

SLIDE 1. ANCHORED: A Study of What We Believe and Why

Teaching: **Article 10: Discipleship**

Sunday February 25, 2023

The fictional character, Luke Skywalker, was a humble Tatooine farm boy.

He needed to find a man named, Obi-Wan Kenobi.

When he did – he was pulled into an epic story of battling the evil Empire – along with his friends Princess Leia and Han Solo, of discovering the truth of his parentage, of becoming one of the greatest Jedi the galaxy has ever known, and so to ending the tyranny of the Sith.

But first – he needed to find a man named, Obi-Wan Kenobi.

He had no idea who he was. Some thought he might be looking for a guy named, Ben. Indeed, we would learn later that his alias was Ben Kenobi. Others referred to a legendary and strange and somewhat mythical figure who lived in a hut in the Jundland Wastes – on a bluff surrounded by the Western Dune Sea.

Luke did find Obi-Wan.

Luke got to KNOW Obi-Wan. And more.

He watched Obi-Wan. “These are not the droids you’re looking for.”

Luke learned about the ways of the Force from Obi-Wan – a way of living – so the story goes – that aligns itself with the energies of creation.

The way of the Jedi.

This way was innate in Luke from a young age, but he had to GROW more and more in his knowledge of the Force to become a Jedi Knight.

He had to GIVE himself to the practices and training of a Jedi – as an apprentice – as someone who would take on the teachings of his mentor.

He trained physically. He went to the planet Dagobah for some intense cross-training.

He trained mentally. He moved rocks and R2D2 and his X-Wing fighter using the force.

He trained emotionally. He had to face his greatest fear.

And then – of course – he had to GO. He had to save his friends.

This is the way of an apprentice: to find one worth following – to KNOW them – to GROW in your knowledge of them – to GIVE yourself to their way – and to GO and be like them.

This is also the way of a disciple.

APPETIZER

SLIDE 2. How does being a disciple of Jesus Christ compare to Luke Skywalker being an apprentice of Obi-Wan Kenobi?

MAIN COURSE

We have talked about a way of being a disciple (or an apprentice) of Jesus Christ here @ SLC – what we have referred to as our discipleship pathway.

SLIDE 3. KNOW. GROW. GIVE. GO.

To KNOW Jesus Christ – who he is and what he has done for us.

To GROW in our understanding of him through the practice of spiritual disciplines.

To GIVE of our time and talent and treasure in service of Jesus Christ and his Church.

To GO and make disciples of Jesus Christ by loving our neighbors through deed and word.

KNOW

We needed to find Jesus. The good news is this...

That whoever seeks God – which is the same thing as looking for Jesus – will find him!

SLIDE 4. The bible says: ***You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart (Jer. 29:13).***

But this requires a heart that is open to finding him – and a faith that believes he exists.

SLIDE 5. The bible says: ***And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe He exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Heb. 11:6).***

The bible pattern is this: that we seek God, and he adds faith as a gift.

SLIDE 6. The bible says: ***It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God... (Eph. 2:8).***

This is how we come to KNOW God.

By his grace.

SLIDE 7. The bible says: ***Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Ro. 10:13).***

Then – as disciples (or as apprentices) of Jesus – we desire, and we aim to GROW in our relationship with him – as we would anyone who has so loved us.

SLIDE 8. KNOW. GROW. GIVE. GO.

GROW

SLIDE 9. And so – how do we do this?

Through the practice of spiritual disciplines: both on our own and as a community of faith.

On our own – we can practice prayer and solitude, we can fast, we can read and study the bible, we can meditate on God's word, we can sabbath.

Together – we can confess our sins to one another, we can practice accountability and encouragement, we can have fellowship with other believers, we can celebrate and worship together, and we can be baptized and practice the Lord's Supper (as we talked about these 2 practices over the last 2 Sundays).

This list is not exhaustive. These are simply examples of ancient forms – age-old practices of our Christian faith.

I would like to say this though – that – in my practice – I have found it crucial for my discipleship to have a small cluster of intentional Christ-following friends in my life or - a Christ-centered small group for me to GROW deeper in my relationship with Jesus.

I am fortunate to have a small cluster of friends in my life who challenge and support me in my faith. You've met one – Cory Buettner. And you might know a second one – Stan Bahnman – he is the brother of our beloved volunteer custodian, Rod Bahnman.

