

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

R₂L – Resolved to Live: By God’s Guidance (Part 2)

Acts 15:36-16:10

Acts 16:1-5

1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, 2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. 5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

Last week I drew your attention to this section of verses that stretches from Acts 15:36-16:10. In these verses it is my desire to help you see how the Holy Spirit of God is leading and guiding Paul, Barnabas and the church to fulfill the mandate of Jesus in preaching the gospel. I reminded you that the book of Acts is truly a reporting of the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in and through the life of the church. The book of Acts is not the record of extraordinary men doing things for God, but rather is about an extraordinary God accomplishing His purposes through ordinary people. Never forget this truth; that what made the apostles and the various other men and women of the early church extraordinary was not something found in themselves, but was the working of the Holy Spirit through them. As Paul would remind the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 4:2, the only requirement that is placed upon believers of Jesus is that they be found faithful, or trustworthy steward or managers of the gospel.

Up to this point in the book of Acts, the church growing and expanding further and further from her starting point in Jerusalem. By means of the ministry of Paul and Barnabas in the first missionary journey, the gospel had now spread as far west as central Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, to the city of Antioch in Pisidia. Of course, Satan, the enemy of the church, would do anything he could to thwart the progress of the gospel and so false teaching had been introduced from inside the church that sought to say that the gospel was Christ plus one’s good works brings salvation. The Jerusalem council determined that the Scriptures taught salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone.

But the enemy does not give up so readily. Through the use of circumstances of fear and doubt, Satan had already discouraged John Mark, one of the traveling companions of Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, causing Mark to desert the team before they began to preach the gospel in Asia Minor. The enemy used this “fact” to sow seeds of discord between Paul and Barnabas; which, as we noted last week, resulted in their separating. The enemy was seeking to break up the grand missionary team, which, it might be argued, he did. What he did not realize is that by doing this, two effective missionary teams would rise up and thus cover more ground. And so, from Acts 15:36-41, we noted the first of several means the Holy Spirit uses to guide and direct the church to accomplish the will of God. What was the means the Spirit used? It was this discord, according to 15:39, “a sharp disagreement” between Paul and Barnabas. Remember however, it was not that the Holy Spirit caused the discord. Satan, by manipulating circumstances, coupled with the sinful tendencies found in every human heart, including Paul and Barnabas, resulted in what I believe to be an ungodly display of dissention. But the Holy Spirit is

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sovereign, and while He undoubtedly desired multiple missionary teams and would have accomplished this purpose in a God-glorifying way, He yet can use our own discord to accomplish His purposes for the church.

From this we see the very practical need to be resolved to live by the guiding and leading influences of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit can use our disagreements to yet accomplish His purposes (and by the way, this truth does not condone us pursuing disagreements among one other), the how much more can be accomplished when we strive together in unity?

This morning, as we come to the next section of these verses that I have entitled, “Resolve to Live By God’s Guidance,” we see Paul and Barnabas going separate ways in order to accomplish the purpose for which they had both originally agreed, that purpose is found back up in 15:36 where Paul said to Barnabas, **“Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”** This introduces the second means I would have you consider the Holy Spirit uses to guide the church into the purposes of God; that second means is the process we know as discipleship. The Holy Spirit uses the process of discipleship to lead the church. In other words, if you are truly resolved to live by God’s guidance; if you would know God’s leading and heart for your life; I say to you that you must be involved in Christian discipleship.

Let me quickly tell you what I mean by discipleship. According to Matthew 28:19-20, the mandate given to the church, the purpose that we have been called to is what? We are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ by teaching people to obey all the He commanded. A disciple is simply a follower of Jesus Christ. He is one who learns about Jesus and then seeks to live like Jesus. A disciple is a person who accepts and assists in spreading the teachings of Christ. Such a follower is intent in spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ. That is a disciple. Discipleship is the process by which followers grow in the grace, knowledge and practice of the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in their hearts, to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more like Christ. The process of discipleship requires believers to respond to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to examine their thoughts, words and actions and compare them with the Word of God. This requires that we be in the Word daily—studying it, praying over it, and obeying it. And this process is not primarily an individual exercise, but is one in which believers are to be engaged in one another’s life, encouraging and exhorting one another. This process of discipleship is an outgrowth of the church.

