

Matthew 11:28-30

Be A Disciple

Introduction: This verse has been on my heart for sometime now.. In fact I'm not sure how many of you remember but we actually began the year considering this passage and I just keep coming back to Jesus' offer here in Matthew's Gospel. It is an offer to truly be his disciple, to be with him, to walk with him, to learn his rhythms of grace.

We have been highlighting three ways that we understand and practice our discipleship to Jesus: We are to be with him, to become like him, in order to do what he did. This is not seminar, or a training from which we graduate - it is a lifelong journey in the school of discipleship

The truth is that if we have Jesus, if we have his presence for the journey, if we are yoked up with him, we can weather any storm, we can run with the horses, we can bear fruit in drought and scarcity....Back in January we were reflecting on 2019 and our year of biblical literacy. At that time I felt strongly that this year's focus was to be on intentional discipleship to Jesus - which is one of the reasons we decided to teach through Mark's Gospel.

Shortly into this year's plans all hell broke loose and our world was turned upside down.

The last time we had our normal Sunday gathering was March 15th - can you believe it?

But we're back now. Here we are at our location, gathering together on a Sunday morning, but I think we would be foolish to assume that since we are meeting on Sundays again, things are just going back to normal, or should go back to normal... They aren't.

I believe, as I said from the beginning, that the Lord is using this pandemic, as a shaking, a testing, bringing us out of complacency and mediocre faith, thrusting us into the wild wilderness where we are forced

to seek the Lord once again for his presence and his voice. God is taking his people to a place that we would not choose to go ourselves - He is bringing us through the wilderness but he is leading to a good place, this journey will produce greater fruit in our lives strengthening our character and produce fruit for God's kingdom..

For some of us the pandemic has revealed the frailty of our discipleship - without a Sunday, and the regular schedule of church gatherings we've been lost, and disconnected. For others the pandemic has only proved the resilience of our discipleship - we have continued to seek the Lord, to be in his word, to pray for direction and to fellowship even if it has been clunky and awkward at times, but there is fruit and there is the development of Jesus like character.

We believe in this season, and with the continued uncertainty of what is ahead it is vital for us to take our discipleship into our own hands. Because whether there is peace and prosperity or hardship and scarcity, our call to be disciples of Jesus, and our call to the mission of God doesn't change.

1. Refuge's Weekly Rhythms

- a. Our Weekly Rhythms are the practical way for taking our discipleship into our own hands. Our goal is to be a Jesus Formed Community on the Mission of God.
 - i. Study it
 - ii. Hear it
 - iii. Apply it
 - iv. Live it
- b. We have gone about discipleship in many different ways over the years at Refuge - From in depth Bible studies, to classes, to men's and women's fellowship, to community groups, etc. But in the last season we have relied more on organic groups for community and mission. But I believe that this casual approach doesn't do justice to the call of Jesus to go into all the world and make disciples. This is not something that we

are to do casually but something we are to organize and train for - to be disciples who make disciples.

- c. Every follower of Jesus is called to be a disciple who makes disciples. But most of the time we fall into a program that allows us to coast and plateau in our Christian journey. We believe by reshaping our weekly rhythms we can take individual as well as communal responsibility in the process of our own discipleship. By reading and meditating on scripture in order to be shaped by it, by hearing God's word taught and preached to our community in order to obey it, and by meeting regularly to apply it, we can faithfully live it out in our community...

2. Most of you are probably already familiar with our new Weekly Rhythms - Weekly Rhythms - Study it, Hear it, Apply it, Live it.

- a. **Study it** - Followers of Jesus are called by God to study and know scripture in order to be shaped by its story - At refuge we have always prioritized the importance of God's word for our flourishing and formation as followers of Jesus. Scripture is a light to our feet and a lamp to our path, in a confusing world of post truth, and the endless offers of meaning and fulfillment. Scripture must be our guide and number one voice if we are to be formed in the way of Jesus.
 - i. *"If we forget that the newspapers are footnotes to Scripture and not the other way around, we will finally be afraid to get out of bed in the morning. Too many of us spend for too much time with the editorial page and not nearly enough with the prophetic vision. we get our interpretation of politics and economics and morals from journalists when we should be getting only information; the meaning of the world is most accurately given to us by God's word."* - Eugene Peterson, *Run With Horses*
 - ii. We will be posting the weekly passage of scripture that we will hear the following Sunday in order for each person to read and study it on our own. The idea is to immerse yourself in the story, to experience the passage

personally. Listening to what it might be saying to our own lives.

