

## Keeping It Real: Handling Discipleship Discouragements With Hope

The process of discipleship always works best if there is some sort of plan. The only problem with plans, of course, is that they involve...well, people! Sometimes people encourage us by their spiritual responses and steps of obedience. We love that! At other times, however, we find ourselves discouraged by creative excuses or lack of follow-through or ebbing interest. Even worse are those who, over time, fall away from Christ entirely. What has happened to our former disciples? Have we failed? Is there something wrong with our discipleship approach? In this opening session, we want to chart the course for our time together. We want to study Scripture and think about our discipling. We want to encourage one another and revitalise hope, and in doing so, we want to "keep it real."

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### A. Facing the Desert

- I Samuel 30:1-6
- I Corinthians 16:9
- II Corinthians 1:8-11
- **Small Group Discussion:** What things do you find most difficult in your discipling ministry?

### B. Remembering the Call

- Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-17; 3:13-15; 10:28-31
  - The call to BE disciples comes before the call to MAKE disciples.
  - We reproduce what we are, not what we say.
- Mark 8:14-21; 9:34; 10:35-41; 14:37-38, 50
  - *“The process of becoming disciples of Jesus is a slow and painful one for the Twelve...One does not become a mature disciple in year one.”* (Garland)
  - *“...anyone can be a follower, [but] no one finds it easy.”* (Garland)

**C. Let’s Talk:** How do these texts in Mark encourage you as a disciple-making leader?

#### **D. Finding Hope: Six Reminders**

1. Discipleship is ultimately God's work, not ours.
2. The power of discipleship is not in our words or efforts or even in our amazing discipleship curriculum; it is in God's Word, empowered by the Spirit of God.
3. We are indeed accountable to God for our plans, our efforts, our words, and our actions; AND those we disciple are also accountable for their response in faith and obedience.
4. Discipleship is often "messy" because people are messy. We forget things. We are far from perfect ourselves. If life is like a road, there are always plenty of ditches on either side.
5. Anytime discipleship "works," it is because God is faithful! Gospel work is God's work!
6. Always, always, always...Fix your hope on God Himself. Do not use your discipleship outcomes as the measure of your "success" or "failure" as a disciple-making leader.

#### **E. Conclusion & Prayer**

- A personal story: wrestling with unexpected disappointment.
- Small Group prayer based on **Romans 15:13**

#### ***Suggested Reading:***

**Each of these books brings something helpful – and there are many others:**

*Discipleship* by Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Coleman

*Discipleship that Fits*, by Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom

*Contagious Disciple Making*, by David & Paul Watson

*The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*, by Win & Charles Arn

*The Disciple Making Church*, by Bill Hull

*The Trellis and the Vine*, by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne

*Deep Roots of Resilient Disciples*, by Rick Hill

*Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, by Peter Scazzero

*Pursuit: The Heart of a Disciple*, by Michelle Clifford

*Discipleship Essentials*, by Greg Ogden