

Growing into the Image of Jesus

Disciple: Following and Learning From Jesus (Part 2)

Colossians 1:24-29

Ryan Cole

Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | [Slides](#) | 1.27.21

Scripture Reading

- *Matthew 28:16-20*
- *2 Corinthians 3:18*
- *Philippians 1:6*
- *Colossians 1:24-29*

Instant Regrets

- Have you ever been in a situation when you said or did something stupid and immediately regretted what you said or did?
- examples of instant regret from my life
 - In sixth grade I went to my friend's school's fall festival and made fun of his teacher in front of the teacher. (I didn't know what his teacher looked like)
 - when we told my parents about our engagement
 - There have been many examples when I so wish I could grab the words back I just said
 - I have called several men "ma'am" and women "sir."
- examples of instant regret from pop culture
 - We see celebrities post apology posts all the time in the notes app
 - The Seahawks should have run the ball
- After all of these situations we want to do better. We don't want to let that happen again. We don't want to repeat those mistakes.
- We want to grow. We want to change. We want to mature.

Disciples Grow

- As disciples we are called to grow in Christ.
- Jesus didn't call us to just make converts, but to make disciples.
- In the next number of weeks, we will be reflecting on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.
- A disciple is a lifelong follower/learner of Jesus. For the rest of our lives we will follow and learn from Jesus, which means we will continue to grow and mature into what He has created us to be.

- The passage we will look at tonight is *Colossians 1:24-29*. This passage is probably the clearest explanation by Paul of what he believed the purpose of his ministry to be.
 - As a minister, I always try to pay close attention to passages that discuss particulars about early church leaders' ministry.
 - Pay careful attention at what Paul believes the goal of His ministry is and how he achieves this goal.
 - His goal is maturity of those he's ministering to.

Colossians 1:24-29

- Paul is writing this letter to the church at Colossae, located in ancient Asia Minor/modern day Turkey. He likely did not start this church, but was a very influential leader to this church. Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter to the Colossian church.
- **24** Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.¹
 - A disciple can rejoice even when they suffer because...
 - Jesus suffered.
 - Jesus promised that we'd suffer. (*John 16:33*)
 - Even when we suffer for being a Christian we can rejoice. (*Matthew 5:11-12*)
 - Our suffering does not compare to the glory we will one day experience. (*Romans 8:18*)
 - "lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions"
 - Paul believed that his suffering was connected with Christ's suffering, and his suffering was to benefit the church.
 - The church is the body of Christ.
 - The church is far from perfect. But remember that the church is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. You must love it.
- **25** I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—
 - Paul viewed himself as a servant of the church.
 - He is a servant, not its lord, boss, or master
 - His goal and commission from God is to present the word of God in its fullness to the church.

¹ All biblical references in this document are taken from the New International Version (NIV). *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

- **26** the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. **27** To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
 - When Paul speaks of the mystery of the gospel, he speaks of the Gentiles being welcomed into the Kingdom of God.
 - *Ephesians 3:6* - "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."
 - He was an Apostle to the Gentiles. (*Romans 11:13*)
 - Paul proclaimed that Christ is available to everyone.
- **28** He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.
 - Jesus is the one Paul, as a minister of the gospel, proclaims
 - If I ever stop speaking about Jesus, y'all need to fire me.
 - Administering/teaching
 - Teaching is essential in making disciples (*Matthew 28:20*)
 - We're lifelong learners.
 - Paul's purpose was, at times, to confront errors and sin.
 - Paul's goal is to present everyone mature in Christ.
 - Maturity of those he ministers to is Paul's win.
 - Paul's goal was not to present a nursery full of babies, but people who are matured and grown up in Christ.
- **29** To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.
 - Paul is working hard at this. He's using up all his energy on this. He's leaving it all out on the field.
 - But it's not just his energy. He's working hard with the energy Christ gives him.
 - And Paul makes it clear that it's not by his power or ability. He doesn't get a big head. He acknowledges it's Jesus' power and energy at work.

Change. Maturity. Growth. Transformation.

- All of us grow and change. Change is a part of the human condition.
- You're not exactly who you were in middle school or high school.
- Aging will change you. There are parts of people's brains that aren't developed until they're 25.
- What we experience, what we learn, and who we encounter shape who we become.

- Change is inevitable. But how you change or who you change into is not.
- You can, at some extent, control who you become.

