

The Cycle Of Discipleship - Transcript & Outline

(From *In the Studio With Michael Card*, episodes February 5 to 21, 2022)

(**WL** = William Lane, **MC** = Michael Card, **WS** = Wayne Shepherd)

FIRST CYCLE

WL: The cycle of discipleship begins with the call of Jesus upon our lives to be with Him. And He engages us in a number of situations in which [we] participate in ordinary life and extraordinary life as well. We are with Jesus in the situation.

After we have been with Him, the cycle moves into a second phase. We are commissioned to speak His word and to do His work. We cannot do that until we have been with Jesus.

The cycle then advances to still a third stage, when, after we have been out speaking His word and doing His work, we come back and report to Him all that we have done and all that we have taught. And then we hear Jesus say to us, "*Now come. And rest and be with me in new situations.*"

And the cycle continually renews itself.

MC: So it's not that we're in one point in the Christian life all the time. This cycle is repeating in each one of our lives as we follow Christ.

WL: If we are to follow the gospel pattern, yes, Michael. I think that it's all too easy, however, to be caught up in a period in which we're with Jesus, or to be caught up in a period in which we're doing the work of the ministry.

MC: That's my problem. I get stuck there thinking, "*Well, that's what I'm called to do.*" You know, Jesus' word, Jesus' word, just like you taught me, Bill.

WL: And that's where we become like a record that is stuck, and it's skipping, and we wonder what is wrong. And the answer is: we have not heard the call, "*Now come apart and rest a while and be with me in new situations, for I have yet more to teach you.*"

WS: Never thought about it in terms of this cycle, as you call it, Bill, the cycle of discipleship. Well, we're going to devote this program and the next two programs to this topic, so can we cover cycle number one?

WL: Yes, we can. And the place to begin is actually in Mark chapter 3, verses 13 to 15.

WS: We love to get to the Scripture passage here and actually hear it. Michael, why don't you read it for us?

MC: "*Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted, and they came to Him. He appointed twelve, designating them apostles, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.*"

WL: Now, what's interesting about that passage is that it's preceded by a paragraph where we see Jesus in the midst of the multitude. He's on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, from the south, that is, from Judea, from Idumaea, from the regions to the east, the regions across the Jordan, the regions from the north, Tyre and Sidon. Crowds of people keep on coming to Jesus, and He's engaged in ministry of proclamation. He is teaching them concerning the kingdom of God. He's also engaged in mercy ministries. We read that He healed many so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch Him, and whenever evil spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and cried out, "*Why you are the Son of God!*" And Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell who He was. We see Jesus in the midst of the many.

Then the surprise comes with verse 13. Jesus withdraws from the crowds and gives His attention to the few. He went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted, and they came to Him, and He appointed 12 that they might be with Him. That brings us into the first phase of the cycle of discipleship.

WS: And the key phrase here is that "*they might be with Him.*" That's your point, Bill.

WL: Yes. Of course, the appointment of 12 was not something incidental. The 12 tribes of Israel were now going to have, as it were, a new configuration. Here was the beginning of a new Israel that would be sensitive to

God's covenant relationship with His people. And the interesting fact is, to these twelve, impressive promises are made.

MC: And these are not impressive men, are they? This is not the creme-de-la-creme. I've heard you talk about that.

WL: That's true. That's the point that I would want to move on to in just a moment, but let's hear the promise. "*Fear not, little flock. It is the Father's good pleasure to give to you the kingdom, and you will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" But as you have said, Michael, they are not particularly impressive in themselves. They are not those we would have chosen if we had a program for world mission.

Now take for an example this man Bartholomew. If you were to take a little 3x5 card and write his name in the upper left hand corner and had as an assignment to write on that card everything that you know about this man, not only would you be reduced to a sentence or two, but you might well be wrong in what you had written down. You would say, of course he was one of the twelve, that's correct. You would say, secondly, we know his name, and that's incorrect. "Bar" is simply the Aramaic word for son. We know the name of his father. His father's name was Ptolemy. He was simply known as the son of Ptolemy. But we don't even know his own personal name. But do you know I find the greatest encouragement in that? Jesus wanted this man to be with Him. That was the significant fact.

And the truth of the matter is, while you and I have had a close relationship, Michael, most of our listening audience do not know my name. And yet I am one of those that Jesus wanted to be with Him, and that's the significant fact that sets me apart as one upon whom the call of God has come, and a call to which I want to be responsive.

