

Col. 1:28-29

MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES

Sitting in a window seat, Roger Williams looked forward to time in reading on the short flight from Sacramento to San Diego to attend a national youth ministry conference.

As he settled in, two well-dressed young women sat down next to him.

Their conversation competed with his reading.

They talked about the club scene—
What they enjoyed drinking—
Who they were dating—
Even their intimate relationships with men—
Both single and married

--Then they began to gripe—
‘Why do guys have such a hard time committing?’
‘Why don’t they leave their wives like they promise to?’

Then—to Roger’s peaked interest—one of them said,
“But you know, if it wasn’t for church, my life would really be hell.”

“Wow,” said the other. “You go to church, too? I know exactly how you feel. If it wasn’t for church, I don’t know where I’d be.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” the other woman said. “If I miss church more than two weeks, everything in my life goes nuts.”

We live in a secular society, and it’s not just society that’s secular.

Os Guinness notes that “evangelicals and fundamentalists have embraced the modern world with a passion unrivaled in history. Of all the cultures the church has lived in, the modern world is the most powerful, the most pervasive, and the most pressurizing. And it has done more damage to Christian integrity and effectiveness than all the persecutors of the church in history.

“...modernity...has devastated the church in Europe and has destroyed faith among leaders...in the U.S.”

Now, Society has always been secular. The problem is, many churches and persons who claim the name “Christian” have been squeezed into the mold of the world. This is tragic. The devil laughs, God weeps, and so should we.

One of our associate pastors asked to be moved because, quote, “The lead pastor won’t allow any preaching about sin since he wants to be seeker sensitive.”

So, he has left this good-sized and growing congregation.

Oct. 3, '05 I boarded a plane in Charlotte. The air was not flowing. It was hot. The man in front of me began complaining. When a flight attendant passed by, he pursued his complaint, ending with the words, "If you don't make people comfortable, you'll lose them."

I was reading my Bible at the time and had just read Jesus' words in John 7:7 "The world hates me because I accuse it of sin and evil."

While the American church has been working to make people comfortable, it is losing 6.7 million per year.

Over 3500 churches close their doors every year—while only a third that many are started.

For decades we've focused so much on the love of God until it has been watered down to extreme tolerance—

--Even a sort of evangelical universalism.

Until we recover the message that God is holy and that His love is holy, and that we are to be holy as He is holy, we will continue to slip into a secular religiosity with no power and little light.

This is a call for us to be disciples and to make disciples of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This means a radical obedience to the call of Jesus which depends on one thing only—the supreme authority of Jesus Christ.

It means living in transformational communities where individuals and churches are dead to sin, alive in Christ, laying down their lives for God's "cherished missing."

I know—it includes me.

If you are a pastor, it includes you.

If you are a pastor's spouse, your wife or husband cannot shepherd the church of Jesus Christ with full effectiveness apart from your godly and prayerful participation.

If you are a lay person, please embrace the truth that you are a minister of Jesus Christ, called of God to concentrated participation in God's plan to be disciples and to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Why is it that, in America, 88% of children raised in Christian homes do not follow Jesus after high school?

I believe the answer comes back to discipleship.

So I raise this question:

How are disciples made?

A. BY SAMPLE

We used to go annually to Niagara on the Lake, a wonderful place at the base of the Niagara River where it pours into Lake Ontario.

In this town, there is a great fudge shop. On the counter, they place a lot of samples of the various kinds of fudge. Why would they just give this good candy away? Well, when you taste the samples, you “have to buy.” It is so hard to walk out of the shop—even if you’ve filled up on samples—without purchasing fudge.

You see the fudge being poured out. From this genuine fudge, come genuine samples.

When the life of Jesus Christ is poured out into us—when we become transformed followers of Jesus Christ, we are the genuine article—little Christs in this world.

Discipleship begins on our own doorstep—in our own heart—in our own mind.

A pastor or lay leader living out of self-interest is contributing to the ineffectiveness of the church, hindering its health.

This is true, even if on the surface, the church is growing.

So, Paul writes to Timothy, “The whole point of what we’re urging is simply love—love uncontaminated by self-interest and counterfeit faith, a life open to God.”

True SAMPLES—“uncontaminated”

He further writes: “Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity. Stay at your post reading Scripture, giving counsel, teaching.” (1 Tim. 4:12-13)

Paul doesn’t mince words: “If you have leaders...who refuse the solid words of our Master Jesus and this godly instruction, tag them for what they are: ignorant windbags who infect the air with germs of envy, controversy, badmouthing, suspicious rumors.”

