

Revolutionary Disciple Week #1: It's a journey with Jesus

This is the beginning of a teaching series that I believe can be huge for us as a church. It's called Revolutionary disciple. There are **three ways** that you can connect with this teaching. **First, come to worship for the next 3 weeks.** I will be teaching about something in God's Word that can be revolutionary for us as followers or disciples of Jesus. **The second way** is to get into a bridge group. **These are a setting with 6 to 12 people** who discuss the topic in a more **relational setting like Jesus did with his twelve.** This is where the **theory of what is taught here becomes practice** in a setting where we help each other put the teaching into real life. There are groups meeting all over the area in Midland and Beaverton. **The third is to get this book** with the same title. This will help you go a little deeper into what a revolutionary follower of Jesus is like. This is a really excellent and challenging read. You do not need to read the book **to understand the sermons or take part in the bridge group.**

My challenge is to go all in. If you **haven't been attending in person** and you are healthy, then take that step. If you are attending, but are not in a bridge group, take a look at the **back of your outline** for places and times and contact info. Call today or just stop by. It's ok, these are **open groups.** If you are doing both of these or if you are a reader, then let Tammy know or simply call the office and you can purchase one.

This is what **we want for everyone.** This is the kind of church that I want to be a part of. **A church filled with people for whom this next statement is true will be a life giving, transformational community.**

A disciple (if you prefer **apprentice** that works too) **is someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus and committed to Jesus' mission.**

This is revolutionary in nature. It's grass roots.

This first point is really important. **This is a journey, not a point of arrival.**

Notice that the definition of a disciple isn't a destination. Following Jesus clearly isn't about arriving; it is about continuing to listen and obey. **Being changed by doesn't have some mystical "maturity" goal.** The only arrival is that **he will finish** what he starts in us. Even committed to his mission sounds like it has a finish line or **a one time only commitment.** But when you get to know Jesus and you allow him to change you, how we are to **join his mission changes and morphs.** The mission is to live and love like Jesus taking his fullness wherever we go and to help people learn to follow him as we go.

This is a journey.

Maybe these diagrams will help us see it better. **(Human mindset diagram)**

The first diagram is looking at God through a purely human mindset. **The question is how am I doing? It's about me getting somewhere.** It's about taking steps, getting better, and, therefore, **getting closer to Jesus.** Every other part of our lives, work, and school is based upon taking steps toward a goal. The problem is, when we did it this way we get **discouraged** and we ignore God's grace. This is based upon a wrong view of God. He is either **angry, ambivalent, or absent.**

The second is the Jesus' mindset. **(Jesus mindset diagram)** This is where we **stop trying to get closer** to someone who has already come too close to us. **The question is no longer how am I doing, but rather God how can you be so good.** If we are stepping over the line of faith and committing our lives to Jesus, then he's in you and you can't get any closer. **It's about abiding** in him, listening to him, and allowing him to transform you. This is the way Jesus wants us to view our relationship with him.

It's a journey, not a point of arrival. We just keep walking with Jesus and learning from him the abundant life.

There is one absolute **deal breaker** to this journey. It is the one thing that will ruin our ability to follow, be changed by, and fully commit to his mission. **It's not ability or giftedness.** There are all kinds of gifts that people have; some are more dynamic than others. **It's not intelligence.** Smart people don't necessarily think themselves into being disciples. **It's not a lack of wisdom.** You can become wiser as you grow. **It's not any particular sinful behavior,** because those are the things that Jesus will give us victory over and use, because they are a part of our weakness. **It's not how much Bible you know,** because you can grow in that. **It's certainly not about your age,** because kids can be more trusting and faithful than adults are.

Let me state this in a positive or what you must have in order to be able to follow, be changed by, and fully commit to Jesus' mission.

Without humility this cannot happen.

That reveals the deal breaker, which is pride. Pride kills discipleship. Pride and humility are polar opposites. But wait, I'm **constantly told that pride is a good thing.** I should be proud of myself, my kids, my country, my school... Those things aren't necessarily what we are talking about, but they can fall into the idea of pride that we are talking about. Here's what we mean by pride. **Pride is simply being self-absorbed.**

Self-absorbed means preoccupied with one's own feelings, interests, or situation. What I feel, want, or am in the middle of this is what I am focused upon and it is my lens through which I see the world. **It's living life like it's my story, starring me including Jesus and others.** Humility is living as if it's **Jesus' story**, starring Jesus, including me. And in that story I'm to serve others like Jesus did.

First of all, this is a **human disease** that we fight the rest of our lives. **It is the basis of all sin, which is rebellion to the loving authority of God.** It's doing it my way. Everybody has some of it. **Here's a quiz to see where pride might be popping up in the church.** See if any of this sounds way too familiar. **Don't be condemned or get defensive.** We all have a pride issue that Jesus wants to deal with.

Pride in the Church shows itself when we...