WS: Well, that is loaded with significance already here, Bill, as you think about, "*What am I worth?*" You know, I know, that I have infinite worth in God's eyes, and yet sometimes you feel ordinary. And yet you're saying that God can use us as ordinary people.

WL: In fact, God loves the ordinary person. I think oftentimes when we hear persons on the radio, we see them on television, we see them giving leadership to large congregations, we see "gifted" persons. And perhaps a spirit of envy is birthed within us: "*If only I could be a gifted person like that.*"

WS: If only I could sing like Michael Card, let's be honest.

MC: Or had a voice like Wayne Shepherd, or teach like Bill Lane. They're all included in this circle.

WL: But the truth of the matter is, everyone that Jesus wants to be with Him is a person who is both gifted and needy. And Bartholomew was just such a person. So am I.

Now what's interesting is, it's obvious that phase two of that cycle, "*He chose twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons,*" that will concern us in Mark chapter 6, 7 through 13. But when I ask myself: What is the significance of the material in the Gospel of Mark between the call of the Twelve and the sending of them out two by two on mission? In other words, Mark 3:20 through 6:6, why there we see the disciples with Jesus in a variety of situations. They are with Jesus, and it's the significance of our being with Jesus that I want to stress for our listening audience.

WS: Well, Bill, knowing just that much, I mean God uses us as ordinary people.

WL: Indeed He does. It involves us in ordinary situations that He might be an extraordinary God to us in the midst of those situations. Now what's interesting is that in the Gospel of Mark there follows six sections, as it were, in which we see the disciples with Jesus.

MC: So this is phase one now.

WL: This is phase one with being with Jesus. The first section extends from chapter 3:20 through [verse] 35. It is a situation in which Jesus is engaged in conflict, first with His own family, who felt that His failure to eat and sleep properly indicated He had lost His mind. He was also in conflict with the biblical scholars from Jerusalem, that is to say the very best of the teachers in the land, who were convinced that Jesus was possessed by an evil spirit.

WS: So His family says He's out of His mind, the teachers of the law say He's possessed.

WL: And Jesus engages that conflict, and He engages it with the 12.

WS: They're right there with Him.

WL: Yes. We need to think about that and ask why. Why does the period of being with Jesus begin with opposition from the family, [and] opposition from some of the great religious authorities of the day? Jesus knew that the call of God cuts across the grain of our culture. It cuts across the grain of often our ambitions, our dreams, our plans.

MC: And the dreams that our families have for us.

WL: Yes. And as we see in this first section, is that Jesus knew if He was engaged in conflict because He had said "yes" to the call of God upon His life, we will be engaged in conflict as well. And it makes an enormous difference whether we engage conflict in our own strength or we engage it with Jesus.

WS: Alright, Bill, you said that there were six and the first is that Jesus taught them through His own encounter with conflict.

WL: Yes. Now the second one is found in Mark 4:1-35. And it's the great parable section of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus teaches in parables. And a parable is simply an extended comparison by which that which is unknown, namely the kingdom of God, is clarified by reference to that which is well known. The sowing of seed, the farming, the baking of bread, the catching of fish, ...

WS: ...the everyday things.

WL: Very ordinary things. And perhaps the key to it all is found in verses 33 and 34. "*With many similar parables, Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand (that is to the crowd). He did not say anything to them without using a parable.*" He was trying to keep them from saying "no" to the call of God too quickly. But when He was alone with His own disciples, He explained everything. You see, you can't speak the word of Jesus unless you've spent time with Jesus, allowing Him to clarify what the call of God upon your life really means.

MC: And for Mark to give us the detail, "*but when He was alone with His disciples, He explained everything,*" that shows that this time of teaching parables was not simply for the crowd. It was specifically so that the disciples could be with Jesus to see Him teach and to have those things explained.

WL: Absolutely.

MC: I've never seen that before.

WS: This is Jesus as mentor.

WL: This is definitely Jesus as mentor who is doing the work of God, speaking the word of God, and preparing His disciples to do precisely that.

WS: What's next here, Bill?