This is what we see in the verses before us; the example of Paul and the church to be moved by the Holy Spirit to desire the process of discipleship, of making fervent followers of Jesus Christ. This is the principle behind the historical narrative before us. This morning we move beyond the simple history of what Paul did to answer the question of what motivated him and those with him to pursue the discipleship of others. When that question is answered, we can then realize that the principle that moved Paul is the same principle that is to be found in us who profess to know and love Christ. I submit to you that what moved Paul to pursue this process of discipleship was the working, leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit. And if we submit to the same Holy Spirit that moved Paul in this way, I contend that we will equally long to be known as those who make learners and followers of Jesus Christ.

I might call this the resolved to live by Spirit driven discipleship. So then, how can we know if we are being guided and driven by the Spirit in the ministry of discipleship? From our text, there are at least four “desires” the Spirit gives that reflect His leading and guiding...

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I. A consuming desire for people (16:1a)

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra...

According to Acts 15:39, Barnabas and John Mark sailed east off to the island of Cyprus to begin visiting the believers that were first met on the previous journey. Seeing no reason to follow behind them, Paul and Silas head north through Syria first and then east through Cilicia which is the extreme southeastern edge of Asia Minor (Acts 15:41). As we see in Acts 16:1, this would have Paul come to a couple of the last cities he had previously visited, the cities of Derbe and Lystra.

Now, I had said that if we are to know whether our hearts are resolved to live by Spirit driven discipleship, that we would have a consuming desire for people. And the question is, did Paul have a consuming desire for people, and specifically for people to know Jesus Christ? We all immediately answer, “Yes, of course Paul’s desire, his heart was for people to know Jesus.” How do we see this in our text? Just how desirous was Paul to make followers of Jesus? To begin with, let me remind you again of what Paul said back up in Acts 15:36. He said to Barnabas, **“Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”** There beloved is the very heart of discipleship. Paul said, “Let us return...and see who they are.” The heart of Paul was not simple to make Jesus known generally; but rather Paul wanted people to know Jesus personally and progressively. Too many churches today pride themselves on being evangelistic. They boast of how many people have made professions of Christ and have been put on the membership roles, but too many of such converts are never followed up on and challenged to be mature in Christ. Here is Paul, knowing that they had quickly proclaimed Christ and salvation in His name; but he did not want to leave a string of infant believers who could only cry and perhaps be fed false doctrine. He wanted to follow up and see these believers mature in their faith; to be enabled to recognize false teaching, to be able to raise up leaders. Beloved, it is a false notion to separate evangelism – the telling people of their need of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; from discipleship - the process by which people are made more fervent and committed followers of Jesus. Evangelism, whether it is going door-to-door telling people about Jesus; or witnessing to some family members or co-workers about Christ, is not ever an end; but is only step one in the process of discipleship. If you would be concerned enough to tell somebody their need to receive Jesus, you ought also be equally, if not more concerned about encouraging their continued growth in Jesus. This was the heart of Paul. He wanted to return and see how the believers were doing in their walk with the Lord.

But there is another indication of Paul desire for these people. As Paul enters through the back door of the first missionary journey, Luke mentions that he and his companions come back to Lystra. Do you remember what happened to Paul in Lystra? It was the city where Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19-20). What kind of man puts himself back into such a dangerous setting? One who has a desire for other to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Paul knew there were believers there and that living in Lystra was a dangerous place, both physically and spiritually. What would encourage these believers more to trust in the providence and sovereignty of God over and against the fear of men than to see Paul come back to visit?

