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WEEK 1

RELATIONAL: “COME, FOLLOW ME”

(MATTHEW 4:19A)

Go deeper: Watch videos online and download the Like Jesus app. LikeJesus.church/live

GETTING STARTED

Three words capture how Jesus made disciples: relational, intentional, and missional. These three words come directly from Matthew 4:19 when, eighteen months into His ministry, Jesus approaches James and John and Simon and Andrew (and later on Matthew) and challenges them to go deeper with Him. Having been with some disciples for a year and a half, Jesus is going to move into a player/coach role with His disciples, and these men are His starting five. His challenge will be: “Follow me [relational], and I will make you [intentional] fishers of men [missional]” (ESV). This week we start looking at Jesus’ relational method for making disciples.

But before we begin, let me introduce you to Vi.

Vi lived in a Midwestern farming community and attended a small rural church of less than 150 people. Vi loved the Lord and sought to live her life for Him. At a weeklong missions conference in her church, the speaker kept talking about “making disciples” from the Great Commission text of Matthew 28. Vi knew this process began with a willingness to share her faith with her farming neighbors who did not know the Lord.

As Vi struggled to figure out how to embrace the Great Commission in her life, she felt like such a failure. “Lord, I want to please You and do what You have commanded,” Vi prayed, “but I’m just not gifted in evangelism.” All week Vi wrestled with what she was

hearing. Finally, at the end of the week she said, "Okay, God, I will try!"

With her farming neighbors on her mind, Vi prayed for the courage to visit them and share the good news with them. Vi stopped at her neighbor's home, and the woman invited her in and offered her a cup of coffee. As the conversation progressed, Vi managed to turn the discussion toward the gospel. During her presentation of the gospel, the man of the home entered the kitchen. The man listened in on the conversation and became increasingly agitated.

Finally he burst out in anger, "We have our own religion and don't need you selling us yours. You can leave now!"

Vi went home feeling that she had failed God miserably. "God, I know that the first step of making disciples is sharing the good news, but I tried and failed," she told the Lord.

Later that day, as providence would have it, the boy from the farm that she was just kicked off of was playing in her yard with her son. She looked at this young boy and prayed, "Lord, I failed at sharing the gospel, but I can pray! And if you will help me, I will pray every day for that boy to find Christ!"

She set her heart to praying. That young boy went to high school, off to college, and then (through a series of miracles) found Christ at college. He began to share his story with others, leading several young men in his fraternity house and several family members to Christ. One time when that young boy was back on the farm, he heard through the grapevine that Vi knew Jesus.

He went over to Vi's home and asked her, "Do you know Jesus the way I do?"

"What do you mean?" Vi asked.

"Well, about two months ago, my roommate shared Christ with me, and I asked Him into my life. My life has been changed. I'm sharing with others. I'm in a Bible study that is teaching me so much, and God is doing some amazing things. Some of my family is also finding Christ's love and forgiveness. Do you know Jesus that way?" he asked.

Vi started crying.

Disciple-making is nothing more than sharing the good news of the gospel and seeking to multiply Christ's character and priorities in others through our web of relationships.

"Did I say something wrong?" the boy asked.

"No," Vi said. "I've been praying for you for over ten years!"

All of a sudden that young boy started crying too.

I know that story well, because I was that young boy! On December 17, 1970, I accepted Christ in a fraternity house after a beer party. And I'm convinced that was because Vi prayed for me for more than ten years. To my knowledge, I was the first in my family to accept Christ.

Now many in our family know Jesus personally. Hundreds, if not thousands, have come to Christ because of Vi's prayers. My family has been forever changed, saying nothing about the multiple future generations that have been altered because of Vi's prayers. Her prayers began the process that led to my becoming a disciple of Christ and then later growing in disciple-making.

Disciple-making is nothing more than sharing the good news of the gospel and seeking to multiply Christ's character and priorities in others through our web of relationships. Vi was crucial in the disciple-making process because she was willing to step out by faith and initiate this process in our family. Her prayers for me through the years served as the platform for my coming to faith and then growing in Him.

All disciple-making is relational and thus it begins with us living out that good news within our relationships. Vi understood that God wanted her to begin within her sphere of relationships. And fortunately for me, she obeyed! My life and eternal destiny has been forever changed. Vi looked at her relational network and, because of her love for God and for people, she began there. And today the fruit of her faithfulness continues around the world.

