



Life on life discipleship was the model of Jesus. The making of disciples was never defined as a class or an event, but rather a life lived with one another. This was by necessity implied in the call of Jesus to follow Him:

Luke 5:27–28 — *After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, “Follow me.” And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.*¹

Matthew 4:18–22 — *While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

John 10:27 — *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

The overarching theme is *follow me*. This was not a theoretical following or a theological following or a even a moral following. It was an all of life following — a forsaking everything — living, eating, walking, talking life with Jesus.

PRINCIPLE: Jesus’ model of making disciples was life together; therefore, His followers should do the same.

TABLE DISCUSSION: What would change about Christian discipleship if we embraced Christ’s model and method of making disciples?

THE BASIS OF LIFE TOGETHER

LIFE TOGETHER: Our *unity in Christ* is at the blazing center of our life together. All that we have together is *in Christ and through Christ*. Authentic Christian community then cannot be built on any lesser thing than who we are in Christ and the privilege of helping one another pursue Christ by faith. Any attempt at life together without embracing Christ in us, Christ for us, and Christ through us will result in a religious community, a moral community, or maybe a kind community, but it will not be a community that produces conformity to Christ or a community that displays the gospel for all to see.²

¹ The Master’s Plan for Evangelism by Robert E. Coleman is extremely helpful in unpacking how Christ’s model of mission and discipleship are actually very much the same, for they all stem from these profound words — *follow me*.

² The quotes in this instruction were pulled from Deitrich Bonhoeffer’s wonderful little book, *Life Together*. I commend it to you if you want to work out the biblical principles and implications of life together in the Body of Christ.



Life on life discipleship is simply the outworking of authentic Christianity worked out in life together. We have committed to following Jesus, which means we have committed to life together with those who are also following Jesus (for we are members one of another).

Romans 12:3–5 — *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, **are one body in Christ**, and individually members one of another.*

This life together then is supernatural — for our commitment to one another comes from the very grace of God that saved us and the measure of faith that God has given to us.³ The flesh then will not be of any assistance in working out authentic, Christian life-together. Life together in the family of God is fundamentally a work made possible by the gospel.

*When God was **merciful** to us, we learned to be **merciful** with our brethren. When we received **forgiveness** instead of judgement, we, too, were made ready to **forgive** our brethren. What God did to us, we then owed to others. The more we received the more we were able to give...The more meager our brotherly love, the less we were living by God's mercy and love. Thus God himself taught us to meet one another as God has met us in Christ (Bonhoeffer).*

TABLE DISCUSSION: If we actually believed Romans 12:3-5, what would change about our commitment to life-together with God's people?

THE IMPLICATIONS OF LIFE ON LIFE DISCIPLESHIP

Most followers of Jesus would agree, in principle, with the need to embrace life together in Christ. However, when the rubber meets the road, we need help to actually work this out by faith. The following principles are derived from the Word and if heeded, will help each follower of Christ embrace life together as the essential path for authentic Christian growth (for both themselves and others).

#1: LIFE ON LIFE DISCIPLESHIP IS INCONVENIENT

Just as it was inconvenient for our Savior to leave the glories of heaven, to take on human flesh, to suffer in every way as we do, and ultimately to die in our place — the call to follow Christ is a call to come and die. It is not a convenient call but it is worth it!

³ It could be implied from this text that embracing your essential need for body of Christ and it for you is inseparable from faith.



John 12:24-26 — *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

The Christian life then is not one of comfort but sacrifice. This sacrifice is not spiritual or theoretical, but practical and relational. Sacrifice that is not displayed relationally is theoretical at best. The call to embrace life together, to make disciples as a way of life, is wonderfully inconvenient. And in this wonderful inconvenience Christ is displayed as infinitely glorious and worthy.

TRUTH: At the very heart of this inconvenient life in Christ — is the call to love one another, to bear the burdens of one another, to embrace life together.

QUOTE: *We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions (Bonhoeffer).*

TABLE DISCUSSION: How would applying John 12:24-26 to the making of disciples affect your Christian life?

#2: LIFE ON LIFE DISCIPLESHIP IS CONSTANT

The example of Jesus and the Apostles was living among those that you were discipling. Discipleship was not a class or an obligation in the New Testament — it was a way of life. The model of Jesus was clearly *among* — meals shared, transportation with, praying together, side-by-side ministry — once again we see that discipleship was a way of life.

