

Discipleship

Luke 10: 1-3, 17 & Romans 12:1-8

Paraphrased from Rowan Williams book on Discipleship: Discipleship is not a course you turn up to, or a Sunday service you regularly attend, it's a continual relationship with the Father.

In the 1st century, to train in the religious order, Jews would daily follow a Rabbi, listening to all that he said, observing all his actions, and replicating it in their own lives. They would know what the Rabbi ate, what shoes he liked to wear, how he acted when he was angry, how he reacted to poverty, and begin to mirror his actions.

When you are around someone for a while, their characteristics tend to rub off you on don't they?

I have an annoying habit of randomly bursting into song at home. It's usually a musical number in a very loud voice! Recently I've woken up to another member of my family singing something with joy in the morning. My habit has rubbed off on my family.

I've also watched my husband comfort our children with gentleness and compassion, scooping them up when they are hurt and distracting them with laughter. Over the years his gentleness and his caring techniques have rubbed off on me and I've learnt how to do the same.

Discipleship is deeply relational and intimate. And it was the same for Jesus and his disciples in the first century. When we meet the disciples in our Luke chapter, they have already absorbed much of who Jesus is and they are ready to have a go at doing it themselves!

They have seen Jesus go into villages and towns to share the good news of the kingdom and cast out demons and heal the sick. So, what were the 72 going to do? Share the good news of the kingdom, cast out demons and see people healed. This time round there's no debate on where or not they can do it, they just go. And what happens? The good news of the kingdom is shared, and people begin to believe and demons are cast out, and people are healed.

We get so wrapped up in whether we are called to this or to that, or whether or not we can possibly see people healed or come to Christ, that we forget who we are disciples of. If we are really spending time in the presence of our God, all that he is and all that he does becomes our own. So yes, people will come to know Jesus, and yes people will be set free and healed.

So are we expectant? Do we believe that the character and actions of God can really be here on earth? Do we trust the Holy Spirit who has been given to us, to disciple us and make us more Christlike? So when Jesus says that he will give us peace, we can have peace. When Jesus says he will never leave us or forsake us, the loneliness of this generation can be healed through the gospel. That when Jesus says I have come to heal and restore, that people's pain and suffering can be met with the power of God?

Discipleship is not about who we are, but about who *he* is. It's a lifelong journey of discovering more

of God, being with discovering new ways of being and getting it wrong, and being transformed.

But Jesus' life wasn't just full of everything exciting and exhilarating. It was also full of verbal and physical abuse and even death. Who Jesus was, what he taught and how he lived was counter cultural. The very kingdom he was ushering in was confronting the powers and principalities both on earth and in heaven. And to the earthly authorities, Jesus had to go!

Just as Paul writes to the church in Rome, we are also called as Jesus' disciples to be a living Sacrifice. In the UK we are so blessed that our lives are not at risk now. We may be mocked, teased, or even ostracised from different groups of people. But we will not be killed for our faith. So similarly, to the church in Rome at the time of Paul's writing the letter, our sacrifice looks different.

It consists of laying down our own agendas so that we can actually be disciples of God. Laying down our disputes between one another and allowing the

gifts that God has given each one of us to flourish. It looks like being attentive to God in each one of us and allowing what God is doing rather than what we want to do, to take centre stage. This is a spiritual and emotional sacrifice, one that takes courage to admit that Jesus' agenda needs to be above our own.

But when we do this, we *find God*. To be a disciple of Jesus, is costly, but the reward is a relationship with God.

As disciples we are called to live in a relationship with our Father, listening to his voice, and replicating his character and actions here on earth which include the costly call to sacrifice
But how, as a church, do we encourage one another to be disciples of God together?

- Praying - coming face to face with God
- Reading our Bibles
- Being in fellowship with one another sharing and learning from each other
- Worshipping God in our daily lives

- Being missional - just like the 72, it's when we get on with being disciples, sharing the good news of Jesus, that we discover who God is and we are transformed to be more like him.
- Lastly and most importantly, being willing to step out and get it wrong, creating a culture of forgiveness and encouragement.

Recently I realised that I am not as kind as I would like to be, I have ideas of how to be kind to a friend, like taking flowers round, but I often won't have the energy to do so. So, I prayed 'Holy Spirit one of your fruits is kindness, please can I have some of that?' And gradually I am becoming kinder. I'm beginning to wash up a little more frequently, being a little more patient, and have started to take that card or that bunch of flowers round to a neighbour. I'm not perfect every day, but the holy Spirit is encouraging me and transforming me, bit by bit. I was getting it wrong, so I invited Jesus in and he is changing me. In his love we are made new.

Discipleship is not a course you turn up to, or a Sunday service you regularly attend, it's a continual

relationship with the Father, which transforms the whole of our lives. All about a living relationship with our Heavenly Father, and what a wonderful father we have.