

January 19, 2011

Born Again Series - Discipleship

2 Corinthians 5:17 – “What just happened?”

INTRO...

What a great time in Matthew we had last night...hope that many of you can join us...

- ...it was good to get back into our verse by verse studies through the New Testament...
 - ...with Matthew being a great place to start...it took us nine years to get through the first time...
 - ...Lord willing...we will go through a little faster than that this time around...as we cover two to three chapters per night...

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A number of years ago...as Pastor of Evangelism & Discipleship at Calvary Fellowship...

- ...the Lord spoke to my heart regarding Christian’s responsibility in caring for New Believers...for New Christians...

Pastor Wayne Taylor...who has an evangelist’s heart...would lead many people in the sinner’s prayer...

- ...Sunday and after Sunday...and one of my responsibilities was to make sure that there were enough...
 - ...of Pastor Wayne’s devotionals...through the gospel of John...so that he could give them to those who had made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ...

On one particular morning...as I was making sure there were enough books outside of the entrance to the sanctuary...

- ...the Lord spoke to my heart...of the **enormous** responsibility we have to disciple new believers...
 - ...He told me...that failure to give proper attention in this area...would render us as guilty as taking a ‘newborn baby’...

- ...and placing them on someone else’s doorstep for them to raise...

Of course...we would not think of doing such a thing...and yet...this is precisely what we do...

- ...when someone comes to faith in Christ...and we don’t give proper attention to helping them grow in their faith...in becoming a ‘disciple of Jesus’...a mature follower of Jesus...

When I was going through the Evangelism Explosion training...we would conclude our leading someone to Christ with...

- ...*“Welcome to the Family of God!”*...which is precisely what happens to every new believer who comes to faith in Jesus Christ...
 - ...they leave their family of unbelievers (blood relatives...friends... neighbors...co-workers and so on)...and begin a relationship with believers...
 - ...and they haven’t a clue as to what that looks like...it is a huge culture shock...and they need help...

Jesus said...that we are to preach the gospel to all nations...to all peoples...BUT...he also said...

Matthew 28:19–20 (NKJV) — 19 Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; ...**

Discipleship...in it’s purest and simplest form...is doing just that...teaching people...

- ...teaching New Believers...not only ‘how to observe’ and follow the things Jesus’ commanded...
 - ...BUT...why it is that we are to observe such things...

Paul said that the role of the church is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry and to build up of the body of Christ...

- ...and that we are to do that until people mature in their faith...until they are mature Christians...

There is a lot of immaturity among Christians today...and it is because proper attention

has not been given...

- ...to disciple people in the Word of God and all it says in regards to being a Christian...

Ephesians 4:14 (NKJV) — 14 ...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with **every wind of doctrine**, by the **trickery of men**, in the cunning **craftiness of deceitful plotting**,

There are many *winds of doctrine* out there and if proper care is not given to nurture a New Believer...in their faith...

- ...they will fall prey to unbiblical teaching...and the trickery of men...in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting...
 - ...and before long...they will have fallen away from their faith...

One of the great challenges I have discovered...over the years...in this area of discipleship...is where to begin...

- ...there are **so many things** that could be covered...it can be hard to prioritize them...

I have spent over 32 years learning about the Christian faith...

- ...and in many respects feel like I have just begun and feel like I have so much more to learn...

I say this not to discourage...but rather to encourage us that this is how much of the Lord there is to discover...

- ...AND SO...what I have put together...is 10 of those things which I believe are essential...in forming a solid framework for a mature faith in every New Believer...
 - ...in an order which I believe to be the most beneficial...

NOW...bear in mind...that there are literally hundreds of Scriptures that speak to the things that every Christian should know about their faith...

- ...and so the things I will be sharing are not all inclusive by any means...BUT...are intended to provide the framework for every New Believer...
 - ...to grow strong in their faith...and provide a good solid foundation for

their Christian lives...

For years...as a Christian...I spent a lot of time trying to figure things out...

- ...I knew I was a Christian...and just like the new kid at school...or on a new job...
 - ...I felt that there was an expectation that I should know certain things that I clearly did not know...
 - ...BUT...I was not about to let anyone else know that I didn't know them...

Sadly...this even carried over into my years in ministry...hearing terms like... propitiation...

- ...and sanctification and atonement...not really fully understanding what they meant...but feeling I needed to pretend I did...

I would hear teachers say...“*We’ve all heard the story about the prodigal son!*”...and I would think to myself...

- ...I don't even know what the word 'prodigal' means let alone who 'his son' was...
 - ...and the list of such things would go on and on...and I spent a lot of years just trying to understand and figure out the basics of Christianity...
 - ...too embarrassed and too prideful to admit...“*I don't have a clue what you are talking about?*”

I believe that the Lord wants us to be committed to making sure that this doesn't happen in our church...

