

Developing a Culture of Discipleship Week 2

My favorite class of all times was a two semester study in the Nature and Attributes of God. The Curriculum was difficult the reading was way over my head but the subject matter was captivating and the instructor was a truly gifted communicator.

- In the course of those two semesters, we scaled the majestic heights of God's righteousness, contemplating the wonder of His goodness, his patience and the unfathomable depths of his mercy.
- I learned that year that God actually shares some of his attributes with men; they are called His communicable attributes. (love, goodness and kindness)
- But there are other attributes that God does not share with his creation, these are all of the "Omni's" His Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence, we call these God's incommunicable attributes.

Well one of God's incommunicable attributes, an aspect of his nature that He does NOT share with US is his immutability. Now, immutability simply means that God does not change. The Scripture very plainly bears witness to this truth about God.

Malachi 3:6 **"For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.**

Hebrews 13:8 **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**

And while God does NOT change, we who were made in his image, well frankly we change all the time. Our bodies change, our minds change, we grow and we age.

- Think about how many people made Resolutions to change certain habits in the New Year. Sure most of them will fall short of their goals but just the fact that we make these resolutions is a testimony to the truth that we are all changeable.
- Scripture warns us about changing for the WORSE:

Romans 12:2 **Do not be conformed to this world,** (*That would be a change for the worse*)

And then there is the verse that parents of teenagers so often quote:

1 Corinthians 15:33 **Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."**

- Friends, there are many influences that affect the lives of our children and our grandchildren. These influences will inevitably shape them as they move ever closer toward adulthood.

BUT as Believers we long for, we hope for, we look for positive changes to take place in our lives. The Apostle Paul writes of this positive transformation in his letter to the Corinthian believers.

2Corinthians 3:18 **And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (Changed) into the same image (that is the image of the Lord) from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**

- Very often this glorious transformation comes into our lives as a result of godly influences that God graciously brings into our lives.

Remember in our study of 1 Peter how Peter instructed Believing Wives to influence their unbelieving husbands?

1 Peter 3:1 **Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct.**

- I continue to encourage those of you who are unequally yoked with unbelievers to trust in the Lord and continually petition Him for grace and patience so that you might influence your family for Christ.

Now, take a minute to think about those individuals who have significantly influenced your life for Christ.

- That patient yet persistent believer who came into your place of work every few days just to encourage you and point you to Jesus when you were brand new to the faith.
- That Older Believer who took you in when your family was falling apart and helped you to see that **“God sets the solitary in families.”** Psalm 68:6
- When you take the time to reflect back on the path of your life, it is easy to see the many intersections where God sent other believers to walk by your side in this Pilgrim’s journey.

In John Bunyan’s classic allegory of the Christian life titled “Pilgrim’s Progress” a traveler named “Christian” sets out on a journey to the Celestial City. Along the way, he meets a variety of characters, some are very dangerous, but others join Christian in his journey along the Pilgrim’s path. A man from his own hometown named “Faithful” travels with Christian to encourage him in a time of trial. Later a new friend named “Hopeful” assists Christian in resisting temptation.

- You may have been raised in a Believing household, taught the Scriptures from a very young age by a faithful praying mother and a godly father who was hopeful that you would follow him along the path to the Celestial city.

As I shared with you last week in this New Year, I would like to work at developing a culture of discipleship here at Harvest Fellowship. But First I need to ask:

- What is Discipleship?

Looking at the Bible there are a couple of observations we can make concerning this word discipleship.

First, In the Book of Acts “**Making Disciples**” seems to be synonymous with sharing the Gospel: Let’s look at Chapter 14.

Acts 14: 21 **When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,**

- They preached the Gospel and made disciples. So IS conversion the same as discipleship?
- Well, a deeper Study of discipleship shows that there is actually MUCH more to making Disciples than mere conversion.
- A Disciple is Not someone who prays a prayer, walks an isle and then goes on to live the same ungodly life they did before they prayed that prayer.

In the Great Commission Jesus describes discipleship as a lifelong process which includes conversion, baptism, AND Obedience to all of the Commands of Jesus Matthew 28:18 **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

- On the basis of Christ’s supreme authority and dominion, knowing that His kingdom will be made up of people from every nation, language and people. He commands His disciples to GO and make Disciples!

Over the next few weeks, before we return to our verse by verse study through the New Testament, I would like to continue working to develop a culture of discipleship within the fellowship here at Harvest.

- And this morning I would like to challenge all of us in one of the most essential areas of Discipleship in all of the Bible. Discipleship in the Home!

Throughout the Bible, the family unit is the primary mechanism ordained by God to spread the Word of God and the knowledge of salvation from one generation to the next.

Think about it, Adam and Eve were told to:

28b, **"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."**

- The means whereby man was to subdue the earth and exercise dominion was by multiplying generations of offspring who like their parents bore the image of God.
- Parents walking with God in faithful obedience to their creator raising children who would also walk with God and expand the borders of the garden to the ends of the earth.
- BUT before the first child was born to our first parents they rebelled against God and were sent away from His presence.

- BUT God had ordained before the creation of the world, that a lamb, a precious and sacrificial lamb would be slain to rescue sinful men and women from the ravages of sin and death.
- As God's plan unfolded, He chose Abraham as the one through whom the Promised Redeemer, the Lamb of God would come.
- Now, Listen to how God describes Father Abraham:

Genesis 18:19 **For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."**

- Surely we understand that God loved Abraham and called him to Himself.
- Not only did God reveal his will and his plans to Abraham but by that same grace with which He chose Abraham, he also empowered him to pass on his plan of redemption to future generations.

When we arrive at the Book of Deuteronomy Moses, a descendant of Abraham, reminds the people of God's Identity and then He calls them to love God and like Abraham to pass His Word on to the next generation.

- At the heart of the Book of Deuteronomy we find what Jesus called the first and Great Commandment:

Deuteronomy 6:4 **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**

- This weighty text asserts that the Lord God of Israel is the one and only God, there is none other. He and He alone, is Jehovah, the self-existent One; the One who, by sovereign grace had made Himself known to Israel.
- Since there is but One God, The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, The God who chose Israel and delivered them from bondage in Egypt, the covenant people of God are called to love Him unreservedly and entirely.

Now, immediately following Moses' declaration of the person and nature of God, He turns to address the Families in Israel regarding their God given responsibility to teach their children who God is and what God requires of them.

- Let's read verses 6-9 and then we will break it down into three points.

Deuteronomy 6: 6 **And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.**
 7 **You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.**
 8 **You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.**
 9 **You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.**

We are going to take our outline for the morning directly from these 4 verses:

1. The Word on your heart.
2. The Word on your lips
3. The Word on your house.

The Word of God must FIRST be on your own Heart. It must abide in the very seat of your affections and do its work renewing your own mind in order that you might be able to pass it on to your children and to your grandchildren.

Adam Clark's commentary asks the Question:

“Where else can love be? If it be not in the heart, it exists not. And if these words be not in the heart — if they are not esteemed, prized, and received as a high and most glorious privilege, what hope is there that this love shall ever reign there?”

- The heart that has been renewed by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, released from the bondage of sin, is a heart on which the Word of God has been written. Consider these words penned by the Prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 15: 16 **Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.**

- Jeremiah found his joy, his delight in the Word of God. And the Joy of God's Word was able to sustain Jeremiah even in the midst of persecution, when it seemed that the whole nation had turned against him, He was assured that He belonged to God because The Word of God was His delight.

We find this same principle in Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 3:16 **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

So before we move on to consider discipling our children I have to ask, “IS the Word of God settled, abiding richly in your own heart?”

- Is it your joy, your delight, the very sustenance by which you live? Keep in mind, You can't give your children something you don't possess yourself.

I spent 14 years managing a distribution center for a chain of grocery stores.

One of my responsibilities was purchasing all of the stock for the warehouse so that when our stores needed Cornflakes, Spring Water, Laundry detergent, we had plenty on hand and we could deliver them the next day. W/ warehouse in mind.

In the last Parenting course that I taught I likened a parent's devotional life to storing up a wealth of God's Word in the warehouse of their heart so that, at any time they could deliver an ample supply of godly wisdom to their children when they walk with them along the way, when they rise up and lie down at night.

- If the word is in the heart it will also be on the lips: That's our next point.

2. The Word of God on your lips

Deuteronomy 6: 7 **You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.**

Consider how God has given us, as parents a willingness even a passion to sacrifice huge amounts of time and attention to rearing one solitary person. Eighteen, twenty, now a days, twenty-five years of our lives invested on a daily basis in the development and care of our precious children.

- After so many years of love and training, when the kids are grown sometimes it's difficult to change that role of Dad or Mom to the role of a friend.
- Releasing them into the discipline of the Lord isn't always easy. Very often you still want to step in and shake them up a little bit.

The phrase, "**teach them diligently**" translates a Hebrew word that means sharpening. Adam Clark says the word depicts the constant friction of a sharpening stone. It is the introduction of a repeated irritant that is designed to hone a knife or sword

- I find it interesting that training children, who are born in sin would be described as a repeated irritant, the friction of a sharpening stone against hardened steel.
- In order to "**Teach them diligently**" Parents continually repeat themselves, and children are continually irritated.
- Does that sound like your house? (You know you have gotten through when you begin to say something and your teenager says, "**I know, I know**")

The repetition involved in discipling our children is described in these words.

(YOU) **shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.**

- In this context, it is the commandment of the Lord that is repeated when you sit in your house, when you walk along the way, in the morning and the evening.
- These commandments serve as a divine irritant working in the heart of a child to bring about the conviction of sin.

Let me stop here to emphasize the fact that the discipleship of children is to be accomplished primarily by their Parents. The God-given responsibility for teaching children about the person and work of God belongs to mom and dad.

