

Sermon Notes

(A basic transcription with modifications for style and clarity)

WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Matt King, April 22, 2017

Christ referred to those who would follow Him—those who would imitate His example, those who would walk in His steps—as disciples. He even went so far as to say that those who show godly love, outgoing concern, to others would be recognized, would be identified, as His disciples. If someone were to ask you, “What is a disciple? what would you say? How would you respond to that? If someone were to ask you the question, “Are you a disciple of Christ? Are you a disciple of God?”, how would you answer? What would you say?

The theme of discipleship is an important theme that we see throughout the Bible. You see it identified in both the Old Testament and the New. Many would probably think that the whole idea of discipleship, at least from the perspective of Christianity, was something that originated with Christ in the first century. But it is a very important concept. It’s a very important principle that we find in the Old Testament. It may not be specifically noted as “discipleship”, but it is defined and it is identified by action in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

For those who are called, for those whom the Father has reached out to and brought into a relationship with Him, it is an especially important principle. It’s an especially important idea, especially as we come out of the Spring Holidays. We have spent considerable time over the last several weeks evaluating our lives, searching to understand and to identify sin with the intent and purpose of removing it from our lives. The whole idea of discipleship is to help us understand how we take that next step. What is it that we do when we identify sin? What is it that we do next? How is it that we organize our lives? How is it that we focus our lives? How is it that we take that next step so that once we identify and remove sin, that we can keep sin from entering back in; that we can continue on the path to be a holy people?

Think about it for just a second. Create this picture in your mind. Think of a bottle. That bottle right now is empty. And sin is the air in the bottle. We have gone through a period where we have identified the sin; but just try to move sin out. Just try to dump it out. The air doesn’t go anywhere. Something else has to be put in the bottle to replace the sin and make sure it doesn’t come back in. That’s the idea behind discipleship. To not only remove it, but to replace it. To make sure it doesn’t enter back in.

So for the rest of the afternoon today, I'd really like to focus on two things to leave us to think about and to consider.

The first is, I'd like for us to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be a disciple. To really define what is a disciple. Being a disciple goes much deeper than just being a follower. I know when I say that, that it might be a little shocking, especially when we've have been in the Church for a while. Yes, we need to follow the example of Jesus Christ. I am not saying that we don't need to follow Jesus' example. We see that clearly in Matthew 4.

Matthew 4:19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

But we also need to understand that being a disciple means that a deeper transformation needs to take place in our lives. We will explore that transformation and what that means in a little more detail.

The second thing I'd like to focus on is leaving us with some specific examples. Look at some examples of what discipleship means in detail. Tear those apart, look at them and taste them, so to speak. Touch them, understand them. I know a lot of times it's easier to apply Biblical principles in our lives when we take them and de-construct them a little bit, we work with them. I'd like to take a couple of examples so that we don't just have a definition, but we have a working definition and we can understand what it means to be a disciple a little bit better.

I wonder, as we think about discipleship though, if to some degree, the modern view of discipleship hasn't really influenced what it means to be a disciple in a spiritual sense. A disciple of Christ; a disciple of our Father. Discipleship, as we view it in the modern vernacular, implies that a disciple is someone who simply follows and someone who distributes or spreads ideas or doctrines. For example, we can look at the *Miriam-Webster Dictionary*. It defines a disciple as, first, "*One who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another: such as Christianity.*" It's the same for Protestantism or Islam; someone who simply spreads the doctrines. Another definition is that it can be "*A convinced adherent of a school or an individual*". Someone like Freud. If you align with Freud and some of his thought processes, you tend to spread his ideas and his thoughts. Then you would be considered a disciple of Freud.

There are a couple of challenges with that definition that we probably should be aware of. The first is, you can spread doctrines and teachings of another individual and in this definition make adjustments as you go. If you think about being a disciple of Freud, there are many types of psychology. There are different strands of Freudian psychology, so you can be a disciple of Freud and not believe everything he taught; not distribute everything he taught. You can make up your own way or part of the way. The other challenge that we should probably consider is that, viewed from this definition we

just read, being a disciple can become almost a mechanical act. If I do this, I'm a disciple. If I don't do this, I'm not a disciple. If I think this way, I'm a disciple. If I think that way, I'm not. It can lead us to a place where discipleship becomes very mechanical. Very rote, very routine.

Both of those thought processes and ideas can influence the way we think about being a disciple of Christ.

