

Homegroup Notes for Week Beginning 1/6/2025.

Introduction:

This term, the notes follow aspects of the Disciple series that we are following on Sunday evenings. They are seeking to encourage you to consider ways in which your group can become a place of discipleship, encouraging each other in the way of Christ through a number of discipleship practices.

Jesus' simplest command was two words, 'Follow me'.

Leave what you have been doing and re-learn a new way of life as my disciple.

The Message translation of Matthew 11.28-30 expresses this particularly clearly,

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

To live this life we need to begin with a response to the love of God in Christ that is expressed through the cross and the resurrection, and we need to practise the presence of God through the Holy Spirit, shaping our words, our thoughts and our deeds.

John Mark Comer suggests that this does not happen without thought and discipline. Not to practise this is to find ourselves following someone or something other than Christ.

"For those of us who desire to follow Jesus, here is the reality we must turn and face: If we're not being intentionally formed by Jesus himself, then it's highly likely we are being unintentionally formed by someone or something else."

He suggests that the way to be formed in this life involves:

- Being with Christ
- Becoming like Christ
- Doing as Christ would do.

Additional Resources:

John Mark Comer, 'Practicing the Way'

Numerous resources can be found here, practicingtheway.org

Podcasts are available also here,

<https://open.spotify.com/show/08pHYEWdAJgGjpWTcVK9e3?si=085378f07e9548ce>

Disciple 5: Solitude



Read Psalm 40.6-8.

The writer addresses God saying *'Here I am, I have come...I desire to do your will, my God'*

Begin your meeting by a time of focused attention on the presence of God.

You may like to share some verses about God being with us (**Joshua 1.9, Matthew 18.20, Matthew 28.20, John 14.16-18**)

Leave some silence

Perhaps each person in the group might repeat, *'Here I am, I have come...I desire to do your will, my God'*



The practice of solitude calls us to spend time alone with God- it is not the same as 'me time' or loneliness.

It is the call to be with God for God and it requires us removing distraction.

- John Mark Comer says, *'The problem is many of us in the digital age never really go all the way into solitude or community.'*
- What do you think of that? What prevents us from being fully present to God?

Henri Nouwen says, *"Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life...We do not take the spiritual life seriously if we do not set aside time to be with God and listen to God."*

- What two reasons does Nouwen give for needing time alone with God?

John Mark Comer says that solitude is a place of encounter: encounter with our self; encounter with our enemy; encounter with our God...

- In what ways does solitude bring us into encounter with each of these?



Read Matthew 4.1-11 and Matthew 26.36-45

Here are two times of solitude and encounter for Jesus.

- In each case what was Jesus led to confront?
- In each case what was the result? What did Jesus discover?

Read Mark 1.35-37

- Use your imagination- What do you think Jesus prayed when he went to 'solitary places'?
- John Mark Comer, who remember encourages disciples to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus and to do as Jesus would do, writes of solitude, *'It's so important that we follow this pattern, because when we don't come away, we lose our centre, and our spiritual equilibrium...But when we encounter God in solitude, like Jesus, we emerge with a clearer sense of our identity and calling.'*
- What do you make of that statement? How important is it for us to come to God in Christ in solitude if we are to go with God in Christ into the world?



Read Psalm 121, especially verse 8.

Let these words lead you into prayer