

Discipleship: the ethos of spiritual growth

Titus 2:1-10

MPS: Discipleship streams through mission IN the church to grow and mature God's people AS the church.

OBJ: Every person can recognize an ethos of discipleship by four characteristics.

Read Titus 2:1-10

*But as for you, **teach what accords with sound doctrine.** Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. **Titus 2:1-10***

INTRO Community vs community

Everyone offers community today. You can find it at work, at play, shopping, or wherever you go. Everyone wants you to feel connected to who they are, what they are doing or what they are selling. Statements that can be found everywhere today include, "we're like family", "we really connect", or "we have great community". The world's community, no matter where it is found, is mitigated by external commonalities. All the world's uniqueness looks exactly the same. **In a world where relationships are established by the click of a mouse and intimacy gets shared through a unique emoticon, community has (ironically) become our highest commodity.**

So, when the church talks about community there is no wonder why so many are confused about what that means. And, when church demands more, so hesitant and resistant to give it. If you relate to others in the church the way you relate to others anywhere else in your life, then you may have EVERYTHING ELSE working for you, but what you have at "what you call church" is not a biblical concept of church. **The church is NOT "like" family; we ARE family.** The Church is NOT a community of people like me, nor a community for me, but a community FOR Jesus. **Community in the church is about building Spirit unity with one another (together) thru communion with God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

The church community held a distinguishing rhythm in the New Testament: teaching + worship + fellowship + witness. (Acts 2:40-47) These elements provide the true rhythm of Christian mission. "We learn from the NT that God's intention is for believers to be disciples in the midst of these committed communities of believers that we call churches."¹ "Make disciples" forms our principle command, our commissioned purpose, the church's mission in the world. Discipleship is the rhythm of all of life in the church. "Discipleship isn't discipleship until the disciples become disciple makers."² Discipleship means working out (bringing to reality / fruition) the sanctification God is working within. **The church family is a community where disciple-making cultivates growth and maturity in every Christian.**

MPS: Discipleship streams through mission IN the church to grow and mature God's people AS the church.

ILLUS Streaming music

Streaming music is a common practice. It fills the space of time, creates a rhythm for our day, and often dictates our pace and intensity. An ethos of discipleship streams through the church to grow and mature God's people in everything we do. **Discipleship means every activity IN the church aims to grow and mature God's people AS the church.**

OBJ: 4 characteristics mark an ethos of discipleship that grows and matures the church.

¹ Bruce Ashford, *Every Square Inch*, p39

² Jeff Christopherson tweet, 19 Sept 2015.

1. Discipleship sources from the teaching and preaching of sound doctrine. 2:1, 7-8

Against his description of false teachers Paul provides a stark contrast. He commands Titus to teach what accords with sound doctrine. He tells Titus that all teaching in the church must faithfully align with Biblical truths through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. False teachers worked to make people depend upon them. Paul states that sound doctrine equips the church to disciple one another. [Discipleship begins with preaching and teaching gospel truths in the church.](#)

Sound doctrine simply means teaching what aligns with God's Word. Paul commends Timothy to be a man who rightly handles the word of Truth. He later says that there will be a time when people will not tolerate sound teaching, but will choose teaching that suits their own passions. (2 Tim 2:15, 4:3) [Sound doctrine processes the measure and understanding of all things according to God's Word.](#)

When was the last time you heard someone say something like, "We don't need to bother with doctrine. We just need to love God and others." Or maybe, "I want a church that doesn't get all bogged down in doctrine, but just teaches practical lessons." I don't believe people don't want sound doctrine. I think they don't want boring doctrine. People want to know that God can relate to their life. God wants people to know that he created you, loves you and perfectly understands everything about you. This is what sound doctrine is all about. [Sound doctrine shapes the life of the church around the truth of God's Word through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.](#)