Let's dig into the Bible a little bit. Let's understand how our Father defines discipleship a little bit more. I would like to give us something to think about as we start here in Exodus 19. Because as we read here—we'll start in Exodus 19 and go into Exodus 20 and up to and end at the 10 Commandments. But as we go through this thought process, I'd like for us to think about the 10 Commandments for just a second.

When we think about the 10 Commandments, we often view them as a distinct body of laws – the Ten. The Ten, or God's 10 Commandments. We almost view them as a distinct body of laws, separate from all the other laws and the principles and the statutes and the judgements that He gave to Israel. But if we consider where Israel was coming from for just a minute, from one perspective the 10 Commandments define discipleship in a very pointed, very concise and a very direct way.

As God was bringing His people out of Egypt. They had been indoctrinated, immersed in an environment that set them at odds with their God, with the whole system, the whole way of life that they saw around them. The gods, the thought process, the rulership, taught them to live a way of life that was completely the opposite of their God's way of life. As He was bringing them out, and as He was beginning to communicate to His people His way of life and how He expected them to work, how He expected them to live, how He expected them to interact with Him; He had from the time they left, about two months. They left on the 15th of the first month and they reached Mount Sinai about the 15th of the third month. He had a fairly short period of time to begin to work with them and to communicate to this people who He was.

When we ultimately get to the 10 Commandments, we find Him communicating His expectation and His way of life in a very concise, a very specific way for His people to begin to understand. Then what we find with Israel after the 10 Commandments, we find Him continuing to open up; continuing to communicate His way of life. To expound on it, to enliven it, to enlarge it. Enlarge it and helping the people to understand more, so that His mind then, would continue to grow and be spread out. It's interesting to think about where Israel was from that perspective as He was working with them. Beginning in verse 3 we read:

Exodus 19:3 And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine.

6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Let's pause just a second. At this point, the people knew they were dealing with a God that was completely different than anything that they had experienced. This God, who had called them to this mountain where they were standing, had just executed, about 8 weeks earlier, judgement against the most powerful, or at least one of the most powerful, nations on the earth at that time. He also executed judgement against the gods of that nation and He knocked them over like they were chaff. They were nothing to Him. As these people were coming up to Mount Sinai and they are about to be engaging with their God in a different way, they understood at least to some degree that this Being was different than any other being they had ever experienced. Continuing in verse 16:

Exodus 19:16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled.

Think about where they were at. These people had heard horns; they had heard trumpets before. Trumpets were traditionally used by royalty to announce events and times. It stands to reason that the Egyptians had trumpets. But they had never heard trumpets like this. These trumpets were so loud and powerful that the people trembled. Again, coming before a God that was nothing like anything that they had comprehended before.

17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

18 Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.

Consider your thought process and what you would be thinking if you were standing there before that mountain. The people had no idea before this time of the power of this Being. Yes, they had seen great things. This Being came down on a mountain, lit the entire top on fire, it was like a furnace and He was shaking it like a rag. It was quaking. These people had come from an understanding of gods that were stone, gods that were

metal, gods that were wood and people who thought they were gods. Now they're coming before a mountain and they see what God is really like.

What would they be thinking? What would be going through your mind? Especially when they understand that this God wanted them to be His people. That you're going to be His special treasure. That you're going to be His nation. What were they thinking? I know one of the things I would be thinking. How do I do that? All the reference points that I have are what I've seen and how you honor gods of wood and stone and metal. This one's different. What do we need to do to be the kind of people that You want? Because everything they had experienced did not prepare them for this. This God was different. So what God did was, He explained in a very concise and focused way what He expected of them. How He wanted His people to act. How He wanted His people to interact with Him. He gave them an overview, so to speak, on how they were to be His people.

Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying:

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 You shall have no other gods before Me.

As I noted, we often separate the 10 Commandments from His other laws. It is almost as if we consider the 10 Commandments more important than His other laws. But when we do that, I think we lose something in understanding. The judgements, the statutes and all the laws that He gave to His people came from His mind. When we look, God tells his people to put a parapet around the top of their house, on their roof. He does that because He wants to show people how you have outgoing concern for others.

Deuteronomy 22:8 When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

If somebody is on that house, which people tended to do at night, they would sleep on the roof of their house because it was cooler. He didn't want somebody accidentally falling off and hurting themselves. It was teaching the people how you actually show outgoing concern to others. It was showing them how to exercise His law of love to other people.

