

Teach Christ

'Following Jesus' series – Colossians 3:16 – Isaac Hydoski – Nov. 9, 2010

Main Idea: Part of our call to make disciples of Jesus Christ is to take in the Word of Christ abundantly, so we can be teaching the Word of Christ wisely.

I had helpful conversation with Chris Cates this weekend, and he brought a clarifying thought that I believe is very important for us to keep in mind as we pursue the work of disciple-making. He said:

*“It may serve everyone to see the big picture of this series and ask; why do we make disciples? Sure it is our call, but where does our heart fit into that? Does it begin with a growing heart for others or a growing heart for God? The answer is God, **because if we truly know God we want Him to be made known to others.** In all cases, knowing precedes doing, and the doing of disciple-making simply stems from a true intimate knowledge of God. Thus, in all our pursuits to follow Gods call we must primarily, continuously, and consistently be seeking to know God more intimately. Intimately knowing and worshiping God should precede and shape all of our callings in life; disciple-making being one such calling. **So, we proactively seek both: to know God intimately, and to love Him deeply while we are seeking to make disciples of others.** We can’t pursue discipleship at the neglect of personally and intimately knowing Christ ourselves because Christ is all we have to give.”*

I believe Chris hit the nail on the head here; a proper focus on discipleship will first embrace that we are followers of Christ and we’re to know, love, trust, and obey Christ. All our work of making disciples should flow from the reality that we are disciples. Let’s pray together for this.

We’ve reached the fifth message in our series on Christian discipleship, and to recap we’ve learned:

A disciple of Jesus Christ is a committed and devoted follower of Jesus Christ who embraces His mission.

We’ve then turned to look more exactly at *how* we are to make disciples of others:

- We are to *share Christ*
- We are to *show Christ*

And tonight we’ll be looking at another critical element of disciple-making that each of us is called to embrace as followers of Christ:

- We are to *teach Christ*

Teach Christ: Manuscript

This area of disciple-making is critical because of the need around us. If we agree that believers and unbelievers' greatest need is to know Jesus Christ personally; to comprehend His saving work on their behalf, and to experience in deeper ways the amazing and glorious reality of being in unending relationship with the risen Jesus, then shouldn't we carry the responsibility to help others know Christ and to meet this great need?

Our discipleship of others must be focused on the goal of helping others know, love, trust, obey, and exalt Jesus Christ. We do this by how we know Christ, follow Christ, share Christ, and show Christ in our character and by how we teach others about Christ.

Read Colossians 3. This letter to the church in Colossae provides some of the clearest statements on the nature and work of Christ we have in Scripture. Christ's deity, authority, and the implications of His atoning work for us are clearly laid out in this short letter. If you want to know and treasure Jesus more, study this letter!

From Colossians 1:28-29 we have a succinct description and goal for Paul's gospel ministry that is very relevant for us today:

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works in me."

Paul desires to preach Christ, and to teach and admonish others to follow Christ, with the goal of seeing all those he preaches to grow into maturity in Christ. This is the nature and goal of disciple-making; proclaiming Christ, and teaching Christ so people are mature in Christ. Paul's goal and methodology should be ours as fellow disciple makers. These verses in Colossians 1 serve as a parallel of our text in Colossians 3 and express precisely the same burden and purpose.

Colossians 3:16-17

"[16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

The point of our text today is to take in the Word of Christ abundantly so we can be teaching the Word of Christ wisely.

Disciple making happens as we teach the Word of Christ. To teach Christ we must know Christ, and to know Christ we must take in the Word about Christ. It is my hope that you will be convinced from the word of God of our call to be teachers of one another.

Teach Christ: Manuscript

I pray that each of you would recognize a key way that we make disciples and encourage growth in disciples is to be faithfully teaching each other the Word of Christ. And I want to demonstrate how entirely uncomplicated this is for us to do!

Let's start off with two simple points that will help remove some of the anxiety, and confusion that may arise when you hear me exhort you to become teachers of Christ with one another.

