

TUTORIAL 9.20 Applying truth in the walk of faith

This tutorial introduces the third question in the area of *Discipleship*: 'Are they able to access regular, godly input and genuine friendships that intentionally help them along as they follow Jesus in the walk of faith?'

John 17:17-19: Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

These are the words of the Lord Jesus as He was speaking to the Father, of course, talking about the way that He'd been with His disciples. And it's such an amazing reflection of His heart, as He speaks to the Father about His relationship with those who God had given Him to be with.

Jesus is obviously thinking forward to His crucifixion here. It's interesting that we're called to be a living sacrifice, in the same way Jesus was a living sacrifice too. Even before He actually died on the cross, He was making Himself available to them. There were many times where He was tired and was ready to get away. But there were those who wanted to hear, and He would make Himself available to them.

There was a sense in which the disciples were like adolescents at times. In some ways they were so petty. But Jesus was patient and willing to be accessible and just to be with them. For those of us who have a role in church planting, it's crucial to see this time with unbelievers and new believers as a precious opportunity to perhaps equip them for something they'll face once we're gone.

Last time

We looked at the second question from the WILD outline in the area of Discipleship. It asked if people are being encouraged to apply truth to their own real-life situations. In this tutorial we will discuss the third question in the WILD outline in the area of Discipleship.

Are they able to access regular, godly input and genuine friendships that intentionally help them along as they follow Jesus in the walk of faith?

There are a few words there, perhaps, that we could really focus on that will help us to consider what's involved. Having *genuine friendships* conveys intentionality. When you start putting all those words together the sum total actually involves a lot of sacrifice. It means a lot of giving up what we see as our own rights. It means giving up "me time", which is prevalent in Western society. It means not looking out for number one all the time.

The Lord can use situations where we have little time to ourselves to teach us to be accessible, to be available to give godly input. If our hearts aren't ready for that and we're just thinking about ourselves and how annoying the interruption is then we won't be ready to give that godly input. Instead we'll see it as a hindrance. And yet, discipleship requires that we be willing to let go at any time and be available to those who have needs.

For those of us who are involved in church planting, there will be deadlines or office work that really needs to be done. There'll be lessons to prepare and a team to lead. Your family will need you also and that's important too. There will be all these competing things. It's so important to trust the Lord that He'll bring the balance in those relationships so that we will be accessible and available to these folks who are the reason we're there.

It probably means that there's no longer just the idea of working nine to five or having a set time that we're available. If we have that mentality, we'll miss out on so many opportunities that are actually the whole reason that we're there in the first place.

It may mean maybe changing our schedules. For those of us who like to keep schedules and specific times for doing things this will be especially difficult. We still have to do our work, but when people need us, then we'll have to try to be there for them and say to the Master, "Okay, we know that You're available and so we need to be as well."

Is the subject of relational discipleship being taught and discussed in a way that communicates its true value and necessity in the life of individuals and the group?**Are there those who, although very conscious of their own needs, are actively pursuing friendships with other believers with the purpose of encouraging them to follow Him as disciples?**

Greg describes how discipleship in Siberia often happened as people lived life and spent time together:

As the church began to grow, one of the main key components that we saw in Scripture was this idea of mentoring and discipling and investing into lives and teaching others. So we began partnering with different men and women in the group. Our wives were meeting with the ladies, my teammate David also partnered and we were discipling and mentoring the men and women of the community. It looked different maybe than how we perceived it.

So much of what we see in the West now is a perception that you do it in a coffee shop for an hour a day or whatever it is and you do that once a week. It was very different in the sense of it was life with life, we lived life together. We would be very much involved with each other's lives, where they worked, where I worked with students. You were walking life with them, along with them, and teaching them how a godly man should live. We went through a whole group of guys. For most of the men of the community, alcoholism is a problem by the time you're sixteen years old. Your destiny is that you'll be dead by the time you're forty-five. So for these guys to actually watch life being lived out, for older men, "How do they live, how do you treat your wives, how do you treat your husbands, how do you actually treat your children, what should you do at work, how should you respond to parents who don't like how you are as a believer and how should you be a father or mother?"

Dealing with all those real-life issues was done in many different ways. We did things where we would take guys on these camping trips, long hikes all the way across Siberia, across the lakes, over the mountains. We did a variety of things where you could get away with men and teach men what men were like and teach how God wanted us to be as believers. And the same with the women, they would get together and disciple each other and invest in each other's lives and keeping that going. One of the challenges in that is to maintain that intensity and that's where the church is struggling at these times. Where they're walking through it and actually continuing that all the way along where people's lives are being invested in each other. And it's something that, as churches grow, seems to drift or dwindle a little bit and one of the challenges they're facing right now is figuring out how that can proceed in the future.

Are there opportunities for discipleship relationships to develop into genuine partnerships of equality and trust in the context of service?

Matt describes the challenges for discipleship in the context where they work:
We need to help. We need to walk alongside of them and feel what they feel and help them discover how they can love their family and truly not be concerned about reputation. It's easy enough for this ex-pat to say;

I'm from another place and my reputation is not at stake with these people. I believe we need to spend more time with them and ask the harder questions about how to continue to be a part of their community, continue to be a part of their family.

In real practical terms, I think we need to sit down and talk about whether or not they should participate in activities that are not religiously driven but are socially driven but where the stigma of drunkenness and alcoholism and all of that is still part of the scene and help them ask, "What would a believer do in that? Would he separate himself from that? Would he not engage in the sin of that but come alongside and participate as a member of the community in that?" And I think that's where our discipleship needs to go instead of being on the outside and watching them suffer through that, coming alongside and really walking with them in that and really asking them to engage in God's Word together with us. Really get alongside and ask them to engage with God's Word with us to determine what it would look like for them to live in that society and be a light to their people.

So in other words, we really don't have the answers, I don't believe. I think what we are seeing is that we need to join them and really help them come to the Word of God and really wrestle well with what it means to be a Christian in their society as an insider.

We started this tutorial with the question, "Are they able to access regular Godly input and genuine friendships that intentionally help them along as they follow Jesus in the walk of faith?" We didn't focus too much on the area of intentionality, we'll get to that in subsequent tutorials, but hopefully what's come across is this idea of really being available and really prioritizing genuine friendships so that the teaching of God's Word is applied in real life circumstances. And that happens through everyday discipleship.



ACTIVITIES

Applying truth in the walk of faith

1. Do some online research and see how much different mission organizations focus on discipleship and how they describe it. Summarize your findings and share any thoughts you have.

2. In a short paragraph describe 'Disciple Making Movements'. Please share your thoughts on what you discover, if possible using the broader WILD categories.