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### Disciplmaking 2 Being His Witness

## INCARNATING THE GOSPEL

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:1, 14*

**THE DEFINITION OF INCARNATE.** To incarnate is to give substance or bodily form to something. Jesus was the incarnation of God as He took on human, tangible, physical form and dwelt among us. Jesus was the incarnation of God's love to lost people. Today we are the incarnation of His love to lost people. Believers give substance and bodily form to the Gospel. We are the Gospel in flesh and blood ... His good news in human, tangible, physical form.

**LOVING LOST PEOPLE.** God is our model for loving lost people. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life"* John 3:16. Jesus came to us ... loved us ... and died for us while we were lost. We need to follow God's example of love. We should love lost people. He has given us instructions in how to love the lost, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

**JESUS AND PAUL.** Jesus taught about how we should incarnate the Gospel in His parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the two lost sons. He also demonstrated it in His interactions with lost people. He incarnated the Gospel as He made meaningful contact with the woman at the well in Samaria ... as He made meaningful contact with the tax collector Levi ... and as He made meaningful contact with the businessman Zaccheus. We should follow the example of Jesus. Paul taught about incarnating the light of the Gospel as ambassadors and as clean vessels. Paul also demonstrated incarnation in giving his life to lost people. Paul's life was an expression of God's love for the lost. We should follow his example.

**OUR INCARNATION.** We are the incarnation of the Gospel in our dark and lost world. Following the instruction of the Word and the examples of Jesus and Paul, we should make meaningful contact with non-believers. Incarnating the Gospel involves taking the Gospel to them ... demonstrating it ... living it ... and offering it. Incarnating the Gospel is not a program ... not a project ... not a gimmick ... and not a harvest mechanism. It is a way of life ... a life of loving the lost ... a life of living for them. Incarnating the Gospel is God's love flowing through us to lost people.

## LOVING LOST PEOPLE

**God's love is our example.** God loves the world ... that's why He sent Jesus to us. Jesus is the one *"who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood"* Revelation 1:5. He loved us *"even when we were dead in our transgressions"* Ephesians 2:5. Jesus loved us and died for us *"while we were helpless ... while we were yet sinners ... while we were enemies"* Romans 5:6-10. He loved us while we were lost. He is our example to follow. To be like God is to love lost people. To be like Jesus is to love lost people.

**We must love the lost.** The Bible commands, *"Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you"* Ephesians 5:2. Paul wrote, *"Let all that you do be done in love"* 1 Corinthians 16:14. Real love is more than words ... it results in action. It is practical ... not just theoretical. The second greatest commandment is, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:13-14. We are also commanded to love our enemies, Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27,35. Jesus said, *"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same"* Luke 6:32-33. Real love is not just words ... it is deeds. And it is not just deeds ... it is words too.

**Instructions for loving the lost.** Incarnate the Gospel in love ... not in neutrality ... and not in hostility. God has given us instructions for loving lost people, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. This classic passage on love is sandwiched into three chapters about the use of spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit has given at least one empowering gift to each believer ... given to build up the Body qualitatively and quantitatively. In building up the numbers of people in the Body, these gifts are to be used in witnessing. And love should motivate, control, and be expressed in our witnessing. Learn from 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (in bold italics below) ... as it instructs you in how to love those who need the Gospel.

***Love is patient*** - Be willing to take enough time with non-believers. Calmly proceed at their pace. Don't be hasty or impetuous. Recognize and respond to their pace.

***love is kind*** - Be gentle and considerate. Don't be harsh. Be helpful rather than hurtful ... constructive rather than destructive.

***and is not jealous*** - Don't be possessive of your time, life, fellowship in the Body, or the Gospel. Be willing to openly give your life and the Gospel away to the lost. In addition, when appropriate, bring other like-minded believers into your witnessing relationships.

***love does not brag*** - Don't try to impress non-believers by glorifying yourself or fellow believers. *"For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake"* 2 Corinthians 4:5. Tell them *whose* you are ... not *who* you are.

**and is not arrogant** - Don't have a prideful attitude of superiority and exaggerated self-worth. Don't act holier-than-thou. Don't be condescending in attitude or words.

**does not act unbecomingly** - Don't be rude, discourteous, or obnoxious. Be a gracious example of the Gospel.

**it does not seek its own** - Be more concerned for their best interest rather than for your own. Paul wrote, *"Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved"* 1 Corinthians 10:33.

**is not provoked** - Don't let yourself be offended. Don't get irritated or angry when a non-believer acts like a non-believer. Have thick skin and a tender heart. They will test you ... try to provoke you. Never strike back. Don't prosecute or condemn. Keep cool. *"He who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding"* Proverbs 17:27.

**does not take into account a wrong suffered** - Don't keep score of personal hurts. Don't take their criticism or rejection of the Gospel personally. *"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions"* Proverbs 10:12.

**does not rejoice in unrighteousness** - Don't join in or approve of their sin, Romans 1:32. Love them ... but not their sin. Remember that you are a witness ... not the judge and jury.

**but rejoices with the truth** - The Gospel is the word of truth, Colossians 1:5. Joyously share the Gospel ... and rejoice when people come to the knowledge of the truth, John 4:36, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Timothy 2:25.

**bears all things** - Silently absorb and overlook the wounds they inflict. With sympathy and compassion, get beyond the things in them that you find displeasing and wrong. *"He who conceals a transgression seeks love"* Proverbs 17:9.

**believes all things** - Believe that God will work in their minds and hearts. Have unquenchable faith that they will come to faith in Christ.

**hopes all things** - Desire their salvation ... yearn for it. Expect them to come to Christ. Be positive and optimistic.

**endures all things** - Be steadfast. Persevere. Don't let difficulty, discomfort, or opposition stop you. Press on!

**love never fails** - Always be motivated by your love for them. *"For the love of Christ controls us"* 2 Corinthians 5:14. Never stop loving them. *"A friend loves at all times"* Proverbs 17:17.

## JESUS ... INCARNATING THE GOSPEL

Jesus is God ... is the creator ... is the source of life ... is the true light ... and is the means of salvation, John 1:1-13. He became flesh and came to us, John 1:14. Jesus came to us as God in human form. He was God's ultimate communication to mankind, Hebrews 1:1-2. He was God incarnate ... in flesh and blood. As believers, we should be like Jesus. We should incarnate the Gospel in our world.

**The teaching of Jesus.** Jesus spent time with the people who needed Him. The Savior spent time with the lost. The Great Physician spent time with those dying from sin. Frequently Jesus was criticized for His contact with sinners. Luke 15 contains three parables ... His response to some of His critics. These parables can help us incarnate the Gospel. Consider the context of Luke 15 (the first two verses) ... then dig through the three parables for lessons for your incarnation of the Gospel. Write your notes in the margin along the side of the parables below.

His conduct ... and the criticism.

*"Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.*

*The Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" Luke 15:1-2*

The lost sheep parable, verses 3-7.

*"So He told them this parable, saying, What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Luke 15:3-7*

The lost coin parable.

*"Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?*

*When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:8-10*

The two lost sons parable.

*"And He said, 'A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me." So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.'" Luke 15:11-16*

*"But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" So he got up and came to his father.'" Luke 15:17-20*

*"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." Luke 15:20-24*

*"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'" Luke 15:25-30*

*"And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'" Luke 15:31-32*

**The example of Jesus.** He came *"to seek and to save that which was lost"* Luke 19:10. His incarnation of God's love earned Him the label *"friend of sinners"* Matthew 11:19, Luke 7:34-35. Could you be called a *friend of sinners*? Understand His teaching ... and follow His example. Dig into your Bible ... read each of the three accounts mentioned below. Look for the facts listed for each ... and put notes in the margin below.

Jesus and the woman at the well, John 4:4-42.

- He went through Samaria.
- He made contact with a Samaritan woman at the well.
- He did the unusual ... asking for a drink.
- He talked with her.
- He spoke to her need.
- He refused to argue about the place of worship.
- He revealed Himself to be the Messiah.
- She believed.
- She brought others to Jesus.

Jesus and the tax collector Levi, Luke 5:27-32, Matthew 9:9-13.

- He walked by the tax office.
- He made contact with Levi.
- He called Levi to follow Him.
- Jesus went to Levi's home.
- Levi brought his friends to Jesus.
- Religious leaders criticized His sinner-contact.
- Jesus answered the critics.
- Levi became a follower of Jesus.
- Note: Levi became known as Matthew ... the Gospel author.

Jesus and the businessman Zaccheus, Luke 19:1-10.

- Jesus walked through the streets of Jericho.
- He saw the interest in Zaccheus.
- He made contact with him.
- He went to his home.
- Jesus was criticized for His sinner-contact.
- Zaccheus became a believer.
- Jesus explained the purpose of His incarnation.

## PAUL ... INCARNATING THE GOSPEL

Paul incarnated the Gospel. He not only gave the words of the Gospel to lost people, he also gave his life to them. He described himself as *"being poured out as a drink offering"* Philippians 2:17, 2 Timothy 4:6. He described his attitude and actions with the words, *"I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls"* 2 Corinthians 12:15. He taught about incarnating the Gospel ... and he lived it.

**The teaching of Paul.** Paul gave us clear teaching on incarnating the Gospel. Dig into each of the passages below for the key thoughts of his teaching on this. Write your notes in the margin below.

Bringing light to the blind.

*"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

*For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.*

*For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves." 2 Corinthians 4:1-7*

Ambassadors of His love.

*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.*

*Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

*Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:14-20*

Clean and useful vessels.

*"Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.'*

*Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.*

*Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."*  
2 Timothy 2:19-21

**The example of Paul.** He wrote, *"I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me"* 1 Corinthians 4:16. Paul also wrote, *"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ"* 1 Corinthians 11:1. Jesus incarnated the Gospel ... and Paul followed His example. Paul incarnated the Gospel ... you should follow his example. Dig into the Biblical texts given below to learn from the details of Paul's examples. Add some notes in the margin.

Life lived in contact with lost people.

*"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." 1 Thessalonians 1:5*

Their Gospel was more than words.

There was power in their Gospel.

It was Holy Spirit delivered.

It was given with full conviction.

Their lives proved their Gospel.

They were among the people.

Love as the motivation.

*"But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."*

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

They lived among them.

They were tender as a nursing mother.

They had fond affection for them.

They gave the Gospel to them.

They gave their lives to them.

Their love grew.

Being a chameleon.

*"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it."*

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Paul made himself as a slave to the lost.

To Jews ... he was a Jew.

To Gentiles converted to Judaism ... he was like them.

To Gentiles (not under law) ... he was as a Gentile.

He stayed pure ... under the law of Christ.

To the weak ... he acted weak.

He became anybody ... to win anybody.

He did it all for the Gospel.

Paul wrote five times that his goal was to win the lost.

He used *all* means to save *some*.

Note: Paul followed the example of Jesus ... who was a chameleon. Jesus, being God, took on human form to bring the Gospel to us, Philippians 2:5-8.

## YOUR INCARNATING THE GOSPEL

Every believer has regular contacts with non-believers ... with friends, acquaintances, and strangers. Seek opportunities with those in all three categories. Make preemptive strikes with the Gospel. Build bridges of friendship with lost people. Be creative ... make meaningful contact with them. Find common ground with them ... ground on which you are both comfortable. Share your life and the Gospel with them. Take the initiative to spend time with them. Some common ground opportunities include:

### **Eating together**

- Breakfast or brunch
- Lunch or dinner
- Dessert
- Holiday meals
- International dinners
- Picnics or barbecues
- Neighborhood dinners
- Relief meals in times of illness or need

### **Regular activities**

- Co-operative baby-sitting
- Clubs
- Commuting
- Exercise
- Music
- Politics
- Recreation (museums, aquariums, zoos, theaters, hikes)
- School organizations
- Shared chores (house, lawn, cars, gardening)
- Shopping
- Sports (lessons, playing, coaching, watching)
- Volunteerism

### **Celebrations**

- Anniversaries
- Birthdays
- Graduations
- Holidays
- Sports Championships

Some believers have fallen into the ingathering, holy-huddling trap of having only Christian friends. If that has happened to you, pray and take action. Program your life to make new acquaintances. Work on reactivating old friendships ... and turn some acquaintances into friends. Meet new people ... turn some strangers into acquaintances. Make meaningful contact with non-believers and with their friends. This will take some effort if you have been isolated instead of insulated. Break out of the holy-huddle mentality ... or never let yourself develop it. Remember that you can't shoot the moose from the lodge.

## INSULATED OR ISOLATED?

*"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord, 'and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you.'"*

2 Corinthians 6:17

**Be a friend of sinners.** Jesus was a friend of sinners ... follow His example. Follow the example of Paul making meaningful contact with lost people. However, don't sin to be a friend of sinners. Your personal purity authenticates your message. Friendship is different than being *yoked together* ... i.e., being bound together. There is a line drawn by the Bible for us. *"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' 'Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you'"* 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. Do not put yourself in a yoke with a non-believer. Marriage is a good application of that. Don't marry a non-believer. Don't marry someone in hopes of bringing him or her to Christ. Becoming one flesh (the sexual union of husband and wife) is to be taken very seriously. A violation of the sanctity of that one-flesh union is also very serious, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. If you are already married, don't divorce your non-believing spouse, 1 Corinthians 7:12-14. Another example of being yoked together is a business partnership ... because it is being legally bound together. However, regular employment isn't a binding agreement and therefore is not being yoked together. Be a friend of sinners ... but don't yoke yourself together with them.

**Can you associate with immoral people?** Jesus did ... to bring His message to them. Paul did ... to tell them about Jesus. You can ... to share the Gospel. *"I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves"* 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. Dealing with another believer's sin should be done with great love, along Biblical guidelines, and for the purpose of restoration, Colossians 3:12-13, Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1.

**Be in the world but not of the world.** Jesus taught separation that is insulation but not isolation, John 17:15-18. Jesus didn't sin to be a friend of sinners, 1 Peter 2:22. Paul changed his behavior to be a more effective witness ... but stayed true to the law of Christ, 1 Corinthians 9:20-21. Avoid every appearing of evil, 1 Thessalonians 5:22. But don't avoid lost people. Separate yourself from sin ... but not from lost sinners.

## A PERSONAL REVIEW WORKSHEET

1. Do you really have love for lost people?  
Do you need to pray for a broken heart for them?
2. Which part of the instructions for loving lost people (3-2 and 3-3)  
do you need to pray about and work on?
3. What did you learn from the incarnation teaching and example of  
Jesus (3-4 to 3-6)?
4. What did you learn from the incarnation teaching and example of  
Paul (3-7 to 3-9)?
5. What incarnation ideas from page 3-9, or from your own ideas,  
will you do?
6. How is your purity? Are you a friend of sin?  
What are you going to do about it?

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