

Why Are We Here? To Disciple One Another

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

August 2, 2026

Test: Acts 2:42-47

Purpose: To teach the congregation the second purpose of the church – discipleship. We are to intentionally become involved in helping each other grow in our faith. We grow through learning. Learning occurs in an environment of trust, with a skilled teacher, with a good lesson. This discipleship may be in Sunday school or small groups. Failure to do that will result in stunted growth.

Joe's wife bought a new line of expensive cosmetics that guaranteed she would look years younger. After a lengthy period of time sitting before the mirror applying the "miracle" products, she asked her husband, "Darling, honestly, what age would you say I am?"



Looking over her carefully, he replied, "Judging from your skin, twenty; your hair, eighteen; and your figure, twenty-five."

"Oh, thank you for those flattering words! she replied.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Joe interrupted. "I haven't added them up yet."¹



Over the past few weeks, we have begun to explore the question, “**Why are we here?**” The first purpose we found from our passage was evangelism. We all recognize that the life blood of the church is in evangelism. We need to be presenting the gospel to our neighbors, friends, and family. The world we live in today is so filled with distractions – television, music, recreation, shopping, and dining, that we hardly have time to consider the eternal consequences of our life.

I am more convinced now than ever before the need for intentional personal evangelism. I need to be willing to confront people about their eternal destiny and put my words into actions. I need to spend time in praying for the lost in our community. I need to look people in the eye and challenge them to commit their life to the Savior. There are only two destinations for every person, heaven or hell. Those that are not saved, I want to add to my prayer list and pray for their salvation every week. Those that are saved, I want to encourage to become more committed than before.



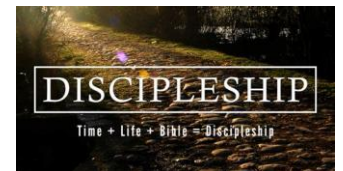
John 3:16 is still true. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”* The key word there is BELIEVE. The denomination doesn’t save you, Christ does. Confirmation or Baptism doesn’t save you – Belief in Christ does. Believing that He is the Son of God - Believing that He died

for your sins, that He rose again on the third day, that He ascended into heaven and is coming back again to judge the living and the dead. I believe once a person makes a commitment to Christ, they should follow that decision with baptism. Baptism is an outward demonstration of an inward commitment to Christ. How you can claim to be a Christian and not declare it through this simple act of obedience is beyond my understanding.

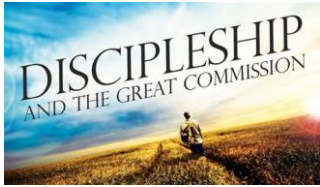
Once you committed your life to Christ, what are you supposed to do? Just sit in a pew all your life? Come on Sunday at 10:30 and that is it? NO! If you really meant what you said about your trusting Jesus with your life then you will want to know more about Him. This is where discipleship comes in.

What exactly is discipleship?

Discipleship is the process of leading someone through the teachings of Jesus, helping them to apply them to their life, and encouraging them during this process. It takes time, a commitment of your life to the importance of studying the Bible. It is not something that you acquire and then never go back to. Discipleship is a lifelong pursuit. We cannot do it alone. Those that have been walking with the Lord for years, studying His Word, are to be the ones that disciple others.



We may ask ourselves, “**Why are we to disciple one another?**”



We find our answer straight from the words of Jesus. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave us some last-minute instructions. He said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:18-20)

I. Christ instructs us to Disciple others.

The first point I want us to understand this morning is that Jesus instructs us to disciple others. The orders that Jesus gave to the disciples were explicit.



They were to Go – Seek – and Make disciples. We are to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We are to TEACH them all that Jesus has commanded.

Salvation is the first step on the road of faith. Baptism is a demonstration of that first step. Becoming a disciple is the second step on the path towards spiritual maturity. Then as mature believers, we are to disciple others. It is true that you are saved from your sins when you accept Christ. But our life in Christ involves more than that.



Once a person has decided to follow Christ, you need to grow. You need to set aside time for an intentional

systematic study of God’s word. Once we grasp God’s word, then we, as mature Christians, should encourage new believers to come and participate in some intentional instructional program.

Over the years we as Baptist’s have had many programs to educate and disciple believers of all ages.

