

Paul H. Dixon
Christ Above All in Discipleship, Part 4
circa 1993

Unedited Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

We have been studying together the topic of Christ above all in discipleship. We've looked at the New Testament and Jesus is our example. His brief earthly ministry was spent pouring His life into a few men. Then He commissioned that early church to go about doing the same thing: evangelism and discipleship. The two are inseparable. We see the Apostle Paul as he goes from city to city and town to town, establishing churches, writing back love letters, writing back follow-up letters. Instead of going on to establish more churches, often going back to check up to see how the saints are doing because he was committed not only to evangelism, but to discipleship.

Paul H. Dixon:

And the challenge has been for us to spend the rest of our quarter and academic year, though we have but few days doing the same. And to begin developing a mindset as to how we are going to do this and practice God's truth this summer back in your hometowns and your home churches or on your MIS team or your gospel team. Wherever it is that you're going to work and you're going to serve the Lord this summer. And then it's a challenge for us to spend the rest of our lives. Seniors, graduating seniors, discipling a spouse, discipling a child, having them disciple us, pour into our lives. And wherever we serve God in whatever capacity, whether it's behind the pulpit or out in a pew that we are going to be sold on the biblical principle of discipleship.

Paul H. Dixon:

It was exciting for me to have down through the years young men who came into our home and would start at 6:30 in the morning. And as we would study together and endeavor to pass on this principle of discipleship over the last 23 years that we've lived in Cedarville. And I think of one especially, I knew him when he was but a boy because I would hold evangelistic meetings in his church in Toledo. And then I watched him as a teenager. And then as he came to be a part of the Cedarville College student body, and I watched him graduate and somehow this whole principle of discipleship he bought into it.

Paul H. Dixon:

In his first church as an associate pastor, he said, "I took those same things and I passed him onto our youth group." And he's a senior pastor today in one of the leading churches in Milwaukee. And he tells me he still practices this principle of discipleship. He now serves on our board of trustees at Cedarville College. "But as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. Commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also," said Paul to Timothy.

Paul H. Dixon:

Last week, we started looking at the demands of discipleship. If we're going to commit our lives to this, what kind of people do we have to be? And we saw that discipleship demands holiness, discipleship demands humility, discipleship demands discipline. We're going to tell people to follow us and we have to be good role models. And we saw that we need to be disciplined in the Word of God as Jesus used the Old Testament 160 times in the presence of His disciples. And as it says in Ezra 7:10, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes in judgment." We need to think it. We need to memorize it.

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Paul H. Dixon:

The Word of God needs to become a part of our mindset, our lives if we're going to disciple others. We need to be disciplined in prayer. I really doubt that much discipleship takes place without prayer. There's a sense where we pray about those we're going to pour our lives into. We see Jesus praying so much in the presence of His disciples so much so that they said, "Lord teach us to pray." But I'm convinced that He prayed as to who would be the 12 and He prayed about who would be the three. And surely we would do the same.

Paul H. Dixon:

Every major event in our Lord's life was accompanied by prayer. You go through the Book of Acts and you go through the epistles, there's a major emphasis on prayer. I just returned late last night, got home about midnight from a trip to Phoenix. I was invited to speak at the national conference or I should say the area conference for the Southwest Association of the Conservative Baptist of America. And we met in the Palmcroft Baptist Church in Phoenix.

Paul H. Dixon:

I spoke on Thursday night and Friday and Saturday. And then Sunday morning, I had the morning services at Palmcroft before catching the plane home. Pastor Don Ingram has been there for six years. Some of our faculty will remember that Don Ingram pastored the Church of the Open Door in Elyria, Ohio. And often we would have him come and speak in on our platform. And I'm always impressed with Don. I remember when he told me, "I've been here at the Open Door, I think 17, 18 years. And the work is so big and I just need to go to a smaller place." And so he goes to this 500 size church in Phoenix.

Paul H. Dixon:

And a week ago yesterday, they had 2,000. It's bigger than the church that he left. And I've tried to evaluate what is it that makes Don Ingram tick? He's one of the really refreshing individuals that I've had the privilege of meeting in my life. One of the things was very clear as we met yesterday morning. Before the service started, we had a two services yesterday morning. And a little after eight o'clock, we were meeting with a number of other people and there on my chair as a I knelt to pray were the guidelines as to how to pray for the church and how to pray for the service. It's something they've just started this year. And they have people praying all during the days.

Paul H. Dixon:

And he said, "Brother Paul, we've seen our offerings go up \$5,000 a week. We've seen our attendance go up 200 a week. And we are seeing decisions in every service since we started this new prayer emphasis." That shouldn't surprise us. God works when God's people pray. And if we are going to be discipled, we have to be committed and disciplined in prayer.

Paul H. Dixon:

Number four, discipleship demands love. I still remember the student who came to me one time and said, "I want to be a pastor." I remember it so vividly. For whatever reason, I think we had been talking about discipleship in an open meeting at Grace Baptist Church here in town, and I'd invited a bunch of students to come. And it was at time of Q&A and then afterward this kid came up to me privately. He

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said, "I really want to pastor, but I have a major problem." I said, "What's your problem?" He said, "I don't much care for people." And I said, "You have a problem."

Paul H. Dixon:

You can't be a discipler if you don't love people. Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one toward another." Let's just look at John 15 for a few moments. Often we think about John 15 as a fruit-bearing passage and it is crucial when it comes to that great truth. But in John 15:8, 'Herein is my father glorified that you bear much fruit, so shall you be my disciples' Now He is talking to His disciples about bearing fruit. "And as the father hath loved me, so have I loved you. And I want you to continue in my love."

Paul H. Dixon:

One of the keys to Jesus' discipling was how much He loved the disciples. "If you keep my commandment, you shall abide in my love even as I've kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things. Have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you." If you want to be a discipler, ask God to give you a great love for people in general, but especially for a few that you can pour your life into.

Paul H. Dixon:

Number five. Discipleship demands patience. God is never in a hurry to build men and to build women. May I have a heart to heart with you? I've been at this in Christian higher education for a good while. Going back to when I was a student. And I greatly appreciate those who always manifest a heart for God who sit there right now listening to this series on discipleship and you are excited about it and you're buying into it and you're saying, "I want to spend my life doing this." And yet, when I was a student there, it was a segment of the student body who really could care less.

Paul H. Dixon:

And the "spiritual ones" had a tendency to write off the "unspiritual ones" and to get fairly judgmental and critical. And in reality, developing such a spirit that becomes unspiritual in itself. Hang in there with those who seemingly have little interest. When the record is written and all of our lives have been lived, some of those who today seemingly have so little interest will have accomplished the most. Don't ever give up on each other.

Paul H. Dixon:

I've had students graduate from here and all they heard in chapel and I wasn't sure they ever listened. All they heard in chapel didn't take till five years later after they graduated. We must be patient. We have to be patient with the men and the women that God is working in their lives as He's working in our lives.

Paul H. Dixon:

Number six, discipleship demands sacrifice. I want you to look at 2 Corinthians 12:15 and what the Apostle Paul said about the people at Corinth and his relationship to them. And I would remind you, this was not an easy group to love that this was a group with lots of problems. Doctrinally, they didn't get

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along well at times. There was division. There was strife. Some said, "I'm of Paul." Some said, "I'm of Apollos." Some said, "I'm of Cephas." Yet, Paul loved them. Maybe no one else did, but Paul did.

Paul H. Dixon:

In 2 Corinthians 12:15, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Wow. There are times when you feel like that as a parent, the more I love you, the less I'm loved. Paul said, "I don't care. That's up to you how you respond to my love. I can't control that, but what I can control is I'm telling you I am willing to spend my entire life on you." That's sacrifice. You can't be involved the rest of your life in other people's lives unless you're willing to sacrifice. It's going to cost you time. You're going to have to make people your priority. It's going to cost you money. It's going to cost you home.

Paul H. Dixon:

I've recommended to you and still continue. I would hope everyone in the student body would take home this summer Dawson Trotman's biography, Daws. And if you're going to hit the bookstore, all of you be sure and give them warning so they can get enough copies in here before you leave. But I would encourage you to get it and take it home and read it this summer. Dawson Trotman's children said they could not remember a night that they did not have someone eating at their table and usually sleeping on their floor. As a family, they committed themselves to pouring their lives into people. That's sacrifice.

Paul H. Dixon:

Some of you are going to go out and you're going to build beautiful homes and you're going to have beautiful furnishings and beautiful carpet. Don't keep people out of your home because you're going to be afraid that they're going to mess it up. If they mess it up, that's okay. They are worth more than the carpet. They are worth more than the furnishings. This is our chance to give our lives for the significant, rather than give our lives for the mediocre. I appreciate that it would come today that we would honor these two men and other teachers as impact teachers of the year. It takes sacrifice.

Paul H. Dixon:

Dean Carlson, who came from Illinois, his wife was invited to be a part of this. She finally had to say no because she's discipling someone in her Sunday school class and said that's more important than being with you today for that honor. We're talking about sacrifice. Dawson Trotman didn't live to be a very old man. As I recall, he was 50-ish and he was at word of life with Jack Wyrzten. Jack and Daws and some young people were in Jack's boat and they were out there in the middle of Schroon Lake and I think Daws had said to a couple of the girls, he said, "Do you know how to swim?"

Paul H. Dixon:

I don't know whether they said yes or they said no, but somehow they hit a wave or made a turn or something, and these girls went in the water and Dawson Trotman went right in after them. I think he got one to the boat and then he got the other and he kind of held this one up until Jack could reach down and take that one out of the water. And when Jack looked back, Daws was gone. He sunk to the bottom of the lake. His life was over. When the word got back to his wife, Lila to his daughters it was, yes, the heartache and all the pain and the sorrow that went with it. But they said, "Thank God we had the privilege of living these few years with a man who lived and died investing his life in others." Discipleship demands sacrifice.

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Paul H. Dixon:

And number seven, discipleship demands commitment. All of us, if we're going to accomplish anything have to decide what we're going to commit our lives to. We all have to say somewhere along the line, "I'm going to give my life for something or for somebody." And what I'm asking you to do is to consider seriously following the example of Jesus in the example of the New Testament and giving your lives in exchange for others. It's called the multiplication principle.

Paul H. Dixon:

For too long, we've been adding in the church and God wants us to multiply. It's the age-old illustration would you rather have a dollar a day? If I gave you a dollar, would you rather have a dollar a day the rest of your life or what if I gave you a penny today and doubled it every day the rest of your life? In the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, they demonstrate this principle by having a display and they put a grain of sand on a checkerboard square, and then they double it. Then the next day on that square, you'll find two and then there are four and eight and 16 and 32 and 64 and 128 and 256. And by now, the sand is rolling out on the floor and they jump down to one of the squares. I forget however it is on that display.

Paul H. Dixon:

Let's say it's around the 50th square. They said, "How much sand would be on this square if we've continued this principle?" And the answer is enough sand to cover the whole subcontinent of India five feet deep. That's multiplication. That's what they did in the early church. They start out adding to the church and then it says the disciples were multiplied, and then it says the churches are multiplied and that's how they reach their will for Christ. And oh, if we would buy into this, this New Testament principle that's the way that we're going to out the Great Commission.

Paul H. Dixon:

Early in my Christian life I saw this principle and God in His sovereignty allowed me just to witness it and to be a part of it. When I was in College and I was approaching every summer and praying about what to do, one summer I went to the Virgin Islands and spent the summer working with young people. And another summer I decided to travel the United States in evangelistic meetings. I was 20 years old. It was 1959 and so another fellow and I just wrote pastors all over the country and said, "Hey, would you like to have a youth evangelistic meeting?" And we booked enough meetings for the entire summer and so we traveled all summer on evangelistic campaigns.