I also reach out to (and they reach out to me) a trilogy of other pastors who have become friends: Grant Miller @ Cedar Valley Church in Mission, Jon Reesor @ NLCC Aldergrove, and Peter Vincent @ Madison Community Church, Everton, WA.

These are men who want to GROW in their relationship with Jesus, who listen to my fears and longings, who are attentive to the Spirit of God within them, who speak truth into my life with gentleness, who pray with me and over me, and who – as it turns out – have eaten a fair amount of pizza with me :)

I looked for these kinds of men. And they found me.

I have also found that a place to find these kinds of people and to practice these kinds of deep and honest and vulnerable spiritual rhythms – is in a small group.

Currently – we have 5 small groups @ SLC: 1 led in White Rock by James and Ingrid Baerg on Wednesday nights, 1 led in Aldergrove by Ken and Shirley Loewen on Wednesday nights, and 3 in central Langley – 1 led by Larry and Carolyn Kwiatkowski on Wednesday nights, 1 led by Peter and Ruth Klassen here at the church every-other Friday morning, and 1 led by me on Wednesday nights here at the church.

All of which are listed – except the short-term small group I'm leading – on our website! All of us exploring ALPHA during this season.

I have spent some time in each of these groups – but for the Loewen group – which is restarting this season – and have been reminded of the richness of meeting with people in small groups and making spiritual friends.

All of which is my way of inviting you to join a small group @ SLC if you aren't in one already. Just give me a shout!

Small groups are the people-space where we get to know people and get to be known.

We'll talk more about this at our TOWN HALL meeting – after the service - and over lunch!

SLIDE 10. KNOW. GROW. GIVE. GO.

GIVE

SLIDE 11. Disciples (or apprentices) of Jesus are marked by a life of service – serving Christ and his Church – and meeting the needs of others.

We believe that every follower of Jesus has been given spiritual gifts to be exercised in service of the church – as stewards of them - and that doing so is fundamental to maturing in our relationship with Christ.

Why?

Because this is what we do with gifts that loved ones give us – we use them - to honor them.

This is intuitive – but it is also the point of the parable of the talents in Mt. 25:14-30.

Because the body of Christ – the church – can't function without the members of the body contributing to the whole.

This too is intuitive – but it is also the point of what Paul says in 1 Cor. 12, 13, and 14.

Because in using the gifts we are given - we participate in a knowledge of God by shared experience.

Let me say it this way: If I have a friend who loves to snowboard – then I will get to know him better by snowboarding. I will get to know what it feels like to buckle into a board, what it feels like to glide on the snow, what it feels like to wipe out!

I would know these things – not because I watched them on a video – but because I would have experienced them.

I think this might be what ALPHA – session 1 – might be getting at when it talks about the difference between "head knowledge" of God and "heart knowledge" of God.

When we use our spiritual gifts in service of the church – we get to know God better by virtue of doing things like him with the gifts he has given us to do things like him.

To help you in this - you will find a listing or SPIRITUAL GIFTS (and what they mean) on our website – under the tabs - NEXT STEPS – and then VOLUNTEER SIGN UP.

And – of course – to GIVE - also includes the stewardship of our financial resources. To work. To pay our bills. To set some aside.

And to give to the church – which some call “tithing.”

The short version of which is this: that we would give joyously, proportionately, and sacrificially – to demonstrate our faith in God’s provision and to support the work of the church to help people know and follow Jesus.

SLIDE 12. KNOW. GROW. GIVE. GO.

GO

SLIDE 13. Disciples of Jesus GO about their days sharing their faith in Jesus – by deed and word.

Please notice that sequence of phrase – by deed and word.

I am fairly convinced that we (the church) have mostly lost our voice in secular spaces. And so – I believe we need to earn that right to speak by first loving others well. By deed – then word.

By treating others with different opinions with respect. By caring for others like precious image-bearers of God. By speaking kindly, not talking trash. By speaking the truth in love – but double-checking that you are *leading* with love – not judgement. By being honest in all business transactions.

By feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, giving clothes to those who need them, and visiting the sick and the imprisoned (Mt. 25:37-40).

By taking care of widows and orphans (Jas. 1:27)

By being in this world but not of it. Which is to say this - that disciples of Jesus separate themselves from evil practices – they keep themselves from being polluted by the world (Jas. 1:27) - but never from the practical need to love people who are victimized by the evil one and the world.

Jesus sure didn’t. He was frequently in the “wrong” places with the “wrong” people – according to the religious legalists of his day – but he never condoned a sinner’s sin – he called them to turn to God and a with-God life.

Jesus prayed – not that the Father would take his disciples out of the world – but to protect them from the evil one (Jn. 17:15).

Disciples love their neighbors. And sometimes – when we’ve earned the right – and when we’ve listened well - that means saying something.

SLIDE 14. Paul laments: *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have never heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Ro. 10:13-14).*

This may look like sharing the gospel in a nutshell: God loves you. Sin separates you from His love. Jesus died to forgive your sin – to restore you in relationship with God. You are bought at a price. Your life is not your own. It is in the hands of the one who made you and loves you. Give yourself to his leading – in this life on into the next.

This may look like sharing the gospel as the story in your life – of how God gave you peace through an anxious time – or of how God healed you – or of how God gave you wisdom for a difficult decision – or of how God opened and shut doors as you moved with him by faith – or of how you were given the right word to say at the right time – or of how God helped to keep you from saying the wrong thing at the wrong time...

This may look like sharing a song or a verse with someone when they are ready. It may look like lending a book that's helped you make some sense of the world to someone who's searching. It may look like introducing them to a friend who shares a similar interest or problem so that they might help.

The gospel has legs. And because Jesus called his disciples to a community of followers – not just to follow him – the gospel has many legs.

The gospel is embodied and communicated by the church.

What does that look like? Well – for us @ SLC – it looks like this...

It looks like reaching out to our community through Sonshine St. Preschool and Daycare. Lord willing – we will add *before* and *after* school care – if/when **Friends @ 5 Corners** opens here this Spring or Fall.

It looks like Community Connections – like the Fall Fun Fair in September, like the Family Movie Night in October, like the Family Games Night in November, like the Christmas Eve service in December, like Hockey Day in Canada in January – and like the Cornhole Tournament we are hosting on Feb. 24!

It looks like offering 2 different day camps to our community over the Spring Break. It looks like Sports Ministries. It looks like Rentals Ministry. It looks like demographic ministries: Youth, YA, Men's, Women's, Senior's.

It looks like all of us working together (like a body!) to create and to establish connections in our community, and to plant the seed of the gospel in helpful and sensitive and thoughtful ways – by deed and word.

It looks like being a disciple (or an apprentice) of Jesus!

SLIDE 15. Leader: Jesus calls us to walk with Him, to follow Him.

SLIDE 16. Congregation: Through the power of Your Spirit, we will take up our cross, we will live ready to suffer, to surrender our rights, even to die, for the cause of Christ our King.

SLIDE 17. Leader: Jesus calls us to walk with each other. Do not neglect to meet together but encourage each other to love and good works.

SLIDE 18. Congregation: God, You have given us each other, that together we might discover Your holy and perfect will. We ask for wisdom in time of uncertainty, for courage in time of difficulty, for humility in time of defeat.

SLIDE 19. Congregation: We commit ourselves to a life of discipline, ready to receive correction and offer encouragement as the Lord directs, so that we might be built up into a holy and beautiful temple, pleasing to God in every way.

SLIDE 20. Leader: As followers of Christ, we are also "friends of God," and enemies of the darkness that rules this present age. Rescue us from its seductive power, empower us to live boldly as citizens of the Age to Come.

SLIDE 21. Congregation: We reject the world's use of power to oppress and impress. Fill us with your love and humility; make us peacemakers, who know the power of sacrifice.

SLIDE 22. Congregation: We reject the world's desire to hoard and squander wealth. Fill us with your generosity; make us poor in spirit, who know the wealth of simplicity.

SLIDE 23. Congregation: We reject the world's lust for pleasure and lack of self-control. Fill us with your purity; make us to hunger and thirst after righteousness, as those who know the pleasure of feasting on God's will.

SLIDE 24. Leader: May we grown to be like Christ. Thinking His thoughts, speaking His words, embodying His passion to serve and to save the lost.

SLIDE 25. Congregation: As Christ called us, we want to joyfully call others to walk with us, and together follow Him in this new life.