WL: The third extends from 4:35 through chapter 5:20. It is engagement with the demonic. Now this is not the way that oftentimes we think about reality. We tend to deny that there is a demonic cast to life. But in the furious storm that rose at the time that Jesus was asleep and the disciples were left to their own resources, we are to hear in the text a reference to a demonic presence, for Jesus, you remember, is rudely awakened. He gets up, He rebukes the wind, He says to the waves, "Quiet, be still." He speaks to them as if they were a person. And the disciples, terrified, not only by the storm, but what has happened in the subsiding of the storm, say, "*Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him.*" They are in the presence of the one who confronts the demonic.

WS: The students are learning here.

MC: Well, I've never seen this before now, but that's the same thing He will say to demoniacs, "Be quiet."

WL: Absolutely. In fact, the best translation, Michael, would be be muzzled, be muzzled, be still. Well, that's followed immediately by the account [of] an encounter with a demoniac, a person the center of whose personality has been taken over by demonic powers and Jesus brings a remarkable release to this man and the disciples are with Jesus. Now why? Jesus knows that if He encounters the demonic in the course of a ministry

that is given to the glory of God, they will encounter the demonic as well. And we do not possess the personal resources, in and of ourselves, to confront the demonic. To do so with Jesus makes all the difference.

MC: I just saw something else I've never seen. After the demoniac is cleansed or the demon is cast out, you know, he begs to go with Jesus, but Jesus won't let him. Interesting to me, he hasn't been with Jesus in those other teaching, those other phases, other parts of phase one.

WL: And but notice what Jesus does say to him He says go home to your family, have a ministry to your family, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you. Be a personal witness and he does become a disciple for Jesus in a Gentile place as a Gentile person because God has done something remarkable for him.

WS: Bill, quickly take us through the other lessons here, Jesus' encounters as mentor with His disciples.

WL: The next account, which extends from 5:21 through 43, brings the disciples into the confusion of disease and death, the humiliation if you please. And Jesus came to push aside the hand of death. He came to heal that which was sick. And the disciples are with Jesus. Jesus knows that if His ministry brings Him into the presence of disease and death, so will their ministry. And once again, it makes an enormous difference whether you stand in the presence of disease and death in your own strength, or you stand there with Jesus.

The final incident, chapter 6, [verses] 1 through 6, brings Jesus into His own hometown, and there He experiences personal rejection. And the disciples are with Jesus. You see, He came with the twelve. And one of the last phases of their training before He sends them out, two by two, is the experience of rejection. Why? He understands that the world turns on the axis of acceptance and rejection. And yet He came to be the one who was accepted by God, but frequently rejected by men and women and young people. And He knew they would experience that rejection as well. And once again, it makes an enormous difference whether you face rejection in your own strength or you face it with Jesus.

WS: Well, Michael, we're seeing such incredible insights here today into how Jesus relates to His disciples. Bill, for those of us who are listening and seeing these things for the first time, how should we apply this? What should we be learning here as we go today?

WL: We should be learning, Wayne, that Jesus understands the situations in which we find ourselves, and we do not enter those situations alone.

WS: Not in our own strength.

WL: He enters those situations with us. We face them with Jesus and His resources, His wisdom, His love, His compassion, His discernment, His insight. He's there to undergird us as we face conflict, teaching, the demonic disease and death and rejection. And we are not to face these as individuals cut off from Jesus, but those who are with Jesus.

SECOND CYCLE

WL: Michael, I like the image of bearers of the light, for we have no light within ourselves. It's only as we've been with Jesus that light begins to thrust out all of the darkness that has been just built up inside every one of us. And what we saw in the Gospel of Mark last week was that Jesus involved the Twelve with Him in an experience of conflict. He involved them at times of teaching. He involved them in an encounter with the demonic. They stood with Jesus in the presence of disease and death, and finally in the humiliation of personal rejection. It's very interesting that the transition to phase two, where Jesus authorizes them to go forth to speak His word and to do His work, is found in a little verse, a half verse if you please, in verse 6b of chapter 6 of the Gospel, *then Jesus went around teaching from village to village*, and I find in there a suggestion there were many other things that Jesus taught the disciples in that itinerant ministry as they were with Him, moving from village to village, and that becomes the prelude to their being commissioned to speak for Jesus.

WS: Just for clarification, we're in the book of Mark. That's the book that Bill just referred to, and it is chapter 6 and verse 6. I want our listeners to be able to open the scriptures if you're in a position to do that and take a look at that with us. Michael, would you read for us the Gospel of Mark chapter 6 verse 7 and verse 12 and 13?

