

“Designed For Discipleship”

Portions contributed by [James E. Parks](#).

Psalms 13:1-6

Matthew 10:29-42

A few years ago, Grayson got to experience something he never had before. His Aunt Jenell and Uncle Eric, own a fertilized wholesale distribution business, that supplies fertilized soil to most of the nurseries in this region of the country.

I had an appointment, and Amy had to work, and Aunt Jenell and Uncle Eric, said that Grayson could come and hang out with them and help around the yard. The yard is about a hundred acres of piles of sand, wood chips, and other mixtures of fertilized soil.

Grayson got a chance to ride, for the first time, in a front end loader. Now, I had the chance to drive those loaders myself...A boys dream come true. When we were trying to raise money for the adoption process to bring Grayson home, I would go out on the weekend and turn their piles of dirt for them...they helped out generously to Grayson's fund.

Now, before I left, Uncle Eric was telling Grayson how important it was to be extra careful around those loaders. With those gigantic tires, if you slipped and fell, you would be crushed immediately.

You should have seen Grayson's face as this is the first thing he hears. He grabbed onto my hand pretty tightly, and for quite a long time. Not a great way to start your fun experience. But eventually he relaxed and enjoyed his time with his uncle and the loader work.

This morning we are continuing this ride we call 40 Days of Community. We have talked about being better together. You were created for community...and it is in community that we can reach out and share our faith with others.

Now, we talked last week about being in fellowship with each other. You see, we need to be with each other and get to know each other as children of God to grow closer to one another.

So, this morning, and hopefully all this week, we will be focused on our next purpose as a community and that...is discipleship. You see, you were designed to be a disciple...and being a Christian disciple, well that means that your life looks a lot like the life of Jesus Christ.

I would say as a disciple of Jesus you would allow Jesus to live in you. This is not easily done and it definitely does not just...happen.

So today I want to lay out the process by which I believe God will help you grow as a disciple. And also to remember, that this, is about community.

I also think I will start like Uncle Eric did, with a harsh reality first. Just as he wanted to warn Grayson that a loader can be a dangerous machine, I want to remind you that discipleship is a very serious subject.

I think we often make discipleship optional. It is just for some people...that, you know, have the time. It is for those who may want to go into ministry, but it is not for everyone.

Wrong!!! If you are a Christian, you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, than you are to be following Jesus. You are to be learning and growing in the love of God.

Now, Jesus gets pretty straight in this passage, when he says following him must be more important to you than your father or mother. It must be more important than your son or your daughter. Actually, it better be more important than your own wants and your own desires.

Now, I chose to read from the Message Bible, paraphrase this morning, because it puts this in better wording for me than other translations. What Jesus actually says is if you love your parents more than him, then you are not worthy to follow him.

If you love your children more than you love him, then you are not worthy to follow him. Ouch! Those are some pretty hard words, but I also believe they are very true.

I believe the best way to love those close to you, is to love God more. You see when you add the love of God to the love you have for others, including friends and family, it multiplies the love you have for others.

So in my own ability to love I can love Grayson and Tuck, this much, but if I love God first and foremost, my love for my children expands.

It is the same just in myself. If I try to be the best I can be in my own human strength and ability, I can be okay. But when I give myself over to God, when I lose myself to God, I am fully set free to be more than I could ever have imagined. It is true for you also.

You can try your best by yourself, but it will only get you so far. God says, I created you for community, I designed you to be a disciple, and when you give yourself to that process, God will free you to be so much more.

So if you commit yourself to this process of discipleship God will do amazing things in your life. I only say this because I know it to be true. But again, you really need to be committed to it, in order to reap God's benefits.

The process for discipleship I want to give to you is as simple as 1, 2, 3...but, it is also complex enough that it will keep going. The first place to start in being a disciple of Jesus Christ, is by committing to worship God. Embrace Christ by joining other believers in worship.

I believe this is the starting point because if you do not think God is worthy of our worship, then why would you want to follow Christ? Worship helps us to believe God is present with us. It helps us to draw closer to Christ.

Now, if you are young in your faith, that is the perfect place to start. Or, even if you have no faith and are still wondering about who God is, I believe worship is a great place to seek God. We will talk more about worship in a few weeks, because that is another purpose we have together.

So, step one is worship. If you are growing in worship and want to take the next step you should seek out a discipleship small group, or, maybe get with someone to start a discipleship small group. This is really the core of discipleship, having a group of people who will help you grow in your faith.

Now this small group is not just a fellowship group to hang out with. It is not just a social club. To be a discipleship small group, the group needs to study the Bible together and pray together. The group should also encourage you as you follow Jesus; but also, it should hold you accountable to living the way Christ wants us to live.

This group will teach you and grow with you. And not only will they be helping you grow, but you will be doing the same for them. You will encourage them, teach them, and hold them accountable.

This is what our memory verse for this week says. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, **“Encourage one another and build each other up.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11.**

I personally have an accountability partner that I meet with regularly to disciple me. Then I also have a small groups that I meet with. If you would like to start a 40 Days group, and decide to meet, we can get the materials for you to look at and to choose how to start, and how to grow as a small group.

Or maybe you want to find another small group depending on what you are learning or going through. You need to find, or create, a small group where you can be disciplined and grow in your faith.

So we come together in worship, then we can take it a step further and experience Christ in a discipleship small group...and if you are doing those two things, the next step is to serve in ministry.

As you are growing in your faith God wants to use you to show His love to others. As you practice what you are learning by following Jesus, you will be drawn to serve others.

Next week we will try to have a list of ministries that you can look at, and see, the many different ways to serve through this church. We will also be focused on the purpose of ministry in our worship service, so we will talk more about this as well.

So here is the discipleship process. Commit to worship, discipleship with small groups, and service in ministry.

You really do not have to go in that order, but to become a fully committed disciple, each of those things should be present in your life. So think about where you are.

If you are only committed to one of those areas then pray about taking the next step. If you are committed to two areas, pray about taking the third step.

Maybe you are already in all three, then keep going at it. Dig deeper in your small group or take a step forward in your ministry area by taking on more responsibility. Also, if you are moving forward, maybe you need to be discipling someone else and helping them take the next step.

I know that Grayson had a lot of fun riding in that loader with his Uncle Eric. I know so, because he told me all about it several times over. He also told me about how his Uncle Eric let him drive.

Uncle Eric first told me how Grayson was a little hesitant at first, but then he hopped over onto his lap, grabbed the steering wheel, and began to steer. Now Uncle Eric was right there with him, and when Grayson started to get off line He would reach his arms around Grayson and make a correction, and then let go again.

This is the perfect picture of discipleship. As we go forward in life and especially as we go forward in faith, we need others who will help us steer straight. We need people who will let us steer, so when we are getting off track, they can help guide us back on track.

God wants to free you for a wonderful life, but to get there you need to follow him. You were designed for discipleship. You need to commit with others to follow Jesus every day. **Amen!!!**