As we progress after this time, He continues to teach the people and help them understand how to live. How to have His mind and how to project that mind and live in a physical world so that it reflects His nature. So that it reflects who and what He is. To learn to apply His mind in life so that others can see it. To be His light. In effect, that is

exactly the point that the 10 Commandments are making here in a very concise and a very focused way.

Think about the progression that you see in the 10 Commandments. The first commandment, you shall have no other gods before Me.

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me.

He is telling His people: look to Me, have your connection with Me. Make sure that I am the focus, make sure that I am your top priority. Make sure your thoughts are on Me, make sure that's where your connection is.

The second commandment. He's telling this to a people who came out of a society that was in complete conflict with Him.

4 You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments

He tells them in the second commandment: Don't look at the things around you. The gods of wood, the gods of stone, the gods of metal—they're not gods. I am your God. Don't make images and think that that represents Me. Don't set things up in your life and think that that's Me. Go back to the first commandment. Have your connection on Me. Don't get caught up in these other things and get focused here.

Then we come to the third commandment. We often view the third commandment as a prohibition against using His name inappropriately or saying it inappropriately. But that is not really the point that He is making in the third commandment. Yes, it includes that; we should never use His name inappropriately. But that's not the point that He is making. He has just told the people that He's brought them out, that He wants them to be His nation. His priests, His special treasure, His people. In effect, they were to be His representatives as they go out now. As they cross over and they go into the Promised Land, His point was He wanted them to be His people; His special treasure.

The third command specifically states:

7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.

The word for "take" in the Hebrew implies to take up, to bear or to carry. The idea this word is conveying to the people here, and by extension to us, is that we are to take

up His name and we are carry it in a certain way. In other words, they were to be His representatives. They were to hold Him up in a certain way.

The other word we should pay attention to is the word in vain. Because He specifically says, don't hold it up, don't carry it in vain. The Hebrew term for the word translated vain implies emptiness. It is translated in different places in the Bible as worthless, vain, unrestrained, fraudulent.

The point He is making to His people, as they stand before this mountain that is on fire like a furnace, is: telling the people to lift up and bear His name. To be His people and carry His name, in a way that is not fraudulent. That is not worthless. Carry His name in a way that reflects who and what He really is. Again, the point was that they were to be His nation, His people. They were to be His light in a dark world, so that when people came into contact with the nation of Israel, they were supposed to reflect His nature and His character. That's what He's telling them. They were to be reflective of who and what their God is. That's what He intended for the nation of Israel.

That is exactly what Christ communicated to the disciples before His death. The exact same principle.

But how were the people to do that? They were indoctrinated in another system that put them in conflict with this Being—how were they to do that? How were they to know what to do? What were they to do? How were they to carry His name appropriately? If you look at the rest of the commandments, He tells them.

Remember the Sabbath day. Keep that time holy. Keep the time holy that I separated so that I can have a relationship with My people, and you can remain connected and focused on Me, your God. On YHVH. Keep the Sabbath day holy. Keep it separate.

They were to honor their father and mother. Because the family unit and the father and mother are the first beginning teachings of what it means to have a relationship with God. The father and mother are responsible for taking a young mind, teaching that young mind and helping that young mind connect to their Father. Their heavenly Father. Honor your father and mother. Honor that purpose. Honor that relationship.

As we progress through the rest of these commandments, He is helping the people understand what it means to be in a relationship with Him and then take His nature and who He is and carry His name appropriately into the world.

As we go through the rest of the commandments, after this point, as God gives His people more statutes and laws and judgements, you find He is helping the people understand how His mind works. So that they could begin to mimic that mind and they could be His light and therefore represent His name appropriately in the world. That

was the purpose. We can connect this thought process with what Christ left us in John 17. We see it in perfect parallel.

John 17:6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

7 Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.

8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

How we carry our Father's name is important. It is also critical that we keep our focus on the source of all things. Christ came from the Father. His life was the light of men. The life and the light that He had is the same life and the same light that Our Father has. Christ made it clear that Our Father is the source of the light. Just as was stated in the first commandment. We have to remain connected to that light. We have to remain connected to that source. He must be the absolute highest priority in our lives. Period. When we are connected to Him and we carry His name appropriately, we reflect His light in a world of darkness. We reflect His light into the world.