All this instruction to Timothy and to us is built on the one discipline of a godly ministry and life that is indispensable and upon which all growth and integrity is built.

Prayer in the name of Jesus.

At the beginning of chapter two Paul tells Timothy, “The first thing I want you to do is pray.”

Later, in the same chapter he writes: “Prayer is at the bottom of all this.”

Dr. Joab Lohara, the man called of God 26 years ago to go to the tribes of India, and the man who has brought about 800 churches into our fellowship—wrote in his book *THE KINGDOM ADICT*, “I urge you to go to your prayer closet now and pray until you have caught a vision for the lost.”

E. M. Bounds said, “men (and women) are looking for better methods, God is looking for better men (and women).”

So, as genuine SAMPLES of Jesus Christ, what will emerge in our lives, carried out under the supreme authority of our Lord?”

I. Life will be a life of REPENTANCE

Doug Frank wrote:

“Embracing the tension of Christ against culture and Christ transforming can only occur as we recognize we are in this together. The Holy Spirit must convict us that indeed there is a ‘line’ to be drawn. But it is not the line between us and them. Instead it is the line that encircles us all and reminds us that we are all sinners and come short of the glory of God. It is not that we all once were sinners and now some of us are not.”

Dr. James Mannoia, president of our Greenville College, wrote:

“To be authentically transformative the evangelical community must be in the business of transforming ourselves, transforming our institutions, transforming our communities, transforming our culture. This must begin with repentance and end in faith, even as it did with John the Baptist.”

Recently I was told of a wife who said of her long-time husband: “I’ve never heard him say, ‘I’m sorry.’”

To stop repenting applies the brakes on growth. It is to give up on God’s grace and mercy. It is to live in the prison of pride.

Lord forgive me:

Forgive me for complaining; for negative attitudes; for a critical spirit.

Forgive me for missing the opportunity to practice love in this situation because self-interest was on my radar screen.

Forgive me for putting things ahead of you, your Word, your will, your way.

Forgive me for watching what shouldn’t be watched; for thinking what shouldn’t be thought; for speaking what shouldn’t be spoken.

Are we not called upon to live a life of humility? Does this not include at its core, a path of repentance?

If my people, who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heave and will forgive their sins and heal their land.

(2 Chron. 7:14)

If we are to be the growing people he desires;

If we are to become more and more like Jesus;

If we are to be holy as He is holy

Repentance must be one of our regular practices.

James 4:7-10 says: “So, humble yourselves before God....Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief....When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honor.”

Not only must we be SAMPLES of REPENTANCE,

II. Life will be a life of SUBMISSION

Is it possible that the key verse in all of Scripture which makes the church work right is Ephesians 5:21?

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

The Word of God clearly identifies a direct relationship between submission to one another, submission to those in authority and submission to God.

This is a characteristic of the sanctified heart—delivered from the pride and self-interest that presses us to have it our way.

In fact, submission in an unholy institution is always used by the powerful to exercise control. But submission rooted in self-surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is a beautiful thing to behold.

Paul wrote to the Colossians: “Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. (Ch.3, MSG)

One of our pastors wrote to me:

“At (the church) we were planning for the new year, and I simply took the vision of the Bishops for the church, and the Expected Outcomes to the planning meeting and said: “This is what our Bishops are asking us to become and we need to submit to that and talk about how we can become this kind of church.” It was a very good meeting. I found the Expected Outcomes provided the prescriptive/descriptive mix we have talked about for so long. We had a discussion about what specific actions we need to take in the coming year to become a church more like the Bishops’ vision of the church. I think that discussion should happen to every FMC every year.”

Further, he wrote: “I believe that if this kind of submission characterized the FMC from top to bottom, (if we were free from pride and lack of submission) God would bless us and the benefit we would reap would be holiness and eternal life.”

How do you respond to this pastor? As a bishop, my response is this: I must live a submissive life.

In his classic book,
The Divine Yes,

E. Stanley Jones wrote: “Self-surrender is the secret of life. When you know that, you know everything of significance. Fail that and you fail everything.... Every self-centered person is an unhappy person. He does what he likes, but then doesn’t like what he does. He saved his life and then he loses it.” (p. 59)

Heb. 13:17 says, “Be responsive to your pastoral leaders. Listen to their counsel, they are alert to the condition of your lives and work under the strict supervision of God. Contribute to the joy of their leadership, not its drudgery. Why would you make things harder for them?”

Like repentance, submission is found on our knees before God. I can guarantee that unsubmitive people pray very little if at all, and if they pray, the prayers are about themselves—their needs and wants.

David Harvey, one of our great superintendents, observes that “God can redeem a bad decision but He cannot redeem an unsubmitive heart.”

So, we live as SAMPLES of REPENTANCE and SUBMISSION. Then, we

III. Live a life of DISCIPLINE

Paul told Timothy (1 Timothy 6:11b-12)

“Pursue a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight for what we believe. Hold tightly to the eternal life that God has given you...”

To pursue anything takes effort, requires focus, and demands discipline.

Paul spoke of this many times in his own life, noting that discipline involves—not only our spirit, attitude and heart—but our body.

In 1 Corinthians 9:27 he writes, “I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”

Earlier (vs. 24-26) Paul said: “You...must run in such a way that you will win. All athletes practice strict self-control...we do it for an eternal prize. So, I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step.”

In my lifetime, nothing has impacted the church more negatively than television. While this technology—as with the Internet—has incredible potential for good, it has more obviously been used to squeeze us into the world’s ways.

Many know more of movies than the Master;
 Many know more of sports than the Savior;
 Many know better how to watch than to study the Word;
 Many make life a playground, not a pray ground.

Add to this the Internet.

The average American household is on the Internet 1.7 hours per day.
 4.2 million WEB sites are pornographic.
 That’s 21% of all WEB sites.

And the largest group of pornography observers? 12-17 year olds.

When the third reich was advancing across Europe, Winston Churchill rallied the British troops, “We must do better than our best. We must do whatever is required to win.”

Unless you and I practice—as love slaves of Jesus Christ—the disciplines of prayer, fasting, study and stewardship, we will remain separated from the transformations we hear about and want.

At a team Leadership Conference at Roberts Wesleyan College, I sat and listened as Pastor Max McGinnis challenged young people to a life of holiness and purpose. God was there.

After a time of prayer, young people began to testify. The hours came and went until close to midnight, one of the young men—raised in the church—18 years old—chosen as a leader—stood and began sharing.

He noted that this was the first time in his life that he knew God was speaking to him. I wondered:

What church is he from?
 Who is his pastor?
 Who have been his teachers?
 Are his parents followers of Jesus?
 Who has discipled him?
 How can a person spend 18 years in one of our churches and never hear from God?

If we are not on our faces before God;
 If we are not living and breathing the Word of God;
 If we are not saturated with the anointing of the Holy Spirit—and of fire.

There will be little transformation from darkness to light;
 There will be little or no formation of the life of Jesus in us or in our people;
 There will be minimal, if any, ministry to the people God misses most.

How are disciples made? It begins with us—the church—
 We are SAMPLES—God’s life poured into ours—
 SAMPLES of REPENTANCE
 of SUBMISSION
 of DISCIPLINE

AND... disciples are made through

B. SYSTEMS:

Every Church functions in a system

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Every pastor functions in a system.

These systems are easily identified:

- Look at your calendar
- Look at your use of resources
- Look at your use of time

This will reveal your system.

Some pastors and churches have this all carefully worked out on paper. Flow charts, Power Point presentations, record keeping procedures, and accountability to specific goals guiding them in a particular direction.

Others claim their system to be identified by walking in the Spirit, going with the flow, concentrating on organism rather than organization.

Some wed these two approaches together.

Regardless of approach, we are all functioning in a system.

But this is not the crucial issue. The crucial issue is FRUIT.

Jesus said: “Go and bear fruit.”

The question is about multiplication of disciples.

Have you noticed?

- Most of the good stories about the FMC in the US are about additions: We’ve added 15 new members this year. We’ve added 3 new churches to the conference this year.
- Do you wonder why some places in the world expand by 15-20% every year; why some churches mother one or two new congregations every year; why some conferences (like India) plant two or more churches every week?

I believe that there are two reasons for this:

1. The first is the heart issue I've already tried to address. As individuals and as churches we need a fresh revelation of the cross—we need to get the heart of the Father.