- Take in the Word of Christ abundantly
- Teach and admonish one another wisely *through* the Word of Christ

1. Take in the Word of Christ abundantly

As we dive into this verse it's important to bring some clarity about what Paul means by 'the word of Christ'.

The phrase *word of Christ* is a literal translation; the word that is of Christ. This clues us in; this phrase isn't limited only to the words that Jesus physically spoke in the four gospels. Nor would we be as precise as we should be if we simply said the *word of Christ* is a euphemism for all of the Scriptures, Paul may have easily enough used the more commonly used phrase *word of God*. So what is Paul getting at in using *word of Christ*? It's an intentional move on his part that communicates to us clearly the priority for our teaching in making disciples: we should be teaching the *word that is about Christ, and that proclaims Christ*.

This means we proclaim Christ from the Scriptures! We should speak the word in such a way that signals to those we teach that the Word of God is what points us to Jesus, shows us Jesus, and proclaims Jesus and His saving work! It's God's Word, and His intention in His word is to reveal Himself to us so that we can know Him, worship Him, obey Him and proclaim Him through Jesus Christ.

So yes, the *word of Christ* is Jesus' words in the gospels and it's the entire Bible. Both have the same origins and help us to know and be reconciled to God through the person of Christ because it's the word that comes from Christ!

We see a clear example of this thought in Luke 24 as Jesus interacts with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus has just risen from the dead and he finds these two men discouraged over the events surrounding His death and bewildered over the news of His resurrection. Jesus responds to them, saying:

"O foolish ones, and slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Teach Christ: Manuscript

Jesus is plainly revealing that the OT Scriptures are *about* Him, from Genesis to Malachi. Simply put friends, the Scriptures proclaim Christ to us. Your Bible is the message of Christ, about Christ, and this is precisely what we must be letting dwell in our hearts abundantly so that we can help others toward maturity in Christ. What I'm describing to you is called biblical theology. Unlike systematic theology the focus of biblical theology is on the overarching message of Scripture, which many summarize as the message of redemption through Jesus Christ.

The imperative from verse 16 shows us that we're to endeavor the word of Christ or the word that proclaims Christ and have it dwell in us, "*let* the word that proclaims Christ dwell in you richly." This verse is a parallel to verse 15 in the Christ-centeredness and action we are to take, "let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts." And this action is informed by the statements of fact in Col. 3:1, "*if then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above where Christ is.*" Because we've been raised with Christ in His powerful resurrection our lives are new and our hearts alive to God. With Christ actively dwelling in us through the Spirit we are to allow His peace to rule in our hearts and His word to dwell in us richly. This is where we'll experience the amazing benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection and His word will dwell in us in rich ways -if we let it. And that '*let*' denotes activity on our parts.

Allow Christ's word to soak into your heart and dwell in you bringing; life where there is hardness and cynicism, joy where there is despair and depression, strength where there is weakness, love where there is bitterness and anger, and enduring faith where there is unbelief and hopelessness. I've noticed when there's cynicism towards a certain person there's a subtle distrust that leads to a deadening affection for them and a tendency to critique. God's Word in Ephesians 4:1, 32 broke apart the hard ground of my heart in several places, and it brought renewed love, affection, and gratefulness.

Bringing the word of Christ into your hearts daily, consistently, and carefully will bring these affects of God's presence in His Word to you. Store up the word of Christ in your heart and not on your shelf! The word of Christ will satisfy you unlike anything else; it will sanctify you in powerful ways, guard you from temptation and it will empower you to make disciples of others. For this Word to dwell in you richly treasure it, and store it up in you like the treasure it really is. Make the word of Christ your great treasure and Christ will become your most intimate friend.

Paul's use of the word "dwell" should trigger in us some imagery of the home. We are to allow or make room for Christ's word inside of us.

Imagine that you're planning for a guest coming to your home. You make room for him at your dinner table, you make room for him to hang out in your living room, you make room for him to sleep, and you make provision for him to

Teach Christ: Manuscript

experience life with you. What happens as you do this? You're the one blessed by the effort in making room for this guest! It turns out you're the beneficiary not the other way around, because this guest turns out to be a billionaire and begins to share in the abundance of his riches since you've allowed him to make his home with you. If you allow the word that proclaims Christ to make its permanent home in you, you will benefit from the glorious riches of this word, and your life will never be the same.

