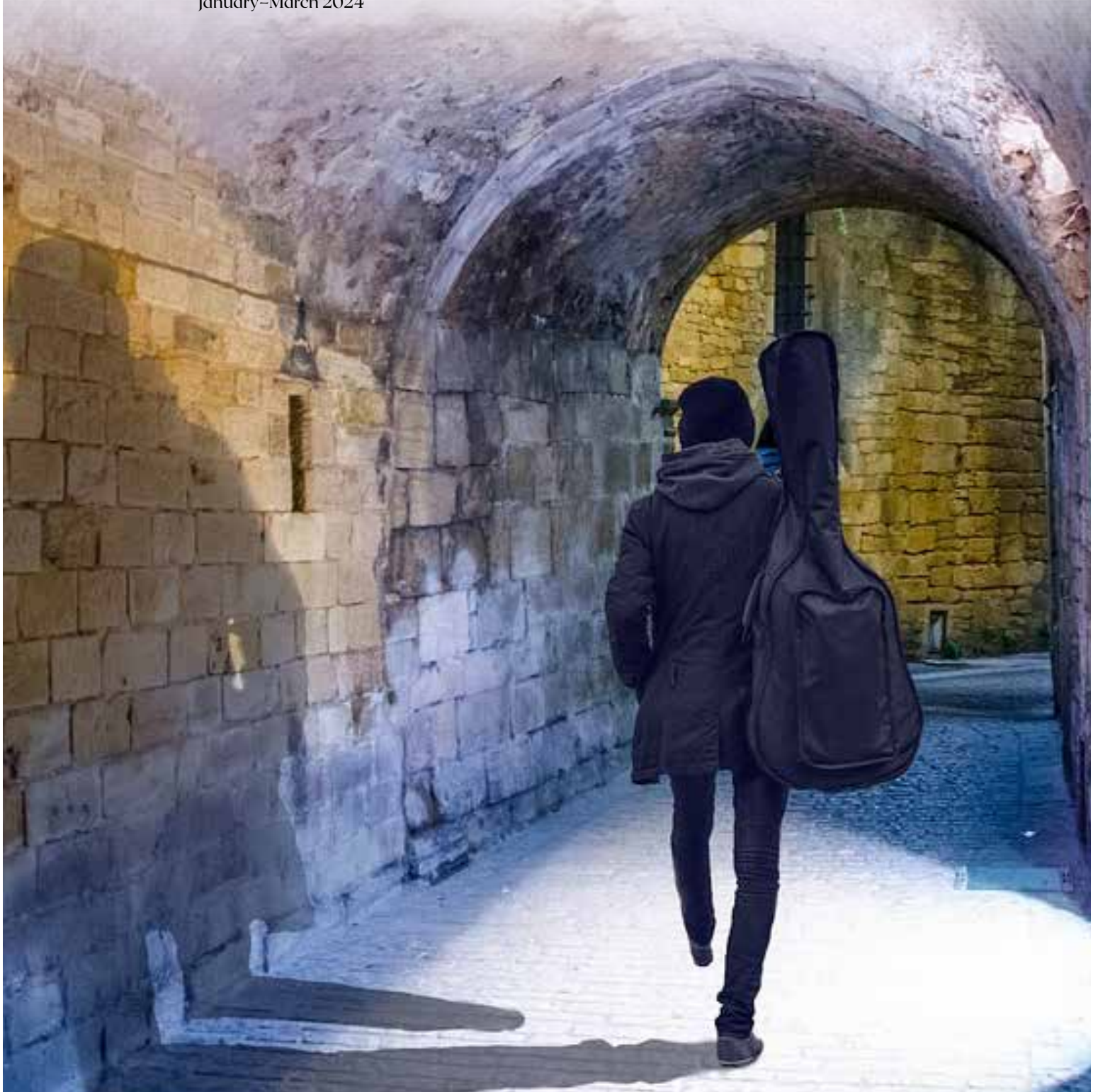




HIGH Calling

January–March 2024



The Nature of Discipleship

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Help us build a better world

PLEASE NOTE:

Starting in 2024, the Francis Asbury Society will publish issues of the *High Calling* on a quarterly basis.

High Calling
January–March 2024

The *High Calling* is a publication of The Francis Asbury Society to serve as a link between FAS and its constituents, building loyalty and awareness so that the teaching and experience of Christian holiness may continue to be lived and proclaimed throughout the world.

