

Equip OCC Class #1 - Disciples Making Disciples Devotional- Pastor Zack Beck

Deepening Your Relationship with Jesus & Embracing the Call to Make Disciples

Day 1: The Gospel Sets the Beat

Aligning Your Life with God's Rhythm

Scripture: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"* - 2 Corinthians 5:17

Reflection: Like a drummer sets the rhythm for an entire band, the Gospel establishes the foundational beat for your entire Christian life. Today, consider this profound truth: The Good News creates a New Person, which leads to a New Life.

The Gospel isn't just your ticket into heaven—it's the daily rhythm that shapes every aspect of your existence. When Paul declares you are a "new creation," he's saying that at the deepest level of your being, you have been fundamentally transformed. Your identity is no longer rooted in your performance, your past, or your potential, but in Christ's perfect work on your behalf.

Personal Examination:

- What areas of your life are not yet aligned with the Gospel's rhythm?
- How does knowing you are already "complete in Christ" change your motivation for spiritual growth?
- In what ways are you trying to go "beyond" the Gospel rather than going "deeper" into it?

Prayer: *Father, thank You that through Christ, I am reconciled to You, forgiven, and made new. Help me to live today from the reality of who I already am in Christ rather than striving to become something I'm not. Let the Gospel set the beat for every decision, relationship, and moment of this day. Show me how to keep in step with Jesus. Amen.*

Action Step: Identify one specific area where you've been trying to earn God's approval. Choose to rest in the Gospel truth that you are already fully accepted in Christ. Write down one way you will live differently today because of this truth.

Day 2: Authority and Mission

Understanding Christ's Command to Make Disciples

Scripture: *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...'"* - Matthew 28:18-19

Reflection: Jesus begins the Great Commission not with a command, but with a declaration of His absolute authority. The Greek word *exousia* doesn't just mean power—it means legitimate, rightful authority given by the Father as a result of Christ's perfect obedience and sacrificial death.

Why does this matter for discipleship? Because discipleship without divine authority is merely human effort. But discipleship grounded in Christ's absolute authority becomes participation in His cosmic reign. You're not trying to change people through your own wisdom or strength—you're partnering with the risen Lord who has all authority over every realm of existence.

Notice the progression: Christ's authority → the command to make disciples → universal scope. The scope of the mission matches the scope of Christ's authority. This isn't a suggestion from a good teacher; it's a non-negotiable command from the King of kings.

Personal Examination:

- Do you approach discipleship relationships with confidence in Christ's authority or anxiety about your own adequacy?
- How does knowing that Jesus has "all authority" change your perspective on the obstacles you face in making disciples?
- Are you trying to make disciples in your own strength, or are you consciously depending on Christ's authority?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that all authority in heaven and earth belongs to You. I confess that too often I've approached discipleship with anxiety rather than confidence in Your power. Help me to remember that when You command me to make disciples, You also provide the authority to accomplish this mission. Work through me today to see others as You see them—not as projects to fix, but as people You love and want to transform. Amen.*

Action Step: Think of someone in your life who needs to know Jesus or grow in their faith. Instead of focusing on your inadequacy, spend time today praying and asking God how His authority can work through your relationship with this person.

Day 3: Desire and Denial

The First Steps of Following Jesus

Scripture: *"Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'" - Luke 9:23*

Reflection: Discipleship begins with desire. Without spiritual hunger, there's no decision. God uses the emptiness in our souls—guilt, yearning, dissatisfaction—to create desire for Himself. As Paul writes, creation was "subjected to futility" in hope that we would seek our Creator.

But desire alone isn't enough. Jesus calls for denial—the same Greek word (*arneomai*) used when Peter denied Jesus. "I don't know that man," Peter said. Jesus says, "Do that with yourself." This isn't denying yourself things, but denying the very self that wants to run its own life.

Consider this profound truth: "You are not your own. You have been bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). When you desired to follow Christ, you gave up the right to self-determination. This isn't a burden—it's liberation from the exhausting task of playing God in your own life.

