

# Discipleship

by Joe Root

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*Discipleship in the 21st century requires intentional investment, teaching, and care to direct individuals in a definite pattern of understanding and living.*

**Duration:** 33:41

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19

**Topics:** "Discipleship Training", "Following Jesus"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of discipleship in the 21st century, drawing parallels between training a powerful horse and guiding individuals towards a transformed life through intentional investment, teaching, and care. It explores the necessity of discipleship based on Jesus' command, modeling, and examples in the Bible, highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities for discipleship in the current culture. The sermon calls for personal discipleship, discipleship in homes, and churches, stressing the need for deliberate engagement and investment in the lives of others. It concludes with a strong exhortation to actively pursue discipleship and make the necessary sacrifices to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

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## Transcript

The horse trembled with strength and power and energy. I sat over on the sideline fence. It was a round pin and I saw that horse snort and just trembling and waiting to explode.

But there was a young man there, a young man who understands the nature of horses, a young man who loves horses, a young man who has experience in guiding horses. And he clucked to the horse and he led the horse and he worked with that horse around and around and around. I had just stopped in in the spur of the moment.

A godly young man in our community a few weeks ago that I know and I wanted to stop and see him and visit him for a little bit. And he was leading a horse into the ring and so I just sat on the sideline for about the next hour and I watched. That day discipleship had been on my mind and God had some lessons about discipleship for me as I watched that young man working with that incredibly powerful horse.

And Taylor told me, he said, really, Brother Joe, horse training involves learning to control and direct their energy. It's teaching them the blessing and the opportunity to go fast and to gallop suddenly, but then to be able to slow down abruptly when necessary. It's learning to respond properly when they encounter

obstacles.

Loud noises, sudden movements, rattlesnakes, things out of the ordinary, other animals, water crossings, and it's learning to develop in that horse a sense of trust. And so I watched as Taylor led that horse all around the ring and then before long he saddled the horse and he climbed on the horse and he worked with the horse as it backed up and he taught the horse to go backwards and forwards. He said, this horse was brought to me because it was no longer controllable by its owners.

And the last time I trained it before the weekend, I think it was on Friday, and this was Monday. He said, I didn't get along well at all, but today the horse was learning and it was working well. And God was teaching me some lessons in discipleship and trust because there is in this generation, my brothers, tremendous energy and potential and power and opportunity.

But God is calling us to offer a little guidance and a little direction. Now Taylor could not have possibly held back that horse if the horse wasn't willing. That horse had so much more strength and power than he did.

He's a strong young man, but no match for a mighty horse. But that horse wanted to please and that horse just needed some guidance. I believe God is calling us in this generation also to discipleship.

Tonight that's what we want to talk about for just a few moments while we're here together in this message, and that is discipleship in the 21st century. Discipleship in the 21st century. After Jesus lived among humanity, he left his wonderful life example and his powerful teachings about the kingdom.

You know that's why we're here tonight. You know that he went to the cross and he offered his own blood and gave his life as a ransom payment for my sin and for your sin and for the sin of the whole world. After three days he rose in glorious triumph and he was seen of his disciples for 40 days.

Then shortly before his ascension he went out and he gave these words to his followers. These words that I want to hold up before you tonight. Jesus said all authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and lo I am with you always even unto the end of the age. Discipleship in the 21st century.

I want to briefly consider seven areas quickly. What is discipleship? Why is discipleship necessary? What is unique about discipleship in the 21st century? Then I want to think about a call to personal discipleship. I want to think about a call to discipleship in our homes and I want to think about a call to discipleship in our churches.

Last of all I want to think about discipleship. A call to go get it. A call to go get it.

Let's think about these thoughts for the next few moments together. Discipleship in the 21st century. What is discipleship? Point number one.

What is discipleship? I want to suggest to you this definition. You can ponder it. I welcome your input and response but I suggest that it is the intentional investment of time, teaching, disciplines, demonstration and care of a person or people into the life of another.

To direct them into a definite pattern of understanding and living. I'll say that one more time. I suggest to you that discipleship is the intentional investment of time, teaching, disciplines, demonstration and care of

a person or people into the life of another.

To direct them in a definite pattern of living, of understanding and living. A disciple is a learner. A disciple is a follower.

