



## Week/Sermon #1

**Title:** Three Epic Questions

**Key Texts:** Galatians 5:22-23 and 2 Timothy 2:2

### Overview:

In this message, we will look closely at the intimate (and often misunderstood) relationship between Discipleship (growing in Jesus) and Evangelism (going with Jesus). These two core biblical teachings and callings are so closely connected that one should always lead to the other. We will also explore the multi-generational nature of discipleship. By the end of the message, listeners should be able to identify the seven markers of spiritual growth (discipleship), be aware that discipleship always includes four generations of people, and understand the intimate and unbreakable connection between discipleship and evangelism.

### Sermon Outline:

#### Introduction to the Series

- Give an **illustration** of the importance of ongoing growth and the concern we all have when growth is stunted. (Examples...a newborn baby and the need for physical thriving in the first weeks of life. Or, a toddler and development of motor skills including learning to walk...if you have a video of a toddler in your church learning to walk and parents cheering on their child, this would be a great image to show. Or, use some other illustration that will help people see the joy that comes when natural growth happens.)

- **Read** Ephesians 4:11-16

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

- The role of leaders is to equip all of God's people for a journey of growth, service, and ongoing maturity!
- This process builds up the body of Christ.
- It leads to unity in the church.

- o It grows our knowledge of Jesus.
  - o It grows us into the “whole measure of Christ.” This is a life-long journey of growth.
  - o This maturity stabilizes us and protects us from false teaching.
  - o We grow as the body under the headship of Jesus.
  - o The whole body (Church) grows and each believer finds their place of service and ministry.
- Cast a **vision** for how the next eight weeks of messages, small groups, and personal learning as people read (or listen to) the book, *Organic Disciples*, can help propel each person closer to Jesus and into the world on the mission of Jesus. Also, cast a vision for how this journey of growth strengthens Christ’s family, the Church.
  - **Pray** for God’s blessing on this eight-week journey of growth together.

## Introduction to this Message

- Why is growth so important? How can we know we are growing in spiritual maturity?
- **Illustration**... Give an example of a situation where growth is stunted and people are really concerned. This can also be of a baby or a toddler who has hit a point where growth (physical, verbal, emotional, verbal...) is stunted. Talk about how parents are always concerned and take action to help overcome this obstacle to growth.
- Let people know you will be looking at **three epic questions** in this message that help define the journey of a Christian to health, thriving, and maturity.

## Epic Question 1- How Can I Know I am Growing as a Disciple?

- Explore the importance and place of the **fruit of the Spirit** in our journey of growth in Christian maturity (Galatians 5:22-23). Read the passage and talk about how our growth in the fruit of the Spirit acts as the **umbrella** over all of our spiritual maturity. If we are developing practices such as Bible study, prayer, worship, generosity, and more, but the Spirit is **not** alive in our heart and growing His fruit in us, it is very easy to become arrogant and pharisaical in our spiritual life. When this happens, it actually slows our growth, saddens the heart of God, and pushes non-believers away from Jesus.

- **Read:** Galatians 5:22-23

*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (NIV)*

- o What happens when a Christian is practicing spiritual disciplines and actively engaging in things that should lead to spiritual growth but are not developing the fruit of the Spirit in their life?
- o Look at how we can become arrogant and spiritually prideful.

- o You might want to look at how the religious leaders of Jesus' day (Pharisees, Sadducees, Teachers of the Law...) followed the letter of the Law but their hearts were full of pride and spiritual arrogance. Jesus spoke against this!
  - o Focus on how the fruit of the Spirit and the growing work of the Holy Spirit in a believer act as guardrails and an umbrella over our spiritual growth. This leads to humility and a healthy witness to the world.
- One of the greatest indicators that we are growing to be more like Jesus is that our love for lost people and engagement with them is continuing to increase!
- Introduction to the **seven markers of spiritual maturity** (use the seven icons\* if you think that would be helpful.) *\*available on OrganicDisciples.org.*
  1. *Bible Engagement*: learning to know, love, and follow the teaching of Scripture,
  2. *Passionate Prayer*: increasing our ability to speak to God, listen for God, and seek God with others,
  3. *Wholehearted Worship*: developing hearts, lips, and lives that celebrate the glory and goodness of God,
  4. *Humble Service*: extending acts of kindness and service in the name of Jesus,
  5. *Joyful Generosity*: recognizing that all we have is a gift from God and learning to freely share what we have,
  6. *Consistent Community*: loving God's people and connecting with them regularly,
  7. *Organic Outreach*: sharing the good news of Jesus in the flow of normal life.
- **Illustration**- A recipe or a menu? Talk about the difference between a recipe and a menu. Dig into the idea that the seven markers of maturity are not a menu to choose from but a recipe that makes your life all God wants it to be. All seven of them are needed for our spiritual growth.

As a **fun bonus**, if you can have homemade cookies available after the message...made by someone who has an amazing recipe...and they are willing to share the recipe... this could be fun. Give a little card with the cookie. On one side of the card, you can have the ingredients for this great cookie and on the other, you can have the recipe for a mature and thriving spiritual life (with the seven markers of growth with the icon next to each one).

- **Concluding Thought for Epic Question #1**...We know we are growing in our journey of faith in Jesus when we are tending to the seven markers of spiritual growth and letting the fruit of the Spirit guide this journey.

## Epic Question 2- Is Discipleship Bigger than My Relationship with Jesus?

- A Biblical Model of Four Generations of Disciples (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

<sup>1</sup> You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And 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 (NIV).