- A. Jesus **worked** with: *And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets (Luke 5:4-5).*
- B. Jesus did **ministry** with: *Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many (John 6:5-9).*
- C. Jesus **prayed** with: *Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” And he said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come (Luke 11:1-2).*



Unfortunately, discipleship in the modern era has been turned into events, meetings, sessions, classes, and the like. Whereas these scheduled events can help us move towards life-together, they fall short of actually embracing continual life together in Christ.

The Christ-like model of life together is much more in line with what is described in **Deuteronomy 6** — *and 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.*

Life together is more like an apprenticeship than a classroom. Apprenticeship is where you learn to work out and apply the truth you know intellectually. In these real-life, lived experiences you are able to work out the life of faith with and among your fellow Christian who is doing the same.

TRUTH: The constancy of life-together creates real-life opportunity to work out the life of faith in the every-day, little moments of life.

QUOTE: *Life together is not an ideal which we define; it is rather a reality created by God in which we participate. The more clearly we learn to recognize the privilege of life together in Christ, the more sweetly we will long for it (Bonhoeffer).*

TABLE DISCUSSION: In our flesh, why is it desirable to think of discipleship as an event vs. a way of life?

#3: LIFE ON LIFE DISCIPLESHIP IS ENDURING

You will be tempted to attempt life on life discipleship, but to throw in the towel due to inconvenience, busyness, exposure, clash of personalities, and all the rest. But if God has permanently and continually welcomed us in Christ, then we ought to permanently and continually welcome one another:

A. We Will be Tempted to Stop Loving One Another

The Word of God is filled with encouragements to endure in loving one another.

1 John 3:11 & 14 — *For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another...We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*

Romans 13:8-10 — *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*



1 Peter 1:22 — *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,*

John 13:34 — *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

Enduring in life together with one another is a work of God's grace that we do by faith. For in the flesh, we will not endure in loving one another to the end. This is why real Christian love is transcendent — meaning it is not possible in the flesh.

B. We Need Christ's Example & Power to Embrace Life Together

Apart from Christ — we can establish a kind of community — but it will not be a supernatural community. It will be a community built on agreement, preference, culture, and amiability, but it will fall short of actually helping all people know, love, and follow Jesus more by faith.

Notice how Paul connects life together with God's character and power that was revealed in Christ:

Romans 15:5-7 — *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

(#1) It is God's work that enables us to live in harmony with one another

(#2) It is a work modeled and produced by Christ

(#3) It produces authentic unity in our hearts towards God together

(#4) We are able to welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed us

(#5) God is glorified when His children endure in welcoming one another because it displays His heart

As we endure in life together — alongside of one another — we actually experience the profound goodness of a community that is empowered by the gospel. We've grown deep through the trial of being sinned against and confessing sin one to another. We've earnestly sought the Lord together in His Word & prayer to discern our hearts and what is the response of faith. We've disagreed over significant matters but found Christ our unity and our joy. And in this kind of enduring community, we experience the welcoming love of God through one another.



TRUTH: When the gospel of radical welcome takes root in the soul, we will be compelled and empowered to welcome one another with the enduring love of God in Christ.

QUOTE: *What determines our brotherhood is what that man is by reason of Christ. Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us...The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us (Bonhoeffer).*

TABLE DISCUSSION: How have you been tempted to not endure in relationships when things got hard?

#4: LIFE ON LIFE DISCIPLESHIP IS **HUMBLING**

Event based or check-in based discipleship is less exposing than life-together. The content can be managed. The schedule kept. The environment protected. But when you actually engage in life-on-life discipleship as a way of life — welcoming one another into all of life's little moments — you will experience the kind grace of being humbled.

A. Your carnality will be exposed

It is easy to appear godly when you are doing a Bible study or reading a book together. But when you begin to open up your hearts, your homes, your relationships, your lives to one another — you will inevitably see one another's sin and sin against one another.

Mark 9:33-34 — And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.

B. You will have opportunity to confess sin

We often speak of confessing sin to the Lord, but how often do we actually confess sin to one another? We may not confess sin to one another because:

(#1) we don't spend enough time with one another for sin to be exposed

(#2) we aren't sensitive enough to our own carnality and sin towards one another

(#3) we aren't committed to humbly working out the gospel together

1 John actually describes the beauty of confessing our sin to the Lord and also to one another:



1 John 1:7-9 — *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Did you notice the context — it moves seamlessly between the Lord and one another. Dealing with sin is not only to God alone, but to one another. As we confess our sins to the Lord and one another — our fellowship is restored with both God and each other.

