

A Biblical Basis for Discipling

By Anne Ortlund

Speaker 1:

Hey, those of you who are in the back, you can just come around on the side and those places over here or go around through the back and come around through the door. Okay. Tonight we are doing a privileged to have with us a speaker who has written a number of books. One of them I just read recently which is called The Disciplines of a Beautiful Woman. Maybe someday she'll come out with one called Disciplines of a Beautiful Man. Our hands in there. She is a traveling speaker and she does mini conferences and so why don't we just pray tonight before she comes to speak to us about discipleship?

I just want to thank you so much that you have gathered us all together tonight and we ask that you will just help your Holy Spirit work through our lives. God, that we will be attentive and that even with all the people here that it will not help us cause to be restless but that instead we will just be one body and encourage each other to just listen and apply all that we hear tonight. And I just ask that your Holy Spirit will work through hand to deliver to us what we need to hear and what we need to do as a result of her message. Thank you. In your name. Amen.

Anne Ortlund:

Holly. I'll tell you the reason I didn't write Disciplines of A Beautiful Man, they don't need it. I like you guys just the way you are. Since a little hostility here. This is terrible. This mic doesn't come off at stand, does it? How am I going to talk to you kids back here? How do you like the back of a head? Pretty good? Are you guys comfortable or standing up? No. Well, there's lots of carpet. Welcome to the carpet up here. If you want to join the others. The \$5 seats.

Sing all over you to the Lord. I love it. I love it. Do you know I have been saying Hallelujah for years and years and years and I just discovered what it meant about a year ago. Do all of you know this? Is Allelu I knew it meant praise the Lord, but I just never broke it down. Allelu Yahweh. Now, did you know that? Raise your hand if you already knew that. Not very many of you did. Some of you did. I am really slow, but some of you are slower than me. No, you haven't lived as long. Haven't lived as long.

There's this little girl down at a country fair. Oh, mercy. I think Ray and I told this last year in Chapel. I hope you're all freshmen. Little girl at a country fair down south. Big barrel of molasses in the middle of his bare grounds. You could go by and take a free lick every time, swipe your finger in and get some molasses. So the day went along and the supply in the barrel got lower and lower.

She kept going back every now and then. Finally, toward the end of the day, she went back to the barrel for another lick and golly. There was just a little bit in the bottom. So she gets up over the edge of the barrel and all you could see was what goes over the fence last. And she fell in. And she stood up in the bottom of the barrel and all she could think to do was just offer a prayer. Lord, make my tongue equal to this occasion. Yeah, you're kind of sharp. You're pretty good. Matthew 28:18-20. Matthew 28, the end of the book of Matthew, the end of Jesus earthly life. I love you guys. Back behind me, too. Sorry, I can't turn around.

The end of Jesus, Jesus earthly life. What he said was so important. We have it four times at the end of Matthew, the end of Mark, the end of Luke, and the first chapter of Acts. Now, here is the second person of the Trinity saying goodbye to this planet after his only visit in bodily form since he created it. Well, having said that, I don't know. Don't you sense a lot of appearances of the pre-Christmas Christ in the Old Testament? You're going to have to ask him about that when we see him. At any rate, here, he's been on this planet for 33 years. He's about to go back. You would think that he would gather all the inhabitants of the planet together and he would say, now, hear this, wouldn't you?

Because these are his last words of man's parting words. They are so important. I know a fellow, Tom Bun. He was a great Christian in the Pasadena area. I don't know if any of you know the Bun family. That is a name with status. I want to tell you why. He probably disciplined more guys than you will ever know. Back in the old days at First Methodist Los Angeles, when it was in its days of great spiritual power, and it turned out generation after generation of young people that love Christ. He was a lawyer, a very influential lawyer in downtown Los Angeles, and has three beautiful sons, one minister and two lawyers. But he also owns most of KSOM. No. What's the beautiful music station? I don't know. He sold it when he. So KBIG? No. Anyhow millionaire. He made lots of money.