It's one who adheres to the teachings of another. People can be disciples tonight of many different people or of things or of movements. There are all kinds of disciples after this or that in American society around us tonight.

But Christian discipleship begins with a true conversion and conviction that the gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to produce a transformed life. Christian discipleship begins with true conversion and a conviction that the gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to produce a transformed life. May God be praised.

Let's consider the second area tonight. Why is discipleship necessary? Why is discipleship necessary? Well I'll suggest a few things for your consideration tonight. Why is discipleship necessary? Well first of all I would say because Jesus specifically said to do it.

He said go and make disciples of all the nations. Jesus told us to do that. To do this.

That alone makes it necessary. But further, Jesus modeled discipleship for us. We have recorded in the New Testament, in the Gospels, not only the teaching but also the life example of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus modeled discipleship for us and we are to be like him. But furthermore we have examples of discipleship in this book, the Bible, the Word of God from the beginning to the end. My mind goes to men like Moses who had disciples around him.

Moses had a Joshua who was his servant. The one who accompanied him. The one who went up on the mountain with him.

The one who saw his heartbeat. The one who heard his prayers. The one who witnessed as Moses communed with God.

I think about men like Jehoshaphat that the Bible says when he was used by God to help accomplish a revival in the nation of Judah. That Jehoshaphat sent out men to bring the people back to the Lord. And not only that but a little later on, I love this, the Bible says of Jehoshaphat himself, even after he'd had some failures, even after he'd had some rebukes, Jehoshaphat himself went out and gathered the people back to the Lord.

That is discipleship tonight. That's why it's necessary we have the example in the Word of God and also the teaching of our Lord Jesus. Furthermore, as we move on into the New Testament, we see that the apostles also both instructed and modeled this example of discipleship.

One example that is so fascinating to me that particularly comes to my mind tonight is the new church at Antioch. Now the church at Antioch, as far as I'm able to tell in the New Testament, was the first primarily Gentile church. And it was quite a church in a bustling metropolis of Antioch, up north of Jerusalem, perhaps 300 miles.

And as that church began to grow and these were Gentile people and and there was something a little different about this church, the Bible says that the tidings of these things came to the ears of the apostles at Jerusalem. And what did they do? I love the response of the apostles. It said when they heard that, they decided to send Barnabas up to Antioch.

They didn't raise alarms. They didn't send a bunch of decrees. They sent a son of consolation.

They sent Barnabas up to Antioch and Barnabas took a young man by the name of Paul along with him. And the Bible tells us that a whole year, a whole year, they met with those new believers. That, beloved, is an example of discipleship.

Well, why is discipleship necessary? Jesus said to do it. Jesus modeled it. We have examples of it from the Old Testament all the way through the New Testament.

And further, discipleship is necessary because, now get this brothers and sisters, discipleship is necessary because our creation in the image and likeness of God includes the reality that we are relational people. We are relational people. And that means, among other things, that we are influenced and we're guided by the lives of others.

That's a reality of our image. And since we are influenced and guided by the lives of others, we have to pause and recognize tonight that since sin has entered into the world, most of the influences around us, as well as the influence of our own flesh, as well as the influence of an enemy, the evil one, Satan himself, who is proactively against the work of God because of these things, we definite, we need definite, deliberate discipleship in the Word and in the will of God. Because we're not neutral territory.

We're not in a neutral spot. We're behind the lines in enemy territory. And, beloved, we need discipleship.

I need it. You need it. We all need it.

We need discipleship. That's why it's necessary. And finally, discipleship is necessary because we will pattern after something.

We will pattern after something. Discipleship sets forward and promotes a pattern of godliness. Discipleship in the 21st century.

We've thought about what is it? We've thought about why is it necessary? I want to consider a third area and that is this. What is unique about discipleship in the 21st century? Be interesting to know how you would answer that question. What is unique about discipleship in our day, in the 21st century? You know, Jesus asked a question in the first century, in his day, to a group of men.

And he, I just can hear the cry of Jesus as he, somewhat in pathos and yet also an understanding of humanity that he had had a part in creating the image and likeness of God. In fact, the word tells us that all things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made. But Jesus made a cry to the men of his day and he said, where unto shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? That was the text of the first sermon I ever preached a number of years ago.