QUOTE: *Why is it that it is often easier for us to confess our sins to God than to a brother? God is holy and sinless, He is a just judge of evil and the enemy of all disobedience. But a brother is sinful as we are. He knows from his own experience the dark night of secret sin. Why should we not find it easier to go to a brother than to the holy God? But if we do, we must ask ourselves whether we have not often been deceiving ourselves with our confession of sin to God, whether we have not rather been confessing our sins to ourselves and also granting ourselves absolution...Who can give us the certainty that, in the confession and the forgiveness of our sins, we are not dealing with ourselves but with the living God? God gives us this certainty through our brother. Our brother breaks the circle of self-deception. A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person (Bonhoeffer).*

C. You will have the opportunity to forgive sin

By necessity, if someone is asking to be forgiven of sin, someone else is being given the opportunity to forgive. Jesus regularly instructed his disciples on how to apply grace, mercy, and forgiveness to others — for such things are impossible in the power of the flesh.

Mark 11:25-26 — *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

Matthew 18:32-35 — *Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.*

As we embrace life-together in Christ, we will be given the opportunity by God to forgive one another. And as we learn to apply the gospel of forgiveness that we



have been given vertically to those around us horizontally, we are actually learning to be His disciples!

TRUTH: The confession of sin is a primary means of grace when doing life together with a fellow Christian, for it is our vital union with Christ that frees us to both confess sin and forgive those who have sinned against us.

QUOTE: *Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to pride...In the deep mental and physical pain of humiliation before a brother...we experience the cross of Jesus as our rescue and salvation with one another (Bonhoeffer).*

TABLE DISCUSSION: Have you ever confessed sin one to another? How was that good for your faith and how was the relationship strengthened because of confession & reconciliation?

#5: LIFE ON LIFE DISCIPLESHIP IS MISSIONAL

This life on life, relational-discipleship model was used by Jesus to care for His disciples and those who were yet to be His disciples. The habit of Jesus was to engage in the every-day, normal moments of life with all people *for the sake of their soul*. Living on mission for Jesus was not separate from the making of disciples but rather normalized as He made disciples.

A. Jesus shared **meals** with those who were yet to believe in Him

Matthew 11:19 — *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.*

Even if & when others judged him harshly for hanging around *sinners*, Jesus embraced life together with those who were yet to believe in Him.

B. Jesus did normal life with those who were yet to believe in Him

John 3:1 — *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him...*

Jesus was approachable — even in the evening. Nicodemus knew that if he sought Jesus out, Jesus would welcome him.

John 4:7 — *A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink.*

Jesus accepted the cultural custom of asking for a drink (even of a Samaritan woman). He did this knowing that it would lead to a conversation about her need for living water.



C. Paul Reasoned with Unbelievers Daily

Acts 17:16-17 — *Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.*

This would have been engaging in normal life in the 1st century — debating in the town square. Paul did not avoid these places but continually pressed into these spaces for the sake of the gospel.

D. Biblical Hospitality Necessitates the Inclusion of Strangers

The word hospitality is *a vivid compound word illustrating the idea of hospitality: philos - a loving friend + ksenos — stranger = a stranger treated as a friend.*

1 Peter 4:9 — *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

Hebrews 13:1-2 — *Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

Biblical welcoming then is more than drawing near to those who are like us (life stage, common interests, similar cultures, etc.). Biblical hospitality is drawing near to strangers (believers or unbelievers) to help them know, love, and follow Jesus better by faith. ⁴

TRUTH: A convictional move towards life together is the most effective model of missional living in every culture.

TABLE DISCUSSION: What would it look like for you to welcome strangers into your life? Who are those people and what could this look like in your life?

⁴ For a wonderful treatment on biblical hospitality as a way of life, check out *The Gospel Comes With a House Key* by Rosaria Butterfield.



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. How does this Christlike model of life together affect your view of helping others follow Jesus?
2. What is the benefit to living normal life with others? How does the stuff of everyday, normal life foster discipleship opportunities.
3. What obstacle keeps you from actually engaging in life-on-life discipleship?

HEART-WORK & HOME-WORK: *to be completed in a conversation with a brother or sister in Christ (preferably someone who is in Lead School)*

1. Have you ever been discipled by someone who actually did life-on-life discipleship, how did that positively impact your faith?
2. How would life-on-life discipleship with a mature believer impact your Christian life and growth in Christ?
3. What principle from the Word would cause you to embrace life on life discipleship?
4. What could it look like for you to begin or continue in life-on-life discipleship with those God is putting in your life?