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The Theological and Practical Nature of Discipleship

Bill Kierce

IN HIS LETTER to the Colossian believers, the Apostle Paul states: “He [Christ] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me” (Col. 1:28–29 NIV). Christian discipleship is the process of becoming like Jesus. The goal of God’s redemptive work in our lives is that we reach full maturity in Christ. In our Wesleyan tradition, this means that we are fully sanctified by God’s grace so that our hearts are made perfect in love (1 Thess. 5:23). This doesn’t happen by education. No one can be educated into a holy life. It also doesn’t happen through imitation of Christ’s earthly life alone. If

that were the case, we would be no different than a follower of Buddha or Mohammed. What sets Christianity apart is the purpose and power of God to accomplish in our hearts what we are incapable of achieving by our own effort. Our part is to fully surrender our will to Christ, to “take our thumb off of our own life,” as Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw so often described it. The result is a heart that is set free from the rule of sin, intimate fellowship with God, and a life empowered by God’s Spirit. In this issue of the *High Calling*, we present articles that explore both the theological and practical nature of discipleship. As you journey through its contents, we pray that you will be encouraged and emboldened in your journey with Jesus.

Passing on the Passion

Cricket Albertson



Cricket is the granddaughter of Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw, founder of the Francis Asbury Society. She graduated from Asbury Theological Seminary in 1999 with a degree in theological studies and began working for FAS as a research assistant to Dr. Kinlaw. This edited and abridged article is taken from Chapter 7 of her book *Passing on the Passion* (2011). Used with permission.

THE SACRED TRUST of communicating our love for Christ to a new generation may be the most momentous issue of our time. In this day, every sacred thing has been tarnished, every hallowed place desecrated. The world needs the love of Christ manifested in the lives of believers through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Passing on a passion for anything is never a formula. It is not a book to learn or something to do. Passing on the passion for Christ to the next generation means we must be filled with God’s Holy Spirit, living in him and letting his life flow out of us for others.

Christians are pilgrims on a journey. Many times along our journey of faith,

we may wish to sit by the fire and settle in, but God has another home for us, and he is calling us to come higher up and deeper in. Like the children of Israel, we must be willing to claim our inheritance in Christ. We must be willing to journey into the Promised Land, fighting battles, killing giants, and doing the hard work to claim the promises of God for ourselves, our children, our families, and our world.

The book of Joshua begins after the death of Moses, and this simple fact grabs my attention: *God speaks*. How many times have we forgotten that he *speaks*?

Passing on a passion
for anything is
never a formula

He speaks when there is a leadership transition. He speaks into our need, our loneliness, and our void. He has spoken to our grandparents, our mentors, our parents, and our friends—and he wants to speak to us, too!

What does God say to Joshua? First, he acknowledges a new reality: “Moses, my servant, is dead” (Josh. 1:2). God speaks and acknowledges the finality of this stage in the history of his people, but he doesn’t stop with the past. He turns his attention

to the future. God is always interested in the future of his people. Whatever he has done for us in the past, whatever he has done for our ancestors, God is ready to act for us now.

So, he says to Joshua, “Now therefore . . .” I love these two words. *Now* is the time for action. The moment that God has been waiting for has come. “*Therefore* . . .” he has a plan for his people:

Arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. (Josh. 1:2–3)

God’s first instructions to this new leader are basic: “Arise.” Following God always requires us to go forward, sometimes on our knees and sometimes trembling, but always moving in his direction. God wants us to be ready, not just curled up on the couch or snuggled in our beds. We must be ready to go when he says, “Arise.”

God asks his servants to come alongside and help him accomplish his plans for his people

Second, God says to Joshua, “Go over this Jordan.” Their parents had been through the Red Sea, but this new generation had never experienced the parting of the waters. God wanted to prove his power to this generation; it was not enough to have proved it to their parents. YHWH wanted to reveal his powerful guiding presence to the new generation of Israelites—and he wants to reveal himself to us as well.

Third, God tells Joshua that he is giving the land to the children. God is *giving* the land, and the children are *receiving* the land. He is giving this gift not to Moses nor Joshua but to his people. Joshua is entrusted with these people to help them receive their inheritance. In this way, he prefigures the Lord Jesus, who mediates our salvation and entry into the promised land of life. Every Christian has been given the precious gift of God’s life and redeeming love. Once we have received God’s gift of grace, we become mediators to help others receive their inheritance.