10 And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.

11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through (Through what? Through) Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

When we carry His name appropriately, when we are connected to the source – what comes out of us, what should be coming out of us, is the same thing that emanates from our Father. We are one, then, just as They are one. That's the point that Christ is making. It's about a transformation. It's not just about following. It's about being one as They are one. We are not perfect, we're going to continue to make mistakes. We're going to stumble, we're going to fall and we're going to get up and we're going to try again. But being a disciple means that what come out of us in the form of thought, of purpose, intent and action begins to more and more emanate from Our Father's mind. Because we are taking on that same mind. We are one as They are one.

If you could turn with me to chapter 14 of John. Christ spends a little bit more time digging into this.

John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Christ has said repeatedly in His interaction with the disciples and with others, "The things that I do, the words that I give you, they are My Father's words; they are My

Father's will. It's my Father's purpose. What I am doing is not Me, I simply tell you what the Father says. I am giving you what the Father gave to Me."

There is a complete oneness. There is a way of life in the commandments and that way of life emanates from a mind.

16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that *it* may abide with you forever—

17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it (the world) neither sees *it* nor knows *it*; but you know *it*, for *it* dwells with you and will be in you.

What Christ is talking about is, the world doesn't understand the Holy Spirit. He's going to give us the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is given and it is working in us or with us, that is the power that enables us to live and go in a way that connects to our Father's mind. What comes out of us, then, is His way of life. It is the Holy Spirit that is that power that activates to be able to do that.

You can read John 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 and you find that exactly mimicking what God was telling Israel. John 14 is a perfect parallel to what God was telling Israel as they were standing there at Mount Sinai. Entering into a relationship with Him. It's a perfect parallel. To be disciples, we have to be connected to the source. Our Father must be the absolute, unequivocal, no holds barred top priority in our lives. All the gods, all the things that are set up in the world, all the things that are going to vie for His attention and all the things that are going to vie for His place; everything else has to be put down. He must have that top priority. Then, as disciples, we are to lift up His name. We are to carry His name in a way that reflects, by our actions and our thoughts and our attitudes, who and what He really is. We reflect that into a dark world. His light then is reflected in darkness.

Being a disciple is not just following. Being a disciple requires that we strive with all of our might and through the power of the Holy Spirit to be an embodiment of His nature in this life – a holy nation, a royal priesthood. We are to walk in the light as He walks in the light. That's what being a disciple is. That's what it means.

But how do we do this on a daily basis?

There are times when we are going to be confronted with challenging circumstances. Sometimes it helps to have details for us to think about. How do we actually live this on a daily basis? What does it look like?

One of the first things I would ask us to think about it, as we think about how we actually become those people, is how casual are we toward God? How casual are we in our relationship towards Him? This is something that was touched briefly on in some

previous messages. I know that Mr. Orchard and some others have touched on it, but it bears some thought. How casual are we toward Him in our relationship?

Our Father obviously wants a close, personal, intimate relationship. He wants to be at the center, at the very core, of our lives. It's interesting that, when the Eternal dwelt with Israel, He placed the Tabernacle at the center of the camp. Every morning when the Israelites would wake up, the first thing that they would see when they came out of their tents was the Tent of Meeting, the Tabernacle. The pillar of fire or the cloud, depending on when they got up. The very first thing they would see. When they went to bed at night, one of the very final things that they would see—a pillar of fire, a pillar of cloud over the Tabernacle of Meeting. They understood that that's where His presence was. Every day.

Think about how He fed the people. They had to look to Him for food, for water. Where did they get water? It had to come from Him. They were in the middle of a desert. There was no food. There was no water. There was their God. He was at the center. If you would turn with me to Numbers 1:52. It's interesting that, if you think about it, He was the one that specifically structured the camp of Israel and He placed Himself at the center so that the people would understand that He was to be the core of their way of life.

Numbers 1:52 The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies;

53 but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel (We'll come back to that point in just a second.); and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.

54 Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they did.

As you read chapter two, the picture that you get is the way that Israel was structured around the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was in the middle. Around the Tabernacle were the Levites, the Levitical priesthood. Around the Levites, you had the rest of the Israelites by family and by tribe. What you find is the Tabernacle where the Eternal dwelt was in the center of the camp.

So the Eternal specifically structured the camp so that the people's lives would focus on Him. It would be a constant focus, a constant reminder that He was their God and they were His people. The Levites were between the people and the Tabernacle, because there was a seriousness in approaching God. In Exodus 19, verses 10 through 13, we're told that when the people were told to approach Mount Sinai, they were told to consecrate themselves. They were told to clean themselves up, wash their clothing and come. But they were also told not to touch the mountain. If any human or

animal touched the mountain, it was to be killed with an arrow or it was to be stoned to death. It was not to be touched.

