



FAIRFIELD METHODIST CHURCH

Handbook on DISCIPLE MAKING

Version: June 2015

Name:

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Foreword from the Pastor-In-Charge

From this handbook, you will notice that apart from Congregational Gathering and Mentoring / Accountability Groups, Small Groups are essential to accomplish the mission and vision of Jesus for His church. Jesus created a Small Group as a primary method of transformation and multiplication for His first twelve disciples. The early church continued that model. So do we at Fairfield.

Building relationships is integral to building disciples. However, we cannot stop at simply strengthening friendships. If we want to truly make disciples, we need to build Small Groups in which people can be challenged, growth can be measured, and impact can be multiplied. In FFMC, we want to encourage every disciple to join a Small Group where Jesus' disciples are transformed into His image and by which His message of redemption is carried to the nations. This handbook is prepared with the Small Groups in mind. It is to facilitate your growth as a disciple not merely as an individual, but more so within the community of faith. Whether you are a Small Group Member or Leader, we are hopeful that this handbook will serve you well as you engage in one another through the fifteen devotionals.

Ways to use this handbook

This handbook serves as:

1. An informative guide to the process of disciple making in the context of Fairfield Methodist Church (FFMC).
2. A reference to ministry leaders who seek to present a coherent message on FFMC's model of discipleship to others.
3. A personal devotional / Small Group (SG) discussion guide. Included in this handbook are 15 devotionals with discussion questions. These are adapted from the disciple making sermon series as well as selected sermons preached through Jan-July 2015 at FFMC.

PART 1:

THE CHURCH AND DISCIPLE MAKING

Introduction

At FFMC, our vision is: **“To be a disciple-making church”**
(Matthew 28:19). To help us understand what this vision is about, we need to understand the following words:

1. Church
2. Disciple
3. Disciple-making

What is your own understanding of “church”; “disciple” and “disciple-making”? Jot down your thoughts!

What is a Church?

According to the Bible, the Church is:

1. The “coming together” (*ekklesia*) of believers who.....
2. Participate in “fellowship” (*koinonia*) with one another as we.....
3. “Worship” (*proskuneo, latreuo, sebomai*) God, seek to understand and apply His Word for our lives so as to.....
4. “Attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” (Ephesians 4:13)

The Church is therefore a community of believers who actively seeks to grow to be like Christ. For that to happen, the Church needs to be faithful in its call to **make disciples**.

What is a Disciple?

1. The word “disciple” comes from the Greek word “*mathetes*” which means “follower, pupil or apprentice”.
2. A disciple can be defined as a person who is “*in the process (or journey) of becoming all that Christ has called him or her to be and do. There is a process of transformation of the inner life as well as outward evidence of that transformation*”
3. **2 Peter 1:5-7** provides eight Godly values for disciples to take heed as we journey with Him: “⁵ *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your **faith** with **virtue**, and virtue with **knowledge**,* ⁶ *and knowledge with **self-control**, and self-control with **steadfastness**, and steadfastness with **godliness**,* ⁷ *and godliness with **brotherly affection**, and brotherly affection with **love**.*”
4. Hence, to be Jesus’ “disciple”, we need help from the Holy Spirit and one another to grow in our:
 - Submission to Jesus’ authority
 - Understanding of God’s Word
 - Application of God’s Word in our lives
 - Accountability to one another
 - Discipleship of others

What is Disciple Making?

1. If being Jesus' disciple is about being involved in the process of becoming all that Christ has called us to be; then disciple making is ***“the process of bringing people (pre-believers; new disciples) into right relationship with God, and developing them to full maturity in Christ (growing disciples) through intentional growth strategies, so that they might multiply (disciple-makers) the entire process in others also”*** - Adapted from Edmund Chan, “A Certain Kind” (2013)

What is a Disciple Making Church?

2. Hence, being a **disciple making church** is about becoming a church that exhibits the following major characteristics:
 - Dependency on prayer & leading of the Holy Spirit.
 - Clear and ongoing disciple making strategy.
 - More concerned with growing deep through the Word.
 - Acts of service and care are commonplace.
 - Witness of the Word as a lifestyle.

Our mission as a Disciple Making Church

Given an understanding of what constitutes a “disciple-making” church; our mission is to help ***“every member be committed to magnify God, multiply disciples and minister to all peoples in Singapore and beyond.”***

Magnify God

- Grows in knowledge of God’s Word and applies it rightly to life situations.
- Worships God sincerely and whole-heartedly.
- Yields to the lordship of Christ, demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit and lives by faith in God’s provision and goodness.
- Has a healthy prayer life.

