

In the Meantime – Week 4

October 26, 2025

1 Thess 2:17–3:13

A Heart of Discipleship

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Jesus' final command before ascending was clear — **"Therefore, go..."**
 - 1. (Matthew 28:18–20).
 - 2. That's our calling too: to make disciples **of Jesus**, not of ourselves.
- B. The question today: How do we develop a heart of discipleship?
- C. We live in a world desperate for disciple-makers—where most people are:
 - 1. **Short-Sighted** – focused on comfort, not eternity.
 - 2. **Surface-Level** – avoiding real relationships.
 - 3. **Easily Discouraged** – losing heart when life gets hard.
 - 4. **Prayerless** – relying on self instead of God.
 - 5. **Self-Centered** – orbiting around success, not the gospel.

But there's a better way.

Paul models a **heart transformed by the gospel** — a heart that lives for the Kingdom, loves people deeply, endures hardship faithfully, prays persistently, and centers everything on Jesus.

II. 5 Marks of a Disciple-Making Heart

- A. He Was **Kingdom-Minded** (2:17–20)
 - "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory... Is it not you?"
 - 1. Paul viewed life **through eternity's lens**—building the present on the certainty of the future.
 - 2. What mattered most to God mattered most to Paul.
 - 3. The Thessalonians weren't just converts—they were his **joy and crown** before Christ.
 - 4. In a short-sighted world, Paul lived for **eternal impact**, not personal comfort.
- B. He Was **Relationally Invested** (3:1–2)
 - "When we could stand it no longer, we sent Timothy..."
 - 1. Paul's ministry was **deeply personal**. He didn't just share the message of Christ—he shared his **life**.
 - 2. "Left by ourselves" literally means "abandoned"—he was willing to lose comfort for connection.
 - 3. Disciple-makers are not **"here I am"** people but **"there you are"** people.
 - 4. Discipleship happens in relationship, vulnerability, and presence.
- C. He Was **Faithfully Resilient** (3:3–5)
 - "We are destined for these trials..."
 - 1. Paul expected suffering—he warned the Thessalonians about it.
 - 2. Faithful discipleship means endurance, not ease.
 - 3. When hardship came, Paul didn't quit—he checked on their faith.
 - 4. The tempter will always try to undo gospel work, but Paul's hope was firm.

- "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)
- D. He Was **Prayerfully Persistent** (3:6–10)
- "Night and day we pray most earnestly..."
 1. When Timothy brought good news of their **faith and love**, Paul was **revived**.
 - "Knowing that your faith is alive keeps us alive."
 2. Their steadfast faith gave him joy and strength in persecution.
 3. Paul's response? **Prayer**.
 - He didn't just pray occasionally; it was his lifeline.
 - Prayer was not optional—it was his **first act of love** and **dependence on God**.
- E. He Was **Gospel-Oriented** (3:11–13)
- "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow..."
 1. Every desire Paul expressed flowed from the **gospel**:
 - That God would clear the way
 - Make love overflow
 - Strengthen hearts
 - Prepare them to stand holy and blameless before God.
 2. The gospel wasn't just Paul's **message**—it was his **motivation** and **measure of success**.
 3. The heart of discipleship beats for others to know the grace we've received.

III. PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Paul's heart of discipleship didn't happen by accident—it was formed through his **surrender, suffering, and intimacy with Christ**.

How Do We Begin to Develop Our Own Hearts of Discipleship?

- A. We fix our eyes on Jesus' Kingdom
 1. Develop an eternal perspective by daily surrendering our own agendas to God's greater mission.
 2. Try beginning each day praying, *"Lord, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done."* Ask God to align your priorities with His purposes.
- B. We open our life to others
 1. Discipleship happens in a shared life, not just shared Bible studies. We must let people in—to see our joys, our struggles, and our faith up close.
 2. Try inviting someone into your common place routine and trust God to make it sacred space.
- C. We endure through faith when things get hard
 1. Hardship is the classroom where the heart of a disciple-maker is formed.
 2. When trials come, and we ask "Why me?"—Try asking- "What might God be doing?"
 3. *"Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up."* (Galatians 6:9)
- D. We pray like it all depends on God

1. Developing a disciple-makers heart starts by replacing worry with intercession. Paul didn't just pray occasionally; prayer was his lifeline.
 2. Try keeping a short prayer list of people you're discipling or influencing, and pray for them by name every day this week.
 3. "Night and day we pray most earnestly..." (1 Thessalonians 3:10)
- E. We keep the Gospel at the center
1. The Gospel isn't just our message—it is our motivation. A heart of discipleship beats for others to know the grace we've received.
 2. Try reflect daily on the gospel story—how Christ met you, changed you, and now sends you. Let that gratitude fuel your ministry.

LIFEGroup Questions – Week 4: A Heart of Discipleship

1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:13

1. Warm-Up

When you think about someone who has discipled or deeply influenced your faith, what stands out most about their example?

2. Kingdom-Minded

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17–20.

- What do Paul's words reveal about what mattered most to him?
- How does keeping an eternal perspective shape the way we live and invest in people today?
- What are some ways we can become more "Kingdom-minded" in our priorities this week?

3. Relationally Invested

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1–2.

- Paul was deeply invested in people, not programs. Why do you think relational discipleship is so powerful?
- What might it look like for you to move from "here I am" to "there you are" in your relationships?

4. Faithfully Resilient

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:3–5.

- Paul reminds the Thessalonians that trials are part of following Jesus. How do you usually respond when hardship comes?
- How can difficulties actually strengthen our discipleship and faith?

5. Prayerfully Persistent

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6–10.

- What do Paul's prayers tell us about his love for the Thessalonians?
- How might our discipleship look different if we prayed as consistently and earnestly as Paul did?
- Who is one person you can commit to pray for daily this week?

6. Gospel-Oriented

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11–13.

- How does Paul's prayer show that the gospel is both his motivation and his measure of success?
- How can keeping the gospel at the center protect us from discouragement or self-focus in ministry?

7. Application

- Which of the five marks of a disciple-making heart—Kingdom-minded, relationally invested, faithfully resilient, prayerfully persistent, or gospel-oriented—do you most want God to grow in you right now?
- What's one practical next step you can take this week to develop that part of your heart?