**PP The Shift**

**Part 5-** Vision Weekend: Introduction to Jewish Discipleship: **Disciple*Shift!*** 1/4-1/5/2025

Illus My father owned a construction company and of course, I was often drafted into working with him. One job he gave me was to cut several boards to a specific length he gave me as we framed a house. I went to work…the wrong way. Each board I cut, I used as the measurement for the next one, each time unwittingly shortening the board little by little. By the time I was done, the final boards were more than an inch short, and I wasted material and time. What I should have done was to measure and cut the first, making sure it was correct, and label it ‘sample’ or ‘pattern’ to use it as the guide for the rest of them.

Jewish discipleship understood this danger, and created a careful system of making disciples that

was alive and well when Jesus called His own disciples

It weaves through the entire book of Matthew, but if we are going to read this incredible book

rightly, we must at least understand the Jewish world of discipleship

After 586 BC, when Babylon destroyed the city of Jerusalem exported thousands of Jews to

Babylon, the religion of God’s people had to decentralize…there was no longer a temple

In Babylon, synagogues were created, places for them to come together for prayer and study

It was there that Jewish boys were schooled, while girls were taught at home by her parents

**PP** Formal education began at 6 years old in **Beth Sefer**, elementary school, where the teaching

focused primarily on the Torah, the books of the Law, the first five books of our bibles

Beth means *‘house’* in Hebrew, and Sepher, ‘book’, so **Beth Sefer** was the House of the Book

Children read it, wrote about it, and memorized large sections of it, some even memorized it all

At the end of this stage of schooling, usually age 10, education stopped for many of the not so

good students and for these, it was now time to learn the family trade

**PP** The best male students went on to what we would call secondary school, **Beth Talmud**,

House of learning, for male students 10-14 years old

They studied the prophets of the Old Testament and began to study the Oral Torah, the

interpretations of the Torah that the Rabbis had made

They began to make their own applications, similar to modern catechism classes

Most did not have their own copy of the Scripture, so memorization was key and done by

reciting the scriptures out loud, utilizing constant repetition

And they learned how to give an answer by asking a question

**PP** Only the best of the best pursued the final phase, **Beth Midrash**, House of Study

The exceptional student would seek a study group, or better, a rabbi and ask permission to study

with him, often leaving home to travel and live with him for a lengthy period of time

The rabbi conducted a rigorous interview to see if the student knew enough, or was disciplined to be his disciple as they would only accept the very top students

Questions would be asked like how many times the word *‘well’* is found in Genesis, or how

many times does Habakkuk reference Deuteronomy 17?

If the student failed, the rabbi would tell him to go home and learn the family business, make

babies and pray that their babies become rabbis

If accepted, the rabbi would say two Hebrew words which, translated, are *‘Come follow me’*

All students of Beth Midrash longed to hear those words from a rabbi

Though ordinarily, a student would come to a rabbi, Jesus reversed that

**PP** ***“And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ Immediately they***

***left their nets and followed Him.”* Matthew 4:19-20**

None of the 12 main disciples whom He called had ever made it into Beth Midrash

They had not been the best of the best, in fact, at most, they never made it past Beth Talmud

**PP** If the rabbi bid the student to follow him, he became a Talmid, a disciple of the rabbi

The word disciple means most fundamentally learner, and the goal for the Talmid was to be like

his rabbi, **PP *“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained***

***will be like his teacher.”* Luke 6:40**

**PP** Becoming like the rabbi included 4 goals: Memorize your rabbi's words; adopt your rabbi's

teachings; imitate your rabbi's way of life; and raise up your own disciples to follow you

But Jesus made an important distinction in His disciples: **PP *“But you are not to be called rabbi,***

***for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.”* Matthew 23:8**

His disciples are to raise up disciples by passing on the words, teachings, and way of life of Jesus

Paul, who was a Talmid of Rabbi Gamaliel, said to his disciples **PP** ***“Be imitators of me, as I am***

***of Christ.”*** **1 Corinthians 11:1**

In the 1st Century, when a young man went to a Rabbi (later the title meant ‘Great one’) and he

passed the test and was bid to come follow him, the Talmid was taught to become like

him in every way

If the rabbi walked with a limp, you would often see his Talmidim walking behind him limping