Multiply disciples

- Learned to effectively share the Gospel.
- Discovered, developed and uses his or her spiritual gift(s).
- Ministers willingly to other believers.
- Faithfully contributes to FFMC by his or her prayers, presence, gifts and service (1 Peter 2:9-18)

Ministers to all people

- Is a positive influence on society as light and salt to a lost and broken world.
- Is concerned for the spiritual and physical welfare of his or her family.

FFMC's strategy to make disciples

1. Disciple making in FFMC is to be carried out through a **three-strand** discipleship strategy:
 - Congregational gatherings
 - Small Groups
 - Mentoring / Accountability groups

Congregational gathering

- Refers to the platforms for cultivating our knowledge of God. As Jesus' disciples, not only must we be familiar with the Word of God, we also need to be well versed with doctrines (based on the revealed Word of God) such as the "Resurrection; "Salvation"; "Trinity"; "Gospel"; "Holy Spirit" and more.
- Refers to our weekly gathering for corporate worship, prayer, preaching of the Word as well as mass based teachings such as Membership Class and Bible Study Seminars.
- Refers to ways we communicate with one another about discipleship as a community such as FFMC Connect and SGL Connect.

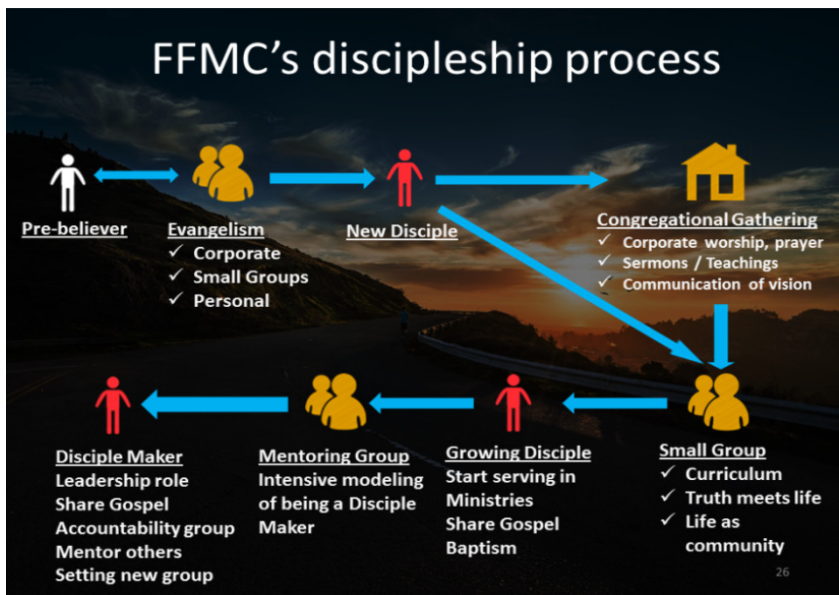
Small Groups

- Refers to smaller communities of believers coming together to help one another grow in Christ-likeness through:
 - Studying and sharing of God's Word.
 - Helping one another connect truth to life
 - Demonstrating love for one another as well as for the lost, poor and outcasts of society.
 - Cultivating accountability for growth
 - Providing pastoral care for those in need

Mentoring / Accountability Groups

- Refers to one-to-one or groups of three or four persons coming together for spiritual accountability and / or mentoring.
- Groups are usually gender based and ideally similar marital status
- Environment for nurturing disciple makers.

2. All three strands are important and run dependently on one another. No one strand should be overtly emphasized at the detriment of the other. The following diagram illustrates FFM's three-strand disciple making strategy.



3. You will notice that FFM's three-strand strategy highlights disciple making as a process or what we call **"journey"**. Generally speaking, we envisage that the average person would go through four categories of spiritual journeys (*as explained in the next page*) in order to be a disciple maker.

Journey 1: From Pre-believer to New Disciple



- Our journey as a Christian begins when we commit our lives to Jesus Christ. This happens when someone shares the Gospel with us. The sharing of the Gospel can occur when the church (individual or a group of persons) goes to the pre-believer or when pre-believers seek out the church (during events, courses or worship services).
- When a pre-believer commits his or her life to the Lord Jesus Christ, he or she becomes a **new disciple**.

How can you participate?

- If you like to find out more about the Christian faith or register for the Alpha programme, please refer to page 49.
- Disciples who like to learn more about how to share the Gospel, please refer to page 49.

