



“Disciple Every Home”

Acts 9:10-19

Idea: A call to discipleship is a call to follow Jesus.

Intro: Alexander the Great was an ancient Macedonian ruler and one of history’s greatest military minds who, as King of Macedonia and Persia, established the largest empire the ancient world had ever seen. His vast empire stretched from Greece to Egypt, through Persia, and all the way into India. Being charismatic and ruthless, brilliant and power hungry, diplomatic and bloodthirsty, Alexander inspired such loyalty in his men they would follow him anywhere and, if necessary, die in the process.

This loyalty is wonderfully portrayed in one of the many legendary stories of his conquests. As legend has it, Alexander the Great and a small company of soldiers approached a strongly fortified walled city. Alexander, standing outside the walls, raised his voice and demanded to see the king. When the king arrived, Alexander insisted that the king surrender the city and its inhabitants to him and his small band of fighting men. The king laughed saying, “Why should I surrender to you? You can’t do us any harm!”

Alexander offered to give the king a demonstration. He ordered his men to line up single file and start marching. He marched them straight toward a sheer cliff. The townspeople gathered on the wall and watched in shocked silence as, one by one, Alexander’s soldiers marched without hesitation right off the cliff to their deaths. After ten soldiers died, Alexander ordered the rest of the men to return to his side.

The townspeople and the king immediately surrendered to Alexander the Great. They realized that if a few men were actually willing to commit suicide at the command of this dynamic leader, then nothing could stop his eventual victory.

As followers of Christ, we follow an even greater and more dynamic leader who also has a conquering kingdom. We are servants of this King, advancing His kingdom. We do this because, like Alexander the Great, Jesus has told us to march. He said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”* (Matt 28:18b-19a). Our Lord has called us to make disciples. His calling to each of us means that He can work through all of us to make disciples. We reflect His light in the darkness of this world.

14 *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. – Matthew 5:14-16*

Did you know that our church campus sets on one of the highest points in the entire county? Could it be that the Lord has strategically placed us in such a geographic location so that we would physically be the light to Powhatan? Think about it...as the church gathered we are to reflect the light of Christ on top of Tower Hill. And as the church scattered we are to reflect the light of Christ to our neighbors.

Today we are finishing a series that we've been calling "Bless Every Home." The Bible teaches us that God desires to bless every home, and it teaches that His children are the conduits through which His blessings flow to every home. We have learned that we bless every home as we pray for, care for, and share the gospel with every home. Our goal is to lead lost men, women, and children to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Today, we will see that the final step of blessing is to disciple every home.

What is a disciple?

And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. – Mark 2:14

Levi, better known as Matthew, was called to follow Jesus. A call to discipleship is a call to follow Jesus. Literally, "follow me" (ἀκολουθεῖ μοι) means "walk after me." It is the idea of moving behind someone and going in the same direction. As a Christian I am to be a disciple, one who walks the same path as Jesus. And as a Christian I am commanded to help others get on and follow the same path.

Illust: As a little kid my dad taught me that the best path for me to walk whether we were hunting or trekking through deep snow was his path. I learned to literally step in his footprints. That is what discipleship is... "Follow me as I follow Christ."

Inquiry: In Acts 9, we find Saul of Tarsus in Damascus. He has just encountered the Lord Jesus on the road outside the city (vs. 1-9). The great persecutor of the church has now become its newest member. Saul's encounter with Jesus physically blinded him, which was an illustration of the spiritual blindness that had overshadowed his heart. Jesus told him to go into the city and wait for instructions of what to do next.

Ananias was a disciple of Christ, and the Lord told him to go and meet this Saul and to lay hands on him so that he might regain his sight (vs. 11-12). He did just as Jesus instructed, and because of his ministry Saul the persecutor of the church became Paul the church planter.

Read Acts 9:10-19.

Ananias discipled Paul. From this man we learn that God can use you and me in His mission of transforming lives by His grace for His glory. There are four encouragements in this passage that I want you to see.

1. God often uses unknown people to make eternal differences. (vs. 10-12)

It might surprise you to know that there is not a lot said about Ananias in the Bible. He is a rather obscure character. He is only mentioned here and in Acts 22. There are not chapters and books written in description of his life like Abraham, Moses, and King David. I believe it is safe to say that Ananias was just an ordinary person. The Bible does not describe him as a pastor, evangelist, or a deacon. He was simply a disciple of Christ (9:10), which is the only title we should ever desire to possess.

“He who gets beyond a disciple rises beyond his proper place.” – Charles H. Spurgeon

What do we know about Ananias? He walked after Jesus. More than likely he had sat at the feet of Jesus and learned, yet he was not one of the more famous twelve disciples. But he was a disciple, and you cannot disciple the nations unless you are first a disciple of Christ.

Paul described him as a devout man and well thought of by all (22:12). The characterization of Ananias as a devout man means that not everyone is. We need men, women, and young people who are devoted to the Lord Jesus in everything. In addition to his devotedness, everyone thought well of Ananias. They might have hated Christians, but they couldn't help but like Ananias because of his Christlike character.

Ananias also loved the church. This is seen in his concern for the church and the persecution breaking out against it (vs. 13-14). For Ananias the church was not an address or an event to attend; it was his family.

Ananias was also ready. When Jesus called he answered, “Here I am” (vs. 10). His response was just like that of Abraham (Gen 22), Jacob (Gen 31), Moses (Ex 3), Samuel (1 Sam 3), and Isaiah (Is 6).

Ananias didn't have a pedigree or a post-graduate degree. He didn't hold an office in the state or in the church. But he did walk after Jesus. He was devout. He was well thought of by others. And he was ready. As a result, Jesus used an unknown man to make an eternal difference in the lives of billions of people. This leads us to a second encouragement.

2. God enables those who are available. (vs. 13-16)

Fear usually does one of two things in a person. It can be a crippling emotion, or it can be a conquering emotion. In the face of fear, the feeling of *fight or flight* takes over.

Names in the Bible are significant. God often uses them to teach and illustrate His principles and precepts. The name Ananias means “protected by God.” This man by his very name understood that he was under the protection of God. As a follower of Christ who very well could have been with Jesus as He ascended into heaven, knew well the promise in the Great Commission... *“I am with you always, to the end of the age”* (Matt 28:20b). He was a man of courage who feared what Saul had the authority to do to the church. Read Acts 9:13-14.

Ananias feared the person and reputation of Saul, but that did not negate his courage. You see courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is commitment to the call in the presence of fear.

Fear is a natural and normal part of living in this world. People fear all sorts of things:

- Spiders
- Flying
- Cancer
- Death

InterVarsity ran an article outlining the responses to the question: “What keeps you from following Jesus and being involved in His mission?” The answers were not surprising: selfishness, busyness, lust, health issues, lack of self-discipline, and materialism. But one answer stood out. Approximately 25% of respondents indicated the biggest obstacle to giving their whole life to global mission was fear.

Some of you won't go over seas on a short-term trip because you fear flying, or you fear the idea of being in a foreign country. That really isn't shocking to me. It is irrelevant but not shocking. What does shock me is that many of you refuse to bless your neighbor with the gospel because you fear how

your neighbor may or may not respond. God cannot enable you because you are not available.

Imagine how ineffective the men and women in our Special Forces would be if they operated like that. Ananias committed himself to Christ and His call despite any fear he had. He made himself available, and God made him able. If you will make yourself available, God will make you able.

There's a third encouragement we see here.

3. God blesses the ordinary service just as much as the extraordinary. (vs. 17-19)

The conversion of Saul to Christ was miraculous. Jesus showed up on the road. There was a blinding light, and the Lord's voice thundered (9:3-7). It was an extraordinary event. But what happened next was nothing but ordinary. Yes, Saul's blindness was healed and scales fell from his eyes, but Ananias was not told to perform a miracle. Jesus simply told him to go and pray over Saul.

Ananias demonstrated genuine compassion and spoke encouraging words to Saul. He offered fellowship to the man who persecuted his family ("*Brother Saul*"). He also welcomed Saul into a discipling relationship (Acts 9:19).

I believe Jesus called Ananias to go and minister to Saul in the same manner he ministered day in and day out. This was his ordinary life practice. It involved ongoing Bible study, consistent teaching and mentoring, regular fellowship, and prayer. In God's economy the ordinary is just as important as the extraordinary. This is how He usually moves in our lives. I doubt any of us have had a Damascus Road experience like Paul. No, that is not the way we met Christ and have grown in Him. Someone loved us enough to pray for, care for, share the gospel with, and teach us to walk after Jesus. This is how we were introduced to Jesus.

Celebrate ordinary, day in day out ministry because God does. Invest yourself in the lives of the people who live in your neighborhood. Do a simple Bible study in your home. Pray regularly for them. Find ways to serve them. Share the gospel with them. Then teach the ones who trust Christ how to follow after Jesus. God will bless that. He will bless the ordinary.

This leads to our fourth and final encouragement.

4. God values each disciple.

The story of Saul's conversion in Acts 9 is preceded by stories involving the pillars of the early church. The apostle Peter was the leader of the church. He preached the Pentecostal sermon in Acts 2 after the Holy Spirit descended. He and John healed a lame beggar outside the temple and were flogged by the Pharisees for preaching the gospel (Acts 3-4). Peter called out the hypocrisy and sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). When persecution broke out, Philip went down to Samaria and preached the gospel to the Samaritans. Spiritual awakening broke out, demons were cast out, and many responded to Christ. These two men and many others were being greatly used by the Lord, but after the conversion of Saul Jesus did not send them to Saul. He didn't send the pastor of the Jerusalem church. He didn't send the evangelizing deacon of Samaria. He sent a simple disciple. His name was Ananias, and he lived just down the street from where Saul was staying.

God values each disciple. And God desires to use each disciple. He wants to use your life as a conduit through which His blessings flow to every home.

Saul the persecutor became Paul the planter. But there would not have been a Paul if there had not been an Ananias. It was there in Damascus that Paul was discipled by Ananias and others. Behind many

well-known servants of God are lesser-known believers who have influenced them. God keeps the books and will see to it that each servant will get a just reward. The important thing is not fame, but faithfulness. Even small wheels play a significant role in the working of God's machinery. It is unwise to covet the important honors of the church. Sometimes our greatest opportunities come in the small, menial tasks, which apparently seem to have no value. On April 21, 1855 Edward Kimball led one of his Sunday school boys to faith in Christ. Little did he know that Dwight L. Moody would one day become the world's leading evangelist.

Conclusion: The soldiers in Alexander the Great's army were completely and utterly devoted to the person and mission of their king. They would follow him to the death even if it meant walking off a cliff. We too have a King, who demands just as much allegiance. And we are to be devoted to His Person and His mission.

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." – Mark 1:17

It is okay that you and I are unknown nobodies. God still wants to use us to change eternity. It is okay that we aren't always involved in extraordinary things. God delights in using our ordinary service in everyday life. The key is availability. If you will make yourself available, God will make you able.

Let's be a blessing to every home by praying for, caring for, sharing with, and discipling every home.