There is a seriousness and a gravitas that we need to have in our relationship with our Father. It is easy, especially in the world that we have today, to become so casual about the way we go to Him. About the way that we interact with Him. It can almost become ad hoc and flippant, where we don't get the gravity and the seriousness that a relationship with Him needs.

He's not some mean, tyrannical God that wanted to crush and kill His people. He told them, don't come and touch the mountain. He warned them and He set up a barrier so people wouldn't just come in a flippant way or on the spur of the moment. "Hey, let's go up on the mountain and see God today." There needed to be thought in approaching Him, in investing in that relationship with Him. They needed to recognize who and what He was; have reverence for His name and for His position in their lives.

So, given the fact that God took the time and made the effort to structure Israel around Him the way that He did at the very center, shouldn't we ask the question: "How do we structure our lives?"

Do we structure our lives? Do we structure our priorities, the way that we conduct our lives so that He is at the center of our lives, so He is at the core? Do we structure our lives and think about our lives in such a way that He is at the center, that He consumes our attention? Is that the approach that we have towards Him? If we do that, what does it look like? What does it begin to look like when we do that? What are the things that we do? Just some things to think about:

How do we approach our jobs? What kind of careers do we choose? Do we make choices that put us on a collision course with our God? Do we think about our jobs and careers that way? Do we select things that we do and the way we approach our jobs that put us on a collision course with Him? Or do we, on the other hand, take a step back and evaluate: "How do I choose careers, how do I think about my job so that what I do on a day-in and day-out basis keeps my attention focused on Him?" A simple thing. Is that something that we do?

How is it that we start our day every day? There is a reason that David, Daniel and others prayed three times a day. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing. Do we? Is He such a focus in our lives that that is the place that He gets? The choice pieces, the choice time and always focusing on Him. Is that what He gets? Israel saw a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire when they came out as He was teaching them about Himself and how to interact with Him; how to think about Him as a part of Israel and a part of their lives. It was a teaching experience. The manna was a teaching experience. Is that the way we think about Him in our lives?

You think about something else: How do we dress when we come before God? I am not saying that we need to have a \$5,000 Armani suit. I'm not going to buy a \$5,000 Armani suit. I don't think we need to go buy Gucci clothes, but I think we do need to think. Do we wear the best that we have? Do we dress appropriately when we come before Him? Do we think about those things? One of the things I think in this society that from time to time just shocks me is the length of some of the skirts and some of the shorts and some of the fashions and trends you see. Paul encourages women to dress modestly and not to engage in outlandish fashion.

1 Timothy 2:9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,

It goes for men as well. There are some pretty outlandish fashions for men as well. Maybe not as much. They're there. How do we approach our dress in the way that we think?

It's interesting. Paul tells us in Philippians 4:5 to let our moderation be known. Some translations say, let your gentleness be known to all men.

Philippians 4:5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

That word in the Greek implies virtue. Paul is saying, let your virtue, your values, your purpose, come out. So when people see you, what they see is the nature and character of your God.

In questioning the things that we need to be evaluating in our lives, the point is clear that if we are truly connected to our Father as disciples we will structure our lives differently. We will do things differently. And sometimes, that means physical changes. When we get up in the morning, before we go to bed, do we actually take the time to pray? Put that routine in our lives so that we are focused on Him. Do we do things like that?

This is one of the reasons we must think about enhancing and maintaining as we structure our lives so that we are connected to God; so that we have His nature and His life coming down, flowing through us and out. That is one of the reasons it is so important to see His way of life as so much more than just a list of do's and don'ts. If we look at His law from that perspective, we get focused on the wrong thing. We're not focusing on reflecting His life; we're worrying, did I do this or that? Our focus should be on maintaining and building that connection, so that what emanates from us is His mind. It's a different thought process.