- After all, they are the ones who are there when the child wakes up, they are the ones who kneel beside the bed when the child lies down to sleep at night.
- And while I am fairly certain that you would agree with my interpretation of this text, there are many parents who leave the bulk of Spiritual Training to the staff and volunteers of the local church.

- Friends, over the past 30 years it seems that churches have been more than willing to take the role of spiritual development out of the hands of parents. Almost as if they are saying, “We are trained professionals, don’t try this at home!”

From 1979 – 1990 I served in the role of Youth Pastor. With the help of my wife, we built a thriving youth ministry at times teaching 40 – 50 teenagers on a Wednesday night. BUT when I looked at the adult Bible Study that was going on at the same time there were 4 -5 adults in the room. Kids were dropped off at the church so that Sharon and I could raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

- And I was too young and dumb to see what was happening.

Over the past few weeks I have been listening to a series of sermons by a Southern Baptist Pastor named Voddie Baucham, In one sermon Voddie shared some staggering statistics concerning the S.B.C.

- Despite the work of innumerable Youth Pastors, statistics show that 75 – 80% of the young people in their denomination walk away from the Church by the time they complete their freshman year at college.
- Voddie put it this way, There are 16 million Southern Baptists in the denomination, IF things continue to go the way that they are going there will only be 4 million Southern Baptists in the next generation, only 1 million in the following generation and only 250,000 in the fourth generation.

Why is this happening? He said this is happening because parents have abdicated their God given responsibility to train their children in the Word of God and churches have not called them to account.

I learned from my years as a youth pastor that an hour and a half studying the Word of God in the middle of the week is not sufficient to undue the dysfunction of a worldly home environment.

- Don’t get me wrong a few of our kids went on to live vibrant Christian lives. But the overall majority faded away soon after graduating High School.

As a church we are here to assist parents in the training of their children.

- Memorizing the Catechism will give them a sound theological foundation for life.
- Memorizing the Scripture will renew their mind and guard their heart.
- We can hold forth the standards and develop the best of curriculum but if it isn’t taught, if it isn’t modeled daily by Mom and Dad our children may end up on the wrong side of the statistics.
- The Greatest thing that Parents can do for their children is to explain the Gospel to them. Every time that you confront their sinful self-centeredness, Every time that they lie, cheat and steal,
- You have an opportunity to teach them the blessing of repentance and the glorious grace and forgiveness that comes through Christ alone.

If you have the Word of God abiding in your heart it will most naturally come forth from your lips after all it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

- Finally we must make our homes a sanctuary where the Word is @ the center

3. The Word of God on your Hand, head and your house.

Deuteronomy 6: 8 **You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.** 9 **You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.**

- Moses instructed Israel to keep the Word of God before them at all times. Because we think with our head and act with our hands Moses taught them to tie the word of God to their head and bind it to their hand as a continual reminder to think and act in accord with the revealed Word of God.
- But what was intended to be a spiritual reality, living a life that is saturated with the Word of God, they made into a physical practice.
- Binding pieces of paper, texts of Scripture to their forehead and hand in leather boxes. Putting them on became a lifeless ritual.

TODAY We have Bible Verses in the artwork on our walls, Scripture on our screensavers, ipads and smart-phones. Teaching from world-class teachers, literally at our finger tips. Do these physical reminders help us to disciple our children?

- They should

Understanding the frailty of our flesh, the depravity of the world around us and because we are engaged in a spiritual battle we need to faithfully and joyfully fill our lives and the lives of our children with the Word of God.

- Consider the environment in which many of our children live.

If your child is enrolled in Public Education for 180 days every year they are confronted by a system that is aggressively anti-Christian.

- Their History classes have been carefully sanitized to remove every inference to the Christian faith.
- Their science classes are founded upon what is possibly the greatest lie to permeate modern society The Theory of Evolution.
- Can 45 minutes in Sunday School 2 or 3 times a month deprogram all of the lies they are taught in the 1260 hours of public education that they receive every year of their life for 12 or 16 years?

So my friends, Christian Discipleship begins in the home. OUR HOMES should be sanctuaries where our children can find truth in a world of lies, hope and peace in a world of fear and intimidation, justice in an unjust world and holiness in a world that is overtaken with depravity.

- A place where prayer accompanies every meal and the Word of God takes precedence over the Television.

- A place where grace and forgiveness flow like a river and love abounds like the spring rains.
- And when the children are gone, discipleship doesn't end, it actually expands. The Parsons house established in 1980 with only 5 has now expanded to 15.
- Fifteen people to pray for, Fifteen people to encourage, fifteen with whom I can share the Gospel on a regular basis, and I haven't even begun to talk about the larger family of God.

Finally, my friends, I want you to know that discipleship is NOT an elective course it is part of the core curriculum of the Christian Life.

- I invite you to come and grow with us!

If you are here this morning and you are burdened by a heavy weight of sin.

True freedom, forgiveness can only be found in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- He gave his life on the cross as the full and complete payment for the sin of his people.
- To repent and believe this good news is to be free!