A Talmid was passionately devoted to his rabbi, noting everything he did or said

**PP** One saying was, *“May you follow him so closely that the dust of his sandals covers you.”*

Hearing, observing and imitating were core practices to becoming like the rabbi

**PP** The teaching, philosophy and interpretation of scripture that a rabbi had was called his ‘yoke’

**PP *“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke***

***upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest***

***for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”* Matthew 11:28-30**

The disciples were expected to take the rabbi’s yoke and learn it so well they could teach it to

other future disciples

The Rabbi’s yoke was basically embodied in two columns: the bound column contained what

was not allowed, and the loosed column was what was allowed

**PP *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall***

***be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”***

**Matthew 16:19**

**PP** The authority to bind and loose that a rabbi had was gained when they had s’mikkah, which

means ordination

A rabbi with s’mikkah had the authority to create their own yoke, interpretations of the

scriptures, the keys to the kingdom of heaven

They were granted this authority when they excelled far over others, and two rabbis with

s;mikkah would lay their hands on the rabbi, vouching for his authority

Jesus law said that a testimony confirmed by two or three witnesses was true

Jesus was granted s’mikkah at His baptism, as John the Baptist declared Jesus as mightier than

him, and the Heavenly Father as well as the Holy Spirit ordained Him

**PP *“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the***

***heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and***

***coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My beloved Son,***

***with Whom I am well pleased.’”* Matthew 3:16-17**

Rabbis ordinarily quoted other rabbis but one with s;mikkah spoke on his own authority

Jesus often said, ***“You have heard that it was said…but I say to you…”*** which astonished his

listeners, **PP *“for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their***

***scribes.”* Matthew 7:29**

They knew he had authority,s;mikkah, and His yoke, His interpretation of Scripture astonished

them for he quoted no rabbi’s yoke, but the scriptures themselves

He called people to believe in Him and follow Him as His Talmidm and become like Him

Jewish discipleship was all about becoming like the rabbi in all ways, and when fully trained, the disciple became the teacher with his own disciples who they train to be like themselves

Jesus raised up disciples who knew how to make disciples, learners and followers of Jesus

The rabbis of His day trained disciples who could train disciples to become like themselves

**PP *“But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.***

***And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.***

***Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.”***

**Matthew 23:8-10**

He was telling His Talmidim to not make disciples after themselves, but after Him only

Every disciple of Jesus must be training others to follow after Jesus becoming like Him

I have only touched on the Jewish world of disciple-making which was well established when

Jesus lived on earth, for He did not create it, but co-opted and perfected it

The book of Matthew is built on this discipleship world, and not only must we understand it as

we move though our series called The Shift, it will you understand our church’s purpose

Cornerstone shifted three years ago on a journey to make discipleship become our DNA

**PP (Chart)** Our vision is to be *A family of Multi-Planting churches that make disciples of Jesus*

*who will live on mission for the glory of God*

Our strategy is built on multiplication, for addition is not the math of the Kingdom of God

This strategy requires each of us to be multiplying worshipers, disciples, and churches

Inviting others, particularly the unsaved to come to our church

Becoming fully trained in Christ and inviting others to be discipled by us

Multiplying churches in areas where few Christ-centered churches exist

We are seeking to learn how to *simplify* what we do here, *shift* it all to making disciples, and

*spread* the gospel of Jesus through multiplication

We’ve simplified our ministry to the poor, placing the meal before the Saturday service and

inviting our friends to join us for worship if they want

We will be starting a Community Group for them as we give any who desire to do so a way

into the full community of our church

Community Groups, what some churches call small groups, or life groups, provide the backbone

of our church, a place to be loved and to learn to love, to be encouraged to grow in Christ

If you haven’t joined one, please get on line and do so, and if you are interested in starting a

group, let us know online and we can help you on that journey

We have also created a discipleship strategy we call D-Groups

We have found that the phase of a rabbi fully training his Talmidim into his yoke has been

missing in the modern church

Churches are good at bible studies and church services and church activities, but tend to be poor

at fully training Christians to be like Christ

We have found that less than 10% of our church has ever been intentionally, strategically trained

in being a disciple of Jesus, even though many of them have grown up in church

Therefore, how can they intentionally make disciples of Jesus if they have not had anyone do this

with them?

Our D Groups are one way we are looking to make disciples who know how to make disciples

Church, what you learned today is the rich world of Jewish disciple-making, one that our church

is striving to live out and we are calling you to fully be part of this

If you are on the periphery of our church, attending but not involved, we are asking you to make

that change and come into our community!

And as we travel through the book of Matthew together and see Jesus the King of the Kingdom

of God, let us be willing to disciples*hift* and truly sit at His feet as His disciples

Pray