

The Essentials of Disciple-Making
Session Six: Ten Qualifications of a Disciple-Maker
Commentary

Mark 1:35; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 2:8

1:35–37. The events up to this point had been rapid, coming one after the other. They also would have been emotionally and spiritually exhausting. The humanity of Jesus is evident in these words: Jesus got up and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Even Jesus needed to recharge his batteries by withdrawing from the crowds and talking with his Father. This was a time of renewal and preparation for Jesus. Two other times in Mark's Gospel we see Jesus getting away to pray (6:46; 14:32–41). Each time he was preparing for a crisis.

While Jesus was concerned about focusing on God's mission for him, the disciples seemed to be caught up in the increasing popularity of Jesus. Perhaps they felt they should seize the day: Simon and his companions went to look for him; and when they found him, they exclaimed, "Everyone is looking for you!"¹

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

5:14. Paul then explained why these two motivations controlled his ministry. He began with the statement that Christ's love compel[ed] him. Interpreters differ over whether Paul meant the term Christ to be taken subjectively ("Christ's love for us") or objectively ("our love for Christ"). The grammar permits either reading. Because the following context focuses on Christ's sacrifice, it seems best to understand it to mean "Christ's love for us." Paul was compelled in ministry by the love that Christ demonstrated when he died for all.

Christ died for all, and therefore all died with him. Dying with Christ was one way Paul described conversion (Gal. 2:20). For this reason, this passage appears to teach universalism—the belief that Christ's death brought salvation to every person. But the rest of Scripture stands opposed to this interpretation. Only those who have saving faith in Christ are saved (John 3:18; 2 Thess. 2:12). The language here is similar to Romans 5:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:22. In this context, the all is all of the Corinthian Christians. It is not that Paul was assured of the salvation of each individual in the church—he plainly stated that he was not (2 Cor. 13:5). In this passage he accepted their professions of faith at face value for the purposes of his argument.

5:15. Paul's main point was that Christ died for them and they all died with him so that those who live through the power of his resurrection should no longer live for themselves. Those for whom Christ died are "bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:20), and they no longer belong to themselves. Therefore, they are to live ... for him who died for them and was raised again.

Paul ministered for the Corinthians' sake because he was compelled by the love displayed in Christ's death. He died to redeem the lost so those for whom he died might live for him. Because this was the purpose of Christ's death, it became the goal of Paul's ministry.²

¹ Rodney L. Cooper, *Mark*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000).

² Richard L. Pratt Jr., *I & II Corinthians*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000).

1 Thessalonians 2:8

2:8. Here is a classic understanding of biblical love. To Paul, love is always a verb, it is doing. Feelings may accompany love, but they do not define it. Instead, the commitment of acting in the best interest of another opens the way for feelings: We loved you so much that we were delighted to share ... our lives.

It is easier to teach theology than to love, easier to share lists than time. Paul gave not only the message of the gospel, but the example of it as well. He spent time. He shared joys and headaches. Parents and teachers, coaches and mentors, pastors and leaders know what it means to give part of their heart away to others. Love is not just a job. It is a way of life.

But note that Paul did share the gospel of God. He was balanced. He gave his life and love. He gave content as well. It is not enough to visit people in the hospital or prison, or to show compassion to the poor or those new in the faith. Somewhere, carefully and candidly, they must also hear the truth of the cross and what it means to trust and follow Christ.

Arguing whether the church should meet people's physical needs or whether it should limit itself to preaching the gospel is like debating which wing of an airplane is more important. Both are essential!³

³ Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000).