MC: Sure. *Calling the twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. ... And they went out and preached that people should repent, and they drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

WL: It was Jesus who initiated the call to be with Him, and it's Jesus who initiates the commissioning of the Twelve to be sent out two by two with authority that He gives to them to exercise authority over evil spirits, and we read they went out and preached that people should repent. Why? Because that was the message of Jesus as He came into Galilee, "*repent for the kingdom of God has drawn near.*"

WS: Bill, I'm impressed that Jesus knew when the time was right to send them. He wanted them to be with Him, and then He knew what the right time was to send them.

WL: Absolutely. And yet we must also appreciate they were fledglings. This is the first time. They have been commissioned to represent Jesus. And we read that they drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. Why? Because those were the ministries of mercy in which Jesus was engaged.

MC: It's interesting to me, Bill, that they're sent out two by two. Is there some specific background to that?

WS: What's the strategy there?

WL: It's clear that there is an advantage when two persons go forth because one person may be gifted in one area and one in another. But that isn't the answer to the question. The real answer is, in the scriptures of the Old Covenant, that is the Old Testament, the law of testimony was that every matter had to be confirmed at the mouth of two or three witnesses. And so it's a concern for truth. It's a concern for integrity that stands behind the appointment of the going forth of the pairs of disciples.

WS: That is fascinating. There is strength in two going together. You can draw strength from each other, but that's a fascinating background to it, Bill. And you get that from a full understanding of the Old Testament here when you bring it to the New.

WL: Yes, and you see, background is sometimes crucial for understanding a detail. You may remember there was a small detail in chapter 3, verse 14, that we never commented on last week. Jesus called the twelve, whom He designated apostles.

Now that word apostle is familiar to us. We speak of the Acts of the Apostles. And not all of us would have an opportunity to know that behind that important term was a Jewish juridical institution of the first century called the *shaliach*. The *shaliach* was simply a commissioned agent. You would commission someone to act in your name. And the key ruling with regard to the *shaliach* was the word of the one who is sent is as authoritative as the word of the one who commissioned him.

The closest we would have in our culture, it seems to me, would be a lawyer who enters into a court, enters into the bank to draw up a mortgage and to make arrangements for you, and whatever he agrees to, you have agreed to because you authorized him to act on your behalf.

Now, the disciples were *shaliachim*, that is, they were the commissioned agents of Jesus.

WS: Would they have understood that background that you just described to us?

WL: They certainly would have, and anyone with a Jewish background to whom Mark was writing would have understood. But I understand Mark to have written for the Church of Rome where there were many Gentiles and I assume, Wayne, there must have been teachers in the congregation that would have helped the Christians of that day to understand this background.

WS: Well again that that shed so much light on what He was doing here.

WL: You see, Jesus was authorizing them to speak the word that He spoke. It's obvious they had to be with Him to know precisely what that word was. He was authorizing them to do the work that He was doing. It's obvious they had to have been with Him in a variety of experiences and seeing what God was pleased to do through Jesus. They go as His representatives. They are not free agents.

The interesting fact about the *shaliach* is if he received a commission and became ill and was unable to fulfill the commission, it simply stopped with him. In other words, if I were commissioned to buy a piece of land for you, Wayne, I couldn't, if I became ill, simply say, "*Michael, Wayne wanted me to buy a piece of land.*"

He gave me these specifications. He's willing to pay so much an acre. Would you please take this commission and carry it forward?" No, I am responsible to you as I am your agent. And I am absolutely accountable for what I do in your name.

WS: So it speaks of a very special and unique relationship that the apostles had with Jesus.

WL: Now, this is the way I think we ought to think about this phase of the discipleship cycle. There was first a school phase. The 12 are with Jesus in a variety of situations. It's followed by an outreach stage. And the beauty of the outreach stage is the disciples don't go in their own strength. They don't go in their own resources. They are the authorized, commissioned agents of Jesus, and they go empowered with the power of Jesus.

MC: Yeah, I just encircled the phrase, "*and He gave them authority.*" That's the language of the *shaliach*. He imparts His authority to them.

WL: Absolutely. And you see, when I know that I have been authorized by the Lord to speak His word, or to do His work, it gives me confidence to enter into situations that are brand new to me, which are unfamiliar, which take me out of my comfort zone, knowing He will participate in the whole transaction to His own glory.

