

Summary- Nurture Disciples so they Flourish in the Faith-Matt 28:18-20; 1 Peter 1:13-2:3

Jesus must have been thinking of nurturing disciples when he gave his parting commands to his disciples after his resurrection in Matthew 28:19: when He said, '*Go and make disciples of all nations...*' **This command implies** that making disciples is inherent in our identity as followers of Christ. Not just to preach and make converts, but to nurture them to grow, thrive and become confident as His disciples who will make others disciples. In v20 Jesus says we are to teach them to obey everything He has commanded us.

A disciple is a follower of Jesus – who trusts and believes in Jesus and follows His words and example. He is learning to walk with Jesus because he is committed to Him and has an intimate, instructive, and imitative relationship with Him. They help others to follow Jesus by doing deliberate spiritual good to them. Good disciples disciple others.

To be a church that nurtures disciples, we can learn from Peter in 1 Peter 1:13-2:3. He says, we should be alert, obedient and sober and encourages us to be holy like Jesus. He says that we should powerfully long for the nourishment that comes from feeding on the Word of God. A healthy new baby has an instinctive yearning for its mother's milk. He calls us to emulate the unrelenting desire to be fed by God's word – crave the Word of God. Study the Bible regularly. Let it shape our lives. A steady diet of God's Word is vital for our growth. God uses gifts He has given us to bless others in His church.

As we grow spiritually, we nurture and build others up. The Message (Psalm 1) says, *this person thrills to God's Word, & chews on Scripture day and night, never dropping a leaf, always in blossom*. This speaks of nourishment, growth & maturity in their faith.

Jude (v20) says, *dear friends, carefully build yourselves up in this most holy faith*. We do this by influencing one another to walk in the way of Christ as we obey the Word.

To flourish, it's important to be in worship services, Bible studies, Prayer fellowship, Home groups, and the like. They are opportunities for growth as we study the bible together and consider our struggles and how to apply biblical truth to the reality of our everyday life. We can share our struggles, pray together and grow in loving obedience to God.

Challenge: Ask yourself, Am I growing as a disciple? Am I receiving nurture from the bible and obeying it? Am I nurturing, supporting, influencing others in the faith? Am I in the same place I was as a Christian 5 years ago, or can I see signs of growth in my choices & desires? How useful am I in the church? God is asking each one of us to grow up! You've heard the statement; you are what you eat. So **what do you eat a lot of or feast on spiritually?** Jesus said, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be satisfied...* not those who casually snack after righteousness.

Isaiah 55 says that God's *ways are far higher than ours and his thoughts way above ours*. He looked at crooked Jacob, and gave him a new name, Israel, (which means triumphant with God). He looked at Gideon, and called him a man of valour who would accomplish great things for Him. At that time, Gideon was a bungling coward. Jesus looked at unstable Peter, and called him a fisher of men, when all that Peter wanted to say was, "*Please leave me alone, I am a sinner*". God is looking at you, beloved saint, where you are, perhaps feeling defeated, unmotivated, famished and he is saying, **you are called to be my disciple. Jesus trusts in what his resurrection power will accomplish in and through you. Go, and by my grace, live like my disciple. He says, 'and surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age'**. (Matt 28:20)