This is all well and good, but how do we know that Paul was not just a philanthropist; motivated by some earthly good will toward men. Where did Paul get this consuming desire for

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people to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus; so consuming that he was willing to risk his own personal well-being to accomplish it? Look back with me at Acts 13:2-4 -

2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. 4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Notice Paul had been commissioned by divine command [set apart for the work of God] (2) and sent out by divine empowerment [being sent out by means of the Holy Spirit] (4) to make disciples, followers of Jesus Christ. This is a fulfillment of what Jesus had said back in Acts 1:8, **“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you [divine enablement]; and you shall be My witnesses [divine command] both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”** Paul was being driven by the Holy Spirit to desire to see believer’s matured in their faith. This is Spirit-driven discipleship. Are you so driven? How do you know? If you desire to see and to go to other believers to cause them to become better followers of Jesus, then you know you are being guided by the Spirit. If you lack that desire, then you are being driven and guided by your own desires, by your own flesh, by your own concern for personal comfort rather than by God. A church and her people cannot be said to be guided by God and Spirit driven if they do not mutually share a concern for the spiritual growth and well-being of other believers. Let us pray for such a consuming desire for people.

Now it can be relatively easy to recommit ourselves as a church to have a desire for seeing people become more fervent followers of Jesus. This is where one of the dangers of being a body comes into play; the proverbial, “This is what ‘we’ do at our church.” Have you ever heard people say things like, “We, at our church do ?” Often times, the people who say that are little involved in the actual doing of such a ministry. I knew a man who would tell me often, “Well, we at our church are going to this mission field and that mission field.” All the while he, himself had never been on any mission field. If we would be Spirit driven in discipleship, it means that each one of us would have a personal stake in discipleship. This is our second point. That Spirit-driven discipleship is reflected by...

II. A committed desire for a person (16:1b-3a)

And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, 2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him...

It is hard to think of the selection of Timothy as anything but a replacement for John Mark (just as Silas was a replacement for Barnabas). It is interesting that Mark’s replacement is said to have come from the city of Lystra, and that he was highly recommended by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. Lystra, the place of Paul’s stoning. I can’t help but think that Timothy, perhaps but a teen at the time, was one of those surrounding Paul’s body when he was laying there. My point in this is that Timothy lived in a very dangerous place, and yet his testimony was highly respected by the Christians who knew him and his testimony in that dangerous place. While John Mark was a young man who bailed out before they even reached Lystra, Timothy was

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a young man who emerged in the midst of opposition and danger. Here was the kind of young man whom Paul could trust when things got rough.

Notice a couple of things about Timothy. The first is that he is identified already as a disciple. He was already following Jesus, most likely as a result of Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey. His mother was a Jew who had come to Christy (Eunice), along with his grandmother (Lois) encouraged him in the faith (2 Timothy 1:5); but here was a young man who made his faith in Christ his own. This was not his mother or grandmother's faith. He was a disciple, so much so that Luke says next in verse 2 that he was “well-spoken of by the brethren.” This young man's faith, I believe he might have been only in his late teens here, was seen and known by people in both Lystra and Iconium. How many of us in this room have our faith in Christ well-spoken of by others in two cities? The phrase “well-spoken of” is “emartureito” – from martureo, the verb meaning “to be a martyr or to give a good witness.” Remember that Jesus said in Acts 1:8 that His followers were to be His “witnesses” – His “martures” – those who would give a good report and testimony concerning the person and work of Jesus. Here is a young man of whom it is said that concerning His testimony of following Jesus (as a disciple), everyone testified that this young man was resolved and committed to Jesus. A good disciple of Jesus is one whom others will give a good testimony.

Paul notices this young man and according to the first part of verse 3, desired “**this man to go with him.**” This is the second step in discipleship, not just an overall consuming desire for people to know and grow in Jesus, but also the committed, personal desire to invest in a specific believer. Paul saw in Timothy a young man who was hungry to know and serve Jesus. Paul realized that he could encourage and guide that and so he invited Timothy to join him. I was trying to imagine this. I might say to you that I would love to go and work with John MacArthur for a year or two; to sit under his pastoral tutelage so as to learn from such a faithful and experienced preacher. No one would fault me for such a desire. But notice in the text, this is not Timothy expressing his desire to join Paul (although he may have wanted to), but this is Paul wanting Timothy to join him. It would be like John MacArthur calling me up and saying, “Ed, I want you to join me in my ministry for a time; I believe you can learn from me and that your gifts would also help my ministry.”