Six Benefits of sound doctrine for the church.³

1. **Faithfully reading and teaching the Bible.** The ultimate goal of reading and studying the Bible is to love God more and others more faithfully. "Sound doctrine summarizes and synthesizes the Bible's teaching into a coherent whole. It tells us what God is like, what he loves and hates, what he's done in the past, and that his plans are for the future." (p30) Sound doctrine guards against reading the Bible and making it say what you want it to say. [Sound doctrine enables you to read every story of the Bible as the Bible's one story, the Gospel.](#)
2. **Holiness.** "Every biblical doctrine, embraced by the mind and applied to the heart, conforms us to the character and will of God. Sound doctrine is a central means by which Christians grow in holiness, and holiness is the goal of sound doctrine." (p51-52) [A Christian who wants nothing to do with sound doctrine is like a medical doctor who doesn't want to be bothered with science, medicine or people.](#)
3. **Love.** Sound doctrine grounds love for God and others in truth. Without truth, love is little more than selfish justification and gratification of feelings that indebts others to you.
4. **Unity.** Sound doctrine establishes the church's unity in the gospel of God's Word and not man's opinion.
5. **Worship.** "Sound doctrine is for worship like wood is for a fire. [Sound doctrine teaches us to delight in God because it shows us how delightful God is.](#)" (p85) Sound doctrine moves us to worship by beholding the glory, goodness and grace of God, by proclaiming a love so great that we are moved, stirred and captured in worship.
6. **Witness.** Sound doctrine is for faithful witness because it brings the truth of God's Word to the realities of our life and leads us to the gospel of Jesus Christ to experience God's love. It also frames a worldview that allows us to not lose heart and to hold out hope in Jesus to others in the world.

Paul tells Titus that for pastors sound teaching begins before the sermon. Maybe you've heard it said, "Pastors must practice what they preach." This is a true statement, but it gets the order wrong. Before a man stands to preach he must live in the practice of what he dares to proclaim. Charles Spurgeon says, "The labor of the Christian ministry is well performed in exact proportion to the vigor of our renewed nature. Our work is only well done when it is well within ourselves."⁴ A pastor doesn't need to be measured as perfect. But he must demonstrate faithfulness in godliness, an understanding of and longsuffering in the realities of life's struggles and depend upon the power of the gospel as sufficient and sweet for savoring.

A pastor's life must model sound teaching in three ways; integrity, dignity and sound speech. [Integrity means a pastor personally practices the sound doctrine he teaches.](#) [Dignity means a pastor models the truthfulness of what he](#)

³ Bobby Jamieson, *Sound Doctrine*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013). These six benefits are taken from the outline for the book.

⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, Third Printing, 2012), p17.

teaches by the seriousness with which he lives it. He not only knows that of which he teaches, but he is known for it as well. Finally, teaching with **sound words** means a pastor is intentional with what he says and how he says it. [Sound doctrine demand intentional words.](#)

Sound doctrine teaches biblical, life application and trains in how to live it out daily through the gospel. [Sound doctrine frames all conversations for spiritual growth as the center of all Christian discipleship.](#)

2. [Discipleship demands relationships with people that point you to godliness.](#)

Paul identifies four categories of people that intentionally engage one another in relationships for discipleship; 'older' men and women and 'younger' men and women. It's interesting to me that these four categories are often the most divided in our culture. But this critical point needs to be preached in our world today. [The Gospel leads us to get over personal and generational pride to move forward in spiritual growth.](#)

The church is family. One of our biggest spiritual challenges is that so often everyone we surround our life with looks like me, talks like me, acts like me, laughs at the same things I laugh at and struggles with the same things I struggle with. [When this is true of you, it means your biggest problem is that your community is about you. Single-generation community poses a great threat to the church because the defining voice speaks with an absence of generational wisdom.](#) (There's a reason you don't just leave the kids at home alone.)

Note the "-er"; there is a 'relative factor' to this directive. The old and young doesn't have an explicit start or stop point. It does denote a distinct difference. [We need people not 'like' us, generationally distinct from us, that will challenge, stretch, counsel and encourage us to grow up!](#) And, we need those with whom we are laboring to invest in for the same purpose. This is not the sum-total of what Paul is saying here, but it is an important application we need today. The one statement I most want to tell Christians today, regarding church life, is this: "Not everything 'they' want to do is wrong. And, not everything 'you' do (or want to do) is right." (Every generation needs to remember this.) [Biblical discipleship demands multi-generational relationships.](#)

Principle: [The basic spiritual growth principle means we are always looking forward and back, 'to be made \(growing\)' as we are laboring 'to be part of making \(growing\)' another in Jesus' image.](#)

ILLUS Papa's counsel, "You'll never have enough money to get married."

I wanted to propose to Christin, but I was unsure how I could afford marriage. He offered this counsel that has provided good perspective at a number of times in my life.

