

## NOTE FROM PASTOR JONATHAN

We have a **Prayer Summit** on **May 7**. It's a vital opportunity for our Life Groups to come together to pray as a church. Charles Spurgeon called his church's prayer room "the powerhouse" of the church. We're powerless without God, so we need to regularly come together to seek Him.

Whether your Life Group meets at the Willingdon Campus, at home, or online, we encourage you to join us at the prayer summit instead of your regular meeting that week. The theme will be "Blessing," based on Numbers 6:24-26, often considered "The Lord's Prayer of the Old Testament." We'll be meditating on this prayer and praying for our high school and university graduates as they step into the next stage of their lives, as well as our families. We'll also pray for our nation. No matter which party wins this election, Canada and all Canadians need God.

Please join us to seek God together and encourage others to do the same. The café will be open for dinner from 5 pm to 6:45 pm. Come early to relax after work, enjoy a good meal, and have fellowship with others before we pray. **The café will not be open for Life Groups on May 6 and 8.**

Don't forget to sign up for **Outreach Day** (<https://willingdon.org/events/outreach-day/>)! I hope your group can serve together and share the Gospel with our community.

### Matthew 28:16 - 20

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

### Daniel 7:13 - 14

<sup>13</sup> "I saw in the night visions,  
and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.  
<sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed.

**Ephesians 1:19 - 23**

<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Willingdon Church's Understanding of Discipleship**

Jesus' mission is to transform us, his followers, into his likeness. He calls us to abide in him, base our lives on his Word, and live by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Our relationship with Jesus begins with spiritual rebirth by the Spirit of God, continues as we surrender everything to him, and manifests itself in worshipping God with all that we are. Marks of genuine discipleship are love for Jesus, love for the Word of God, joy in worship and prayer, love for the church family, love for those who do not yet know Jesus, love for enemies, humility, integrity, and a forgiving spirit.

## Let's Warm Up: Questions to break the ice.

### 1. Who has been a significant mentor or guide in your life? What influence did they have?

Many of us are who we are because of the impact others have had on our lives.

Had a teacher who inspired a love of learning a subject? Were there senior employees who helped you feel welcome and get comfortable at your new job? How about parents, aunts/uncles, or grandparents (biological, legal, or acquired) who taught you about love and being a family? Was there a coach who taught you to love a sport?

In this week's passage, Jesus sends His disciples to go disciple others just as Jesus had disciplined them.

### 2. What superpower would you love to have?

All of us have grown up hearing stories of people with superhuman abilities. Which one did you want to be like? Maybe you want to be strong like Făt-Frumos, always on valiant quests. Or you wish you could turn invisible like mischievous Saci Pererê. Do you want superhuman endurance like Mikula Selyaninovich so you could never be tired? Want the kung fu abilities of Huang Rong? Perhaps you'd love to be forever young like Galadriel.

In this week's passage, Jesus uses His supernatural authority and power to send His disciples out to make disciples.

### 3. What was passed down to you that you passed down to others?

Is there a tradition that's been passed down? Got a unique genetic trait that's going down your family line? Maybe you were taught to play an instrument by a music teacher. Now you're teaching others to play. Do you have a keepsake that has been passed down for generations?

My dad had a kimono when he was a baby. Then I wore it. Then my son. That thing's over 70 years old! It was touching to see photos of me in the kimono and then seeing my son in it. If my son has kids, I hope he can pass them down to them, too!

In this week's passage, Jesus wants His disciples to pass down what He passed to them.

## Let's Get Started: Questions to start thinking about the main themes.

### 4. What do you think the disciples felt after the resurrection?

Things hadn't gone the way they expected. Jesus talked about the kingdom of God and being the Son of God. They thought Jesus would usher in a new era of freedom from Rome and the corrupted religious system. He'd give them positions of power (Mark 10:35-40). The disciples couldn't accept the idea of Jesus being killed (Matthew 16:21-23).

What happens? The Romans kill Jesus at the demand of the corrupt Jewish religious leaders. The disciples' dreams completely collapse. But unexpectedly, Jesus comes back from the dead and meets them!

What kinds of emotions do you think they felt? What did they think about the future or what Jesus had in store? Were they optimistic, scared, or neutral?

## 5. What were some significant moments of Jesus on a mountain?

Jesus meets His disciples on a mountain. No doubt, as they met Jesus this last time, they would recall other big moments. Pastor Ray listed out what happened on a mountain as recorded in Matthew.