How incredible would it be to be found so faithful and committed to Christ that as significant ministry opportunities in the church arose, your name would come to the lips of church leadership? Does your name come to the lips of church leadership? Is your testimony of serving Christ and His people upon the lips of others to such an extent that when church leaders hear of it, they can't wait to approach you and ask you to join in a particular work?

But let us flip this around as well? Are you, you who have been in the faith for some time, looking at the work of the Spirit in the lives of young believers and then inviting them to join you in something that will help them mature in their faith? It may be a ministry, it may be a bible study; it may be regular times of prayer; but, to ask the often asked question, “who is your Timothy?”

These verses are the commencement of a long and very close relationship between Paul and Timothy. What was it that Paul saw in Timothy, that the believers in Lystra and Iconium saw in Timothy? What are the things we ought to be looking for in young believers or striving for as young believers. We are not told in our text, but Paul does share what he saw, and thus what others saw in Timothy over in Philippians 2:19:24. There we read:

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19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. 20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. 23 Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; 24 and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

I would have you notice at least four things that are true about Timothy here. First, Timothy stood out. We know that Timothy could be a timid or shy person, so when Paul writes that **I have no one else of kindred spirit**, he did not mean that Timothy was an identical personality or possessed the same spiritual gifts. What Paul meant is that Timothy stood out as one who shared Paul’s heart and mind when it came to knowing and making known the person and work of Christ. They were like-minded. They both had different tasks, but shared the passion to see believers grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

Second, Timothy was concerned for people like Paul was concerned. Notice verse 20 again, **For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare**. Paul saw the same work of the Holy Spirit that made him have a consuming passion for people to Jesus at work in Timothy. In verse 21 Paul reports a state of affairs that I see still being true by and large in the church today saying, **For they all seek after their own interests....** Wow, Paul could be describing our own times, our own cities and even our own churches. But Timothy was a person who was so influenced by the person and work of Christ, and so filled with the Holy Spirit of God, that he was concerned about others, putting their own spiritual interests before his own. Are you a Timothy or one of these others.

Third, Paul describes Timothy here as one who not only looked out for the interests of others, but did so by first looking to the interests of Christ. He finishes verse 21, **For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus**. Timothy understood that everything begins and ends with Christ. Beloved, it is possible to have a church filled with people who are concerned about others, but not within a Christian framework. A good non-Christian counselor; some buddies in a bar; or even a boss at work might be genuinely interested in other people in order to help them, but if it is not for the sake of Christ, if it not to draw others to Christ, it is not of eternal worth. Timothy had his priorities right. How about you?

Finally, Paul reports that Timothy worked well with others. In verse 22 he said, **But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father**. We all know of people who might get a job done but they don’t do well with others. There are plenty of mavericks and Lone Rangers out there in the world; there are not supposed to be any who are a part of the company of the redeemed. Timothy knew how to work with a team. Timothy might have been at times too timid, but Paul saw him as a good pastor because he knew how to work well with others. And so, Paul trusted Timothy with the churches that he visited, to pastor them. Paul said that the Philippian church knew his proven worth. Do those here with whom you fellowship, know your proven worth. Have they seen the excellence, the consistency, the fervency, the faithfulness, the dependability, the reliability, resolve of your life; the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in you to either call on you to be disciple by them, or to come to you seeking to be discipled by you? That is Spirit-driven discipleship. To whom will you

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have a committed concern to see that person matured in the faith? Until you are engaged at some level in personal discipleship, you are failing to be guided by God in ministry.

This brings us to the third of the indicators that you are being driven by the Spirit in discipleship...