- ...we must make sure that we are doing everything we can...to strengthen the faith of New Christians...it is so critical to their spiritual livelihood...

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There are two things...we must always keep in mind...whenever we are taking a new believer through a discipleship study...

FIRST...Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

- ...your role is to disciple them and help them grow into a mature Christian and not just to get through the particular ‘discipleship study’ you are going through...

Don’t get so stuck on getting through the lessons...that you miss an opportunity to teach something that they need to know at that particular moment...

- ...some of the greatest times I have had with a New Believer is when they asked a question that led to searching the Scriptures and letting them discover...

SECONDLY...Involve them in the bible study at every opportunity...it is a great way to get them started in doing what Christians do...so they will more quickly do it on their own...

- PRAYER...have them pray at the end of your time together...they will be intimidated with the idea of praying in the beginning...BUT...encourage them...
 - ...that their prayer can be as simple as, *"Lord thank you for this time...Amen"*
- SCRIPTURE...have them read the study sheets aloud...especially the bible verses...
 - ...this helps them get used to reading the word for themselves and will make it easier for their personal times of studying the bible...

AND SO...The purpose of the next 10 weeks...is two fold...

1. To help any New Believer in service over the next 10 weeks have a better understanding of what it means to be a Christian.
2. To equip EVERY believer in the service...with the tools to ‘disciple’ a new believer ...to help a new Christian grow in their faith.

NOW...let me conclude my introduction with this...as I have thought about the best approach in accomplishing both of these goals...

- ...I feel that the best way...is TO TEACH...as if we were ALL were new to the faith...so that it will minister to the broadest group of people...
 - ...those of us who are NEW to the faith...and those of us who are OLDER in the faith but want to learn...
 - ...**how best** to minister to a New Believer...

AND...the Lord has been speaking to my heart...that the best way to accomplish this...

- ...is by looking and hearing things through their eyes and ears...we get so used to being Christians...
 - ...that we can be insensitive to New Believers and what they are going through...as they learn how to live the Christian life...

AND...if there are some of you...who are the way that I was for years...you will learn some things...

- ...that everyone **thinks you already know**...that you really **don't know**...and when we are finished...you will **really know** them...

Let me tell you...without hesitation...that one of the greatest joys of being a Christian...

- ...is watching someone who was dead...become alive...**and then** being a part of helping them grow in their faith...
 - ...into a strong and mature follower of Jesus Christ...a Christian who then begins to disciple others...
 - TURST ME...you are going to love it...many of you know what I am talking about...

PRAY...

This morning we are going to be looking at the first part of the Discipleship portion of our Born Again series...

- ...which I have entitled...**“What just happened?”**...

ILLUST: Wizard of Oz...Black & White...to full color...It is probably safe to assume most of you have seen it...

- ...*“Toto...I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.”*...Glinda the good witch shows up on the scene...
 - ...*“Now I know we're not in Kansas!”*...

I think this perfectly illustrates what goes on in every New Believer's heart and mind...

- ...as you begin discovering the incredible wonders of a New Life in Christ...

This was really brought to light a few months ago...when a New Believer showed up at the men’s prayer meeting...

- ...and the Lord gave me an opportunity to see and listen to the things that were going on in that room...
 - ...through the eyes and ears of a New Christian...and I suddenly had this compassion for and desire...in a new and fresh way...
 - ...to help New Believers understand what had taken place...when they accepted Jesus into their heart...

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians living in a city called Ephesus...

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) — 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

ILLUST: Lucy giving her life to Jesus...

- ...at four years old...we had never really gotten along that well...BUT seriously...
 - ...after she gave her life to Jesus...we get along great...

This is literally what happened when you gave your life to Jesus Christ...you became a New Creation...

- ...you came to the realization that there was nothing fulfilling in the old life you were living...
 - ...nothing was bringing you the true satisfaction and lasting joy you were searching for...
 - ...your life was headed towards a dead end and you wanted to do something about it...BUT...you didn’t know what to do...

At some level you knew you needed God in your life...you knew you needed a relationship with a Holy God...a perfect God whom you knew was without sin...

- ...and in different ways you began to search for the God of the bible...He intentionally designed it that way...
 - ...He created in you...a desire to know Him...and a way for you to discover Him...

Acts 17:26–27 (NKJV) — 26 ...He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, **27** so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

This is such an amazing truth...God loves you so much and wanted a relationship with you so much...that He predetermined when you would be born...and where you would be born...just so that you would seek God...

- ...and He hoped that you would search for Him...knowing that if you did...you would find Him...because He is not far from any of us...

Before you became a New Creation...You knew that you were not pure and perfect...and that if you ever hoped to have a relationship with a pure and perfect God...

- ...you would have to figure out what to do with the sinful things that kept you from being pure...and thereby kept you from feeling good about a genuine relationship with God...

AND THEN...some divine circumstance led you to that someone...a co-worker...a friend or family member...

