



**FGA MELBOURNE
MEMBERS NOTES**
August 2014

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LIVING FAITH – Members

Session 1: Church is Discipleship

Key passage: "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him." (Matt 4:18-20, ESV)

A. Scripture Reading (Matt 4:18-20)

B. Main point

We are called to be disciples

First and foremost, being a Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus. We are not fans sitting on a seat, nor do we just follow his philosophy or value system. Discipleship is open to everyone who sincerely responds to the call of Jesus. The catch, if you can call it that, is you do not get to write your own job description, Jesus Himself sets the agenda. This is the heart of what Lordship is about. We are his disciples and we follow our Lord (John 14:15).

C. Discussion Questions

1. What do you call the people inside a Church? Take a shot at explaining the real reasons why people come to Church.

2. Many people can attend church, or even be broadly connected to a church without attending. What do you make of the statement: "you can make a church and not have disciples, but you cannot make disciples and not have a Church"?

3. What do you think are the essential elements of discipleship?

4. Are you a disciple that makes disciples? Read Matthew 28:19-20 (The Great Commission)

D. Application

As you go through the next week or so, take a look at your relationships through the eyes of a disciple of Jesus. What ways are you 'discipling' those you come in contact with? How are you drawing them closer to God? What ways are you being disciplined by those around you? Perhaps being disciples and discipling others is not so unattainable after all.

E. Looking Forward

You are not just a disciple, but you are a member of a body. This is not a solo life or individual journey, but you are connected to the body, relationally connected as a son of the house, member of the body. Living out our faith as part of a community. In Session 2 we will be looking at what it is to be members of a body and living in community.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

Discipleship, the topic for this study, is not about being converted and converting others as a goal in itself. It is not about filling our minds with Bible knowledge or Christian doctrines. The core of discipleship is about relationship, one that expresses itself through loving God and loving others. We believe that the most loving thing we can do is to introduce others to the God that completely transformed our lives.

LIVING FAITH – Members

Session 2: Members of a Body

Key passage: *"You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which he has the final say in everything."*

1 Cor 12:12-13 (The Message).

A. Scripture Reading (1 Cor 12:12-31)

B. Main point

Disciples are members of a connected body

Discipleship is done together. The key to good discipleship is having access to the culture that is going to shape you. You are not just a disciple, but you are a member of a body. This is not a solo life or individual journey, but you are connected other parts of the body or relationally connected as a son/daughter of the house. In essence, we live out our faith as part of a community. In the key passage, Paul likens the church to being different organs of a body. Just by comparing to a human body, we know that that each organ is alive, but to remain alive and to function as intended it needs to be connected in the right way to other organs of the body. Some of the organs are the base organs, or not outwardly attractive or noticeable (e.g., the liver or intestine), yet are absolutely essential for the body to function. Furthermore when they become visible it is usually because the body is sick and the person is undergoing an operation. From another perspective, there is no point in having great brain or a beautiful face alone. If it's not connected to the rest of the body, it cannot survive. Being part of a local church means that we belong to the same body and all members have a God-given role and purpose. We must know how to be truly connected on one another and work together and live in harmony for the body to function healthily, grow and reproduce.

C. Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the culture of those who are closest to you? What elements of that culture (just pick one or two) do you see bleeding into your life (both good and bad)?

2. What is it that we can sometimes feel alienated in our discipleship process (or alienated at church)?

3. Who do you do discipleship with? How can you connect and have access to the right culture/influence?

D. Application

When thinking about how you connect and have access to the right culture, what things come to mind that could help you make healthier connections? Is it spending more time with particular people who you know have a stronger relationship with God, joining a fellowship group, or perhaps it is surrendering to God something that you are not sure is right for you.

E. Looking Forward

We did not chose God but he chose us, not because of our works but because of his love (Eph 1:4). Next session we will look at the letter H of the FAITH acronym in the context of what it can mean to be holy and set apart as a church community.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

*Living things grow! In his book *The Lego Principle*, Joey Bonifacio notes how photosynthesis brings energy to plants, similarly communication is the process of exchange that brings people together and creates life in a relationship. When we have good communication with God and with others we find our lives lean in that direction towards the light. Just as a lack of photosynthesis causes plants to die, likewise relationships will also die through lack of communication.*

LIVING FAITH – Members

Session 3: Holy and Set Apart

Key passage: *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* (1 Pet 2:9, ESV)

A. Scripture Reading (Acts 11:19-26)

B. Main point

Disciples are all His, we are set apart

Application Example: Sabbath and Tithe

As Children of God and Disciples of Christ we are to be wholly His. Answering the call to discipleship is a call to die to the ways and life you have known (Matt 16:24-25). And Jesus repeatedly challenged those that wanted to follow Him. In a world where all that we do revolves around self-promotion, social acceptance, outwitting others, one upmanship, excelling in our natural abilities, self-preservation, seeking comfort, experiencing new heights of entertainment and technology, even ones own personal safety... Jesus calls us to die – To give up the old life and embrace a new life. Your life is now sacred.

On a practical level, some of the ways we demonstrate our commitment to God revolves around the things we consider sacred. From a longstanding Church tradition, even for thousands of years before Christ was born, the two indicators of being set apart for God was what people with did their time (Sabbath) and their money/wealth (tithe). It's important to realise these were inaugurated (Gen 2:2-3; Gen 4:3-4; Gen 14:18-20) well before Moses introduced the Law (Ex 20, Lev 19). As we know that these are important to God, the tithe and Sabbath can be used as indicators or templates for demonstrating our commitment to Him. History tells us that if you don't do it when you are young in age or young in the faith, you probably wont do it later on when you have excess money or have more time in life. From young you teach children how to work with time, when is study time, time to get up for school, when its time to brush our teeth, etc. This pays off later on as they see that time is to be spent wisely, such as date night with wives or time set apart for doing things with the children (such as holidays). Similarly we should consider aspects of sacredness early on in our walk with God.

*This session uses the biblical example of the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11, Lk 23:56, Mark 2:27) and the Tithe (Mal 3:10, Lk 6:38) as a template for all of our lives being set apart for God. Please remember that we are not talking about these as legalistic rules (the law kills but the Spirit brings life 2 Cor 3:6), but rather as a Biblical example of us being set apart. The study is not an in depth biblical look at the reason behind the Sabbath and tithing.

C. Discussion Questions

1. What things are sacred and not negotiable in your life?
2. Why is the Sabbath important as a template for us being set apart? What does Sabbath mean to you?
3. Why is the Tithe important as a template for us being set apart?
4. OPTIONAL: What things do people who are set apart keep sacred?

D. Application and Prayer

Break into pairs and discuss with one other person an area of challenge you are facing in life or one you have faced in the recent past. Think about what area may need to surrender or die to so that you can see Christ be fully in control of your personal situation. Pray and encourage one another.

E. Looking Forward

Next session we move to the next letter in the FAITH acronym, the letter T for "Teachable in discipleship". We will discuss what it is like to live in the world when your citizenship is in heaven. How do we discover what God's world is? What is the pattern or way of God's life for us? Israel was called out, the disciples called out, Adam and Eve called out. Each time they were called out they were given instructions. We have to learn what God's world is and what path we should be following.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

Choosing to follow Jesus wholeheartedly is not so much a matter of what we have to let go of, but whom we get to hold on to. Jesus offers far greater pleasure, indescribably more power, and a much higher purpose and meaning to life than the world could ever offer (David Platt, from his book Follow Me).

LIVING FAITH – Members

Session 4: Teachable in Discipleship

Key passage: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." (Psalm 1, ESV)

A. Scripture Reading (2 Tim 3:16)

B. Main point

Disciples know and discover God's world

Application Example: Scripture

There was a pattern to this world before we even arrived in on the scene. Andy Stanley uses an example: Just as when you go to the workplace or school there is a pattern culture already established, there was a pattern in this world before you entered it. We spend our life figuring out what that pattern is: how do we succeed and understand the way things work in order to get ahead? Yet the Bible exhorts us in Roman 12:2, not to don't spend your life working out the pattern of the world. There is a way that God's world works, spend you life trying to figure what that is. That is the essence of being teachable. The primary source of teaching and revelation from God is through His Word. This is how we know Jesus loves us and has come to rescue us (John 3:16).

Greek word for disciple is *mathétés* in the Bible is defined as learner or pupil. Not a learner just to gain knowledge, but to have a lifestyle imparted to them. We need to adopt the posture of being lifelong learners. If we follow someone's teaching closely we become immersed in (living with) and if we undergo an apprenticeship we are required not just to gain knowledge but to act it out. Knowledge, by itself puffs up but with love it builds up (1 Cor 8:1, 1 Cor 12:31). Another key understanding is that no one arrives at being the perfect disciple, but it is a life of discipleship. We know God accepts us because He made the first move. We are sons and daughters of the one house (the church) already. We are permitted, or rather expected to make mistakes along the way. The key thing is not the mistakes we make, but whether get up and try again.

There are so many ways for us to learn about God and His Kingdom! Even creation testifies to its creator (Rom 1:20). However, today we focus on Scripture as a great way of understanding the pattern of the image of Christ.

C. Discussion Questions

1. How do we know God's world or even know about God?
2. What are the barriers we face to being teachable? What are some differences between a disciple who is teachable and one who is not?
3. Name something you have learned this year from Scripture and share it with the group.

D. Application

Pick one way to grow in your understanding of Scripture. Perhaps spend some time talking about the SOAP devotional method.

- Scripture: Write the verse or verses that stuck out to you in your reading. You can show the verses and even have them read to you with the click of a button. Not copying and pasting blocks of text.
- Observation: What did you observe about the passage that struck you. This can be one sentence or a whole paragraph.
- Application: How can you apply the observation so that it affects your life today.
- Prayer: Write out a prayer to God based on what you just learned and ask him to help you apply this truth in your life.

E. Looking Forward

In the next session we will look at the letter I – what it is to be Intimate Relationally, where we will apply the heavenly worldview in a relational context.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

In summary, the goal of teaching and being taught is not just to know more about do's and don'ts, rules and laws, but to grow in relationship with God and with one another. We all need encouragement from others in order to do this well.

LIVING FAITH – Members

Session 5: Intimate Relationally

Key passage: *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."* (Gal 5:6, ESV)

A. Scripture Reading (Gal 5:6)

B. Main point

Discipleship is for relationship

Application Example: Hospitality

The world will know that we are his disciples based on the quality of our relationships, first with Him and then with others. You may have heard people say they love God and love Jesus, but they hate the church. It's a bit like someone saying they want to get to know you well, but they hate your wife. They aren't going to get too close to you. Whether you like it or not, the way we view the church affects our intimacy with God and our ability to grow in discipleship. Think about it a little more, can you really be good friends with God and hate something that he loves. You know Jesus died for the Church, it is his bride to be, his example to the world of his love are his people. The way we view and speak about the church (or even parts of it) undeniably affects our spiritual walk (Heb 10:24, 1 Thes 5:11)

We are made in the image of God. We were created and saved to relate well to God and to those around us. It is the fostering of relationships to that is a crucial element within which all discipleship takes place. Our increasing intimacy in our relational connections can be broken down into the three comments:

1. Intimate relationally with God
2. Love his Church.
3. Love the world.

One example that we will use for showing our faith through love is that of Hospitality. Today's practical example involves us opening up our lives and homes for others in the name of the Lord. This doesn't need to mean going to unsafe extremes, but it does mean moving out of our comfort zone and allowing more than just our friends into our lives. Read Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9, Matthew 25:34-46 and Luke 14:12-14

C. Discussion Questions

1. How can we grow in our intimacy with God? What things do you do to get a close relationship with God (different to just understanding God, which was the focus of the session before)?

2. How can we increase in hospitality? What does Christian hospitality involve?

3. What are some of the rewards for being intimate relationally?

D. Application

Come up with one area that you can stretch in in the area of hospitality. If you don't want to do something yourself, pair up with someone in the home group and organise a hospitality event. Lunch after church with new people is always a good idea and easy to do.

E. Looking Forward

What distinguishes the church from a social club is growing through involvement. Next session we will look at what the church needs to do and how we can work together to discharge these responsibilities.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

"The Bible considers that our relationship is more important than accomplishment. God will get his work done! He does not demand that we accomplish great things; He demands that we strive for excellence in our relationships." Ted Wilhelm Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader*.

The key way to having excellent relationships is to excel in Biblical love (1 Cor 13:8a).

LIVING FAITH – Members

Session 6: Active and Personally Involved

Key passage: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* (Eph 2:8-10, ESV)

A. Scripture Reading (Eph 2:8-10)

B. Main point

Who you are flows into action

Application example: Serve

Through this series we have discovered that the singular calling (or commissioning) of the Church is discipleship. This being so, the end goal of all our activities should draw people to closer to God and to positively influence those around us whether they be in the church, family or strangers. Creating an atmosphere where God's presence impacts us everyday is the challenge. This session, we ask the very practical question how we are actively and personally involved in this process.

Pause and reflect for a moment that although our walk with God is personal, our activity in the church is part of a corporate response to the call to discipleship. The way we walk with God impacts and influences others, for bad or for God. This does not necessarily only include home groups, but also groups of friends and our families and household. Using an analogy of the human body, a person who gets fed without exercise stores and accumulates fat. It is well known that obesity leads to many other health problems; some of which can lead to premature death. Just as our physical muscles are to be put to work to maintain personal health our spiritual muscles need to be exercised to be part of a normal spiritually healthy life.

You can do many things, but not all will lead to fruitfulness. To be fruitful we need to know and accept our purpose. There are activities we can do for the sake of doing something rather than nothing. Alternatively there is a purposeful way to actively live out our faith. Having a greater purpose than serving oneself is, ironically, the only way to experience deep personal satisfaction. Why? Because that is how we were designed to function. Therefore our activities need to have a relational relevance, and be to be connected to the goal of making disciples.

C. Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between a club and a church?

2. Why did we go through three steps before getting to "Active and Personally Involved"? Or, What is the difference between doing things religiously v's out of love?

3. Pick an area that you can serve and share it with the home group. Take particular care to articulate the purpose or the driver behind that choice.

D. Application

Choose one of the action points you mentioned in Question 3 and put it into practice. Just as with any form of exercise initially it may be hard or inconvenient, but you will reap the rewards.

E. Looking Forward

In our last session we will look at what it is to be Faithful to the Mission. We will explore ways we can be part of fulfilling the great commission by bringing good news and good works to the world and making disciples that make disciples.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

God has an assignment for each one of us individually that affects how we relate to one another corporately. This assignment he knows will bring us ultimate personal satisfaction and fulfilment as well as contributing to the part of tapestry that shows his love and goodness to the world. Through experience we come to know that the benefit of the 'good works' applies to the giver as well as the receiver.

LIVING FAITH – Members

Session 7: Faithful to the Mission

Key passage: *"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:16-20, ESV)*

A. Scripture Reading (Matt 28:16-20)

B. Main point

Disciples make disciples

Application example: Evangelism

Jesus could have commanded us to go and build strong marriages, go and feed the poor, go and be successful in whatever we do, or even go and plant churches. Instead his command was to go and make disciples. Not only make disciples, but help others make disciples whoever they are or wherever they may be; to live and reproduce spiritually (1 Cor 12:27). Jesus is certainly not dead, but he is alive and has promised be with us (Matt 28:20) and to give us everything that we need to accomplish the task (John 15:7).

We have different gifts, calling, talents, passions, circumstances, and life experiences. But collectively, out of all the things we can be doing, at the end of the day, our actions must lead to what God has called us to do in making disciples of all nations. Regardless of a person's circumstances, talents or gifts sometimes we should stop and reflect how, or whether, what we do is moving towards this singular aim.

A disciple is not a missionary, but it could be, it is not a pastor, but it could be, it is not someone that serves or poor or is a prayer warrior but it could be. The central idea in making disciples is seeing that people are propelled into their calling with a global and eternal perspective with the full assurance this is what they are called to do: to follow and obey Christ.

C. Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways we can disciple people so that they disciple others in the context of the Great Commission?

2. Who are people we can disciple? And is that a job for us?

3. The practical example for today's final session is based around Evangelism. What can you do to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

D. Application

Before the home group period closes for the summer break, consider hosting an outreach fellowship or do some good works in the community. How can you as a home group work together to honour Jesus' command?

Such an event could be a lead up to the Christmas celebration that we are planning. Closer to the time we will be giving you more information on the Christmas program, which you can invite your friends and family to.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

True followers of Jesus do not need to be convinced, cajoled, persuaded or manipulated into making disciples of all nations. If we truly believe Jesus' words, and know Jesus' worth then we are compelled to be part of this task, not because they have to but because they so want to.
(David Platt)

Like the Israelites in the wilderness when Christians sidestep the call to make disciples they end up going around in circles instead of fulfilling their purpose on earth (Joey Bonifacio).