Where unto shall we liken the men of this generation? As a young man, I was concerned about that. I wondered about the realities of our generation. That's been perhaps nearly 20 years ago now, 18 or 20 years.

I can't even remember exactly right in this moment. How much more so today? Where unto shall we liken the men of this generation? What about our generation, brothers and sisters? What is unique about discipleship now? Well, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, the apostle Paul said these words. Some of you have memorized the last part of this chapter.

And I'll just share with you a little example of discipleship. When I was a young man, I was a teenager, before I give you this quote, I don't know why he did it, but I came in the house one evening and my father was sitting in the chair. My father is a man of God.

And he gave me this challenge. He said, son, before you go to bed tonight, I want you to memorize 2 Timothy chapter 3. Now it's not a long chapter, but somehow he sensed the right moment. Many times it wouldn't have worked.

Many times I might not have responded, but somehow in that moment, I sensed the work of God. I sensed the call of the spirit. And I took that challenge.

I rose as a young man and I went in my bedroom and I poured in my Bible till late that night. And before I went to bed, I went out to dad's chair and I said, dad, I think I've got it. 2 Timothy chapter 3 and was able to share that with him.

What a blessing. I want you to think about a few words of it now. That was discipleship on his part.

I'll be forever grateful for my father's discipleship. But the apostle Paul said in that chapter, this know also that in the last days, perilous times shall come. That word perilous could be translated raging.

And isn't that an apt description of America today or even our world today in the 21st century, raging times shall come times of turmoil and busyness. What is unique about discipleship in the 21st century? It goes on to say for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous boasters, proud blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof from such turn away and so on. Isn't that a description of America today in the 21st century? What is unique about discipleship in the 21st century? Well, there's a group of people and I visited with some of you brothers about this.

I did some study on this a number of years ago myself, but it's moving on. There's a group of people in America today known as the millennials. And the millennials are the people today that are and a number of you are here, you're millennials.

If you're from 16 to 36, would you please raise your hand? If you're age 16 to 36, take a look. This is the group that society would call the millennial generation today. And God bless you.

But the millennials face a very unique challenge. They follow generation Y and generation X and so forth. And there are social analysts who study the generations and certain things that are typical of each generation.

But I just want to say without taking time to go into that, that I think we have a culture that is very proactive in discipleship. And if we're going to in some way cultivate the love and the life of Jesus Christ, it will take deliberate discipleship on our part. Otherwise the culture is going to do it for us.

Many people today are being disciplined. The millennial generation is being disciplined by American culture. You can attempt to order a supply or a part or a book on Amazon.

And that's a useful tool. The headquarters is a couple hours from where I live over in Seattle. But that company, you can go onto that site and all kinds of suggestions will pop up at you.

Here's a free movie clip that maybe you would like to watch right now to see if you would like to download that. Here is what is popular. Here are bestseller books.

Wouldn't you like to see the clothing item that's been the most popular that has sold the most? Discipleship. The culture is discipling very proactively around us. The social networks around us are setting trims.

I'm not here wringing my hands tonight. I want you to know that. I just think we need to pause and take a look at reality.

The discipleship of our culture. I remember several years ago, I couldn't think of a current example, but most of you know who Sarah Palin was when she ran for president. She wore a certain type of glasses that were kind of noted.

And I just remember reading that as she began to appear in the media, the sales of that type of glasses just went off the charts. And she was just one public political figure, let alone the celebrities and the sports figures and the Hollywood figures. They're discipling very proactively.

That's one of the things that I believe is unique about discipleship in the 21st century. I want to read to you a couple of verses out of the book of Daniel. The last chapter of Daniel verse three says this, and they that shall be wise, they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased. Now I think those are two factors that we see Daniel prophesied would be evident in the time of the end.

And I think that's what's unique about the millennial generation about discipleship in the 21st century. It's that many shall run to and fro, first of all. We live in a society of globalization.

We live in a society of travel. We can communicate. We can travel.

It's a beautiful, it's a tremendous opportunity for discipleship and for spreading the gospel. I'm excited to live in this generation. Brother and sister and friend tonight, you aren't here in 2016 by accident.