WS: Take us then to verses 12 and 13, because here are the results of them acting with the authority that Jesus gave to them.

WL: Yes, they do not preach their own message, but they preach that people should repent. They do not do their own work, but they encountered the demonic and they drive out many demons, anoint many sick people with oil, and they are healed because Jesus acts through them and He speaks through them.

WS: Bill, is there any evidence that the apostles really understand what's going on here, that they understand the authority that's been given to them and understand the results of that ministry?

WL: Yes, we'll find that out, particularly in phase three when they come back and excitedly tell the Lord all that has transpired.

WS: So I have to wait until next week to find out the answer to my question.

WL: Yes, I think you do. But what I'd like to call attention to is the verses that we neglected to read that are in between verses 8 through 11. These instructions that Jesus gave to the 12 were specific to that mission, but what He makes absolutely clear is you will depend entirely upon the provision of God.

WS: Let's read those verses, Michael.

MC: *These were his instructions. Take nothing for the journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals, but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town, and if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave as a testimony against them.*

WL: Now what I hear, Michael, in these verses is that Jesus anticipates that God will provide hospitality for the twelve. He will care for them. At the same time, when they enter a town, and a home is open to them, they are not to bring dishonor upon that house when more comfortable quarters are offered by someone else. They are to enter into the house, they are to pronounce a blessing upon it ¹, they are to stay there until they leave that town.

MC: They aren't beggars going from house to house.

WL: No, not at all. But what I appreciate about the text is that it is entirely realistic. It is realistic in the recognition there will be places where they are not welcomed, where men and women and young people will not listen to them. And in that case, they are to shake the dust off their feet when they leave as a testimony against them.

This is an interesting account of what I call "prophetic realism". It actually corresponded to an action that Jewish people engaged in when they left the Holy Land to visit perhaps in Babylon or in Asia or some other place and then would return to the borders of Israel. They would carefully remove from their feet any dust that had clung to the skin, any dust that had clung to their garments as a witness they didn't want the pollution of those lands that did not know the Lord God clinging to them.

¹ As this is done by Jesus' *shaliachim*, this is Jesus' blessing on the house. It is just as if Jesus came and blessed the house personally.

Now from that actual activity of cleansing themselves or removing the dust of pagan lands from their feet and from their garments there came an important symbolic action.

If I were to stand before you, Wayne, and shake out my garments against you, you would know that I was saying, you are no better than a pagan.

WS: In the culture I would get the message.

WL: Absolutely.

WS: Boy, that's fascinating.

WL: It was a very powerful action. It was a powerful statement.

WS: And that's what it means here as a testimony against them.

WL: Absolutely. In other words, as a severe warning, be careful, you are resisting the very purposes of God. But what I appreciate about the account is, Jesus says, God will provide for you, but don't forget you will also encounter opposition even as I have encountered opposition. There are no red carpet treatments that are guaranteed.

WS: Bill, how do we apply this? We're to be living constantly in this cycle. How do we apply what you're teaching us here today?

WL: I think when we should anticipate that after we have been with Jesus in a variety of situations, it is going to be our privilege to represent Him. But we are not to simply speak out of our wisdom. We are not to share our experience apart from the experience that we have found in the presence of the Lord. We are to do His work. We are to speak His Word. That's what the world desperately needs.

WS: Mike, last week you talked about the fact that sometimes you get stuck in a particular phase of the cycle. Is this a difficult phase for you?

MC: I think it is. I think it's difficult from the standpoint of discerning when is Jesus sending you out? When does that commission come? And I think that's when it's important to have the brothers who can help you discern, you know, is it time for me to go? Is it time for me to go out and do His work and share His Word?

WL: And that's a good word, Michael, about sharing with the brothers, because that's what this sending out two by two is all about. It's not that you simply say, I feel the call of God upon my life for music, and I'm going to give myself to that, irregardless of what the community has to say. But there ought to be at least one other, there ought to be others who are confirming, yes, the call of God is upon your life for a ministry of music, and you are to speak Jesus' word, you are to do Jesus' work.

WS: So as we think about this call, first of all to be with Jesus, and then the call to go, perhaps at least to me the most fundamental thing is that we don't do that in our power. The call means that we go in His strength.

WL: And that's precisely right, Wayne. Jesus initiates the call to be with Him, and if that has not occurred, we are ill-equipped to speak His word and do His work. But Jesus also initiates the call to speak His word, to do His work. To go where He is going, and there we are to be His representative. And I think that that gives such a dignity to those engaged in the works of ministry. They can commend themselves as His *shaliach*, they can commend themselves as His authorized agent. They can speak on His authority, they can act on His authority, not on their own.

WS: It gives us confidence and courage.

MC: Well, He says in another place, you know, and I think this refers to the disciples when He refers to the least of these, talking about, you know, however you receive them, that's how you receive me. I mean, we do go with that authority as His representatives, so much so that if we're rejected, it's not us that are being rejected, it's Him. And that's an amazing place to walk.

WL: And that word rejoices the word "rejected" is an important one in the context, for you remember that the immediately preceding paragraph is about Jesus' experience of rejection. If they rejected Him, they may well reject you. But even as Jesus was graciously received by others, there will always be those who graciously receive those who come in His name.

THIRD CYCLE

WL: And it's precisely as bearers of the light, as those that had been authorized to speak Jesus' word and to do His work, that the Twelve came back and reported to Jesus what they had done and what they had said. We can, would you read that passage to us, Michael? Mark 6, 30 and 31.

MC: Sure. *The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.*

WL: It's here that the disciplined use of the imagination is invited by the text itself. Here we have the Twelve who have been sent out two by two as the authorized representatives of Jesus. It's interesting that in verse 30, they are clearly designated the apostles.

MC: Is that the first time?

WL: It's the second time in the text, because you remember in chapter 3 verse 14, He called 12 who were designated apostles. And we saw that the background to that term was the institution of the *shaliachim* in first century Judaism. There was the institution of the commissioned agent who was authorized to act on behalf of an individual in the purchase of land, in the carrying out of some banking transaction, in the actually carrying forward a number of enterprises.

MC: So it was part of that responsibility then to report back?

WL: Absolutely.

WS: And it goes beyond the concept of disciple to apostle?

WL: It really does, because the *shaliach* was the person whose word was as authoritative as the word of the one who commissioned him, precisely because the terms of the commission had been carefully defined. This is what you are to do. It's within these parameters you're to carry out your work. It's within these dimensions that you are to address the situation. And so, of course, it was the responsibility of the *shaliach*, of the apostle if you please, to come back and to tell the one who commissioned him, in this case Jesus, what they had done and what they had taught.

WS: And of course, last week in phase two we learned that they did go out, they preached. They preached that people should repent and they drove out demons. That was a part of what they did with the authority of Christ.

WL: Yes, and you can see that there had been an enormous response in verse 31. Many people were coming and going. That is, they were asking for the ministry, which the twelve were authorized to carry forward so that they themselves did not even have an opportunity to eat. We're reminded of that incident back in the home in Capernaum where Jesus had no time to eat, no time to rest, and His family thought He had lost His mind.

WS: There are other priorities at work here.

WL: And it's interesting that Jesus cares for those who have been commissioned to speak His word and do His work. For He says, *"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."* He was deeply concerned for their welfare.

WS: So this is the third phase in this cycle of discipleship.

WL: Yes, and Wayne, it's a phase that calls us into accountability. You see, none of us is a free agent who seeks to speak the word of the Lord and do the work of the Lord. We have been commissioned by Him, but we are accountable to Him. And it's at that point that I think Christian ministry and leadership and involvement in Christian work has frequently gone wrong.

WS: How so?

WL: Because we have failed to come into the presence of the Lord to say, *"Lord, this is what I've done. This is what I have said, and I did it for you."* Because it's in just such a situation that the Lord can say, *"Well done."* Or He can say, *"You did fine up to this point, but you didn't represent me well here. You need to represent me better in this particular way."*

MC: This whole issue of how difficult it is to accomplish that I think is reflected in this chapter, because even when they try to go aside to rest, they're pursued by the crowd, He ends up feeding the 5,000. I mean, I can relate even to the difficulty of that. You try to get away to a quiet place, and then someone says, Well, here, Bill, here's a good idea for a book for you to write. Or, I have a friend who needs counseling.

WS: How can you say no to that?

MC: Yeah, how does that work?

WL: And what you're putting your finger on, Michael, is that we can become so caught up in doing the work of the Lord that our relationship with the Lord itself is undermined.

WS: So we're not talking just about those in Christian leadership here, Bill. This is for all of us.

