
Be a Disciple of Jesus Christ

DARRELL DELANEY

Some people think of discipleship as a way of living that is designated for special people on a special mission, like masterclass for Christians. In actuality, discipleship is for everyone who is a believer and follower in Jesus. Even though that is true, there are stages and steps in that walk with the Lord. We plan to unpack what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in this episode of *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Darrell, we are, with this program, beginning a new series of programs in which we want to talk about something we do talk about a lot, but do we really reflect on it and know what it means, and that is discipleship. What does it mean to be a disciple? How do we become a disciple? How do we grow as a disciple? So, that is what we want to talk about in the next few programs in this new series.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know what? I get so excited when someone walks up to me and says: Do you know how to become a disciple? Do you know what it means to be a disciple? I remember in college when I started doing Bible studies. That was an exciting question that I had for my mentors, but now it is a question as a pastor that I receive quite often. How do we grow? What does it mean? How do we demystify it? Have you ever had that question come to you, Scott?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sure; yes. People who are really committed Christians want to understand more. I mean, this is really...and grow more, and mature more. This is really what is behind almost every Bible study every church has. People come together...yes, there is a social element to it. It is nice to see your friends at the mid-week Bible study, or get together for morning in the breakfast time or something at a restaurant or at the church. So, there is a social dimension, but at the core of it is this desire to dig into what we do here on *Groundwork*. To dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. People want to grow in their discipleship. You know, discipleship, Darrell, always begins...it begins this way in the Bible with Jesus saying, "Follow me."

DARRELL DELANEY

Exactly.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And following Jesus means doing now spiritually by the Holy Spirit what the disciples could physically do, and that was follow Jesus and watch him and learn and figure out how to imitate him.

DARRELL DELANEY

There was actually a saying in the Hebrew culture: May you get dusty; because they would follow the rabbis so closely that they would literally get the dust of the shoes on them. The point is to follow very closely; so, when Jesus says, "Follow me," he is opening an invitation to have a relationship to grow; and when he teaches this in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Chapter 7, he says:

⁷"Ask and it will be given; seek and you shall find; knock and the door will be opened."

So, when people want to be disciples, they are literally knocking on Jesus' door, and we get to help with that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right. I like that "dusty" comment...to stay close to Jesus, to follow him...and it wasn't easy for the disciples, you know. They had some different ideas on who Jesus was supposed to be, and so sometimes instead of following, they tried to take the lead...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Jesus always had to kind of shoo them back behind him; but I always like the German word...Dietrich Bonhoeffer's famous book, *The Cost of Discipleship*...its German title is just one word: *Nachfolge*, which is the German word for discipleship; and *nachfolge* literally means to follow after; and that is how we learn.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think at this point, Scott, it might be important for us to get a working definition of a disciple. When you think about it simply, it means that you are an intentional learner. You are learning in a direction. You are learning with intentionality. I have an elliptical in my room, and I have a weight bench in my garage, but if I don't put any intentionality behind it, I am not going to get any more fit than I am now. So, I actually have to get on that treadmill and then actually pick up the weights and get going. So, it is something that is a discipline. It is something that I do regularly that actually benefits me inch by inch; and I think as a disciple who is learning to grow and follow Jesus, we need to be a person who intentionally has practices in our lives to help us to grow.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is a good analogy, and one, you know, I think the Apostle Paul often used in the New Testament as well; but right, that idea of intentionality...I speak from some experience here, I am afraid to say, but just having a treadmill in the house doesn't make you more fit if it just sits there.

DARRELL DELANEY

You said it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It gets dusty in the wrong way, which mine did, I am afraid to say. You have got to want to do it, right? That kind of training, Darrell, we read about in the New Testament.

DARRELL DELANEY

Definitely; so, I have a verse here from 1 Timothy Chapter 4:7, 8, and it reads like this: ⁷Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. ⁸For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. Timothy is told by his mentor, Paul, that he needs to actually not just train for physical things, but to train for spiritual things; and so, if he uses the same principles that he did for the physical training, he is not only going to get benefit for this life, but the life to come.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; in fact, this is sort of an interesting little vignette of the growth of discipleship. Timothy is now under the mentorship of the Apostle Paul...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Paul is probably getting older. The letters to Timothy and Titus, the so-called pastoral epistles, we think are the last letters Paul wrote, and he was passing the torch to the next generation, Timothy and Titus...

DARRELL DELANEY

That is right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And they were working in the Greek world, Timothy in Ephesus, Titus on the island of Crete, where the Olympics and training and athleticism, that was the top of the mark. If you were a great athlete today, you would have your picture on the cover of *People* magazine and you would be on TV all the time. So, now Paul makes the transfer: If you put that much work into your spiritual life, you are going to be really healthy in ways that last, because eventually even the best athlete in the world gets older and dies...