Next, God gives the boundaries of the Promised Land. God has a specific place for his people, and he has chosen the boundaries. Life’s possibilities only seem limitless to the very young, and as we grow, we realize that life has built-in limitations. God had a land for his people—not the entire world, but one specific land. He has a specific place for us as well, a place where we are to live and accomplish the purpose he has for us. He does not want us to look past the boundaries he has set for us. His borders are good, and the battles to be fought within the boundaries he has established will be enough to keep us busy and complete in him.

God then gives Joshua a three-part promise. First, Joshua will be able to stand before his enemies and accomplish this task given by God. Second, and even more precious, God promises his presence. God wanted Joshua to know that his presence would be with him even as it had been with Moses. Third, God gives the most precious ringing promise of all: a personal promise to Joshua that God would not leave nor forsake him as he journeyed forth.

Finally, God commands Joshua to be strong and of good courage. Joshua had a job to do. He was working with God to fulfill the promise God made to the patriarchs of the children of Israel. God asks his servants to come alongside and help him accomplish his plans for his people. When we are fear-filled or timid, God cannot fully accomplish his purposes through us.

One of the joys of this journey of faith is the people God brings into our lives to comfort and encourage us. I had a conversation with a godly woman one day, and she said, “The next time I see *so and so*, I am just going to ask her, ‘Honey, have you ever met Jesus? If not, I can introduce you to him.’” Then the woman looked at me with joy and said, “After all, I have nothing to lose.” Those words gave me courage.

After that conversation, I found myself in a store with an opportunity to witness. “Well?” the Holy Spirit nudged me, “You have nothing to lose!” Then he helped me give my witness.

Later that day, friends showed up rather unexpectedly, and I felt another nudge, “Cricket, you have nothing to lose!” This one was harder, but I knew the Spirit helped me turn the conversation to Christ and give my witness.

Two days later, I was taking home a little neighborhood boy from church. That same sweet voice whispered to me, and I knew I had nothing to lose, and this little boy had heaven to win. The Holy

Spirit came into our car, and my children hushed and began to pray as I witnessed to this small child about the Lord Jesus. Jesus came into our minivan, and we came around our friend and loved him and supported him in Jesus’ name.

As life becomes challenging, we may be tempted to look to other places to meet our needs. Parents are aging, and resources might be tight, and we find ourselves shut in by life and circumstances. At these moments, we must come to the Lord Jesus to meet the needs of our hearts. When we come to him, out of our hearts will flow rivers of living water (John 7:37–38).

Our dependence on Christ to meet every need, fill every moment, encourage every heart, and make us a witness to the world will enable our children, spouses, neighbors, and friends to have the opportunity to walk in the overflow of the Spirit’s life in us. In his life is blessing, joy, peace, strength, and grace. The world needs the love of Christ manifested in the lives of believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. Don’t be afraid! You have nothing to lose! ✠

“Evangel-ship” Josh Hallahan



Josh Hallahan is director of Discipleship at FAS and is passionate about the need for intentional discipleship in our communities, churches, and homes. Josh has served in full-time ministry for twenty years and has found that the most influential ministry happens when he engages in honest and transformative discipleship.

IN THE INTRODUCTION of Dr. Robert Coleman’s well-known book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Paul S. Rees asks this question, “How do we go forward with an evangelism—a widening of the circle of faith so that it includes more and more people who have transformingly trusted Christ as Savior—that is continuous, contagious, and compelling?” I remember reading this book as an undergrad student at my Bible college and being deeply impacted by Dr. Coleman’s writing. I also remember thinking, “This is not a book of evangelism; this is a book on discipleship!” Thus began a journey I am still on today of understanding that true evangelism requires discipleship, and true discipleship involves evangelism. Why was this such a ground-breaking thought for me?

I began to realize that my upbringing, my early discipleship journey within a solid evangelical church, somehow taught me that evangelism and discipleship were two distinct processes. While never explicitly stated, I began to believe that a Christian must be discipled to a certain extent before receiving the call to evangelize. On top of that, I also began to think that the “spiritual elite” were the ones who were called and explicitly gifted to evangelize (especially cross-culturally). I have learned and grown to appreciate that discipleship and evangelism go hand in hand. In fact, the Master left us a plan that includes our personal discipleship in step with our endeavors to make disciples (evangelism).

We are all likely familiar with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20. As I have served in a support-based role for close to fifteen years now as both a cross-cultural missionary and a home-based missionary, I have regularly shared the Great Commission with churches and Christians in our fundraising endeavors. As my wife and I share from Matthew 28 regularly, one of my favorite questions to ask is, “What is the main verb of this

Evangelism and discipleship are *not* two distinct practices

passage?” While I have not kept actual records, the vast majority, young and old, answer quickly and assuredly that the main verb is “Go!” I probably am beginning to enjoy too much the looks of confusion and surprise when I tell them that they are wrong. I am humbled when I realize that I, too, have been taught wrong. Evangelism and discipleship are *not* two distinct practices.

The main verb in the Great Commission is “make disciples.” When our English translation states, “Therefore go and make disciples . . .” (NIV), we instinctively view this as a two-step process. First, I must “go” (or evangelize), and then I can disciple by teaching and baptizing. The word “go” comes first in the sentence, so it must be the most important, right? Wrong! As Jesus spoke these words, originally in Aramaic and then written in Greek, it was clear to the hearers that the main action was to make disciples. Going, teaching, and baptizing were the participles, or the “how,” of making disciples. This changes things. Perhaps a more accurate reading might be, “As you are going, make disciples by teaching and baptizing.”

In his book *Spent Matches*, Roy Moran says:

To be a follower of Christ is to be on mission. Jesus’ hope was that it would be normal for His followers to make disciples as they lived out a dangerous message that would divide families and heal the brokenhearted, challenge the well-off and encourage the impoverished, transform the oppressors and bring freedom to the oppressed. To fail to make disciples would indicate followers weren’t connected to Jesus and the heart of His mission.

If you feel a bit overwhelmed by that quote, like I do, maybe that is why we struggle with this view of discipleship. When evangelism and discipleship are intricately wrapped together, it becomes a big deal! The neat and tidy ways we like to disciple (i.e., Bible studies, Sunday school classes, podcasts, etc.) become only a fraction of how we are called to disciple. Leaving the act of going to the spiritual elite is no longer an option. Discipleship as the Master intended requires life on life. It requires meeting people right where they are in their mess and inviting them into yours. It does not let you off the hook because you are not part of the “spiritual elite.”

An often-forgotten part of the Great Commission is in the verses preceding the call to make disciples. Jesus and the disciples met on the mountain in Galilee, and, “when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted” (v. 17). Then Jesus claims his authority in verse 18 and gives the commission in verse 19. Nowhere in this passage do we see a hint of an exception for those who doubted.

In their book *Contagious Disciple-Making*, father/son duo David L. Watson and Paul D. Watson give very practical teaching on these concepts of what it means to be a disciple who makes disciples, to be someone in an ongoing discipleship process while not shying away from the commission to be about making more disciples of Jesus:

In our experience, Contagious Disciple-Makers focus on helping people come into a dynamic and growing relationship with Christ through prayer, Bible study, worship, evangelism, fellowship, and ministry. Disciple-makers first teach people the Word of God so they will know what to obey. Second, they train

people in the skill sets necessary to be an obedient follower of Christ so they will know how to obey. And third, disciple-makers equip people to their full capacity to serve God and others so they demonstrate lives of consistent obedience and make more disciples.

First, our own personal discipleship process is just that—a process. We ought to continually engage in the means of grace that draw us closer to Jesus and allow the work of the Spirit to transform us into his image constantly. To think that we

Evangelism is a natural, everyday expression of our faith lived out among those around us

must wait until that ultimate completion before engaging others is not part of the Master’s plan. Second, evangelism is not as difficult as we make it out to be. As the Watsons (and many others before them) explain, it is a hallmark of the Christian life to invite the people around us into times of Bible study, worship, outward expressions of our faith, and intentional time with other believers. These can be official events in our local churches or a conversation across the table at the local coffee shop or under the hood of the neighbor’s car in his garage. Evangelism is a natural, everyday expression of our faith lived out among those around us.

As the process continues, we teach and train others to follow Christ. It takes discernment to know when those around us are ready to be challenged and taught the need to change their way of life, that following Jesus requires a life of surrender and obedience. This is when we cling to that promise at the end of the Great Commission, “and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (v. 20). Whenever the task seems too much, we can remember that we are not discipling or evangelizing alone. We are not doing it in our own strength. If we are, then we are doomed to failure. We evangelize and disciple others under the authority and in the eternal presence and strength of Jesus himself.

Finally, let us not forget that, in the Master’s plan, our disciple-making efforts lead to disciples who make disciples. This cycle is built into the DNA of the Great Commission and the early church. A

glance at church growth statistics today quickly reveals that our local churches—at least here in the West—are not growing because we are seeing new disciples come to Jesus but because we keep changing our minds about who we want to be in fellowship with.

I encourage us to be deeply invested in our local churches and discipling those inside those walls. However, it cannot stop there. We must be involved in discipling those outside the church, pointing them to Christ. We must also teach our youth in Sunday school and youth groups to seek opportunities to disciple their friends in school and their neighborhoods, to invite them not only to church and youth group but also to a life with Jesus. And as people of all ages come to see Jesus for who he is, we must teach them that Jesus has commissioned them to go and find others to disciple. This is how we will see the fulfillment of the Great Commission. When every follower of Jesus continues in their discipleship process by continually inviting others into the discipleship process who will invite others into that process, it's evangelism. Brothers and Sisters, he has commissioned us through the Father's authority. Let us commit our lives to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Let's go! ✠

Discipleship in Public Schools: 4Kids

An Interview with Carol Gullett



Carol Gullett is the director of 4KidsLex, an outreach into the public school system in partnership with the local church. Through a biblically backed social and emotional learning curriculum and a mentoring system, 4Kids can come alongside this young generation to teach and model living as a house of light, love, and hope.

What is 4Kids and why does it exist?

4Kids is a ministry to kids in public schools staffed by volunteers from local churches. We provide training in leadership and practical life-skill development for students in grades 5–8. Our 27-week curriculum is run during the regular school day and is designed to empower kids with Truth—with a capital *T*—in ways that honor the school systems' rules and state and federal laws while still honoring God.

In a typical classroom, there is a trained 4Kids leader who presents the day's lesson to five or six small groups of

kids who are each supported by a volunteer mentor. Engaging videos and written materials hold the kids' attention while we deal with issues that are relevant to their everyday lives. An extensive online lesson base is accessible through a password-protected website.

Through statistical analysis and collaborative research, we've determined that our highest goal for kids is also our top outcome! We want them to develop a *Mindset of Hope*. Our research shows that they've begun to see there is a possibility for turnaround, that working together, we can change the trajectory of our world.

Would you expound on the capital T—Truth idea?

Yes, certainly. In our Declaration of Independence, words like *Life*, *Liberty* and *Happiness* are capitalized. So is *Rights*. Our Creator has endowed us with certain unalienable Rights. Just like in Scripture, the words have deep purposeful meanings. We believe the Rights speak directly to our potential.

Today, as we comprehend the Sovereign origin of our documents, we can assume a much higher calling presented to us as citizens seeking "a Better World," a world where our constitution calls us to achieve "A More Perfect Union!" The Truth that guides our work is:

The LORD our God is with us to guide us into Kingdom Living so that we become His Children of Glory.

We can Be One United People working together for the Glory and Honor of God. We make our Heavenly Father known through our thoughts, words and actions!

This is of course what Jesus did as he revealed God with us!

So what is the big vision? How will kids learn the fullness of the Truth?

The call to be Light, Love, and Hope is a part of our lessons in the schools. Our goal is ultimately to empower parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends of the kids to realize how God wants to use us all in building his kingdom. We have a companion website called *Point to One* that teaches the higher Truth. Our leaders have access to the "heart of the lessons," and we are currently working on a teaching series called *Empowering Parents to be Disciple-makers*.

How can we pray for you?

The vision for a united people who join together as one family formed and shaped as heavenly ambassadors is very much on my heart. Would you join us in praying for

God wants to use
us all in building
his kingdom

this? Joining together and seeking peace and unity made real between all people is central to the 4Kids mission. We can be one nation of holy, set-apart people who honor and glorify God with our lives. We can be conformed and confirmed as image bearers of God. ✠

Discipleship Toward Holiness

Vic Reasoner



Vic Reasoner is director of the Francis Asbury Institute for the Francis Asbury Society. A pastor for 44 years, he is still involved in research and writing, mentoring, and preaching. In this article, Vic surveys historical approaches to the doctrine of sanctification and connects them to discipleship.

OUR DOCTRINE OF sanctification influences how we disciple. In his book *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (1992), Michael Wilkins wrote, "In its broadest sense discipleship is the metaphor most descriptive of the doctrine of 'progressive sanctification.'"

The tension between divine initiative and human responsibility in our understanding of the doctrine of salvation also affects our understanding of discipleship. Ironically, those who believe that salvation cannot be forfeited, nor sanctification realized, often do the most follow-up with new believers. Yet their discipleship may consist primarily of how to respond to doubt. Once a convert has made his or her decision, it is never considered that doubt could be the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

The humanistic view of sanctification is that we perfect ourselves by choosing what is right, but this ignores our depravity. The "name it and claim it" teaching counsels people to *just say it*. However, we are not made holy merely because we profess it, claim it, or confess it to be so. Early Methodism was quick to seek and slow to

profess Christian perfection because they required divine evidence.

The promises and commands of Scripture imply that entire sanctification is possible before death and that the believer may be preserved in this condition, culminating—not beginning—with Christ’s return. Yet, it is widely taught that there is no deliverance from sin in this life. Luke 1:75 assures us that we can serve God in holiness and righteousness “all our days.” Yet the Calvinist, B. B. Warfield, taught that entire sanctification is obtained *at the second advent*. The return of Christ will not remove sin because he already put away sin *at his first appearance*. We can be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Thess. 5:23), when he will bring final sanctification or glorification.

This error is based on a dualistic view that anything physical is sinful; therefore, the body is sinful, and we will be sinful until we leave the body. Any holiness, then, is positional or imputed. In this view, the obedience of Christ is reckoned to our account (imputed) so that a morally impure person is considered positionally holy. Thus, our standing in Christ may be very different from our actual state. This is why people who are bound by sin still think they are going to heaven.

Mysticism is a belief that emphasizes passivity (or stillness), self-denial, and individuality apart from corporate worship. In extreme forms, it seeks a perfection that is attained through the loss of self-consciousness; the finite is absorbed by the infinite. But how would we know if we had arrived at this state of perfection since we would have lost all self-consciousness?

Monasticism has been called the greatest organized pursuit of perfection in history. It emphasizes holiness through withdrawal from the world and vows of poverty, chastity, and discipline. “Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence” (Col. 2:23; Gal. 3:3). In contrast, Wesley taught a social holiness: “The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.” He advised, “It is a blessed thing to have fellow travelers to the New Jerusalem. If you cannot find any, you must make them; for none can travel that road alone.” Holiness simply cannot be attained apart from fellowship with other believers.

Supernatural manifestations such as tongues and miracles do not necessarily lead to a holy life (see Matt. 7:21–23). A leading Pentecostal scholar, Stanley Horton, conceded that the baptism in the Holy Spirit “is not of itself a sanctifying experience.” And while the sacraments are a means of grace, the symbols do not necessarily produce a holy life. Sacramentalism is a corporate view of perfection that believes the body is holy even if all its parts are unholy. Neither external manifestations nor observation of the sacraments necessarily produces ethical purity.

The Keswick movement teaches that the Holy Spirit counteracts the sin nature and helps us suppress it. Is this idea helpful, or does it implicitly deny a complete cleansing from the nature of sin? Is this simply a semantic argument over suppression versus eradication of sin?

Eradicate means to pull up by the roots. The danger in using this term is that it conveys the idea that sin is a physical substance that can be removed once and for all, like a tooth extracted or the roots of a tree dug out. This amounts to reification, the practice of making something concrete from an idea or abstraction. Is all pride, anger, jealousy, and desire removed, or is it reoriented? A holy person is fully human, and no human emotion is destroyed. For example, as holiness is full conformity to the image of Christ and Christ was angry, we should not expect anger to be removed but pray that it is redirected. *Meekness* is defined as the balance between excessive anger and passivity. Thus, a meek person is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time—demonstrating Christlikeness.

Stephen Gibson, a leader in the conservative holiness movement, conceded that they sorely neglect discipleship and spiritual accountability. Most “discipleship” occurs at the altar. It is assumed that if a seeker receives the Holy Spirit, the Spirit would lead, and the church wouldn’t need to do any follow-up.

To recover an emphasis on holiness in our daily lives, which approach to holiness is right? There are elements of truth within every emphasis. Wesley did not invent a new way of believing as much as he successfully adapted old ways. R. Newton Flew surveyed the idea of perfection in church history and then issued this challenge:

We reach, then, this broad conclusion, that the seeking of an ideal that is realizable in this world is essential to Christianity. It is essen-

tial to the corporate life of the Church that this principle should be enshrined at the heart of its doctrines, its hymns, its confessions of faith, its institutions. It is essential for the individual Christian that the goal set before him should be not merely conversion, not merely a life of service, but perfection. Or if the term is disliked, let it be Wesley’s phrase—“perfect love,” or “sanctity,” or “holiness.” If we have no hunger and thirst after that righteousness which is Christ, we are not Christians . . . at all. Christianity is not Christianity unless it is aiming at Perfection.

The command to seek holiness (Heb. 12:14) is still applicable to those who are growing in holiness. As we continue to walk in the light, the blood continues to cleanse (1 John 1:7). We are to attend to the means of grace: prayer and fasting, daily Bible reading and reading of devotional literature, spiritual conversation, public worship, the sacraments, accountability to a small group, and giving financially. We will grow spiritually as we

Saints do not usually set out to attain perfection; they set out for God

learn spiritual discipline. But while all this will weaken sin, it will not drive it out. God alone can cleanse us. William Sangster wrote that saints do not usually set out to attain perfection; they set out for God. “They gaze on God in love and longing, and the Holy Spirit makes them holy as they gaze.”

Discipleship, therefore, is not the exclusive property of Wesleyans, but if we have the most robust doctrine of sanctification, we should also have the most robust practice of discipleship. To disciple effectively, we must recover the practices of the early Methodist societies, even if we do not maintain eighteenth-century traditions.

When people first entered Methodist societies, they were seekers. All that was necessary was a desire to “flee the wrath to come.” Most conversions took place in these small groups. The “class meeting” worked on behavioral change. They were, in effect, house churches. The “band” provided for close conversation, where a person could bare his or her feelings.

The way to perfection for Wesley was through the means of grace. He wrote in

A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, “Never omit meeting your Class or Band; never absent yourself from any public meeting. These are the very sinews of our Society; and whatever weakens or tends to weaken our regard for these, or our exactness in attending them, strikes at the very root of our community.” In modern practice, we have disconnected Wesley’s means and his end. All too often, we attempt to promote holiness without practicing discipleship.

According to Kevin Watson, the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification and the Wesleyan discipline of accountability were both important for growth in holiness. I am not pleading that we attempt to recover eighteenth-century customs but that we first recover a biblical doctrine of the holy life and then find contemporary ways to disciple both those who are seeking such a life and those who have entered into this life. The way forward will undoubtedly include a knowledge of what has worked across past centuries. ✠

Radical Discipleship

Matt Friedeman



Professor of evangelical studies and discipleship at Wesley Biblical Seminary in Ridgeland, MS, Dr. Friedeman regularly leads students in outreach, such as prison ministry and ministry to the unborn.

YEARS AGO, I was approached by a young lady from French television doing a documentary on Mississippi’s religious liberty law. She wanted a local church (and pastor) to answer her questions. She found us as we were offering hope to women out at the local abortion clinic. Nobody else in our crowd trusted her to do a fair job, but alas, I took the chance and granted her access.

She came in with loads of questions and a filming crew. Among other things, she sat through our worship service and then, she asked one more thing: “Don’t you have to have the right people in office in order to have the nation you want?”

Answer: “No. Of course not. God has done some of His best work in nations without righteous political leadership whether it was the early church in Rome (where Christians had NO political power) or China today (where, again, Christians are on the outside looking in). In both cases and in a hundred important historical instances in between, the Church

prospered, and the Kingdom stayed on the march. We don’t need political power; we need the presence of Jesus and radical discipleship.”

I saw the documentary later. It was obviously meant to be a hit job from the very beginning. It made us look sinister with creepy music playing in the background and things edited out to make all of us look like idiots. And, of course, all reasonable comments were edited out in the final product; fragments of comments were pasted together to showcase us in the worst possible light. Edited out or not, I think my answer about the fullness of the Spirit is still true. And so is the need for radical discipleship.

Dean Kelly, in his volume *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, noted that the great mobilizers of Christian history have frequently been religious leaders who drew to themselves little groups of followers. These bands are characterized by, among other things, a commitment to one another in mutually supportive, like-minded fellowship.

These little bands of committed men and women have an impact on history out of all proportion to their number of apparent difficulties. In the main, they are usually recruited from the least promising ranks of society: they are not noble or wealthy or well educated or particularly talented. . . . But they are able to cut through the partial and fleeting commitments of the rest of society like a buzz saw through peanut brittle.

Why? Because targeted small groups, linked together and willing to subordinate their personal desires and ambitions to a great cause, are “intensely and continuously so much more alive” than other enthusiasts in lesser causes.

When Jesus told his followers to “make disciples of the nations,” this is what he was talking about—people trained in the ways of God so that their sensibilities are driven toward:

- Mutually supportive, like-minded, committed fellowship.
- Making a disproportionate impact on history.
- Cutting through partial, fleeting commitments.
- Being intensely and continuously so much more alive.

Robert Coleman, in his classic volume *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, famously

suggested how Jesus did this with his small group of twelve, and, among others historically, John Wesley showed how a movement could make this kind of discipleship impact with a well-thought-through system of small groups.

But how can we make this happen? First, let’s ask God for the fourth beatitude of Jesus (Mt. 5:6) to come alive in our lives. We need his grace of hunger and thirst for him, his righteousness, and his fullness of Spirit. Jesus told them that before they were to make disciples they needed the fullness. Wesley, for his part, wanted believers who had an experience of salvation to immediately start to develop a passion for entire sanctification. This is the foundation of radical discipleship.

Next, take seriously the “means of grace”—first, works of piety. No radical disciple comes from sloth. We must give our full attention to daily prayer and Bible study, weekly attendance to a local church service and a discipleship group, regular fasting, and regular partaking of The Lord’s Supper. These have always been the ground-level works of piety necessary for life-changing discipleship.

We need the presence of Jesus and radical discipleship

We also need to take seriously the other side of the “means of grace”—works of mercy. Jesus headed immediately with his disciples in Matthew 4 to the margins of his culture—those with various diseases and pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics. Wesley saw this and thought that a regular work of mercy for the Methodist was absolutely essential. It is hard to be an erstwhile follower of Jesus and not follow him to the hurting and the pained in your community. Many historians think this was the secret of growth in the early church: “Let your light so shine before men, that they might see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16 NKJV).

Finally, we need to develop the culture with our families, our churches, and our places of business so that Catherine Booth’s adage to the cupped faces of her babies is true for us: “You have not been sent here for yourselves; you have been sent for others. The world is waiting for you.” We are a “blessed to be a blessing” people. Oh, the amazing results that come when we act within such radical discipleship! ✠

The Challenge—A Passion for Holiness in the 21st Century

Dennis F. Kinlaw, from *The High Calling*, Summer 2002



Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw (1922–2017) was the founder of the Francis Asbury Society. He twice served as the president of Asbury University (College). As an evangelist, teacher, and administrator, his primary focus was the scriptural message of holiness—that through a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus, we can be empowered to live wholly devoted to God. His writings include *This Day with the Master*, *Let's Start with Jesus*, *Preaching in the Spirit*, *Malchus' Ear*, *We Live as Christ*, *Prayer Bearing the World*, and *Lectures in Old Testament Theology*.

NO PERSON LIVES fully without the influence of other persons. Perhaps that is why Jesus commanded believers to go into all the world and make disciples. No disciple or leader is made without the help of others. This, we believe, is God's way. One day God himself in the person of Christ came to help us. You and I are infinitely different because he did. There is a verse of Scripture that says, "To whom much is given, much is required." We think that it applies to our willingness to help others.

We live in a changing world with profound opportunities to influence the world for Christ in ways heretofore impossible. In recent years, we've concluded that if our Society helps others as God has helped us, it could change our world.

Please read the hopes and aspirations of our society to minister around the world redeeming the opportunities made possible by Christ uniquely for this moment in time. There is a sense of urgency in us that now is the time to act.

Our desire is to give the world better evangelists, educators, pastors, missionaries, psychologists, social workers, communica-

tion experts, etc. They will corporately influence the whole strata of society.

WE NEED YOUR HELP. God will honor your partnership; I am persuaded of that. Prayerfully read this issue of the *High Calling*. Sense with us the hopes and passions expressed in these pages for lives of service to Christ.

Our hope is that you will then, in Christ's name, help us to build a better world through him.

Details for various methods of giving to the ministries of the Francis Asbury Society are available on our website: www.francisasburysociety.com/support. 🙏

Systematic Theology Project: Vol. 1 John N. Oswalt and Christiane Albertson, eds



Coming Spring 2024!

Instead of beginning with God, as most theologies do, Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw insisted we should begin our theological studies with Jesus, who has made known the one true God (John 1:18). He said, "If we get Jesus, we get God; if we miss him, we miss God. If our concept of God is wrong, the more religious we get the more dangerous we become." Thus, this systematic theology project begins with Christology, and every subsequent volume of this project is based on that understanding.

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