

DISCIPLE MAKING



By Marius Gradwell
Christian Centre Abbotsford

07 July 2024

Key verses: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Introduction

At the heart of Paul's message to Timothy (1 & 2 Timothy) is the charge to remain true to the gospel, no matter what. This message applies to all of us as well...

2 Timothy 2:1 ESV *You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus...*

- This continues from what Paul wrote to Timothy in the previous (first) chapter.

2 Timothy 1:13-14 ESV *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

- Just like Timothy, believe that God's grace is there for you – that Jesus Christ will supply all the help you need inwardly and externally – in your heart and in your circumstances. It will enable you to do His will.
- Just like Timothy, take practical steps to promote the future spreading of God's Gospel – the Good News concerning Jesus Christ! It is God's power to save!
- Paul describes a particular method.

Disciple-Making and Its Cost

2 Timothy 2:2-7 ESV

(2) and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (3) Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (4) No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (5) An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (6) It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. (7) Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

- We are indeed called to embrace the cost of discipleship...
- That is to follow Jesus, deny self, take up our cross, and walk in his steps, with all the believing, praying, giving, loving, and serving involved. This is the first and most basic aspect of Christian discipleship: Being a Disciple of Jesus.
- But Jesus himself calls us to more than just following him. **His call to discipleship includes the call to disciple-making.**
- Being a disciple of Jesus involves following a person whose pattern of life was not monastic, nor was it preoccupied with the masses.

- He got alone to pray – Mark 1:35
 - He preached to the crowds – Mark 2:13
 - He invested the bulk of his ministry with those few men he called to follow Him – Matthew 4:19
 - He told the world his parables but drew his Twelve aside and explained its mysteries to them.
 - A lot of Jesus' alone time was often with these men.
 - Jesus was willing to bless the masses, but what drove his ministry was **investing in the few who would lead the church** after his redemptive work was accomplished and he returned to his Father.
 - Jesus's life was not one of mere personal holiness and uninterrupted focus on his Father. His time and attention moved beyond his own purity and faithfulness. He embraced the cost of disciple-making.
- Timothy's work is not to "keep the wheels turning" – maintaining the work that Paul has established – but Timothy is encouraged to take practical steps and advance!

1. What Is Disciple-Making?

2Timothy 2:2 ESV *and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.*

- This verse is a call to disciple-making, not mere discipleship.
- There is indeed a cost to following Jesus. (Discipleship)

Luke 14:33 ESV *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

- But this verse calls us to disciple-making... and verses 3-6 explains the cost and rewards that go with it.
- I define disciple-making as intentionally and relationally investing oneself in the spiritual growth and maturity of a few disciples — part of which is training those disciples to then disciple others who disciple others.

Essential components of life-on-life disciple-making: Content, Intent, and Context.

1. The **Content** is the Gospel. We focus on this and aim to pass it to the next generation - "*what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses*".
2. The **Intent** is Multiplication. It's not merely addition - just discipling. It's making disciples who make disciples.
3. The **Context** is Relationship. **It is personal and time-consuming.** Books, sermons, conferences, and articles play a wonderful supplementary part in the discipleship process, but no distant writer, speaker, or preacher can sit with you and apply Christian truth to your specific life because he knows you and has seen your sins and patterns. A real-life relationship is vital.

An important and especially costly aspect of discipleship is *disciple-making*. Not just being a disciple of Jesus, but sharing oneself as Paul talks about...

1 Thessalonians 2:8 ESV *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

2. What Makes Disciple Making So Hard and Costly?

2 Timothy 2:3-6 ESV *Share in suffering as a good **soldier** of Christ Jesus. (4) No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (5) An **athlete** is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (6) It is the hard-working **farmer** who ought to have the first share of the crops.*

Let us consider the main lessons Paul wants us to learn from these illustrations:

- a. The Christian must take his share in **suffering**.

The soldier, the athlete, the farmer – all of them have a tough life to be lived. Every Christian has to endure troubles and testings.

- b. It takes **effort** to achieve something for God.

Soldiers have to fight. Athletes have to run. Farmers have to toil at the soil. Each of the illustrations makes a point that the godly life is a tough life. There is work to be done. There are hardships to be endured.

- c. Two of the illustrations make the point that the life of serving God requires **single-minded** concentration.

A soldier cannot be caught up in the ordinary affairs of life. We should guard against priorities that draw one's attention away from loyalty to Jesus.

Luke 8:14 ESV *And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.*

The athlete illustration makes the same point. The athlete wears light clothing. He fixes his eyes on the winning post. He does not look behind him but stretches every muscle to win the race.

- d. The athlete illustration underlines the fact that the athlete has to conform to the regulations/rules of the contest.

Tough training is involved. Certain disciplines have to be accepted by the runner. Christian ministry is the same! There is a cost to disciple-making.

Like the athlete, the soldier has to attend to the orders he receives from his commander.

The farmer has no choice but to attend to the seasons of reaping and harvesting.

The Christ follower must persist in faith, must hold to the "pattern of healthy words", and must accept hardships.

- e. There is a possibility of not achieving reward.

A note of warning is involved in what Paul says. The athlete is not crowned if he does not abide by the requirements of the contest.

3. What Makes It Worth the Cost?

2 Timothy 2:4-6 ESV *No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (5) An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (6) It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.*

Each of the illustrations emphasises the point that there is **something to be won** by hard effort. (REWARD)

- The soldier not only has a sense of achievement when he wins a victory, but he also has the joy of pleasing the leader of the army.
- The athlete runs to win a prize. He receives the crown for winning the contest.
- The farmer will be the first one to gain the fruits that come from his hard labours.

3 John 1:4 ESV *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

Conclusion

2 Timothy 2:7 ESV *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

Notice that revelation and human thinking are brought together in this instruction. Timothy must think and God will do the revealing!

So, **disciple-making is costly! It is designed by God. It is not easy. It's hard work. But deeply rewarding, tasting great joys as God works in and through you in disciple-making.**