- ...maybe even a radio or television program or some other event...or even something more random than that...

Before you knew it...you understood...really understood for the first time...that there was absolutely nothing you could do to get your own act together...

- ...AND...you met someone who could take care of your dilemma...and His name was Jesus...

You had heard about him...and perhaps grew up singing about when He was born...and how all the angels rejoiced...at his birth...

- ...you certainly loved celebrating His birthday...because you got some of His birthday presents...
 - ...except they were the ones that you wanted...and it happened year after year...

BUT NOW...as a New Creation...when you read...that part of the Christmas story..

Matthew 1:20–23 (NKJV) — 20 ...an angel of the Lord appeared to him [...Joseph...] in a

dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. **21** And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for **He will save His people from their sins.**” **22** So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: **23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”**”

...you realize that that is just what happened in your life...that by believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth that Jesus died on the cross...

- ...in order to save His people from their sins...He forgave **your** sins...He made you clean...
 - ...AND somehow...you miraculously became BRAND NEW...and even though you can't explain it...you know it's true...
 - ...because you know you...better than anyone else knows you...and you know you're not the same OLD person you used to be...

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) — 20 I have been crucified with Christ [...your sinful past was put to death...]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life **which I now live** [...this new life...] in the flesh I live **by faith** in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

When you became a Christian...you put to death your old life...and the life you now live is by faith...

- ...faith in the truth that all you need is Jesus Christ...who will direct you in your New Life in Him...

When a religious Jewish leader named Nicodemus...came to Jesus to find out how to inherit eternal life...Jesus said to him...

John 3:5–7 (NKJV) — 5 ...“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘**You must be born again.**’”

When you gave your life to Jesus Christ...you were ‘Born Again’...

- ...you now have two birthdates...the one on which you were physically born... and the one on which you were spiritually born...

One which was temporary...

Hebrews 9:27– (NKJV) — **27** And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

AND...the other birthdate...when you were born again...which is eternal...

John 10:27–28 (NKJV) — **27** My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. **28** And I give them **eternal life**, and they shall **never perish**; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

You don't remember when you were born the first time...but you know that you could not have survived on your own...

- ...you needed help to dress yourself...to eat and drink and all of those things babies do to survive...
 - ...so that they can grow into adulthood...

In the same manner...as a Newly Born Christian...you need help in order to grow into the strong and mature Christian...God wants you to be...

- ...you need to learn how to live as a New Creation in a cleansed body that now belongs to Jesus...

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NKJV) — **19** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? **20** For you were bought at a price [...by the blood of Jesus who died for your sins...]; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

When we surrendered our lives to Jesus...we gave Him control because when we were in control...

- ...we weren't doing a very good job...in fact we were doing a horrible job...and now we need to learn how to live the right way...

The way that we learn how to live as a New Christian...is to listen and learn about the things that Jesus said...

Matthew 7:24–25 (NKJV) — **24** [...to a crowd that Jesus was speaking to...He said...] “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, **and does them**, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: **25** and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

...we do the things that Jesus says...NOT to get us into heaven...because He already took care of that...

Ephesians 2:8 (NKJV) — 8 For **by grace** you have been saved through faith [...faith in what Jesus did on the cross...], and that not of yourselves; it is the **gift of God**,

- ...we do the things Jesus says...not out of obligation...BUT RATHER...out of gratitude for what He did for us...

He came down from heaven...became a man...died on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins we could not take care of ourselves...

- ...He rose from the dead as a demonstration of His power to overcome death...and He is sitting at the right had of God...at this very moment...
 - ...waiting for us to be with Him for all eternity...WOW!!!

ILLUST: Nightmare about owing someone \$1,000,000 dollars...

- ...there it was...all in silver dollars...in a glass coffin...and I couldn't use it to pay what I owed...
 - ...my stepfather...one night...said... *"I will pay it for you!"*...I never had the dream again...

I opened a Christmas card recently that perfectly summarized what Jesus did for us...it said...

- *"He came to pay a debt He didn't owe...because we owed a debt we couldn't pay."*

I never could understand why a little boy...8 or 9 years old would have such a morbid nightmare...

- ...but I now realize...after all these years that it was a beautiful picture of what Jesus did for us...
 - ...He paid the debt of sin...a debt He didn't owe...because He was perfect...and without sin...
 - ...because we owed a debt we couldn't pay...

I have been thinking about this truth for 32 years...and it NEVER...NEVER gets old!!!

PRAY...

Next week...we will continue out look at “What just happened?”...as assure the New

Believer...

- ...that they can be certain that their salvation is secure...along with some Christian terms they will be hearing a lot...
 - ...AND need to be familiar with...

LAST NIGHT...

- ...was such a sweet night on focusing on Jesus...and what a wonderful name it is...
 - ...and how wonderful it feels in our mouths and hearts...

WORSHIP...