT**

- Bitterness not only effects you and imprisons you it spreads, and it spreads faster than any earthly sickness or epidemic. It poisons your thoughts, your relationships, your destiny. Offense holds you captive.

**Proverbs 18:19: "An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars." NLT**

- And this verse is not an excuse to be offended this is a warning label. I've personally experienced bitterness in my family my brother struggles tremendously with bitterness from church hurt and has even directed it at me when I moved to Ohio. It is so hard. It closes you off like no other. When offense sets in reconciliation seems impossible. The walls get taller and the door gets heavier. The prison becomes permanent. Walls you built to protect you end up imprisoning you, and when you live behind the wall long enough you convince yourself it's good. But the reality is you traded freedom for perceived safety and you actually have neither.

- God calls us to walk in freedom not lived trapped behind the fortress of offense. You will never experience freedom while you are chained to hurt and

offense. It's a wall that needs to come down and excavated so God can build that firm foundation in your life. Here is one last wall:

***Walls That Resist Transformation***

- These walls keep God's truth from ever truly reaching our heart and making change in us. These are walls we put up when we decided God has done all He can do in us. We've arrived spiritually, we are good. Walls of pride that block any more transformation and growth. We hear His Word, sense His conviction, but we've already put up the wall saying: this isn't for me I'm already good. That must be for someone else.

- Or if not pride then we decided we aren't actually willing to give what God is asking for. God you can have these areas of my life but not that. God I'd do anything for you, but I won't do that. God you don't touch that, that is sacred in my life, I'm not ready to give that up. We must be moldable no matter how much it hurts, nothing should be off limits for God to mold.

**Jeremiah 18:1-5: "The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, 2 "Go down to the potter's shop, and I will speak to you there." 3 So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. 4 But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so he crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over. 5 Then the Lord gave me this message: 6 "O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand." NLT**

- Is every area of our life actually moldable? Sometimes we work years of our life to become something, and then we aren't willing to let God make us into something different. We must be clay in God's hands. Willing to let Him move us and mold us into His Will. Disciples are yielded to the Potter, to God. Clay doesn't talk back and neither should we! When we harden certain parts of our lives and resist God as our Potter and Molder we are missing out on the plans God has for us.

***You can't be clay in God's Hands and keep control. You have to give God Full Control!***

- We must be willing to let the Potter shape us and form us. We can't build walls or draw lines and tell God which parts of us aren't available to be shaped. God deserves all of us! Disciple give God all! What we need to realize is God is never trying to take something away from us but form something in us that can

only happen when all the walls come down. Look at what God says in Ezekiel…

**Ezekiel 13:14: "And I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare…" ESV**

- This prophecy wasn't just about physical walls but spiritual ones too. We build spiritual walls in our lives and we try to make them look good but God wants to tear them down excavate them so we can build new fresh disciple foundation. God doesn't tear down our walls to harm us but equip us. God tearing down our walls is redemptive! If we want to be Disciples we must allow Him to tear down our walls so He can reinforce and rebuild our foundations on the rock. We can't stop at removing the walls but continue and allow God to rebuild on His truth, His Word!

- So this morning we've done some spiritual excavating and digging now it's time to get building. We are going to go over ***"The 4 Pillars of a Disciple's Foundation"*** These spiritual truths prop up our foundation, in 1 Timothy Paul actually tells Timothy about it in His letter to him and we read it in chapter 1.

**1 Timothy 1:18-19: "Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord's battles. 19 Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked." NLT**

- Paul is talking about some who let go of their faith and were spiritually shipwrecked. They didn't cling and fight for their faith so it was shipwrecked. How heartbreaking. What's mentioned here isn't people going through a season of stumbling or doubt, this is a total collapse of faith. The foundation gave way and everything they built was lost. This brings up the question of can you lose your salvation, some believe you can't no matter what but scripture shows here you can in fact turn your back on God.

- You can't lose your salvation like you lose your car keys when you get saved you are secure in Christ. But you can consciously choose to leave Christ. My marriage to Autumn is secure and I won't lose her but I can choose to leave her or break my covenant with her. I would never ever do that but the option is there. God has given us free will so we can freely choose. But our salvation is secure when we fight for our faith and keep our covenant with God! Don't shipwreck your faith like these men Paul mentions.

- We as disciples of Jesus want to last through any storm imaginable, that takes the foundation! So what are the four pillars of a firm foundation? These pillars may be familiar to you but they are imperative and remember it's more than hearing the words, it is putting the words to action. Alright number one…

***Foundation Pillar 1:* Scripture- Let God's Voice Be Louder Than Yours**

- If we are going to build a foundation that will stand we need to decide whose voice gets the final say in your life, your voice or God's voice? The loudest voice in your life will always be the one you trust the most. For some of us that may still be our own voice. We lean on our opinions, or reasonings, our instincts. We read the Word of God but reserve the right to overrule it if it feels too inconvenient for us. Jesus confronts this in John chapter 5…

**John 5:39-40: ""You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! 40 Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life." NLT**

- This was Jesus talking to Jewish leaders who didn't believe in He was The Messiah. They knew scripture front and back but they didn't know Jesus. The same can be true of us. We can know scripture but unless it changes us, we live it, we can miss the relationship with Jesus. We can study the information but we need transformation! The Bible is not a textbook we learn and master it is God's Voice that should master us! We need to make God's written voice our authority. It will change our lives and guide our very steps.

**Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path." NLT**

- This means we don't light up our own paths anymore, we aren't guiding ourselves. We don't set our own direction and then hope God blesses it. We submit our path to His light and if God's Word doesn't lead us there we sure shouldn't be going there! If The Word of God only ever agrees with you, you probably aren't listening to the Word of God. The Word of God will confront us, challenge us, stretch us, cut through our malarky and excuses! If we ignore God's Word long enough and rely only on our voice or other voices for guidance we are simply building on sand.

***You cannot be a Disciple of Jesus without a foundation of His Word!***

***Foundation Pillar 2:* Prayer- Let Communication with God Become Your Oxygen**

- Communication with God is so vital! Let prayer become so frequent, so important to your life that it is your spiritual oxygen. I have no idea why but we often treat prayer like a lifeline only for emergencies. Our phone a friend for when we have no other option. Prayer should not be an occasional act but a never ending line of communication with our Heavenly Father. Jesus modeled this for us in the gospels. For a Disciple prayer should not be just a tiny part of our life but the very atmosphere of our life.

**Luke 5:16: "But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer." NLT**

- Prayer should be an often occurrence, Jesus withdrew to quiet places to pray, found His spots to communicate with The Father. The sinless, perfect, son of God still made prayer a constant priority. If Jesus needed prayer that much why do we ever think we can even go a day without it? ***Why is it we have gotten better at charging our phones than charging our spirits?***

- Well maybe all of us except my wife, she lets her phone die constantly but I never let my phone die! I make sure that baby is charged, honestly my phone probably never makes it below 50%. We need to become better at recognizing when spiritual we need some charge we need some alone time with God. It's energizing spiritually to pray and we need to be better at plugging in with The Father! Sometimes our spirit is on red and just desperately needs time with God, our source!

- It's funny I've actually developed some specific phone charging routines. Every time I get in the car I have a phone cable and that baby is getting charged. I hop in bed every night I have my nightstand charging station my phone is getting charged. I think we need to develop some good spiritual charging routines and rhythms. We make phone charging stations why not create space for spiritual charging. Have a spot in your house that is designated for communication with God. You need this pillar in your life, you need prayer!

**1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Never stop praying." NLT**

- One of my favorite things to do when Autumn and I aren't together is to call her and keep her on speakerphone with me. I could be doing what I need to do but she is on speaker right there next to me. The line of communication never ends. Even if we are doing are things we are there. Imagine creating that type of prayer life. The line of communication with God is always open the dialogue is always ready. As you go about your day even if it's in between

other things always be speaking to God. Have you special private moments too but never turn off the speakerphone.

**Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." NIV**

- We far too often make decisions and experience reactions and feelings all based from our anxiety and worry. But that is not God's plan. We defeat worry and anxiety with prayer and from that prayer comes peace because we actually trust God. Prayer pushes out fear and squashes anxiety because we put things in perspective. It's not on our shoulders we don't have to open the doors God's got it!

***Foundation Pillar 3:* Worship- Not a Feeling But Rather A Life Reordered Around God's Worth**

- Worship is not a song, it's not a genre of music, worship is reordering our lives around God's Worth! The word "worship" actually comes from an old English word: "Worthship" and it got shortened over time to simply worship. But what it means is to give value or worth to something. So that means worshipping God isn't about a song, the volume, the tempo, it's about declaring the value of God. It's not about chasing feelings. Which means: if God is worth the most, which He is, He should get the most!

- God is worth more than our leftovers, our spare moments, He should get our first, our best! Worship is not just the two slower songs in our Sunday morning set-list. Worship is about value! It is declaring with your life what matters most. What is most worthy. What do you consistently give your best time, your attention, your resources to? Because whatever it is that is what you are actually worshipping in life. God is looking for worshippers! He is looking for people whose lives actually match the lyrics they sing.

- It is more than a song, it's alignment. It's when my schedule, my decisions, my resources, my priorities, all reflect the weight of the Glory of God! Paul outlines what actual worship looks like in Romans 12…

**Romans 12:1: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." NIV**

- A sacrifice actually costs you! Worship is deliberate, it means something else gets pushed down the priority list because God comes first. Worship should cause us to rearrange our life. And should always be on our lips. It's time for us to reorder our lives in a way that reflects God's supreme worth!

***<u>Foundation Pillar 4:</u> Community- Stop Hiding in Independence and Let Yourself Be Sharpened***

- One of the greatest lies the devil will try to tell you is you can do this on your own. That is unbiblical, we need each other! The Church Family here, our community is a gift from God! From the very beginning in Genesis we can see God knew it wasn't good for man to be alone. We weren't created for isolation but for community and connection. Discipleship is personal but it is never private! This was understood by the early church and in the patterns The Holy Spirit brought the church on The Day of Pentecost.

**<u>Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." NIV</u>**

- They were devoted to fellowship with one another. This verses uses the word "devoted" that is a strong word. It doesn't say they were okay with fellowship, tolerated fellowship, sometimes fellowshipped. They were devoted to it, they fought for it! They knew the value of it! They learned together, ate together, prayed together, they carried one another's burdens and because of that they grew strong in The Lord together! Look at what James says about the benefits of community:

**<u>James 5:16: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." NLT</u>**

- Miracles happen in community, accountability happens in community. A livestream or podcast can't pray over you or hold you accountable with your struggles. You need a Christ family for that, community for that! What a gift! Together we can celebrate victories and challenge our compromises. What a gift!

**<u>Proverbs 27:17: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." NIV</u>**

- Sharpening doesn’t happen without having someone else in your corner, thats what this community this family is here for! When we do it alone we dull over time.

- We need these pillars in our life especially if we plan to live as true disciples. We always need these they build foundation and we need foundation. We need to knock down walls and allow God to rebuild our foundation and strengthen it daily.