Who first shared with you the good news of the gospel? What kind of relationship did you have with this person? (Was it a family member, neighbor, or friend?)

How well did you receive them when they shared with you the truth of the gospel?
What were the major reasons that caused you to believe?

It has often been said that all true life-change comes through relationship—a relationship with friends, family members, work associates, or a relationship with God. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

TAKING THE NEXT STEP:

My Personal Story:

I grew up in a very large Midwestern farm family. When I say it was large, I mean *large*. There were sixteen children in our family, and I was number fifteen of sixteen. We were a very religious family. We went to church every Sunday and prayed before meals.

But when I became a teenager, I turned away from my religious upbringing. My faith was superficial and impersonal. God increasingly became an object to fear, not the personal caring Father that I had been told about as a child. At college, I sought once again to know God personally, but with no success. I soon gave up the search and became consumed with success and the party life. I succeeded in joining the most popular fraternity on campus, was elected class president, and began to run for student body president. But every weekend was the same: go to parties and get drunk, only to regret my actions once the weekend was over.

But then something powerful happened. My roommate, who always joined me at drinking parties, stopped wanting to get drunk. He had attended a Christian conference and heard about biblical repentance and inviting Christ into his life. I noticed a powerful change in his words, actions, and priorities.

One night after a keg party, I came back to our fraternity house, only to find him reading his Bible. I was shocked. "What happened to you?" I asked.

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yes."

He then pulled out a gospel tract called the *Four Spiritual Laws* and began to share with me how much God loved me, how I was separated from God because of my sins, and how I needed to repent of my sin and receive Christ into my life. I clearly remember him sharing with me Revelation 3:20: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."

My roommate asked me if I wanted Christ in my life and if I was willing to turn from my sin. That night, December 17, 1970, I invited Christ into my life as Lord and Savior.

My life has never been the same. Soon after I invited Christ into my life, I found out about Vi praying for me for over ten years. I was disciplined by a young man on campus who led my roommate and me into a study of basic Christian truths. Vi also shared with me what she knew of the Lord. We began immediately to share our faith with others. Soon, as others accepted Christ, we realized we needed to help them grow. God quickly gave my life meaning, purpose, and a new sense of direction. I found many new friends who loved the Lord, and we began the exciting journey of being disciples and building other disciples.

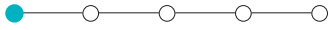
How well can you articulate "your story" of coming to Christ? Write out three or four sentences that answer each of these questions in "your story." Share your story with someone else.

1. What was your life like before you accepted Christ?

2. What led you to understand the gospel? How did you accept Christ? (Share some Scripture verses that helped you understand.)

3. What has changed in your life since you accepted Christ? What difference has it made?

DAY ONE



JOHN 13 AND RELATIONAL LIVING

The focus of this study is how Jesus made disciples. Since all Scripture points to Jesus, in reality we could go anywhere in the Bible and learn from Christ. However, we will focus in this study on the earthly life of Christ (Heb. 5:7) that is primarily recorded in the Gospels. This is the life that we are called to imitate (1 John 2:6).

In John 17, we will use the actual words that Jesus used to describe what He did with His disciples. These are the seven disciplines of a disciple-maker. They are seven "I" statements:

Verse 6 (see also v. 26): "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me"

Verse 8: "I gave them the words you gave me"

Verse 9 (see also v. 20): "I pray for them"

Verse 12: "I protected them"

Verse 18: "I have sent them into the world"

Verse 19: "For them I sanctify myself"

Verse 22: "I have given them the glory that you gave me"

These are seven things Jesus very clearly said He did in terms of making His disciples.

These are seven things Jesus very clearly said He did in terms of making His disciples. We want to study each of these and look at Jesus' life for how we can be more intentional about doing what Jesus did (John 14:12). John 17 will be our launching pad to study how Jesus made disciples.

But in order to appreciate John 17, we must understand the context around John 17.

In John 13, it is just a few hours before Jesus will be betrayed in the garden of Gethsemane. He takes His disciples on Thursday to a prepared upper room where they will celebrate His last Passover with them. He washes His disciples' feet and Judas leaves, setting up the betrayal. In John 14, Jesus gives some further instructions, telling them that He will be leaving them, and that they are to "do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12).