When he was dying, he had a series of heart attacks. He was in the hospital. The point of this story before I got heckled because of his name. The point of it, we got to get this thing lofty, so you'll stick with me. The point of it is how important a man's parting words are. Tom was in his hospital bed. Here around him are these three big, handsome sons and their wives and his own

wife. It's like Noah in the Ark. Here are these eight family members around. He knew he was breathing his last. He didn't have any dope in him or anything. He was perfectly alert. He raised his hand and he repeated the what is it, ironic benediction?

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift his face upon you, cause his face to shine upon you and give you peace. And he dropped his hand and he was gone. Isn't that a wonderful way to go? His family will never forget it. Well, Jesus words were so important, you'd think he would have said them to thousands or millions, everybody on the planet at the time. He said it to eleven guys. Should have been twelve. But by now one had defected. So he gets these eleven fellas on a mountaintop, and he says to them, what's really a sandwich? It's a comfort and a command and a comfort.

We happened to say this in Australia about a year ago. And our team with us that Ray and I had a psychiatrist and his wife a dear Christian psychiatrist and his wife with us. And he has always smart thoughts about things. And when he heard us say that, comfort, command, comfort. We happen to say it there. He thought, now, that is the way to handle people when you have something tough that you want to say to them. I'll throw this in for free, kids. First you give them a soft, fuzzy.

You say something that's nice, you comfort them. Then you say the hard thing you have to say. And quick, before it hits them too hard, tell them another comfy, nice, warm, fuzzy thing. Okay? That's what the Lord did here. Good psychology. He said, Matthew 28:18-20 all authority has been given to me. Now, that's a comforting thing. We will nestle close and listen to somebody

who has all authority. Go make disciples of all nations. See that they're baptized. Teach them to obey everything I've taught you.

Then he gives another comfort because they think, golly, we can't do that. I will be with you always to the end of fill in the blank the way you want. It could be the age. It could be the end of the world. This word can mean either space or time. You cannot live so long that I will not be there. You cannot go where I am not. Actually, I'm no Greek scholar. But they tell me that this word, you probably know this better than I. This sentence has only one command verb in it and all the rest are participles. It says, make disciples, going, baptizing, and teaching. The last thing that the Lord wanted to tell his followers was, Go make disciples.

Now they knew what that was because that's what they were. He was saying, I'm just about to leave you. Now each of you turn around. You gather a little bunch of disciples around you the way you've been around me. A girl yesterday in Ventura where Ray and I were speaking, said wistfully to me, do you ever disciple anybody by mail? Would you disciple me by letters? And I had to say to her, deary Matthew says that Jesus chose men to be with him. The most important part of discipling is life rubbing life. You've got to be together. And these guys knew what discipling was.

They had eaten with him and watched him travel with him, watched him heal and listened to what he had to say. They knew it all. They've been with him the whole time. And indeed, in Acts, chapter 1, they had to pick another to fill in the twelve spots that had been with him from

the beginning because they had to know it all. Now, you know, we read this. I'll tell you how we read Matthew 28:19. We read it, therefore go make disciples of all nations.

And we call it the Great Commission, like you're talking into a rain barrel or something. And we make it such big deal that we think, well, now, let's leave this to the Billy Graham crusades.

They've got all those wonderful navigators to follow up after. They come a year early and rent the Colosseum or whatever this kind of thing is for them. This is too heavy for me. I'm one little Biola student or I'm this or that. Reverently, I say Jesus had the same problem you have. He was one person. He had deliberately limited himself. Though he was God, he only had two eyes. He got tired. He only had 2ft. He could only be in one place at one time. He had the same problem you and I do. We look at this verse, this worldwide verse, we say, no way.

He loved all the people of that generation and the ones that would follow, the ones that had been before. He had an ultimate goal in bringing them to God. His redemptive plan was in motion. The wheels were turning. What was his strategy for this to happen? He called a few men to follow him. No wasted energy. Wasn't haphazard. That's what he did. If you're taking notes, that's an important sentence. When you look it over, you'll be saying, Lord, if this is the model life, the model human life, this is what you've also called me to do. No program. He actually did not form an organization that bore his name. He didn't establish a seminary. But what he did was he chose not just anybody.

This is another crucial sentence for your notes. He chose guys that the multitudes would later follow. He could see the whole explosion coming in the Book of Acts. He knew what would

follow. And instead of being this great big evangelist that always spoke to the multitudes, he did that too. But you know these preachers that say, I love crowds, it's just people I can't stand. The Lord Jesus loved the multitudes, but all the way through the Gospels, you see, withdraw, withdrew, withdrew, withdrew. He withdrew to be apart with a few guys. He would heal. He would teach. Then he would get into a home. We're going to see this in one of the other evenings. He would get into a private place.

He'd go on a mountain where the crowds couldn't follow. He'd withdraw with his disciples. He poured a lot of time into a few people. Do you know this must be your plan? We know Jesus message so well. We don't know his method as well. That's why back in your hometown or wherever you live or whatever you're doing in this world, there may be a lot of people around you that do not know the saving grace of Jesus Christ. You do it's in your head. It's in your heart and in your life. But what is it that's hard to get it from here to there, to jump over from you to them? We need to have his strategy. We need to have his plan. Now let's look and see how the Lord Jesus did it.

We could turn to any of the Gospels. Let's look at John chapter 1. We'll just follow a little bit of his life and see what it is he's doing here. He starts out in John chapter 1. We'll look at verse 35, and you say to yourself the next day. So obviously this is the day after something. John 1:35. Let your eye sweep up the page. You know this anyway. What took the day after? What had happened the day before, verse 35? Anyone? What happened? His baptism. Right on. So he has just been baptized the day before. This is day one of his ministry, right?

This is the first day of the rest of his life. He's got three years to go. This is the first day John the Baptist was there again in the baptizing spot by the Jordan with two of his followers as disciples. When he turned and saw Jesus passing by, he said, look, the Lamb of God. This is amplified in verse 29, where it says that the man of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Well, these fellows heard John the Baptist say this, and they said, Whoa. Because that was the gigantic statement of the day. They'd been waiting for all these generations with all those millions of lambs being slaughtered for this final Lamb, capital L, to come.

And hearing him say this, they follow Jesus and turning around, Jesus saw them following and said, did you want something? I think the equivalent would be if you were in a room with Ronald Reagan, you know, and your credentials have been cleared and Secret Service are everywhere. But you sneak up behind his back because you're going to tell your grandchildren, two generations from now that you were 3ft behind President Ronald Reagan. And all of a sudden he turns around and says, did you want something? And he's looking you eyeball to eyeball.

And these guys say, and they scuff their feet in the dirt, and they say, sir, where do you live? That is a little bit ridiculous. You are face to face with the Lamb of God come to take away the sins of the world. But that's what he says here at the end of verse 38. And he knew that they were not asking for information. He could have said, Go over the hill to the left and at the second palm tree, turn right and the third house down. He knew that they were trying to establish a relationship. And he said, Come home and see. If you have a living Bible, you see right away how many hours he was there. We can't tell quite as well if you've got another version. But the

fact is he was there from midafternoon to early evening. Anyway, he was there. They were there in the house within maybe three, four, five hours, something like that.

And when they had been at close range in his house, seeing where he lived, he was still with his mother. We don't know about Joseph, but his brothers and sisters, they were in intimate contact, person to person relationship with him for a few hours of exposure. This is the first thing you've got to know about human relations. It's got to be intimate. You can't love the whole body of Christ. You've got to love a few. And Jesus, on the first day of his Ministry, was getting in intimate with a few. And their impression of them was when the evening was over that Simon Peter went tearing after. I mean, Andrew went tearing after his brother Peter. And he said, we have found the Messiah. And he was convinced.

Wonderful that when we read in 1 John 1, 7, is it? If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another in the blood of Jesus Christ, cleanses us from all sins. You've known that verse for a long time, right? That verse says something unique. It says, God is in the light. It doesn't say he is light. We have a lot of places that say he is light, God is light. This says, God is in the light. That's another thing. It means God has deliberately exposed himself. He has deliberately said, here's my hands, here my sides. Touch me and see. He deliberately makes himself intimate and knowable. He is not the far-off God. And that is one of the first things you learn about human relationships. Got to be that way in the body of Christ.

There must be a few who know you well, scars, mars and all, and who accepts you as you are. Well, we see that this thing is like a rolling snowball. It keeps gathering. He's got two fellows

there Andrew and then soon Simon Peter. In verse 41 and 42. Then the following day, this is day two of his Ministry. Down in verse 43, Jesus finds Philip and he says, follow me. And 45, Philip finds Nathaniel and says, we found the one Moses wrote about and all that. And by the time the chapter ends, Jesus has at least four fellows that follow him off to Galilee when he says, let's go to Galilee, maybe more, he's got a little entourage going and it's only the third day, the end of the chapter in the beginning of chapter 2 of his Ministry.

You see, there was no haste here, but there was determination. He knew his plan and he was on the road. Now the word spread and the disciples multiplied. Have you all read Robert Coleman's Master Plan of Evangelism? So you know well the idea that I'm bringing the springboard from which I'm launching this evening. Disciples multiplied. By the middle of the second year, he's got an unmanageable number around him. Some of you are so gifted. People wise, or some of you have the gift of teaching. Some of you have an unusual knowledge of the Word already. Some of you have a special walk with Jesus already, whatever your age, there are some of you that people are wanting to get close to your elbow. It could be as your gifts develop and as your life goes along, there will be more trying to scramble to your side to learn about the Lord.

Then you have time to assimilate time or emotional strength or whatever. And at this point, Jesus did middle of the second year. We know from counting Passovers about how far along he was, middle of the second year of his Ministry, about halfway through, maybe 18 months down, 18 months to go, something like that. He had an unmanageable number. God voluntarily being human. What did he do at that point? 2 of my favorite words, he eliminated and concentrated.

Sorry about that, but just a key to living. You got to do that with your wardrobe, and you got to do that with your time, and you got to do that with. Eliminate and you concentrate.

Luke 6:12 and following we discover what he did when he got more followers around him than he could really be intimate with. Luke 6:12. One of those days, Jesus, Luke 6:12, went out into the Hills to pray, spent the night praying to God, spent the night, spent the night. When morning came. Before you have a heavy decision to make, spend a lot of extra time in prayer. We find that before particularly busy times or coming out of very busy times, or when he had big decisions to make, special times like that, you find him in long seasons of prayer, not just daily quiet time, long time.

And when morning came, following this prayer time, he called his disciples to him. There were probably hundreds by then and chose twelve of them, whom he designated Apostles. Now in John chapter 17, when Jesus prays that fabulous prayer to the Father in Gethsemane, just before his arrest, the bulk of the prayer he prays for the men thou gavest me. When did the Father give the Son those men, I think right here in Luke 6:12 when he spent that night in prayer.

God is going to give you special close ones around you, an intimate circle, a small group that you can share your heart with, that you can be real with, that you can be accountable to, that you can love with tough love. And they will pray for you and they will say, hey, did you get your closet cleaned out or did you lose that town this week or did you get your term paper done a week before it's due? And you would ask to be held accountable to that and they'll hold you to it

because they love you. You can't live without that kind of close end fellowship. Jesus modeled it for us.

He chose right here after a long season of prayer, and he chose the men that the Lord gave him.

Speaker 2:

Please turn the tape. Decide to for the continuation of this session.

Anne Ortlund:

Can't live without that kind of close end fellowship. Jesus modeled it for us. He chose right here after a long season of prayer, and he chose the men that the Lord gave him. He had other wonderful followers and friends, but the last and best 18 months of his career, roughly a rapidly diminishing priority was given to anybody outside the Twelve and within the Twelve. Are you listening? Particularly three? Hey, that's manageable. You could do that. Is Jesus message your message? Jesus method ought to be your method.

He proportioned his lifestyle to a few men he wanted to pour his life into. Some of you kids will be going into full time Ministry. That will be a key, a key to your success, I mean, spiritual success in any kind of Christian Ministry, it will be if you're part time as well, not trying to scatter your shots all over the cotton picking place. But if the Lord gives you a broad Ministry, praise God for multitudes, but be accountable to a few who know you and know your vulnerabilities and love you.

Anyway, there are a lot of senior pastors that the staff do not know. He's this aloof fella that never is real with his assistant pastor and his youth man and all that. There are lots of Christians who are these lone rangers riding off into the sunset clanking their silver bullets. And God never planned it that way and Jesus never modeled it. Well, if we say, well, this is Jesus, how do I know I'm supposed to do this just because he did? Well and it's true, we can't do everything Jesus did. We can't die on a cross to save anybody. We probably won't be ahead of the game if we wear sandals and the robe. I mean, we don't have to do everything he did.

But remembering Matthew 28:19 that his final words were, Fellas, I'm leaving now. You turn around and you go make disciples. Say that they're baptized and teach them everything I've taught you. Okay. Ten days after he said that, are you with me? Acts chapter 2. Acts, chapter 2. 10 days after he gave the last command and went up on the mountain, we have what is Acts 2? Pentecost. Of course.

When the day begins, how many followers, how many believers are on the scene? I'm sure there were more, but how many were right here on the scene of our story at the beginning of chapter 2, the morning of Pentecost. How many? How many? Well, Acts 1:15 will tell you, 120. Okay. About 120 believers gathered at this time of Pentecost, as far as we know, the ones, the believers that were in the upper room. All right. At the end of the day of Pentecost, how many believers are on the scene after Peter preaches his sermon? 3120. All right, you've got 120 old timers and you have 3000 new baby Christians. Tell me, please, how 120 people are going to assimilate 3000 new babies.

If this were one of our local churches that had normally in a 10th of 120 and on a Sunday morning, 3000 accepted the Lord, they would say, oh, my God, we don't have enough train teachers and we don't have enough Sunday school quarterlies. And what are we going to do? Because we're not geared biblically. We got a lot of the 20th century trappings and they're not bad. Praise the Lord for all the techniques for disseminating the word of God.

We can have. But there is a basic biblical way that doesn't take quarterlies or Sunday school rooms or anything. I'll tell you what they did. Okay. That's ten days before Jesus last words, go make disciples. See that they're baptized. Teach them everything I taught you. All right. Verse 41 of Acts 2, Peter's finished his sermon. Those who accepted his message were what? What did they do? They were baptized. That was the first half of Jesus command. Now, 3000 added to their number and they devoted themselves fervently strong word there, devoted themselves to what? Apostles teaching. And that's the other thing Jesus told them.

So right off the bat, they obeyed both commands. They saw that they were baptized and they started teaching them. What did they teach? Well, they taught everything that Jesus said and everything that Jesus did. And the Holy Spirit was so wonderful. He gave them perfect recall. He let them repeat from memory what Jesus had said and done without error. And soon the oral became written and we call it the New Testament. So what they were doing, we would say the equivalent today is Bible study. Okay? They devote themselves to four things.

Apostles teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. Breaking of bread, probably including Communion. Prayer here is the prayers in the Greek. I'm telling you tonight, all the

Greek I know. I just said my last thing. The prayers actually has an article in front of it. And it's the very same word that you have down in chapter 3, verse 1. One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of there it is again, the prayers. And it means the stated times of prayer in the temple. So our equivalent would be Church going, okay.

Devoted themselves to those four things. They who's the they? Who devoted themselves, the old timers or the newcomers? What do you think? Both. You're right. 3120 of them. Okay. Notice where it took place, verse 46, what are the two low side? What are the two sites, the two places where this new lifestyle takes place? Yes? Homes and Church. Who could fit in the Church? Everybody. Who could fit in homes? Small groups. And how often did their new lifestyle take place? Verse 46. Daily. Fantastic. Here you have the authentic Christian lifestyle. It is our only description of it.

Listen, people, we've got to really pour over Acts 2:42 to 47 because very quickly persecution is going to come. They're going to have to split in all directions to save their skins. And this really is the only description we have of the Church in the fullness of the Holy Spirit under ideal conditions before persecution begins. Here it is. And do you know what? We live today with no persecution in Southern California. Maybe a giggle now and then, but not a gun. And there's no reason why we can't have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. So that really we have no excuse for not living out a biblical lifestyle.

Now when you think of small groups in homes and how this would have worked out for this discipling to have taken place, 120 believers to 3000 new babies is a ratio of about one to 25. So

I don't know if Matthew said, hey, Philip, you take home these 25, they're from your hometown. And I guess Peter was in charge of Peter says, Matthew, you take these and I don't know. But did they have 25 that came to their house every day? I don't know.

Did they have three groups of eight each? I guess their homes weren't really that big and they met twice a week, each group. I don't know. It worked so well that instead of the huge sieve that we have in our local churches where old Joe comes to know the Lord and six months later the people in the Church say, Remember that guy that accepted Christ, old Joe, whatever became of him? People say, I don't know. We got a great big front door and we got this great big back door and they come in one end and they fall out the other and we hardly notice.

They had a tight hold on them then through small groups. That's how they hung onto them so well that soon there were not only 3000 but 5000 more. And before long they had turned Jerusalem upside down and they were changing the known world. Well, why do our churches grow slowly? Could be we don't really have the biblical lifestyle of meeting altogether in the Church and in small groups, in homes as a daily lifestyle. And when they come, they don't have to be assimilated into 500 people at once.

They're just taken on by three or four or five that meets in a home every week. And that's how they get taught and loved and prayed over, laughed with and cried with and all the good stuff. So Paul emerges. Big superstar. Paul, you think Long House really he could do it alone, right? He wouldn't need any help. Paul never did anything alone. He didn't even write his letters alone. And everywhere he went, he went with an entourage, a guy that he was pouring his life into and

passing along everything that he did, his methods, his message, the whole works. So that when he was gone, the thing would be carried on just in the pattern that Jesus had established. Never alone.

Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, do you want me to make an absolutely terrible confession to you? I don't have anybody with me tonight. And about ten years ago, when Ray and I began to realize what this discipling was all about, we vowed we would never go solo again. When people ask us to speak, I have to tell you why. And this is no excuse. I'm so embarrassed. I have seven gals that are really praying for me, praying earnestly, my particular small group.

There are eight of us, but they are all young housewives, all but one mother. One is a single. Six housewives. Most of them young mothers with babies, are little run around kids. And they gave themselves to me for a conference this last weekend. The husbands, babysat, they gave me the entire 72 hours. They poured out their lives for me. And I did not have the heart to ask any of them to come tonight. They really needed to be home with their family. And one of them is going to Denver with me on Friday for a conference this coming weekend. And I said, Gals, will you promise to pray Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday nights? Will you really promise?

And Tuesday we really will. So that's what they're doing. So I really am just the tip of the iceberg. But you just can't see the others. Normally, they are always with me, one or two or three that are in current groups with me. Well, what do you do? What do you do? Do it in team. Learn not to fly solo. I know that a lot of you, most of you are full time students now, but some of you teach Sunday school classes and do Ministry on weekends. Some of you serve the Lord in

special ways here on campus, with Chapel or whatever. How do you serve the Lord? Don't do it alone.

If you teach Sunday school, team, teach. Bring along somebody that never taught before and have them just sit in and watch and have a lesson prepared the way you do. Back up for a while. They won't do anything. Then give them a piece of the action. Some Sunday, you're sick. Normally what happens in Sunday schools when a teacher is sick, she calls up to the head of the department. Right? She says, I feel terrible. I can't show up this morning. Will you please give my nine wiggly third grade boys to the fourth grade teacher? And the fourth grade teacher is.

But when you have team teachers, when you are starting to realize that the Body of Christ ministers together and you do things in team. So you're sick one Sunday, she knows your lesson or he knows your lesson and he just moves in and takes your place. That's discipling. And the last stage of discipling is that you've moved off the scene altogether. The new one is doing the full thing and is pulled along a new disciple that he can start training the way he got trained. There is nothing you do that you can't do better with a few precious members of the Body of Christ around you to do it. At least they can be praying. They can know the details of what you're doing and be praying for you, perhaps within the time frame of what you're doing. But often you can do it in team Ministry.

You need to move in close. You need to have a few around you that are a true discipling group, of course, is where older is with younger. And you guys need to ask some of these fabulous props that are so rich not only in the Lord but in lifestyle. They're smart, but they're Godly, too.

And you need to say, hey, would you disciple six of us guys for six months or for the school year, could you give us an hour a week? We know you're busy. Could you do that? You gals need to do the same thing. Get next to somebody that just seems to be a person who walks with the Lord and say, hey, be our substitute Mama for this school year, okay? And let us just rub up against you.

And if you ever go to lunch, take us along. We'll pay for your lunch, but just let us see you do what you do sometimes. We'll babysit your kids or new. And that's the way discipline takes place. There's the principle of flow. Everybody needs to be constantly learning from somebody who's walked with Jesus longer. Then you're not the tail end. You're not the cul de sac. You're passing it along to somebody who knows less than you do. Then, of course, there are not only discipling groups when we think of small groups, but there are peer groups, aren't there? There are supportive fellowship support groups. You need that in your life for you students to get together with a few other gals or guys.

Oh, this is so wonderful. Let me tell you about our son in law and daughter Walt and Sherry, who when he was going through Fuller Seminary and we were right there in Pasadena. Also, my husband was pastoring Lake Avenue Church. And Sherry came to us and said, hey, mom and dad, could we be in a small group with you over the summer, in between semesters from June to October? And we said, oh, that would be super.

It's really fun when your own kids want to be with you. And I think as I recall, we met on Thursday afternoons in race study from 430 to 530 or something like that. Well, right at the

beginning of the time we were together, Walt said, Mother and dad and Sherry, I've got four goals I want you to pray for. Hold me accountable for. I have a quiet time every single day between now and October when the group would end. I want to pray with Sherry every day. His wife, our daughter. I want to lose 5 pounds and I want not to overspend. When you're in seminary with a wife and a baby and a Visa card. We said, we'll pray for that, Walt.

Well, Walt was in another group with young guys like Avenue Church has hundreds and hundreds of small groups in it. Great majority of people are in them. So we had these young fellows, I think he was meeting with them Tuesday morning for breakfast, Bible study, sharing, et cetera. And he told his guy the same time that he told us what his goals were. Well, a few weeks passed. Walt said to us, hey, mom and dad and Sherry, you know the guys that I meet with every week, I told them the goals, same time I told you, nobody's asked me how I'm doing.

We said, hey, Walt, tell them. They're not functioning. Let them know. So the next Tuesday morning, he said to them, guys, what is this group? Do you love me or don't you? Since I told you my goals, nobody has asked me if I'm getting into the refrigerator. Nobody has asked me if I'm praying with Sherry, et cetera, et cetera. What is this group for? Are we just playing games? Do you love me or don't you? And the guys are the next week, the bone crackly rang itself off the hook. They were checking up on him. When October 1 came, Walt had lost his 5 pounds. He'd prayed with Sherry every day. He had had his quiet time every day. And he didn't have any debts except his education debts to Uncle Sam.

And it told us again what we already knew. You can be a little diddling Christian all by yourself, but for your highest dreams, your greatest spiritual longings, the things you were crying to God for, you need a few brothers and sisters who love you and will pray for you and hold you accountable. That's nitty gritty Christianity. And we'll proceed with this tomorrow night and just show somehow to us and how it works in scripture and how it can work in our lives and let's bow in prayer.

O Father in heaven, you know what we prayed for before this meeting began tonight. We prayed that the power of the Holy Spirit would give us a burden to not just hear and stuff our heads with more information, but obey. Oh, Lord, we know so much at a discussion level, but we need in our impotent fumbling way as best we can to obey what we learned so you can teach us more. Help these guys and gals these men and women to long to be biblical Christians. And whatever you want to say to us from tonight and from these three nights, Lord, do it and give us courage to act on it. Give us obedient hearts. We love you not as we are, but we love you in Jesus name. Amen.