



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Invite Only – Path to Discipleship

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August 13, 2017

Main Idea – As the body of Christ, we understand that God’s plan for leadership is through discipleship.

The Church’s greatest asset is people.

- **Mark 8: 34 - 36** outlines the four steps to discipleship. **“And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.”**

Four Steps to Discipleship –

Desire

- Discipleship begins with a genuine desire to follow Christ.
- Jesus used this phrase multiple time in scripture: “whoever has an ear to hear, let him hear.” This directly implies some do not have the desire to hear. Hearing is more than listening. Hearing involves understanding what, why and how.
- Desire leads to denial: the willingness to put others first.
- Great leaders are not found, they are developed. It was once said, “The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.” (*H. Firestone*)

Denial

- The key to denial is found in Mark 8:34, “...Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself...” and 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”
- Denial is putting others first: serving the needs of others before our own needs.
- The love of God compels us to serve others.
- Denial is admitting that we do not have everything figured out
- God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called. As seen in James 4:6, “...Wherefore he said, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” We should embrace our lack and trust God fully.

Death

- We should recognize that we are in the boat with Christ. In Luke 14: 26-27 Jesus said, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”*
- Taking up your cross is personal. Each of us has a mission and purpose. But, we must be willing to surrender what we have to God. The life we think we could have is dead. We should only want what He can give and do through us.
- Death is not the greatest loss. What matters is what dies inside us as we live. In Matthew 8, Jesus said, *“For whosoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”*

Elevation

- Elevation is an invitation to do more, to be better.
- God sees our mess but recognizes our potential. In Romans 8:35, we read, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...”*
- Discipleship is accepting an unending invitation based on God’s love to do better.
- In the process of discipleship, we must understand that there will be discomfort. But, there is also grace and protection.
- Our response to God’s perpetual and unending invitation should be: God, I hear and accept your perpetual and unending invitation to come and follow you.

Reflective Questions for Invite Only, A Path to Discipleship

- 1. Jesus’ words about discipleship are quite strong and very direct. Knowing you are called to be a disciple, what are the steps you will take to develop in each of these key areas: desire, denial, death and elevation?**
- 2. Getting yourself out of the way: laying everything down to the plan and purpose of God is not easy. What steps are you taking to answer Jesus’ call to “Come, follow Me”?**
- 3. Dying to self means loving God more than anything else. Death to self is personal and important for elevation. What in your life must die as God prepares you for elevation?**