

The Cycle Of Discipleship - Leader Notes

This is a free 3-session interactive small-group study based on a discussion between Michael Card, Wayne Shepherd, and William Lane on the "*In The Studio With Michael Card*" podcast. The Cycle of Discipleship covers Mark 3:13 to Mark 6:32. This series last aired in February 2022.

This package includes:

- These leader notes
- Three question sheet handouts (CoD-Questions_#.pdf)
- Three excerpts from the *In The Studio With Michael Card* podcast (CoD#.mp3)
- A transcript and outline of the podcast excerpts to help in your preparation.

Each session covers one phase of the cycle of discipleship. For each session:

1. Hand out the question sheets for the session to your students.
2. Listen to the podcast discussion (about 20 minutes). As they listen, students follow along in their Bibles and answer the questions on their own. They may also add questions of their own, along with comments or insights.
3. After the podcast ends, open the discussion. Go over the questions and answers, and discuss the concepts presented in the study.

You can listen to the original podcasts by searching for "Bearers of the Light Part" at:

<https://podbay.fm/p/in-the-studio-with-michael-card>

The podcasts are also available on Apple and Spotify.

Permission to use the audio excerpts was obtained through the Michael Card Music Facebook page.

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Andrew Bernhardt

dtjsoft.com

Phase 1

Hand out question sheets first, then listen to Phase 1 podcast (CoD1 .mp3)

Questions

1. The first phase of the cycle of discipleship is:

...being with Jesus in various situations.

2. What is being "with Jesus" primarily about?

Observing and familiarizing ourselves with our Master, seeing Him at work in the world - doing His Father's business.

Learning from what Jesus said and did, seeing the results of these things, and learning from how He responded in different situations.

*As the disciples observed Jesus, I'm sure they noticed He did not do and say things the way they would have. Therefore, learning from Jesus includes observing what Jesus did *not* say or do, and how He did *not* respond, in comparison to how we might have done so. For example, in Luke 9:54-55, Jesus rebuked His disciples who wanted to call fire down on those who rejected their Master. He rebuked them because He did not want them acting that way once He sent them out.)*

3. The disciples witnessed Jesus going through the following kinds of situations:

(Context: These situations occurred between the time Jesus first called His disciples to send them out (Mark 3:13-19) and the time He actually sent them out (Mark 6:7ff).

- **Mark 3:20-35** - _____.

They saw Jesus engaging in conflict with His family and with the scribes (religious "experts").

- **Mark 4:1-35** - _____.

They saw Jesus teaching the multitudes in parables. Jesus used parables to teach spiritual truths using things they were familiar with. Afterwards, He explained the meanings to His disciples.

- **Mark 4:35-5:20** - _____.

They saw Jesus engaging the demonic. He stilled the waves and cast out demons.

- **Mark 5:21-43** - _____.

They saw Jesus entering the confusion of disease and death. He healed a woman with an issue of blood, and raised a girl back to life.

- **Mark 6:1-6** - _____.

They saw Jesus experience personal rejection from His own townsfolk.

4. Why was it important for the disciples to be with Jesus in these situations?

To equip them for when Jesus sent them out. They would know what to do and what to expect in the same kinds of situations. They would also learn to trust Him just as Jesus trusted His Father in these situations.

The things the disciples would experience later were the same things Jesus experienced (i.e. John 15:20). They would have His example in mind in how to respond. They would learn to act and respond in the same manner as Jesus - representing Him accurately, so it would be just as if Jesus were there in person.

5. How can we be with Jesus when He is not physically present today?

Since being with Jesus is primarily about observation: read, study, and meditate on Jesus' ministry time in the gospels. The gospel writers recorded these things so we can become familiar with what He did, how He was treated, and how He responded.

6. Why is it important for us for be with Jesus?

So we can see and learn from what happened to Jesus as He did His Father's will.

So we see how Jesus responded in different situations.

So we can be prepared to act like Him.

These prepare us for the next phase of the cycle.

Spend some time this week looking at the passages listed under question 3. What do you learn about Jesus from this passages?

Phase 2

Hand out question sheets first, then listen to Phase 2 podcast (CoD2.mp3)

Questions

1. The second phase of the cycle of discipleship is:

Jesus' commissioning of the disciples to speak His word and do His work.

2. What is a *shaliach*?

A commissioned agent. He acts under and with the full authority of another.

*A *shaliach* is not authorized to improvise what to say or do. He is told exactly what to do and how to do it.*

*In the Bible, the commission of a *shaliach* is often expressed by the word "sent." The word apostle comes from the root *apostello* which means "sent out." So an apostle is a *shaliach*.*

*The word *shaliach* does not appear in the Bible, but the related word *shalach* does, which means "send".*

*An Old Testament example of a *shaliach* is the servant sent by Abraham to find a wife for his son, Isaac. This account is given in Genesis 24. Abraham gave him detailed instruction on where to go and what to do and not to do. This was so the servant would be able to faithfully represent Abraham and his wishes to the family he was sent to.*

3. Is there any significance or reason for the *shaliach* not being able to pass on his mission to another?

*A *shaliach* is chosen by Jesus. Those doing Jesus' work need to be led by Him and authorized by Him to do the work. They also need to have been with Jesus so they know how to do the work and what to expect.*

One who acts on Jesus' behalf but is not called to do so by Jesus doesn't have Jesus' authority or power.

4. How did the disciples' previous experiences of being with Jesus help them prepare for their mission?

They knew what to expect. They knew how to respond. They had Jesus' example in their minds. Today: Disciples training disciples by their examples in the world.

5. What do you think the results were of the disciples' mission? (Mark 6:12-13, Luke 10:17)

Ultimately successful. While some rejected their message, others believed. (As in the parable of the sower, some seed was eaten by the birds, while some germinated and bore fruit.)

*(Notice the *shaliach* verses in Luke 10:1-16.)*

When Jesus sent His disciples out, He knew His word would bear fruit. If it wouldn't bear fruit, He would not have sent them out.

Isa 55:10-11 *For as the rain comes down and the snow from the sky, and doesn't return there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, and gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing I sent it to do.*

If the disciples went without Jesus' sending them, or they spoke on their own instead of what Jesus told them, the fruit would not have been the fruit that Jesus wanted.

6. How might the results have been different if the disciples hadn't been with Jesus?

Specific answers are conjectural, but their mission would not have been successful.

One example of those not acting under Jesus' authority is in Acts 19:13-17 where some Jews who were not commissioned by Jesus attempted to cast out demons in Jesus' name.

7. How does this phase shed light on what it means to follow Jesus?

Following Jesus involves doing His will His way.

Notice how Jesus acted as *shaliach* for His Father. This can be seen in John 5:19-47. What can we learn about our role from this?

John 5:19 *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him"¹, so that you may marvel. 21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. 22 The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*

25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. 30 I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. 31 If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. 33 You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. 34 Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. 36 But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.² 37 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. 39 You search the Scriptures because

1 Verse 20: Compare with John 14:12 *Most certainly I tell you, he who believes in me, the works that I do, he will do also; and he will do greater works than these, because I am going to my Father.*

2 Verse 36: Compare with the works the apostles did because Jesus sent them. Their works bore witness to Jesus (Acts 3:6, 4:10, 16:18). Whenever you see the apostle doing something in Jesus' name, they act as Jesus' *shaliachim*.

you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. 41 I do not receive glory from people. 42 But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. 43 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? 45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

The *shaliach* concept also appears in John 15:17-25. Jesus commissioned His disciples, just as He was commissioned ("sent") by the Father. For example:

- *"This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you." (John 15:12).*
- *"If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (vs 20)*
- *"If they kept my word, they will keep yours also." (vs 20)*
- *"He who hates Me hates my Father also." (vs 23)*

The *shaliach* concept is quite common throughout the scripture. I think the first instance can be seen in God's command to Adam to take care of the garden. He was commanded to do God's work and was ideally suited for it because he was made in the image of God. Other examples include the last 40 years of Moses' life (beginning with Exodus 3:10), various prophets such as Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:3ff), and Paul (Acts 22:21).

Phase 3

Hand out question sheets first, then listen to Phase 3 podcast (CoD3.mp3)

Questions

1. The third phase of the cycle of discipleship consists of:

Telling Jesus what was done and what happened, AND coming apart and resting with Jesus.
The cycle returns to knowing Him more.

2. Why is it necessary to tell Jesus what happened? Isn't He omniscient? Doesn't He know?

We see the benefit ourselves. It is sharing the joy of success and sharing the sorrows of rejection... an unburdening.

If we don't unburden from doing Jesus' work, we'll carry that burden over into the next cycle of work. That cycle will have it's own burdens to add. They will keep building up, and wear us out.

Philippians 3:10a *...that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings...*

(Hymn: *I Must Tell Jesus*)

3. Why is rest necessary?

We're returning to the source of our strength, and the one who truly cares for us and is interested in us and what happened during our mission.

Jesus also went to spend time alone with the Father:

Mark 1:35 *And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.*

Luke 6:12 *In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.*

4. Why does the cycle of discipleship repeat?

It is necessary for our growth and spiritual health. Life consists of cycles, like breathing in and out, waking and sleeping, 6 days of work followed by 1 day of rest, etc.. Rest is part of the cycle God built into this world. It is for our benefit.

There are always more things to learn from being with Jesus, and there are always more opportunities to do His work.

Notice in Luke 10:38-42, Martha was stuck in the work part of the cycle, while Jesus commended Mary for just being with Him.

Notice the Ephesian church in Revelation 2:1-7. They were also stuck in the work part of the cycle. They had left their first love (vs 4).

5. How can we take part in this phase today?

Jesus is not physically present today, but we still have His presence. We can still learn from Him in our Bibles.

I think of the phases of the cycle of discipleship as reading and studying my Bible to get more familiar with Jesus, responding to His call to do His work, and returning to Him in prayer.

There should be both short- and long-term cycles.

Do not treat phase 3 as part of phase 2, i.e. another thing you need to "do."

- 6. Where do you find yourself in the cycle of discipleship? Are you stuck in a particular part of the cycle?**