Sunbeams – for younger children

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,
To shine for Him each day;
In every way try to please Him,
At home, at school, at play.



A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
Jesus wants me for a sunbeam;
A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
I’ll be a sunbeam for Him.

Royal Ambassadors – a boy’s discipleship class



As a Royal Ambassador I will do my best:
to become a well-informed, responsible follower of Christ;
to have a Christ-like concern for all people;
to learn how to carry the message of Christ around the world;
to work with others in sharing Christ; and
to keep myself clean and healthy in mind and body.

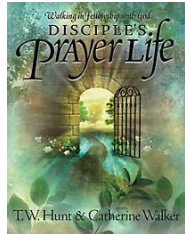
Girls in Action – a girl's discipleship class

GA Pledge:

As a GA, I will do my best to live a mission's lifestyle that honors God by learning about missions, praying for missions, giving to missions, doing missions, and participating in the work of the church.

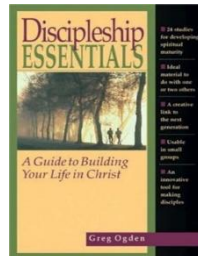


Masterlife – a six-month adult discipleship program – divided into four units.



Disciples Prayer Life – is a workbook driven class focused on prayer. Several members of Spilman went through this course a few years ago.

Discipleship Essentials – 24-week program which works best in a small group setting to equip new and older members in the essential elements in the Christian faith



Some newer churches today have adopted a format of small group ministries. This is where people meet in the homes of church members for fellowship and discipleship. This program of small groups has been so successful for our day and time that many churches have dropped Sunday night services in favor of this small group ministry. Some churches have even dropped Sunday school in favor of the small group format. Meeting together regularly establishes relationships, support, and nurture for all the members. It

has been shown that if a group will meet regularly for three years, they will stay together for 30 years.

Almost all the larger mega churches today have built their programs around small group ministry. If you were a member of a church with 6000 members, the only way that you could be effectively ministered to and administered is through group dynamics and lay pastoral support.

But for almost 200 years the most effective method of discipleship has been through Sunday school. There was a time, before child labor laws, when many children had to work to support their families. Many of these children worked six days a week and did not have any primary or secondary education. The only time they could get any Biblical instruction was on Sunday. That is what gave birth to the Sunday school movement. B. W. Spilman was instrumental in introducing this discipleship program to churches specifically in North Carolina and America in general.



II. We are drawing strength through Discipleship

A second point I want to make this morning concerning discipleship is that we increase our strength, both personally and as a church when we are involved in discipleship and Sunday school.



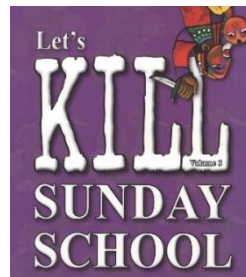
I have heard it said many times, as the Sunday school goes, so goes the church. If the Sunday school is successful, then the church will thrive. If Sunday school is weak and poorly attended, then the church will eventually follow that same pattern. Can I repeat that once again – except this time more emphatically? As Sunday school goes, so goes the church. Unless the members of this church begin to make the teaching ministry of the church important, then this church will fade away.

Our church was built on the love of Sunday School. We need to rekindle our interest in the Sunday school program of our church. For our church to accomplish its intended purpose, we need to make Sunday school a priority once again.

I came across this list that I want to share with you.

Fourteen ways to kill a Sunday school²

1. Attend only when convenient
2. When you do attend, arrive late.
3. Grumble about attending.
4. Criticize the officers and teachers in front of your family and friends.
5. Refuse to accept any responsibility in the Sunday school. If you ever do accept any, do it grudgingly and neglect it often.
6. Never study your lesson.
7. Always show your lack of interest in the lesson.
8. Appear relieved when the class is over. Act as if you have wasted your time.
9. Refuse to welcome visitors; make them feel that you belong and they don't.



10. Criticize every new idea that is suggested.
11. Dominate discussions; always insist that your opinion is right.
12. Regard the teachers of your children as busybodies.
13. Show your distrust or disapproval of teachers when they call in your home.
14. Never sacrifice for the Sunday school; leave that for somebody else.

I have given you this list as an eye opener. The truth often hurts, but it is necessary if change is ever to occur.

