

Paul H. Dixon
Christ Above All in Discipleship, Part 1
circa 1993

Unedited Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

Beginning today through the end of the quarter and this academic year, I'd like to share with you four messages around our theme for the year of Christ above all. And I would entitle these four messages "Christ Above All in Discipleship." It's been a blessing to my heart to receive on email so many reports of what God is doing in your lives in discipleship groups. Some of these are prayer groups, Bible study groups in the dormitories. It seems like it started back in the fall, but it has just grown. Not only have I had information from you as students in person, in the office, over email, but some of the head residents have reported to me that some of the most exciting things are happening in their dorms and in your lives that they've ever witnessed on our campus. And we praise God for that.

Paul H. Dixon:

Whenever we talk about discipleship, we're talking about something that is very close to the heart of our great God. And I suppose there are two verses of scripture that we ought to underscore in our thinking. There are many, many verses out the Old and the New Testament, but I want you to note, if you will, Third John four, I would encourage you to take notes for this series. Write down the verses. Various thoughts. If I have one regret, it is that we waited until the end of the year to talk about this and I know that in just a very few weeks, you'll be going home for the summer or graduating or wherever you're going to minister and serve God this summer. But yet the more I think of it, maybe it will be a motivation to get involved in discipleship in your MIS group Or the gospel team you're traveling on. Or as you are back home this summer.

Paul H. Dixon:

It will be a challenge, I hope, that you will get involved in a greater way during the remaining weeks of this quarter. And most of all, I pray that the outcome will be that you will leave Cedarville College, whether this is your last quarter, if you're graduating or transferring or just can't come back, whatever it might be, with this indelibly imprinted in your heart and mind, that you're going to give your life, above everything else, the rest of your life to a ministry of discipleship. Yesterday, I spoke at the Black Hawk Baptist Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. There were about 1700 people there in both services. It was thrilling to see what God has done in that church. I recall holding the first of evangelistic campaign in the history of that church for David Jeremiah, when they met in a double wide trailer, something around 23, 24 years ago. I've watched a church that was probably starting out with 12 people grow to 1700. And I would have to say that God has used many things, but one of the foremost things that He's used is evangelism and discipleship.

Paul H. Dixon:

Third John four says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." What brought joy to the heart of John who penned this epistle? To know that those he'd had a part in leading to Christ were advancing, maturing in the cause of Christ. It's interesting. We will not turn, but if you would note in your notes that in Luke 15:7, it says that when someone gets saved, there is joy in heaven. In Luke 15:10, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. And first Thessalonians 2:19 Paul said, "What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing when our Lord comes? It's you. It's you I've had a part either in leading to Christ or to taking biblical truths and transmitting them to you. That's what's going to be my joy, not only seeing my Lord, but seeing you in heaven. And I've had a part in ministering in your life."

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Paul H. Dixon:

Philippians 4:1. Paul said, "You are my joy and my crown." And it's exciting to me to read in Acts 8:39, that after the eunuch was converted, the scripture says he went on his way rejoicing, so I would argue that when we get involved in this business, this ministry of discipleship, it brings joy to the heart of God, joy to the angels, it brings joy to the life of the person now who's a part of this process, and then when we get at the Heaven, it's going to be our joy and the person who has either been saved or disciplined, joy comes to their life. That's why I entitled a book that I wrote on this topic, The Joy of Discipleship, because I firmly believe that's what it's all about.

Paul H. Dixon:

There's another verse of scripture that you must note and probably memorize. Second Timothy 2:2. Second Timothy 2:2 is one of the classic verses on discipleship in the New Testament. "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." This marvelous truth of Paul and Timothy. In fact, if you look at it, the discipleship that took place in Timothy's family, the part of his mother and his grandmother as you read chapter one in chapter three, they invested in Timothy spiritually, Paul invested in his life. And now he is saying, "Timothy, your responsibility is to go out and to find faithful men and to build into their lives, to take this body of truth that I've given to you and pass it on to them."

Paul H. Dixon:

Do you understand what really excites the faculty scattered around right now and over in the other auditorium and the ENS center? What really excites the men on this platform? Not building the buildings. Sure, we get some measure of excitement from that, but not the greatest. Not building the new programs or the network. All that goes into administration and leadership and being a faculty member. No, no, no. The greatest thing that comes to the heart of our staff members building into your lives. Frankly, most of us have concluded that there no greater way to invest our lives than in young people. That's it.

Paul H. Dixon:

And you have the opportunity right now to build into one another's lives. You get far more done as a residential campus in the dormitory rooms than we get accomplished in the classroom or in the office or in the chapel platform. Discipling is going on all the time. But the greatest discipleship takes place one on one, and the opportunities you have to rub shoulders with one another, "And as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Proverbs 27:17. I want to give you the start this morning of what I call the doctrine of discipleship, and I want to begin, having had this introduction, by giving you a definition of discipleship. Disciple comes from a Greek word that means a learner, a pupil, a scholar. It's important that you note this. Is not someone who merely gathers facts, but it is someone who does something with those facts. That's a disciple.

Paul H. Dixon:

What excites us at Cedarville is not how much truth we transmit, but how much you practice after you've received it and how much we practice after we've received it and after we've given it. The word disciple is found 232 times in the Gospels, 27 times in the book of Acts, and it never occurs in the epistles. I would say suggest that probably it's replaced by Saint in the epistles. And the word Saint is

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found 57 times in the epistles. So obviously when you come to the New Testament, there's a phenomenal emphasis on being a disciple, on being a Saint of God.