It's a wonderful time to be alive and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but it's also a time to be real, to accept the reality that we live in a very proactive discipling culture. And if we want to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we're going to have to be intentional about it. Many shall run to and fro.

The second point that scripture says is that knowledge shall be increased. Technology, industry, instant communication, social networking, instant shopping. A few weeks ago, my wife went outside.

We live out in the country in the state of Washington, and she heard a buzzing sound. And she looked around, couldn't figure out what that buzzing noise was. And about 10 feet over our roof was a little drone

flying.

And it turned out it was just a neighbor flying a drone around. And I had to chuckle at the contrast. We live right across the road from our church, and it's a simple plain white building.

And there was a man parked in the parking lot launching his drone and taking high-tech pictures around the valley. You think about that. Discipleship in the 21st century.

And those things can be used profitably. I realize that. But it does make a time a unique challenge.

Well, I just want to say this. This generation longs for input and accountability and affirmation and engagement. I believe that with all my heart.

This is a wonderful generation. I see so much potential. You that raised your hands tonight, there is so much potential in your generation.

God bless you. I'm so excited for you. I'm just a little bit out of your, a little bit older than you.

But God bless you. What potential? Well, let's consider quickly a call to personal discipleship. A call to personal discipleship.

That is your investment in the life of another. It's seizing opportunities in the life of another. This calls for humility.

It calls for availability. And you know, so often, I just want to encourage you brothers and sisters tonight, whether you're a millennial or younger or older, you all have a place in discipleship, personal discipleship. And so often, I think we miss the little indicators.

Have you ever had someone just kind of casually mention, I've been struggling a little bit. Yeah, I'm doing fine. Yeah, fine.

How are you? That was an indicator. I think too often we're busy. We're caught up in our lives.

And we don't want to take time and we don't want life to get complicated. And we want to be a little bit protective. And sometimes we're hearing the tip of the iceberg and it's a call for personal discipleship.

Personal discipleship. Be ready. It may be a text, a call, just a little hint.

But it's, sometimes it's a direct request. I've had that too. A call on the phone.

Would you meet with me? Would you disciple me? I'm struggling. God bless them. God bless them.

This is powerful. Prayer, accountability, encouragement, calling people back to the truth. Sometimes we let the devil whisper lies in our ears.

Generation, this generation of millennials, the devil is promoting lies in your ears. But you don't have to listen. And God bless you as you are disciplers and are disciplined.

Yes, I think there's a great longing for that. And it reminds me of a little boy a few weeks ago. Just a little boy about this tall.

And I'm thinking of the longing for discipleship. And this little boy, his father told him one evening, his father had been very busy. And his father told him, tomorrow morning, son, we're going to get up and go fishing.

You know what that little boy did? It touched my heart. That little boy went and got on his bib overalls and he got on his flannel shirt and went to bed. He wanted to be ready.

He wanted to be ready when daddy called in the morning that it's time to go fishing. And beloved, so often I think there are people craving and crying out for personal discipleship, for an investment in each other's lives. God bless you.

But brothers, you that are in your 30s and 40s, I just want to remind you, even those of you that are in your 20s, it's your turn. Sometimes I had a group of young brothers in my home just a few nights ago. And the ladies were at a ladies meeting.

And some of these young men, I asked them about this subject. I said, what would you say if I just said this title, discipleship in the 21st century? And I got a variety of responses and we had a good discussion. But when that discussion was all over, I said, brothers, just remember this.

And these were young men of God. I thank God for them. I said, it's your turn.

They were talking about how they've appreciated it and they love it and they welcome it. But I said, it's your turn. It's now your time.

Isn't that what our scripture says? The things which thou hast heard of me, the apostle wrote to Timothy. Among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. This thing keeps going and passes on.

And if you've appreciated discipleship in your life, I encourage you, it's time. It's your time. It's your time to reach out.

Well, let's think a moment about this, the call to discipleship in our homes, a call to discipleship in our homes. I just want to say tonight, this is an incredible opportunity. It's a powerful opportunity for amazing influence, our homes.

An open home, a cup of coffee, a glass of iced tea, perhaps a meal, maybe a Bible study, maybe a place to stay, your home. Beloved, tonight, how do you look at your home? Is it a place for my space or is it a mission station for Jesus Christ? Is it a place of discipleship? And I know we all need times where we have quiet. And I encourage us to arrange our homes where we have a spot that we can get away.