Journey 2: New Disciple to Growing Disciple



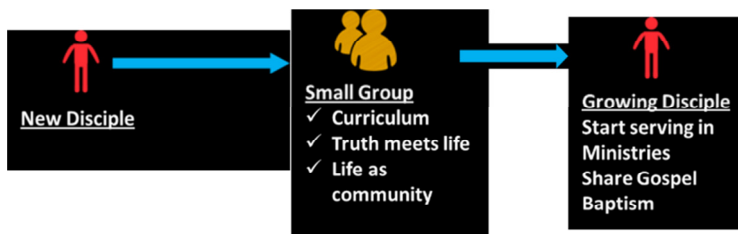
- The new disciple then seeks to grow in his or her knowledge of God through corporate worship, prayer, teachings from the pulpit and other congregational platforms such as bible study seminars and membership class.

How can we participate?

At the congregational level, new disciples can seek to grow in Christ by participating in the following:

- Pray together with other disciples at church wide prayer meetings (Refer to page 50 for details on FFMC's prayer meetings)
- Register for "My First Steps" (Refer to page 49).
- Be baptized. (Refer to page 49)

Journey 3: New Disciple >> Growing Disciple

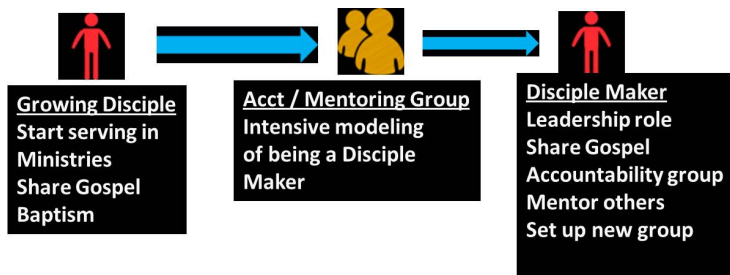


- **Concurrently** (with journey 2) the new disciple seeks to grow in his or her behavior as a Christian through Small Groups. Small Groups are the gathering of believers (usually about 10-12 persons) to share life with one another through God's Word, prayer and fellowship.
- As the new disciple grows in his or her Christian behavior, he or she would ideally be a good witness for Christ in his or her daily life. He or she should also be serving in at least one ministry and be committed for church membership.

How can you participate?

- To visit a FPMC small group, refer to page 49
- To join a membership class, refer to page 49
- To serve in area(s) of ministry, refer to page 49
- Small groups that wish to use the Omega series, refer to page 49

Journey 4: Growing Disciple >> Disciple Maker



- To be nurtured as a disciple maker, the growing disciple should be mentored and be involved in accountability groups. This is on top of his or her involvement in Journeys 2 and 3.
- Some disciple makers might receive God's call to serve in various leadership positions e.g. Small Group Leader, LCEC member or Youth Ministry Coordinator. These leaders will also be called to be involved in training programs as developed by the church. As part of his or her discipleship, the disciple maker should in turn disciple others to grow as disciple makers as well.

How can we participate?

To nurture disciple makers, the church leadership will invite growing disciples to be part of training programs and mentoring relationships.

PART 2

15 Devotionals adapted from “Disciple Making Sermon Series” and other selected sermons

For audio recording of sermons: please refer to

www.fairfieldmc.org

The Lord's Call for Disciple Making

Scripture

Matthew 28:18-20: “¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Devotional

By saying that “all authority has been given to me”, Jesus declared to the disciples that the limitations applied during His incarnation as a human being *no longer applies*. While the essence of His authority does not change since He is the Son of God; the scope of His authority is vastly expanded. This is because as Jesus said, the authority given to Him now includes the heaven and the earth. In other words, Jesus’ authority spans throughout the entire Universe. How big is the Universe? To imagine how vast the Universe is: We have to think of earth as just a tiny dot (as compared to the Sun and many other gigantic planets) residing in a galaxy call the Milky Way. In the Universe, it is discovered that there are at least 100 billion galaxies like ours.

This is the authority of the risen Christ. In His hands, He controls the hundred billions of galaxies in the observable Universe. This mighty right and power to do what He wills is directly related to verses 19-20, where Jesus' main emphasis in the Great Commission is for those who follow Him to make disciples. As a church, the Lord's call for us is therefore to be discipled and make disciples. Only then, can the Lord Jesus' teachings and way of life be imparted to all who believe in Him.

Discussion questions

1. When Jesus gave the Great Commission to His followers to make disciples of all nations, why do you think he needs to tell them that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him?
2. How do you think churches in Singapore have been responding to this clear command by Christ to make disciples of all nations?
3. As an individual or Small Group, how have you been responding to the Lord's call for you to be discipled and make disciples? Why?