At the end of John 14, Jesus says, “Come now; let us leave” (14:31). Jesus and His disciples left the upper room at this time.

Walking down toward the Water Gate and exiting the city walls, somewhere along the way Jesus stops and gives His teaching on the Vine and the branches (John 15:1–8). These are some of the last words Jesus says to His disciples, as He describes to them what they will face in their life. He continues this teaching into John 16.

Coming near the bottom of the Kidron Valley outside of the city walls, before Jesus crosses the Kidron Valley (see John 18:1–2), He stops and looks toward heaven and prays for His disciples.

I can see Jesus gathering His disciples around Himself, putting His hands upon them, and then passionately praying for them. We will study this prayer much more in the next few weeks.

But before we get to John 17, let’s get to know the context.

Read this chapter below (John 13) and underline all the words that you see that emphasize the relational nature of Jesus’ ministry. In the side bars, write why you consider Jesus’ actions relational.

JOHN 13: JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES’ FEET

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

⁷ Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

⁸ “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

JESUS PREDICTS HIS BETRAYAL

¹⁸ "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned against me.'

¹⁹ "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. ²⁰ Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

²¹ After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."

²² His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.

²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."

²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." ²⁸ But no one at the meal

understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰ As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S DENIAL

³¹ When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

³³ "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

³⁶ Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

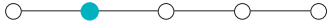
³⁷ Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

³⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

Of all the words you have underlined, identify what you feel are the three key words that show Jesus was engaged in relational disciple-making. Explain why you chose these words.

God became flesh and made His dwelling among us (John 1:14). Jesus chose to impact people by "imparting His life" to them, a method that the apostle Paul spoke about in 1 Thessalonians 2:8. We can never forget that discipling is primarily relational. It is not just a curriculum we study or content that we learn (even though this is an important first step). It is far more, since we primarily learn through watching the lives of people we admire. Disciple-making begins and ends with healthy relationships, as modeled in Jesus' life with His disciples.

DAY TWO



JOHN 14 AND RELATIONAL MINISTRY

Relational disciple-making happens when we use our life to invest in people, helping them to become more like Jesus. We all have a multitude of relationships, but some are more intensive than others.

Read John 14 below and identify the various kinds of relationships Jesus had in this chapter (i.e., the Twelve as a group, Thomas, Philip, His Father, the world, etc.). Be specific. List them below:

JOHN 14: JESUS COMFORTS HIS DISCIPLES

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going."

JESUS THE WAY TO THE FATHER

⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.⁷ If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you

such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

JESUS PROMISES THE HOLY SPIRIT

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

²² Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

²⁸ "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. ³⁰ I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, ³¹ but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

"Come now; let us leave.

Jesus had different kinds of relationships with different people. Those different kinds of relationships Jesus had required different types of responses. Identify how each relationship produced a different response from Jesus.

Person or relationship

Jesus' response

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

DAY THREE



JOHN 15 AND RELATIONAL FRUITFULNESS

Relationships are often messy. When we become relationally engaged with people, we begin to see all their weaknesses as well as their strengths. Relationships can become demanding. They require time and energy.

Some people just seem to have an easier time with relationships than others. Some relationships just seem so sweet and natural—and at times, some relationships are just the opposite. Have you ever found yourself thinking, “Lord, I love You, but I just can’t stand people”? If we ever start thinking like this, what does 1 John 4:19–21 remind us about?

John 15 uses many words to describe the type of relationship the Lord wants with and from us. Read John 15:1–17 below. Identify some of the words Jesus uses to define that type of relationship.

Clarify what you feel is the single most critical lesson to learn about our relationship with God. (See especially verses 1–17.)

John 15:18–27 clarifies our relationship with the world. Again, many relational words are used to describe that relationship with the world. Read verses 18–27 and write out those words that define that relationship.

What would you identify as the single most critical lesson to learn about our relationship with the world? (See especially verses 18–27.)

JOHN 15: THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for

one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

THE WORLD HATES THE DISCIPLES

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

²⁶ "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

Relationships were not a strategy for Jesus. They were a way of life. Therefore we must remember that any disciple-making that is void of an ongoing relational emphasis lacks the impact of Jesus' method. To Jesus, relational disciple-making was a nonnegotiable.