

# Robust Discipleship

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word. As you know, we're taking a break from our series in the book of Judges for several weeks for our Grit and Grace Generosity Initiative. And when you hear those words, generosity initiative, of course you think, well, this is going to be about money. We are, as a church, as I've said many times, we are about a mission, not about money. We just happen to need money to fuel that mission.

And so what we've been talking about is our mission together as a church. You'll see that mission summarized in the back of your worship guide. And so we've been going through and talking about the different elements of our mission. We began by talking from Matthew chapter 5, that the church is a city set upon a hill. It's the light of the world. And then we looked in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and we talked about the fact that we're a gospel hub. We're constantly receiving and sending. We looked at 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We talked about the fact that we are a thick community. When one rejoices, all rejoice. When one suffers, all suffer. And we're continuing doing that very thing this morning. We're going to be talking about robust discipleship. That word, discipleship, gets at this question of what is the mission of the church? What is our task? And more narrow within that, what is our task when it comes to discipleship? And discipleship simply comes from the word disciple, which means a student. So what we're asking, what we're looking at is what does it mean? How do we develop good students of Jesus Christ? How is the church supposed to help us as we learn to follow after Jesus and become more and more like him? As we do that, we're going to be looking at two different passages. You'll see this on page 7 of your worship guide, Matthew chapter 28 and Acts chapter 20. And so I often say, hey, you can turn on your phone, you can turn in your Bible, you can turn on your worship guide, and all of those will work this morning. Your worship guide will work especially well, since we'll be jumping between two passages. So I invite you now to look with me at Matthew chapter 28. And we remember as we come to this, that this is God's word. God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb, which is why we read now Matthew chapter 28, starting at verse 18.

And Jesus came to them and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. And then Acts chapter 20, starting at verse 24. But I do not account my life of any value, nor is precious to myself. If only I may finish my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

[ 3 : 2 8 ] And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we come and thank you again that you haven't left us alone to figure things out by ourselves, but instead you've given us your word and you haven't given us a little bit of it. You've given us a lot of it. You've given us your whole counsel, everything we need to know to walk after you in this life. We ask that you would remind us of that this morning, of your grace in sustaining and directing us, and that you would convict us and move us to follow you more and more. And we ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you are a student of military history, which I know a few of you are, the date July 2nd, 1863, will stand out to you as an especially important date for the history of military and also the history of our nation. You may recognize that as the middle day of three days of the Battle of Gettysburg during our civil war here in the United States. And that was a decisive battle that ultimately led to the victory of the Union and the defeat of the Confederacy. Not only was it a decisive battle, but there was an important moment in that battle that proved to be decisive. And it was when, if you know, Joshua Chamberlain mounted at a fence of a hill, the hill of Little Round Top, and his job was to guard the left flank of the Union. He did this with the 20th Maine Infantry, and his brigade commander gave him one job.

He said, your job and your only job is to hold the left flank. In fact, he said this, you must hold the ground at all hazards. In other words, no matter what happens, no matter what casualties you suffer, the left flank of the Union cannot fall. And so Chamberlain sustains six attacks from the Confederates.

He realizes after the sixth attack, they do not have the bullets left to sustain another one. And so he decides they are going to do what they have to do, right? At all cost, at all hazard is what he's been told. And so he tells his soldiers to fix their bayonets. And at the seventh attack, they are going to go on the offensive and charge towards the Confederates. Of course, this has been immortalized in movie history. You know what happens? He leads his men himself, and he routes the Confederates and sends them scrambling. It is his faithfulness there in that moment that wins that battle, that battle that sends the Confederates packing back to the South and ultimately leads to the victory of the Union. And then in 1893, 30 years later, Chamberlain receives the Medal of Honor.

I tell you this story because it highlights an extremely important element of military doctrine, which is the commander's intent. The commander's intent is when the man who is in charge lays out not the strategy, not the tactics. No, he says this is what the ultimate result must be. This is the end state. You figure out as things change on the ground, as situations develop, you may have to adapt your strategy and your tactics. You may have to change your approach. No matter what you do, the end state remains the same. Chamberlain knew no matter what, he must hold the ground at all hazards. [ 7 : 49 ] And so he did it, right? He adapted. He tried first with bullets for six attacks. He ran out of those. He had to adapt. He changed to bayonet. The brilliance of the commander's intent is it does not describe the road. It only describes the destination. And so it's up to those on the ground, right, to figure out what are we going to do in the moment to achieve the end state.

