

OCTOBER 10, 2021
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
THIS IS US WEEK 5 | WE ARE A CLASSROOM
MATTHEW 7:24-27
FALL QUARTER WEEK 5 OF 13

EFCC's definition of a disciple: Someone who is learning to live in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus.

EFCC's discipleship values: Pursuit, Obedience, Journey, Wholeness, Together, Mission.

EFCC's discipleship model: being WITH (upward focus), becoming LIKE (inward focus), doing AS (outward focus).

EFCC's discipleship methodology: focus on what we need to learn, what we need to practice and with whom we need to be in relationship in order to live in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus.

I think the discipleship value most highlighted this week is **obedience**. Here is how we've defined it -

"A loving response to Jesus marks the true follower. Through our submission, we show him that we love him and trust him, and that we believe he has good plans for us. We also understand from the Scriptures that obedience is the path to deeper joy and greater intimacy with God. We commit to this way of life, not because it is burdensome, but because God is our delight."

In the being **WITH**, becoming **LIKE** and doing **AS** paradigm, this week's message focuses us on **doing as**. Jesus was both a hearer and a doer of what the Father wanted Him to do. He knew the Scriptures and He obeyed them. When He calls us to live in His way, He calls us to follow Him and to imitate His example of obedience to the will of God. Jesus was a rabbi, and a rabbi's main goal was to train people to live like he did. And, people began to follow a rabbi with the express intent of learning to live like him. To follow Jesus means to obey God like Jesus did.

Renewed by Grace

1. What's one thing you've done in your lifetime that you recommend others do?

No one gets any credit for saying, "Become a Christian" because that is a foregone conclusion.

I'm going to give you three!

- I would say, "Get married, if you can."
- I would say, "Have kids." If you can't conceive, then adopt.
- I would say, "Decide to make a long term commitment to one church and stay there through thick and thin. No church is perfect. No pastoral staff is perfect. But the long term benefits of being in one place for a long time are priceless."

What would you say?

Equipped as Disciples

2. **Review with each other how it went practicing last week's "I will..." statement. Remind the group what you decided to do. Talk about if you did it (and why you didn't, if you didn't), and how it turned out. Did you get the result you were praying for? Why?**

My group meets on Wednesdays. The "I Will" statement that I came up with last week was to obey the teaching about being curious. What I decided to do was have a conversation with each of my kids where I practiced being curious by asking a lot of questions, and then listening. I have to get this done by Wednesday. Feel free to ask me how I'm doing.

3. **Read Matthew 7:24-27.**

- **Many observations about the text were made in the message. Which of those are significant for you right now? Why? Do you have other observations you'd like to share? What are they?**

The point of this question is to give people a chance to talk about how God spoke to them.

I am going to switch the order of the questions from what is above, and from what was published. I want to put the, "Which of those is significant for you?" question at the very end so that the discussion of significance can include all of the observations which were made.

- Here are the observations which were made in the message -
 - Storms come to all lives.
 - Every person is constructing a house - a life.
 - The main variable is what you build your foundation on.
- Are there other observations which you or your group have about the text? Here are some of mine -
 - The wise man is the man who both hears and does. This requires time. spent in hearing and time spent in doing.
 - Hearing is as important as doing, and doing is as important as hearing.
 - Hearing without doing leads to failure.
 - He is not contrasting people who did hear with people who did not. He is contrasting people who heard and did with people who heard and did not.
 - Hearing alone is not enough to keep your life from falling apart when the storm comes.
 - Doing is what prepares and protects you when the storm comes. Of course, hearing is assumed.
- Which are most significant for you?
 - For me, it's the challenge to increase my hearing. I have been working hard on obeying, but I need to expand my hearing.
- **The point was made that "Hearing + Doing = Building." Discuss this. To help you, here are some additional questions for consideration -**
 - **Why is hearing seemingly easier than doing?**
 - **How is it that Christians seem to have come to a place where hearing can be separated from doing?**

The point of this question is to wrestle with how and why the church in America (as a whole) has missed the mark when it comes to obedience. Jesus' definition of love for Him is obedience to Him (John 14:21). You hardly ever hear this teaching in churches

(I'm glad our pastor is different.) I pray God uses this question to open eyes and convict hearts, mine included.

Deuteronomy 5:1 says, "5Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: "**Hear**, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may **learn** them and **observe** them carefully." It's an oft stated fact that in the Old Testament "hearing" and "doing" were synonymous. The ancient Israelites would never have understood an approach to hearing that did not include careful doing. Somewhere along the way the Western Church has changed the meaning of the word "hear." To the original recipients, when they were told to "listen up," they also understood that to mean that there were going to be things the LORD was expecting them to do. Not only does Deuteronomy make this link between hearing and obeying, but so too does Jesus in this week's passage. (Matthew 7:24 "Therefore everyone who **hears** these words of Mine and **acts** on them.")

Why is hearing easier than doing? And another question I often wrestle with is, "Do I have to have an obedience step every time I read the Bible, or is it okay to read for knowledge in order to let the 'word of Christ dwell richly in me?'"

- Doing requires intentionality and having a plan to obey. Hearing does not.
- Doing requires something from me. Hearing really does not.
- Hearing is easier than doing because hearing is mostly passive and doing is always active.
- We are lazy.
- What else?

How is it that Christians seem to have come to a place where hearing can be separated from doing? Because -

- The Western Church has defined spiritual maturity more by what you know than by what you do.
- The Western Church has defined a disciple of Jesus as someone who believes the teachings of Jesus and has received Him as Savior, not as someone who takes His teachings seriously.
- The Western Church hardly ever includes a call to obey in its gospel presentations. Its gospel is a gospel of "Believe in Jesus so you can go to heaven when you die, and hang on until then." Jesus' gospel was, "Repent so you can enter the kingdom of heaven. Obey all that I have commanded you."
- The Western Church has put a premium on feelings towards God as being the way you love God, while the Bible puts a premium on obedience to the commands of God and the teachings of Jesus and the apostles as being the way you love God. There is quite a difference there.
- What else?

4. Two strategies were presented for being a people who both hear and do. What are they?

- **As you discuss each, consider these questions -**
 - **What are your current tactics for applying this strategy? What are you doing to be the kind of a person who lives this way?**
 - **What challenges are you encountering along the way?**

- **What successes are you having?**

The point of this question is to give people a chance to discuss how they are doing with the hearing (“renew your mind”) and with the doing (“retrain your body”). It will also set up the final question where we all will create an “I Will” statement. Furthermore, it will give others in the group ideas about how they can renew their mind and retrain their bodies. It’s a chance to give a testimony and learn from others to gain wisdom and input.

The two strategies presented are to renew **your mind** and **retrain your body**.

Renew Your Mind -

- Knowledge alone isn’t enough, but it’s absolutely necessary.
- Jesus said the Holy Spirit would bring to mind all that He taught the disciples (John 14:26). The Spirit does the same for us. But He can’t bring to mind things which are not in our mind.
- Romans 12:1-2 - Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
- Lies are the devil’s main ammunition against us. Truth is our greatest defense.
- Prayer is also a tool.
 - Through prayer we gain intimacy with God.
 - Through prayer we hear God’s voice and instruction.
 - Through prayer we receive empowerment through Spirit.
 - Through prayer we are grounded in the goodness of God.

- What are your tactics for renewing your mind? For praying? Is there anything new that you are doing?
- What challenges are you facing these days in your quest to renew your mind?
- What successes are you having?

Retrain Your Body -

- The body is an underappreciated component in our vision of how we “obey what Jesus taught.”
- When we think about obedience to the way of Jesus, we typically only think about what we think about, but BODIES are major players in our spiritual health and maturity.
- Dallas Willard, “It’s certainly true that without Jesus we can do nothing, but it’s also true that if we do nothing it will be without Jesus.”
- It’s in partnership with Spirit that we are called to retrain our bodies.
- Paul captured this so well when he wrote Philippians 2:13, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”
- God will empower us to change, but He will not change for us.
- To change we need -
 - **Vision** - Philippians 3:12, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.”
 - **Cues** - Cues mean we decide that we are going to chase that vision of a freer self – but we know we need to interrupt our pattern for thinking and doing.

- **Replacement** - “28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.” Ephesians 4:28
- **Accountability** - “16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” James 5:16
- What are your tactics for retraining your body? Is there anything new that you are doing?
- What challenges are you facing these days in your quest to retrain your body?
- What successes are you having?

Sent in Love

5. **There is blessing waiting for those who are obedient. “This week I will...” What is one thing you can do this week to practice obedience to these commands?**

One Final Note

You’ll see me going back and forth between this DBS method of asking three questions of the text (What does the passage teach us about humanity? What does this passage teach us about God? What are your observations from the text that we have not yet discussed?) and my more normal method of asking questions of the sermon. I’m not going to say how much or when I’ll use each one. I’ll pray for guidance and go with what makes the most sense for that week.

One thing that will be a constant, however, will be a check-in at the beginning of the group meeting regarding how the applications from the previous week went, and ending with asking people to come up with concrete I WILL statements.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

I will roll out more insights and training on how to facilitate a DBS as we go along. And we will talk more about it at our lunch together.