- Blast someone on social media with whom we disagree
- Scream and yell in anger at a sporting event
- Reject the promptings of the Holy Spirit to give up a particular sin
- Float from church to church or in and out of church because we're too busy chasing our dreams
- Rebuff people who hold us accountable for our actions
- Play the victim rather than trying to understand or resolve conflict
- Defend ourselves when someone gives us constructive criticism
- Leave a church and divide God's people, wreaking havoc along the way.
- Refuse to forgive others when we clearly need forgiveness from God and others too.
- Judge others for their sins but look past our own

Humility is knowing who you are in relation to God and choosing to go lower.

Jesus is our example of this. He was **totally secure** in his standing with his father and, therefore, he could choose to go lower and become a servant. In other words, he wasn't insecure about how his father felt about him.

It's like when Robin and I were dating. I wanted her at the beginning to see the best things about me. That meant not spending a lot of time together. **I was cleaned up, attentive, on my best behavior.** As our relationship went further, we talked more deeply and I was able to show her more of myself. **Then, when we promised to love and to cherish till death parts us,** there was a great amount of security. **When I trusted her, I didn't have to be insecure about her seeing my weaknesses.** Because I know she won't leave me, I can take a lower position to serve her and others. I can take risks and put myself out there.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

Jesus was the Son of Man, another way of saying, Messiah, Christ, Son of God. And because he knew and had confidence in that, he could choose to go lower. **You don't choose to go lower if you think it might affect your ability to feel like you are Messiah, Christ, Son of God.** If you feel like you need to prove those things to God and others, then you probably don't serve by "giving his life as a ransom for many."

Let's look again at the definition of a disciple of Jesus. **A disciple is someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus and committed to Jesus' mission.**

Let's break it down in its parts and ask the question, can you do this with pride or with humble submission?

Following Jesus means we humbly submit to Jesus as our leader. I am not a free agent or an independent, I belong to him. **Taking instructions from someone else will always uncover pride.**

"Being changed by Jesus," demands the humility to allow someone to get into your business and tell you where you need to change. Pride will buck up against this. **Pride will say something like this, "Well at least I'm not like _____ or as bad as _____."**

"Committing to Jesus mission" This takes humility because **we don't come up with our own dream for our life and then go get it.** Kids, especially those getting close to graduation. It is not about making a lot of money or getting to do something really fun for a job. **It's not about having a dream.** It's about asking, what has God called me to do with the next season in my life. **We submit to Jesus' plan to go where he sends us, to be his fullness and to love others like Jesus would.**

It's a journey, not a destination. Pride kills discipleship. Humility is knowing who you are in relationship to God and choosing to go lower. But how do we learn to do this in a culture that is all about pride and getting mine? **We're called to learn humility by walking with Jesus.**

²⁸ Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. (Does that verse describe you? Always trying to arrive or achieve? Do you need rest?) ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus' is the way to learn to be humble. But this comes from his heart, that is who he is. Me? That's not my heart; my heart needs to be changed into one that is naturally humble. Like I said, I'm not there yet. But if I take on his yoke, that means obey his leading, direction and correction, he will change my heart into a humble and gentle heart. But my part is choosing his yoke. I bow my head and slide it under that yoke to pull that plow. I learn humility by obeying King Jesus. I'll find out that humility isn't heavy, its light as he forms my heart.

God does the most forming of our hearts through obedience or life situations that are out of our control. We get humbled and we see ourselves more realistically than before. We see that it's not about me through events in our lives that we can't control because we are not God.

We start with Jesus and then we move to the Apostle Paul. **Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. ² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Ephesians 4:1-2**

I don't know about you, but I need Jesus to teach me how to be humble, gentle, and patient and to make allowance for others' faults all because of love. What is natural is to be self-absorbed. When it's about me others need to be gentle and patient and make allowance for my faults. If they would just relate to me that way then I could reciprocate. No, not until I get my focus off of my agenda and myself.

It begins with knowing who you are in your relationship with God. This is the answer...God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. Ephesians 1:5

Learning humility from Jesus begins with knowing who you are in relation to God. If you have trusted in Jesus, if you have stepped over the line of faith and decided to follow him, then you have been adopted. You are in. You don't have to try to earn your way into his good graces, you just have to learn from him.

My dad told me about learning humility. He was a young engineer at International Harvester. He was in the plant equipment design department. They were designing a paint booth for the truck cabs. My dad had a way in mind that he absolutely believed was the best way and that was that. It was something he had learned and felt comfortable with.

Well, as it turned out, he had some things yet to learn. There was a better way to move those cabs down the line and through the paint booths. Had to accept this different idea that was eventually incorporated into the production of trucks. He had to submit his plan to others.

At the same time he was operating at our church and in our home as someone who was secure in his relationship with Jesus, who was learning to make it about others and not himself. He **didn't have an issue submitting** to the leaders of the church. He **never tried to push his way in a business meeting.** He trusted God and the leaders.

Then when they wanted the first head elder after changing their church governance, this **85 year old, soft-spoken, listened more than he talked, never had the pastor or youth pastor as an entre at Sunday dinner, unimpressive in size and not dynamic in personality was the obvious and unanimous choice.**

My dad learned that from Jesus, not from the culture around him.

