

Group Notes 15 January 2012
Discipleship 2: Lifestyle

Welcome - Ice Breaker

Is there anyone you tried to copy when you were younger?

Word – Matthew 5:1-12

This is the second in our series on *Discipleship*. Please see Colin's blog for a message about St Matthew's year of discipleship in 2012. This week we are looking at Lifestyle. Discipleship is about copying the lifestyle of your master. In Jesus' day the disciples of great rabbis would follow them everywhere and tried to be with them all the time, not just when they were teaching. They wanted to learn how their rabbi lived, not just what the rabbi had to say. There are even stories of disciples following their rabbi into the toilet and hiding under their bed!

Question 1: Read through the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10). How many of them are about lifestyle? How many of them did Jesus model in His own way of life?

Discipling is a coaching relationship where Jesus is our life coach teaching us how to live. In this coaching process the twelve disciples had a tremendous advantage over us. They could see Jesus, they knew what He looked like, they could hear His tone of voice, they could reach out and touch Him. Yet we also have an advantage over them. In Matthew 28:20 He says, *I am with you always*. By the gift of the Holy Spirit He is present even in our heart – see John 14:15-18. So He can be our coach all the time. God's aim in all this is that we grow to be more like His Son. Our lifestyle needs to be growing in the Jesus characteristics of peace, forgiveness, boldness, love, mercy, trust...

Question 2: If we are all supposed to become more like Jesus, does that mean we lose our individuality? Why does our individuality matter to God?

God's plan for all of us is that we grow to be more like Jesus. Romans 8:29 says God has predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of His Son. Romans 8:28 says a bit about how God does this in our lives: *God works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose*. So God will use all things – all the ups and downs of our daily lives – to bring about this great good for us, that we might grow more like His Son. Our calling is part of this process: when God calls us to do something, it isn't because He can't manage without our help, but because He wants to use that calling to coach us to be more like Jesus.

Question 3: How might the following callings teach us to be more like Jesus?

- marriage?
- singleness?
- parenthood?
- being a son or daughter?
- being in work in a caring profession?
- being in business?
- being in education?
- being unemployed?
- ministry – including whenever we pray for and encourage one another?

Where possible give practical examples from your own experience.

Matthew 5 begins with an interesting dynamic. A crowd comes to see Jesus. Perhaps many in a pre-TV age just wanted to see what the fuss was all about. Jesus doesn't say, "Great! We've got a churchful!" Instead, He goes away. He goes up a mountain. It's as if He is deliberately making it hard for the crowd. But some of the crowd are so keen to be near Him and to learn more that they follow Him up there. These are disciples – the ones who can be bothered to seek Him. So it says, *His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them*. The others who could not be bothered were not there to receive His teaching.

Question 4: Are we too obsessed with numbers? Do we set the bar too low sometimes? Do people need to be challenged to become disciples? Can coaching achieve anything if it is not challenging?

Worship ideas for groups with no musicians.

In question 1 we asked people which of the beatitudes Jesus modelled in His own life. Give people a beatitude each. Ask them to write a one sentence prayer of thanks for what Jesus has modelled with respect to that beatitude. (For example – *Blessed are the peacemakers*: "Thank you Lord that you made peace for us when you laid down your life on the cross.")

When everyone has finished, get them to read them out as an act of praise to the Lord.

Works/witness.

Encourage people to sign up for the Gifts Course – see extract below from the flyer that went out on Sunday:

Dear Church Member

Gifts Course Wednesday 25 January and 1 February 7.30pm in the St Matthew's Centre

I'd like to ask you to consider joining me for our Gifts Course. The course will enable you to explore the gifts God has given you. It will help you develop a sense of the ministry He is calling you to. It will lead to a greater sense of personal affirmation and fulfilment in His service. It will also help you stop doing things that aren't really you and are just wearing you out.

- The course will be particularly helpful to new Christians who are still finding their feet
- It will also be a great resource for longer term Christians who may have got into a bit of a rut!
- Please note you really need to attend both evenings – session 2 depends on having done session 1
- Think what a tremendous blessing it will be for St Matthew's to get everyone using their gifts to bless others and no-one overburdened with tasks they are not really suited for.
- Please bring a pen or pencil and a Bible.
- Please think seriously about coming and let me know urgently on 01922 624012 or ct.gibson@tiscali.co.uk

Colin.