Paul H. Dixon:

And then the next summer I was getting married and I figured I'd better make some money. So I got a job in Cincinnati at the Taylor Company. Now, they made what was known as the Taylor Tot. Some of you remember they put children in these and they wheeled them around. And so I had a part in manufacturing Taylor Tots and I worked on the second shift and get off about midnight and go home. It was hot. It was dirty. We were chrome plating pieces of things. And it was an interesting experience, but this particular day I got up and after my sleep and I had to get a haircut. So I went down to my car. It was a 1953 Dodge. That was the most amazing car you'd ever want to see. Those 1953 Dodges had automatic transmissions.

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And let me tell you what, they only manufactured these for a while so it was a real gem. What you did is you pushed down on the accelerator and then you took your foot off of the accelerator and you listened for a pin to drop, and you'd hear a click. And now you could step down on the accelerator again. I mean, I could drive up to a light and boy, I could really take off ... Click ... That's really a fascinating way to shift a car. I always kept that jewel. It was black and I always kept that jewel polished to a high shine and had lots of chrome on. It was really a neat car, kept it for years, but it didn't like the rain.

Paul H. Dixon:

Chrysler's come a long way. If it rained, in fact, if it duded it wouldn't start. And usually if I took the distributor cap off and wiped it and worked on the spark plug wires and things like that, I could get it started. But this day, I couldn't get it started and so I just shut the hood and I started walking a mile or two to the barber shop, got my haircut. I'm walking home, this car drives over by the side of the road and said, "Hey, Dixs, you need a ride?" The only people who ever call of me Dixs were kids I went to high school with.

Paul H. Dixon:

And I looked over there and an ROTC uniform was a guy who's about three years ahead of me in high school by the name of Jim. And I said, "Yeah, I need a ride, Jim." So he was driving me home. He said, "What are you doing?" So I told him. I said, "By the way I'm preaching now and Sunday night I'm preaching at the Norwood Baptist Church. Would you like to bring your wife and come?" He was a senior at the University of Cincinnati. Well, he said, "I'm an agnostic, but I'll come."

Paul H. Dixon:

So he came on Sunday night and I looked out there and there sat Jim and his wife. And when I gave the invitation, I said, "Is there anybody here? Who'd like to raise your hand for prayer and say 'I'm not a Christian and I want you to pray for me tonight?'" And Jim raised his hand. I said, "I'm going over to a room in the hall. Anyone who would like to come and just ask me questions or talk to me, I'll be over there." Before long, Jim came in, he said, "Now, remember, I'm an agnostic. I don't believe the Bible." I said, "That's okay. It's all right. Evidently you're interested in talking." He said, "Yeah, I'd like to talk."

Paul H. Dixon:

So we sat there and he said, "Would you tell me why you believe the Bible?" And so I told him. When he got finished, he looked at me and said, "I'll believe it." He said, "I don't know what, but I'll believe it." But he said, "I'm afraid that it's all so emotional. I've never been in a service like this. I've never been moved like this. I'm afraid it's all emotion." He said, "I'm going to have to give it some thought." I said, "Fine. And if while you think about it, you die and you'll go to hell. But if you want to think about it, you go ahead."

Paul H. Dixon:

I said, "I'll tell you what, if you want to get saved, you be at my house Tuesday at two o'clock. You think about it for two days." Tuesday at two o'clock, there was a knock on the door and there stood Jim. And he said, "I want to get saved." And I took him up to my room and had the privilege of leading him to Christ. And he said, "Now I want to learn the Bible." And so I spent some time with him teaching him the Bible. And he said, "Could I come back tomorrow?" And he'd come back the next day and I'd teach him the Bible. He said, "Can I come back tomorrow?" And this went on for two weeks. And one day he said,

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"I can't come tomorrow. I have ROTC practice. Would you come to the campus? I'll skip lunch if you'll teach me the Bible."

Paul H. Dixon:

And Jim Carraher is on the Board of Trustees of Cedarville College today. An agnostic who in the sovereignty of God came across my path and we had the privilege of seeing him come to Christ and who loved the Word of God and wanted to grow. And early on, I found out at least something of what it is to be involved in the greatest ministry of all, the ministry of discipleship. God help you and God help me this summer and the rest of our lives to be committed to making an impact, impact teachers, passing truth onto others who will in turn pass it on to others. Have a great day.