Pastor Bill Bump of our Lawrence, KS church saw over 300 come to faith in Christ last year. When I asked him how this came about, he replied, "I was in my 50's before I allowed God to change me and give me a passion for the lost." Now, the whole church is involved.

2. The second is a systems issue.

Some have adopted the Rick Warren, Purpose Driven Church system; some are part of the Bill Hybels Willow Creek system; some are embracing the Bogotá, Columbia G-12 system; some are in the T-3 system; some are in The Master's Mile system...

The question is this:

Is your system multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches: If not, why live another day in that system?

Some of you are doing incredibly well.

Following Paul's instructions in Eph. 4:11-13,

- You are equipping others to serve, witness, lead and pastor;
- You are sending others into various ministries, coaching them along the way;
- You are encouraging them to take others with them so that they not only serve but equip others to serve as well;
- You are fully releasing the equipped and godly servants of Christ to use their God-given gifts.

--no jealousy, no anger, no control, no insecurity—just rejoicing when all God's people are engaged in harvest and discipleship ministries.

But, most are not doing this.

Most are functioning in the frustrating system of church programs and are doing the bulk of ministry as a lone ranger—multiplying defeat, discouragement and unhealthy dependency.

Every ministry that lacks the heart of the Father, that lacks His compassion for ONE MORE SOUL, becomes a program. Every program, over time, will tend to breed indifference.

HOW ARE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST MADE?

By **SAMPLE**: Living a life of prayer that results in repentance, submission and discipline.
By **SYSTEMS**: Adopting a system that produces fruit and multiplies, setting aside all that hinders.

—AND— If we are to make disciples, we must have some eager

C. STUDENTS

I believe that one of our biggest errors is found in our tendency to concentrate on the many rather than on the few. In fact, many pastors, in an effort to please everybody, end up spending the bulk of time with those inclined to demand attention, rather than with those eager to learn and to obey Jesus in advancing the Kingdom of God.

It is amazing how Jesus kept vacating areas, resistant to advertising, leaving the crowds.

He often withdrew to be with his Father—this goes back to being a disciple.

He often withdrew to be with his disciples—this goes back to working a system.

He often withdrew to be with three of his disciples—this goes back to multiplying fruit.

To multiply; to grow; to send; to advance; to get big—we must get small.

Into whom are you pouring your life?

Can you identify 2 or 3 fellow believers—students—into whom, during this present season—you are investing your life?

Let me ask you a question:

What would happen, if out of prayer, you selected two or three people into whose lives you would invest a year? What if you equipped them to do the same thing with two or three other people? And, what if the focus of the investment was ONE MORE SOUL?

In the parable of the Sower, Jesus said that some would produce 30, some 60 and some 100 fold.

If we take the lesser of these, 30 fold, we could find results like this:

One equips two

These three meet weekly in Transformative Community:

Learning together;

Encouraging one another;

Accountable in healthy ways with one another;

Dreaming together about the heart of the Father.

Each one has identified three friends or neighbors who do not know Jesus.

These nine are prayed for by name every day and when the three—the triad—meet each week.

They find ways to connect with these nine—cook-outs, ball games, shopping, etc. Christians rubbing shoulders with the people God misses most.

After a year—30 fold—3 of the 9 have come to the Lord. They become part of a triad—a cell—led by one of the original three.

3 becomes 9, 9 becomes 15, 15 becomes 42, 42 becomes 63, 63 becomes 96, 96 becomes 144, 144 becomes 216, 216 becomes 324.

These are all new Christians resulting from one group doing what Jesus taught us to do.

This says nothing about family members.

It took 9 years to get from 3 to 324, and it was not 100 or 60 fold, but 30 fold.

A heart for God, a simple system and some students=multiplication of disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

Jesus said: “When you’re joined to me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant.” (John 15)

Are you involved in a nominal ministry? Are you ready to vacate it?

Are you ready to embrace a ministry compelled by the Cross of Jesus Christ?

Be a SAMPLE: praying, repenting, submitting and living a disciplined life in Christ.

Get yourself, and over time, the church into a multiplying system.

Start now—Invest in a few students—
Believers who want to make a difference.

Set aside every hindrance—and the sin—that so easily shuts you down.

The church should plan to neglect anything that interferes with going.

OBEY: GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS—ONE MORE SOUL at a time.

Note: For more on a multiplying system (T-3), apostolic ministry and the power of submission, order the 3 packet booklet set (\$12.00) from the Board of Bishops.