It's impossible to come to know Christ and abundantly take in the word of Christ without being transformed by Jesus Christ. So I want to advocate to you today a key way you grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ and as a disciple maker is to be carefully, and consistently taking in the word of Christ:

- Listen to sermons carefully, take notes, and engage your mind.
- Read the Bible diligently. Don't be focused on what you don't understand or haven't read yet, but be focused on what God is showing you and riches will come to you in what He's brought to your understanding.
- Think about the word; engage it with your mind as an expression of loving God with your mind.
- Sing the word. The richness of theology and Christ-saturated songs we have on Sunday, in our iPods, and our cars every day will teach you about Christ. (I learned about justification from the song 'Justified' that we use to sing on Sundays.)

Let the word of Christ remain in you, and make its home in your heart. Don't be an 'in one ear and out the other' kind of listener. If you allow the word of Christ - the word that proclaims Christ- to make its permanent home in you you will experience the riches of His word as His disciple by growing in maturity and being an effective disciple maker. Because you know Jesus, He will become your intimate friend that you love, adore, obey, and exalt and you'll be able to teach others.

2. Teach and admonish each other wisely through the Word of Christ

We let the word of Christ dwell richly for a clear purpose. We need to know Jesus through the word of Christ so we can teach others about Christ.

The clauses of that make up Colossians 3:16 aren't two disjointed or unconnected ideas, they are very much related and the first is the means by which we act on the second. If we take in the word of Christ in abundant ways, then the word of Christ will be on our lips and we'll be teaching each other about Christ. It's just that simple my friends! So, what does the Scripture mean by teaching and admonishing?

Think about teaching and admonishing like two sides of the same coin, or the 'positive and negative' of an approach.

Teach Christ: Manuscript

As one commentator states:

“Teaching refers to the positive presentation of Christian truth, while admonishing refers to the more negative warning about the danger of straying from the truth.”

Let me illustrate this idea:

Your Christian friend struggles with trusting God’s faithfulness to provide a spouse. When you find him discouraged and struggling to believe you come along beside him and gently remind and instruct him about the trustworthiness of God from passages like: Matt.7:7-11 or Proverbs 3:5-6. You *teach* him that God is faithful to give good gifts to His children; He faithfully leads those who trust in Him. You remind him from Romans 8:32 how God has provided a Savior for him, and He can graciously provide a spouse. Your friend is encouraged in that moment and benefitting from the Word that is dwelling abundantly in you. But then a month later that same friend tells you he’s grown weary of waiting on God’s timing for a godly spouse and has decided to take matters in his own hands and is now dating an unbeliever. What do you do then? You *admonish* your friend by instructing him through passages like Hebrews 3:12-13 and Genesis 16. You caution him to not allow his heart to be deceived into believing happiness can be found by rejecting God’s will, and that his personal agenda will only lead to a hard heart and more unbelief. You warn him of the heartache, pain, misery that emerged in Abraham’s life when he grew weary of waiting on God’s promise to provide him children and took matters into his own hands. You remind him from 2Cor.5:15 that we are to live for Christ now not our own desires.

Teaching and admonishing accomplish the same purpose -to trust in the faithful Heavenly Father- but go about the purpose in different ways. You’ll teach or admonish your brother in wise ways but the achievement of this depends on the circumstance. This is simple, right? Do you recognize this is what you are already likely doing in your relationships? The reality is that we will be ‘teaching and admonishing’ in the same ways regularly because teaching doesn’t require new content. There will be times, many times, where we find ourselves re-teaching or re-admonishing our brother and sisters because of how easily we forget or don’t apply what we already know. I want you to grasp this because it’s the reason why we’re always encouraging you to be reading your Bibles, doing daily devotions, sharing at care group meetings, and counseling one another with the Word on your lips. If we aren’t giving each other the Word and teaching one another through the Word then all we’re left with is the empty platitudes the world offers.