III. A considerate desire for people (16:3b)

Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

I don't want to do any injustice to this verse by rushing through it, but let us quickly note what happened and then look at the principle being taught. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy. Is this inconsistent with what Paul had just argued against back at the Jerusalem council; that it was unnecessary for a person to be circumcised in order to be saved? Paul and the council did argue and concluded that the Bible taught it was unnecessary for a person to be circumcised in order to be saved. But what was unnecessary for acceptance with God was advisable for acceptance by some of the Jewish people Paul and Timothy would encounter.

The principle at work here is that Paul and Timothy were being considerate, sensitive to the hearts and minds of people. Paul's concern was for the defense and propagation of the gospel. When the essence of the gospel was at stake, Paul would refuse any compromise. However, when the gospel was not at stake, as was the case here, Paul was willing to compromise many things in order to win others to Jesus. Paul articulates this principle in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22

19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

Compromise on doctrine, on truth, on the gospel? May it never be! To do something that the Bible does not say affects our salvation or our holiness in order to reach others, go for it! Because Timothy was half Jewish, Paul thought it best to circumcise him. When Titus would come on the scene, because he was not Jewish at all, Paul would not circumcise him because whether he was circumcised or not would not affect the Jews and the Gentiles didn't care.

When we seek to disciple others, we must have a consideration for where others are at in their walk with the Lord. I have a friend, who upon coming to Christ, because he had been so negatively influenced by things he watched on TV and music he listened to, personally got rid of all such things. That may be well and fine for him. But soon he began to question the spirituality of anyone who watched TV, be it a movie or sports or anything and he sought to impose this standard upon others. Needless to say, he was not being considerate of where others were at in their walk with the Lord and so people did not see the gracious Spirit of God at work in him, but rather the legalistic works of the flesh. What is more important than anything else is communicating the person and work of Christ.

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We have seen that a Spirit-driven heart for discipleship included a consuming desire for people to know the person and work of Christ; a committed desire to work with at least one believer to see him or her matured in the faith; a considerate desire for people, to do what you can to preach Christ to people, and now, finally, the last indicator of a Spirit driven discipleship is...

IV. A comprehensive desire for people (16:4-5)

4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. 5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

Paul, Silas and now Timothy continue on with this missionary journey to the cities further west. And what were they doing? I would have you see three things here that are evidences of the Spirit at work.

First, they were promoting unity in doctrine. Unity in doctrine; *they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.* The decrees were Biblical, Spirit-inspired directives concerning salvation by grace, through faith in Christ and how such a salvation shows deference to one another. How do we know that what Paul was doing here was Spirit-driven and Spirit-led. Notice what Paul would write to the Philippians in Philippians 2:1-2

1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

The evidence of Christ, of godly love and being in union with the Spirit of God is of being likeminded concerning doctrine; and the doctrine Paul will go after beginning in verse 5 is Christology 101, the person and work of Christ. This is why we have a doctrinal statement based upon Scripture. This is why we teach series like the one coming up this fall, “What We Believe” so that we can have unity in doctrine as directed by the Spirit of God.

The second thing Paul, Silas and Timothy did was to strengthen the faith of the believers. This is important to note as Luke recorded back in Acts 15:32, that church at Antioch, under the pastoral leadership and teaching of Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas was encouraged and strengthened by the ministry of the Word of God. The word “strengthened” means to apply support; to give something to lean upon. The teachers were preaching the Word of God as the only support and strength of the church. Then, in Acts 15:41, we read that Paul and Silas were carrying the same ministry of strengthening the church by means of the Word in Syria and Cilicia. Here, in Acts 16:5, Luke uses the root word of the previous two examples saying that the churches of Asia Minor were being strengthened. In the faith. The word strengthened here means to make firm or solid as in building up muscles. To use today’s vernacular, Paul was seeing to it that the churches were “ripped” – which means to have well-defined muscles. The muscle of the church is faith. Faith here is the content of what we believe concerning God, Christ, the Bible, the Church and salvation. A Spirit-driven discipleship is one that purposes to see the church ripped; not ripped apart, but well-defined in what she believes.