DARRELL DELANEY

You beat Father Time.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, not so if it is spiritual.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is true...that is true. In just a minute, we are going to talk about different aspects of discipleship, and we pray that it will help you discern where you are in your walk with Christ. Stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This is the first program in a series of programs on discipleship, what it is...and we kind of defined it...and we want to talk about the stages. In this particular program, being the first program in this series, we are going to talk about the early stages of discipleship; and the idea is that we are supposed to mature, and we are going to talk more about that in the second program of this series, but at this point, we are talking about some early stages of all that.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, you alluded to the second episode, which will happen to be about meat, but this one is about milk...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

The Apostle Peter writes about that in his book. In 1 Peter Chapter 2:2, 3, he writes: ²Like newborn babies, crave spiritual milk so that you may grow up in your salvation, ³now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

The Apostle Peter is making the connection of babies craving milk and our spirits craving spiritual milk. Now, what is spiritual milk? Have you ever had anyone ask you this question, Scott?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, and it is a metaphor—an image that Peter is using here, obviously—and Peter...you know, you wonder about Peter...such an interesting character. So, he was writing...we think that both of the letters we have in the New Testament from Peter were written to the scattered Jewish Christians...Jews who had become Christians, which was sort of the field Peter worked; whereas Paul worked more with the Gentiles and so forth; but anyway, Peter himself surely probably knows a little something about this, because there was a time...when he was following Jesus physically, before Jesus died and rose again and ascended to heaven...there was a time when Peter thought he was ready for meat a whole lot earlier than he actually was. He tried to correct Jesus' theology now and then and got scolded for it; and I think, later now, now that he has become more mature as now an apostle, I think he is saying: Yeah, back then I should have stuck to the milk because I was getting ahead of myself. But yes, I have had people ask me that question. How do you answer it?

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, the way I answer it...I mean, this whole topic could be its own series...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

What is spiritual milk? How do we use it? But, to break it all the way down, it is the regular practices that you have in your life that help you to grow in your walk with Jesus. So, for some, weekly worship. For me, it has been scripture memorization. For others, it could be studying the Word, it could be writing the music, it could be journaling. There are a variety of different ways for this, and many people have been nourished in a variety of ways; as far as discipleship goes, there are practices that we have.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When we literally as parents have babies, you know, we adapt what we offer them according to the stage of life where we know they are at. Literally, that is milk for the first part of a child's life; that is all they can take in and drink; and spiritually, I think, you know, for people who are just starting out...for anybody who is a fairly new Christian, you know, milk, I think, are just a lot of those basic teachings. You just kind of have to try to figure out...maybe you have heard different things about Jesus your whole life, but who was he really? You know, when people sometimes say: You know, I don't know anything about it. So, I will say: Well, you know, go to the Gospel of Mark...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because Mark in many ways is a gospel of some milk. Now there is lots of substance to it, too, but right, Mark gets a lot in in a hurry...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He is always in a rush...

DARRELL DELANEY

Action-packed gospel.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, he is very...he shows Jesus in action a lot; and so, if you study Mark, you are going to start to figure out, you know, some of the basics of what is a disciple, who is Jesus, and so forth and so on; and then maybe you move on to the Gospel of John, which is a little deeper, and yet, also has some very basic teachings and so forth. Those are the kinds of things that, you know, I think about; or you know, just being able to figure out, if you are in a church that recites the Apostles' Creed, the milk of the gospel would just be being able to understand what that creed means, right? And you find a way to do that, through a study group or whatever you can do.

DARRELL DELANEY

Definitely; and as a father, I have a daughter who is very young, and she would love for me to get *The Jesus Storybook Bible* off the shelf, read a couple of stories out of that, and then lead her through her prayer. So, that is spiritual milk for her, to be able to read *The Jesus Storybook Bible* and to learn more about what Jesus' life meant, and then to be able to lead her in a simple prayer is a way for spiritual milk to begin nourishing her heart. So, now she knows that: 1) God is listening; 2) That I can speak and I can communicate with God through prayer, and that is something she can wash, rinse, and repeat when she gets older. Of course, it will get deeper when you learn new things, but that is the thing that is really nourishing for her.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, and that is a great example. I mean, just teaching a child the basics of what is prayer. You can talk to God, you can talk to Jesus, just like you can talk to me, your dad or your mom or whoever. You know, that is just a very basic thing; and sometimes those of us who have been believers for a while forget that people who are just starting out in discipleship don't really even know how to pray...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Even the disciples said: Lord, teach us to pray, right? And so, that is very important; but you mentioned something in passing just a little while ago, Darrell, that scripture memorization early in your discipleship walk was important. Tell us about that, and what that meant and how you did that, so that maybe we all can learn a little bit about that.

DARRELL DELANEY

Thanks for asking, Scott. I know for me, I asked Jesus a really awkward prayer that made a lot of sense to me then. I asked him to make me a concordance, which is where you look, and it is kind of an index for scripture. If you look up the word *love*, and it has seventy different scripture references for the word *love*...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

I asked the Lord to make *me* the concordance so that I wouldn't need to use one. So, then I began to take passages in rote memory, over and over, write them out and recite them all throughout the day. If I am waiting in an elevator, I would just, under my breath meditate on and recite those; and then I had a necklace that I made with the scriptures on it and I would refer to those necklaces. Stop at a stoplight, it is kind of crazy how it just became part of me; and now, it is interesting because Jesus' word is true. In John 14 he

says: (14:26b) The Holy Spirit will bring back to your remembrance the things that I have taught you. So now, in the strangest times or the most discouraging times, there is a word—there is a scripture—that comes back to my heart and my mind: Oh, yeah; Jesus did talk about this. Jesus did say something about this. I think I remember it somewhere. So, scripture memorization is one of the spiritual nourishment practices that have really helped me, and I would offer it to anyone to try it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, it reminds me of Psalm 1: (verses 1, 2 paraphrased) Blessed is the one who is well rooted...right? Who doesn't run around like the evil, but you are well rooted, and you meditate on God's Word day and night...right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Day and night...

SCOTT HOEZEE

That image of just marinating yourself in the Word; getting all those basics down. This is the milk of the gospel. What does it mean to love? What does it mean to pray? What does it mean to know that Jesus is savior? Those are just all those things that we all need just to start out and make part of us. You know, there are different images in the Bible. God often will come to the prophets and will hand them a scroll and say: Eat this...

DARRELL DELANEY

Eat this...

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is like, eat this Word...ingest it...make it part of you; and early on, as we have been saying, that is milk that we ingest, but you never get to eat a hamburger if you don't do a good job on the milk first.

DARRELL DELANEY

That's true...that's true.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, we want to talk a little bit more about all this practically in our lives as believers, and so, as we wrap up this first program in this series on discipleship, we will do exactly that.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Darrell, we are talking in this first program about early stages of discipleship. It is a series on discipleship. Spiritual milk...we just talked a little bit about what that was. You talked about scripture memorization or even teaching your young daughter how to pray, and just what prayer is. These are the kinds of things...you know, that is the craving of spiritual milk that the Apostle Peter talked about in a passage we read in the previous segment; but Darrell, as we close out the program, we want to talk a little bit practically about all of this, but also, I think we want to recognize something that is really, really important, and that is this growth of discipleship is not a Lone Ranger activity or a solo activity...

DARRELL DELANEY

I am so glad...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, so am I. It happens in the body of believers, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

That's true, that's true. If it were up to me and I had to do it all on my own, I think I would be in a lot of trouble; but the fact that I have my pastor, the fact that I have my father and my mother, the fact that I have close friends... So, I have different levels of people who are able to plant and water the seeds in me...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

People who I look up to, people who I look eye to eye with, and then people who I share with. I think that we need those three different levels to help nourish us, and also to help us encourage one another.

SCOTT HOEZEE

One of the favorite images in the New Testament for the Church is a body, and we had earlier in this program...and this will come up in future programs, too, you know...that Christ is the head of the body and we grow from the head down, as it were, right? So, that idea that we are a body, that we help each other, that is what it is all about; and earlier we had a passage from Timothy—Paul's letter to Timothy. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul writes:

^{2:1}You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. So, two short verses there, Darrell, but what you are seeing there is Paul trying to suggest we need some good holy momentum to keep this thing going.

DARRELL DELANEY

I believe that, and I also am thinking about the Olympics and how...you know, when you are running a relay, you receive a baton, but then you don't keep the baton, you pass the baton. Now, I know you cannot pass your faith from one generation to another, but you can pass the faithfulness of God and the stories of your life and how he shaped you spiritually. So, I see Paul giving Timothy the charge to pass the baton. Don't let it just stop with you...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But you need to share what you have learned with people whom you care about; and the practical part of that is that we have to start where we are. We cannot be where we think we should be, where others think we should be, or where we hope to be; and the good news about the God whom we serve is that he wants us to start right where we are to grow.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and it takes some courage to do this, but this isn't the only place where Paul does this, but he does say...he says it in Philipians as well, you know: Whatever you have heard me say, whatever you know I am enthused about, whatever you have heard me preach...