WL: It is for all of us. And the bottom line is relationship. It's not the ability to speak. It's not the ability to act with power. It is the relationship that we sustain with the Lord. And when Jesus says to me, Come with me by yourself, or He says to us as a community, Come to me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest, I hear the renewing of the cycle of discipleship. He's saying, in essence, come and be with me once again.

MC: So it's not simply R&R, it's let's renew our relationship, come and get to know me again, let's begin this relationship, take it to a deeper place.

WL: Well precisely, though because I think we can easily come to the conclusion we know what ministry is all about, we know what sharing our testimony or our giving our witness is all about, we know what doing the work of the Lord entails. The truth of the matter is, there are a variety of situations to which we've been exposed, but there are others about which we know very little. And the Lord is eager to enrich us, and so He wants us to spend time with Him.

WS: That's very meaningful, Bill, because, Michael, you know with your unique lifestyle that you can go on, doing what you do without this rest that the Lord provides, and yet you grow more weary as you do it, and it loses its power, really.

MC: Well, I had an opportunity when I was walking with Bill intensively to see someone who was teaching actively, going all over the world, discipling and writing commentaries constantly. And Bill is the person who would say, well, let's take a walk two times around campus once a week, or let's get away by ourselves. I mean, he really lived this out for me, and that was helpful. And it's only as I got away from that that I began to struggle. I didn't have anyone in my life to show me how to rest, show me what it meant to get away, to be alone with Jesus.²

WS: Bill, is it significant that Jesus talks about coming to a quiet place? You know how difficult it is to find quiet places in our culture.

WL: Well, that's true, but I remember what it meant to labor with my wife in Amsterdam. Where the evil that I had known in our culture, which was basically beneath the surface, relatively polite, covert, was suddenly blatant. And one of the important insights that came to us was sometimes, especially those of us who labor within the midst of the city, have to withdraw from the city in order to be refreshed to go back into the city and to labor in the midst of whatever is our circumstance. I know how important it is to have a period of time where you can focus undistractedly upon the Lord.

And I also know what it is to commit the sin of idolatry, where I made the work of the Lord more important than my relationship with the Lord. And I think it's helpful to think of the face of a clock.

Think in terms of the hour hand. At 12 o'clock we hear the voice of Jesus calling us to be with Him. And as the hour hand gradually moves around toward 6, perhaps at 2 o'clock, the call to be with Him in conflict. At 3 o'clock, the call to be with Him in a time of teaching. At 4 and 5, the call to be with Him in the experience of the demonic disease and death. At 6, the call to be with Him in the experience of rejection. At 6 o'clock, the hour hand begins to move toward the point where we hear Him say, now speak my word and do my work. And then as the hour hand continues to move back toward the 12, we come to that point perhaps at five minutes to 12, where we come into His presence and we say, this is what I've done and this is what I've said. And then we hear,

2 We learn by example. As you follow the cycle of discipleship, and especially this last phrase, you can become an example to others.

now come and be with me yet more. So long as that cycle is unbroken, we are energized in our lives as Christians and the witness we seek to share.

But when the cycle is broken, when we become stuck at some point within the cycle, burnout occurs. And burnout is the experience where we've begun operating within our own perspectives, within our own strength, within our own limited resources, and we forget that we are instruments of His Word, of His power, and we become useless and must be replaced.

WS: Even if we get stuck at that point where we're with Jesus, I mean, Michael, you can become so pious about it. It never moves into action, never moves into claiming territory.

MC: Yeah, there are people who are forever preparing for ministry, another degree or, you know, that sort of thing.

WL: And that puts your finger, Michael, on an important point. Where do you find yourself in the cycle of discipleship right at this moment? Is it for you a time in which you are with Jesus in a variety of experiences? Wonderful. The only question I have for you is how long have you been there? Is it time, perhaps, that you heard Him say, now speak my word and do my work?

And this isn't a call that comes simply to leadership or to those in the music ministry, or into some other phase of outreach and mission. It is a call that comes to every one of us.

Or it may well be that you are in leadership, engaged in ministry. You are out there speaking Jesus' word. You are out there doing Jesus' work. Great! But the question I have is how long have you been there?

When was the last time that you came into Jesus' presence and told Him all that you had done and all that you have said, and heard Him say, "Now come and rest and be with me yet again?" That's imperative if we are going to be renewed in our desire to be the disciples who are capable of making the presence of Jesus believable and beautiful in our generation.