But I also encourage us to open the doors. Do you know that a stable, godly, loving home is an extremely rare thing in our world today? And there are people crying out for that. If you have a godly home tonight, do you know that your home shouts without you ever saying a word? Just as you come in and as someone shares a meal, and they observe your life, and they hear your conversation, and they watch your respect, and they watch how you deal with the children, you are discipling in a powerful way, discipleship in our homes.

Well, the sixth point I wanted to make, I want to hurry on and conclude, is a call to discipleship in our churches, a call to discipleship in our churches, the ecclesia. That word means the assembly. It literally

means the called out and called together, the called together, the assembled ones.

This is God's plan. So clear in the book, in the word of God, so clear in the example in the Acts of the Apostles, that local, functional, healthy, stable churches where there is love and joy and discipleship, this is God's idea. God puts the solitary in families, and he does it on purpose.

Discipleship in our churches. You know, our churches, stable, healthy, functional churches, at least as they develop, include bishops and deacons, the word of God says. And these men are not to be lords, but they're to be helpers, they're to be encouragers, they're to be examples, the Bible says.

And brothers, I just want to say to us in our churches here tonight, I really believe that we need to face, if you're struggling, if you're a pastor tonight, or if you're an older brother in a church, and maybe you struggle with facing future fears of compromise, or of washout, or of dilution, I believe we need to face those fears, not with more rules, more and more and more rules, and adding, and trying to desperately keep up with the new trend so I can categorize something else to deal with this, but rather with deliberate discipleship, with reaching out in love, and relationship, and teaching, with our brothers and sisters, daring discipleship. Yes, the local church, our local churches, should be greenhouses of growth for disciples. But with all of that, I want you to remember, remember the example of our Lord Jesus.

He fulfilled the prophecy, literally, that was written of Him, and we need to remember this example in discipleship as well. Yes, we want to inspire, we want to call this generation to high ground, we want to motivate, we want to prompt them to godly living, but remember, the Bible says of Jesus that a bruised wreath would He not break, and smoking flax would He not quench. He didn't stamp it out if there was just a little spark, and we want to follow that example in discipleship in our churches.

Well, the last point I want to give as I take my seat is discipleship, a call to go get it, a call to go get it. My observation is that those that seek shall find, to those that knock it shall be opened. My wife and I learned the familiar sound of the gravel crunching in the driveway, and we could sometimes tell who it was by the way they drove, or the sound of the vehicle, or the sound of the bicycle, or the knock on the door.

But I just want to encourage you, my young brother, sister, friend, man, woman, older brother, whoever you are, go get it. Go after discipleship. James says you have not because you ask not, and I've had people say, I don't have anyone to talk to.

I don't have anyone to speak to about how to go in life, and I know God intended that there would be godly homes with good parents, and I had that blessing, but not everyone does. And we need to be there for those who do not, so go get it. Other brothers and sisters can help you in learning to practice spiritual disciplines, Bible reading, prayer, fasting, memorization and meditation, how to fight sin and temptation, seeking discernment in my life, choices and decisions, all of those things.

It's serious. Remember, Jesus said, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. In fact, he says, whosoever of you will not forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

It's serious. It's worth making hard choices to have it. Young man and young woman tonight, whoever you are, maybe you don't know many people here or elsewhere, but if you are seeking to follow Jesus, I encourage you to surround yourself with godly men and women.

It's worth making hard choices. It may mean a job change. It may mean a geographical change.

It may mean a personal liberty sacrifice. It's worth staying around for the hard sayings of Christ. Our Lord Jesus one time looked at a group of disciples, a whole group of them, and he taught some pretty hard things, and quite a few of them walked away.

And Jesus turned to the few. He said, will you also go away? Tonight, I wonder if there's someone here just about to go away, just about to walk away. Will you also go away? Hundreds have walked away.

Thousands have walked away in the past few years from godly, solid discipleship. I'll leave their lives in the hands of God. And let's go after them, by the way, when we have the opportunity.

But will you go away? Make some hard choices. Make some resolves tonight. I want to be a disciple of Jesus.

I want men and women of God to surround my life. May God bless you. Let's seek discipleship in the 21st century.

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