

Living the Great Commission – Part 3

Discipleship – No More Orphans!

1. You might notice this strange looking fruit tree near me. What do you see that is odd about it?
 - a. It isn't alive, yet it has fruit on it.
 - b. It has different kinds of fruit on it.
 - c. Why is that so odd?
2. All the way back in the Book of Genesis , “And God said, *"Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*”
 - a. Interestingly enough, the plants and trees obeyed God in producing fruit after its own kind.
 - b. It is their nature to do so. Apple trees bear apples, Lemon trees bear lemons, and Fichus trees don't bear fruit unless it is taped to them!
3. **We are commanded to bear fruit.** Jesus compared our lives to trees and plants in the fact that healthy ones bear fruit. Unhealthy ones don't bear fruit. A dead tree won't bear fruit. But *it is the nature of a live tree to bear fruit “after its own kind.”*
 - a. Over the past two weeks, we have been talking about being and making disciples. We learned that in order to be a disciple, you must also be a disciple maker. A disciple bears fruit after his own kind. This is consistent with John 15:
 - i. John 15:8 *“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”*
 - ii. Are you bearing fruit?
 - iii. Are people attracted to your faith and your walk with God?
 - iv. Do people want what you have?
 - v. Do you have an earnest desire for people to know God like you do?
 - vi. Dallas Trottman, founder of the Navigators, was trying to recruit counselors for a Billy Graham crusade in a large metropolitan city. He made a number of phone calls to supporting churches when he would ask them “Could we have the names of the men and women in your congregation who know their bibles well enough to lead someone to Christ.” The church secretary of a rather large church replied, “could you repeat the qualifications again?” Mr. Trotman did. After a long pause, she replied, “You know, we did have a man like that in our church once, but he moved away.”
 - vii. This is the tragedy of the church, when people know their bibles well enough to quote promises but not well enough to share their faith with another person, either evangelistically or to disciple one another.
 - b. Part of the problem for many of us is that we learned from our church culture how to “act like a Christian” but we never learned biblically what a Christian (disciple) actually is.
 - i. **Many of us are spiritual orphans**, either through our own choices or simply the neglect of our church leaders, or a combination of both.
 - ii. We had no one to “parent” us in our walk with God...or if someone offered to, we figured it was inconvenient or something we could do on our own.
 - iii. As a consequence, we failed to build a lifestyle of following Jesus with an whole and undivided heart.
 - iv. Oh sure, we have some evidence of spiritual life...God answers our prayers, we go to church and experience a sense of God's presence, sin still makes us feel bad, and we still pray when things get tough. We have got just enough of Christianity to keep us from being infectious! (like when you get a flu vaccination, it builds your antibodies up so you don't get the real thing.)

- v. Perhaps somewhere along the way we went on autopilot in our walk with God, maybe because our lives settled down, our crisis passed, or we got to enjoy a time of calm prosperity.
 - vi. But in the end, the problem remains that we haven't been disciplined, taught, mentored, guided, parented...in our faith!
- c. 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 *"You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, 12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."*
- i. A mentor exhorts, encourages, implores his mentee just like a father would his own children...**so that** *"you will walk in a manner WORTHY OF THE GOD who calls you into His own Kingdom and glory."*
 - ii. **How many of us have had someone invest a year in us teaching us how to live as a Christian?** Raise your hands. (betting 4 people raise their hands).
 - iii. Orphans! Most all of us! We have a Heavenly Father but no earthly manifestation of Him!
 - iv. Let me see if I can tell you why...