WS: Bill, the popular term today is burnout. Is this what you're talking about here, a spiritual burnout?

WL: Yes, it's interesting, Wayne, that as a boy, I never knew that expression. I never heard it. And yet every one of us knows that expression well. It describes the person who once was in the forefront of ministry, in the forefront of leadership, in the forefront of various forms of expressing Christian witness.

WS: Even in their family.

WL: Yes, who have then dropped out simply because they have become exhausted to the core. How are we going to prevent that? It's going to be to recognize this cycle of discipleship that needs to be continually renewed.

MC: It strikes me that this pattern can be applied on different levels. It can be applied in the course of a day, where you get up in the morning, you are with Jesus. He helps you prepare for the day, the day has been in ministry, and then at the close of the day you report back to Jesus, He says, come and rest. But this could be applied over a lifetime, over the period of studying, preparing perhaps to get a degree, that period of being with Jesus. Then the period of a life's ministry, and then at the end of a lifetime Jesus saying, come with me and rest. I mean, it's a big cycle. I mean, the truth of it encompasses, can encompass a whole lifetime. But of course primarily and most functionally the way we're applying it here is in a cyclical way in our lives over the course of ministry.

WL: It is so easy to presume that we will always be able to speak Jesus' word, we'll always be able to do His work, and that simply is not the case.

WS: We feel superhuman, or we attempt to be superhuman when we're not.

MC: Well in time it really becomes our word and our work and no longer His. So we need to turn it back over.

WL: And we wonder why there is a staleness to what we say and to what we do and why there is no power in the actions in which we engage.

WS: Bill, in the closing moments here of this final discussion of the cycle of discipleship and the three phases we've talked about, would you once again look our listeners, all of us in the eye, and just ask us to be open to

the Lord's leading right now. Where are we in that process, and how can we get started again? Where do we start, regardless of where we find ourselves?

WL: I think perhaps a word that might be helpful is concentric. A Christian's life is concentric, that is, Christ is at the center. And our lives revolve around the call of Jesus upon our lives, whether it be to be with Him, to be commissioned to speak His word and do His work, or to come into His presence and to report all that we have done and hear the call to be with Him again.

The eccentric person is the person who is cut off from the center. That's the person who experiences burnout.

If we will place Jesus at the very center of our lives, we will be more sensitive to His call and we will be responsive, precisely as we ought to be when He calls us to be with Him or commissioned to speak His word and do His work.

Transcription Outline

OUTLINE

1. The call of Jesus to be with Him in various situations. Mark 3:13-15.

○ Mark 3:20-35 - Jesus in conflict with own family and biblical scholars.

20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." 23 And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— 30 for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." 31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." 33 And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

○ Mark 4:1-34 - Jesus teaches by parables.

1 Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." 10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, 12 so that

"they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. 17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 20 But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." 21 And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? 22 For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. 25 For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." 26 And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. 27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. 28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." 30 And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. 34 He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

○ Mark 4:35-5:20 - Jesus engages with the demonic.

35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. 2 And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. 3 He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, 4 for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. 6 And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. 7 And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." 8 For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" 9 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." 10 And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. 11 Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, 12 and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." 13 So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

14 The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. 16 And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. 17 And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. 18 As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. 19 And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

○ **Mark 5:21-43 - Jesus brings disciples into confusion of disease and death.**

21 And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. 22 Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet 23 and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." 24 And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. 25 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, 26 and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. 28 For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." 29 And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32 And he looked around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. 34 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

35 While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. 38 They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. 41 Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." 42 And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. 43 And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

○ **Mark 6:1-6 - Jesus' personal rejection in His hometown.**

1 He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.

7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— 9 but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. 11 And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” 12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

2. **Commission to speak His word and do His work. Mark 6:7,12-13**

7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ... 12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

- Must come after first phase (i.e. being with Jesus).
- Jesus commissions His disciples. The *shaliach*. His authority.
- Jesus instructs His disciples... what they are authorized to do and not do.

3. **Return to Jesus to report all we have done and said. Rest and be with Jesus in new situations. Mark 6:30-31**

30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

- Tell Jesus what was done and what happened.
- Come apart and rest with Jesus. Know Him more.

The cycle must continually repeat itself. If you're stuck in one phase of the cycle, you get burned out.