

**"A COMMITMENT TO BECOMING A
DISCIPLE (LEARNER)"**

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The key to this series is the realization that inspiration is not just a moment in time, it is not just a series of steps you take and complete, it is a process that has no ending (Lord willing), you keep growing, being inspired, learning, hitting the wall, growing some more and repeating.

The last two weeks Danny set the table for inspiration, last week was key to understanding this process when he introduced stage 1:

1. The Life Changing Awareness of God.
 - Of course, that's where this all begins to happen, it isn't until you and I not only open our hearts to becoming aware of God but when we actually begin to seek God and all that He has for us.
 - Moses instructs the children of Israel before they go into the promised land, that you will fall away but...

(Vs) Deuteronomy 4:29-31 "If from there you will seek the LORD your God, then you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and soul. In your distress, when all these things happen to you in days to come and you return to the LORD your God, then you will hear his voice. For God is compassionate. The LORD your God won't fail you..."

(Vs) Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart."

(Vs) Isaiah 55:6 - "Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near."

(Vs) 2 Chronicles 15:2-4 "Azzariah the prophet; "Listen to me, Asa, Judah, and Benjamin! The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will allow you to find him..., Israel lived for years without the true God..., but they turned to the LORD God of Israel in their distress. When they sought him, he let them become acquainted with him."

(Vs) Psalm 119:2 - Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart...

(Vs) Matthew 7:7-8 – “Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened for you. Because everyone who keeps asking will receive, and the person who keeps searching will find, and the person who keeps knocking will have the door opened.”

That's inspiration at the start... not an end, it's the beginning.

- Last week many of you stood at the end of the service to signify that you felt specifically God was inspiring you to some thought, some call, some purpose in your life.
- I am assuming that was the beginning point for each of you. It may have been years in the making to get you to that point, but it is not the ending point. It is the official beginning of the process
- If you have spent much time in church, you have probably heard the word; Discipleship. To a church person that word can have many meanings. Usually, from my experience, it was referred to like a set of stairs.
- From a positive perspective, the idea was that discipleship was the grounding of a new believer into the essentials of their new walk and life of faith.
- The problem I have with a set of stairs... it can infer that if you learned and did these basic things in your faith, you were good to go. And I think that's where discipleship goes wrong, I think we learned and did those things and we got to the top of the stairs and then we spent the rest of our spiritual life judging all of the other people who hadn't completed all of the steps as we had.
- That's exactly what Jesus was warning us about in...

(Vs) Matthew 7:1-4 “Stop judging, so that you won't be judged, because the way that you judge others will be the way that you will be judged, and you will be evaluated by the standard with which you evaluate others.” Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye but fail to notice the beam in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when the beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite! First, remove the beam from your own eye, and then you will see clearly enough to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”

- Today I hope to help you understand the second stage, the word discipleship in a way that is tied to the process of Inspiration.
- This week, we are taking your awareness that God is “calling” you and me to something bigger, something different, something maybe or maybe not specific requires us ALL to enter the life of DISCIPLESHIP/LEARNING.
- The best way I think I can try to help us all through this process is to see how it played out with the original “disciples” and more specifically we will look at Peter.
- Keep in mind, none of the original 12 disciples that Jesus called, or inspired to follow Him were religious people necessarily; not as in the sense of being Rabbis, or religious teachers anyway.

- As a matter of fact, as Jewish men, there is a good chance they had all at least considered or pursued the idea of being a rabbi in their childhood and as the process played out they would have been rejected and told they were not smart enough or gifted enough to become a rabbi or religious teacher and so then they decided from there to be something else.
- Age 6-10 start memorizing the Torah, the first 5 books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (heck for some of us memorizing the names of the first five books would be huge).
- The best of the best would continue until age 14 when you would memorize the rest of the entire Hebrew text.
- Then around 14, you would present yourself to a Rabbi, and he would test you to know if you had what it takes. For the most part, a rabbi didn't come looking, you had to go prove yourself to him. If the rabbi thought you had what it takes he would say, "Come follow me..."
- You would leave everything, and you would follow that rabbi. As they would say, "*May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.*"
- You would literally copy everything that the rabbi did. This is what it meant to be a disciple.
- If after some time of learning that rabbi thought you didn't have what it takes he would tell you to go back to your village and apply your trade. Go have children and family and work and maybe they will have what it takes, but now, go apply your trade (family business).

(Vs) Matthew 4:18–22 ISV "While Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon (also called Peter) and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, because they were fishermen. "Follow me," he told them, "and I will make you fishers of people!" So at once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there he saw two other brothers—James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee repairing their nets. When he called them, they immediately left the boat and their father and followed him."

Jesus said, "Come follow me..."

- Now, understand... the Life-Changing Awareness of God (calling them) wasn't the end of the story.
- As a matter of fact, that is where the story begins. That is where they committed to the process of following Jesus

Discipleship, the second stage of inspiration, is a commitment to the process of learning what God has for you.

- Now, if we are using Peter as an example we will see some great examples of his life that we can all apply to our own.

Let's fast forward a bit to a familiar story...

(Vs) Matthew 14:22-31 – Jesus immediately had the disciples get into a boat and cross to the other side ahead of him, while he sent the crowds away. After dismissing the crowds, he went up on a hillside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. By this time the boat was in the middle of the sea and was being battered by the waves because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and cried out, “It’s a ghost!” And they screamed in terror. “Have courage!” Jesus immediately told them. “It’s me. Stop being afraid!” Peter answered him, “Lord if it’s you, order me to come to you on the water.” Jesus said, “Come on!” So Peter got down out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came to Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he was frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, “Lord, save me!” At once Jesus reached out his hand, caught him, and asked him, “You who have so little faith, why did you doubt?”