Don’t be ashamed of Christ and the simplicity of His word. Friends, we have so much more than mere words; we have the very words of God which makes us

Teach Christ: Manuscript

wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ. That message that is the power of God makes simple people wise, brings hope, shatters hardened hearts, and brings life. What else should we be teaching one another than the Word that proclaims Christ!

Your pastors desire is that our community be characterized as a Bible-speaking, Bible-teaching, Bible-counseling, Bible-encouraging & admonishing community. Let's be talking to each other through the Scriptures, and teaching and helping each other along the pathway of discipleship. As we do this we're fulfilling the task Jesus set before us of making disciples. So talk to each other through the Word of Christ that dwells in you, and share encouragement, warning, and help with each other through the Word. This is teaching each other from the Word of Christ!

When you read Colossians 3:16 don't make the mistake of thinking of teaching in a lecture format; you're not one guy in front of a crowd while all others listen in. Think of teaching simply as talking, talking with others about something you know intimately, and have first-hand experience with. We teach others who Jesus is; what He's done for us, and what He's like, in a way that makes Jesus known, attractive, and desired. And we do this together, and be as Spurgeon says, "a mutual-instruction society".

Don't make the mistake of thinking teaching is something only the mature do. Or something only pastors and care group leaders do, or even the girl who reads her Bible every day for an hour. I believe wholeheartedly, that this passage is placing on every follower of Christ the responsibility to be teaching and admonishing each other in wise ways through the Word of Christ.

If we're failing to act on this responsibility; leaving it to others to do, or farming out our responsibility, we're failing in our call to be helping make disciples and helping disciples grow in maturity. Yes, pastors are called to be teachers of God's Word in unique ways; "rightly handling the word" (2Tim.2:15), refuting error, correcting opponents of the gospel, and equipping the saints in ministry. But we do this as pastors so that you can be more effective in teaching others about Christ. If I'm not equipping you to talk about Jesus and to make sense of this Word, then I need to find a new job. As pastors we are to be equipping you in the work of ministry; teaching others about Jesus with the aim of seeing them love, obey, and cherish Jesus as His disciples!

Friends we must stop farming out this responsibility to a nebulous group of people that we think are more capable, or more knowledgeable than us. Let me state this plainly for you, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ you are called to teach others about Christ; other believers and unbelievers, mature and immature Christians, atheists and agnostics, angry and doubting believers, and despairing and hopeless people alike all need us to be proclaiming the words that proclaim Christ.

Teach Christ: Manuscript

This Bible, this message has been entrusted to us. 2Corinthians 5:19 makes it plain to us that God has entrusted to *us* this message and we must be sharing it with a world and with a church that are struggling without it! He gave this Word to us and we should be sharing and teaching it to others.

And in all this our burden, method, and goal should be the same as Paul's:

- *“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works in me.”* Colossians 1:28-29
- Paul's method of discipleship is teaching (the same method Jesus gave us in Matt.28)
- Paul's goal of his discipleship is to see people rescued from the sins, and mature in Christ.

We teach Christ, and proclaim Christ, so that we may have the joy of seeing everyone mature in Christ. Let us, with Paul, toil and struggle and labor to this end. With God's power and energy let us take in the Word of Christ so we can be teaching the Word of Christ.

As we wrap up tonight, consider three questions for application:

1. Who can you be teaching the Word regularly to?
 - A believer you know who's hungry to learn the Word
 - A believer you know who perhaps struggles with a particular issue
 - A believer you want to get to know better
 - An unbeliever you know who has questions or objections
2. How will you teach them the Word?
 - In what context; as you hang out, talk in a group setting or one on one, or during Bible study?
 - In what manner; how can you wisely bring the Word to them?
Consider the individual, without taking a one size fits all approach.
3. Are you seeking to be taught about Christ from others?
 - Do you make it easy for other believers to talk about Jesus, and His Word?
 - How can you be seeking out this kind of fellowship with those around you?