

# Discipleship - Accountability

REVIEW: Today is our last day in our series on discipleship. Next week we will do a special thanksgiving message, and then head into Advent. To start out, I wanted to review where we have been so far and point out a couple of things that may have gotten lost in translation.

The very first week we looked at Matthew 28, and Acts 11 and came to the conclusion that all Christians are disciples. The two cannot be separated. There is no upper class of Christianity called disciples, and the rest of us are just regular Christians. The Bible does not allow for that. Because all Christians are disciples, we looked to see what Jesus said defines a disciple: Disciples hold to Jesus' teaching, disciples love one another, and disciples bear much fruit. If any of those things are not true in your life, are you really a disciple?

- I. In the following weeks we talked about discipleship within the family context.
  - A. What I want you to understand is those principles are transferable
    1. Every one of the things we talked about can be transferred to discipling others around you
    2. While framed for use with your kids or your grand children, you can use the same principles with others in your life
  - B. One of the first things we talked about was the principle of modeling
    1. The fact is you are discipling your kids, or people around you
    2. The question is, what are you discipling them in?
      - a) Do they know that Christ is the most important thing to you
      - b) And you can say, "yes," but is your life proving that out?
  - C. The second area was time
    1. The big overarching principle is, time is about doing what you do already
      - a) Having the chat in the car
      - b) Find creative ways to make family prayer a priority
        - (1) Here is an idea - make a prayer dish you keep in the cup holder of your car
        - (2) Invite your family to think of prayer requests to put in the dish - these can be people to pray for regularly (grandpa and grandma, teachers, bosses, friends, etc.)
        - (3) While you are all in the car, have one of the kids pull out a prayer request and then have family prayer
        - (4) One tip: the driver should keep their eyes open
      - c) When you put the kids to bed, when you get up in the morning - find ways to talk about your faith
    2. Whatever you do, be consistent
      - a) That does not mean a certain time every week nor does it mean a one and done conversation

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- (1) I talked to junior about Jesus - all is well
- (2) And never the topic comes up again
- b) It means it should be a regular part of the entire family vocabulary
  - (1) Conversations about faith and Christ should not be few and far between
  - (2) Nor should they be by just one parent - both parents need to engage - I'm going to pick on the men - men we HAVE to get in this fight - Just an addition, I have been encouraged by the number of men coming for men's Bible study this year
- D. The third area was moments
  1. This is simply using the moments of life as teaching tools
    - a) Many of us are great at this for sports and other things
    - b) Our kid gets knocked down in sports and we teach them to get back up
      - (1) Or in my case I had a temper when I was a kid
      - (2) The ump made what I felt was a bad call and I threw my helmet when I got back to the dugout
      - (3) Dad did not let that stand! He was quick to get a hold of me and remind me to show good sportsmanship even if it was a bad call
  2. We are acquainted with the idea of using moments in other ways
    - a) We need to do the same with spiritual conversations
    - b) And that involves being prepared, knowing God's Word - the stories of the Bible we can relate to our kids or others
    - c) It also involves knowing our kids or others we are talking to, as to how to best communicate
- E. The fourth was milestones
  1. This IS what it sounds like - making much of the spiritual events in the life your child or friend
  2. Baptism would be one for sure, could be significant ages, or special occasions like a first retreat, or mission trip
  3. And you can celebrate big with a trip to Hawaii (along with your favorite Pastor), or as simple as a letter or note

INTRO: Today, I want to talk about the area of addressing sin in the life of our friends or family.

So to begin, I have a confession to make: I am not a car guy. If you have been around me for any length of time, you know that I am not a car guy. Those dreaded "idiot" lights on the dash panel can strike fear into the heart of this ol' boy. The most feared light of all is the "check engine" light. Its like this nebulous annoyance that you never know what the real problem is. Give me a light that says

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“its the drive shaft” or “You’re brakes are bad” or “You’re air filter is disgusting - change it!” But “Check engine” is so general, it could be a hundred different things.

So when the check engine light comes on, you take it into the shop. The mechanic comes out with his little computer thing and plugs it into the car so they can have a little conversation. His computer gets the error code, they look it up if they don’t already know it, and viola you have your answer to the problem.

- I. The check engine light is not limited to automobiles however
  - A. All of us have had problems in life and we have been in the same spot, not knowing how to fix things, but we can sense the check engine light is on
    1. Your marriage is strained and you are not sure why
    2. Your family seems at each other’s throats
    3. You can’t get out of debt or see there is a problem
    4. There is something wrong, the check engine light is on strong, but we can’t figure it out
  - B. This is a time we need someone to plug into our lives with a computer and tell us what the problem is so the problem can be corrected
  - C. Turn to Galatians 6:1-3
- II. What does it mean to be “caught in sin”
  - A. It does sound as if someone has been caught in the act - someone was found out as to doing something wrong
  - B. The Greek word actually means taken by surprise or trapped
    1. It is interesting that the two verses before this Paul says, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”
    2. Here in 6:1 its like Paul is saying, “Even though we walk by the Spirit, we will still fall into sin.”
    3. Walter Hansen in his commentary says “Moral failure in the church should not be a surprise, nor should it be considered fatal to the life of the church”
      - a) Yet, the church over the years has changed being a Christian into being perfect
        - (1) I talked with the teens about this last week - I asked if they felt they had to have their “I’m okay” mask on - most said, “yes”
        - (2) One thing that tells me is we are discipling the teens into this behavior
      - b) We should expect that sin will happen because we still live in a fallen world, and have not been glorified yet
  - C. So what do we do with someone that is caught in sin (taken by surprise or trapped)?

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1. “you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently”
  - a) Before I go any further, lesson one from these verses: We should not always trust ourselves in trying to diagnose a problem
  - b) When the check engine light comes on, it takes someone else to diagnose the problem
  - c) Sin, at its core is self-deception
    - (1) “This is not that bad”
    - (2) “I can do this and it won’t hurt anyone”
    - (3) Its like hanging a picture on a wall
      - (a) When the kids were rehanging posters next door at the house, one was hanging, and someone else was directing if the poster was straight or not
      - (b) Why? Because the one hanging was too close to see the truth - they needed someone else to help point out reality
  - d) And this is where the American church struggles - with pride over sin
    - (1) Paul is already letting us know that this will be the norm
    - (2) Even though we walk by the Spirit, we will struggle with sin, and we will need our brothers and sisters to help us diagnose and correct the problems
    - (3) And yet, we still struggle with pride, not wanting people to know we have problems - certain not to know what those problems are
    - (4) Is it any wonder that pride is also addressed in this passage? (“If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves”)
2. This is why Paul says, “you who live by the Spirit...” should restore the person gently
  - a) And I want you to notice that Paul does not give a step by step guide to how to restore a person
  - b) The focus is on THAT it happens, and on HOW it happens
    - (1) It is to happen by others that are walking in step with the Spirit
    - (2) And it is to happen gently
  - c) So let’s chat about this for a bit
    - (1) It is the ones who live by the Spirit that should do the restoration
      - (a) It is important to understand that it should be people that are living by the Spirit that seek to help restore others
      - (b) What do those people look like? Go back to chapter 5 - the fruit of the Spirit - people who walk with the Spirit
        - i) In part because of spiritual pride Paul says this, “watch yourselves, or you may be tempted.”

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- ii) So there does have to be spiritual desire, and focus on living a life focused on Christ
- (c) The other side of the coin can be that people never feel spiritual enough
  - i) We feel like we still struggle with sin ourselves, so who are we to help restore anyone
  - ii) This can be one of two things at work here
    - (1) One, it can be a false sense of spiritual pride
      - (a) You are so focused on your life and your sin that you feel as if you cannot help anyone else
      - (b) It is the “plank in your own eye” gone awry
      - (c) Absolutely, be aware of your own sin, don’t go after every brother or sister for their sin, especially if you have not examined your own life
      - (d) But do not use that as an excuse that you cannot follow this command of the Bible to help your brother or sister in Christ be restored
    - (2) The second thing at work is, we may not actually be spiritual
      - (a) This is far more serious
      - (b) If we are not seeking to walk in the Spirit, seeking to live by the Spirit, then you are right, you should not try to help restore others
      - (c) You should be focused on yourself and where you are spiritually - if anything you need others to help you with your check engine light
- (2) Now, these spiritual brothers and sisters should restore, and do so gently
  - (a) Sadly, this video is the idea most people have in mind when Christians talk about accountability
    - i) VIDEO: S.L.A.P.
    - ii) Paul was specific that restoration is done gently
  - (b) It’s interesting that Paul uses the words “restore” and “gently” together
    - i) The word for “restore” is used for mending broken nets, and can be used for setting a broken bone
      - (1) Setting a broken bone can be anything but gentle
      - (2) So it is odd the two words are paired together
    - ii) Gently is really going back to the fruit of the Spirit

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- (1) Paul is showing us that sin is the opportunity for Spirit led people to display the fruit of the Spirit to help bring healing
  - (2) That is the goal - healing, restoration
  - (3) The goal is never condemnation, or trying to make the person feel worse about their sin
- III. Paul makes the mission clear when He adds, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."
- A. Being caught in sin is a huge burden to bear, and Paul is trying to help us understand that it is not a burden we should have to bear alone
1. This flies in the face of us in America
    - a) We are used to individualism so we feel we have a right to privacy
    - b) We are used to individualism so we feel we can handle anything on our own without help from others
  2. And Paul is calling out to the church to help us realize that we need one another to continue to live by the Spirit properly
  3. We need one another to check our engine for us and let us know what is going wrong sometimes
- B. The reality is we are called to mutual accountability with each other
1. It is the duty of the church to engage those caught in sin, those trapped or ensnared by sin
  2. But it is scary to get involved like that
- C. Sin, by its nature is messy
1. If we get involved, it will get messy
    - a) It may mess up relationships
    - b) It may mess up our standing with God
      - (1) We almost would prefer to be the priest and the Levite when they come across the man that had been attacked on the road
        - (a) Don't get me involved, it might mess up my life, make me unclean, make my life more difficult
        - (b) They didn't want to get messy
      - (2) Yet God calls us to be the good Samaritan
        - (a) To get off our collective donkeys and help the person trapped in sin
        - (b) Even if it is messy and difficult
  2. God wants us to bear the burdens of others, even if it gets messy
    - a) C.H. Spurgeon says it this way: "but so and so is very quick tempered!" I hope that it is a burden to him to be quick tempered; and if so, that is an additional reason why you should bear with him."

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- b) Name the sin, or the thing that makes it messy, and it is just another reason to bear their burden with them
  - c) If you want to ask why, Paul answers that: fulfill the law of Christ
    - (1) What law?
    - (2) The two greatest commandments: love the Lord your God, and love your neighbor as yourself
    - (3) When you bear another's sin burden you are fulfilling the law of Christ
- IV. Time to get practical - how do we bear another's sin burden and fulfill the law of Christ
- A. There are three ways to look at this idea of accountability: Two in the negative and one in the positive
  - B. Here is what I mean by the negative
    - 1. If you see a person that is struggling with sin, trapped and ensnared, this is no suggestion, it is a command that we help out
      - a) We need to be the serviceman, plugging in the computer to help them to see what the check engine light is on for
      - b) It takes its shape in so many different ways that it is impossible tell you how exactly it is done
      - c) Let me give you this by way of example: a good Christian brother confronted me, not about an area of sin, but still something that could trip me up
        - (1) Now I have tried to train myself to not overreact when someone says something to me (and being in ministry you develop a thick skin or die under the weight)
        - (2) I evaluated what he said, and took it as a corrective of the course I had been on
        - (3) It helped me to reset the course, and even understand why the course I was on had crept into my life unnoticed
        - (4) This is an example of confronting someone on negative things that went well
        - (5) Our fear is that things will blow up in our face when all we are trying to do is help - and we have to be ready to get messy
    - 2. The second area of negative is having a relationship in which you can hold one another accountable for sinful tendencies
      - a) Whatever that sin may be, if it is holding you back from glorifying God, and enjoying deeper fellowship with Him, living a holy life, it is worth sharing with a Christian brother or sister for accountability
        - (1) James 5:16 "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other"

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- b) I put this in the negative category because this kind of accountability is pulling us back from sinful behaviors
- c) Two other things about this:
  - (1) Don't ask the question if you can't handle the answer
    - (a) In other words, if finding out that someone you look up to in the faith struggles with anger, or gossip, or bitterness, or lust, or whatever - if that is going to hurt you, don't ask the question
    - (b) Instead, ask if the person is being accountable in their life to someone - encourage them to do so
  - (2) Second, what do you do WHEN someone confesses sin to you?
    - (a) It is certainly not slapping them like in the video
    - (b) First, pray confessing the sin to God, agreeing with Him that it was sin and that you need to repent and seek the life He desires for you
    - (c) Second, speak the gospel back into their life - Christ died for that sin, and God still loves them
- C. The other area of accountability is positive
  - 1. That is sharing something you want to do for God's glory and deeper fellowship with Him
  - 2. For example: making your prayer life more regular (15 minutes a day), or reading your Bible 4 times a week, or starting to journal about your relationship with God, or seeking to be more merciful, gentle, kind, etc
  - 3. These are all things that you can share with a brother or sister to help you improve your relationship with Christ
    - a) And that has to be the focus - a better relationship with Christ
    - b) If it is just to force good habits into your life, you will fail at it
      - (1) The focus has to be relationship
      - (2) That as a result of doing this thing I have chosen, I will become closer to Christ, experience Him more intimately and deeply
- D. One final thing about accountability - what do you do if you have someone that wants to keep you accountable and you don't want them to be your accountability partner?
  - 1. It is possible that you might have someone ask you about your life and you don't want to share with that person
    - a) Maybe you are not sure if you can trust them with sensitive areas of life
    - b) Maybe you don't have a close relationship
    - c) Maybe you don't know why, but you are uncomfortable with them playing that role in your life - how do you handle that?
      - (1) Just my suggestions:

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- (2) First, thank them for caring enough to ask - recognize that they are trying to show you love because they want to help guard you in your faith - you understand that they are just trying to help you be accountable
- (3) Second, be honest and tell them you are not comfortable with sharing that with them - and you don't have to provide a reason
- (4) Third, tell them you have someone keeping you accountable (if you do - you can even tell them who) or tell them that you will share with them who you chose to keep yourself accountable within a certain time frame
  - (a) EX: Within the next month I will get back with you on who I have asked and shared that area of my life with
  - (b) This affirms their heart for accountability to occur, and yet gives you the freedom with whom you will be accountable

CONCLUSION: Some times we know what the problem is in our lives, but we need help in overcoming it. Other times, we need others to plug into our lives and help us see why the check engine light is on. Either way, if godliness is our goal, then we need to be willing to enter in the messy world of bearing another's burdens, accountability, and grace. When we do, we will be a stronger church for it.