Personal Examination:

- What areas of self-will are you still holding onto?
- How does understanding that you've been "bought with a price" change your approach to daily decisions?
- Where is God stirring desire in your heart for deeper discipleship?

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank You for putting a holy restlessness in my soul that drew me to Christ. I acknowledge that I belong to You completely—spirit, soul, and body. Help me to deny my selfish desires and trust Your plans for my life. Show me areas where I'm still trying to maintain control instead of surrendering to Your lordship. Give me grace to die to myself so that Christ can live through me. Amen.*

Action Step: Identify one area where you've been operating in self-will rather than surrendering to God's will. Take a specific step today to "deny yourself" in this area and trust God's plan instead.

Day 4: Death and Devotion

Taking Up Your Cross and Following

Scripture: *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." - Galatians 2:20*

Reflection: When Jesus said "take up your cross," His disciples understood exactly what He meant: capital punishment. The cross wasn't a piece of jewelry—it was an instrument of execution. Taking up your cross means ending your life of self and starting a new life of sacrifice and service.

But notice the progression: desire leads to denial, denial leads to death, but death leads to devotion. "You get a crown, but not without a cross." The hymn reminds us: "Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me."

This death isn't morbid—it's liberating. Paul describes it as being "crucified with Christ." Your old self-centered life died when Christ died, and now you live a new life where Christ Himself lives through you. This is the heart of devotion: not trying harder to follow Jesus, but allowing His life to flow through you.

Personal Examination:

- What aspects of your "old self" are you still trying to keep alive?
- How can you practically "present your body as a living sacrifice" today?
- In what ways do you need to stop trying to live for Jesus and instead let Jesus live through you?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I thank You that my old self was crucified with You on the cross. Help me to live today in the reality of this truth. When I'm tempted to act out of selfishness, pride, or fear, remind me that those things belong to my old nature that has already died. I choose to present my body, my time, my relationships, and my resources as a living sacrifice to You. Live Your life through me today. Amen.*

Action Step: Choose one relationship or situation where you typically react out of your "old self." Consciously choose today to respond from your new identity in Christ instead.

Day 5: Overcoming Barriers

Rejecting Cheap Grace for Costly Discipleship

Scripture: *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* - Ephesians 2:8-10

Reflection: Dietrich Bonhoeffer warned against "cheap grace"—grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ living and incarnate. Many people think: *"I am good at sinning and God is good at forgiving. This is a match made in heaven."* This sees God's grace as permission to sin rather than power to overcome sin.

Grace is free, but it is not cheap. It cost Jesus His life, and it calls you to a transformed life. Bonhoeffer calls us to "costly grace"—the Gospel that must be sought again and again, the gift that must be asked for, the door at which we must knock.

Three barriers often keep us from costly grace:

1. **Consumer Christianity** - "What's in it for me?" mentality
2. **Cultural Christianity** - Claiming the name without bearing fruit
3. **Christless Christianity** - Morals without the Master

True discipleship transforms us from consumers to contributors, from cultural religious people to fruit-bearing followers, from moralistic people to Christ-centered disciples.

Personal Examination:

- Which of these three barriers resonates most with your current struggle?
- How has God's grace empowered you to overcome sin, not just excused it?
- Are you living as a consumer of religious goods or a contributor to God's kingdom?

Prayer: *Father, forgive me for the times I've treated Your grace cheaply. I don't want to presume upon Your mercy or use it as an excuse for sin. Thank You that Your grace is not just forgiveness for my past, but power for my present and hope for my future. Help me to live as a contributor, not just a consumer. Transform me from the inside out so that my life bears fruit that demonstrates the reality of Your work in me. Amen.*

Action Step: Identify one way you've been approaching Christianity as a consumer rather than a contributor. Take one concrete action today to serve others rather than focusing on what you can get.

