

# Stepping Up and Stepping In

Joshua 3:7-17

## Joshua 3:12-17:

**12** Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. **13** And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

**14** So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, **15** and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), **16** the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. **17** Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

The only thing worse than having no community is having fake community. Over the past 20 years, I have heard many reasons why people do not want to be in a Life Group. I have narrowed them down to 10.

## Top 10 reasons NOT to join a Life Group:

- 1: I have other things I need to get done first.
- 2: I don't really need to be in a life group. I can grow spiritually on my own.
- 3: I'm afraid that people will find out I don't have my life together.
- 4: Nobody in the group will truly understand me.
- 5: I'm afraid it will be draining.
- 6: I'm afraid of getting stuck in a group with people I don't like.
- 7: There are other more fun things I'd rather be doing.
- 8: I cannot sit still long enough to be in a group like that.
- 9: My life is fine the way it is. I don't want to feel pressured to change.
10. I am too busy. I am overwhelmed, and I just don't have time for one more thing.

In conclusion, having deeper relationships is too hard, too messy, and you probably don't want to do what it takes to maintain them. These are real reasons! Good reasons—**deeper relationships come with a high risk and a high cost.**

I have attended or led a variety of groups for over 20 years. Every group was different. But as I look back over my life and I think about all the ministry efforts I have taken part in as a pastor, there is no doubt the biggest impact I have made in ministry has been in my life group. The biggest impact on ME and the biggest impact on OTHERS has happened, without fail, in my groups. Nothing else has even come close.

**When I invest in a few people two things will happen: People's lives are changed, and my life is changed.**

About two weeks ago, I found a note from someone I invested in in an old book on my bookshelf. I have it on my desk now as a reminder. It says this:

"Thank you for leading me to Jesus. You are the only person I've ever met who will listen to everything I say, ignore all of it, and tell me I need Jesus. When I get tired of that, you don't try a different approach. You stick with Jesus. Thank you for the time you've spent meeting with me. Thank you for helping me see Jesus."

That is what it's all about! But it's not always easy. Truthfully, I didn't want to meet with him. I had to drag myself to do it.

I'm a loner and an introvert. I really struggle to ask for help and leaning into community. I usually go kicking and screaming to group but every time I do, I am glad I did. It's not always right away, but in the long run, I am always amazed at what God does with just the simplicity of remaining committed to a few people over a long period of time.

**In the beginning, we were designed for deep relationships!** We were created for real connection. Many in this church are malnourished in our relationships, and we don't even realize it. It's like our soul is starving—wasting away—and we don't even realize it.

We all need:

- To be known and loved
- To have someone look us in the eye when we're wrong
- To have people notice when we're struggling
- To have a more 3-dimensional view of God
- To be able to ask the hard questions to people that care about us
- To directly confront our self-centeredness

"To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to fully known, and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us."

- Timothy Keller

**Q:** *We have a million reasons to do life on our own. But what is God's strategy to reach the entire world?*

**A:** He made disciples.

What is a disciple? (Matt 4:19, Matt 28)

The definition is embedded in the invitation.

We are following Jesus, changed by Jesus, and on mission with Jesus.

When I teach my son how to drive a car, I am also inadvertently teaching my future grandsons. I don't just want my son to be able to drive, I want him to be a good dad. I want him to be better than I am! So, I must be INTENTIONAL not only in what I am teaching, but HOW I teach it. Why? **Because everything we do matters.** What we do in this life echoes into eternity! The good news is this: You are already making disciples because you are following Jesus and people are watching you.

Mission is all about who we invest in and how we do it.

*Is my life pointing people to Jesus?*

The target of this Church is discipleship—people coming alongside one another as we learn to follow Jesus. **The call on every believe is to make disciples.**

**Matt 28:18-20**

And Jesus came and said to them, "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. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

We are following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and on mission with Jesus!

What does it mean to make disciples or fishers of men? What does it mean to follow what Jesus did? Jesus invested in a few, then he asked those people to invest in a few. Those disciples didn't do it perfectly, but they still handed it off to the next generation. That's how we are in this room today. **We are all the great grandchildren of the disciples of Jesus.**

We are regular people, walking alongside regular people, helping them to know and follow Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are no experts in discipleship just like there are no expert parents. We don't know what we're doing, but we do the best we can because we love our kids.

*There are no experts in discipleship!*

### **Acts 4:13**

**13** Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

When regular, imperfect people step up, and step in to invest in a few, the Lord moves in powerful ways in your life and those around you. I want to challenge every person here to step up and step in. Watch what God will do!

***How is God calling you to step in a little deeper into community? How is he leading you to be intentional to make disciples of Jesus?***

I am asking you to put your feet in the water and watch what God might do if we take the next small step.

**Notes:**