The Goal of Maturity

- Many of us have goals in life.
- examples of good goals:
 - places we wish to visit
 - get married and start a family
 - begin a particular career/vocation
 - lose weight/gain muscle
 - buy a house
- Many goals we create are measurable (and that's good--think M.A.P.S.).
- But a goal that's more difficult to measure and most of us don't have has to do with the transformation of our lives.
- Is personal transformation a goal? Is growth a goal you set? Is maturity something you strive to achieve?
- two reasons maturity/growth/transformation aren't common goals
 - It's hard to measure.
 - It's necessarily an admission that you're not where you want to be. It's an admission that you haven't arrived. It takes humility to strive for maturity.
- Being a disciple is about the life-long journey of becoming more fully formed into the image of Jesus. In other words, discipleship is about growing and maturing.
- sanctification vs. justification
 - Justification is what happens when you come to Christ at conversion. You are saved. You receive the Holy Spirit. You are His child. You have the hope of the resurrection and eternal life. Justification happens in an instant.
 - Sanctification is the long term, life-long growth and formation of a disciple of Jesus.

The Immature Christian

- It is possible for someone to be saved but not be growing in maturity into the person God wants them to be.
- A theme of much of Paul's letters to various churches was this: You're not acting like the people God created you and saved you to be. Grow up!
 - *1 Corinthians 3:1-3* - **1** Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. **2** I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet

ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. **3** You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

- Notice: these people are Christians, but are immature, spiritual babies/infants
 - *Hebrews 5:12-14* - **12** In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! **13** Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. **14** But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.
- The goal Jesus gave us is not to ONLY make converts to Christianity. The goal is to make disciples of Jesus.
- How sad would it be if a baby was born, but never grew or matured? How tragic would it be if a person was born but never learned to walk or talk? How sad would it be for someone to eat only baby food and milk for one's whole life?

An honest look in the mirror

- Before we can move forward and grow, we must take an honest look in the mirror.
- How are you really growing spiritually?
- These are five helpful categories for determining your spiritual growth/maturity.
- Five categories of spiritual growth²
 - 1. **The spiritually dead** | characterized by rebellion and unbelief
 - 2. **The spiritual infant** | characterized by ignorance, confusion, and dependence
 - 3. **The spiritual child** | characterized by self-centeredness, idealism, overconfidence, and under confidence
 - 4. **The spiritual young adult** | characterized by a God and others centered outlook
 - 5. **The spiritual parent** | characterized by reproducing disciples and feeding themselves
- Taking an honest evaluation of your life can, at times, be painful. But it's always worth it because knowing where you are will help lead you to where you want to go.

² Neil Reynolds, *5 Discipleship Principles I Live By: Hint: Anyone Can Do These*, 3-4.

Who are you becoming?

- Discipleship is a process. We never arrive. It's more of a journey than a destination. Discipleship is about transformation.
- We need to remember this: God is the one who transforms us. We don't do it ourselves.
 - Paul says it's the "energy of Christ" working powerfully in him (*Colossians 1:29*).
 - *Philippians 1:6* - "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
 - *2 Corinthians 3:18* - "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."
- However, it is our responsibility to put ourselves in position to be formed by God.
- The choices you make today will determine who you are tomorrow.
- There are some things you can't control, but there are other things you can.
- Before you became an adult, you had little to do with who you were surrounded by. You did not choose your parents, family, teachers, or peers. But now, you have a lot of agency in who you're around and who you become.
- You have a lot of control over who you become.
 - You can control who you're around much more.
 - friends
 - who you date
 - You can change what you do in your free time.
 - You can determine your career path.
 - You can decide the spiritual direction in your life.
- God is the one who does the formation. The Holy Spirit is the one who works in your life. However, you have choices. It's clear in scripture you can quench the work of the Spirit in your life (*1 Thessalonians 5:19*).
- Are you putting yourself in positions to be more or less formed into the image of Jesus?
- Next week's message will be very practical. We will discuss three marks of a growing disciple.

Discussion Questions

- Tell your group about a way you have grown in maturity over the last few years.
- How would you describe your current spiritual maturity within the 5 categories Ryan shared earlier?

- 1. **The spiritually dead** | characterized by rebellion and unbelief
- 2. **The spiritual infant** | characterized by ignorance, confusion, and dependence
- 3. **The spiritual child** | characterized by self-centeredness, idealism, overconfidence, and under confidence
- 4. **The spiritual young adult** | characterized by a God and others centered outlook
- 5. **The spiritual parent** | characterized by reproducing disciples and feeding themselves
- What is one thing you will do this week to put yourself in a position to be formed by God more fully into the image of Jesus?