- The Four Generations (Biblical Exposition):
  1. Generation 1- Paul (a more mature person taking your hand),
  2. Generation 2- Timothy (the person being discipled, personal spiritual growth),
  3. Generation 3- Faithful people Timothy discipled (take the hand of someone else and help them grow),
  4. Generation 4- Those they will help and disciple (train the person you disciple to do the same),
  5. This process continues until Jesus returns...Generation to generation!
- **Illustration**...Share an example from your life or someone in your church where there are four clear generations of disciples with hands locked climbing upward in spiritual maturity. If all four can be present, consider having them stand in front of the congregation with hands locked in the order modeled in the 2 Timothy 2:2 passage. If one of the people has passed away or can't be there, you might want to have a picture of this person projected.
- **Testimony "The Power of Family Faith"**- If you have a family in your church where there are four generations of discipleship that have taken place or are taking place, you might want to have them share a testimony (on video or live). If you do it live in your sermon, be sure they are well prepared and ready to share (staying in the prescribed timetable for your sermon).
- **Define Discipleship**: The way we are defining "Discipleship" is any time a follower of Jesus helps another person take a next step closer to the Savior.

Yes, there are formal discipleship programs and relationships, but we will be looking at the big picture of discipleship being lived out in many ways by all believers.

- A Powerful Old Testament Testimony to this Vision of God's Heart for His People (Read: Psalm 78:5-7)

<sup>5</sup> He decreed statutes for Jacob  
and established the law in Israel,  
which he commanded our ancestors  
to teach their children,

<sup>6</sup> so the next generation would know them,  
even the children yet to be born,  
and they in turn would tell their children.

<sup>7</sup> Then they would put their trust in God

*and would not forget his deeds  
but would keep his commands.*

- o Look at the generational nature of faith and discipleship that existed in the Old Testament. This is God's plan from the beginning!
- **Concluding Thought for Epic Question #2**...Yes! Discipleship is much bigger than just me and Jesus. It is generational and each of us has the opportunity and honor of being part of a four-generation discipleship journey as we let a more mature believer take our hand, as we tend to our own spiritual growth, as we take the hand of a person who is younger in faith, and as we teach them how to disciple another person. This has been God's way from the beginning!

### **Epic Question 3- What Is the Relationship between Discipleship and Evangelism...**

- Looking at the Heavenly **Connection of Discipleship and Evangelism** (Read: Matthew 28:19-20)

*<sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (NIV)*

- o Believers are called to make disciples!
- o This includes reaching those who are still far from Jesus...we go.
- o It is not just conversion but also spiritual growth. We help them know and grow in all Jesus has taught and commanded.
- o This passage is about Evangelism and Discipleship. They are clearly connected.
- **Visual** of the -20 to the cross and +20 diagram\* after faith in Jesus. You can talk about how people are on the journey of growing closer to Jesus (the cross) and then growing in their faith for the rest of their life. \*available for free download [here](#).
- **Illustration**- Share about how one person walked with another from before they were a Christian and then after they came to faith. Maybe this non-believer began at (-5) and they were open but had lots of questions. Over time and discussion, possibly attending a church or small group, with love and care from a Christian in their life, they came to faith (the cross). Now they are at (+10). This same person has walked with them on their growth journey to become more like Jesus. Discipleship is walking with a person to Jesus and then continuing on the journey as they grow in Jesus. This can be a story of a relationship you have or someone else who has been on the journey with a person to Jesus and now with Jesus.
- What is the relationship of Discipleship and Evangelism?
  - o Evangelism and Discipleship are **not** enemies.
  - o Evangelism and Discipleship are **not** just friends.
  - o Evangelism and Discipleship **are** marriage partners.

Take time to teach on the danger of seeing discipleship and evangelism as antagonistic and at odds with each other. Look at how they can't just be loosely connected like buddies or pals. Then, dig into how true discipleship leads people out with the heart of Jesus and in partnership with Jesus on mission. True evangelism will always demand more discipleship in our lives and the local church. True discipleship always leads us into the world with Jesus on His mission.

- Clarity, clarity, clarity! What do we mean when we say discipleship? As you close the message, paint a robust and BIG picture of discipleship. Many people don't think of themselves as being discipled, as growing up in maturity as a disciple, or as discipling another person. They certainly don't imagine that they are part of an epic and Spirit-led discipleship movement that goes from person to person and continues God's work until Jesus returns...but we are meant to be exactly that! Seek to break down some of the fear and nervousness about this topic by showing people that discipleship happens any time one person helps another person walk closer toward Jesus or deeper with the Savior. Use some of the examples you find on pages 36-37 of *Organic Disciples* to get you thinking. You can develop your own short video collection of people saying, "I was discipled by (name or relationship) when they (explain how they helped them grow closer to Jesus,)" at the close of the message.

**Concluding Thought for Epic Question #3...**Celebrate the marriage between Discipleship and Evangelism and how all of us can engage in both when we realize what it means to be a growing follower of Jesus.

**Closing Prayer:** Close the message in prayer by asking God to lead you on this journey of Organic Discipleship and pray that each person who joins you will draw closer to Jesus than ever before and also engage more organically in sharing the truth, love, and message of Jesus with the world.

**Follow Up:** In your bulletin, on your website, and in your church communication this week, highlight various ways people can grow as disciples in your church and invite them to engage.

**Bonus:** Encourage every adult and student (from middle school upward) to take the "Markers of Spiritual Growth Self-Assessment" provided on the Organic Disciples website. If you want to train some people at your church to do a one-on-one follow-up after people take the assessment, there is a video on the Organic Disciples website. This is only done with those who request it. This tool and process provide clarity on how each person is doing in each of the seven areas of spiritual growth (that will be explored in the coming seven weeks and sermons). It also gives immediate feedback on steps for growth and ways to celebrate signs of maturity.

May God bless you as you use these resources to craft a sermon for week 1 of Organic Disciples that fits the needs and culture of your congregation!