

The Call to Dangerous Discipleship: Beyond Sunday Morning Christianity

What if everything we thought we knew about being a Christian was just scratching the surface? What if the faith we've settled into—comfortable, predictable, safe—is actually a shadow of what God intended?

The gap between conversion and transformation is where many believers lose their fire. We start ablaze with passion for Christ, overwhelmed by the grace that saved us, ready to turn the world upside down. Then somewhere along the journey, that flame dims to a flicker. We're told to sit nicely, behave properly, invite people occasionally, and contribute financially. But this isn't discipleship. This is domestication.

The Great Commission: More Than a Suggestion

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus delivers what we've come to call the Great Commission. Fresh from His resurrection, possessing all authority in heaven and earth, He gives His final instructions: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Not converts. Not crowds. Not congregations.

Disciples.

This single word carries the weight of everything the church is meant to be. Jesus didn't say, "Build impressive buildings" or "Create entertaining services" or "Gather large audiences." He said to make disciples—people who don't just admire Him from a distance but actively pursue becoming like Him.

The promise attached to this commission is profound: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." When we feel abandoned in the difficult work of discipleship, when we question whether we're equipped for

this calling, we must remember—He is with us. That truth changes everything.

Crowd or Disciple: Which Are You?

When Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, two distinct groups were present: the crowd and the disciples. The crowd liked Jesus. They were fascinated, intrigued, excited by His miracles. Wherever He went, there they were, caught up in the spectacle.

But the disciples were different. They didn't just enjoy being around Jesus—they had decided to trust and follow Him. When Jesus sat down to teach about kingdom living, He spoke to those actually in the kingdom.

The distinction matters because instruction on following Jesus doesn't mean much to those who aren't actually following Him.

Consider the contrasts:

- The crowd comes to attend; the disciple comes to absorb.
- The crowd fits church into their life; to the disciple, it is their life.
- The crowd cares about the wrapping; the disciple wants the contents.
- The crowd follows what pleases the crowd; the disciple seeks only what pleases God.
- The crowd stays until something better comes along; the disciple knows there is nothing better.

Which group do we belong to?

Peter's Transformation: From Failure to Fearless

Simon Peter's journey offers hope for every imperfect follower of Christ. When Jesus first encountered this fisherman in Luke 5, Peter was just trying to make a living. After a fruitless night of fishing, Jesus told him to try again in deeper water.

The resulting catch was so abundant it nearly sank two boats.

Peter's response reveals the beginning of true discipleship: "Oh Lord, please leave me. I'm too much of a sinner to be around you." Confronted with Christ's power, Peter saw himself clearly for the first time. He recognized his unworthiness.

But Jesus replied, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you'll be fishing for people."

This same Peter who would later deny Jesus three times, who ran away when courage was needed, eventually stood before the religious council in Acts 4 with stunning boldness. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he proclaimed, "There is salvation in no one else. God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

The council members were amazed at the boldness of these "ordinary men with no special training." But they recognized something crucial: these men had been with Jesus.

That's the power of discipleship. It transforms cowards into champions, failures into faithful witnesses, ordinary people into extraordinary representatives of an extraordinary God.

What Discipleship Actually Teaches

True discipleship isn't about perfecting our outward religious performance. It's about deep inner transformation that changes our heart, our passion, and who we rely upon. It's not about looking good on the outside—it's about being transformed into Christ's image so people can see Him in us.

Connection to Christ

The most important commandment, Jesus said, is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Discipleship teaches us how to deepen our connection with Christ daily. It helps us learn to hear God, understand His Word, pray effectively, worship authentically, and become more like Jesus.

Conviction for Life

Matthew 6:33 instructs us to seek God's kingdom above all else. But how? Discipleship provides practical wisdom for navigating decisions—family leadership, career choices, financial stewardship, relationships, leaving the past behind. It helps us develop convictions that will guide us when faced with difficult choices.

Correction

Proverbs 10:17 reminds us that "people who accept discipline are on the pathway to life, but those who ignore correction will go astray." Discipleship involves being corrected—not through judgment, but through loving accountability rooted in Scripture. We must learn to receive correction without offense, recognizing that "wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy" (Proverbs 27:6).

Confessing Our Faith

First Peter 3:15 calls us to "always be ready to explain" our hope, doing so "in a gentle and respectful way." Too few Christians know how to share their faith. Discipleship equips us to articulate what we believe and share it with grace rather than arrogance or religiosity.

Cooperation in the Body

As 1 Corinthians 12 illustrates, the body has many parts, each essential. Discipleship helps us discover our unique role in God's church and learn to work alongside others who are different from us. Those differences become strengths when we're each walking in our calling.

Clarity of Calling

Ephesians 4:1 urges us to "lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God." Discipleship helps us discover God's specific plan for our lives and equips us to prepare for it and stay on track.

Coaching Others

The final aspect of being disciplined is disciplining others. This is multiplication, not exclusivity. As we're poured into, we pour into others. The Great Commission is for all believers, not just pastors or church leaders.

The Missing Element

When Andrew met Jesus in John 1, his immediate response was to find his brother Simon and declare, "We found the Messiah." Philip did the same with Nathanael. This is the pattern: encounter Jesus, be transformed, bring others to Him, disciple them, and repeat.

We stand as believers today not because of the crowds that surrounded Jesus, but because eleven ordinary men were disciplined by Him for three years. They became living copies of their Master, and the world has never been the same.

The world doesn't need more church people. It needs more of Jesus. And He has called us to be that representation—the light in us isn't about how good we are or how well we behave. It's about how much of Jesus shines through us for a desperate world to see.

The Choice Before Us

We have a decision to make. Will we remain part of the crowd, doing our "Christian thing" while the kingdom passes us by? Or will we become true disciples, pursuing Christ with everything we have, becoming more like Him, and helping to change the world?

The call to discipleship is overwhelming. It's bigger than us. But it's the call God has placed on every believer's life.

And He promises: I am with you always.

That changes everything.