- b. **Hear it** - on Sunday's we will gather at our 9:30 service to hear this same passage taught. We are listening to how God is speaking and directing us individually and communally by his word.
 - i. The reading of scripture is important but scripture must also be preached and declared because it is not just good advice, but it is the good news about what God has done to rescue and redeem us, his promises to never leave or forsake us, his promise to return and heal our broken world - we need to be recalibrated to the message: The gathering is a recalibration to the true story of the world - God is king and he coming to rule and reign in righteousness and justice!
- c. **Apply it** - We are asking that each member of Refuge be a part of a discipleship group of 2-4 people which will meet once a week (time and place determined by a group vote). We encourage these groups to be gender specific. The purpose of this meeting is not to talk about what we learned, or to critique the teaching, as much as it is the place to ask for help and accountability in applying the teaching to our lives.
 - i. Many times our christian relationships turn into nothing more than commiserating about life, or the evils of the world, sports, politics and the latest consumed media. But as followers of Jesus, we have the common goal of Christ-likeness and the mission of God. We need to take advantage of this and push one another, with grace and truth toward this goal of becoming more like Jesus through crucifying our selfishness, and practicing the way of Jesus.
 - ii. We believe that community is an essential part to following Jesus - You are not intended to live your life as a christian without other christians to walk along with

you, to point you to Jesus, to help you assimilate the Gospel, to fight sin, to bear your burdens..etc.

iii. The point of these groups is to get the conviction, formation, and direction of scripture into our daily lives and relationships. So that we might be changed and transformed by scripture more and more into the image of Jesus.

iv. **We would follow up with accountability type questions:**

1. How did it go?
2. What are we learning about ourselves and about God?
3. How are you growing in that?
4. Now go and do it!

d. **Live it** - As we grow in our discipleship we are to live out the implications of the story and scripture that we have been studying, hearing, and applying in the context community.

i. We want to encourage each other toward missional-community through regular social gatherings, organizing a neighborhood meal or event, park dates, open mic nights or trivia at a local pub, etc. Many of you are already doing this, we want to encourage intentional mission and gospel conversations to these rhythms.

ii. The point of these gatherings are twofold - to invest in deeper friendship and camaraderie as followers of Jesus and secondly to expose our friends and neighbors who don't know Jesus to the Jesus community - simply building friendship with these people in a casual environment of Jesus like kindness and service. The goal is to put the Jesus community on display in a real and relatable way.

1. *"How can this strange story of God made flesh, of a crucified Savior, of resurrection and new creation become credible for those whose entire mental training has conditioned them to believe that the*

real world is the world which can be satisfactorily explained and managed without the hypothesis of God? I know of only one clue to the answering of that question, only one hermeneutic of the gospel: a congregation which believes it.” - Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society

2. *“Live in the kingdom of God in such a way that it provokes questions for which the gospel is the answer.” - Lesslie Newbigin*

Practical Questions:

How will discipleship groups be appointed? Discipleship groups will form in two ways: organically and by appointment. We want to give space for people to gather naturally and organically with those whom they already have a connection and yet, we also want to make sure that everyone is accounted for. Those who form discipleship groups will register with Refuge (who, when, and where) and those who are not part of a discipleship group will register so that we can appoint and plug people into groups.

Can anyone start a Refuge group?

Yes, what we are encouraging is intersecting the church community with the surrounding community, but doing that with intention of sharing our faith, through faithful presence, posture, hope/gospel filled perspective

Closing: We believe that through this four fold weekly rhythm we can, with greater intentionality, grow in our discipleship to Jesus, help others grow in theirs and expose our city to the life and light of the kingdom of God. again our goal is to be a Jesus formed community on the mission of God

“The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus

Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.”

— ***Dallas Willard, The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship***

Prayer: Holy Spirit, do for us what we can not do for ourselves. Remake our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Cause us to hear your heart and love for us and for the world that is far from you, help us to take our discipleship to Jesus as the most honorable, the most fulfilling and the most purposeful calling that we could ever receive in this life! We commit ourselves, our families, this community, and this city to you - We ask that your kingdom would come and that your will would be done in Sonoma County as it is in heaven!