- Jesus resists Satan's temptation to worship him for all the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8-10). Jesus knows that He is the Father's Son and will receive the nations without Satan's help (Psalm 2:7-8).
- Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). He taught "as one who had authority" (Matthew 7:29).
- Jesus prays alone after hearing about John the Baptist's death and feeding the 5,000+ (Matthew 14:22-23). Soon after, Jesus will walk on water and calm the storm. In response, the disciples will worship Jesus and declare Him as "the Son of God" (Matthew 14:32-33).
- Jesus heals a large crowd and feeds the 4,000+ (Matthew 15:29-39). As a result of the healing, the people glorify God (Matthew 15:31).
- Jesus tells the disciples what to expect when He returns (Matthew 24:3-25:46).

## Let's Dig In: Questions to discuss the passage and how we can respond.

## 6. Why was it important for Jesus to be granted all authority in heaven and on earth?

In the ancient world, gods were limited in different ways.

**Geography.** For example, in the Old Testament, Israel once defeated the Syrian army in a battle. The Syrian advisors said, "Their gods (the God of Israel) are gods of the hills, so they were stronger than we. But let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they." (1 Kings 20:23). They thought they lost because they were fighting on the Israelite god's home turf, where their gods had the homecourt advantage. If they fought where their god had the advantage, they would win. The world was full of gods. Just like human kings, they had their own areas where they were stronger.

The Canadian federal government can send its officials all over Canada, because it has authority over all of Canada. But if it wants to send officials to other countries, they have to ask for and receive permission because they have no power there. Since Jesus has *all* authority on earth, He can send His disciples *all* over the earth. He doesn't need to ask for permission, because it's all His.

Jesus has authority over Canada, Cambodia, Chad, China, Colombia, Croatia, and more. Although the religious and political situations may not be welcoming of the Gospel, Jesus has already authorized us to go.

**Sphere of Influence.** Many religious systems had deities with different roles and powers, like the Egyptians (<https://www.britishmuseum.org/learn/schools/ages-7-11/ancient-egypt/ancient-egyptian-gods-and-goddesses>) and Romans (<https://worldhistoryedu.com/list-of-roman-gods-and-their-greek-equivalent/>). Each deity can do some things, but not others, like the harvest, death, or the sun. When God sent the 10 plagues, He showed that He had authority over every sphere (Exodus 12:12). He was the one God who could do everything. There's no area that's outside of His reach.

The disciples didn't have to pray to Apollo to heal people, Mercury to travel on mission trips, or Minerva for wisdom to know what to do. Jesus has authority over everything, so through Him we can have everything we need.

**Mortality.** What's fascinating is that ancient gods died a lot. For example, Baal was a major god of the nations living around Israel. Over hundreds of years, God's people kept leaving Him to worship Baal, from Gideon (e.g., Judges 6:30) to Elijah (e.g., 1 Kings 18:16-40) to Jeremiah (e.g., Jeremiah 2:8). In the Baal legends, Baal kills other gods and is himself afraid of Mot (death) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal\\_Cycle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal_Cycle)). In the Greco-Roman world that the disciples lived in, gods were born and could die as well.

Because Jesus defeated death (1 Timothy 1:10), He has authority over death as well. The disciples knew that nothing could stop their mission.

**Everything.** Since Jesus had authority over everything, nothing could get in Jesus' way. Paul put it beautifully:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39.)

## 7. Why did some of the disciples doubt when they saw Jesus?

As I wrote for Question 5, the disciples' plans and conceptions of Jesus' kingdom were thrown out the window. Jesus' plan was nothing like what they expected. Now they're meeting Jesus on a mountain. What will happen?

Matthew records two responses. The first is to worship. Usually, when we hear worship, we think of pulling out a guitar and singing. Although that is an expression of worship, the concept of worship is broader than that. The Greek word is προσκυνέω (pros-koo-neh-o), meaning "to express in attitude or gesture one's complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure" (BDAG). They're probably bowing down, putting their faces to the ground, and doing other gestures to show that they submit to Jesus.

The second response is to doubt. I used to wonder why they would doubt. Were they doubting that Jesus actually came back from the dead? Did they doubt that this was the real Jesus?

Well, the Greek is διστάζω (dis-tad-zo), meaning "to be uncertain about taking a particular course of action, hesitate in doubt" (BDAG). As Pastor Ray noted, this word was used when Peter was walking on water (Matthew 14:31) when his focus shifted from Jesus to the dangerous waves, so his faith wavered.

"This doubt did not concern the person of Christ. It did not relate to the fact of the Resurrection that these men had so long disbelieved but now had come to believe. The doubt did relate to what was ahead for the disciples." (*The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, Pentecost). What was Jesus' plan for them? Could they handle it?

Jesus had told them to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him to give up their lives for Him (Matthew 16:24-25). They probably didn't expect Jesus to carry a literal cross and give up His life. Would Jesus require the disciples to all be crucified as well? When Jesus carried His cross, the disciples had abandoned Him. Would they be brave enough when their time came?

## 8. What storms do we face? How can we worship in the face of doubt?

Pastor Ray listed a few common storms many of us are facing. As people share their own storms, come up with some concrete ways to worship Jesus in response to the situations.

- **Financial Storm:** Maybe you're struggling to pay the bills: housing (mortgages/rent, utilities, taxes), necessities (e.g., food, medicine).
- **School Campus Storm:** Maybe you're being ridiculed or excluded because you're a Christian.
- **Family Storm:** Instead of being united as a family, there are broken relationships, and you don't know if they will be healed.
- **Health Storm:** Maybe you've been diagnosed with a terminal illness, have an ongoing mental health issue like anxiety or depression, or are struggling with an addiction to drugs or alcohol. You don't know if there's a way to freedom.
- **Immigration Storm:** Maybe you're waiting for your work permit or permanent residency application to go through. I remember waiting months for a response from immigration. You don't know how to plan for the future. Should you put down roots in Canada or move back to your home country?
- **National Storm:** No country is perfect. In some ways, Canada is more in line with God's teachings than other countries. But in other ways, it's leading the charge in the wrong direction. As of writing this, the polls are pretty close, so no matter who wins this election, half of the country will be very unhappy.

How can we seek Jesus' mission in our circumstances? How can we draw on His strength, love, grace, or support?

## 9. Can someone be a follower of Jesus and *not* be involved in making disciples? Why or why not?

Less than half of Christians in Canada over the age of 35 believe it's "essential for me as a Christian to encourage others to embrace the truth of Jesus Christ." (<https://biblesociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Still-Christian-Report.pdf>).

As Pastor Ray said, "To be a disciple is to be a learner, a follower, to be attached to a teacher." And the core of Jesus' ministry was making disciples. He gathered and taught the 12 and others. If we want to follow Jesus, we need to be on mission to make disciples so they can also follow Jesus.

Again, as Pastor Ray said, "every human being is a disciple." We're all following someone or something. And if we're not about making disciples of Jesus, then we're not following Jesus. That's like saying you're a follower of Pelé but you find football boring, Chef Ramsay but you don't like cooking, or Pastor Brody but you don't like facial hair.

## 1. Do you have doubts about Jesus' mission? Encourage each other with the truths found in this passage.

Maybe you doubt your ability to make disciples. You don't know how to explain the Gospel. Or your life isn't in line with what a follower of Jesus should be like. You're uncertain about whether or not anyone would listen to you because you get nervous about talking on your faith. Are you worried about the repercussions of sacrificing your time or social standing?

I'm sure many of you share the same qualms. Come together as a Life Group to address those issues!

**10. Are there any people groups you feel reluctant about making disciples of?**

Sometimes it's easy to have our prejudices without recognizing them. I think all of us have people we shy away from. Take a moment to think of who would kill your mood if they appeared in front of you.

I've provided two common examples. Can you think of others?

**The Other Side.** During this election season, political discussions can get heated. I've heard people speak of the other side with clear disdain and acidity in their voices. I can't help but notice in online discussions, people spend way more time typing out insults and sarcasm than convincing facts/stances. It's discouraging to see people use terms and expressions that discredit and dehumanize.

As a pastor, I can't say which Canadian political party Jesus endorses. I can tell people to be excellent to each other, though. Jesus tells us to love our enemies, and that includes political opponents (Matthew 5:43-48). If we try to unlovingly correct them, we'll just come off as harsh noise that nobody wants to listen to (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). It won't matter if all that we say is 100% based on fact if we don't have love. We'll be just like any other political pundit who shouts attacks at the other side.

We can still lovingly demonstrate the love that Jesus has for us to them. We can speak with kindness and love. We can prioritize God's kingdom over any earthly nation.

**"Sinners".** It's easy to label people by the dark parts of their past or what they're currently doing wrong. They're drug addicts, sexually promiscuous, lazy good-for-nothings, lovers of the wrong sports team. "They need to clean themselves up before we can help them learn to follow Jesus!"

But that's the opposite of the Gospel. Jesus is like a doctor (Luke 5:29-32). The hospital triage nurse doesn't turn people away for being too ill. "Hey, get out! You're bleeding all over the emergency room! Go stitch yourself up in the parking lot. Then the doctor will see you." The sicker you are, the more urgently you need to see a doctor. The fact that they're living so wrong means they need Jesus all the more.

We can tell them that the solution to their problems is Jesus. He is the one to get them clean.

**11. Our church's understanding of discipleship is, "Jesus' followers are transformed by abiding in him, through Word and Spirit, to reflect his love and character to one another and the world." Which parts of this are you doing well? Which parts do you need Jesus' help with?**

Discipleship is a journey. So, if you're on the right track, keep going! If you realize you've stalled or have come off the rails, don't worry. Seek Jesus' help and the Life Group's help to get on the right path.

If you have questions about what these things mean, please ask! Discuss and process these ideas.