

# 10 MEGASHIFTS IN MAKING DISCIPLES

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## 1. FROM TRADITIONAL DISCIPLESHIP TO RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Johnny was forbidden by his pastor to start his journey in making disciples. Instead, he was sent for two years to sit and listen to lectures about the Bible every day. After that training, he found out that making disciples, apparently, is supposed to be a complicated job. Similarly, for many years, we Christians have tried to make disciples through lecture halls (i.e. Sunday morning church services, seminaries, Bible schools, etc) by collecting books and resources and gathering groups of people together. But, if we want to see Christianity change in our generation, then we should re-think discipleship and SHIFT it to making disciples in a relational way from person to person. This is how Jesus made disciples intentionally and relationally. And it is quick, simple, and effective in reaching people.

## 2. FROM ONE MAN DISCIPLING EVERYBODY TO EVERYBODY MAKING DISCIPLES

In spite of how busy the pastor and the church are in their weekly activities, most still have a hard time in understanding HOW to make disciples. Surveys show that pastors don't know how to make disciples. This is the greatest weakness of any church. There are three reasons for this. Pastors don't know how to mentor someone else, often because they themselves have never been disciplined. They've also been told making disciples is complicated. And, when they have tried to disciple people, they try to do it on their own.

For too long, many sincere pastors have been trying to disciple everybody. Because that is physically impossible, they leave many others undisciplined, who in turn themselves do not go on to make disciples. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, has stated that 97% of Christians are not disciplined, and they don't know how to make disciples.

This not only creates a clergy-laity division, but also makes disciple-making complicated with all the requirements and qualifications needed to become a disciple-maker. It is time to change the way we think about the Great Commission. The intention is for every disciple of Jesus to make more disciples of Jesus.

## 3. FROM ENTERTAINING BELIEVERS TO MAKING DISCIPLES OF NON-BELIEVERS

It is when we complicate the Great Commission that we forget to focus on unbelievers. As a result, there are many wandering Christian "spiritual babies" still wearing their spiritual diapers and never graduating from their Sunday School classes. They have never been shown how to become spiritual parents themselves.

This creates more irresponsible and immature Christians wandering from church to church looking for better programs and entertaining shows that will meet their own needs, but it never changes their lives. And they have no spiritual parents who have treated them as sons and daughters in the Lord and who could have helped them grow up.

But, the intention of the Great Commission is for all of us to become spiritually mature enough to make disciples of those who are not believers in Christ and to teach them to do the same for others.

#### **4. FROM DISCIPLING TO MAKING DISCIPLES**

It is hard to “disciple” someone, but it is easy to “make disciples”. Do we really think God is eager for all men to be saved and come to repentance? If so, then God is already at work in this world, and all we have to do is join what He is already doing by “making disciples” and letting the Holy Spirit lead them. Our job is to make disciples. The Holy Spirit's job is to disciple. Jesus' job is to build His church. We are only bringing people to Christ to be disciplined.

For too long, we Christians have been trying to do a job which is not ours - we have been busy starting and building churches, but also trying to “disciple” a person by forcing them into a Christian mold according to our methods and our timeline. But, this is the Holy Spirit's job! This is the BIGGEST SHIFT in making disciples between the Old Testament way of discipling and the New Testament way. In the Old Testament, Moses was succeeded by Joshua and Elijah was succeeded by Elisha by a kind of “transference of the Holy Spirit” from the current leader to the succeeding leader. In the New Testament, however, the Holy Spirit is given, not borrowed, to every believer. He will live in us to the very end of the age. He will never leave us, nor forsake us. He is the Ultimate Discipler.

One challenge for every one of us in this regard is that of ownership. Let's say Matthew is a disciple of John, but James also shares some spiritual truths with Matthew. Who is Matthew really being disciple by? The answer is the Holy Spirit. Our job really is to help people become disciples of Jesus, not ourselves. We need to get rid of claiming disciples for ourselves and avoid any attempt at exclusivity and unhealthy control. Here is a question that we should answer honestly: If Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches, then why do we fret about a person's spiritual maturity if they are truly abiding in the Vine?

#### **5. FROM PASTOR-LED TO SPIRIT-LED**

For too long, God's people have been led by the one-man rule and role of the pastor. To think that the church can do nothing without him or her is a dangerous idea. Pastors are not alone in the equipping and parenting team that Paul wrote about (Eph 4:11). It's time to give ourselves fully to the Holy Spirit. We are led by the Spirit only for ourselves and our situation — we are not supposed to lead God's people in the ultimate sense. Christ is the only real Head of His Body.

He has not given that job to any human being, even if they happen to be a highly capable Christian leader. All of us are called to be Spirit-led (Acts 2:17,18). I cannot tell you what to do, or else you will be led by me. You cannot tell me what to do, or else I will be led by you. The true test of a servant leader is not how many people are behind them, but how many people they are behind. It's not how many people they are convincing to help fulfill their own version of the Great Commission, but how many people they are actually drawing to Christ.

#### **6. FROM TRADITIONAL PASTORING TO SPIRITUAL PARENTING**

For too long, pastoring has been the domain of formal church leaders. And because they cannot meet all the needs, they have been forced to abandon many unparented Christians, who are really like spiritual orphans. God as our Father extends His fathering through the 5-fold gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph 4:11) — and in fact all of us — to father and mother the next generation. This fulfills what has been said by the prophet Malachi, “Turning the

hearts of the father to the children and the children to their fathers.” (Mal 4:6). After 430 years of silence, John the Baptist echoed the message again, affirming that this is the way to “prepare the way of the Lord” Jesus who came after him.