Disciple making and salvation

Scripture

John 3:36: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Devotional

Can someone be a “Christian” but not a “disciple”? Some seem to believe that this is possible and suggested what they call “two-track Christianity”. This means that on the one hand, there are Christians who are called to discipleship and there are Christians who do not receive this call but are nonetheless “saved”. If that is the case, why did Jesus give the Great Commission to *make disciples* of all nations? In John 3:36, the word “believes” is translated from the Greek *pisteuon* which means “to have faith in” or “to be convinced”. Grammatically, *pisteuon* is written as a present indicative participle. This means that our witness as a Christian is directly dependent on our “believing”. Having faith in Jesus is a life-long journey and there shouldn’t be any dichotomy between being Christian and being disciple. Discipleship simply means to follow Jesus as He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

All true believers witness to themselves as well as to others through following Christ (Luke 14:27); knowing Christ (John 10:14) and becoming increasingly like Christ (Matthew 10:25). On the other hand, Hebrews 6:4-6 gives the clear teaching that those who once believed but had chosen to reject the teachings of Jesus would be in danger of falling away from the faith.

Discussion questions

1. What does “salvation” mean to you?
2. It seems that Christians in the early days of Christianity had no issue with the truth that being Christian is about following Jesus. How is it that some Christians in the modern day choose to believe that salvation and discipleship can be separated?
3. If our salvation as a Christian is intimately related to our following of Christ, how does that affect our own journey with God?
4. Do you think it is possible for a person to fall away from the faith? Why or why not?

Disciple making and fruitfulness

Scripture

Matthew 7:17-19: “So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Devotional

In Matthew 7, Jesus gives us a guide as to how we can discern if a person is growing spiritually. He says that a person who does God’s will as given through His Word bears good fruit. What is “good fruit”? James 3:9-12 tells us that good fruit can be seen through one’s words and deeds. Matthew 3:8 speaks of bearing fruit in keeping with repentance while Galatians 5:16-22 tells us about the Fruit of the Spirit. Nonetheless, Jesus also warned in Matthew 7:15 that there are people and even teachers of the Word who are wolves in sheep’s clothing. A person might seem to be doing things that are honorable or good on the outside, but harboring evil motives on the inside. Or a person could just be doing the works of ministry to “look good”. Hence, whether we are being discipled or discipling others, we need to be aware that not all we see with our naked eyes is the truth.

Often, a person's true state of his or her relationship with God can only be discerned through the consistent bearing of good fruit through time. However, we cannot seek to discern without embracing the essence of disciple making; that is, taking time and effort to journey with others and humbling ourselves to have someone to journey with us.

Discussion questions

1. What are some examples of "good fruit" that is the outcome of doing the will of God found in His Word?
2. How is it possible that a person can do mighty works in God's Name and yet deemed to be unrighteous before the eyes of God?
3. Do you consider yourself to be bearing good fruit? Why or why not?

The cost of being Jesus' disciple

Scripture

Luke 14:25-27: “Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, “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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

Devotional

Are there times when we wonder if Jesus could put forth His teachings in a “nicer” way? Asking people to hate their parents, wife and children in order to be His disciple does not seem to be very “seeker-friendly”....or does it? The truth is that being Jesus' disciple just isn't as easy as the world or some Christians would like to think. To follow Jesus, there are costs involved. The costs that Jesus spoke about in Luke 14 are “changed relationships”. Jesus is not saying that we are to cut off relationships with our loved ones. Jesus is saying that we can have relationships with our loved ones; but we are to give our highest priority to Him. To follow Jesus in an authentic manner, our love and commitment to Christ must be way higher than our commitment to each of our loved ones.

So the Christian may have to face rejection from his or her parents. In some cultures, this could mean permanent separation from the family, or even death. The Christian's marriage might also come under strain, as new priorities are to be worked out in that relationship. So, being a disciple of Jesus will affect a person's closest relationships, and by implication all his or her other relationships as well. This is because for the disciple, Jesus must come first in all that we do. This is the "cost" of following Jesus.

Discussion questions

1. Do you think that as we share the Gospel with others, we should also tell others about the cost of following Jesus? Why or why not?
2. In terms of relationships, what have changed (or not) after you follow Jesus?
3. Are there areas in your life which you have not placed Jesus as your highest priority? What do you intend to do about it?

Disciple: Living in the grace of God

Scripture

Romans 3:21-24: “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it- the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”

Devotional

Christian disciples are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, in our discipleship journey, we need to also learn to live by God’s grace. However, due to false teachings, some Christians have a wrong understanding of what it means to live by God’s grace. While God’s grace cannot be earned since it is a gift to us; God’s grace does not promise that we will live a life free of troubles. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God said to Paul that His grace is sufficient for him and that His power is made perfect in weakness. For Paul, God’s grace did not take away the “thorn in his flesh”; but it is sufficient for him to persevere through the suffering.

