



Developing as a Disciple at Northwest

February 10, 2019

There's something special about gathering around a campfire, especially when the weather is brisk and darkness is falling. People seem to be instinctively drawn to the fire. Similarly, we need the warmth and light of God in a cold dark world. We need to gather together in his presence to be blessed by him and drawn together. There are no walls. Everyone is welcome to come share the warmth. You can't just look on at a distance. You need to come on into the circle. Once you have, you don't dare try to survive by yourself, like a branch that is pulled out of the fire.

Once we Discover who Jesus is, Decide to put our faith in him and follow him, we spend the rest of our lives growing more Devoted to Him as disciples. I believe we will _____ best, in the way God wants us to if we connect deeply with a specific group of disciples, a church. We need to come on into the circle around the campfire.

We may _____ this. There is a part of us that would rather avoid the responsibility of actually putting down roots with other Christians. We may find it easier and more comfortable to keep some distance. Others resist the word "member" itself. It may seem meaningless, institutional or exclusive. Some have felt it can be a matter of bait and switch. To be fair, the Bible doesn't talk about membership in the way we usually do today. The word actually refers to a body part (Matthew 5:29-30; James 3:5) and

occurs in passages where the church is compared to a human body (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). One cannot require membership as we think of it today based on these passages.

On the other hand, I still believe we will develop best as disciples of Jesus if we _____ with a specific group of disciples of Jesus. It will help us "enter the circle" so that we become doers and instead of mere observers, teach us to love all the people "gathered around the fire," including those who are different from us instead of avoiding them, and help us learn to trust, respect, and follow spiritual leaders instead of just doing whatever we please. These things may challenge us, but they will also help us grow to be more like Christ, which is our goal.

Developing at Northwest means utilizing the _____ we offer (worship, Bible study, fellowships, groups, service opportunities) to develop as a disciple of Jesus (Luke 6:40). It means developing _____ with the disciples here and learning to love them as Christ loves us (cf. Romans 12:4-5, 10). It means sharing our _____ of developing disciples and finding a way to get involved in it (Matthew 28:18-20). It means learning to _____ the spiritual leadership of elders and ministers who have been appointed to guide us on the journey (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 16:15-16; Hebrews 13:7, 17).

If you have decided to follow Jesus and are devoted to him, we would love to have you develop as a disciple with us at Northwest. We want to _____ our vision, core beliefs, and ways of doing things with you so that you can see if we are the group of disciples you would like to develop with. If so, we will provide training and opportunities to help you get involved in serving others and advancing the vision of Developing Disciples of Jesus.

