

Let's turn to 2 Timothy 2. Paul is writing this second letter to Timothy, and it's the last letter that we have from Paul. It's the very last letter he wrote. And he wrote it while he was in prison and about to die, so it's got some pretty important stuff in it. The person he's writing this letter to, Timothy is a young man whom Paul literally took from his family and brought him along on his journey and disciplined him. Paul was going around planting churches, planting campuses, growing up pastors, and Timothy was his right hand man that he disciplined. He said, "Hey man, I want you to take this church that I planted and I want you to pastor this church." So he's a young pastor at a young church trying to build his church, much like we are here at the Village Church, more specifically at the Denton campus. I don't know if you know, but we have a very young, handsome pastor who leads this place. In this letter, the things that Paul is going to tell Timothy and the things that he's going to exhort him to do as a young pastor of a young church to really turn the corner and build his church have tremendous implications for us this morning, and they have a lot of things that we can learn. So let's just dive right in. This is from Paul in a prison. He's facing death; he knows he's going to be executed. Nero's been lighting the city on fire and blaming Christians. He's just looking to kill some Christians, and Paul just happens to be one of those guys. He's actually the head of these people. So he's writing this letter to Timothy, and he's doing really two things. First, he's relationally telling him goodbye. He's saying, "Hey, I love you. My time's come. I've fought the fight. I've finished the race. I love you." But the second thing he's doing is offering practical advice for Timothy about how to grow his church. So we literally have Paul's thoughts, his meditations, his lessons learned from all his journeys as he's writing to his young disciple, as he's going to his impending death. It's just a fascinating thing to read.

So let's turn to 2 Timothy 2, starting in verse 1. Paul has introduced himself, he's introduced the situation and now this is when he really starts to write, to Timothy specifically. He says, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything." So as I have thought over what Paul wrote to Timothy and the implications it has for us, these are just some of the observations I have.

Start back in verse 1. He says, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus..." I love that Paul opens up his letter to Timothy in that way, because he basically just said to Timothy, "Everything you want to do, everything you hope to accomplish, everything God's put within your heart and mind to do and to will, everything is dependent on you continuing to strengthen yourself in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And he just said, "Everything you want to do literally rises and falls with how clearly you're seeing Jesus and how strongly you're treasuring Him every day of your life." And if you've been here at any time at all, we talk about being gospel-centered, Christ-centered all the time. We talk about how the gospel for most of us has been deposited in our lives, but it hasn't fallen. So before we can do anything, we need the gospel to fall. We need it to fall from our heads to our hearts so that it might go out through our hands to our neighbors, friends and loved ones and everyone that God puts us in contact with. And Paul's telling Timothy the same thing. "As a pastor, as a leader, if you want to lead this church, if you want this church to continue to grow deep and not just wide, you have to get this. You have to continue to strengthen yourself in Christ Jesus." Basically he's saying something similar to what Martin Luther would say later, which is, "You have to learn how to preach the gospel to yourself every day." You have to beat it into your head continuously. When you come into here every Sunday

morning, you're going to be reminded of the gospel. Everything we sing, everything we talk about and preach about, everything from "Little Village" to the Lord's Supper, everything we do is meant to remind you of Jesus Christ clothed in His gospel and push you in that direction. So when you come in here, there's a good chance you're going to come in here, sing some songs, hear a sermon, take communion with the family of faith and be encouraged and strengthened in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the deal is that's only one day of the week. So if we don't learn how to do this thing continuously every day, we're in some trouble. And I think that's what Paul is alluding to. It's not just a once a day thing; you have to continuously, consistently strengthen yourself in the grace that is found in Jesus Christ. So you and I have to begin to learn and understand and discover ways to preach the gospel to ourselves all over the place, every day. We have to learn how to remind ourselves of the gospel so that it wouldn't just be deposited in us, but that it would fall in us.

I was listening to a pastor whom I really, really respect, and he was saying the same thing to his congregation. He gave the example of how his wife does this. His wife has struggled with a lot of chronic illnesses, so she just has a lot of suffering and hard times. She actually writes the children's curriculum their church. So when she was writing the curriculum, she was on the story of Noah. If you're not familiar with the story of Noah, God decided to wipe out the whole earth of mankind save this one family of Noah's. He tells him to build an ark, Noah builds an ark, he gets on the ark and God sends rain and just wipes out everything. And after it's over, Noah gets off the ark and God makes a covenant with Noah and says, "I'm never going to flood the earth in wrath like that again. I'm never going to do that, and here's the sign of My covenant. I'm going to put a rainbow in the sky so that every time you see a rainbow, you'll be reminded that I'm not going to flood the earth, that I've made a covenant with you." So this woman was studying this story, and she came across something fascinating that she had never read before. The word for rainbow used in the story isn't actually "rainbow," it's the word "bow," as in bow and arrow. It's a weapon of warfare. So she began to think about it and say, "Okay, God's sign is a bow. And which way is the bow pointed? It's pointed towards God." And what God was saying through this bow was, "Listen, I'm never going to flood the earth in wrath like that again. Instead, I'm going to absorb the wrath that's due you. I'm going to take the wrath on. And that's going to be symbolized by a bow pointing up at the sky towards Me." And do you know what this woman does? She put some crystals in her room by the window, so when you walk in and the sun's shining through the crystals in the window, it makes rainbows everywhere. And she remembers the gospel. She preaches the gospel to herself. She remembers the wrath absorbed by Christ. So it causes her to continue to persevere.

We've been going here at this campus for about six months now, and God's been faithful to us. He's put us here and said, "Here's where I want you to go. This is what I want you to do." We've tried to listen to Him as best we could, and He's been faithful, at least to continue to bring people to hear the gospel. But if we want to turn the corner and be more than just a church that grows real fast and become one that grows real deep, this is where it starts. You have to learn how to preach the gospel to yourself every day. And if you need help with that, send us an e-mail. If you don't know what that means, if you don't know how to do that when you read the Bible, send us an e-mail. But I know most of us have an idea, something that reminds you of Jesus, something that reminds you of the cross, something that reminds you that it's going to be okay, that He's risen from the dead. And so sin, death and darkness don't hold any dominion over us. We have to preach the gospel to ourselves every day, that's what Paul says. That's how he starts off with Timothy, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Verse 2, "...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." In this one little verse of Scripture, Paul basically unpacks that was revolutionary at the time and would be very revolutionary for us if we got it. The idea is that the way you're going to build the church is submitting yourself to Jesus every day, learning how to remember the gospel, teaching it to yourself often, but once you've done that you turn around and make disciples. You take what you've learned, what you've been given and entrust it to faithful men. And he's talking to Timothy here saying, "Timothy, get with some men and take these men, pour it into them

so that they'll pour it into other people." In that one verse we have disciples making disciples making disciples. And Paul's basically saying, "The way that you're going to build this church is to become a church full of disciples who make disciples who make disciples who make disciples." And I don't know if you've read a lot about church growth or how things are done these days, but typically (especially in American Evangelicalism) this has not been the way that we try to grow the church. We'd rather just bring a tank on stage and say, "Hey, come see the tank on stage and get saved" or whatever it is. We try to do some dog and pony show or get a good preacher. We've historically drifted away from this. Part of the reason is that after the Civil War the church lost its cherished place in society. Because up until the Civil War everybody was looking to the church to be the moral compass of our nation. So during the Civil War, they looked to the church to speak unto the slavery issue and the church didn't, or at least not as a whole. I'm sure there were some people, but in general they didn't. And when that went really bad and the church couldn't even agree in whether or not we're supposed to have slaves, America said, "Alright, I'll find a new compass." And America fell out of love with the church being the moral compass. And ever since then, the church has been trying to get back to that place where everybody loves it. So we've been doing everything we can to get people to come, to get people to like us, to get people to not think we're intolerant bigots, to get people to get here. Because we're so afraid that they're not going to like us. And in that, our focus is shifted from making disciples to trying to become the sweetheart of America all over again.

Dallas Willard is a guy whose written a lot about discipleship. He's a philosophy professor at USC and he loves Jesus. I love any guy that's a philosophy professor at USC and loves Jesus. I want to sit down with that guy. Can you imagine the conversations he has? And he's just writing books and publishing them and going, "Hey, this is who I am." He's one of the smartest men of our generation, and this is what he says in his book *The Great Omission*, "The word "disciple" occurs 269 times in the New Testament. "Christian" is found three times and was first introduced to refer precisely to disciples of Jesus—in a situation where it was no longer possible to regard them as a sect of the Jews."

Basically he's saying even the times they used the word "Christian" they were talking about disciples. He goes on to say, "The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ." In fact, the first goal set by Jesus for the early church was to use His all encompassing power and authority to make disciples. . .The first goal he set for the early church was to use his all- encompassing power and authority to make disciples. . .Having made disciples, these alone were to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Given this twofold preparation, they were then to be taught to treasure and keep "all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). The Christian church of the first centuries resulted from following this plan for church growth—a result hard to improve upon. But in place of Christ's plan, historical drift has substituted "Make converts (to a particular 'faith and practice') and baptize them into church membership." This causes two great omissions from the Great Commission to stand out. Most important, we start by omitting the making of disciples and enrolling people as Christ's students, when we should let all else wait for that." The very thing that everything else should hinge on, we've omitted. The thing that Jesus said to do, we don't even do it. "Then we also omit, of necessity, the step of taking our converts through training that will bring them ever-increasingly to do what Jesus directed. These two great omissions are connected in practice into one whole. Not having made our converts disciples, it is impossible for us to teach them how to live as Christ lived and taught (Luke 14:26)." Do you hear the shift? It's gone from "go and make disciples" to "just make converts, and whatever you have to do to get people in here, just get people in the door. Maybe they'll get saved." And that's the church's focus. And Paul's saying, "Listen, if you want to build a church, Timothy, you have to make disciples."

I think there's a lot of reasons why we don't make disciples, why we'd rather just convert people or bring people to get converted. One of which is that you can't impart what you don't possess. So if you're not a disciple, you can't disciple anyone else. If you don't know the teachings of Jesus, how are you going to teach someone else to obey Him? You can do that, but you just become a colossal hypocrite. You can't give what you don't have. So that's one reason it's just unseen today. But I think the second reason is even more compelling and it's the one that gets even more of us. It's

just harder to make disciples. It's just more difficult to make disciples than it is to invite somebody to church, is it not? It's harder for me to take a group of four guys and pour into their lives on an intentional, consistent basis than it is for me to tell you guys to go get involved in some church program. It's absolutely harder, because then I have to walk with you, I have to talk with you, I have to labor with you, I have to have the ups and the downs, I have to be there, I have to answer my phone. I have to do all these things. It would be easier to just say, "Hey, go over there." It just flies in the face of everything American culture teaches us, which is comfort, ease, satisfaction, all the things we talked about last week. And Paul's going, "No, you're supposed to be making disciples. It's fine that you want to do a bunch of programs and do this and bring a bunch of people to church. That's good, it's not bad. But if you're not making disciples, you're never going to grow deep, you're just going to grow wide." So if we want to turn that corner, we have to press in to this.

And here's what I love about Paul. Paul knows it's hard. Look at the next sentence in verse 3, "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." Do you think that's a mistake that he put that next? "Make disciples, entrust this to faithful men who will teach it to other faithful men. And by the way, share in that suffering with me. Because you will suffer." If you try to disciple anybody, it's just hard. And then to further magnify the point, he gives us three examples of that it's like. He gives three comparisons of what making disciples is like. In verse 4, he says, "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops." Right off the bat, just look at those three comparisons. You've got a soldier, an athlete that's training and a farmer. Now, what do you get out of that? You get, "That's hard. That's persevering. That's a lot of work. That's tough. I don't want to be a farmer. You have to do all this work, you have to till the land. And then you have to depend on whether it will rain or not. I don't want to do that." And Paul's going, "You're going to share in this suffering." And in the first one, he says, "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." It helps if you think about this in a 1st century, Roman-Greco mindset. To be a soldier was something that you saw all the time, and they didn't get furloughed. They would go for years on campaigns. I remember the movie *Gladiator* where Maximus the general goes up to Caesar after winning another battle. Caesar goes, "What do you want? I'll give you anything you want." And Maximus goes, "I just want to go home. I just want to go home and see my wife and kid." There was something to being a soldier in that day that required sacrifice. You couldn't do some of the things you wanted to do because you were so focused on your duty as a soldier. In fact, it was against the law to actually be a soldier and entangle yourself in everyday affairs. The picture of every individual as a soldier and of life as a campaign is one that the Greeks and Romans knew well. The historian Seneca said, "To live is to be a soldier." Another historian named Epictetus said, "The life of every man is a kind of campaign, and a campaign which is long and varied." And even the Roman code of Theodosius said, "We forbid men engaged in military service to engage in civilian occupations." A soldier is a soldier and nothing else, and Paul is saying a Christian should focus on Christianity. What he's not saying here is, "Hey, it's a civilian thing for you to want to go eat lunch and go to the bathroom. Don't do that." He's not saying that you can't have friends and you can't do this and you can't have a job that's outside of the church. What he's saying is that you can't let yourself get entangled in these things that have nothing to do with your Christianity.

So we're back to where we were last week, the temptation of Jesus – to make something that's morally neutral ultimate. That's what he's saying. And that's hard work, because you have to sacrifice and suffer the losses of some things you really like. Let me break it down this way for you. It means it's okay to have stocks and be interested in the stock market, but if your whole life depends on what happened this last week, that's not okay. I just met with an older gentleman in our church that I just love. He kind of helps me disciple and helps me along. And he's one of those guys who has some stocks, and he just said, "Listen, I want to be a good faithful steward, but at the end of the day, I'm not going to let that dictate my life. I'm not going to let that drive who I am and determine whether or not I have a good week or not. It's not mine anyway; I'm just trying to steward it." It's okay to be a Dallas Cowboys fan or a Mavericks fan. But it's not okay if they lose in the Super Bowl tragically, that 36 hours of your life is wasted and stolen because you're so distraught over it as

if you knew anyone from the team. It's okay do these things, it's okay to have this, but it's not okay to have those things master you. Not if you want to make disciples, because that is how you get off mission. And if you get off mission, you're not going to be able to build a church.

That was his first example. His second example is similar. His second example is, "An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." There's a Denzel Washington movie called *Man on Fire* that illustrates this. There's a little girl played by Dakota Fanning whose name is Pita. She is a swimmer at her school, but she's never gotten better than third as a swimmer and she can't figure out why. She's okay with it, but she can't get better than third. So when her newly hired bodyguard watches her practices, he notices why she got third. He says, "You're the slowest one off the blocks, but you're the fastest one in the water. What does that tell you? You need to get faster off the blocks." So he's been working with her and working with her and working with her to learn how to get off the blocks. Because when the gun would shoot, it would scare her and she would freeze for a moment and then jump in. And that was why she was slow. So he worked with her by banging loud noises in her ear and doing these things so she would be faster off the blocks so she'll win the race. Before the race he asks her, "Are you trained or untrained?" She goes on to take first place in the race. In another one of his letters, Paul wrote, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." And he's telling Timothy the same thing, "You want to build a church? It's foolish to think that you can win a race if you're not disciplined enough to stay in your lane. It's just as foolish to think that you can become a disciple without being disciplined." And I know that pendulum that most churches have of focusing way too much on works and way too much on grace.

We tend to be a little bit more on the grace side, because we believe that it's all by grace. Even the ability to believe, even the discipline we have to compete, to do this thing is given to us by God, for God. But to think that you don't have to exercise and that you don't have to be disciplined in order to become a disciple is foolish. And I think most of us are just sitting around going, "Whenever God decides to do this for me...it's just by grace, man." And to that, Paul would say, "Listen, if you can even think like that, you're probably not saved. You just think you can sit around and wait for God to sanctify you without any of your own intentionality in receiving His grace to be disciplined?" We have to become disciplined. We have to do this. It's just hard. And listen, I wish I could wake up in the morning and Josh Drew would sing me a song to wake up by and then I'd go to breakfast and Chandler was there to tell me the daily psalm and exegesis for me and lead me along the way of righteousness.

I just wish it was that easy, that I wouldn't have to do anything, that it would just happen. I wish I didn't have to fight my sin. I wish I didn't have to fight my greed. I wish I didn't have to fight my selfishness. I wish I didn't have to get up early in the morning because that's the best time that I hear the Lord. I wish I could stay up later. That's not how it works, man. In a church as young as ours, this one will kill us more than the other ones. It will kill us thinking "I know how to run. I learned how to run when I was seven." Well, are you running in such a way that you're going to win the race though? And that takes discipline. You know, they wouldn't even let the athletes in the Olympics during this time compete unless they had prepared for ten months. They had to take a vow that they had been training for ten months to even be able to compete. Paul's saying, "Man, you've got to be able to learn how to run."

And the last one I think holds out probably the most hope for us. It says this, "It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops." I don't know if you've ever been around farmers and farming, but it's just a brutal profession. Listen to this perspective which I read in an article this week. It said, "Often farmers must be content first to work and then to wait. More than any other workers, farmers have to learn that there is no such thing as quick results. Christians too must learn to work and wait. Often they must sow the good seed of the word into the hearts and minds of

their hearers and see no immediate result." I don't know if you've tried to do that, but it's unbelievably difficult to pour, to give, to train and disciple and then to let some of it be out of your control. But Paul's going, "You still work hard. You still plant seeds. You still till the ground. And if it rains, it rains, but if it doesn't, you've done your part. It says, "Teachers often have to teach and see no difference in those they teach. Parents often have to seek to train and guide and see no difference in their children. It's only as the years go by that the result is seen. For it often happens that the young people who have grown to adulthood are faced with some irresistible temptation, some terrible decision or some intolerable effort, and back into their mind comes some word of God or some flash of remembered teaching and the teaching and discipline and guiding bear fruit and bring honor where without it, there would have been dishonor, salvation where there would have been there would have been ruin. The farmer has learned to work hard and then to wait with patience, and so must the Christian." He's attacking this idea of, "I try to make disciples of people, but it just didn't go well. I did it for a whole year." Well that's great, Jesus did it in three years and one His guys left. Hang in there. Maybe you stay with people. And again, this flies in the face of everything our culture teaches us - results, we can get it now, you can get anything you want when you want, it's at your fingertips now. Paul's saying that's not the way this deal works. Work hard like the farmer.

I just got through reading phenomenal, fascinating book called *The Death of the Grown-Up*. It was written by a *Washington Times* journalist. And I don't know if she's a believer, but she basically traces what she calls the decline of Western Civilization to a lack of grown-ups. And by this, I obviously don't mean there's a lack of 40 year olds walking around. I'm referring to people who act in accordance of some sort of standard of what it means to be an adult. She says that has dissipated in America and as a result, our whole culture is just floundering and headed towards ruin. She basically traces the history of how this happened. Now I asked both of my grandfathers, "What was the best decade in American history?" Without hesitation, both of them said the 1950's or the generation after the war, the "Greatest Generation." But in her history, she traces it back to the 1940's when the world went to war. And what that meant to America was American fathers went to war. The bread-winners of the home left, but there were still expenses in the home, so the moms had to go to work. And that left the child alone with either their siblings or peer group. And she talks about this transition in the 40's where teenagers came into existence. The word "teenager" didn't even exist until 1943. They just made it up to explain this phenomenon that was happening where the parents were leaving the home and more and more the teenager was being raised by a peer group rather than families. So when the dads and moms come home, everything's different now. And they tried to get back to the way it was, but it wasn't the child had lost respect for the parent and the parent, insecure of that, began to let all of life revolve around their kid. She says that this horrendous shift happened where kids went from thinking that everything was about the family to thinking everything was about them. So those kids grew up thinking everything was about them. And they went to school in the 60's and 70's. And if you don't know what happened, go read up on that. It didn't go so well. Those are the years everybody thinks things just went to hell. And really this lady's saying it started much earlier. And now you've got a group of parents who have never really been parented that are are trying to parent, and it's just a disaster for our society. And I tell you all that to say the most fascinating part of reading the book was that you can literally trace the history of culture and see how the church mirrors it. So what we have today is a lot of people running around in the church, a lot of converts who haven't necessarily been disciplined. They have no spiritual parents. They have no spiritual mother and father. And the reason is because the people who could be spiritual mothers and fathers didn't have spiritual mothers and fathers. And everybody thinks they don't know how to do this, so nobody's doing it. So we're just here with a church full of people where there's not a lot of discipleship taking place. There's a whole lot of growth, but that doesn't do anything. It just grows us wider.

I've spent all this time so far talking to you to get to this point this morning. You who are older and more mature in the faith, you who have been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ, you who are faithful, let me to you something remarkable, because I need you to help us lead the church. Howard Hendricks is a guy who was my professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. He's just got all this wisdom. He's really shaped a lot of my thoughts on this issue. He said

something about the gospel of Luke that I thought was just interesting. He said that in Luke 6 when the people decided that Jesus Christ must die, that's when Jesus decided to choose twelve men. Right after the first mention them seeking to take His life, Jesus went off and chose His disciples. Hendricks says that is the key to your discipleship. He says, "You will never come to grips with discipleship until you come to the realization that we're in the process of passing off the scene. If you're not making disciples, you're not finishing well." And so you more mature, older men and women of faith in here, I need you to help lead this place. As a pastoral staff, we will not be able to do this alone. There are way too many people who are not being discipled that need to be discipled. We need you to help lead. I need you to get over your fears of not being relevant enough to all these college students. They're just as afraid of you. They're just as afraid of not being able to relate to you. I need you to get over your fear of not knowing enough about the gospel, not knowing enough Scripture, as if it's just all about giving and regurgitating information. If you wait until you're like Jesus, you'll never come, it will never happen. And I know some of you are not in a place where you need to be discipling, and I'm not asking you to. If you're in a place where you need to heal, where you need to be discipled on your own, where you need counseling, do these things. But you men and women who aren't in that place, know that you're here for reasons, that God's brought you into this community for a reason. You who love the life and vitality that all these college students bring, I need you to help. I need you to lead. I need you to grab two or three of these college students and disciple them. I need you to use those spare bedrooms in your house and house a couple of these guys. Teach them how to cook, teach them how to date, teach them how to eat. I need you to do this. I need you to bounce around services here. And I'm glad you're here this morning, because we can't have it where one service becomes heavy college and the other service becomes heavier older adults. We can't have that. But would you help me lead? And listen, if you're going, "Okay, I don't know how to meet anybody," send John Warren an e-mail ([jwarren@thevillagechurch.net](mailto:jwarren@thevillagechurch.net)) He'll hook you up with some students. He'll hook you up with some people who are longing, thirsting for discipleship. I need you to help me lead. I need you to step in. I'm not asking you to be a church worker. I'm not asking you to do a whole lot. I'm just asking you to be a disciple. And part of being a disciple is making other disciples. Because it's not until we do this together that we'll begin to go deep. And listen, I know. I've got four groups of men that I'm in the process of doing this with on a weekly, monthly basis. Preaching is like 2% of what I do here, if that. I'm just meeting with people, trying to disciple. Because this is the way God said it would be.

Okay, now for you younger men and women in here, you college students, you people who go, "Yeah, I don't know how to do that. Nobody ever taught me. Nobody ever parented me," let me read you a quote. Dallas Willard said, "The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christlike and so dwelling in his faith and practice, systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end." Basically a disciple is someone who rearranges their entire life to become like Christ. "In contrast, the non-disciple, whether inside or outside the church, has something "more important" to do or undertake than to become like Jesus Christ." So for you young men and women, I need becoming Christlike to be your foremost pursuit. I need for that to be the most important thing in your life. More important than what degree you're going to graduate with. More important than how your Facebook looks. Just go through the list of the things you and I spend most of our time thinking about. And most of it's not bad stuff. The greatest enemy of the best isn't the bad; it's the good. I need pursuing Christ and becoming Christlike to become your ultimate pursuit, and I need you to step out and asked to be discipled. You might say, "I've asked before." Okay, well keep asking. Are you just going to quit? Keep asking. That's part of the whole process, perseverance, being like a farmer. We need you to do this. We need you to do these things. And after you've spent some time with these older men and women, I need you to take some of these junior high and high school students and disciple them.

This is how it works. This is the only God's kingdom works. This is the way He set it up. And it shouldn't surprise us either. Jesus Himself exemplified this better than anyone. God came down into the flesh, and He took a group of twelve bozos and discipled them. They were strong and hard working guys, but He took a group of guys and walked with them for three years. He just poured into them and poured into them and poured into them, and they never got it. They never got

it until Pentecost. They all ran away from Him. One of them had Him murdered. They never got it, but He kept doing it. He kept pouring into them and pouring into them, because He knew that's the way God was going to build His kingdom. And then when they did get it, the church exploded. And do you want to know what has been one of the most interesting things about looking over 2 Timothy for me this week? Woven throughout the whole passage is the idea of reward. No soldier entangles himself in everyday affairs. Why? So that he can please the one who enlisted him. Reward, pleasing Jesus, having Jesus the God of the universe pleased with you. An athlete, if he disciplines himself and runs in such a way to win the prize is going to win the prize. Reward, the prize, the crown, not a perishable one but an imperishable one, Jesus. And a hard working farmer ought to be the first one to get a share of the crops. Again fruit, Jesus, the personification of fruit. And even Jesus Himself said in the Great Commission, "Go therefore unto all the earth and make disciples. And if you do that, I will be with you always." He's saying that in the context of making disciples. "I will be with you always, even to the end of the age."

So this morning as we come to the Lord's Supper, as we think about these things as a family, as we seek to become men and women, disciples who make disciples who make disciples who make disciples, Jesus is with us. And I know some of you are going, "Oh my God, what do I do?" Go back to the first thing we talked about today. Start by strengthening yourself in the grace of Jesus Christ. Let's look to Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, together this morning and realize that He's here us, that He's already done it. This thing's going to work out. Our role now is to join in the race and follow Him. And as we follow Him, we invite other people along with us and teach them what we're learning from Him. So let's pray together this morning and let's think about Jesus as we end and as we go out as missionaries. "Father, I thank You that Jesus Christ made disciples. I thank You that from the very beginning His call was, 'Come follow Me. Come walk behind Me. Come learn from Me. Come to Me.' So Father, we just come to Jesus at the end today. We talk about these things, we've got vision and mission, we want to turn the corner as a church and grow deep as we grow wide, but we need to see Jesus to do that. So I pray as we break bread and dip it into juice that we might be reminded that Jesus is in our midst this morning and that it doesn't matter we're already doing this or we've never even heard of doing discipleship. We all come to Jesus and say, 'We need You. Teach us, lead us and guide us.' Father, we thank You that You have and that You will. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen."