

# Disciplines of a Disciple

## Biblical Community *continued*

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### Introduction

#### ***Why the disciplines?***

*“It’s not inspiring, doesn’t make me feel warm and fuzzy, it doesn’t get me fired up, why does this matter?”*

A reminder of week one... the disciplines are the pathway to the abundant life that Jesus offers. And to experience the easy yoke of Jesus, the abundant life He offers, it actually requires something of us. If we’re going to become like Jesus, if Grace Chapel is genuinely going to become a disciple-making church, we’re going to have to make some changes in our habits, rhythms, and priorities if that’s going to take place.

The spiritual disciplines move us *toward* something.

The disciplines also serve as a guard *against* something dangerous as well.

*Throughout the scriptures, we see three enemies that are in a war against your soul — the world, the flesh and the devil.*

In a world that is becoming increasingly hostile toward followers of Jesus — it is a world where people are driven by what they “feel” is true, about themselves, about their circumstances, about their world, about other people. They’re driven, not by what is true, but by what they feel is true — about what they feel is fair or unfair, by what they feel is just and unjust. In a world where Truth is treated as relative, both within and outside of the church walls, we must be ROOTED in Christ who is the way, the TRUTH, and the life.

**If followers of Christ are going to remain faithful to Christ,  
we must be rooted IN CHRIST.**

If you, your children, your children’s children, are going to be able to stand firm in the evil day — where what is evil is celebrated as good, and what is good is detested as evil — if you settle for a half-hearted, shallow, consumeristic, westernized version of Christianity — you will not be able to stand in the evil day. You may have a form of godliness but you’re denying it’s power.

The amount of pressure in our world to reject, renounce, relinquish your faith in the name of cultural relevance or social preservation, is increasing day by day. It’s only going to become more difficult in the days, months, years to come.

**Which is why it is so important that we engage in spiritual practices that will clothe us in the fear of God, and free us from the fear of man.** These practices will root us in deep abiding intimacy with Christ, and with others that are on that same journey.

I don’t say these things to make you anxious or fearful about the future. But I’m sharing them to motivate you to engage in the ways of Jesus, not as some ethereal, philosophical ideal, but as a nuts and bolts way of

life that will give you confidence, strength, assurance, patience, and supernatural courage, a soft heart and a steel spine in the moments that demand it.

*So far, we've talked about...*

1. **Private Devotion** – Scripture, Sabbath, Solitude, Fasting, and Prayer
2. **Biblical Community** – Corporate Worship, Fellowship
3. **Missional Living** – How to live with healthy rhythms and boundaries as it relates to loving those outside of the church
4. **Kingdom Stewardship** – Everything in our lives, even our lives themselves don't belong to us. They've been entrusted to us to steward for His glory. How do we faithfully steward our lives, our time, our gifts, our resources for God's glory?

### **BIBLICAL COMMUNITY**

#### **Corporate Worship, Fellowship, Hospitality, and Confession.**

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## **Hospitality**

### **Luke 14:12-14**

He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed."

The only way to get anything done in first century Hebrew culture was to know somebody. You had to be connected. Getting things done wasn't necessarily about merit, or previous achievement — you had to know someone with position and power and no other way.

We think networking is a new idea — they had this down in the first century. Everyone is trying to meet and become friends. Now how did you accomplish this? How did you make those connections and networking relationships? **Hospitality.**

But when Jesus starts talking about hospitality — He is completely trashing their version of it. Because when you read it, *it seems like* Jesus is saying that "once you become my follower, my disciple, you can never have relatives and friends over for meals and movies..."

- That's NOT what He's saying... but what Jesus IS saying is, "*What I want my followers to prefer is to bring people into your home who can't pay you back, who can't do anything for you, who can't add value to you, but bring them in and love them anyway.*" That's biblical hospitality.

Hospitality is bringing someone into your life. But it's more than entertaining. Our definition of hospitality is so weak. When we hear that word, we think, Martha Stewart.

It was **biblical hospitality** that brought me to Jesus, it completely changed the trajectory of my whole life.

- A home is a place where you find refuge from life. It's safety, security, rest, and rejuvenation. It's where you go to recharge. Your home is the core of your life, it's your launch point for what you do in the world. When you bring someone into your home you're bringing them close to your heart. You're inviting them in to find peace, rest, refuge from the storms and chaos of life, under your provision and care for them.

***Biblical hospitality has essentially two major elements.***

**Hospitality is...**  
***welcoming others into your life***

It is your home but it's broader than your home. It may mean having someone to your house, but it also could mean inviting someone you've never met here out to lunch with you. It could mean extending an invitation to someone to come join you doing something that you love to do.

One of our elders at the church we planted in Washington years ago — he is the expert on this. Ron loves to fish. He has a boat. All summer long he invites others to join him on his boat and they fish together. They spend hours, sitting on a boat, chatting, hanging out, and catching fish. Ron has brought so much encouragement to people for years, simply by inviting someone to join him in something he already loves to do. His focus is simply to serve people. To welcome others into his life.

**Hospitality is...**  
***treating strangers as family***

In the original Greek the word for *hospitality* literally means, “*love of strangers.*” A stranger is someone that is different from you. That's not good or bad, just different.

There are three kinds of strangers we're commanded to show hospitality to.

- 1. Other Christians** – you say, “That doesn't make any sense. Other Christians are people that share my faith, they aren't strangers!” I would beg to differ — there are plenty of strange Christians out there.

There are people you don't know that are very different than you. Bring them into your life. Show them some hospitality, help them connect, build relationships, and grow. Bring them with you on a Sunday, go out to lunch afterward, get to know them.

If they're Christians, even if they're “strange Christians,” you're still in the same family. You may or may not like that very much — but it's true. By bringing them into your life, you're treating them as family.

- 2. Neighbors**

This isn't “everyone is my neighbor” — this means your literal neighbor. The people that live near you. Do you know them? Do you know their names? Do you share life with them? The great commandment is love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love who? — your NEIGHBOR as yourself.  
*How can you love your neighbor without knowing them? Invite them into your life.*

- 3. Needy**

Look for people that can do nothing for you and bring them into your life. If you are unwilling to look at a needy person and give them preference or priority, what Jesus tells us in Luke 14 is that you don't really understand God's hospitality.

If you do this, what you might find is that God is in the habit of turning complete strangers into true friends

*Let's get practical. What do we do?*

## APPLICATION

1. Invite neighbors, coworkers, needy people into your life. Bring them to your lunch spot, bring them to your home for the big game. Practice Hospitality.
2. Invite each other. Find people you don't know in this community, people that are different than you. Take them out for coffee, be interested in their story instead of waiting for someone to be interested in your story.
3. Volunteer on our Guest Services Team, serve others by helping make coffee and tea. That is literally how we "welcome the strangers" to our church home on a Sunday morning. That's hospitality.
4. Make a connection during the meet and greet time and schedule a lunch, or host a Titans watch party at your house.
5. It's about carving out space to include others into your life.
6. You have to be intentional.

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## Confession

What is it? What does it do? How do we practice it?

In the original Greek, the word *confess* means "to agree with."

What are we agreeing with God about? **Our sin.**

"[Sin] is not just our tendency to lurch and stumble and screw up by accident, our passive role as agents of entropy. It's our active inclination to break stuff — "stuff" here including moods, promises, relationships we care about and our own wellbeing and other people's..."<sup>1</sup>

~ Francis Spufford

*This is saying that sin is not just your propensity to indulge in too much ice cream.*

It's the propensity inside every human being to raise our fists to heaven and declare to God, "I'm in charge!" "I don't need you." "I'll live however I want."

*All of the brokenness we bring into the world through our rebellion against the One who Created us is sin.*

1. Confession is not the same thing as forgiveness
2. Confession of sin doesn't earn salvation over and over and over again until you die —and if you missed one then you're doomed.
3. **Confession is agreeing with God not only about our sin, but also about His finished work, and about who you are in Him.**

The great news is — if you are in Christ, you are in right standing before God, right now. Your salvation is sealed. You've been born again. You are a new creation, you are cleansed and made completely righteous through the finished work of Jesus Christ. Period.

*Confession acknowledges where we still need God to work in us, and allows us to appropriate the forgiveness and cleansing that's already ours in Christ.*

### **1 John 1:9-10**

If we **confess our sins**, He is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins and to **cleanse** us from all unrighteousness.

<sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Spufford. *Unapologetic* (HarperCollins, October 15, 2113)

**What is that saying?** The words *forgive* and *cleans* in this passage are written in what's called anorist tense — which means it's a summary occurrence without regard for time or specific action. It alludes to something that has already taken place in the past and is still taking place — it's continuing to unfold.

- *In other words, God's forgiveness and cleansing are already yours in Christ.*

### **What does confession do?**

As you “agree with God” in your acknowledgment and confession of sin, you are appropriating, applying to your own heart, the forgiveness and cleansing that is already yours in Christ.

1. Confession cleanses your conscience. It silences our self-condemnation and the voice of the accuser — the accusing attacks of the devil lose their power in confession.
2. Confession cripples your desire to do the things you really don't want to do in the first place. It brings what will grow stronger in the dark — out into the light.

If we're going to acknowledge and confess our sin —*where is our barometer for right and wrong, good and evil?*

### **1 Corinthians 4:3-4**

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted...

- Paul is saying that you can't trust public opinion to guide your conscience and your definition of right or wrong. Why? Because public opinion is always changing!
- He also says, I don't even judge myself! I don't trust my own conscience to determine right or wrong.

*And then Paul gives us the standard...*

### **1 Corinthians 4:3-4**

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. **It is the Lord who judges me.**

- God gives us the standard. And it's Himself. He is the standard.
- What this means is that some of you feel guilty about things you shouldn't. Others of you don't feel guilty about things that you should! How do you know the difference? The Lord. His standard.

Until you accept and trust that God is the standard — you can't engage in confession in a way that liberates you — because you don't understand the depth of your sin and the brokenness it's bringing into the world! You have no standard until you trust God's word — until you see His judgment as the only judgment that truly matters!

- **The first component of confession is “you need a standard.”**
- **The second component is “you must own your sin.”**

*Illustration: When my little ones were littler — if something got spilled or broken, and Evie was involved in it — no matter if her little brother Jack was anywhere near the scene of the crime — she would reflexively say, “Jack did it.” She knew he couldn't defend himself — and she had someone to blame for her sin.*

True liberating confession says — “I see your standard God — I see you — and *although there may have been extenuating circumstances*, I will not blame, I will not defend, I won't make excuses, I have sinned. I own it. It's me.” That's confession.

Adam and Eve in the Garden, when they sinned, they made excuses, they covered themselves up — they were ashamed, guilt-ridden. God shows up and asked what happened. Adam says, “The woman YOU gave me.” God goes to Eve and she says, “The serpent made me do it.” We’ve done this from the very beginning of time. We blame. We shift the focus off of our own sin and shame, and deflect to anything and everything else we can.

Biblical, liberating confession starts with owning your sin without excuse. And when you own your sin completely, you no longer feel the need to cover yourself because it’s all laid bare before Him. He knows it all already — and *in confession, you’re exposing your need and desire for something that only God can give you — forgiveness and cleansing.*

In regard to owning the sin without excuse... many people when they sin are sorry only when they get caught, or only sorry when they have to face the consequences of their sin. That’s not true confession. True confession sees the horrible nature of the sin all by itself — how radically against God and harmful to the world sin is — regardless of the consequences of the sin.

- If you only *say sorry*, after you have consequences, you’re not sorry. You’re just sorry you got caught. As soon as those consequences are over with, you’ll go right back to doing what you did before. You’ll go right back to your sin.

**But if you see the sinfulness of the sin, the twistedness of the sin, all by itself apart from its consequences and you go to confession, it will liberate you.**

On the other hand, there are times when we might be more inclined to beat ourselves up about our sin. If that’s what you do in confession, you’re not hating your sin, you’re hating yourself — *you’re punishing yourself for something that God wants to forgive and cleanse you of.*

These two responses to sin — self-flagellation and self-justification...

- In both instances, your heart doesn’t change! There is no liberation. There is no transformed heart.

***So, what do we do?***

### **James 5:16**

Therefore, **confess** your sins to **one another** and **pray** for **one another**, that you may be healed.

The discipline here is to go to one another, where there is trusted friendship, relationship, and confess — own it. Receive prayer from brothers and sisters in Christ that are FOR you. ***This is why this is in the biblical community category — because we need one another for confession and healing.***

Paul says in **Romans 4:7-8** that Jesus was stripped naked, he was exposed to the elements, to mocking, torture, immense suffering for our sin. ***He was exposed to the world, so we could be covered.***

### **1 John 1:9-10**

If we confess our sins, He is **faithful and just** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

***Notice, it doesn’t say faithful and merciful.***

It says **JUST**. It says that *the reason God will forgive you is because He is just!*

## **Why?**

Because Jesus Christ bore the justice of God that was due us, upon Himself. The justice of God, His wrath for sin — sin was poured out on Jesus in our place.

***Jesus was uncovered so we could be covered.  
He was punished so we could be forgiven.***

Do you understand what this means!?! ***If our Heavenly Father were to withhold forgiveness from you who belong to Christ, it would be unjust!*** It would be the equivalent of requiring double payment on a 0% interest loan. It would be extortion.

If you've placed your faith in Christ, He is faithful **and just** to forgive you of ALL your unrighteousness — not because of anything you have done or even have the capability of doing — but because of everything He has done for you in your place.

The main thing we need when it comes to confession and forgiveness that truly liberates us — the main thing we need is to realize is that it was “my sin that put Jesus on the cross.”

- Every wrong action, every impure thought, and every misplaced motive of our heart.

***But do you see how beautiful*** that makes the cross of Christ? ***Do you see the freedom*** that gives from self-pity, or self-hatred? ***Do you see the power*** that gives you to be relentlessly gracious and forgiving toward others?

In the cross, you see the love that removes all of your sin, the beauty that erases every sin, every stain. It makes you perfect and complete, it frees you, liberates you, empowers you. All of a sudden it becomes very easy to be the type of person that doesn't hold a grudge against anyone, because *look at all you've done, and God, in the person of Jesus Christ, holds no grudge against you. How could you hold one against anyone else? Be gracious and forgiving.*

No longer will you be PROUD, arrogant, boastful — why? Because God humbled Himself for your sin at infinite cost to Himself.

No longer will you take advantage of God's grace or indulge in sinful behavior, or hate yourself when you blow it, because the gospel gives you peace, and fills you with power to walk in the freedom that Christ has won for you and for me.

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## **In regard to hospitality**

Jesus didn't come as a wealthy, accomplished, successful aristocrat. He came as a homeless, wandering Galilean peasant. He wasn't born in a home, and he didn't die in His home. He was an outcast.

***Why?*** *He was paying for our entrance into the party.* The only way we could be brought into the great feast, to sit at His table — is if Jesus was thrown out. *He was sent out of the family so we could be brought in.*

All hospitality costs something. But the hospitality of Jesus cost Him everything. Our seat at His Table is free to us, but it cost Jesus everything. And He gladly laid it down for us.

“The value of something is determined by the price someone is willing to pay for it.”

When you see the price He gladly paid so that you could come into His rightful home — it compels you to open your home, your life, your table for the stranger. You and I are on the way to a GREAT BANQUET one day — He’s made the way. Let that truth sink in and motivate you to do for others what He first did for you.

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## Discussion Questions

1. What is the importance of our studying and applying the disciplines in our lives?
2. What “hospitality” are you currently incorporating in your life? What more can you do to welcome others into your life?
3. How can you become involved in the lives of those who are needy and can do nothing for you?
4. In confession, what are we agreeing with God about?
5. How do you know what the barometer is to guide your conscience for right and wrong?
6. Is there a sin in your life that you need to acknowledge? To own? Is it one that you have self-justified or self-condemned?
7. Read James 5:16. Will you do this in your Life Group?
8. Jesus bore the justice of God that was due us upon Himself. What does this mean to you, especially in how you treat others?

**NOTES**