

Introductory Discussion:

- A. “Is there a difference between being a Christian and a Disciple of Jesus?”
- B. In your church / community context, what would a disciple of Christ look/act like?

I. The Christian Imperative to Make Disciples:

- a. **Matthew 28:18-20** (NRSV), Jesus speaking after His resurrection to the assembled Church: *“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 obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*
- b. **Book of Order (2015-2017)... F. 1.0302d:**  
“The Church is sent to be Christ’s faithful evangelist: **making disciples** of all nations in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; sharing with others a deep life of worship, prayer, fellowship and service; and participating in God’s mission to care for the needs of the sick, poor, and lonely; to free people from sin, suffering, and oppression; and to establish Christ’s just loving, and peaceable rule in the world.”
- c. **Luke 5:1-11 – Jesus’ Discipleship 101. Disciples learn...**
  - i. Discipleship is open to anyone... 5:3
  - ii. To trust the words and leadings of Jesus... 5:4-5
  - iii. Jesus can do more than they imagine... 5:6-7
  - iv. Jesus works through them... 5:6-7
  - v. Jesus knows they are imperfect and can deal with their sin... 5:8
  - vi. Jesus enlists them in his mission... 5:10-11
  - vii. They do not need to be afraid of.... 5:10

“Those who aren't following Jesus aren't his followers. It's that simple. Followers follow, and those who don't follow aren't followers. To follow Jesus means to follow Jesus into a society where justice rules, where love shapes everything. To follow Jesus means to take up his dream and work for it.” — Scot McKnight, One Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow

II. How God Grows Disciples – Then and Now:

- a. **Model 1:** James Bryan Smith; *The Good and Beautiful God:*  
Our God/Jesus Narratives

The  
Holy  
Spirit

The Holy Spirit - is coordinating our Christian growth and life.

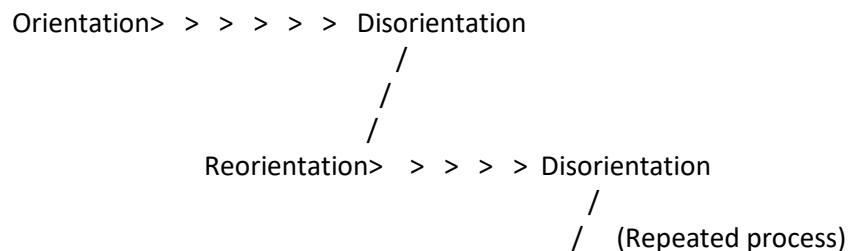
Our God and Jesus Narratives – The images and stories we have been told and tell ourselves that God is....

The Spiritual Disciplines: Our submissive contributing efforts. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. ix: “The spiritual disciplines are those methods by which, enabled by the Holy Spirit, Christians can actually be transformed. Those practices through which individuals *can* (ital. his) become like Christ in character and in power and thus realize our highest ideals for well-being and well-doing,... Ordinary individuals... can become, through the grace of Christ a love-filled, effective, and powerful community. This is the heart of the New Testament message.”

Circumstances – God’s wood-working vice to hold us in place for an accurate cut.

Community – Growth takes place in relationships – with God, other Christians, the world.

b. **Model 2:** Bruce Demerest; **Seasons of the Soul:**

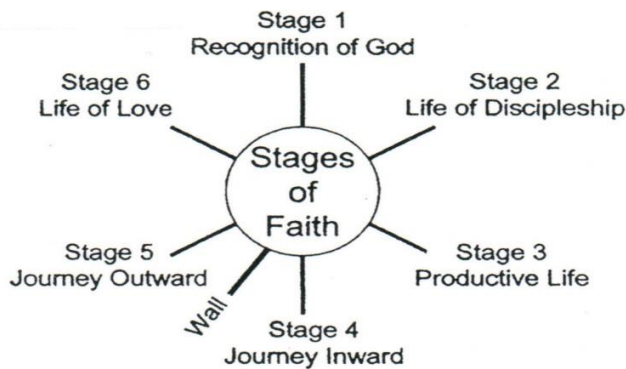


III. **What Christian Growth Looks Like... Spiritual Progression**

a. **Model 1** – Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153), *On Loving God*

- i. Loving self for self’s sake
- ii. Loving God for self’s sake (benefits received)
- iii. Loving God for God’s sake (a pure love in response to God’s love)
- iv. Loving self for God’s sake (loving all God’s creation and people)

b. **Model 2** – Hagberg and Gulick; **The Critical Journey**, adapting Teresa of Avila’s *Interior Castle*:



- IV. **Amplifying on the Spiritual Disciplines** / “Soul-Training Exercises” (James B. Smith)
- a. *“The Christian life is not about trying to live like Jesus, but training to live like Jesus...”*  
- Dallas Willard, former Prof of Philosophy at UCLA
  - b. *Some disciplines of Abstinence:* solitude, silence, fasting from many things, frugality, chastity, secrecy, etc....
  - c. *Some disciplines of Engagement:* worship, service, fellowship, study, celebration, memorizing scripture, etc...
  - d. Disciplines are those practices which Jesus pursued and others appropriate to today’s issues.
  - e. Disciplines are intensified by combining them. I. E. solitude, silence, fasting, study.... Or service, worship, community.

V. **Practical Suggestions for Pastors and Sessions**

- a. **Ask the Session:** Who discipled you? Who Modeled Christ to you? Tell you story...
- b. **Ask the Session:** What do our people need to know to be able to nurture their own Christian growth?
- c. **Ask in Session:** What skills/disciplines/principles do the people in this church need to know to be Christ-like Church?
- d. **Ask in Session:** What skills/ disciplines/ principles do our people need to know to be deployed for/in/with Christ into the World?
- e. **Pastor:** Who are the two, three, four people in this congregation who are very serious about growing in Christ? Pat Hartsock had a church of 1,000 members, but was pouring his time and energy into 10 of them...
  - i. Mark 3:15 – Discipleship is an *invitation to be with Jesus* and with you... Frankly, Christianity is more caught than taught...
  - ii. Not everyone will jump at being a disciple – Parable of the Sower, Mark 4.

- f. **Spiritual Gifts:** 1 Corinthians 12-14. Every Christian Disciple is a different pattern of Christ, depending on personality; spiritual gift; tradition of the Christian faith they were brought up in; community and context, etc.

### **An Encouraging Word:**

“For those who feel their lives are a grave disappointment to God, it requires enormous trust and reckless, raging confidence to accept that the love of Jesus Christ knows no shadow of alteration or change. When Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy burdened," He assumed we would grow weary, discouraged, and disheartened along the way. These words are a touching testimony to the genuine humanness of Jesus. He had no romantic notion of the cost of discipleship. He knew that following Him was as unsentimental as duty, as demanding as love.”

— Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel: Good News for the Bedraggled, Beat-Up, and Burnt Out*

## **Luke 5:1-11 - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

### **Jesus Calls the First Disciples**

5 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup> he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” <sup>5</sup> Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” <sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” <sup>9</sup> For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” <sup>11</sup> When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.