Paul H. Dixon:

Gary Kuhne has written an excellent book entitled *The Dynamics of Personal Followup*, and in it, he gives this definition. "Disciple is a Christian who's growing in conformity to Christ, is achieving fruit in evangelism, and is working in follow up to conserve his fruit. Discipleship training is the spiritual work of developing spiritual maturity and spiritual reproductiveness in the life of a Christian." And I like this. Someone else said, "Discipleship is the process of bringing saints to a mature relationship with Christ and his body." There's a great preacher by the name of Ian Bounds, who wrote many, many books on prayer. And he said this of preachers, and many of you are going to become preachers in this country and around the world. He said, "Preachers are more than sermon makers. They are men makers, Saint makers." I'd like to add. All of us are that All of us are to be men and women makers. We are to be disciple makers.

Paul H. Dixon:

The one who set the greatest example for us in this area of discipling is none other than our Lord. We have examples in the Old Testament, we have the David and Jonathan discipling that takes place, Elijah and Elisha, Moses and Joshua. But no one quite like Jesus. His ministry began with calling out Peter and Andrew and James and John, the call to follow him. The call was to be my disciple. You recall, he did not say, "Come and listen to me." He said, "Come and follow me."

Paul H. Dixon:

Sometimes easy to get people to listen to us. It's difficult to get people to follow us and what we're teaching. And that's what Jesus was all about. I would think that Ephesians 4:11 and 12, that talks about God's gift to the church, basically it talks about the saints and discipling them so that they, in turn, Second Timothy 2:2, take the body of truth and pass it on to others. Any place you turn in the New Testament, you come back to this premise. He started his ministry by calling people to follow him, and he closed his ministry by giving a great commission that said, "Go out, and don't just win them, but train them. Be disciple makers."

Paul H. Dixon:

He called 12 in between the time he started and the time he closed his Earthly ministry. And I want you to see this in your Bibles, if you've never marked it before. Mark 3:13 and 14. Exciting passage on discipleship. He's calling out the 12 and he goes up into a mountain. "He calleth unto him," Mark 3:13, "whom he would and they came unto him, and he ordained 12 that they should be with him and that he might send them forth to preach." It's the with him principle. He called the 12 so that they could be with him, so that they could spend time with him, so they could eat together, so that they could watch him perform miracles, so they could watch how he treated people. So they could pick up his spirit of ministry and for people, to be with him.

Paul H. Dixon:

And isn't that really what discipleship is? Men and women, you'll never be a disciple maker if you're a loner. Discipleship says you've got to have people with you. And it also suggests to me that you have a program and you have a plan about who's going to be with you. Not just people you're comfortable

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with, but people who need somebody who cares, and people who are at this level who need to be moved up and not. But you say, "Present, I'm all the way down here. I need somebody to disciple me." So do I. You'll hear me say this many times in this four part series. All of us need a Paul, and all of us need a Timothy. We all need someone who's building into our lives and we need to be building into someone else's life. And I don't care where you are, there's someone else you can have with you that you can build into their life. And in the process, this is what happens. We all build into each other's lives and we all begin to move to a new level.

Paul H. Dixon:

The with him principle that Jesus taught us in this matter of discipleship. But even as he called out the 12, he picked out three of the 12 to concentrate on. And we know the time that he spent with Peter, James and John. And is it any wonder that when we come to the book of Acts in chapter four and verse 13, a watching world, when they commented about those early believers, what did they say? They took knowledge that they had been with Jesus. I still remember going to that football game across the street at our local high school. Mrs. Dixon and I were over there from time to time through the years. But especially when our son played on the football team, Scott. And Scott graduated from there and from here and from Dallas. But I happened to be seated next to, as I recall, a young college student by the name of Gary Gromacki.

Paul H. Dixon:

This was an unusual young man, Gary Gromacki, from the time I've known him, always had a heart for God. And he does to this day. He's also a Cedarville Dallas product and he is a pastor serving God with a wonderful family today. Gary Gromacki was the kind of kid in high school who would go home and listen to Christian radio and take notes on the preaching on the radio. I think it was Bob Cook who was preaching. And he'd take notes on Bob Cook's messages. So we were watching the game and Cedarville, as I recall, we went undefeated that year, and they were blowing out the other team and it was a little boring. And I just turned to Gary and said, "Who are you discipling?" He said, "Who am I what?" I said, "Who are you discipling?" He said, "I don't guess I'm discipling anybody."

Paul H. Dixon:

"Oh, I just wondered." We went on. Next day, I'm driving across campus. It's a Saturday and there's Gary Gromacki. And he starts waving like this. And he said, "Hey," he said, "I couldn't get over last night when I went to bed, what you said. And I got to thinking, I ought to be doing this. So I came up with the idea last night that I would like to disciple your son and Harold Green's son." He started listing some of our faculty and staff sons that he'd like to get involved in their lives, who were in high school. And he said, "I'll do that with them if you'll disciple me. You teach me one day, and I'll pass on what you teach me to the other kids the next day." And I said, "Well, Gary, I can't speak for my son, but whether he will or he won't, I'll do my end, and I'd be glad to have you in a group."

Paul H. Dixon:

And that was back at a time when we were having a group of guys into our home at 6:30 in the morning once a week. And it was just really a neat, neat time. And so I started this new group with Gary and some others. Gary Gromacki went on to have a marvelous ministry in the lives of our sons. Incidentally, all of our sons are living for God today, and it's a marvel considering the fathers that they have. But one of the reasons, I believe, is because the ministry that a young college student had in their lives back so

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many years ago. Gary Gromacki went onto Dallas Seminary and he wrote some literature for Dallas Seminary on discipleship that at one point they were even using in some of the classes. This with him principle that Jesus taught us is what it's all about. I am saying, young men and young women, get involved in a group, get involved in lives, start praying about it and make this your heartbeat to follow the example of our Lord and to practice discipleship. I want you to close singing with me this morning. Would you? (singing)