

## **MAKING DISCIPLES – SOME KEY POINTS**

Barry Pierce, 2/2/2014

MATTHEW 28:18-20

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

Question:

What do you think when you hear the word “disciple”? – a guy with a beard and sandals, or a guy with a beard and a cell phone?

Hopefully, both!

-The above passage from Matthew 28 is known as “the Great Commission” -- Jesus’ assignment to his followers.

-It applies to all Christians & all Christian churches till he returns.

-The Church of Jesus Christ is to be a disciple-making institution.

-The Church exists **for** making disciples.

-The Church exists **by** making disciples.

-The world-wide scope (“all nations”) of the commission reflects God’s goal to be known and worshipped by all the nations (Greek: “ethne” = nation/ethnic groups) He made for himself, for their good and His glory.

-Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 reveal that God will indeed redeem people from every nation.

-The Great Commission is His appointed means for making that a reality.

-After 2000 yrs, this assignment is yet to be completed.

-In Matthew 24:14, Jesus said the good news will be preached “to all nations, and then the end will come.” Not yet completed; still a work in progress; closer than ever before!

-Making disciples **locally** is an essential part of making disciples **globally**.

-Local disciple-making is the only way to produce disciples of sufficient quality & quantity to disciple all the nations of the world.

-Question:

What is a disciple?

-A disciple is simply another term for Christian, a believer, a follower of Jesus Christ, not a special elite believer.

-The term “disciple” “communicates the idea of a learning believer—someone who is growing in his faith and his love for the Lord....not the moment of salvation, but the lifetime of sanctification that follows..... a lifetime of spiritual growth and increasing godliness...’if you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine’ (John 8:21).” (John MacArthur).

-“God’s plan is to: deliver a man, develop a man, and deploy the man -- to reach still others” (Leroy Eims).

-This final step is also known as “spiritual multiplication” or “spiritual reproduction”.

-Notice how God's goal in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, is for his image-bearers to multiply so that his goodness would be displayed more & more:

- Old Testament: God commanded to his image-bearers to reproduce & multiply **physically**:

"be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth" (Genesis 1).

- New Testament: God commanded Christ's image-bearers to reproduce & multiply **spiritually**:

"make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28).

-2 Timothy 2:2 gives us another view of spiritual reproduction or multiplication:

Paul writes to Timothy:

"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

-The goal is to pass it on to others, who will also pass it on to still others.

2 illustrations:

1. An old TV shampoo commercial showed a satisfied customer who "told 2 friends, and they told 2 friends, and so on, and so on, and so on..."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCjmDI4AJlk>

-The goal is to re-produce **re-producers**, who will ensure the message of salvation **repeatedly continues** on to others.

2. A church in eastern Massachusetts modeled this principle when one woman disciplined/trained another woman, one-on-one, to faithfully follow Jesus. The second woman then went on to similarly disciple others, who themselves also disciplined others, and so on. Soon, over 130 women had been disciplined and trained to follow Jesus and to help others do the same.

-Without such "follow-up", people who come to Christ as savior often fall away and never learn to follow him faithfully as Lord. Disciple-making must include this additional element of on-going growth & development, or the process fails.

-Dawson Trotman, founder of the Christian ministry called "the Navigators" discovered this key principle and developed it in his last message entitled, "Born to Reproduce" – a message which has influenced millions and is available free online:

<http://www.discipleshiplibrary.com/pdfs/aa094.pdf>

-Trotman and the Bible list several reasons Christians fail to reproduce spiritually.

Here are four:

1. **Lack of union.** As a man & woman must have physical union to reproduce physically, so also a believer must have spiritual union with Christ to reproduce spiritually. Failure to abide in Christ results in fruitless-ness, just as surely as abiding in him results in fruit-full-ness. John 15:5ff: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing... this is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples."

2. **Disease.** As physical disease can prevent physical reproduction, so also spiritual disease can prevent spiritual reproduction. Unconfessed/unrepented sin is the disease that can prevent you from reproducing spiritually. Psalms 51 & 32 tell us King David was so weighed down with sin, that it impacted both his spiritual and physical being. He was effectively incapacitated. When he finally confessed his sin and repented, the healing, restoration, and joy -- were over-flowing, leading him to again proclaim God's goodness to others.
  - 1 John 1:9 says "if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
  - The cure for this disease is to confess, repent, and be restored; then you can again be fruitful and multiply, as you were created to do.
  
3. **Fear.** Fear of rejection, failure, or of what others might think.
 

Proverbs 29:25 says, "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe."

  - Courage is fear that has said its prayers.
  - Focus on your fears and your God becomes small. Focus on your God and your fears become small.
  - Don't let fear keep you from pleasing your Lord and helping those who need you, and finding the immense joy and satisfaction of being used by God in someone else's life for eternity.
  - You were blessed to be a blessing.
  - People of the world tend to pass-on blame. God's people are to pass-on blessings.
  - There's simply nothing better. Don't miss it.
  - 1 John tells us: "perfect love drives out fear."
  - Love was Christ's motive in saving you. Establish it as your motive for helping others -- and watch what happens.
  
4. **Busy-ness with other things.** God's main thing should be the main thing of His people. Don't be distracted by lesser things. Human needs are endless; not every need is a calling from God for you to address.
  - Luke 10:38ff: Mary & Martha had different responses to Jesus' visit:
 

"Mary...sat at the Lord's feet listening to what He said.... But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made." Jesus said, "Martha, Martha...you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."
  - Feeding company isn't bad, it's a good thing.
  - Here's the issue: are you willing to give up the good things, for the best?
  - If you're too busy for God's will for your life, you're too busy.

Question:

How can I make disciples?

Many factors are involved –

Here are 2 that are indispensable:

1. First of all: **be a faithful, fruitful disciple yourself.**
  - You can't lead someone to a place you've never been. You can't lead others,

until you yourself have learned to follow --- Jesus.

-Work on being the person God wants you to be in Christ. And aim to become yourself, the person you'd like others to be.

2. Realize that discipling is:

***teaching and modeling: radical love and obedience to Jesus Christ.***

-Teaching is essential but not enough; Jesus taught his disciples the truth and showed them by His example.

-You do the same: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

-Obedience is essential, yet often overlooked. We often think that because we have read it or understand it, that we have obeyed it. Not true.

-Jesus said in Matthew 7:21ff – that many will claim to belong to Him. But He will say to them : "I never knew you." Why? Because they did not obey God.

-The very best motive for obedience is love (fear works too, but it must ultimately be replaced with love).

-Four times in John 14, Jesus linked love and obedience:

v. 15 "If you love Me, keep My commands."

v. 21" Whoever has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me."

v. 23 "Anyone who loves Me will obey My teaching."

v. 24 "Anyone who does not love Me will not obey My teaching. "

-Without love, there will be no meaningful or lasting obedience.

-But, with a heart-full of love for Jesus, the disciple will follow his Savior anywhere, against any opposition, even to death – as millions of his followers have already done.

Conclusion:

What is a disciple?

-A disciple is one who knows Jesus, loves Jesus, and follows Jesus by obeying Him.

-True disciples know & cherish & embrace the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:15, that,

***"... He died for all,  
that those who live  
should no longer live for themselves,  
but for Him who died for them and was raised again."***

His love for us compels us -- to live for Him,

Because He (the best and the greatest of all) is the One who gave so completely of Himself for us – we, who deserved only pain & punishment.

Being loved as we have, how could we not offer ourselves to Him forever, including helping others to know and love Him too!

"Go and make disciples."

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