

Discipleship Seminar, Part II

Indelible Grace Church

Resources:

- * *Discipling*, Mark Dever
- * *Multiply*, Francis Chan/David Platt
- * *Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman
- * *The Gospel Comes With A House Key*, Rosaria Butterfield
- * *Life Together & The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- * *Growing Up*, Robbie Gallaty
- * *One-to-One Bible Reading*, David Helm
- * *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Gordon Fee

Jesus' last command:

*"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20)*

The Greatest Disciple-Maker: Jesus

If you were Jesus, would you do ministry the way Jesus did?

I. The FOCUS of Jesus' disciple-making: A FEW

- Jesus' focus was on people, not programs.
"His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow." (Robert Coleman). He started to gather these men even before he preached a public sermon.
- Jesus' focus was on a few people, not many.
Jesus prioritized the *quality* and *depth* of relationships far more than the number of them. He couldn't effectively disciple everyone, so he selected a few. Some scholars say about 60% of his public ministry was focused on the time with his disciples.
- Jesus' focus on a few wasn't because he couldn't influence the masses. Jesus was so good at attracting crowds, at one point they wanted to "take him by force to make him king" (Jn. 6:15). But he constantly pushed back against superficial popularity (i.e. Jn. 7:4 "*show yourself to the world*"). Time and again, the Gospels tell of Jesus deliberately moving away from the crowds to be with his disciples.

(Mk. 6:31-32) "And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves."

- Jesus' focus wasn't making converts, but making disciples.

If measured by many church standards today, Jesus' ministry wasn't very successful. Of the crowds of people who followed him around, relatively few were converted. Conversions can be made in a moment. Disciples are made over a lifetime.

II. The "FEW" of Jesus' disciple-making: THE TWELVE

- How did Jesus choose the Twelve?

(Lk. 6:12-13a). "*In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and **all night he continued in prayer to God.** And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve...*"

- What kind of men were they?

Most simply stated, they were *ordinary* men.

(Acts 4:13) "*when... they perceived that [Peter and John] were **uneducated, common men,** they were astonished.*"

- They had 3 key characteristics of good disciples:

They were: (1) WILLING, (2) AVAILABLE and (3) TEACHABLE.

❖ (WILLING and AVAILABLE) They willingly left their past lives and availed themselves to follow Jesus wherever he would lead.

❖ (TEACHABLE) If you read throughout the gospels, you'll see evidence of men who were very teachable, willing to be molded by the Creator's hands. They were observant, *constantly* asking questions, willing to share and discuss, obeyed his commands:

(Mk. 9:28) "*...his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"*

(Mk. 10:26) "*And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?"*"

(Mk. 6:30) "*The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.*"

❖ Not just characteristics of good disciples, but they are also for good *disciple-makers*. Disciple-makers are willing, available, and teachable.

- Even among the Twelve, Jesus had an "inner circle"

[Mk. 5:37, on the way to Jarius' dead daughter] "*And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John...*"

[Mk. 9:2, the Transfiguration] “...Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them...”

Inner circles can exist to draw out more intense things in discipleship that only deep intimacy and relationship can provide. [Although the disciples murmured and complained about many things, there is no record of complaint by the other disciples regarding Jesus’ inner circle.]

III. The FORMULA of Jesus’ disciple-making: PRESENCE AND PARTICIPATION

(Mk. 3:14) “And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might **be with him** and he might **send them out**”

- Some scholars estimate that for about 90% of his public ministry, the disciples were with him or nearby. In the last days of Jesus’ life, there’s virtually never a time when the disciples weren’t with him (ex. Gethsemane).
- Jesus modeled life-on-life living and ministry. The disciples watched Jesus: teach, preach, answer questions, heal people, rest, eat, show fatigue, be angry, be sad, mourn, rejoice, comfort, rebuke, challenge, say much, say little, interact with others, etc.
- Perhaps more than anything, Jesus modeled a life devoted to knowing and living out the Word of God.
 - ❖ Altogether there are at least 66 references to the Old Testament in his conversations with the disciples in the 4 Gospels, not including the 90+ allusions to it in his speaking with others.
 - ❖ We can’t make disciples apart from the Word of God. (GC: “Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded”)
 - ❖ The cornerstone of a discipling relationship is the Word of God. Without it, there’s no discipling. It’s just guru-ism or passing down of personal preferences. “Speaking truth in love” means speaking from a source.
- Being “with them” was an extremely inefficient, time-consuming, and slow way to spend his valuable time in ministry.

FOR US IN THE BAY AREA, **TIME** IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT, MEASURABLE COST AND BARRIER TO EFFECTIVELY MAKING DISCIPLES

Justin Buzzard: “If you don’t have time for discipleship, you probably don’t have time to be a Christian.”

IV. The FAR-SIGHTEDNESS of Jesus' disciple-making

- Jesus had a long-term, eternal perspective. He wasn't concerned about immediate ROI.
- Jesus didn't even get to really see them in their fully matured state! The disciples did their most faithful and fruitful work after Jesus ascended to heaven.

Mark Dever (*Discipling*, pg. 34): *"Discipling is the only way I can evangelize non-Christians and equip Christians in that one place where I can never travel—the future beyond my life. Discipling others now is how I try to leave time-bombs of grace."*

We need to have a holy imagination for those we disciple!

- Jesus focused his life on doing things on earth that he couldn't do in heaven.

OTHER THOUGHTS:

- Time and again, Jesus describes the cost of discipleship to his followers and tells them they must choose God over all else.
- Many of the crowd turned away from Jesus because they were unwilling to count the cost of following him.

Do you know the gospel? Have you counted the cost of following Jesus?

Summary: Jesus' primary earthly ministry focused around a few ordinary men that he would be with, consecrate, and send out. Jesus modeled life-on-life discipleship with them, with an emphasis on the Word of God.

Jesus's plan from eternity past for the gospel to reach the ends of the earth was dependent on these 12 ordinary men he walked with. This is amazing!

OTHER THOUGHTS:

*On one level, anyone can disciple others. On an upper-tier ministry level, some need training.

*Discipleship is not a program! Don't pigeonhole discipling into one form or program. Formal DGs are not the end goal – *it's not even the highest form of discipleship*. Discipling can take many forms.

*We must be faithful in the season we are in, with the people God has placed in our lives.

*Much of modeling is in having people simply observe how you live and asking questions. Get people in your house! Be hospitable!

*Don't be afraid of making mistakes – mistakes are part of discipleship too.

*TRY IT! Jesus promised both his power and his presence – trust in the Holy Spirit to do what man cannot.