One man says this, describing the commander's intent. The commander's intent is another way of describing the clear purpose and desired end state of a mission. This statement is usually brief and exceedingly clear. Some have compared Jesus' words in Matthew 28 that we just read as his commander's intent for the church. Notice that Jesus here does not lay out any sort of strategy or tactics. He does not tell the disciples how exactly they are going to accomplish this mission. No, instead he just describes the end state. What is the end state? These folks are going to be baptized and they are going to observe everything that I have commanded you. In fact, it fits the description that I just gave you of an end state. It is brief and exceedingly clear. In other words, Jesus has not left us to wonder about the commander's intent. Jesus has not left us to question what it is we're supposed to be doing as a church. No, he has outlined the end state as clearly as he could. What is the church to do at all costs? Well, we're told here. First, the church, this is Matthew chapter 28 verse 19, the church is to go. And what is the church supposed to do when it goes? Well, it breaks into two broad categories.

The church is meant to do evangelism and discipleship. The church is meant to reach those who do not know Christ, to bring them to a saving faith, and then it is meant to develop those people, to teach them and train them and disciple them, that they would know, verse 20, all that I have commanded them.

And so I asked you earlier, what is our mission? What is it we're supposed to do when it comes to discipleship as a church, when it comes to raising up followers of Jesus Christ? Well, it's spelled out for us here. We are not left to wonder. Verse 19 and 20, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say teaching them all the things that you happen to be interested in right now. It doesn't say teaching them only the things that are nice and happy and encouraging. It doesn't say teaching them only the things that are especially controversial and offensive. It doesn't say teach them here and there as you feel like it. No, the

commander's intent is explicit and broad. Everything I have commanded you. Now, we could try to make that narrow if we want. We could say, okay, we're going to be red-letter Christians. This Jesus clearly just means the words that have come out of his mouth. And yet we read Acts chapter 20. The apostle Paul helps clarify that for us. Of course, Jesus taught many things. Among the things he taught was a great respect for the Old Testament. And we hear Paul's words here in Acts chapter 20. He says this. What did he teach?

Verse 27, I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. What is the church meant to teach? All 66 books of the Bible. How does the church instruct its people?

[12:01] In everything God has given us in his word. Which topics do we cover? All of them. Which passages do we teach? Every single one. Which parts of the Bible do we avoid? None.

In April of 2015, the New York Times ran an obituary for a man named John E. Walsh. And of course, to get your obituary in the New York Times, you have to have done something quite important, right? The rest of the world needs to know about your passing. Most of us, probably none of us, will have that privilege of being featured in a major newspaper when we die. And so what was it that John E. Walsh had accomplished? What was his claim to fame? Well, Walsh was famous because he had produced his own abridged Reader's Digest version of the Bible. He went through and decided what was important and what was unimportant. He ended up cutting the Bible by a full 40%. His obituary said this, he cut the Old Testament by 50% and the New Testament by 25%. None of Jesus' words were changed, but about 10% were deleted. Mr. Walsh says he was initially appalled by the notion of tinkering with scripture where the book of Revelation warned against changing the words of the book of this prophecy. But Mr. Metzger, that's someone who was helping him, concluded that the warning really amounted to an ancient copyright notice. And so he decided 40% of the Bible was unnecessary. 10% of

Jesus' words could be done away with. Of course, there's a bigger issue than simply cutting words and abridging, right? It is the issue of, well, what about those, that 10% of what Jesus had to say? It doesn't fit into Matthew 28, verse 20, all that I commanded you. Jesus doesn't say, teach them 90%. If you cover 80% of the textbook, you can get credit for the course. No, Jesus says, teach them all that I commanded you. Why? Why is the reader's digest version of scripture not enough? Why are 90%?

Why is 90% of Jesus' words not going to get us where we need to go? Why does he tell us everything I've commanded you? Well, Paul again helps us understand this. Acts chapter 20, verse 26. He says, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all. Why is he innocent of everyone's blood? Verse 27, because I taught you the whole counsel. Paul's getting at a basic principle of life here, that there are some things that certain people are obligated to share. And if we do not share those things, we can be legitimately accused of negligence. So imagine for a second that I'm in the middle of preaching and a deacon comes up to me and whispers in my ear that, you know, the back of our church building is on fire right now. And I say, thank you for sharing that with me. That is an interesting piece of information. And then I keep preaching. What might you say? Matthew had blood on his hands.

