

# Grace Today

## **Discipleship: What is it? - Part I**

I've been a part of a number of discussions with GCC leaders lately where the topic of discipleship emerged. Our youth small groups are to be more discipleship-oriented than in the past, so has been a hot topic. Dave has been working furiously to get those groups geared up for the fall and has succeeded in putting together something influential for our young people.

Some of the other discussions around the church have raised some questions about how we use the word discipleship. I sometimes find that we are using a word that is either meaningless, or means different things to different people. I have to confess my prejudices about discipleship- my Doctoral dissertation was on this topic- so I have thought about it a lot and have some ideas about it!

### **Discipleship and Core Values**

If you've been around long enough to hear us talk about the core values of Grace Community Church, you realize that discipleship is one of the central issues for us here at GCC. More importantly than that, discipleship is the key mission of any true Church (see Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus did not leave us with the role of making Christians out of non-Christians, but of making disciples out of all nations. Mere professions of faith in Christ are not satisfying...we must make disciples!

### **What is a Disciple?**

The disciple is the most frequently used description of the followers of Christ, whether referring to the original twelve disciples or the early church in the book of Acts. While absent elsewhere in the New Testament, 'disciple' occurs 264 times in the Gospels and Acts, generally in reference to the Disciples of Christ. Understanding this term is essential to understanding what God expects of us as Christians.

### **What does "disciple" mean?**

According to Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, to be a disciple is to direct one's mind to something, or to learn under instruction, and "the use consistently implies an intellectual process that always has external effects and involves a conscious or unconscious intellectual initiative". As disciples Christians are learning from one Teacher: the Lord Jesus Christ. This truth has practical significance for the work of making disciples. Living as a disciple involves a total attachment of the pupil to the teacher.

Another unique aspect of Jesus' disciples is their devotion and loyalty to the person of Jesus. Teachers in the ancient world directed their disciples toward devotion to their doctrines and beliefs, and when they died it was their teaching that was carried forward by their disciples. Jesus, however, directed His disciples to Himself as the divine Son, and it was more than His teaching that they sought to propagate. Their mission was to lead others to a life-changing devotion to the person of Jesus. "No doubt the nature of the discipleship of Jesus was determined right from the beginning by His own person to which the disciples bound themselves" (Colin Brown).

Jesus encouraged this kind of personal faith and devotion. He called Himself the bread of life (John 6:35), teaching His disciples that through coming to Him and believing in Him, they would find deep, inner satisfaction. It was not just His truths that mattered, though He expected His disciples to obey His teaching (Matt. 28:18-20). He called them to believe in His very person. Through Him alone could they relate to God (Jn. 14:6).

So it becomes very clear that our job is not merely conveying Christian theology or even Biblical knowledge to people. Our job is to attach people to Jesus of Nazareth as His disciple. It involves information transfer, but it is much more than that. Jesus himself did His teaching in the context of relationships- living faith in real life circumstances.

It is therefore more than technically wrong to call someone in my discipleship group one of "my disciples." I've failed at the outset if that is my mindset! Our first job in one another's lives is to push each other to Jesus- to encourage each other to complete devotion to Him. So how do we do this? How do we go about it? ...Tune in for the next "Grace Today" for some answers!

-Don Ward

*Excerpts of this were taken from "Grace Centered Discipleship in the Local Church". A "PDF" file version of this is available upon request from Pastor Ward.*

# Announcements

## Fairmont Update

"Grace Community, Greetings from 202 Maple Ave. Thank you, thank you so much for all you have done and all that you mean to me. I miss all of you and love you very much. I'm looking forward to worship with you in October. I will continue to ask God to bless and keep you. Thanks again for Steve and John for their awesome leadership! Much love, Carol Jean Suggs" - this card had each and every participant's name listed.

## Thirsty Series

It's almost here! Our Thirsty series begins **September 13th!!** Please take advantage of the invitations in the foyer and invite your friends!

## Thirsty Leaders

Those leading "Thirsty" series small groups are invited to meet with Don in his office between services on **September 13th** to review the materials.