- Now, this is huge in our commitment to the process of discipleship. What can we learn from this story?
- Peter is out of the boat because his rabbi was out of the boat...Peter was following Jesus (his rabbi) and he begins to sink... Who was sinking? Jesus or Peter?
- Peter was the one sinking and Jesus pulled him out and asked him this critical question; Why so little faith? Why did you doubt?
- So, who was Peter doubting? It wasn't Jesus, Jesus wasn't sinking, Peter was.
- Peter didn't lack faith in Jesus as much as he doubted himself. He had faith to get out of the boat but he lacked faith in himself.

(Vs) John 15:16 – “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. I have appointed you...

The process of discipleship requires us to understand who we are and who we are not before we can fully understand who God is.

- 4th century Augustine prayed, *“May I know you, may I know myself.”*
- There is another account of the story of Peter being called in the book of Luke where Peter was fishing all night and not catching anything Jesus called from the land and said; Let down your nets on the other side of the boat...

(Vs) Luke 5:8- 10 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus’ knees and said, “Leave me, Lord! I am a sinful man!”— because Simon and all the people who were with him were amazed at the number of fish they had caught...,Then Jesus told Simon, “Stop being afraid. From now on you will be catching people.”

“Christian spirituality has a great deal to do with the self, not just with God. The goal of the spiritual journey is the transformation of self... This requires knowing both our self and God. Both are necessary if we are to discover our true identity as those who are “in Christ,” because the self is where we meet God. Both are also necessary if we are to live out the uniqueness of our vocation.” – David Benner

“A humble self-knowledge is a surer way to God than a search after deep learning.”

- Thomas à Kempis

“There is no deep knowing of God without a deep knowing of self and no deep knowing of self without a deep knowing of God.” - John Calvin

- Much is said in Christian circles about knowing God. But Christians throughout the ages have agreed that there cannot be deep knowledge of God without deep knowledge of the self. Discerning your true self is inextricably related to discerning God's purposes for you. Paradoxically, the more you become like Christ, the more you become authentically yourself.
- Yet so many followers of Jesus never discover the man or woman they were created to be. They spend years, and waste copious amounts of energy, living into a parody of their real, true self. Trying so hard to be who they think they should be, or who their family or friends or culture thinks they should be, or who they wish they could be. In the end, they end up failing at being somebody they're not, rather than succeeding at being who they are.
- But discovering your identity and calling is a process, not an event. And for most of us, it's a lifelong process. Some of us are just getting started; others are miles down the road, but no matter your age, it's never too late to start.

*(Vs) Matthew 16:13-18 ISV “When Jesus had come to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They said, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He asked them, “But who do you say I am?” **Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!”** Then Jesus told him, “How blessed you are, Simon son of Jonah, since flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, though my Father in heaven has. I tell you that you are **Peter, and it is on this rock that I will build my congregation**, and the powers of hell will not conquer it.”*

(Vs) Matthew 16: 21-26

“There is only one problem in which all my existence, my peace, and my happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God. If I find Him I will find myself, and if I find my true self I will find Him.”

- Thomas Merton

- A commitment to Understanding who you really are
- A commitment to understanding who you are not
- A commitment to understanding where and how God is leading you
- You can't get very far down the path of transformation until you discover your identity and calling

“Any hope that you can know yourself without accepting the things about you that you wish were not true is an illusion. Reality must be embraced before it can be changed.”

The movement from stage 1 to stage 2 requires an acknowledgement that we are basically worthwhile human beings and that we are loved just as we are.

- The move from the second stage to the third stage in our journey basically requires us to jump in, concentrate on self-development in the appropriate areas, and take risks in our faith in order to gain enough confidence to participate in the productive life.
- We think by not doing the hard work, it will just go away. Close your eyes and wait.
- What you don't know can and will hurt you and those around you and that you love.
- Jesus said, come, take up your cross and follow me – death leads to resurrection.

BETTER TOGETHER THAN WE ARE APART

A commitment to attend

A commitment to engage

(Vs) Matthew 26: 31-40 ISV – Then Jesus told them, “All of you will turn against me this very night, because it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ However, after I have been raised, I will go to Galilee ahead of you.” But Peter told him, “Even if everyone else turns against you, I certainly won’t!” Jesus told him, “I tell you with certainty, before a rooster crows this very night, you will deny me three times.” Peter told him, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!” And all the disciples said the same thing. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane. He told the disciples, “Sit down here while I go over there and pray.” Taking Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him, he began to be grieved and troubled. 38 Then he told them, “I’m so deeply grieved that I feel I’m about to die. Wait here and stay awake with me.” Going on a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, “O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not what I want but what you want.” When he went back to the disciples, he found them asleep. He told Peter, “So, you men couldn’t stay awake with me for one hour, could you?”

Peter cuts the ear off the soldier who came to arrest Jesus. Peter Denies Jesus...

(Vs) Matthew 26:63-75 ISV “Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard when a servant girl came up to him and said, “You, too, were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it in front of them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about!” he exclaimed. As he went out to the gateway, another woman saw him and told those who were there, “This man was with Jesus from Nazareth.” Again he denied it and swore with an oath, “I don’t know the man!” 73 After a little while, the people who were standing there came up and told Peter, “Obviously you’re also one of them, because your accent gives you away.” Then he began to curse violently. “I don’t know the man!” he swore solemnly. Just then a rooster crowed. Peter remembered the words of Jesus when he said, “Before a rooster crows, you’ll deny me three times.” Then he went outside and cried bitterly.”