God's grace also did not promise a life of vast material wealth. When we constantly link God's grace to health and wealth; we "cheapen" the message of His grace. The theological significance of God's grace is primarily found in the giving to humanity His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. God's grace is therefore primarily about His love for us even while we were yet sinners. In other words, the grace of God is not to be theologically abused to fulfil one's lust for power, material wealth and status. Instead we are to learn to live by God's grace such that we increasingly know who He truly is, His demands for us as His disciples and what He wants us to do for His glory sake.

Discussion

1. What do you understand by God's grace?
2. Have you been living in the grace of God? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think many people are deceived by false teachings on God's grace?

Disciple: Living according to the Holy Spirit

Scripture

Romans 8:5: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”

Devotional

For a long time, the Holy Spirit has been somewhat neglected as the Third Person of the Triune God. A prominent theologian Alister McGrath said: *“The Holy Spirit has long been the Cinderella of the Trinity. The other two sisters may have gone to the theological party; the Holy Spirit got left behind every time.”* In recent decades, the rise of the charismatic movement ensures that Holy Spirit figures prominently in the theological agenda. Now, in nearly every mainstream churches, the status of the Holy Spirit is no longer hidden or neglected, but there have been much discussion concerning its role in worship, in prayer and in our daily living. In FPMC, what is our understanding of the Holy Spirit? Firstly, the Holy Spirit is God. He is not a “force” or a “mystical phenomenon” which can be manipulated by human will; but He is God who wills and fulfils His own purposes. If the Holy Spirit is God, then He is absolutely able to help us to walk according to Him.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is not an angelic being or a “thing” that comes out of God; He is Person. If the Holy Spirit is Person, we are then given the privilege to commune and to build an intimate relationship with Him. Hence, the Apostle Paul said that to live according to the Spirit is to “set our minds on things of the Spirit”. To set our minds on things of the Spirit would then mean: (1) Devoting time to know, understand and apply God’s Word for our lives and believing that the Holy Spirit will help us to do all these. (2) Putting to death the “deeds of the body” (Romans 8:13) or things that binds us from having a wholesome relationship with God. Indeed, disciples of Jesus Christ live according to the Spirit for this is God’s will for us.

Discussion

1. What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
2. Why do you think it is easy to misunderstand who the Holy Spirit is?
3. What obstacles do you face in your walk according to the Holy Spirit? How do you intend to overcome these obstacles?

Disciples: Living in obedience to God's Word

Scripture

John 8:31-32 “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Devotional

Why is there a need to remind the Jews who believed in Jesus to “abide” in His Word? Didn’t Jesus know that the Jews are brought up studying and memorizing Scriptures? For Jesus, being His disciples is not just about having mental knowledge of the Word. Rather, following Him is about consistently knowing, reflecting, holding fast to and obeying the Word. Abiding in God’s Word is not just a command we need to obey as disciples. Our abiding in God’s Word must be borne out of the realization that we are saved by the Word (Jesus) and hence we shall live by the Word. Our abiding in the Word must also be borne out of our love for God because we are enlightened to the truth that He first loves us. If this is the case, how does abiding in God’s Word look like in our day to day living? It means that firstly, we are to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Secondly, we are to study, understand, reflect and live out the truth that is found in God's Word such as being honest in our dealings with business partners, showing integrity at the workplace, discipling our children and showing care and generosity to the poor and needy. Thirdly, we are to align our will to God's will as found in His Word such as making the decision to seek new employment or not. As we abide in His Word, then as Jesus said in John 8:32, the truth shall set us free. The truth shall set us free; not from troubles, but from lies, deception and wicked living that is so prevalent in this fallen world.

Discussion

1. If someone is to suggest that: "Studying God's Word is important, but it is not as important as having a relationship with Him and doing the more practical things"....What would be your response?
2. Many believers know the importance of abiding in God's Word but few are consistent in our practice. Why do you think this is so?
3. How do you think as a community of faith, we can help one another to "abide" in God's Word?

Discipleship and sound doctrine

Scripture

2 Timothy 1:13-14 “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you”

Devotional

In the context of 2 Timothy 1, “sound words” refers to sound doctrine or teachings of the Christian faith that the Apostle Paul has “entrusted” to young Timothy. The word “sound” is translated from the Greek *ugiaion* which refers to what is **true** in contrast to falsehood or **healthy** in contrast to that which is corrupted. Where the Christian faith is concerned, “doctrine” simply means that which is believed and taught. The doctrine of the church is therefore the creed or body of teachings, the church holds to be true and, therefore, teaches. Christian doctrine, or the teachings of the Scriptures, answers the fundamental questions of life -- who God is, who we are, why we are here, and what happens to us (if anything) after we die. As Paul held Timothy accountable to follow the pattern of sound doctrine; each of us are to do so as well. This is because sound doctrine is essential to discipleship in at least three ways. Firstly, sound doctrine is important for the preservation of the Gospel. Since the early days of the church, many charlatans have sought to corrupt the Gospel for their own gain e.g. prosperity “gospel”.