DARRELL DELANEY

Put it into practice...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, and then you preach it again; and then he says: Give it to people who are reliable people who will then teach others, and then they will teach others. You know, it is sort of like, it just keeps going. It is like a stone rolling downhill, building up momentum and speed. We need to keep doing this because, indeed, as we said, we do this together; and we could be reminded, too, Darrell, of something Peter has to say in terms of our

being a spiritual house.

DARRELL DELANEY

Definitely; in 1 Peter Chapter 2:5, it says this: You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. I mean, the idea is that we are a spiritual house. I know it is a short amount of verses, but the point is, we are growing and we are to be developed, not only internally, but we also use the gifts that we have learned, the things that nourish us, to help build others, which is what this verse in 1 Thessalonians gets into. Chapter 5:11 says:
Therefore encourage one another and build each other up just as you are, in fact, doing.
So, not only are we a spiritual house, Scott, but we are called to build one another up. I love the name Barnabas because it means son of encouragement...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

He did this when they were in a church in Acts, in Antioch. He built others up with what he said, with what he did; and if we have been nourished by anything that God has taught us, it is our responsibility to build others up and to pass it on.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is interesting, that verse, Darrell, that you just read from 1 Thessalonians 5, we think 1 Thessalonians is the oldest letter Paul wrote that we have possession of. He might have written others before this, but we don't have it. So, this is one of the first letters he ever wrote to anybody, and that idea of building each other up is right there already...already at the beginning of the Church, there is that idea; and this is why we need mentors. You know, I think years ago, like when my father-in-law went to seminary, he graduated in the 1950s, nobody really thought about that, you know, that you need a mentor; but now at seminary...at my seminary, but at most seminaries...we give students mentors day one...

DARRELL DELANEY

Assigned right away...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right away you get a vocational mentor because you need somebody to pass along what he or she knows to build you up so that you later can build up somebody else...

DARRELL DELANEY

That's true.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then they build up, and so forth. We said earlier the body of Christ is a common image, but the building—the household—of faith, being living stones. That is what we are, and Christ wants to move into that house and redecorate it, kind of, as it were, and keep us building up more and more into his likeness.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is interesting how different members of the body become different aspects of God's tools to build that house. You've got spiritual builders, you've got spiritual contractors, you've got spiritual persons who make plans...blueprints...

SCOTT HOEZEE

That's right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the Holy Spirit is ushering in that whole process. One of my favorite shows was Extreme Home Makeover Edition, where they would literally take the house that was dilapidated and turn it into this masterpiece, and they would say: Move that bus! And everybody would see and their emotions would come because they see how their house has been renovated and changed; and so, I tied that with the book that actually was really helpful for me early in my faith called *My Heart Cries Home* by Robert Munger; and that book showed me that Christ wants to be a part of the bedroom, the bathroom in my life, the basement, the closets, the things I don't want to talk about; and ultimately, if I surrender my life to Christ, I give him the deed to that house so that he could literally own it and be in charge of it and make sure that it gets the proper value that he says it could have.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We talk about C. S. Lewis a lot here on *Groundwork*, and one thing we have mentioned before is a line that C. S. Lewis had. He said: When we first become Christians, we sort of think of ourselves as a house and we think: Well, Christ will move in, he will slap on some fresh paint, maybe put down a new rug...and Lewis says: That is not what Christ does at all. He comes in and he starts knocking down the walls...tearing up the floor...

DARRELL DELANEY

Demo...

SCOTT HOEZEE

He is going to build a whole new house; and as we have been saying, Darrell, in this segment, he does that through others. Christ does that work in our lives, and that is why we need mentors and sisters and brothers in the church, and we need to listen to them. When they make suggestions to us, we need to take it seriously. We start with the milk of the gospel, but as we will say in the next program, we are going to move on to the meat, and we have other people in the church to help us do that; thanks be to God.

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we talk about the book of Hebrews and the idea of moving beyond the elementary teachings of the world into the next level of discipleship. We want to dig into that and show what it means to move from spiritual milk to spiritual meat. Be sure to not miss the next episode of *Groundwork*.

Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com, to share what *Groundwork* means to you and what you would like to hear discussed on future *Groundwork* programs.

DARRELL DELANEY

Visit reframeministries.org for more information, and to find more resources to encourage your faith. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney and Scott Hoezee.

***Correction:** The audio of this program misstates the reference for this passage as John 16. The correct reference is John 14.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/be-a-disciple-of-jesus-christ>

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