[15:49] Right? There was something he was supposed to share. There was information he was obligated to distribute and he didn't. What do we say when someone in government does something negligent and people are hurt? We say they have blood on their hands. Paul is saying here, I must share with you.

Not some of what God's word says. No, I must share all of it. That's how critical and important it is. Part of the reason I'm passionate about this, not just because it's in the Bible, but also because growing up as I lived in the church, there were plenty of things that we did not talk about.

I heard about tithing and giving to the church only at home. I heard about the Christian sexual ethic almost exclusively at home. And sometimes I wonder where I would be in this life if I had only learned about God's word in church. Because I don't think I received the whole counsel of God. In other words, we need God's advice and counsel and commands. We need his wisdom for every element of our lives. We need it for our financial lives. We need it for our relational lives. We need it as we think about how to plan and execute the tasks that God has given us. We need it when we think about being children and being parents. We need it as we think about families and careers and vocations.

We need it as we address the challenges of our mental health. These things, Paul is saying, are a matter of life and death. And it is the job of God's leaders of the church to lay out not some of what

God has taught us, to lay out all of what God has given us in his word.

[ 17 : 48 ] We are not simply or just or merely speaking about matters of salvation. We are not just talking about heaven and hell. Paul doesn't say, I taught you about salvation, therefore there's no blood on my hands.

No, Paul says, I taught you everything. I laid out God's will for every element of your life. I taught what was comforting and I taught what was challenging. I taught what was easy and I taught what was hard. I taught you what you already knew and I taught you what you didn't know. As you walk in life, you can never come back to me, Paul, and say, I made this mistake because you never told me. No, he said, I taught you everything.

I laid out God's word from beginning to end. Why does Jesus present this as the commander's intent? Because the scriptures are the way to life.

Not just part of them, all of them. We don't need its guidance in one area, but not another area. We need it for everything. That's why I remind you guys over and over of what we're hearing in the Psalms, that the Bible is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We need it in every single way. And so that explains some of our tactics here at Cheyenne Mountaineer. Remember I said the commander's intent does not lay out the path. It just outlines the destination. And so it's left to each church to figure out how are we going to accomplish what our commander has given us. There's a variety of things we do. There's a reason that we alternate in the books we preach between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Remember, we were in the gospel of Mark before. Now we're in Judges. Why?

[ 20 : 03 ] We weren't going to do another New Testament book until we'd return to the Old Testament. Because we want to teach the whole counsel of God. Why is it that when we pick a book, we don't skip chapters? We preach it from beginning to end, no matter how boring or exciting it might be.

Because it would be tempting for us in our human hearts to say, well, these are the portions that really matter and these are the ones we can take away. Hey, there's actually that chapter that's weird and disturbing, and it would be much simpler for us to skip it. No, we discipline ourselves. We say, whether we want to teach this or not, we are going to do every portion of the book.

So that we can have what is easy and what is hard, what is challenging and what is comforting. We can have things our culture might agree with us on and things our culture strongly disagrees with. We hold ourselves accountable to learn everything God has for us in his word. Why do we outline our adult Sunday school in the way that we do?

Why do we outline our children's Sunday school in the way that we do? Our children's Sunday school is set up to go from the beginning of the Bible to the end. If you are in our program from beginning to end, you will receive the whole counsel of God.

[ 21 : 26 ] What do we do with our adult Sunday school? We're trying to set it up so that we're consistent in covering different types of issues and topics, different portions of scriptures so that we have the whole counsel of God.

Why is our worship guide set up in the way that it is so that we would know not just what we do, but why we do it? And so that's why we say as a church, we are about robust discipleship.

We don't want to teach a few things. We want to teach all things. We want to be able to say what Paul said here, Innocent of the blood of all, for I declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Our vision as a church is that our members would be equipped for all of life. Our vision is that as our members go to other parts of the country and the world, they will have received teaching from not just the Old Testament, but the New Testament.

They will not just be taught in one area of life, but in another. We will not ignore what's going on in the world around us, but we will talk about the things that are controversial and hard.

[ 22 : 47 ] We want to be faithful in executing the commander's intent. We want to use whatever strategy we have to at the moment to reach the end state that Jesus has outlined for us.

We want at the end of the age to hear Jesus' words, Well done, good and faithful servant. And so that's why our vision includes not just joyful worship, not just gospel hub, not just thick community, but robust discipleship.

That has been and is and will be a priority of our church. You'll notice in the back of your worship guide, we have our image that goes along with robust discipleship, and it's the image of the grapes.

On page 13, it says this, Under the grape image, discipleship begins by being connected together to the vine. This is an allusion to Jesus' words in John chapter 15, where he says, Abide in me, and I will abide in you.

What does Jesus go on to say? He goes on to say, Apart from me, you can do nothing. And so our goal as a church is not that we would simply be an educational center.

[ 24 : 16 ] It's not that we would be great in putting out information that you are downloading. No, our goal is that we would be connected to Jesus by his word.

And that as we're connected, we would grow more and more. As we're connected, we would see all of God's purposes for all of our life.

And as we grow, of course, growing in the vine, we're talking about growing to maturity in Christ. We are also growing as a church numerically.

As I've said, I think every Sunday now, there are many things that we disagree about in this church. One thing we don't disagree about is that this community is getting larger and larger. As this community grows, it is more and more challenging for us to achieve robust discipleship with the resources that we have.

And so this is another reason that we are moving forward in mission together with the goal of bringing on a second full-time pastor. We want someone who's going to come and help us continue to achieve the commander's intent.

[ 25 : 29 ] I've told you all before, there's going to be basically two elements to this individual's job. We want someone who's going to help us lead us in outreach and evangelism. We also want someone who's going to lead us in discipleship, that we're going to go deeper together as a community.

Much of that's going to happen in our small groups. That's why we've talked about having five to seven new small groups by 2026. We also want to have a more detailed and intentional discipleship plan.

We want to have a map that says, okay, when someone comes to Cheyenne Mountain, what are all the ways that we're developing and discipling them over two to four years? Are they receiving the whole counsel of God?

What are the strategies and tactics that we need to adopt to get there? And so that's why, again, we're inviting you all and challenging you to join us on this journey as we aim to raise \$800,000. The goal of that \$800,000 is to pay down our mortgage payment and free up, pay down our mortgage balance and free up the \$8,000, nearly \$8,000 a month we pay towards our mortgage right now.

[ 26 : 32 ] We want to take that money, we want to release it and free it towards ministry. We want it to be part of us being a faithful embassy here in Southwest Colorado Springs.

And doing this takes a lot of work. Colossians chapter 1 is another passage that talks about robust discipleship. And Paul says this as he talks about his eagerness to present this church as mature in Christ.

He says, verse 29, For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. In other words, Paul is saying discipleship takes a lot of work.

It is not simple or easy to teach the whole counsel of God. Acts chapter 20, Paul, in this speech to the Ephesian elders, as he leaves the church in Ephesus, says, You all know how basically I worked night and day.

I was there with you all the time, laboring to make sure God's word was known. And that's what we want. We want to bring on a second pastor who will continue to help us labor to make sure the entire word of God is known.

[ 27 : 43 ] I mentioned this during the announcements. For those of you who are not here, we have 23 households who have made an early commitment to our Grid and Grace campaign.

Those 23 households have pledged \$314,600. That is about 40% of our goal. Of those 23 households, two of those households are our alumni.

They are not currently connected to our church, which means only 21 households in our church have made a commitment. We have over 100 households. And so we're asking the remainder, about 80 more households, to come and help us close that gap, to close the gap of the remaining 60%.

And that's what we're going to do next Sunday. All our elders and our deacons are committed to this project. We're asking that you all would join us so that we can continue our mission. Remember, we're not about money. We're about a mission. We need money to fuel that mission. And our mission is to achieve the commander's intent.

[ 28 : 54 ] Writing about Chamberlain, one individual says this, While Chamberlain gets the lion's share of credit for holding Little Round Top, he was merely executing his brigade commander's intent.

If Chamberlain knew literally nothing else about what he was supposed to do or how he was to do it, he knew that he had to hold the position. Brothers and sisters, we are merely here to execute the commander's intent.

We are here to hold the position. And so let's be faithful together in doing just that. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you for the gift of your word. And we ask that we would continue to be faithful in declaring everything that you have for us in learning and growing, and that we would do it as we are connected to our Lord Jesus, because we know apart from him we can do nothing.

And so we ask that his power would be at work in this congregation and in our hearts, that you would grow us fully into maturity in Christ, that we would love you and serve you and obey you more and more.

[ 30 : 14 ] We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn.