

Discipleship Part III

Michael J. Wilkins

(Silence until 00:30)

And next week you'll have some real preaching. I pray that we all support Mike Cocoris, in his new ministry. It's a difficult transition in the Biola hour history. But the Biola hour is a wonderful heritage. And we need to pray for him.

Yesterday, we gave a handout that focused upon some of the definitions of disciple, discipleship, discipling. We are, any of you not able to get those yesterday. Oh, most of you. OK. Sorry. OK. We do have some extras. We'll try to hand those out for you. Well, we try to do is to focus upon some definitions that have come out of our study of the biblical data. What is the disciple? What was a disciple in the first century outside the, the biblical material? What was the definition of disciple overall?

And today, what we'd like to do is we'd like to build upon those definitions, and suggest some implications for what discipleship entails. And then I'd like to have a little fun and show the way, which we try to do some of that in our own life, especially and through our family. So, I'll be showing slides of our family vacations for the last ten years here in a moment.

Discipleship, disciple. I have been pleased to see, because it's moving in the direction which I think is the correct terminology or definitions. I've been pleased to see some directions in which the definitions of discipleship have been clarified in the minds of some thinkers.

Up until about five years ago, there were some parachurch organizations that use the word disciple. I believe their methodology was correct, but their terminology or their definitions were, I believe, somewhat skewed. They used a discipleship as a focal point for specialized training, but they are now in the process of re-evaluating their definitions. One of those groups, in particular, asked me to, to write another book for them that would be popularly based to help them in retooling their definitions of discipleship. Because they recognize that they may have been using terminology improperly or imprecisely. Their methodologies were sound and fruitful, but incorrect use of terminology has resulted in inappropriate expectations for the Christian life.

Some church traditions have used the word disciple or discipleship as a byword for advanced training; some for social involvement. Others have used it as a title for clergy. And they are now re-evaluating their doctrine in the light of Scripture. For example, the Roman Catholic Church, interestingly enough, they have sometimes drawn a false dichotomy between laity and clergy on the basis of discipleship terminology. However, the Second Vatican Council introduced the vocabulary of discipleship into official Roman Catholicism. In twenty seven cases, council documents use the term disciple as a virtual synonym now for Christian, whereas prior to this it was used as a title for clergy. In his first encyclical, John Paul II describe the church as the community of disciples, in which Christ says to each and every member "follow Me." If the Roman Catholic Church follows up on that encyclical, implications may be profound for their church doctrine.

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Some Christian academic institutions are recognizing that in preparing young men and women for ministry, much more than just intellectual preparation is required. That the disciple is the whole person, and unless the intellectual aspect the person is integrated fully with the emotional, psychological, physical and spiritual aspects, we create one dimensional ministers. And I think we've all seen the fruit of that in some of our churches. This is a central challenge for Christian academic institutions, if we're gonna use the word disciple properly.

We stated earlier our definition of disciple on the handout we gave yesterday. One, who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed him as Savior and God, embarking upon the life of following Him. Discipleship and discipling, therefore, imply the process of becoming like Jesus. To be a disciple of Jesus means living a fully human life in this world, in union with Jesus Christ, and growing in conformity to His image. Let me say that again. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ means living a fully human life in this world, in union with Jesus Christ, and growing in conformity to His image.

Now some implications of this, I think, are profound for us in the Christian life in the church, and especially as we move into preparation for ministry.

The first implication that I would suggest is that discipleship is the Christian life. Discipleship is the Christian life. Discipleship implies a process of growth. And many scholars now suggest that in its broadest sense, discipleship is a metaphor most descriptive of the doctrine of progressive sanctification. This is an important implication, because it emphasizes that our entire life is to be

brought into the discipleship process. If we don't bring our entire life into that process, we run the danger of compartmentalizing or dichotomizing our Christian lives.

We can see many examples of this compartmentalization or dichotomization. For example, our spiritual life is often treated separately from our careers or intellectual life. Many people have had successful careers in the business world and in their churches, but oftentimes they're treated separately. Many older men and women I have spoken with have been active leaders in their churches, yet they have never learned how to intelligently and compassionately live out their faith or share their faith in their working places.

Another example is young people who are dating, they often have difficulty knowing how to have a dating relationship that combines both the spiritual and the romantic domains. They don't know how to bring those two together. I lay a challenge at the feet of young men, that if they believe the Bible speaks of some kind of leadership for the male of the family, then they need to begin exercising that in their dating life. A leadership that is especially directed toward the spiritual, combination of the spiritual and the physical. What I challenge guys to do is I challenge them from now on, in every relationship you have, you're the one that says no. Who usually has to say no in a physical relationship? The women tend to "stop that." Right? Now you do that enough over the length of a dating relationship, even into the engage period, who's the leader in the physical? The woman is. And suddenly they find a difficulty learning how to exercise their proper relationship when they get into marriage.

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John Calvin. Well, Calvin isn't here. I, but, threw this in for him. John Calvin was one of the great intellectual giants of the church. But in his classic little treatise of the Christian life, Calvin assumed the whole Christian life was to be the right subject of discipleship. Great quote. He says, "The gospel is not a doctrine of the tongue, but of life. It cannot be grasped by reason and memory alone. But it is fully understood when it possesses the whole soul and penetrates to the inner recesses of the heart. Let nominal Christians cease from insulting God by boasting themselves to be what they are not. And let them show themselves disciples not unworthy of Christ their Master. We must assign first place to the knowledge of our religion, but that is the beginning of salvation." If our or our religion will be unprofitable, if it does not change our heart, pervade our manners, and transform us into new Christians, when we point to discipleship as a Christian life, we address the whole person in relationship to Jesus Christ.

Second implication, discipleship is a process. Building upon that, if discipleship is the Christian life, then we move s-, one step further and sus-, suggest that discipleship is a process. It's a lifelong process. Too often we speak of discipleship programs, which we have taken or initiated. While very few of these programs suggest that once we have gone through the series we're now a finished product, they seldom show how the program fits with the ongoing process of one's life.

As Calvin suggested we must not develop our intellect or the memory alone. We must develop as well-rounded people. And this is a process that occurs of the entire life or entire period of one's life. Discipleship, and I und-, I'm almost passionate with this; discipleship is not simply a book or a set of tapes that one goes through to reach some kind of compartmentalized maturity. The

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process certainly may include a curriculum; however, discipleship is much more process oriented.

Where, I think that, I've gained the most understanding of this is as a father. I believe that Paul points to the fact that we must have our families in order before we can be elders or leaders in the church, in the sense that he's suggesting that the, the home becomes one of the primary training places for leadership within the church. I have learned more about discipleship in raising my two daughters than I have, I think, even in a classroom or in my own process within the church. Because what I've wanted to do with my girls, my older one, she's gonna be a senior in high school this year. And it's just a delightful young lady, is it? We're seeing her now get ready to go off and be an adult, to take responsibility for her life. And as we've attempted to direct her toward what God wants her to be as a whole person, I gain an understanding of what I should be involved in doing in your lives, and also what I should be involved in doing in the church. It's a lifelong process. It's a process that involves the whole person. And if my wife and I are not involved in every area of our daughters' lives, we are raising one-dimensional children.

Third implication, discipleship is the ministry of the church. Uh, I state that, and see if you can wrestle with this. I believe that discipleship is the ministry of the church. That is the overarching umbrella. All that we are doing is discipleship, or should be.

We often look at discipleship as one particular program of the church, and, and I see this you will do it. You'll have a discipleship pastor. What does a discipleship pastor do? They have a program that they basically run. It may well be that this is where some of our discipleship models, that we

looked at wed-, uh, Tuesday, came into existence. They developed from looking at only limited aspects of biblical teaching on discipleship. And they then ended develop in the, ended up developing a program that accentuated only one segment of the biblical data. It is not as though they're wrong, they're simply too narrowly focused, and for some even reductionistic. The danger here is that our churches and parachurch organizations can become one dimensional, and involved in training one dimensional people.

Candidates for discipleship training in many churches are enrolled in a variety of programs, including spiritual disciplines, mentoring, intensive Bible study, small groups, leaderships development, evangelism, commitment development, social activism, church growth, spiritual gifts, or missionary activity. Those titles come from books that I gather that use the word disciple in the title of their book, and the implication that is often raised in the minds of people is that one segment is discipleship. I believe that what we need to do is move them more broadly, that the title more broadly, so that includes all of them.

These training programs are all good. And I agree that they can all be referred to as discipleship. However, I believe that we need to move toward a more integrative understanding. I suggest that we need to even be more broad, when conceiving of discipleship training. If discipleship is a Christian life, and if discipleship is a process, then the church needs to address itself to all areas of the process of the Christian's life. Some of us are called to specific ministries and areas of service not intended for all disciples, therefore, there should be certain aspects of that training. But it needs to be integrated, fully integrated, and may be one of the problems that we're having

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today is it: people often find themselves less effective in their Christian lives, because we are so compartmentalized in our training within the local church.

In the broadest sense, if we're to raise healthy disciples in our churches, we must begin to understand and to develop men and women who are in the process of growth as disciples in every area of their lives. Secular and sacred, family and church, spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional, well-rounded disciples who are becoming like Christ in every area of life.

OK, those are the implications that I see are so very important for us. Three overarching implications. Now, how does this work out? Well, it works out as Dr. Arnold suggested on Tuesday, it has to work out in the realm of surfing. That is the primary area that all disciples need to be involved with.

Here is an article that I think is fascinating for us. It's called Surfers and Other Disciples. That's not me. That's not me. I wrote this article for discipleship journal last spring. They gave the title. The title that I gave was Institutionalism or Discipleship. (laughter) They came back with a different title.

I liked the title, but what I like the most is the fact that in the minds of some people, you mention a surfer, and something other than a disciple comes to mind. What impressions come to your mind, if I mention a surfer? Be honest now. Bum. OK. To some that comes to mind. What else? Flake, flake. A gnarly dude. OK. A VW van. Okay. California blond. No job. (Laughter) There is

a bumper sticker that goes "real surfers don't work." (Laughter) Other impressions? Dropped out of kindergarten.

Those are, and I, and I hate to say this, but our television ads perpetuate the stereotype that we have of surfers, and in many cases, it is true. What some of you may not realize is that there is a vast distinction between competitive athletics surfing and hanging out surfing. We were aware of the stereotype and aware of the dangers of the surf world.

Several years ago and it became a pressing matter for us, because my older daughter was then going into junior high school. She started competitive surfing when she was in the fifth grade. Her best friends are competitive surfers, and there is a combination among some of her friends of both bums and athletes. We knew that we had to do something in order to have an impact upon her life that would be positive, because oftentimes what we do as parents is we pull our kids away from that influence. But we lived in San Clemente. I surf all the time with Michelle, and you can't go away from surfers if you're going to surf. So we decided instead to try and get involved in the lives of these young people.

During that first summer, going into seventh grade for her, I began taking a group of young kids to surf every Tuesday morning. It's nice when they're in junior high, cause they can't drive. And they can walk to some of the spots in town, but some of the places a little further away they couldn't get to. So, I started picking up these kids every Tuesday morning at about 6:30, and we had every Tuesday about, oh, say, six to fifteen kids. Sometimes I borrow a van or take

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somebody else who could drive. We'd surf places in town, like tea street or cottons point, trestles, place called churches, nice right point break.

We also ended up surfing most every week at our spot. There's a place down at San Clemente, called trails. It's off of the Bluffs, down near the San Onofre plant. But you'd have to walk down this trail for about a mile to get down to the beach. And we would be all alone down there. We'd get there about seven o'clock in the morning, and nobody else was there. And these kids loved this spot, because there were no crowds, there're always good waves. We'd have a great time, surf for an hour or two, and then head back toward town. And we'd stop off and have the breakfast special at Love Burger. That's, uh, a bit contradictory, I know, but these kids had a delightful time. Two bucks for a breakfast special, and we'd sit and talk about everything.