The availability of sound doctrine seeks to expose such destructive messages and prevent the Body of Christ from sinking our feet into that which is untrue. Secondly, sound doctrine is important because it protects God's people. Sound doctrine is not just a set of knowledge to be held; but it is integral to our faith as a follower of Christ. In order for us to relate properly to God, we need to have a sound understanding of who God is. It can even be said that our relationship with God is dependent on the correctness of our understanding of who He is in our lives! Thirdly, sound doctrine is important for the mission of the church. The church is first and foremost the custodian of God's revelation and truth. Notice that when the resurrected Lord instructed the eleven to make disciples (Matthew 28:16-20); He told them to do so by baptism and through "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you". Sound doctrine therefore provides the church with the moral vision to care for the sick, needy and outcasts of the society. All these reasons point us to the truth that sound doctrine is not optional to the Christian life.

Discussion

1. What do you understand by "Christian doctrine"? Do you think the church has done enough to nurture you (or your children) in sound doctrine?
2. Do you think sound doctrine is optional to the Christian life? Why or why not?

Disciples: Living in love for one another

Scripture

John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Devotional

The word “love” has long been degraded to describe relationships that are merely found at the emotive level. As long as we love one another, we can live together without any form of commitment. As long as we love one another, we can alter the traditional institute of marriage to include homosexual relationships. However, Jesus’ idea of “love” is vastly different. Firstly, Jesus commanded the disciples to love one another. If something is commanded, it is not a natural action for us. We have this idea that love is emotional and spontaneous and cannot be forced. And yet the Bible is full of commands to love God and others. This means that the kind of love God demands of us is difficult and not part of our usual nature. We are called to love our wives (Eph 5:25), our neighbours (Mt22:39) and our enemies (Mt 5:44). This teaches us that love can be willed. It is a conscious decision to put the good of others above that of ourselves.

It is to “consider others more significant than yourselves” (Phil 2:3). Secondly, love is about following Christ. Jesus is our example of love. Jesus is our example of service. We must remember that the nature of discipleship is imitation: “To know (John 10:14), follow (Luke 14:27) and become like (Mt 10:25, Luke 6:40) Christ”. Thirdly, love is a testimony. Our love must be clear in the church. It must be clear in our small groups. We are called to treat each other with more than courtesy or politeness. We are called to be so different in the way we care for and work with and reconcile with one another that the world can see that we belong to Jesus. The nature of our love for one another tells the world about the nature of God’s love. This is important as we embrace Jesus’ command for us to make disciples of all nations.

Discussion

1. How do you understand the word “love”?
2. Do you think that as Jesus’ disciples, we have been a good testimony (in terms of loving one another) to those who do not believe? Why?
3. In what ways can you improve in your love for one another?

Disciple: Living in denial of ourselves

Scripture

Matthew 16:24 “Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Devotional

In its Greek forms, the three verbs: deny, take up and follow are given to us in the “present active imperatives”. This means that if anyone wants to be Jesus’ disciple, he or she has no other choice but to live out these three steps on a daily basis. Daily denial of self, daily take up our own cross and daily follow Jesus. Jesus is not asking us to temporarily disown or renounce something for the sake of discipleship; for example to fast from oily food during Lent and then have a prata celebration during Easter. Rather, He is asking of us to permanently renounce or disown every part of the self that is causing a hindrance for us to enter the kingdom of God. The denial of self is closely related to the human predicament: the problem of setting our minds on things that are of man and not of God. Hence, in the denial of self, we are called to deny our own way of thinking and doing. We are to deny the sinful flesh that goes against the desires of God. The denial of self implies that we recognize the awful reality that many a times we are our worst enemies.

When we deny ourselves, we have no will but God's will. In the denial of self, we are also called to take up our cross and follow Him. When Jesus called the disciples to take up our cross, He is calling us to die to ourselves. He is calling us to willingly bear the shame, the reproach, the humiliation, the suffering, the hatred, the alienation and even the death that may come to those who are associated with Jesus. We take up our cross when we proactively choose the narrow way over the way of the world, regardless of the cost. We take up our cross when we live out biblical ethics in our personal lives and in our business relationships, regardless of the cost. We take up our cross when we are willing to suffer any attack for Jesus' sake. To take up our cross means that we are willing to identify ourselves with Jesus Christ, His death and His word, regardless of what it costs us personally, publicly or financially.

