

The Gospel-Centered Life | Fruit

Dylan Dawkins May 29, 2022

“What is a disciple?”

- **Matthew 4:19**

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

- a disciple is anyone who is **following** Jesus, being **changed** by Jesus, and going on **mission** with Jesus

Recap: The Gospel Centered Life

Week 1: Pastor Rob said,

“You can claim to be a Christian, you can go to church your whole life!

But if you are not actively following Jesus, being changed by Jesus and on the mission of Jesus, you will remain spiritually immature.

- you can have all the knowledge about Him...you can memorize your Bible...you can recite in Greek...
 - but if you’re not obeying the commands of Jesus, *you’ll remain spiritually immature...*

“The gospel is not the way you enter the Christian faith—it is the entirety of the Christian faith. It is the core, the heartbeat, the motive, the power, the beginning, the end, and everything in between”

Today

- Because the Gospel isn’t *just* about a single decision you made when you were 13, or *just* about what’s going to happen to you when you die...
 - because the Gospel... the Good News of Jesus Christ is effective for *every part* of your life... the message for this morning is titled **the Fruit of a Gospel-Centered Life**.

What is the fruit of a gospel-centered life?

*The fruit of a gospel-centered life is a growth in **spiritual maturity**.*

- As we follow Jesus, He will change and transform us through the process of discipleship!
 - **Spiritual Maturity, Christlikeness, is the goal of discipleship, and is the byproduct of a life that is centered on the Good News of Jesus Christ.**
 - *the reason I’m so excited for this student takeover is because spiritual growth is something that we’re seeing happen in our student ministry here at Grace Chapel*

Abide

- 2000 years ago, Jesus said something about the way a vine bears fruit that should inform the way every single one of us chooses to live our lives.
 - And He did so by making this really encouraging, uplifting, feel-good-about-yourself claim: **YOU CAN DO NOTHING.**

John 15:4-5

“**4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, **for apart from me you can do nothing.**”

- Jesus didn't say you can't do *anything*... He said, "*apart from me*, you can do *nothing*."
 - We can all go do good stuff... but how heartbreaking would it be to find that it all amounted to nothing?
 - As we've seen over the course of these last five weeks... in our work, our relationships, as we raise up the next generation, and with all that we have...
 - Jesus is inviting all of us to Follow Him by centering our lives on the Gospel... the Good News... that Christ has come and made a way for us to live as we were made to live in HIM
 - And it starts by having a real, daily, moment-by-moment relationship with God
- And as we abide in Him... as we mature and grow...we will become like Christ in the way we live our lives and love the people around us.
 - Like the vine and the branches, the Holy Spirit constantly uses these physical examples in Scripture to help us make sense of Spiritual realities...
 - He even does this in our experience of physical growth as human beings and how that correlates to our spiritual growth as followers of Christ.

Hebrews 5:12-14

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is *a child*. ¹⁴ But solid food is for *the mature*, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

1 Corinthians 3:1

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, *as infants* in Christ.

Ephesians 4:14-15

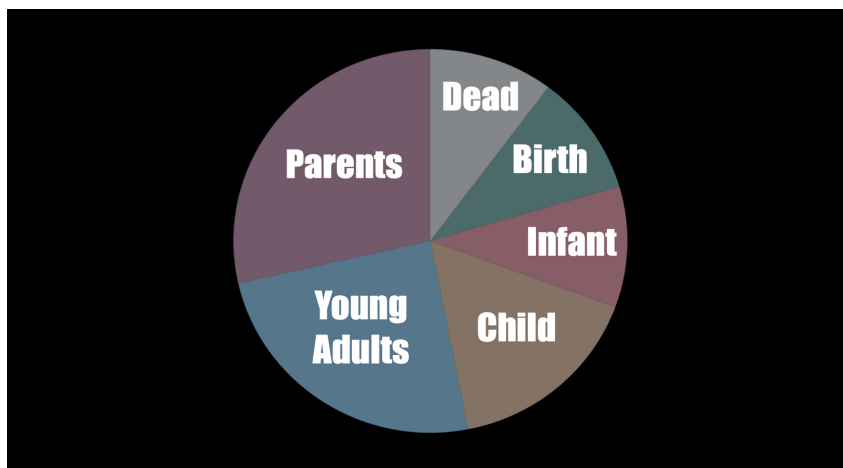
"So that we may no longer *be children*, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are *to grow up* in every way into him who is the head, into Christ"

