

## **DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT Training**

16 December 2017, EFCC-LTC

### **DEVOTIONAL: It's All About Jesus (John 21)**

#### **1. Peter's Restoration to Apostolic Ministry**

##### **John 21**

*15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." 19 (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."*

- This portion of John 21 is commonly known as the restoration of Peter back into the ministry. We know that it was Peter who betrayed Jesus Christ, not once but thrice, after Jesus was arrested. This passage which talks about his restoration is important in the sense that it gives credence to Peter's apostolic ministry

#### **2. Discipleship Principle: "Follow Me"**

- But there is also a very significant discipleship principle that this passage teaches us. John 21 talks about the kind of heart-attitude needed for discipleship of the inner life.
- Let's look into the context: 21:16-17: Jesus asked Peter 3 times, "Do you love me?" Peter answered "Yes, Lord" every after the question. We will go back to this later.
- "Do you love Me, Peter?" "Lord, You know that I love You."
- Jesus then told Peter what his future apostolic ministry will be in the Kingdom of God. And it doesn't look bright, 21:18-19
- "Peter, this is how you're going to die. It's going to be a very difficult death."
- Let's pause for a minute and try to put our feet in Peter's sandals, how would you take those heavy words from your Master and Lord? I wonder how Peter felt at that time? Excited? I don't think so. Fearful? Probably. But we're not Peter, and so we cannot tell exactly how he felt at that time.
- But definitely Jesus knew exactly Peter's inner struggle at that time. Jesus sees through the heart and soul of Peter. And then Jesus simply said to Peter: "Follow Me" (21:19b)
- What was it that Jesus was actually conveying to Peter?
- In a way, Jesus was saying: "It's alright, Peter, I know what's going on inside of you, I know your inner struggle. Just follow me. Don't let your circumstances distract you. Focus on Me, Peter. Just follow Me."

- After the “betrayal” incident, could it be that Peter now is more ready to focus on following Jesus? I would think so.

### **3. Same Discipleship Principle, Taught Twice: “Follow Me”**

- But then he was faced with another struggle. He turned around and saw the other disciple, John (21:20), whom the Bible describes as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”
- Upon seeing John, Peter immediately blurted out, “Lord, and what about this man?” (Lord, what about John?)
- The passage did not say the reason behind Peter’s question. Probably, it was more a case of comparison, as hinted by the context, “Lord, You said I’m going to have a very difficult death, OK, I got that...but how about John?”
- How did Jesus answer Peter’s question? Also in a form of a question, 21:22 “If I want him (John) to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!”
- “What is that to you Peter? You follow Me!” It’s like Jesus was saying to Peter, “I know what’s going on inside of you, Peter. I know your inner struggle. Just follow me. Don’t let that comparison distract you. Focus on Me, Peter. Just follow Me.”

#### **Conclusion:**

- Two different struggles Peter faced: First, the struggle with his circumstances, his uncertain future; and second, he struggled in comparison with John.
- But in the midst of those struggles, Jesus taught Peter a very important discipleship lesson: That if we want to follow Jesus, we ought to focus on Him, not on the circumstances, however “ugly” and uncertain; not on how we compare with others. Because Jesus understands full well our struggles, and our difficulties. And in the midst of our difficulties, Jesus is calling us to focus on Him, and follow Him. He knows what He’s doing and He knows where He’s leading us.
- Radical discipleship is all about Jesus! It is faithfulness to the Faithful God, no matter what! It’s not just about our outward actions. It’s about cultivating the inner attitudes and character, and our core values. A cultivated inner life serves our inner compass that governs all our actions.

#### **PRAYER**

#### **Reflection & Sharing:**

1. What has been your focus at the present period of time?
2. How can you walk faithfully to what God has assigned to you in the face of a difficult circumstance, or an uncertain future?

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

### 1. “Disciple”

- During the time of Jesus, the word “disciple” was a commonly used to refer to an “apprentice” or a “learner”. But Jesus redefined the term “disciple” and gave it such a radical meaning. The following Bible verses spell out the radicalness of His definition of the word “disciple.”

#### Luke 14

v. 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

v. 27 “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

v. 33 “So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

#### Luke 9

v. 23-24 “If anyone would come after Me, let Him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”

- From these verses we can derive that a “disciple” of Jesus is not merely a “learner”, but someone who **knows the cost** of following Jesus, and is **willing to pay that cost**, no matter what.

### “Discipleship”

- Lee Camp (author of “Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World): *“Jesus of Nazareth always comes asking disciples to follow Him – not merely “accept Him”, not merely “believe in Him”, not merely “worship Him”, but to follow Him: one either follows Christ, or one does not...”* In effect, what he is saying is that there’s no middle ground, it’s either you are a disciple or you are not.
- Discipleship is absolute surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all arenas of life. It’s either Jesus is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all.
- For the early church, following Jesus was their life, it was their passion! And this is what we’re missing in discipleship today - **the passion for God**.
- What the church of God needs today is to recapture afresh this passion for God, to live it out, and to pass it on to the next generation through the process of intentional discipling.
- But how do we start this process?

### **Philosophy of Discipleship**

- *“Discipleship is all about a certain kind of person who is radically committed to a certain kind of purpose and who, through a certain kind of process, reproduces a certain kind of product.”* (E. Chan)

- The question is not whether or not we are discipling. Churches around the world would say they are into discipleship. But The critical question is: “What kind of disciples are being produced? Or what kind of disciples do we want to raise?” It’s a question of product.
- But these questions simply point us to a more basic question: “What kind of a disciple am I?” This is a very important question to ask because the fact is, we will only reproduce after our own kind.
- Discipleship therefore has to start with me and you. And this brings us to our topic this morning, “Discipleship from the Inside Out.”
- Radical discipleship is a discipleship from the inside out. It’s the discipleship of the inner life from self-centeredness into Christ-centeredness. It’s a process of transformation.
- **The question for us today is, “Am I willing to be disciplined in my inner life? Am I willing to pay the price?”**

## **SESSION 1**

### **A. WHY IS DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT SO IMPORTANT?**

#### **1. Because it’s a question of VALUES**

- Our core VALUES define us. They are what we hold so dear and so important in our lives. They tell us why we do what we do. They are the driving force behind the choices that we make.
- We’re created by God and for God, but we were born with the sinful Adamic nature. When we were born, we were born NOT interested in God. Naturally our values are reflective of the values of the world (temporal) more than the values of God’s kingdom (eternal)
- As disciples of Jesus, our values must be disciplined by the Scriptures. And then as these biblical values are formed in us, they will help us define what is of ultimate importance so that we may live for what really matters.
- Matthew 6:21 “For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.”

#### **2. Because God values AUTHENTICITY above ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- 1 Samuel 16:7b “For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”.
- Even in the exercise of our spiritual gifts, God searches into our heart’s motives (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

- Corrie Ten Boom: “God never measures the mind...He always puts His tape measure in the heart.”
- God wants us to be tutored from the inside out into becoming authentic disciples reproducing authentic disciples.

### **3. Because without discipleship from the inside-out, we either BURN OUT or we RUN ON EMPTY**

- When we keep chasing the things of temporal happiness and satisfaction we get restless.
- Some of us here, we just attended the recent IDMC conference where the topic on Toxic Spirituality was discussed – Service without Joy, Performance without Restedness, Work without Worship, Devotion without Discipleship, Rituals without Reality.
- We need to be discipled on the importance of full surrender, gratitude, contentment, faithfulness, purposeful work, grateful stewardship, joyful service...

## **B. WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT ALL ABOUT?**

- As I have mentioned already, discipleship from the inside out is a question of values.
- Matthew 6:33 “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
  - “Kingdom of God” speaks of people living in intimate relationship with God and in submission to Him. The natural consequence of this is God’s blessing and approval.
  - To “seek first” does not mean priority, but purpose. To seek first God’s Kingdom and righteousness is to intentionally make God our consuming passion - to intentionally and intensely pursue Him above all else, and to give Him first place in everything - thoughts, words, actions, relationships
- It’s all about the transformation of our values into Kingdom values.

### **1. It’s putting CHRIST first.**

- When we talk about the Kingdom, we talk about the KING for there is no kingdom where there is no KING...
- It’s all about putting Christ and His commandments above all else. That’s why the essence of the great commission is “make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey all things (everything) I have commanded you.”
- Discipleship from the inside out is training the inner life to follow the KING, and this involves **ACTIVE obedience**. When we were still younger, my Mom would get pissed off every time she tells us to do the dishes, or other housework for that matter, and we say,

“Wait, Mom!” Ten minutes pass, the dishes are still waiting. Then Mom says again, “Go, wash the dishes!” And we say again, “Wait, Mom!” Another 15 minutes pass, and the dishes are still waiting!

- But this is not the way to treat our King! How should we respond to the King? – in active obedience.
- It’s a discipleship that transforms “my will, my ways, my wants” to “Your will, Your ways, Your Wants, King Jesus”... “until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). It means that Christ-likeness is developed and evident in our lives, and increasingly, the character of Christ shines through our lives. This is character transformation!