## We Need Pictures!

If you have any photos of recent events at Grace, please send them to Peter Edwards at [peter.d.edwards@gmail.com](mailto:peter.d.edwards@gmail.com) so they can be used for the new website ([www.cvillegrace.org](http://www.cvillegrace.org))!

## New Small Group Forming

The Oweds and Andresons are intending to launch a new small group this fall. If you are interested, please email Michael at [michael.owed@gmail.com](mailto:michael.owed@gmail.com) for more information.

# Women's Events

## Person of Jesus Study

This study will resume **Wednesday, September 9th** and meet at the church every other Wednesday. Welcome and refreshments will be from 9:00am-9:30am, study will begin at 9:30am. If you need childcare, call Carol Hill at 973-2899.

# Youth Events

## MODGNIK

Junior High Fall Retreat is October 2nd-4th. Registration sheets are available at the Crossroads table in the foyer. **Registrations and non-refundable deposit of \$50.00 are due ASAP!!!!!!** Total cost for the event is \$110.00 per person. Family discounts and scholarships are available, see Dave Saville for details. Sign up now! Don't miss out on an awesome adventure!

## Youth Emails

If you are a parent or student who is not receiving the Youth Emails and would like to, please contact Shack Shelley to be added to the list. [lilshack@embarqmail.com](mailto:lilshack@embarqmail.com)

## Senior High Camping

**September 11-12th** at the home of Dave and Carol Hill. See details in the latest Crossroads email or RSVP to Stacey Powdrell at [slp4d@virginia.edu](mailto:slp4d@virginia.edu) or to Steve Jerabek at [ltjerabek@hotmail.com](mailto:ltjerabek@hotmail.com)

## Crossroads

The next Crossroads is this **Sunday, September 6!** See you there!

# Community Board

## Homeschool Support Group Starting Up

Are you a homeschooling mom in need of support & encouragement? A group just for you is starting **TODAY, September 1st**. Group will meet the first & third Tuesdays of the month, from 7-9pm. If interested, please contact Lisa at [go2thegym@comcast.net](mailto:go2thegym@comcast.net) so we have an idea of how many to expect.

## Precepts Bible Study

Precepts Bible Study starts on **Wed. Sept 9th** from 9:15-11:30AM. It is held at 1st Baptist church on Park St. It is a 12 week inductive study on the book of Philippians. If you have children, registration is required by Sept. 2nd. Please contact Jamie Owed with any questions: 985-3914 or [ruthiedog@comcast.net](mailto:ruthiedog@comcast.net)

### **Please help me with my school work!**

Abundant Life Ministries needs adults, college students, mature high school students to be tutors to low-income city students. Great opportunity for family members to serve together. Once/week commitment to same child for school year. Structured lesson plans provided for K-4th; general homework help for 5th & up. Carpools available! Staff oversight for all programs.

- Grades K-4th: M, T, W or Th, 3:20-5:00 pm at Johnson School
- Grades 5/6th: T or Th, 2:30-3:30 pm at Walker School
- Grades 7/8th: M or W, 2:30-3:30 pm at Buford School
- High School (girls): during 45-minute lunch period, Thursdays at CHS

Contact: [Main@CharlottesvilleAbundantLife.org](mailto:Main@CharlottesvilleAbundantLife.org) or 970-2077.

### **Fall Counselor Training at The Pregnancy Centers of Central Virginia**

Perhaps you have considered volunteering at The Pregnancy Center. You may have thought, "I could never do that!" If you are nervous, that's alright with us. We need the nervous, even the fearful. God uses those who have a heart and are willing to learn. If that describes you, we'd love to have you! We will teach you how to help women make good choices they can live with while sharing the Gospel and much more during all 7 classes. Training will be held at our Downtown Center on the following dates from 6-9pm:

Monday, September 14th

Thursday, September 17th

Friday, September 18th

Monday, September 21st

Thursday, September 24th

Friday, September 25th

Monday, September 28th

Cost for the training is \$25. We also have openings for receptionists!

Call today to register! Your life will be richly blessed as you help others!

Call Pat @ 434-979-8888