What began developing was not just surfing with these kids, but getting involved in their lives. I could hardly ever come home from school. We lived just right down the street from the junior high. I could hardly ever come home from school. Said, if I went home in the afternoon without finding a half dozen or more kids with wetsuits and surfboards all over around the house in the yard, they're in, getting a snack. My wife was called Mom by al-, virtually all the kids. You've got to understand where these kids are coming from. Probably no. I think they're becoming more and more the norm in the sense that of those kids, all except for one who came from broken homes. At least half of the kids came from single parent homes. There were two or three of the kids that had never met either a mother or a father, maybe the dad left before they were born or early in their life. That's becoming the norm.

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Of those kids not one of them, except for my own daughter, was a believer. By the end of that seventh grade year of my daughters, we started getting the kids involved. We took them, that was the year the Billy Graham Crusade, we took them all to crusade. I mean, they got wild. They thought we were going to a baseball game, and at Anaheim Stadium. Couple of kids made professions of faith. We started getting them going to church. And we found that over that first year, all of those kids, and I think of about thirteen in particular, all of the kids, except for one, made professions of faith. That was an exciting time as we saw the Lord go to work in the lives of these kids, because they were pretty raw looking. But the Lord reached down and He made a real impact on their lives.

But what arose as I looked at these young people, along with my wife, we asked ourselves the question what kind of disciple do we want them to turn out to be. As I mentioned the first day, do we want them to turn out to be the kind of disciple that is the brand of Biola or Talbot, or of one of the local churches in town? Because they all have different types of believers that come out of their churches. What do we want to emphasize? And what we struggled with was, and that's why I gave the title to the article Institutionalism or Discipleship is that oftentimes, what we tend to do is we tend to perpetuate members of the institution, that we turn out disciples of our institution, as opposed to turning out disciples of Jesus Christ.

See, institutions are good, designed by God. Even the local church, it is an institution. But it can turn into in-, it can turn into institutionalism, if we reverse what it's designed to do. You see institutions are designed as a means to the end. What they're designed to do is equip people, so that they can walk more effectively with Jesus Christ in the world. That's the only reason for

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Biola, Talbot being here. The day that we stopped doing that, I say we shut the doors. I don't care to be a part of a major university, if that isn't turning out disciples of Jesus Christ. I don't care to be a part of a seminary that is involved in great intellectual or research endeavors, if it is not turning out disciples of Jesus Christ. I don't care to be involved in a local church that is more committed to building a big thing, as opposed to turning out disciples of Jesus Christ. They are the means to the end. But oftentimes we turn it around, and an institution becomes the end itself, and we turn out disciples of the institution.

Some questions that I think are very important for us to ask: are we making disciples of our institutions or are our institutions making disciples of Jesus? Are our disciples proficient at programs or living a radical relationship with Jesus Christ? Does our attachment to our institutions isolate us from the world or do they equip us for changing the world? Our people focusing on us because of the importance of our programs or we and our programs, again, the means to the end, so that people see Jesus more clearly? It's important for us to wrestle with those questions, when we're dealing with real lives, real lives that are being transformed, because they've been called to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

How do we overcome the tendency toward institutionalism? I would like to suggest the following, and this is what, this is very... I don't have any major programs. I had a student come in, one of my students come in. He says, "Dr. Wilkins, what is your program for discipleship?" I, I don't have one. I really don't. Now, he's convinced that I do, because he's read my whole book. And he's convinced that I have a program. What I'd like to suggest here is suggest that there are some principles here that are kind of the bottom line for what we should be involved and doing.

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Other things could be added. But I'm a simple person, and these are very simply oriented to touching lives.

First principle, I'd like to suggest is we need to focus on personalized discipleship. Focus on personalized discipleship. We oftentimes, and I remember saying this when I first came to the Lord is that I came to Jesus Christ, not to become a religious person, but to enter into a relationship. Remember that? The difference between religion and relationship. I think, that's very important for us, if we're going to be involved in training young people or older people in their walk with Jesus Christ as His disciple. When Jesus called men and women to follow Him, He offered a personal relationship with Himself, not simply an alternative lifestyle or different religious practices or a new social organization.

If, if there is an area that we need to emphasize again, oftentimes, when you say discipleship, what comes to mind? What comes to mind is your relationship with another person in the church that you are discipling somebody else. And o-, oftentimes even hear people say "well, my disciples." That is not inappropriate. There is one time in Scripture where Saul, who later became Paul, it is spoken of that he had his disciples around him. And it may be that kind of relationship. Paul later on did indeed say, "Imitate me, as I imitate" who? Christ. So we are to be involved in these relationships. But what we want to emphasize with our people is that they are disciples of Jesus Christ first and foremost. And our relationship with them is a means to the end of helping them see Jesus and walk with Jesus. Focus on personalized discipleship.

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The second aspect of that is not only do we let them get involved with Jesus personally, but recognize that every disciple therefore will be slightly different. We are all unique individuals. And we need to focus upon training that will help them develop in their uniqueness, as a creature of God, as a new creation in Jesus Christ. These young people were quite different than a lot of the other kids around. They needed to see Jesus clearly and to develop as He wanted them to develop.

A lot more, but I'll just leave it for now. We're just gonna mention these and rush on.

Second principle, challenge people to count the cost. Challenge people to count the cost. Jesus's gracious call to discipleship was accompanied by an intense demand to count the cost of discipleship. The call to be a disciple in Jesus's lifetime meant to count the cost of full allegiance to Him. Jesus recognized that various securities in this life can be a substitute for allegiance to Him. The demand account the cost of discipleship meant exchanging the securities of this world for security in Him. For some, this meant riches; for others, it meant attachment to family; for still others, it meant nationalistic feelings of superiority. Jesus knew them and knew their heart, and demanded full allegiance to Him.

Surfers tend to be somewhat free-spirited. They like to think of themselves as unhindered by normal restraints. I'm free. Jesus's demand "account the cost" sounds harsh in their ears. Yet, we have found that with these young people, especially the athletically oriented ones, counting the cost is part of what they have to do to be involved in surfing. Surfing is really a very difficult

sport. It looks simply, if you have watched TV or been down to the beach, you see, it looks simple. It looks like so easy.

I just took the couple of kids out this weekend, they're down from Washington, and taught them how to tr-, began to teach them how to surf. Both of them are athletes. Both them play athletics at their high school. They just graduated. This poor, this one young guy was practically in tears by the end of the day, because he was getting hammered. And he said, "This is almost impossible to do." A lot of people like to try surfing. For a while, they'll go out and do it even once. But in order to advance, in order even to get to the point where you can hop to your feet, you can make a bottom turn, hit the top slide down and you can do something on a wave, it may take you a year.

Well, these young people began to understand that counting the cost in surfing is very similar to what they had to do, if they were gonna count the cost in coming to Jesus. See, surfers, there is nothing more despised by a surfer than a poser, person who puts an old surfboard up on the racks of their car, puts on the old surf sweatshirt, drives around town, goes down the beach, sits there for a while, but they don't really surf. There is nothing that should be more des-, despised by us than a person who refuses to count the cost and poses as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, I would suggest help them to become like Jesus. Help them to become like Jesus. And I have a very simple formula that I believe Jesus gave for us through the apostle John, that clarifies what it means to be a disciple. Three evidences that the people of that day could look at in their own lives, and they can say, "Am I part of that crowd of disciples who left Jesus?" Because Jesus

wasn't fulfilling their expectations. Or are they like Judas, who is a false believer, a false disciple in that sense.

Jesus says there are three criteria that will mark your life, and they will help you become like Me. First is that found in John chapter 8 verse 31, abiding in Jesus's Word. What that means is an individual who has claimed Jesus's words as the truth for every area of life. Abiding in Jesus's Word does not mean perpetual Bible study. Rather, it means to know and live in what Jesus says about life. Instead of listening to the world's values, disciples must listen to what Jesus says.

It begins with the profession of faith. Peter gives one of the clearest declarations of that, when the-, when the crowd of disciples leave in John 6:60 through 66. Jesus then turns to the twelve and He says, "You don't want to go away too, do you?" And then the man steps forward, Peter, and he says, "Lord, to whom else will we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have come to know and believed that you are the Holy One of God." Peter has claimed Jesus's words as the only hope for eternal life.

So discipleship begins with that claim, but then it moves into every area of life, moves into areas of life that are so practical. For example, self-image. Is self-image important, anybody here? OK? It's important to those kids. What they'll tell you, self-image is based upon how you look and how you do. If you do well in a contest, if you keep progressing, if you get results, then you're gonna get sponsors, who'll supply your surfboard, supply your wetsuit, supply your food or your, your clothing, and you're gonna be looking good. Rather, what Jesus wants to tell these young people is that to abide in Jesus's words means to live with what He says about them, that

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God loves them, that they are special creatures who will be fulfilled only when they're living in right re-, relationship with Him. Abiding in Jesus's words will transform us into His image.

Secondly, loving one another. This is so crucial. Loving one another. True discipleship means loving one another, as Jesus loved His disciples. John 13: 34 and 35. Love isn't something for a special category of committed Christians. Love is a distinguishing mark of all disciples, made possible because of regeneration, where change has been made in the heart of the believer by God's love, and also made possible because an endless supply of love from God, who is love.

First John 4:12 through 21. Loving one another. I remember when I was first married, I don't know, I've been married about six months, and I had a horrible temper, just a horrible temper. And we'd get into a fight, and my wife knew how to throw my switch. See, I'd be winning the argument, and then she'd throw the switch, and then I'd lose the argument. Because what did I do? I lose my temper. And I was just a total jerk. My, you know, if you've seen the, the way they list my name is Michael J. Wilkins. What did, you know the J stands for? Jerk. (laughter) I can be a total jerk, and I was with the way that I handled my temper. And I was afraid in those days that someday my wife is gonna run out of love for me. But when I saw it, illustrated in her life, is that because she had a change in her heart through regeneration, and because God is love, she had an endless supply of love. And she was the example for me of what a real disciple of Jesus Christ is all about. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples," what? If you have love for one another. Love is the declaration to the world that we are Jesus's disciples.

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Third aspect there of becoming like Jesus is bearing fruit. Jesus said that the true disciple will bear fruit. What is this fruit? It's a fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5, and new converts, John chapter 4, but also righteousness and good works. What has begun in the inside will transform us, so we'll be different on the outside, and we will bear fruit in keeping with our new nature.

So, personalize discipleship, help them count the cost, help them to become like Jesus, very simply through abiding in the Word, loving the brethren, and bearing fruit.

And then I would suggest this so strongly as well, lead the way into the world. Lead the way into the world. We are not involved that some would say in a holy huddle. As Rebecca Pippert said, and I still love that book, "We are to get out of the salt shaker into the earth, if we're gonna make a difference." But what we saw happen in the lives of these young people is that they didn't know how to do it. They didn't know how to live in the world as a disciple of Jesus Christ. They had no models, no examples of how to do it. They didn't come from Christian homes, and the pastors and the leaders of their churches tended never to be in the places in the world where they were involved. And what we began to recognize is that we had to get involved with these young people out there in the world where they lived.

So, s-, you know, it is, it is possible talk me into going surfing, so we continue taking him surfing. We got involved in some of the competition associations for putting on contests. We started putting on our own contests that would draw in the community, not with the banner "Christian surfers," but rather with the banner: we're here to do something for our community. And when you get to know us, you'll know that we are believer, and that helped transform the

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lives of some of these young people. When they saw that they could do it, when they were given an example of how to deal with people with foul language, how to deal with drugs that are going around, how to deal with the temptations that are there in the world, how to live it. We have to lead the way into the world. And, and my friends, I just have to say this, we oftentimes don't know how to do that if we're involved in Christian ministry. Lead the way back out into the world.

Well, many of these, uh, surfers had awfully rough edges. And what has broken my heart now as we look back over the last six years in dealing with them, a lot of the young guys, in particular, were about a year older than my daughter, most of them graduated from high school this last year. It has broken my heart to see the way in which many of them have dropped out of Christian involvement. They will tell you that they are believers, that they know Jesus, that they're His disciple, but they've dropped out of institutions. Some of it is definitely their fault, and I've had to help ride herd on them with that. But some of it is my fault, and some of it is the fault of the institutions. The tragedy is that oftentimes, these young people, once they make professions of faith, don't really fit into the institutions. And the institutions almost force them to conform by way of certain behaviors, certain ways of looking. And what has happened is that these young people are slowly dropped out.

I'll never forget one conversation I had with one of the young guys. His name, well, I won't say his name. He's the one that's grad-, he's one of the ones graduate. He's now on the World Tour Surf tour. Hot, hot young surfer. He was developing a relationship with my daughter. And I saw him becoming a little too friendly with my daughter. And so I, uh, took him out for lunch

(laughter). Went to McDonald's, grabbed some hamburgers, went down the beach, and we sat and talked. And I said, use his name, I said, "I noticed you've been getting a little friendly with Michelle. Let me tell you this. We've developed a good relationship here. Part of my relationship with you is also to help you in every area of your life. And if I see you put one hand on Michelle, I'm taking you out back, and I'm gonna beat the stuffing out of you."

Boy, he, he looked at me these big eyes... And they call me Doc. He says, "Doc, Doc, I'll never touch her. I'll never touch her. I, I wouldn't get near." After we talked for a little bit longer, he, uh, and boy, did my reputation get around after that. Michelle heard about it and said, "Dad, I'll never get to date. Ever." (Laughter) "They're afraid of me now." But he, he looked over at me later on a conversation, and these big tears rolling down his cheeks. And here's a guy, his dad had left before he's born. He, his mom had had at least four, at least four other husbands. At that particular moment, she, his mom was in jail on coke charges, dealing in coke, cocaine. Uh, and we were trying to, we just had to move him from house to house, trying to have a place to live, he and his five year old sister. He looked over at me, these big tears rolling down his cheeks, and he says, "Doc, my life was changed when I met your family last year." Says, "I know that I don't look like I have much, and I don't. But one thing I do know is that I have Jesus now, and He's never going to leave me."

What an indictment of my life, if I don't become the tool that's involved in helping transform that young precious life into the image of Christ. Over the last several years, you know we'd walk down to that beach. And some of the kids they'd stand up at the top of the cliff, and they'd look down and wonder, hmmn, I wonder if it's good enough to walk down today. I don't know if I

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want to make the hike. Others that blast on down the trail; they'd get in the water before we were, and they'd be having a ball by the time we got down there. We'd surf together. Others of kids get off the trail, they climb up the cliffs, going place that shouldn't be going. Over the last several years what we have found is that, some of the kids have run ahead with Jesus, and they're just enjoying a full relationship with Him. Others of the kids, they're kind of still standing at the top of the cliff. One of them, a young lady whose parents are Jehovah's Witnesses, and she's been pulled back into that. At our house yesterday and she's still struggling. She's looking down this path, and stay there. "I don't know if it's worth it." Others of the kids have gone off the trail, and some are doing things they shouldn't be doing.

But what we have to do, as people who are involved in their lives, is keep walking down the trail, eyes on Jesus, following Jesus, available to be used in their lives, so that they could follow Jesus as well. Very simple. That's the way I see discipleship.

Puts close in prayer. Father, thank you for the opportunity for us to be here for these last three days and to look into principles related to what it means to follow Jesus. Father, I pray that as we spend our remaining days or years here, I pray that we would study your Word carefully. Help us not to get too hung up on some of the, the details along the way. Allow us to use the details to give us a more beautiful, more complete picture of our Lord Jesus Christ and what it means to follow Him out into the world, so that we can make an impact for Him. I thank you for each precious life that is here. The dear friends that I've developed over the years and the staff and the faculty...