## **2. It’s putting CHARACTER first, above comfort**

- Character transformation is at the heart of discipling. God wants to change us from the inside out, He wants to change our character, because character development will take care of how we serve, how we exercise of spiritual gifts, how we relate, how we respond to our circumstances.
- Example: These past few days, sisters from the English Zone were preparing for the Christmas fellowship for Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, the discussions are being done in the chat group. I see the exchange of messages, and I can’t help but appreciate the display of disciplined characters.
- Often times when we have a task to accomplish, we get so focused on the end result that we are not careful with the means. But to God who sees and knows everything, the means is as important as the end, if not more important, because that’s where our character is tested.
- In discipleship, we don’t just pass on information; we nurture the character.
- But this needs to start in us. Pastor Edmund Chan keeps reminding us that if we want to grow as disciples of Jesus, we need to take care of the depth of our inner life, and God will take care of the breadth of our ministry.
- We need to surrender to the able hands of the Wise and Sovereign Potter. Because He is so committed to our character development that He will allow whatever is necessary for that inner transformation to happen. Remember Romans 8:28: “And God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.”
- So when God points to a sinful character or attitude, that means He wants to change that. If you value character transformation then you need to stop justifying, or explaining, or blaming; and you will start confessing and repenting. Confession and repentance are the first steps to character transformation.
- Discipleship from the inside out is a series of personal revivals and breakthrough victories. Edmund Chan defines breakthrough as: God breaking into your sin, and you breaking with that sin – THAT is the point of breakthrough, which leads to a breaking forth in fruitfulness.

### **Reflection & Sharing:**

Look into Ephesians 4:20-24

- What does it mean to “put off the old self” and “put on the new self”?
- How can we practically “put off the old self” and “put on the new self”?

### **3. It's putting CALLING first**

- “To be a follower of Christ is to be on a journey where heart and life and possessions all get pulled along in the direction of the Kingdom.” (Mark Powley)
- Discipleship from the inside out is a God-directed stewardship of our Time, Treasure, Talents, and our very Life itself, which is primarily based on what God is calling us to do, not on the needs that we see. Needs do not constitute our calling.
- “What is it, Lord, that You are calling me to do here? I only want to do what You want me to do. Lead me, Lord, and I will follow - whatever, wherever, whenever, however.”
- When God gives you a task, big or small, God will always provide for everything you need to accomplish that task, so don't be afraid to follow.
- So Discipleship from the inside out is the transformation of the inner life from selfishness into becoming generous, cheerful, and sacrificial givers of all that God has blessed us with. For after all, the bottom line of God blessing us is so that we will become a blessing to others, according to His lead. It's His call, not ours.

### **Reflection & Sharing:**

1. Look into 1 Corinthians 4:1-2...

- Why is stewardship so important in the Christian life?
- In practical terms, how can we be faithful stewards?

## **SESSION 2**

### **C. WHY IS DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT SO NEGLECTED?**

#### **1. Because it takes TIME and TRUST**

- It's a lifetime journey that you and I we are not familiar with. It's an on-going process.
- But we are always busy, and we are so used to quick-fix and instant gratification.
- Corrie Ten Boom: “If the devil can't make you bad, he will make you busy.”
- But discipleship from the inside out not only takes time, but also TRUST - TRUST in the God who is able to finish the good that He has started in you and me. TRUST that the all-knowing, all-powerful, ever-present God is at work in us, even if we don't feel like He is.

#### **2. Because it's hard to MEASURE**

- “How is your inner life?” How do we measure that? The inner life is hard to measure because it is not seen on the surface, but its fruitfulness can be experienced.
- Discipleship programs are measurable, and so many churches are tempted to focus so much on the program, instead of seeing them only as tools.

### **3. Because it’s DIFFICULT**

- It’s difficult to start, and it’s even more difficult to sustain
  - a. Because it’s COUNTER-INTUITIVE  
It’s opposite to what we naturally know, to what we are used to do. It’s outside our comfort zone.
  - b. Because we have to face our “INNER DEMONS”  
Often times we are afraid to see our inner demons, the inner pains and wounds. And we do not have the courage to deal with them
  - c. Because we are IMPATIENT  
Any growth process takes time but we are impatient, and we prefer short-cuts and instant gratification
  - d. Because we DO NOT KNOW HOW  
This is why we need to trust that God is able to show us how. But oftentimes our problem is presumptuousness. We think we know when we actually don’t.
  - e. Because we are ILL-DISCIPLINED  
We are badly disciplined by nature; we are often times excited to start, and then the excitement fades out over time. And sometimes, instead of submitting to God, we submit to the negative thoughts, “You’re a failure. You’re not gonna make it!” Of course by yourself you can’t! But it’s possible in God’s power!!!

### **D. HOW CAN WE CULTIVATE IT?**

- If we understand the What and the WHY, we will eventually understand the HOW.
- Discipleship is a “cultivated taste”. It’s not something that we are inclined to do. “My Durian Experience”: The first time I tasted durian, I felt like I would throw up. But we were on a missionary trip at that time and so we ate what we’re served . But that experience started me to get curious: Why some people love durian?” And so I tried eating it again, I still didn’t like it the second time. And then I tried eating it again the third time, and then I started to like it, and now I love it. It’s a cultivated taste for me.
- Let’s cultivate our taste for this inner life discipleship



1. Through taking STOCK of our life (routine check)
  - We must take an inventory of the things that are going on in the different areas of our life, our core values, our priorities, our dreams and ambitions, our relationships, our scope of influences
  - What needs to be changed?
  
2. Through taking CHARGE of our life
  - We must have intentionality in our desire to grow as disciples, in seeking God, in following His lead.
  - Don't just sit in your own comfort zones; don't settle for petty excuses; take your relationship with Jesus seriously
  - God is calling us to grow and bear fruit, and this will happen when we abide in Him.
  
3. Through taking CARE of our life
  - We must have the integrity to take care of the depth of our life, the inner life. And when we do that, God will take care of the breadth of our ministry, and that spells fruitfulness

### **SOME INNER LIFE QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON:**

- There are at least three vital aspects of a disciple's private life to be deepened: the devotional life, the developmental life, and the domestic life.
- Here are some questions to help in our reflection and self-examination. These questions might also be useful in our mentoring of others.

#### **1. Taking care of the DEVOTIONAL aspect of life (our relationship with God):**

Take time to be alone with God. There is no substitute for a disciple's personal walk with God. Here are some questions to consider:

- Do I take time for personal retreats to meet with God?
- Do I sense God's presence daily?
- Do I know God as my Shepherd and Master?
- Do I guard my quiet time and cultivate a deep devotional life?
- Do I keep the Sabbath principle in my life?
- Do I have a vital spirituality anchored by a strong prayer life?
- Do I deal seriously and thoroughly with sin in my life in true and complete repentance?

#### **2. Taking care of the DEVELOPMENTAL aspect of life (our relationship with self):**

As a disciple of Jesus, dying to self does not mean neglecting yourself. Personal leadership is important to effective leadership. And personal growth and development is vital to this endeavour. Here are some questions to consider:

- How am I growing in my grasp of the Word of God?
- What materials do I read? Do I have an enriching reading plan?

- Do I exercise on a regular basis?
- Do I carve out time in a busy schedule to rest and recharge?
- Do I make time for engaging interactions with my mentor(s)?
- Do I keep a journal of God's precious lessons in my life?
- Do I have good friends in a loving relationship of accountability?

### **3. Taking care of the DEVOTIONAL aspect of life (our relationship with family):**

A strong family life is a gift of God. One of our primary responsibilities in life and ministry is our family. Here are some questions to consider"

- How well do I know the real needs of my family?
- Am I giving time to meet my family's real needs?
- What family rituals do we keep that are enriching?
- Are we having family devotions?
- Do I pray with my family members?
- How do my family members see (know) me?

Balancing life's demands is not easy. It requires wise and disciplined life management. But a leader who wants to finish well must pay attention to these vital signs of life. And it all starts within – in the inner life. Take care of the depth of your life, and God will take care of the breadth of your ministry.

### **CONCLUSION: LOVING JESUS (John 21:15-17)**

*15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."*

(The Immediate Context: The miraculous catch of fish.)

Jesus asks: "Do you love Me more than these?" More than what?

In a sense Jesus was asking Peter, "Do you love Me for who I am? Or do you love Me for all the spectacular miracles I have done? Do you love Me more than what I can do?"

To every disciple of Jesus, loving Jesus is of great importance because when we are discipled into loving the One who loved us first, this love-relationship we have with Him draws us to really commit and submit our entire being towards pleasing Him whom we love.

Loving Jesus is to do whatever He calls us to do, no matter what the cost may be. But we need to be disciplined into loving Jesus because we are not naturally in love with Him:

It starts with a desire,

Which grows into a decision,

That develops into a discipline,

And blooms into a beautiful devotion

This is what we desire to see happen as a church, that we will grow and fall in love with Jesus over and over and over again, becoming more and more like Him.

Reflection and Sharing:

1. In the light of what you've heard today and your present circumstances, what do you think is God teaching/telling you?
2. What will you do with what God is teaching you?

**PRAYER:**