

## Discipleship Revisted (Part 3)

Written by Richard Boureston

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*[ We are finally getting to the part that I wanted to write all along. ☐ It is amazing how greatly I underestimated the foundation I needed to lay before I could logically and Biblically get to this point and I didn't even scratch the surface of what I did talk about! ☐ And the truth is: What I'm going to talk about right now is a fraction of what needs to be said on the topic. ☐ Please consider this a 30,000 foot fly-over of the topic. ☐ If you haven't read the first two parts of this series then I beg that you do. Given how we have been raised in the church, it is very hard to get from there to here without taking some intermediate steps. ]*

In [Part 2](#) of this series I gave a definition of what discipleship is and what is its most important attribute. So let's pull those two things forward into this conversation so we can set our foundation and build upon it.

My definition of discipleship: *Discipleship is choosing to walk your faith in front of others as an example, a willingness to pour your Spirit filled life into theirs as you teach them Biblical Truths.*

What I consider to be the most important attribute of successful discipleship: *Context.*

If early Christians spent every day with each other for a period of time ( [Acts 2:42-47](#) ), Jesus spent day and night with His disciples for three years, and Paul spent lengthy periods of time discipling a group of people before he moved on, how close can we get to these models?

I am going to try to convince you that we can get VERY close. How close? Almost exactly. For many of us, there is a group of people that we already spend day and night with and we do it for many years: our family. This gives us an opportunity to almost perfectly duplicate what Paul and Jesus and the early Christians did. We have an amazing opportunity as fathers and mothers to direct the conversation and activities of our house toward building Godly and righteous children. Parents can choose to talk about God and biblical ideas, pose moral questions, and they can also do activities which promote righteous living. It doesn't have to be complicated.

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My family gathers every night after dinner and sings worship songs, reads the bible, works on memorizing a passage of Scripture, and prays. It takes as long as we want it to, but can be as short as 10 minutes if we desire. This simple act of obedience to what God calls us to do as parents has caused a spiritual explosion in our family. My marriage has grown exponentially, my relationship with my children has grown exponentially, my relationship with God is through the roof, and my family is not the only one this has happened to. In fact, it happens every time we obey God and imitate the examples we have before us in the Bible. Examples like Jesus, examples like John the Baptist, examples like Paul, examples like the early Church all call for us to imitate the same pattern: gathering together to listen to God speak to us through Scripture, sing songs, pray, and write it on our hearts.

And they did it together, in the life that they lived. They didn't sit around and talk about what they should do but never do anything. John was out baptizing and preaching, Paul too endured horrible things for the benefit of the church, Jesus continuously taught and led by example day in and day out. In other words they put their words to actions in front their disciples. In other *of her* words, their teachings were always in context with their disciple's lives. These acts bring glory to God and cause us to be lights into this world.

For most of us, our families are our context. They are how we spend our lives and I want to persuade you that learning in context will blow the doors off of learning out of context. What is learning out of context? Learning out of context is most small groups, is Sunday school, and unfortunately is church in most churches. Do you live with everyone who is the same age as you, the same sex, and the same exact interests? Probably not. Those types of settings are artificial. They are contrived. We don't live with these types people and seeing them occasionally doesn't give us or them the opportunity to be continuous examples of a Godly life. Yes, we can talk about what we do or would do or did and we might be able to briefly be an example for them in this artificial setting. But anyone can act any way they want for 2 hours.

On the other hand, you can't hide unrighteousness from your family. If you have an issue with anger, everyone in your family will know it, but those outside may never know. Does this mean that small groups can't be helpful and effective? Yes they can, but they will never match what a family can do together. If we accept that the ideal model is to spend day and night with each other reading Scripture, talking about God, singing songs, praying, and living out our faith in front of each other, the family is unmatched.

When you gather with your family everyday and read the same passage and sing the same songs and listen to each other pray, in effect you are synchronizing your hearts with each other

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and God. You are all hearing the same words God is speaking and hearing the same ways that the Spirit of God is moving in each person's heart, causing them to pray. The result is that you become united with each other under God.

There is an accountability that naturally comes along with family discipleship and worship as you each hear from God and then see each other's lives being lived. Everyone sees how everyone else is applying what they are hearing and they can easily hold each other accountable.

And yet, there are so few Christian families that take the time to truly disciple their children.

Despite what the bible says about training and building up the faith of our children (Deut. 6, Psalm 78, Eph 6:4) there is a great dearth of family discipleship. **If the early church gathered every day and concentrated on the apostle's teachings, ate together, shared everything they had with each other, sang songs together, and generally encouraged each other to righteousness, and if we as church leaders frequently cite Acts 2:42 as the basis for gathering as small groups, then let our first and most important small group be our family.**

Let us gather with our children every day and show them that God is the center of our families, that our families will not function daily without gathering together and talking and listening to God by praying and reading His Word, that [the Bread of Life is just as critical](#) as the bread we put on our tables.

What about the parents? How do they get "fed"? Well there is more than one relationship that you have. You also have a relationship with your spouse and you have an individual relationship with your God. You need to pursue those relationships just as strongly as you should pursue God as a family. In my life, I spend time with my wife before bed talking about God, praying, and reading His Word. As the shepherd of my church, I am naturally daily in God's Word and praying as I prepare for Sunday's talk and the general service.

The Church has done a great job at encouraging people to individually seek God, but it frequently stops short of the other ways that we are [connected to God](#) .

When we gather with our family, with our spouse, and privately with our God, we are fed daily.

At Walk of Faith church, and what most churches did before Sunday School took over, we take those connections to God and celebrate them all. We gather the families together on Sunday

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and have an expanded version of what they are doing every day with their families, spouses, and children in their homes. So everyone brings something to the table on Sunday because everyone has been feeding each other through the week. While we don't have the ability to gather at the temple every day we can and do gather with those who we live with.

But what if we didn't stop there? Since we know that other families at our church are getting together daily to disciple each other, why not invite them for dinner so we can all be in our houses in the true context of our lives with other believers gathering before God to talk and listen to Him? Now that's what I am talking about.

What do we do about people who don't have a family? I have two suggestions:

Ask a family to adopt you. Ask if you can gather with them as many times a week as it makes sense for both of you. This way you can have a Godly family modeled for you so when you get married and have children, you will know what it means to be a Godly husband or wife and a Godly parent. You will have seen Christ exemplified in the lives of people as they lived their lives in front of you in the context of how your life will be when you have children. It will be like you are behind the wheel of a master bike rider who is showing you everything he knows (see [part 2](#) of this series if you have no idea what I am talking about).

My second suggestion, which ideally is combined with my first, is to gather with the people you do live with and if you don't live with other people then gather with your friends each day. The point is to be connected, through the Holy Spirit, with God's children, however that form may look but in the closest context to how you live your life as possible. Not with a randomly generated group of people or a group based on some demographic like age, sex or marital status, but with the people that are part of your daily life and get together with them every day. This is what it means to make disciples of God: choosing to walk your faith in front of others as an example, a willingness to pour your Spirit filled life into theirs as you teach them Biblical Truth.

I hope you have become convinced of this Biblical Truth.