



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 05.05.2024

“Walk in Love”

Preacher

Ps. Josh Plumb

Scriptures

“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Ephesians 5:1-2

Thought

Jesus’ command ‘Come Follow Me’ is central to our Christian walk, but when we think about the concept of following God, or of the word “Disciple”, what thoughts come to mind? Do we think of certain actions or moral boundaries? At the heart, being a disciple is becoming more like Christ in our thinking, our being, and our doing. It’s an all-of-life apprenticeship to Jesus, every part of our lives, and every stage.

The foundation of growing as an apprentice of Christ is to first and foremost know that we are dearly loved Children of God. When we are secure in His love, we are free to learn, to grow, to develop, even to fail. Understanding His love makes us confident in Christ’s character that offers grace and space for us to grow and learn.



Paul reminds us that from this place of knowing that we are dearly loved, we can then imitate God. To imitate, we watch Christ, we learn His ways, we act as He acts, we participate in the process of His work in the world.

But we can only imitate what we see, and to truly see God is to look at Jesus. Jesus said, in John 5:19 - Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. In Jesus we see God's generosity, we see how He engages with those deemed outcast, we see how God deals with anger, with grief, with love, with celebration. Being a disciple means to become like Jesus.

Yet, how do we imitate Jesus in our 21st century western context? How do I parent like Christ? How do I study like Christ? How do I engage in my profession like Christ? This is a question best wrestled with in community with others, where we can engage with each other, ask these questions with each other, and encourage each other.

To imitate Christ is also to imitate His pace. In a culture where instant gratification is key, there's power in slowing down, to cut the shallow breathing, the frantic desire for efficiency, and to just walk. It's life-giving, it allows relationships to grow, it allows time to journey with others, and to hear and absorb God's leading.

'Hurry' too easily creeps into our apprenticeship. We want to be fully formed now. But maturity comes over time, and there's a blessed freedom that comes from knowing that our journey is one step at a time, one 'yes' at a time. To both allow Christ to work on those things that He wants to work on, but also to rest in the knowledge that He will, in time, change our whole lives. Little by little, we grow in the art of loving people well, of willing the good of another in all situations, even at the cost of ourselves. The journey of discipleship leads to the melting of our prejudices, the softening of the stony places in our lives, and the blooming of new life, piece by piece, corner by corner in our hearts.

And so, we are being transformed into His image as we continue to be with Him and surrender to Him. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, reassuring us of His love, changing us piece by piece into those who reflect His heart for others, reflect His character, and become more and more like Him.

Becoming Christlike

BEING, **THINKING**, AND DOING

Conviction of a Disciple: Secure in our identity in Christ.

Know God's approval and delight.

Thought

Like a child, it's not until we truly understand just how much we are loved by The Father, that we can be fully secure in our growth journey - in our successes and failures. Fear of failure can prevent us from trying, but when we know that we are loved no matter what, we also know that we are free to try and even fail in our journey of growth. The disciples failed so many times, but Jesus offered love and redemption each time. So it is with us; the more we understand God's approval and delight for us, the more we are willing to venture on the journey of discipleship.

Practice

Step 1 - **Reflect:** What stood out to me in this message?

Step 2: **Assess:** Do I truly appreciate God's approval and delight in me regardless of my 'performance', or is this something I still struggle with? Why do I think this is the case?

Step 3: **Act:** What can I do this week to more fully understand God's approval and delight for me?

Prayer

Dear God,

May I truly see You in Jesus. Reveal afresh to me, even now, Your character, Your love, Your heart, Your nature. Help me to slow down, to set aside the hurry that surrounds, and to walk with You as an apprentice, all the days of my life. May I, in time, truly understand just how much you love me, and in turn, reflect Your love to those around me in all that I am and do.

Amen.