

Introduction:

1. We're in the middle of looking at the church as a disciple-making community.
 - a. That as a community of Christ-followers, we have one job – to glorify God by making disciples. We used Matthew 4:19 for a well-rounded definition and said a disciple is someone that...
 - i. Has a relationship with Jesus through belief and repentance: "Follow Me"
 - ii. They are being transformed by Jesus: "And I will make you"
 - iii. And are living on mission with Jesus: "Fishers of men"
2. We also looked at the first 8 verses of Romans 12 and begin to see that it's God many mercies that give us the common ground for community.
 - a. Paul spends 11 chapters in Romans unpacking the truth of all that God has done toward us in mercy and grace through Jesus.
 - b. Then in the first two verses of chapter 12 he says this should be your response back to God because of and through the power of His many mercies – be a living sacrifice and have transformed mind to know and do His will.
 - c. Then from verse 3 to the middle of chapter 15 he unfolds and explains how as a living sacrifice who lives in the midst of God's will, we will consider, love, serve, and grow deep in relationships
3. I have to confess to you that I've struggled a bit in this series. I want to be able by the end of it for you to really understand the biblical call to discipleship or disciple-making and understand it in a more simplified and practical manner than before we began.

4. I've been in church since before I was born and we talk about discipleship all the time, but it's this difficult concept to really boil down to a statement or an easily understood explanation.
5. Sure, we try to define discipleship with a simple definition like "becoming more and more like Jesus" or something like that, but how does that happen and what is involved in making that happen.
6. No doubt if we spent some time working on it, we would come up with a difficult process that would leave us feeling defeated or a simplified program that would leave us empty.
7. But neither defeated nor empty are the goals of discipleship. Neither is anxious, fearful, stressed, worried, busy, or tired, but those words resonate with many of us in here.
8. Two weeks ago, while at a pastor's retreat, I heard some passages taught and context given that really helped me think more clearly about discipleship. It was some things I'd heard, but hadn't really followed up with it for whatever reason.
9. So if what you hear today sounds really smart, just know I learned it from smarter people than me and if it sounds really dumb, it wasn't my idea.
10. Think about the words you'd use to describe your current state of heart and mind. Maybe from the list I just mentioned or maybe other words that aren't really Sunday morning language, and then listen to what Jesus says in our text today and compare the two.

Read Matthew 11:28-30

11. Jesus says that taking His yoke and learning from Him will result in rest. I'm not sure what we're doing but I'm pretty sure that's not the result we're getting.
12. So let's take a closer look and try to hear and understand what the disciples of Jesus would have heard and understood.

Let's understand the context...

1. A very important truth when interpreting Scripture is that the passage cannot mean something to us that it didn't mean to the original audience. There are many applications to a passage based on the time and space in which we live, but the truth does not change.
2. So let's dig in for a minute and look at how the context helps us with not only this passage but understanding discipleship.
3. Jesus was a Jewish Rabbi and He has called 12 men to follow Him as disciples. And 1st century Jewish discipleship was very simple.

1. Jewish Rabbi's had a "Yoke" that included their...

- a. **Way:** practices or behaviors their disciples would observe and live out
- b. **Truth:** teaching or interpretation of the Law their disciples would take on

2. Jesus' Yoke offers Rest...

Today I just want to give an overview of the way and truth that Jesus showed and taught to His disciples and then we'll walk through each in the coming weeks.

- a. **The Way of Jesus** – throughout all 4 gospels you will only find Jesus doing 3 things in addition to eating and sleeping.
 - i. **Living on Mission** – going into spaces to redeem unredeemed things – in His teaching, healing, ministering, feeding, bringing hope. But He would take time away from mission to spend time in biblical community.
 - ii. **Spending time in Biblical Community** – Jesus had a groups that He spent time pouring into. His disciples, and other close friends that He enjoyed being with. There was no conflict in the heart of Jesus to not heal everyone and teach everyone in order to spend time with those that were His true family. As important as this is,

Jesus did take time away from mission and biblical community in order to draw near to, or spend time with the Father.

- iii. **Drawing near to the Father** – this was the highest priority of Jesus’ life on earth. God the Son needed to and enjoyed spending time with the Father. With all there was to do all the time for the masses and those close to Him, Jesus didn’t let that keep Him from taking the time to draw near to the Father in lengthy and frequent times of prayer.

b. The Truth of Jesus

- i. The Word of God
- ii. As His life and teaching
- iii. Fulfilled the Law & Prophets

3. Then throughout the Gospels we hear Jesus say 4 different things that mark us if we are His.

Statements that include language like, “If you are my disciple then...”, and they all point us right back to the way and the truth of Jesus.

- a. One is in Luke 9:23 (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34) where Jesus says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Jesus took up the cross, not to symbolize carrying a heavy burden, but for a redemptive purpose. It was the ultimate act of living on mission: going to redeeming unredeemed things.
- b. In John 8:31-32 Jesus says, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” Abide, draw near, take up residence in my word, and the truth of it will set you free.

- c. In John 13:35 Jesus says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.” Biblical community isn’t just an optional extra it is a display of the grace of God to the world around us.
 - d. And in John 15:7-8 Jesus says, “If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” Jesus confirms that relationship with the Father is the ultimate goal of our existence. Our joy being full (capacity and duration) is determined by our abiding in Him. And it is out of that drawing near that fruit is produced in our lives. And we will talk about that in depth in the coming weeks.
1. So when Jesus says “follow Me” as a rabbi would say, He is saying, as He does in Matthew 11:28-30, to “take His yoke” – His way and His truth – and in doing so you will find rest, rest for your souls. He isn’t talking about rest after you die and He isn’t talking about a trouble free existence.
 2. And we know His truth is the Scriptures and through the gospels that record the life and ministry of Jesus we find “the way” of Jesus as they only record Jesus doing 3 things with His time and energy: living on mission (redeeming unredeemed things), spending time in biblical community, and drawing near to the Father.
 3. Again, we’re going to walk through these one by one in the coming weeks and hopefully end with a better and more practical understanding of discipleship.
 4. What we are doing in our small groups will help you know more about the God you are called to draw near to and give you an opportunity to display the mercies of God in biblical community and have a group of people to encourage you as you live on mission.

Closing

1. Weeks ago we talked about having changed desires as a result of trusting Jesus for salvation.
 - a. Maybe you're still struggling with little or no desire to know, love, and follow Jesus.
 - i. Please come talk to one of our leaders up here in just a moment.
 - ii. Ask the Father to give you a desire to want to know, love, and follow Jesus. To be a living sacrifice and live a life of worship.
 - b. Today, just think about where you are. Are you finding rest in your drawing near to Jesus?
 - c. Or are you trying to find something else outside of Jesus?

Let's pray and then you stand and sing and reflect on what God has said to you.