



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 21.04.2024

“Becoming a Disciple”

Preacher

Ps. Nathan Bean

Scriptures

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

33 They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

34 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now, a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me because you have no room for my word. 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.”

39 “Abraham is our father,” they answered.

“If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus, “then you would do what Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. 41 You are doing the works of your own father.”

“We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.”

Thought

We all want to experience freedom. But where does freedom actually come from? The dominant narrative of the world, going all the way back to the Garden of Eden, says that freedom is having all outside constraints removed. We're free when we can do whatever we want. That's freedom, right?

Thankfully, as always, Jesus gives us a better way. In fact, he gives us **The Way**. He tells his followers precisely what will bring them true freedom: *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* (John 8:31-32). This notion of freedom has nothing to do with his followers being unrestricted and doing whatever they want. It's actually quite the opposite.

Freedom, Jesus says, comes from being his disciples. Being his disciple or perhaps better, his apprentices, happens by holding to his teachings. That begs the question: What does it mean to "hold" to Jesus' teachings? How do we do that?

The answer comes in the form of a question from his followers earlier in John's gospel: "Rabbi, where are you staying?" (John 1:38). On the surface this may not seem like such a profound question, but in the context of the passage, these early followers weren't simply after some information, but were offering Jesus their full devotion. They didn't ask what his fundamental doctrines were or what causes he supported. They asked a question related to *living with* Jesus, not *knowing about* him. Jesus' response is also telling. He simply says, *"Come and see"*. This isn't about the exchange of information, but an invitation to walk alongside Jesus.

Our perception of Christianity can so easily become about the things we know, the questions we feel we can easily answer, and having God stay comfortably in a little section of life labelled "religion" or "spirituality". But that is not how the New Testament portrays discipleship to Jesus.



These were communities of people who allowed being with Jesus and the teachings of Jesus to completely overhaul everything about their life.

As we hold to Jesus' teachings, submitting to them and give them authority over our lives we will no doubt encounter "the rub" of uncomfotability. It very well may feel constricting of our perceived notions of freedom. But these rubs are precisely what we need to continue to mature into Christlikeness.

We all have so many things we need to continue to die to in order to become like our master teacher, Jesus. The more we allow him to determine the shape of our life, we will find not only the freedom we ultimately want, but the one we truly need. We will have accepted our status as God's daughters and sons and will be free to be about our Father's business as his Kingdom comes in every part of our world.

Discussion Points

1. How do I feel about the way Ps Nathan defined freedom? Where are the places I am still wanting to "do my own thing" without interference?
2. Are there places where I'm experiencing "the rub" of uncomfotability? What might the invitation of the Holy Spirit be to me in this season?

Becoming Christlike **BEING, THINKING, AND DOING**

Thought

We typically use this section to highlight one aspect of our becoming like Christ. However, this message from Ps. Nathan anchors us back to Discipleship 101: Truly being a disciple means that we are becoming like Christ in every aspect of our life: our BEING, THINKING, and DOING. Of course, it needs to be said that these aren't "sports trials" where we are trying to secure our place as his children. It's exactly the opposite. It's about knowing who we are as God's children. From that place of security, as we spend time with Jesus, we begin to naturally become like him in every way.

Practice

Step 1 - **Reflect:** How is this notion of discipleship similar or different to how you have understood it in the past?

Step 2: **Assess:** To what degree is my life totally shaped by Jesus' life and teachings? If this was a sliding scale from 1-10, where would you place yourself in this season?

Step 3: **Act:** What is a practical way you could move that needle closer to a life fully emersed in Jesus' ways this week?

Prayer

Father, Son, and Spirit -

We want to follow you, to be more like you, to have our lives totally transformed by you. We know you desire for us to walk with you in absolute freedom. Would you re-work our understanding of freedom to make this possible? Would you help us to see that submitting our whole life to you and your ways is the best thing we could ever do. Help us know the places in our lives where we are resisting you. Give us the grace, courage, and strength to press in to you more deeply in these areas.

Amen.