ADVANTAGES of multi-generational Discipleship

You need someone(s) outside your age and stage of life to tell you two things, and ask you one.

First, "Deal with it.", "Stop it." or "Stop getting hung up by it. It's not the 'big deal' you are making it." These are all forms of biblical rebuke.

Generational, 'stage of life', struggles are some of the most difficult for us to discern and confront because we become consumed and overwhelmed by life. (We will get into more details about these later.) Not every 'stage of life' struggle is sin, but none of them are absent of our sin, and many are a direct result of our propensities toward sin, sinful thinking and actions. You need someone who will [rebuke](#) you when you get hung up in your 'stage of life' sin. People outside your life stage often serve as a rebuke in the model they provide. [Spiritual rebuke confronts our sin to bring Holy Spirit conviction that enables us to repent and turn to Jesus.](#)

Second, "Forget it. It's okay and it's not that important. Why is it continually harassing, tempting or discouraging you?" You need someone who will [encourage](#) you, and you can go to ask "can you encourage me?" And, in that encouragement direct you to look beyond the surface of what's going on to get to the root of the lie your believing, deception your practicing or sin your committing. [Spiritual encouragement points to Jesus to show how He is our eternal, abiding joy.](#)

Third, “How are you looking to Jesus to walk in obedience? What is he telling you? How is your heart fighting against His Word? Where are you struggling to know, believe or trust Him?” This third statement always accompanies number one or two by completing the conversation. Discipleship has not occurred until we turn our eyes, mind and heart to Jesus for forgiveness, cleansing, and faith for full obedience that brings eternal, abiding joy.

We need relationships with godly people that are not like us to point us to godliness. People outside our stage of life provide beneficial perspective on life and godliness. The most necessary perspective we often need to hear is one unlike our own so that the situation doesn't crush, condemn or consume us. We need someone beyond (“older than”) us to show us how to navigate toward godliness, and away from repeated or deeper idolatry. Discipleship spans across generations to focus spiritual growth at every stage, no matter the age.

ILLUS The youngest and the oldest teach me the same lesson; I often miss joy because I let things steal it, and even give it away many times. A friend came to the house a few nights ago with their young children. They'd just returned from a birthday party and their daughter was carrying a balloon. Just as she got to our patio it slipped through her hand and quickly flew away. She looked up and watched it leave, then scrunched her face in tears weeping because she lost the balloon. She finally calmed down, but every 10 minutes or so she would just stop and start sobbing “balloon”. She missed her joy. I need to learn how to miss my joy like she did, and stop giving it away.

The “older generation” laughs (in love) because they've learned how it's just not worth getting caught up and letting your joy get away. The “younger” stare at you and wonder “what wrong with you?” because they don't understand, but they also don't care because they just want their joy. Sound doctrine teaches and reminds us that Jesus is our eternal joy. Discipleship that spans generations means we pursue as many people as possible of all ages to surround us that remind us NOT to let our joy get away.

APPL The MAIN point I want to make for LifePoint is this, let's not get stuck on generational pride that serves selfishness, coddles 'stage of life' sinful propensities and 'pets' prideful propensities. Whether you are a new mom & dad of young children, parents of teenagers, empty nesters, grandparents, non-parentiers, unmarried, or newlyweds. Whoever you are, let's repent of thinking that those most like you are most likely right, because they feel right. Humble yourself to pursue those not like you at all and know that God will grow you through the very discomfort that they create. Benefiting from spiritual growth and maturity that generational discipleship provides will only come through humble pursuit and constant, cultivating work.

CLOSE I want to pause here today, and will complete this message next Sunday.

If you ever wonder how the breakdown of the family negatively affects the church, understand this. When you've never had the benefit of multi-generations in your life, you've never experienced the blessing of and struggle to believe it could have any benefit for you, and to submit and embrace its value for you.

Therefore, LifePoint, as a church family we must be so full of Jesus and winsome in warm, welcoming hospitality, that even people who have never known any family in the world can come to understand the eternal value of Christian family for their life. Sound, gospel doctrine must shape and guide us so an all-consuming joy from the abiding presence and work of Jesus marks us. Only a Gospel-consumed people will bear a witness that compels a lost and dying world to trust in Jesus. People 'being made' as disciples provides the defining mark that we are maturing, real Christ-followers.

? Are you being made into the image of Christ through the church?