*What is Discipleship?*

*(The Third Core Value of Grace & Faith Fellowship)*

The final message in this series is focused on Discipleship. The previous three messages We discussed the other two Core Values of Grace & Faith Fellowship, which are Fellowship and Worship. **We identified that Fellowship with God is both a right and a privilege for the believer. We identified that in our Fellowship with God: We are Partners in His Mission, We Participate (Share) in The Benefits of His Work, and We Commune with His Spirit.** We also identified Four Benefits of Fellowship with the Body of Christ (Fellow Believers): **Encouragement in times of need, Safety from false teaching, We have the ability to share our gifts, and We present a Stronger Witness to the World.**

In this message we are going to endeavor to: Define what discipleship is, Identify the cost of Discipleship, and Identify the Reward.

Discipleship simply means the act of being discipled, which begs the question what is a Disciple? The word Disciple has been defined in the following ways:

* One who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. (Webster)
* One who embraces and assists in spreading the teachings of another.
or an active adherent, as of a movement or philosophy. (FreeDictionary.com)
* Learner or Pupil (Strong’s Greek)
* A follower or pupil of a teacher, leader, or philosopher (Oxford Living Dictionary)

If we look at all the definitions highlighted here, we see the elements of teaching, learning, and following. All three of these components are involved in the process of discipleship. The Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is our teacher, specifically the Holy Spirit and we (us believers) are the learners and followers. We can look at the lives of the Apostles and see that to be a disciple is more than simply learning a doctrine, but it is the process of conforming the soul (mind, will, and emotions) to reflect or imitate the life of our Teacher. The word imitate is mentioned frequently by the Apostle Paul illustrating the goal of discipleship, which is for us as believers to allow the life of Jesus to flow through us to such a degree that when people see us, they have seen “The Father” as Jesus modeled for us during His earthly ministry.

I’m going to provide scriptural evidence for the points made thus far (To ensure that what has been said is not Heresy)

Examples of Jesus Declaring His Unity with God the Father’s Will:

*John 5:19 NKJV*

*[19] Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.*

*John 7:16-18 NLT*

*[16] So Jesus told them, "My message is not my own; it comes from God who sent me. [17] Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own. [18] Those who speak for themselves want glory only for themselves, but a person who seeks to honor the one who sent him speaks truth, not lies.*

*John 12:47-49 AMP*

*[47] If anyone hears My words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge and condemn the world [that is, to initiate the final judgment of the world], but to save the world. [48] Whoever rejects Me and refuses to accept My teachings, has one who judges him; the very word that I spoke will judge and condemn him on the last day. [49] For I have never spoken on My own initiative or authority, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment regarding what to say and what to speak.*

*John 14:10-12 NKJV*

*[10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. [11] Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. [12] "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*

Examples of Paul Encouraging Believers to Imitate Christ as He Does

*1 Corinthians 4:15-16 AMP*

*[15] For even if you were to have ten thousand teachers [to guide you] in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers [who led you to Christ and assumed responsibility for you], for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the good news [of salvation]. [16] So I urge you, be imitators of me [just as a child imitates his father].*

*1 Corinthians 11:1 AMP*

*[1] Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.*

*Ephesians 5:1 AMP*

*[1] Therefore become imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father];*

***Social Learning Theory is a theory of learning and social behavior which proposes that new behaviors can be acquired by observing and imitating others.***

*2 Timothy 3:10-11 AMPC*

*[10] Now you have closely observed and diligently followed my teaching, conduct, purpose in life, faith, patience, love, steadfastness, [11] Persecutions, sufferings-such as occurred to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, persecutions I endured, but out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

*2 Timothy 3:10 KJVS*

*[10] But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,*

Kenneth Wuest Word Studies (2 Tim 3:10-11) "Thou hast fully known" is parakoloutheo, "to follow after, so to follow one as to be always at his side, to follow faithfully (a standard or rule), to conform one's self to." The simple verb akoloutheo means "to join one as a disciple, become his disciple, conform wholly to another's example."

Throughout this series of text, we see the principal of discipleship through modeling illustrated. We see how the believer can live the transformed life through direct fellowship with Christ in conjunction with fellowship with elders in the faith who serve as living examples of Christ exercising his will through the life of a believer.

***The Cost of Discipleship***

There is a cost to discipleship, when you make the decision to follow Christ wholeheartedly there are going to be people in your that will not like it. Being aware of this can help us deal with change that is likely to happen as grow in our relationship with Christ.

*John 15:18-21 NKJV*

*[18] "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. [19] If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. [20] Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. [21] But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.*

*2 Timothy 3:12-15 AMPC*

*[12] Indeed all who delight in piety and are determined to live a devoted and godly life in Christ Jesus will meet with persecution [will be made to suffer because of their religious stand]. [13] But wicked men and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and leading astray others and being deceived and led astray themselves. [14] But as for you, continue to hold to the things that you have learned and of which you are convinced, knowing from whom you learned [them], [15] And how from your childhood you have had a knowledge of and been acquainted with the sacred Writings, which are able to instruct you and give you the understanding for salvation which comes through faith in Christ Jesus [through the leaning of the entire human personality on God in Christ Jesus in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness].*

**The Reward of Discipleship**

Although there is a cost to discipleship, the reward is so much greater than the cost that we pay (i.e. persecution from old acquaintances, friends, and family).

*Mark 10:28-30 NLT*

*[28] Then Peter began to speak up. "We've given up everything to follow you," he said. [29] "Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, [30] will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property-along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.*