Here's how Jim Putman explains it in the book *The Revolutionary Disciple*. **Jesus is our example. "Jesus' humility came from a clear and accurate knowledge of who he was before God. Jesus knew he was equal with God; he knew he had all the power in the world; and he knew he was secure in God. He didn't deny any of that. These were all part of his identity. In fact, he could set aside the rights of his high position because he had fully embraced his identity before the Father."** 52

Pride is when we demand our rights that come from a position in life. Humility means knowing that I have these rights, but choosing to set them aside to go lower and serve someone.

It is fear that keeps us from voluntarily setting our rights aside in order to serve and sacrifice for others. Jesus had no such fear.

"We like saying, a humble person doesn't think less of themselves but thinks of themselves less often.' We'd add that when humble people do think of themselves, they seek to see themselves through the eyes of God—which is their true identity." 53

We practice this by repeating this phrase: I am one in whom Christ dwells and I live in his unshakable Kingdom.

Jesus knew who he was but decided to go lower. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:8 You can't go any lower than that. You and I will never serve

in that way. We will never go that low as to die for everyone knowing that many will ignore what was done for them.

This is revolutionary for me personally, my church and the world!

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. ⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had...When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Philippians 2:3-5 & 8

To this point in Greek/Roman culture, humility has only been used to describe submitting to someone who is above you. Humility could be described as knowing one's place or staying in your lane. This is the first time in Greek or Jewish literature where humility is used to describe coming under someone who is an equal or below you. Bam! That's the definition of a revolutionary thought.

This is revolutionary for me as a person. It will transform my primary relationships. People who are secure enough in who they are to go lower and serve others will never need for friends.

I loved being around Sterling Gatling. He was almost always the smartest person in the room, but never needed to prove it. Why? Because he was secure in his adoption by Jesus. He didn't need to prove anything or earn anything from God. He would serve me by being available whenever I needed him. I was his pastor, but he served me and enabled me to do my job. And here is the acid test for humility. Sterling never tried to use his relationship with me as a means of getting any kind of advantage or leverage. I've had people down through my ministry who acted like they wanted to be my friend or serve me, but really their end game was leverage or power or position in the church.

This one thing would create a revival in our church. If we are willing to come to terms with our pride and learn humility from Jesus, the ripple effect would be huge. We couldn't approach one another in the same way. Our affection for each other would increase as we humbly serve one another. Our connection as parts of the body of Christ would grow. And yes we would be more effective at helping people follow Jesus and loving people around us that don't know Jesus or his ways.

And what about our world, particularly our country, that is more divided than anytime I can remember. You might remember this verse. It's often quoted but we mostly focus on the prayer part.

Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. ¹⁵ My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place. 2 Chronicles 7:14

The restoration of this world begins with God's people humbling themselves, not the culture at large. If those people would just humble themselves and listen to us, then our land would be restored to what it was intended to be. No, we who have the answer, Jesus, are the ones who need to learn humility.

The rest of this series will look at what humility looks like in the different areas of our lives. What it looks like in our homes, our church and the world.

Steps of Obedience

I want to challenge you to do something simple but important. I'm giving you a folded card with two sides. I want you to take it home or to work someplace where you will see it daily. I want you to ask yourself these questions to see if **The Holy Spirit** can help you see where your pride is. **Don't get defensive, don't feel defeated** because we all have some pride that is getting in the way of what God wants to do in us through us.

If you are in a bridge group and I encourage you to jump in now if you aren't, you will be coming back to these statements.

Recognizing Pride

- I don't obey someone unless I agree with them.
- I don't trust leaders over my own intuition and instincts.
- I don't serve unless people see my service.
- I don't serve unless I'm gifted at it.
- I won't be taught because I'm the teacher.
- I have nothing left to learn because I am an expert.
- I won't be a servant unless it leads to being a leader later on.
- I will follow leaders only if I understand the reason behind what they are doing.
- I hear from God in a unique way that no one understands except me.

I understand that if you have had **something very traumatic in your life**, particularly when you were young, then you might see a lot of this in you. You've operated in pride because you needed to protect yourself. **This series might bring up some stuff** that has been negatively affecting you

for years. This would be a great time to get with a counselor to talk about that hurt.

Allow these verses to read you this week.

What do I mean by letting these verses read you? Yes, I do want you to look them up and read them. But by reading them I want to ask you to **allow them to point out what is in you. Let them get into your business and uncover what God wants to form in your heart.**

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

When the scripture reads you that means it reveals something in you that God wants to transform. He puts a light on what has been hidden. He uses scripture to **get around your defenses** that keep others out. This is not to embarrass or humiliate, but rather to heal mold you.

- James 4:7
- Ephesians 5:21
- Ephesians 6:1
- Hebrews 13:17
- Ephesians 5:21
- 1 Peter 2:18
- Romans 13:1-2

There are conveniently 7 verses, one per day.

What is God saying to you? What do I need to confess and repent for?