Day 6: The Barnabas Model

Learning to See and Develop Potential in Others

Scripture: *"But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus." - Acts 9:27*

Reflection: Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement," exemplifies what it means to make disciples who make disciples. When everyone else saw Paul as a threat, Barnabas saw potential. When others wrote off John Mark as a failure, Barnabas saw restoration possibilities.

Barnabas demonstrates five phases of disciple-making:

1. **Advocated** - He vouched for Paul when no one else would trust him
2. **Mentored** - He brought Paul to Antioch for a year of co-ministry
3. **Developed** - He gradually increased Paul's responsibilities
4. **Released** - He graciously stepped back when Paul's gifts emerged
5. **Restored** - He invested in John Mark despite his previous failure

"The mark of a true disciple-maker is not how many converts they can claim, but how many mature disciples they can release into fruitful ministry." Barnabas understood that successful discipleship means working yourself out of a job.

Personal Examination:

- Who in your life needs someone to advocate for them, see their potential, or believe in their restoration?
- Are you threatened by others' success, or do you celebrate when those you've mentored surpass you?
- How can you be a "son or daughter of encouragement" to someone today?

Prayer: *Lord, give me the eyes of Barnabas to see potential where others see problems. Help me to have the courage to advocate for the unlikely, the wisdom to mentor with patience, and the grace to release others into their calling. Protect me from jealousy when those I've invested in surpass me. Instead, let me rejoice in their growth as evidence of Your faithfulness. Show me someone I can encourage today. Amen.*

Action Step: Think of someone who others might overlook or write off. Take one specific action today to advocate for them, encourage them, or help develop their potential.

Day 7: Your Discipleship Legacy

Living as One Who Makes Disciples

Scripture: *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others." - 2 Timothy 2:2*

Reflection: You are at the end of a long chain of disciples who made disciples, who made disciples, who made you a disciple. You can trace this all the way back to Jesus who first said, "Follow me." Someone like Barnabas saw potential in you, advocated for you, mentored you, and released you into God's purposes.

Now the question becomes: Who are you discipling?

Charles Spurgeon said: "Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that." The Great Commission isn't merely a suggestion—it's the heartbeat of what it means to follow Christ.

Your identity isn't primarily defined by your job, your relationships, or your achievements. **First and foremost, you are a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.** And disciples make disciples.

Eugene Peterson called discipleship "a long obedience in the same direction." It's learning to dance to the Gospel's rhythm until it becomes so natural that you're moving in harmony with God's eternal purposes.

Personal Examination:

- Who has invested in your spiritual growth, and how can you honor their investment?
- Who is God calling you to disciple? What specific steps will you take?
- How will your life look different this week because you see yourself primarily as a disciple who makes disciples?

Prayer: *Father, thank You for the faithful disciples who invested in my spiritual growth. Help me to honor their investment by investing in others. I surrender my fears and inadequacies to You and trust that You will work through me to make disciples. Give me divine appointments this week with people who need to know Jesus or grow in their faith. Help me to live primarily as a disciple of Jesus Christ, letting that identity shape every other role I play. Until Christ returns, may my life be spent following the King and making other followers of the King. Amen.*

Action Step: Write down the names of 2-3 people you sense God calling you to invest in spiritually. Pray for them specifically and reach out to one of them this week to begin or deepen a discipling relationship.

Weekly Commitment

Based on this week's devotions, complete these commitments:

My Primary Identity: I choose to see myself first and foremost as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

My Gospel Rhythm: I will live this week from the reality of who I am in Christ rather than striving to become something I'm not.

My Authority: I will approach relationships and challenges with confidence in Christ's authority rather than anxiety about my inadequacy.

My Cross: I commit to one specific area where I will deny myself and trust God's plan instead of my own will.

My Grace: I reject cheap grace and commit to costly discipleship that transforms how I live.

My Vision: I will look for potential in others where they might only see problems.

My Mission: I commit to investing spiritually in _____ (name) and _____ (name) in the coming weeks.

Christ's Promise to Remember: *"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* - Matthew 28:20

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you as you follow Him and make followers of Him. Amen.