

2022 ... A Year of Discipleship

Outreach

The spiritual discipline of outreach is unique among the spiritual disciplines. Each of the disciplines we are examining in this year-long study are beneficial, even important, to our living our faith and sharing our lives. Daily time in Bible reading and prayer, as examples, are beneficial for strengthening faith and our connection to Jesus. But outreach is different. The discipline of outreach is what our Christian faith is all about. As the people of God, we are commissioned with Jesus to spread the Good News of our Lord's suffering, death, and resurrection. We are privileged to share the gifts of forgiveness, grace, and love with everyone one meet; so that our words and our actions match.

This may be what makes outreach so important ... and so intimidating. We know that people are watching and listening. They are watching our actions and listening to our words to see if they match; to see if life in Jesus is as transformational as we claim it to be.

Our life of reaching out with the Good News of Jesus, the Gospel, is who we are as disciples of Jesus gathered together to be His Church. It is part of our mandate as the people of God.

1. Read Matthew 28:16-20. This is one of those Bible passages with a name – the Great Commission. In the Great Commission, the Church is given her marching orders. What is the Church supposed to do? Why?
2. Is the ministry of the Great Commission a one-time deal or is it a continuous ministry until the Lord returns in glory? What leads you to come to that conclusion?
3. Read Isaiah 52:7. What does the prophet say about those who share the message of salvation? What does it mean to have “beautiful feet?”

The image of Isaiah 52 is of a messenger bringing news from the battlefield. In Romans 10:(14-15) the apostle Paul quotes this passage to show the necessity of sharing the Gospel if it is to have any benefit in the lives of those who hear it.

4. It is very easy for us say that this is ministry of sharing the Good News of Jesus is only for those who work full-time in the church. Look at Luke 10:2. To whom is Jesus addressing these words? What are we to do so that there may be a plentiful harvest of souls?

God's desire, from creation to the call of Abraham and the establishing of the nation of Israel after the Exodus, is for His people to be different. As a nation, Israel was to show the world what it meant to live in a loving relationship with God. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was able to restore humanity's continued broken relationship with God. As the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people, we are set apart for something special.

5. Read 1 Peter 2:9. Who are the people of God to be? Why does God does this?

6. Read John 15:16. What does Jesus say to His disciples about this set apart nature?

One of the greatest challenges when it comes to Christian outreach is to not present the saving Gospel of Jesus in a mean-spirited way. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons in *UnChristian* (2007 Barna) shares that many young adults (aged 35 and younger) perceive Christians, and especially evangelical Christians, as

- a. overly political (especially skewed to Republican politics)
- b. judgmental
- c. hypocritical
- d. anti-homosexual (anti-LTBGQ)
- e. sheltered

To this list, Dan Kimball in *They Like Jesus But not the Church* (2007 Zondervan) adds

- f. male dominated
- g. fundamentalist
- h. exclusive

These criticisms of the Christian church can be very valid, especially in the way (unfortunately) some Christians present their faith in Jesus.

7. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16. What encouragement do we receive in this passage when it comes to sharing the faith we have in Jesus as Lord?

8. Read Matthew 25:35-40. As we gently and respectfully share the hope we have in Jesus with our words, our actions need to match. What does Jesus say about our outreach in actions?

We are privileged to have a message of salvation, hope, and love in the Good News of Jesus Christ. As we rest in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray that we will have the strength and the courage to live this faith and share our lives to the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom.