

Four Keys to Becoming a Disciple of Jesus Christ – Part 3 **Acts 14:20-28**

Introduction:

1. Let's focus on four keys to possessing this growing relationship with Christ - four keys to becoming a disciple of Christ.
2. If you are not saved, God wants to know you in a personal way and have a relationship with you. If you **are** saved, He wants you to have that close, growing relationship in Christ.

First, you must get established in the Word of God. vs. 21-22

Second, you need encouragement from those who are more mature in the Lord. vs. 22

Third, you need to learn how to function within the life of a local church. vs. 23

1. Paul did more than just encourage these believers. He took steps to organize these believers into local assemblies, establishing leadership and structure within the congregation. Why did he do this?
2. Because God has given all Christians:
 - **The privilege of edifying and caring for other believers.** It is not just about you. God wants you to look beyond yourself to others. 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Galatians 6:10
 - **Spiritual gifts to be used to edify other believers.** You have a unique role in the family. God wants to use you to be a blessing to others. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 14:12
 - **The admonition to grow in their faith.** 2 Peter 3:18
 - This is very difficult without accountability. This is why God has given us local churches.
 - **Illustration:** Take 25 teens and put them into a classroom without a teacher, but with books, paper, chalkboard, and desks, and say, “Now, we want you to grow and learn.” What do you think would happen? Would there be much learning? There needs to be a teacher, some testing, and some accountability if they are to learn.
 - What makes us think we will learn spiritually without accountability?
 - Satan loves detached believers - unplugged from the life of the body, isolated from God's family. They are ripe for the pickin'.
Illustration: Take a log from the fire and separate it from the rest – cold, dead, loses its glow.
 - These are all a part of the normal Christian life.
3. Christians can **fulfill** God's plan for their lives as they get connected to a local church. God is into relationships! He is our Father, and we are members of the household of faith. Notice Ephesians 2:19-22.

- Now that you are saved and know the Lord, you are “*fellowcitizens with the saints,*” part of the “*household.*” The body of Christ is pictured as a building - many bricks together, but one structure (“*together groweth,*” “*buildded together*”).
4. God establishes local bodies of believers to function as one (as a family). The church isn't **like** a family, it **is** a family. Ephesians 3:14-15 makes this very clear. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 explains how we are interdependent on each other.
 - **Illustration:** What if one of your organs was severed from your body? It would quit functioning, shrivel, and die. If you are saved, you are part of the body of Christ, and have been made to work in conjunction with other members of the body.
 - Many Christians are spiritually homeless, wandering about. They are spiritual orphans. They need a church family.
 5. If a Christian does not get connected to a local church, there is no way he or she can grow in the graces that God wants believers to grow in.
 - You learn how to love, forgive, be unselfish, kind, and gentle (etc.) by being in close relationships with other believers (other irritating Christians!).
 - You need a spiritual family. It is vital if you are to grow into a disciple of Christ. Just as a player needs a team, a soldier needs a platoon, and a bee needs a hive, you need a spiritual family.

Fourth, you must get rooted in fellowship with other disciples of the Lord. vs. 27-28

1. Paul and Barnabas traveled back to their home church of Antioch and testified to them of all that God had done on this missionary journey. vs. 27
2. Verse 28 says, “*And there they abode long time with the disciples.*” This is where they wanted to be - in fellowship with other believers.
 - The word “fellowship” simply means “partnership; participation.”
 - Do you know what true fellowship is? It’s when a group of people experience life together. It isn’t just having a donut together before church. Fellowship is what God intends for every Christian.
3. It is a great concern when professing Christians do not desire to be around other Christians. This is indication that something is spiritually wrong. In 1 Corinthians 1:9 it states that we have been called unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord.
4. Fellowship among believers is a natural by-product of our mutual union in Christ. cf. Acts 2:42 (They were experiencing life together - part of each other's lives); Philippians 1:5; 1 John. 1:3-7
 - Biblical fellowship takes place in small groups, not in crowds.
 - This is why L.I.F.E. Groups are the lifeblood of our church. Picture them as the circulatory system of the body. They carry oxygen throughout the body and breathe life throughout.
5. When a person is first saved, it's through fellowship with other Christians that the babe in Christ is taught many truths - by simply observing Christ living His life through others in their daily lives.

In Conclusion:

1. My first point dealt with growing in the Word, but my last 3 points all dealt with relationships. Healthy growth takes place in the context of relationships.
Illustration: A cat that is fed, but has no family.
2. There are a lot of believers like that cat. They come to church and they are fed once per week, but they don't have a family.
3. Healthy growth takes place in the context of relationships.