Think of it from the perspective of an archer. If an archer is at target practice. I'm not an archer, but I've seen a few. I'd probably shoot myself if I shot an arrow. But if you look at an archer, and you're standing off as they are shooting toward a target; say

they shoot 3 arrows. The archer goes up and looks at the bullseye and sees that he missed with the arrows. Hopefully, they've hit the target. This one's 3 inches off, this one's 5 inches off. This one hit the hay bale, didn't get on the target. What does the archer do to correct hitting the center? If the archer just goes back and says, "OK, I'm going to try harder. Pull back, shoot, pull back, shoot, pull back, shoot." Nothing changes. That archer is going to go up to the target, and he's going to see an arrow over here, an arrow over there and one over here. And nothing in the bullseye. Because when we think about changing that result, what the archer has to do is change his stance. Change the elevation of the bow. Sight in the bow better. Change his breathing. Change the way he's holding the bow. In other words, it is not just about what happens once the arrow hits. It is about everything that leads up to that point.

When we think about sin and being disciples and aligning our lives to our Father, it is not just about the things that happen at the end. It is not just about, did we lie or did we not lie? Did we steal or did we not steal? It is about what brought us to that point. So when that archer goes back, if he wants to have a much more accurate shot, then change the structure. We have to do the same thing. That is what disciples do.

Just to ask a question, something to think about: How many times have we come to Passover and we've thought about the same sin, the same thing that we struggled with and wondered why we're not making progress? I understand. I get it. There are some sins that are hard. You have to get down to the nitty-gritty and fight and it is just hard to root it out of our lives. But sometimes I think we come back year after year because we're only looking at the end result and we're frustrated that the sin happened and we're not looking at the structures of our lives, everything that we've done to arrive at that point that results in that sin. And I think we need to!

So let's bring this concept down to a more detailed level. I'd like to look at a couple of examples and leave a couple of examples for you to think about; that you can work with and think about and kind of tear apart.

Ephesians 4:17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

A different way of life. Paul is going to clearly delineate between two ways of life.

20 But you have not so learned Christ,

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The context that Paul is talking about as we come to these examples is walking in the light and being a new man. It's about being a different creation. Having a different mind and a different thought process.

28 Let him who stole steal no longer . . .

If someone is stealing, if there is a thief: stop. Stop! Don't steal! But is that enough of a change in the life of a disciple to walk in the light and actually be a disciple? No. It's not.

. . . but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

To walk in the light as God is in the light, to be a disciple, we must also work. We are told in Exodus 20 and Exodus 34 to work for six days. To engage in activities that are meaningful and are useful. Those who are in the light are not idle, not busybodies. They are not living off of the generosity of others. They work. But is that enough? No. It's not.

They need to work so that they can be in a position to (and have the heart and the mind and the focus to) help others in need. When we look at this example, it is not enough to stop stealing. Should we steal? Absolutely not! But is that enough to be a disciple? No. Other changes are required for us to walk in the light. We have to work. We have to have a generous heart and mind that is there to serve for the benefit of others. Whether it's our time, our money; whatever it is. That heart and mind has to be present.

If someone is stealing and they stop stealing, and they say over and over and over, "I have to stop stealing." Even if they stop stealing, even if they stop breaking the commandment "Thou shalt not steal", is that enough to be a disciple? No. Continuing in verse 29, Paul tells us:

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Again, same application. If someone tends to gossip, to tell stories about other people that were intended to be private or to share things that were not intended to be shared: if we tend to say things that hurt and cut, or if we communicate things that tear

down, or say things that incite a prolonged conflict; is it enough to be a disciple to stop? No. It is not.

We need to communicate and engage with others with the intent to help edify, to build, to heal and to encourage. We need to do that out of genuine love and concern. To do that requires that we change something else in our lives.

It requires that we change what we think about. It requires that we begin to think about things that are uplifting, things that are inspiring, things that are hopeful. It requires that we connect to our Father on a regular basis and have a mind that is connected to Him, that understands outgoing love and how to communicate His thought process to other people. It requires that we think about and we engage with other people and we understand their needs and seek to help and uplift.

It requires that we prioritize what goes into our minds so that what goes into our minds is uplifting. You know the old saying, "Garbage in, garbage out." We put garbage into our minds, corrupt communication is going to come out.

Being a disciple means that we are connected to God and that is our highest priority; above anything else in this life. Above a spouse, above a boyfriend, above a girlfriend, above a job, above a career, material possessions -- anything. That is the one priority that has to be at the top and we have to be connected to Him. It also means that we structure our lives in such a way that we are constantly and consistently focused on Him first and foremost. That He is the center of our thoughts, that He is the center of our lives and decisions and the choices that we make point us back to Him.

So if someone were to come in and ask one of us the question, "Are you a disciple?" What would you answer? ♦