Success apathy. Just because you have had success in the past, it doesn't guarantee success in the future. Simple complacency...we take our eye off the ball.
- Jim Thomas www.fmconsulting.net

Many churches today are at a cross roads with Sunday school. I believe it has been this way for many years. In many churches there is a general lack of interest in attending. There is apathy in learning and being disciplined in God's word. There is a general feeling among many members that church attendance once or twice a month is enough religion for anybody.

I am here to tell you, that is not the way it was with me. I attended Sunday school every Sunday for many years. When we went on vacation, we found a church where we were at and I went. I brought home proof that I was there so I could get my perfect attendance pin. I tried to look for my pins recently, but was unable to find them. If my memory serves me correctly, I had 4 years' worth of perfect attendance pins. When we moved to Trinity Baptist in Raleigh when I was ten years old, they did not give out pins for perfect attendance. Even though I didn't get a pin, I was still there every Sunday.



Those years of attending Sunday school made a difference in my life. It gave me a hope and a security that I could have never found apart from the church. It taught me God's word. It gave me what I needed to face the trials I encountered in college, and later marriage, and in building a Christian home.

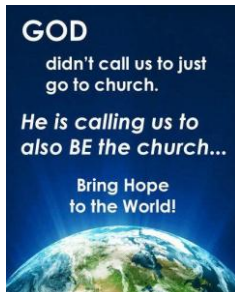
ANYTHING WORTH
DYING FOR... IS
CERTAINLY WORTH
LIVING FOR.

JOSEPH HELLER
PICTUREQUOTES.COM

Coming together to study God's word is vital to our spiritual health. Our own faith health depends upon it. As we live, we realize that our faith story is worth sharing. I have come to realize if our faith is worth dying for, it surely is a faith worth living for. We must be willing to share and teach others about it.

III. Others are depending upon us for Discipleship

The last point I want to make this morning concerning discipleship is that there are many other people around us that are depending upon you and me. They need us to share our faith journey with them in order to encourage them on theirs. If we do not help others along the path in their faith journey, then they will be stunted in their growth, they will not be able to sustain hope when the storms of life come against them.



There are people in our community that are struggling with the reality of life and death. Maybe you are struggling with many questions yourself. When you understand life through the eyes of Jesus, then you can have a peace and

assurance that no one can understand. If you cannot turn to the creator of the universe, the Savior of our soul, then there is no other place to turn. Why do people turn their backs on God? He is the sole sustainer of life. Yes, death does come. Yes, sorrow does come. Yes, sickness does come. We all are prone to these life issues. But we need to realize that we need to know God and know Him more fully!

When we disciple others, we help them grow their roots deep in the soil. The world is depending upon you and me to do our part in teaching them about Christ.



Today can be a day of dedication to Christ.
Today can be a day of rededication of your life to Christ.
Today can be a day of recommitment to do what God has called you to do.

Brian Wren³ wrote a song about new beginnings.

This is a day of new beginnings,
Time to remember and move on,
Time to believe what love is bringing,
Laying to rest the pain that's gone.

For by the life and death of Jesus,
God's mighty Spirit, now as then,
Can make for us a world of difference,
As faith and hope are born again.

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
Step from the past and leave behind
Our disappointment, guilt, and grieving,
Seeking new paths, and sure to find.

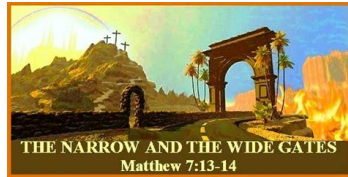
Christ is alive, and goes before us
To show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new Beginnings;
Our God is making all things new.

In faith we'll gather 'round the table,
To taste and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
Our God is making all things new.

I have come to realize that life is a journey. We are all on a path towards eternity. Christ has instructed us to TEACH others. We need Jesus' instructions to successfully navigate life's journey. Many around us are on a path of destruction and do not know it.

Not all roads are heading the same place. Many say, "We are all on the same road." Well, I disagree.

Jesus said, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* (Matthew 7:13-14)



Let us be found faithfully on the narrow road.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Mikey's Funnies, A Make Up Funny, June 30, 2026

² A Treasury of Bible Illustrations, # 188 Fourteen ways to kill a Sunday School, page 69.

³ The 1991 Baptist Hymnal #370, "This is a Day of New Beginnings"