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And final, in addition to the churches being unified in doctrine, and strengthened in faith, a Spirit-driven discipleship is characterized by growth. Luke closes verse 5 with the report that the churches **“were increasing in number daily.”** While it is true that we are to be most concerned with spiritual growth and that sometimes, because we are a small church, we want to de-emphasize the numerical growth, it is to be the purpose of the church to reproduce itself. It is a goal of discipleship to see new followers of Jesus Christ. Not just new converts, and not numbers of people for the sake of numbers; but genuine followers of Jesus Christ. I have said it before, but if each one of us here would purpose to see just one other person come to Christ over the course of a year’s time; and then we impressed upon our new disciple the importance of him doing likewise; the church would grow. A church of 50 could be a church of 100 in one year; then of 200 the following year and in just three years of being 400 people. I believe the Lord could have us grow like that if we were all as committed to discipleship as the Scriptures say we ought to be. But it will all come down to this, are we pursuing a comprehensive desire for people, for them to be united in doctrine, strengthened in faith and growing in numbers?

How can we do this? How can we begin afresh with Spirit-driven discipleship?

Let me close with just a few practical examples of discipleship you need to consider. To begin with, I would like you to think of discipleship as “spiritual friendship.” Spiritual friendship has the mutual goal of growing in Christ and accurately discipleship as flowing in two directions between people.

This biblical call of passing on what you have learned to other faithful people so that they will teach others is the core of what the church does. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, it was to go and make disciples and teach them to obey all that Christ had taught (Matthew 28:19-20). How do we do this? It can be done in a number of ways ranging from very informal to formal instruction. Let me give you some informal ways in which you can begin to make disciples.

Let’s begin with church. It is the first place you are already going to where you can interact with new believers or visitors. Isn’t that brilliant? But church is where everything begins. It is where friendship and discipleship start. It can be difficult to be the outgoing person, but I promise you that the visitor isn’t going to be. So simple conversations about a person’s testimony, where or if they attended church before, and their likes and dislikes will begin to help shape in your mind how you can best serve this person. Are they are spiritually mature person? A new convert? Unconverted?

Getting answers to questions like these may be easier by doing the next suggestion I will give you, but you can’t meet with everyone during the week so often times you have to press pause on the conversation and pick up the next week or follow up by email. Either way, it should be the beginning of a spiritual friendship with the intent of discipling and helping that person grow in Christ.

How about a coffee shop? It may sound cliché, but meet people at a coffee shop. Before too long we will not have a church building an so a coffee shop will be a convenient place to meet. The point here is that discipleship does not have to be only formal. I know that I love to use my early mornings or lunches to meet with people and get to know them better. With some I go through a book; with others through Scripture, but it provides me an opportunity for discipleship.

Finally, let me share with you what I believe to be one of the most important places for discipleship, informal or formal. This will become increasingly important for us when we make our full transition to meeting at the school. We call it, hospitality. Having individuals, families or

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groups in your own home is definitely better than a coffee shop, and you don't even have to drive anywhere. Simply opening your home is incredibly impactful for those in the church, especially for those that are on the fringes. I know that both of your elders and their families are examples of this as both the Samuelsons and the Godfreys open their homes for fellowship. By doing this, we have the biblical right to exhort each of you with the words of Paul who said, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). I am grateful for others in this church who have followed that example. People need to see how you act in everyday life, not just on Sunday. We tend to rarely Facebook or tweet our failings or our greatest strengths. Only those close to us will see them. I will tell you that for me, meeting and working with godly men has had the greatest impact on both my ministry and family life. So be hospital. Invite people to your home, to events or even perhaps along for your favorite hobby. It has a lasting impact that no one can measure and it becomes an indicator of the Spirit at work in your desire to see other become fervent followers of Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria

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Resolved to Live – By God's Guidance
June 23, 2013