- God constantly uses the physical world to help us make sense of spiritual realities... and He's constantly inviting us as disciples into the process of spiritual maturity...
 - And that's really what it is, right? A process. Spiritual maturity involves stages of growth. It's not automatic.
 - Spiritual maturity is a process...
- For some of us, we've been following Jesus for a long time, but we may not be as spiritually mature as we think we are...
 - And others of us may have only been following Jesus for a short time, but we're further along than we think.
 - The point is, that regardless of where you may be, *knowing where you are* in the process of spiritual maturity is invaluable information when it comes to being a disciple.
 - When we know where we are, it informs us of what we need in our relationship with Christ and the community He's placed around us to help us grow

- I want to show you a tool that we utilize in our equipping classes that can help us identify where we are in the process of spiritual maturity.
 - This is not a tool for us to use as a weapon on other people... this is a tool to help us recognize where we are, so we can begin joining the Holy Spirit in the journey of getting where He wants us to be.
 - And when we do that, we will inevitably be equipped to love and serve others as they walk out their sanctification
 - Spiritual maturity is a process. And in the process, it involves stages of growth.

The Wheel of Spiritual Maturity

The Wheel of Spiritual Maturity



- The first stage of growth or life is actually the absence of it.
 - If you aren't alive, you are... **Dead**
 - What is a dead person like? *Cold, lifeless, stiff*
 - What do they need? *Life*
 - The beginning of life... What's **Birth** like?
 - What's birth like? *Loud, celebratory, awesome, exhausting, slightly terrifying*
 - After birth, you have an infant...
 - **Infant**
 - Like: *Totally dependent, naïve, cute,*
 - Need: *lots of care, love, food, everything!*
 - **Child** (age 5-7)
 - Like: *Fun, happy, curious, they mimic, their brains are like sponges*
 - Need: *a good model, patience, boundaries, consistency*
 - **Young adult** (age 13-25)
 - Like: *Curious, independent, adventurous,*
 - Need: *guidance, increase of responsibilities, room to grow*

- **Parents**
 - Like: *tired, busy, responsible for someone else, help children navigate these different stages*
 - Need: *rest, wisdom, patience, CHILDREN*
 - **If you don't have or you haven't had a child, you aren't a parent!*
 - So **spiritually...**
 - If you don't have spiritual children in your life... someone you are caring for and helping to grow as a disciple of Christ, *then you aren't a spiritual parent!*

- Knowing where you are in the sanctification process informs you of what you need as a follower of Christ!
 - You can be in your mid-fifties...but spiritually, you might be an infant or a child!
 - You need some spiritual parents in your life! You need to be discipled.
 - You can be 21 years old... but spiritually, you might be a giant!
 - You've been discipled. It's time to start making disciples!
 - The reality is that we all go through a process of spiritual growth...
 - Imagine if you brought a newborn home from the hospital, sat them down on the couch and said, "good luck." Hope you figure it out!
 - There's food in the refrigerator if you're hungry... See ya SUNDAY!
 - That's the equivalent of leading someone to Christ without discipling them!

- Spiritual infants, just like physical ones, need CARE
 - Yes, Jesus cares for you in your personal time with Him... but what if you've never been taught how to spend time with Jesus...?
 - What if you've never been taught how to be spiritually fed?
 - The reason 70% of students leave the church after they go to college isn't because the A/V equipment wasn't good enough...it's because they were never discipled!
 - Spiritual children need care from spiritual parents!
 - And if you know you're a spiritual infant or child... and you know you need someone to disciple you...ask for help!
 - Maybe you're a spiritual young adult...you've been out on your own... you've been growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ...
 - But maybe it's time for you to step into parenthood...
 - Maybe it's time for you to have some spiritual children!
 - God's commands us to be fruitful and multiply!
 - Yes, physically... but also SPIRITUALLY!
 - A spiritual parent is committed to walking in the will and ways of God and raises others up to do the same.

- So where are you on the wheel of Spiritual maturity? Do you know what you need to continue growing? Have you become stagnant in the process of sanctification?
 - If you aren't as mature as you thought...PLEASE!... don't be ashamed!
 - Awareness of that fact will equip you with the information you need to ask someone for help!
 - No one shames a child for needing their parents' help.
 - We're all in the process of growing in Christlikeness

- Even parents need help and support and wisdom from those a little further along than them
- So, you might be a spiritual giant in some areas of your life and a total infant in others...

“To God, your identity — what makes you you — isn’t rooted in the past (who you were) or in the present (who you are), but in the future — in who you are becoming.”¹
~ John Mark Comer

- God is interested in molding us into the Image of His Son... Romans 8:28-29
 - But Spiritual maturity is not automatic!

The Fruit of a Gospel-Centered Life

2 Peter 3:18

But **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

- It doesn’t take a botanist to know that if you cut a branch off an apple tree, the branch isn’t going to produce apples anymore.
 - And if you pay attention to the branch, you realize pretty quick that producing apples isn’t really something that it has to try and do.
 - When the branch is removed from the vine, it has no life. It does nothing.
- Fruit isn’t produced because the branch tries really hard to squeeze out an apple or two every summer.
 - Fruit is a natural byproduct of the branch’s relationship to the source of its life.
 - **John 15:5**
“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”
- Spiritual Maturity... Christlikeness...the life we were made for comes when we Abide in Him and center our lives on the Rock that will not move.
 - Jesus Christ is the one who supplies our souls with the wisdom and direction and the nourishment and the respite and the growth that all of us so desperately need and desire on a moment-by-moment basis.
 - You can go from here this morning and go back to your job... or your school... or your family...
 - You can chase your dreams... you can do a lot of stuff...you can have all the world has to offer... you can do churchy things and have all the knowledge about Jesus or memorize your Bible and recite it in Greek...
 - but if you’re not obeying the command of Abiding in Jesus, *if you are not actively following Jesus, you will remain spiritually immature because apart from Him, you can do nothing.*
- **The Fruit of a Gospel-Centered Life is Growth in Spiritual Maturity**
 - We can’t grow on our own apart from Him...
 - But as Pastor Myron always says, “we can’t drift into spiritual maturity”
 - Everyone always wants to talk about the negative effects of counting the cost...

¹ John Mark Comer. *Loveology* (Zondervan, Feb. 4, 2014)

Author, Dallas Willard, on the topic of counting the cost once said:
“Non discipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated throughout by love, faith that sees everything in light of God’s overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, it cost exactly that abundance of life Jesus said he came to bring (John 10:10).”²
~ Dallas Willard

James Bryan Smith followed that up by saying:
“The question is not, “what will I have to give up to follow Jesus?” but rather, “what will I never get to experience if I choose **not** to follow Jesus?” The answer is clear: we will forfeit the chance to live a good and beautiful life.”³
~ James Bryan Smith

- Fruit is a natural byproduct of the branch’s relationship to its source of life.
 - Church, you were made for life. If you take nothing else away from today, hear this...

**From Genesis to Revelation,
God’s story to us is telling us of this fact:
we were made to walk in relationship with God
and grow in maturity as dearly loved children
who imitate their Father.**

That is the fruit of a gospel centered life.

Matt.28:18-20

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...”

Anyone remember what He said after that?

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Maturity will never happen without the Source of Life leading us through the process.
“Apart from Me you can do nothing”

Discussion Questions

1. What is the Fruit of a Gospel-Centered Life?
2. Discuss John 15:4-5: “apart from me you can do nothing.”
3. Where are you (honestly) on the Spiritual Maturity Wheel? Do you know what you need to continue growing?
4. Do you have any spiritual children? If you do not, then you aren’t a spiritual parent (discuss).
5. What do you have to give up — or gain — to live a gospel-centered life in spiritual maturity?

² Dallas Willard. *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (Zondervan, Dec. 7, 1990)

³ James Bryan Smith. *The Good and Beautiful Life* (InterVarsity Press, Dec. 14, 2009)

NOTES