4. **Factory Methods of the 20th Century Western Church:**

- a. I have relied upon "programs" or "materials" or "seminars" to do the work of discipleship. I have relied upon preaching to do what only one-on-one will do. I have trusted that somehow Sunday School would make disciples.
- b. **God doesn't mass produce disciples in a factory called the church.**
 - i. We don't drop people into a "program" and watch disciples emerge at the end of the assembly line. Attend Sunday School for a year or two and "poof" you will pop out a mature Christian.
 - ii. (Picture of Assembly Line?)
- c. God's method of disciple-making is one person at a time.
 - i. It takes time to make disciples.
 - ii. It takes individual, personal attention.
 - iii. It takes hours of prayer.
 - iv. It takes patience and understanding to teach a person how to get into the Word of God for themselves.
 - v. It takes a personal investment to help another person learn how to apply the Word of God to the events and situations of their lives.
 - vi. It also requires the supernatural life of the Holy Spirit to help someone hear the voice of God.
- d. **Look at Jesus' method** – he called disciples, they followed Him. He spent time with them, each one of them, notably Peter. Look at Peter! Wow.
 - i. He was a rough hewn fisherman who probably had a vocabulary that we would blush at.
 - ii. Impetuous, head strong, willful...everything you would think would make him an UNLIKELY disciple, least of all, the one Jesus would spend the most of his time with and invest His most into. Yet Jesus did.
 - iii. **Jesus taught him, trained him, tested him, got Peter to walk on water, Peter saw him at the transfiguration and tried to build shelters so they could preserve the moment, He would try to stop Jesus from going to the cross, from washing his feet, and denied he would deny him, and ultimately deserted him. What did Jesus see in Peter? He saw what He could become...a Rock who would "feed my sheep."**
 - iv. Jesus' method was to find a ball of clay and mold it. So it is with us.

- v. So, just as I have begun to see that there are no shortcuts to discipleship, I hope you will join me on this journey. Of discipling and being disciplined. Of walking with someone over an extended period of time. Will you do that?
5. Colossians 1:28-29 *“So everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. I work very hard at this, as I depend on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.”*
- a. Look at v 29 again, “I work very hard (ie. endeavour with strenuous zeal) at this, striving (laboring with wearisome effort) according to His power...”
 - i. This is no walk in the park. **Being a mentor is a lifestyle and a commitment to the growth of another human being, not unlike a parent’s investment in a child.**
 - ii. IT REQUIRES EARNEST EFFORT in the power of God. It isn’t just one person “teaching another” but rather, letting God show and work through us! That is the point!
 - iii. For both parties, the mentor and the disciple, this is not a one month project. Neither is the person a project. This is a sharing of one’s life with another. Are you willing to begin this journey?
6. **Here is the decision point:** You may be comfortable sitting each week and participating at one level. You may not even be feeling the pricking of the Holy Spirit to be a part of discipling others or even being mentored yourself. I am not going to take the place of the Holy Spirit and try to make you feel guilty. You may not be ready. Or you may be in a place in your life where you don’t have the bandwidth to give your time away to others.
- a. But if, you are a person whom God has stirred in your heart over the past few weeks, and you felt the passion rise up, the divine passion to make a difference, to see the multiplication of believers, to see fruit in your life, then this appeal is for you.
 - b. God loves to start fires in people’s hearts, but He often starts with a handful of committed, passionate people who have connected with His passion and Spirit.
 - i. After talking with Joe Fuger, we believe that if just 10 people come forward to be disciplers/mentors, we will be happy!
 - ii. Each of these people will invest themselves in one other person. That person may be you! And as you grow, you will develop a passion to help others get what you got!
 - c. **So if God hasn’t yet lit a fire in your heart to mentor others, then has He put a hunger in your heart to grow and be mentored?**
 - i. In your bulletin, is a form you can fill out and let us know how you might be willing to grow.
 - ii. Our **Large Group Study** will begin on May 9th (during Sunday school) (Mothers Day!) – which is appropriate!
 - iii. If you are interested or willing to be a discipler or have questions or ideas or just curious, come back tonight at 6pm to a discipling forum.
 - iv. And this fall, we will begin small groups that will meet in homes at varied times of the week.
 - d. Don’t sit on the sidelines though. Ask God at what level you should start and begin! Growing is a lifelong process.

Disciplers:

Joe Fuger

Bob Higgins

Jennifer Higgins

Mike Batt

Lynn Stoltz

Deb Stoltz

Pat Bush

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Roger Jewell