**Committed Means ‘Remaining’**

**4S Kickoff Gathering**

• **Jesus tells us to “go make disciples of all nations”—**but He doesn’t mean what we think He means. Our version of discipleship is a form of mental assent. Jesus is asking His followers to invite others into a Rabbi-Talmid relationship…

• **Jesus described the Rabbi-Talmid relationship using a Vine/Branch illustration**, reiterating the “mechanics” of a discipling relationship twice for emphasis: “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).

• **To be formed by Jesus is to remain in Him.** For a Talmid, that meant leaving your parents and your community to live in the same household with your Rabbi—eating together, learning together, laughing together, weeping together. The life of a Talmid meant **immersive togetherness.** And that’s the best way to describe what “remain” means. For us, the obvious follow-up question is: *How do we remain in someone we can’t see, hear, touch, taste, or smell?*

• **There is no more important question for us to answer in our life**—it is central to everything. Think of “remaining” as a direct expression of Jesus’s branch-in-the-vine metaphor. It is union and communion at the most intimate level. In his fantasy novel *At the Back of the North Wind*, the great Scottish writer and pastor George MacDonald explores “remaining” in this interchange between the little boy Diamond and his mother. Diamond is singing a lullaby to his baby sister, whom he has nicknamed “Dulcimer.” His mother has never heard the song before…

*“You never made that song, Diamond,” said his mother.*

*“No, mother. I wish I had. No, I don’t. That would be to take it from somebody else. But it's mine for all that.”*

*“What makes it yours?”*

*“I love it so.”*

*“Does loving a thing make it yours?”*

*“I think so, mother—at least more than anything else can. If I didn't love baby (which couldn’t be, you know) she wouldn’t be mine a bit. But I do love baby, and baby is my very own Dulcimer.”*

*“The baby's mine, Diamond.”*

*“That makes her the more mine, mother.”*

*“How do you make that out?”*

*“Because you’re mine, mother.”*

*“Is that because you love me?”*

*“Yes, just because. Love makes the only myness,” said Diamond.*

• When we come to love Jesus as He really is, not the edited versions of Him that strip away the beauty of His magnetic and confounding personality, we are entering into “myness” with Him. Remaining in Him means to behold this beauty—to savor the way He is until His other-ness saturates our soul and we are infected with awe.

• **Ask:** What are some reasons for what we call “the decline of the church”—the challenges the church is facing today—stuff you’ve thought about or heard?

• **These are all likely reasons, but not the REASON.** I’d like to suggest this…

-**Kids and adults are leaving the church BECAUSE THEY CAN**

• **John 6:68—“Eat and Drink Me”—**Peter tells Jesus he’s not going anywhere—identity, not “discipline.” **“Where else would I go? Only You have words of life and truth.”** defines discipleship.

- **He wants pigs, not chickens…** The French Laundry T-shirt slogan for those who win its “customer service” award—“Be the Pig”

- Chickens have a transactional relationship with Jesus

- Pigs have a transformational relationship with Jesus

- **Story of Job—**The entire account of Job exactly mirrors our transactional expectations of God, and ends with God shattering that equation…

- The goal of discipleship is to help people get to a place where they can say what Peter said—**“Where else would we go? Only You have words of life and truth.”** The path to this place is relational, and only those who’ve “tasted and seen” the beauty in Jesus’s heart are on it.