

Gospel and Discipleship — 1

(Flows from the Gospel)

Outline

1. Discipleship must flow only from the Gospel
2. Discipleship must allow the Gospel to change you from selfishness to worship
3. Discipleship must allow the Gospel to maintain your freedom from bondages

1. Discipleship must flow only from the Gospel

a. What is the Gospel? Gospel is GOOD NEWS, not Good Advice. All religious leaders give excellent advice, but everybody fails miserably in obeying it. All other religious founders teach the way to find God. Only Jesus says, “I am the Way.” Jesus came to live the perfect life; you could not live and die the death you should have, but He died for you instead. And He did all this because He loves you. That’s the GOOD NEWS. Jesus is the Good News because God came to save you from misery, sin, and death. But more than that, Jesus came to transform your heart and bring you into God’s family. That’s GOOD NEWS.

Now, what can you do with good news? You can either receive or reject it—and it will make all the difference in your life, now and forever.

But how does Jesus accomplish all this? By dying on the cross and rising from the dead, having paid the total penalty for our sins.

- God is most holy and passionate about defeating evil, for it was destroying His creation through human sin. To destroy sin in us drove Him to the cross to pay the damages for me and you that are breaking His laws. At the foot of the cross, I see an immense number of His laws that I broke, and He paid for it all. And I am humbled at the sight. I feel like Paul, who said in 1 Tim 1:15 *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.*
- God’s passion to love us meant He **gladly and willingly** went to the cross because He loves us. His love is the only one that matters in your life, and He loves you immensely. Jesus says, *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love (John 15:9).*

b. The crucifixion of Jesus.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus was flogged (John 19:1) by a flagrum (whips made of leather straps to which small metal balls and sharp pieces of bones were attached). Criminals were usually given 39 lashes because one more may have killed them. Their lashes would bruise and cut open the flesh exposing even the bone beneath. They crowned Him with thorns, and later He had to carry His cross (with help from Simon of Cyrene) to the site where He was crucified. In March 1986, the **Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA)** published a paper on the causes of death by such a crucifixion. They gave two reasons. One, by severe blood loss due to the flogging leading to hypovolemic shock, where the heart cannot pump blood to the body. And the other cause is suffocation as the person crucified pushes themselves up and down to breathe and eventually

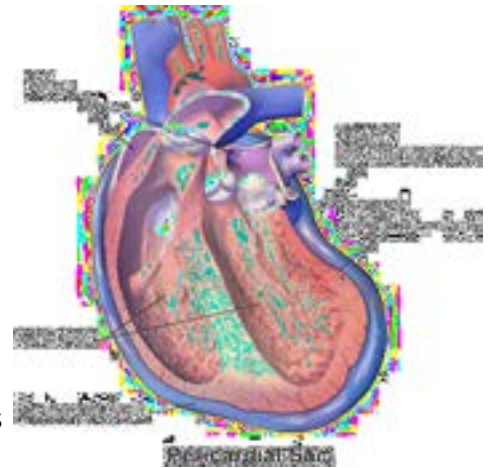


dies. That's why the Romans would break the knees of the two criminals on either side of Jesus to hasten death. But when they came to Jesus, they found Him already dead and didn't break His bones, unknowingly fulfilling scripture (Ps 34:20).

To make sure, they pierced His side (between the ribs) to get to His heart—and water (fluid from the protecting sac called the **pericardial sac** around the human heart) and blood from the heart flowed out. Jesus was dead. By this, they also unknowingly fulfilled scripture (Isa 53.5).

We must never think that because Jesus was God, He could take the suffering without pain.

Remember, He was 100% God and 100% man. He suffered as a man submitting to the Father. He suffered even though He was sinless, innocent and didn't deserve such a death. So, the reality of the cross is blood, bone, flies and suffocating till death.



Bishop Lewis Bayly (1575-1631) wrote a book, "The Practice of Piety". In it, he meditates on the cross. He asked,

Bayly: Lord, why was your side pierced with a spear?

Jesus: So you can find a way to come into My heart

Bayly: Lord, why were your hands nailed to the cross with outstretched arms?

Jesus: That I might embrace you with all my love.

Tim Keller (1950-2023) said Jesus was pierced to let you into His heart, and He stayed nailed to the cross, never to let you down.

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) said, "This is the diagram of love itself. Jesus Christ hanging on the cross demonstrates His love like no other way He could reveal His love. And we should hold this close to our hearts that it would influence us by the Holy Spirit's grace and inspiration".

c. Behold the Lamb of God. *John 1:29 Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* "Behold" means looking intently, deeply engaging your mind, and looking again because God wants to transform you.

Tim Keller said, "A God who says, *I love you but doesn't have anything to demonstrate it—won't grip your attention and won't transform you*". But when you behold the Son of God, who is God Himself, dying on the cross for you, it will demonstrate His love for you, grip you, and transform you. **How so?** — in at least two ways:

- i. *It transforms your view of yourself.* All human beings have sinned and deserve eternal punishment. At the foot of the cross, you realise you are no better than anybody else, even no better than those you dislike or consider inferior. We are all on the same level. It humbles you.
- ii. *It transforms your view of glory.* Without the cross, your glory is based on how much wealth you have and how much you have achieved. But Jesus says *what men highly value is detestable in God's sight* (Luke 16:15). **On the cross, we see God's definition of true glory—love, giving, and serving** (Matt 20:28).

Now, as you **keep beholding** the Almighty Son of God, our Lord Jesus, on the Cross, the Holy Spirit will transform you into Jesus' likeness (2 Cor 3:18), which is what discipleship is all about. It flows from the

gospel of grace and not by forcing your will to obey God (which can become legalistic and burdensome).

2. Discipleship must allow the Gospel to change you from selfishness to worship

When you keep beholding Jesus on the Cross, His love touches your heart by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Then **we begin to love Him more and more and more**, despite the challenges and trials in our lives. Jesus' love melts our hearts, and we begin to love Him in response. *We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).* Then, **our love for Him starts pushing out our love for sin**. It pushes out of our hearts all types of sin, big or small — selfishness, pride, greed, lust, anger, unforgiveness, gossip, stinginess, unkindness, impatience, etc. (We see them in others, but we skip seeing them in ourselves). This beholding Jesus and yielding to Him must be our daily practice. And when we gladly yield to Him out of love, we will find His commandments are not burdensome anymore to us (*1 John 5:3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome*). **And this is worship**. Discipleship is **daily** allowing the gospel to change our hearts from selfishness to worship. There must be **daily beholding the Lamb of God, resulting in death to ourselves** and daily yielding to His resurrection power. Let's examine a few biblical examples:

- i. James says the gospel must balance our status in life. The rich must humble themselves, and the poor must hold their head high because God equally loves both, as Jesus died for both on the cross.

James 1:9-10 Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. ¹⁰ But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower.

- ii. Paul says husbands should love their wives based on the gospel. There are altogether 9 verses in Eph 5:25-32 which state this. If this is stressed, it is easy for wives to submit and respect their husbands (vs 22-24, only 3 verses). This will occur when their hearts are melted with their husband's love, just as our hearts are melted with Jesus' love for us (1 John 4:19). *Eph 5:25 Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

- iii. Paul says our giving must be motivated not by the law but by the gospel of grace.

Cor 8:7-9 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, incomplete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you — see that you also excel in this grace of giving. ⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor, so that you, through His poverty, might become rich.

Paul doesn't appeal to the law of tithing, so you must give 10% of your income. But he appeals to you based on the gospel—that though Jesus was equal to God, he did not consider equality to be something to be grasped but became nothing (Phil 2:6-7). **On the cross**, Jesus was naked, thirsty, hungry and in need of everything— He had nothing and became nothing. That's how poor He became so that we might become rich because He loved us. Jesus gave us everything. When we behold Jesus on the cross, we become like Him — givers, servers and lovers.

- iv. Paul says the grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness. This grace comes out from a crucified Saviour (v14).

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Now, there are many ways to say no to sin —e.g. I may say no to sin because:

- a. I will look bad in the eyes of other people. My reputation will be ruined.
- b. I am frightened of getting caught in my sin. What will people say?
- c. I will hate myself the following day
- d. I will have a constant low esteem
- e. God will not bless me etc. etc etc

Now, we see all these reasons come from selfishness—which is sin in itself. We are more concerned about the consequence of our sins rather than offending God. But when you keep looking at the cross, Jesus' love breaks your heart for you, and you will say no to sin because you love Him! **That's worship.** And use your love for Jesus to motivate you to avail of His grace to say no to all unrighteousness, including patterns of big and small sins that stick to you like a shadow wherever you go. Don't use the grace of God in vain.

John 14:21,23 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them. . .²³ Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

3. Discipleship must allow the Gospel to maintain your freedom from bondages

Jer 50:4-5 "Then the people of Israel and Judah will join together," says the Lord, "weeping and seeking the Lord their God. They will ask the way to Jerusalem and will start back home again. They will bind themselves to the Lord with an eternal covenant that will never again be broken."

The Israelites were idolatrous, and God sent them to exile to Babylon for 70 years. But Jeremiah prophesied to Israel that after 70 long years in captivity in Babylon, God would permit them to return to Israel with unity, weeping in repentance, and humbly seeking the Lord. These elements of **unity** (forgiving others, reconciliation), repentance, and seeking the Lord are crucial when we seek the Lord for freedom from our bondages (e.g., addiction, spiritual battles). You will grow in these three elements when committed to church life.

We experience victory, freedom, and joy in the Lord when we are born again. But the key to **maintaining** our freedom and joy is in vs 5: *"They will bind themselves to the Lord with **an** eternal covenant that will never again be broken."* That eternal covenant is the New Covenant secured by the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross (Luke 22:20)—it is the gospel. If we stay connected to the Lord, in other words, when we abide in Christ, His power will give us the strength to resist the places, people, thoughts, and sins that led us into captivity in the first place.

Quote: Remember, we never find freedom from bondage by living independently from the Lord. We find it by taking the same handcuffs that once bound us to sin and binding ourselves to the wrist of Christ. (Beth Moore).

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.