Discussion

1. How far do you agree with Jesus that we need to "deny ourselves"? Why?
2. What does Jesus' exhortation "to take up our cross and follow Him" personally mean:
 - a. To you?
 - b. To you and your family / small group?

Disciple: Living in worship

Scripture

John 4:21-24 “Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Devotional

Quite often, our worship of God is thought of as an event; an event where we use music and singing to praise God. While worship has to do with the praising of God with music and singing, it has more to do with our attitude, posture, service and response to Him who is the Almighty. In other words, worship is our response in the presence of an Almighty God, our service to Him and the practice of His constant presence in every area of our lives. This means that true worship cannot happen if we do not yield our lives to Christ. We may have beautiful voices and exceptional talents in making music; but if we are clinging on to disobedience in our lives, we are not exactly worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

In this day and age, Christians have had many arguments over where and how to worship. While knowing the “where” and “how” to worship is important, Jesus’ priority for worship is first - to know **who** we are worshipping. Upon knowing **who** we worship, we then go to the heart of the matter: what then should be our attitude and response in worship? Jesus said that the Father is seeking people who would worship Him in spirit and in truth. I believe these “people” would be those who first and foremost seek to live in obedience to the Father in all areas of our lives.

Discussion

1. How do you think the church has deviated (or not) from what Jesus desires of us in terms of “worship”?
2. Why is it important to truly understand “who” we are worshipping? How does that correlate to our attitude in worship?
3. Is your life reflecting a wholesome lifestyle of worship? If not, what needs to change?

Disciple: Living in Prayer

Scripture

Luke 11:1-5 “Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” ² And he said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread, ⁴ and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”

Devotional

Through the “Lord’s Prayer” Jesus invites us into His prayer life and we are to learn from Him. Prayer is not an unfamiliar thing to the disciples. During Jesus’ time, the Jews grew up in a culture of daily prayer. Most of them would offer prayers at least twice a day and often three times a day. Yet, it seems that the disciple who asked Jesus to teach him to pray is no less fascinated by the way He prays and wanted to do likewise. What then is so “attractive” about the way Jesus prays? If we are to do a survey of the Gospels, we will notice that none of Jesus’ prayer is an obligation or a ritual. Jesus prays because He is dependent on God the Father to sustain Him, not just because He is going to the Cross, but because He has so much to do on a daily basis. Jesus prays because to Him, prayer is the essence of the Christian life. Prayer is the Christian life. Without prayer, the Christian life ceases.

As Jesus' disciples, our view of prayer should be likewise. Through the Lord's Prayer, Jesus also teaches us how to pray. Firstly, we are encouraged to constantly pray as a community of faith with God as our Father. Even though individual prayers are excellent, we should always seek to pray with one another (Matthew 6:9). Secondly, we are to pray for what truly matters (Luke 11:2). Sometimes when we pray, we pray as if the world revolves around us. But the reality is that the world revolves around God; and so our prayer life should also be centred on God. Our prayers and intentions for prayer must be God centred. It is not our kingdom, but God's will be done. Thirdly, we ought to pray for what we really need (Luke 11:3-4). We ought to pray for God's idea (not our own idea) of sustenance – what He thinks as essential for our daily living. Our daily bread consists of the things we need and not what we want for daily living. Furthermore, our daily bread does not just include physical food but spiritual food such as the Word of God.

Discussion

1. Are you fascinated by the way Jesus prays as told to us in the Gospels? Why?
2. Based on personal testimonies, if any, why do you think prayer is important in the Christian life?
3. How do you think the community of faith can help one another to pray like Jesus?

Disciple: Living in service to one another

Scripture

Galatians 5:13-14 “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Devotional

We love the idea that in Christ, we can find freedom; but what do we do with this new found freedom? Verse 13 reminds us that we are not to misuse this freedom as an opportunity to fulfil our own desires; but instead to do what God desires. Using God-given freedom “for the flesh” only serves to bring us back to sin and death. It is like walking out of a prison cell into another. So if we keep thinking that in Christ, we are forgiven of our sins and therefore have the “license” to sin more; then in no time would we find ourselves enslaved to sin once again (Romans 6). Using God-given freedom to do what God desires is the only way to live the authentic life of being Jesus’ disciple. Paul suggested that we are to use this new found freedom in Jesus is to “serve one another” through love.

Hence, we do not use our freedom in Christ to look down on those who do not believe; nor do we despise those whom we thought are “less mature” in the faith. Instead, we ought to be as a servant, praying with our neighbors and helping them to grow in maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we serve one another in humility and love, at least two things happen: Firstly, we ourselves will continue to live in true freedom and grow in Christlikeness as we seek to obey God for His glory sake. Secondly, our service for one another advances God’s kingdom as the Lord uses our witnesses to preach to the world that being a disciple of Jesus is not about having a “feel-good” adventure, but the true way to freedom and life.

Discussion

1. Have you ever played the “grace card” i.e. convinced yourself to sin now and seek God’s forgiveness later? How do you feel thereafter?
2. What do you think is the difference between how people in the world serve one another; and how disciples of Jesus ought to serve one another?
3. How are you serving your neighbors today? Does your service arise from the spring of spiritual freedom or otherwise?

Disciple: Living in accountability to God and one another

Scripture

Romans 14:10 “Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God”

Romans 14: 17-19 “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up-building.”

Devotional

On the day of His choosing, all of us will have to give an account of ourselves to God. Those who claim to believe in Him will have to account for how we have led the new life that is given to us in Jesus Christ. Christians usually have mixed feelings with regards to this truth. On the one hand, we rejoice that Jesus will come back again; on the other hand, we dread to think what might be revealed. The Apostle Paul is not insensitive to such mixed feelings. While he consistently stressed for the need to fight the good fight of faith; he reminded disciples of the need to stand together in the “fight”.

That is why in verse Romans 14:19, Paul concluded that disciples should “pursue what makes for peace and for *mutual up-building*”. In other words, we need one another in our growth as Jesus’ disciples. We need to be in accountability relationships so that we can order our lives in accountability to God. There are at least three types of accountability relationships we can commit ourselves to: (1) Accountability with immediate family members e.g. our spouse. (2) Accountability with members of the Small Group (3) Accountability with two or three other friends in the community of faith. True freedom in Christ has no fear in spiritual accountability. Accountability groups are not meant to compare who is “more spiritual”; rather it is the humble acknowledgement that before Jesus comes again, we have one another to depend on to grow His disciples.

Discussion

1. When you are reminded of the truth that one day all of us have to give an account to God, what are your thoughts?
2. Do you think it is possible for a person to grow in Christ without the community of faith?
3. What do you think of the idea of being held spiritually accountable to another person?

Disciple: Living in discipling others

Scripture

Colossians 3:16-17 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Devotional

Our growth as Jesus’ disciples include our obedience to disciple others. While we claim to be blessed by other’s diligence in discipleship; many of us might be reluctant to disciple others precisely because of the “hard work” involved. Yet, the Body of Christ cannot grow without mature disciples willing to disciple others. One of the main reasons for the demise of the church in some parts of the world is not because they do not have a vibrant style of worship; but because they failed to carry on the footsteps of their forefathers to disciple others. Even so, Christians have different ideas on how to disciple others. Some thought that just having mass based teachings would be considered as discipleship. Others thought that by getting people to serve actively in ministries would also be considered discipleship. While these are important, the act of discipling others is so much more. Primarily, Colossians 3:16-17 says that discipling others require our dependence on God’s Word.

Only when the “word of Christ dwell” in us richly, can we “teach and admonish one another in all wisdom”. This act of discipling others ought to produce in us thankfulness to God; not just through songs or words, but through our attitude and behavior towards life. Discipling others also involves journeying with the person, sometimes for a period of time but often for a good part of his or her lifetime on earth. Discipling others involves getting ourselves to share life with another person; modeling our lifestyle as a follower of Christ so that others can imitate what is good and right in God’s sight.

Discussion

1. In your journey as a Christian, has anyone disciplined you? How would you describe the relationship between you and the disciple maker?
2. “We might be willing to disciple others; but others do not want to be disciplined” – Do you agree with this statement? Why?
3. How would you know if you are ever “ready” to disciple others?

Contacts

Enquires	Contact
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To know more about the Christian faith.2. To sign up for the Alpha program.3. To be equipped in sharing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.4. To visit / join a Small Group.5. Small Groups that wish to use the Omega Series.6. Application to serve in a particular area of ministry.7. To register for the next Membership Class.8. To register for the next run of My First Steps.9. To be baptized.10. Send feedback on matters with regards to this handbook or disciple making.	<p>Speak to any of the Pastoral Team members before or after worship services; OR</p> <p>Email: ffmcdisciples@gmail.com</p> <p>Phone: 6221 7394</p>

Prayer meetings @ FFMC

Weekly Prayer Meetings: Every Wednesdays except for first week of the month, 7.30 pm @ Fairfield Hall

Monthly Corporate Prayer: First Wednesday of the month, 7.30 pm @ Kuehn Hall.

This handbook is developed by FFMC's Disciple Making Team. Please forward your feedback / queries to ffmcdisciples@gmail.com. Thank you.