But, even the 5-fold equipping gifts (Eph 4:11) for many years have often become a professional role for formal church leaders. But they are really meant to be applied in a functional and relational way while ministering to the Body of Christ. Paul, an apostle, could have said to the Corinthian believers, “You have thousands of teachers but lack apostles and I have become an apostle unto you.” Nope, he said that they lack fathers and that he himself is “becoming a father” to them. Now, not everyone is an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher in a way recognized widely by the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:29,30), but all of us can become fathers and mothers to someone, helping them to grow up and also to make disciples. (2 Tim 2:2) This is our calling: Fathering and mothering the next generation.

## **7. FROM CLASSROOM TEACHING TO RELATIONAL TEACHING**

Teaching may be geared toward knowledge, but in The Great Commission it is geared toward obedience. There is no Hebrew word for “obedience”, but rather the word is “hear.” That means if we hear, then we should obey. If we didn’t obey, then we didn’t really hear. In the same way the teachings of Jesus are not geared toward principles but practice: He who practice these things...” So, how can we explain this in a relational way? For too long, discipleship has been about classes and lectures and Sunday church services. This Greek style of teaching although sometimes helpful and informative, is really rooted in Pagan practices and must be balanced and put in its proper place. Rather in Deut 6:4-6, the Hebrew way of following God was all about “walking together” and “doing things together” on a daily basis while dealing with practical issues.

Sermons and lectures rarely produce disciples-making disciples, only listeners. The traditional way of discipling often starts with ‘hit and run’ evangelism and then put converts all in a “box” with chalk boards and notebooks. This has been tried, yet we dare not do it all again. We did learn something from the sermons and lectures but we never came to the knowledge of making disciples. In the first place, Jesus did not train his 12 disciples this way. However, the relational way of teaching was Jesus' way. He shared his life with the 12 disciples – they slept, ate, drank, travelled, and worshipped together. In this real-life daily context, He said, “Look at the birds” to teach about faith and “Look at the grass” to teach about trust. He used what His Father had made already as His teaching materials, rather than making his own study notes and school textbooks. He never said to Peter while sitting on the hill: “Peter, would you pass out the paper entitled, 'Lesson three: Faith in God?’” Instead, He walk with them and taught during the daily happenings of real life.

Teaching is geared toward hearing God’s Voice: The Bible says to love one another. “But who? and why?” you may ask? What do we think God is saying to our situation? Our main way of teaching each other is to prompt one another to seek God for ourselves. Giving a prophecy to someone does not have to happen in formal church meetings and in a formal way, but in can be relational. We could say, “Hey Kathy, I felt like God was saying this about your situation. Does this resonate with you?” This is not telling Kathy what to do, but it is asking Kathy if what she hears from God is the same as what we heard from Him.

## **8. FROM CHURCH-GOER TO CHURCH-ON-THE-GO**

The next breed of believers will not be called by denominational names but only by His Name: followers of Jesus Christ. They will not be merely called “Christians,” but “priests of God” whose

mission is to go and make disciples. They will be the “church-on-the-go” and not just “church-goers.” Jesus said, “As you go, make disciples of all nations.” It is time to change the way we think about church. We are the church and so we go and make disciples.

For too long, missionaries were focused on starting and building churches. And so the goal of every pastor was to bring people to church, and the goal of every Christian was to go to church. This helped maintain a kind of Christian status quo. As a new structured church formed, they started to create problems by over-organizing it and maintaining it with a formal weekly meeting and programs.

But, when a person becomes a true disciple, he should simply be added to Jesus “family— our extended family. True “households of faith” don't need to have a formal meeting to maintain a brother or a sister, but they will meet often in all sorts of ways. They can have spontaneous and informal, but focused, gatherings of believers from house-to-house daily. They can continually eat, pray, worship in song, read the Bible, and tell the “stories of the apostles”, which they call the apostles' doctrine. This is literally the story of what happens in own lives moment-by-moment with Jesus that they “gossip the gospel” to each other and non-believers. This is actually how they made disciples from Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea, and to the ends of the earth!

## **9. FROM VISITATION TO HABITATION**

God transferred His residence from the Temple building to a temple that is not made with human hands, but divine hands. “God flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14) In the Greek, the word “dwelt” can be translated as “tabernacle.” In The Message translation, it reads like this, “God dressed in human form and moved the neighborhood.” God is looking for a house to live in, not just to visit.

In the history of church revival movements, God did visit His people and He did do something great. But if you go to those same places now, they are often spiritually dry. In the Old Covenant, God primarily visited His people in the Temple. But, in the New Covenant, God gave Himself to all flesh through His Spirit. Church now is where He lives. Jesus clothed Himself with human form and lived in it. But you and I are also to be in dwelt by the Spirit of the Living God.

If Jesus is living in us, then we have become His temple and tabernacle. The temple is stable, and the tabernacle is mobile. This means we can be both too. That is why we are not only a stationary “community” of faith, but we are also mobile “aliens” and “strangers” of this world. Wherever the would take us, we should go and make disciples. The command was never to “stay,” but always “go.” So, let's not worry about who will send us to our mission field, for we are already there. For wherever there are people, there is our mission field too.

## **10. FROM MANY BRANCHES OF CHRISTIANITY TO UNITY IN ONE BODY**

One of the things that divides Jesus' body into many parts is the human desire to “brand” a church or organization by putting a name on it. But, Jesus sees only One Bride on Earth, not a harem. The word “denomination” comes from the word “to dominate.” So, when someone asks you, “What's your ?” what they are really asking is, “Who controls you?” Today, because some churches are blessed in various ways and others are not, then we will continue to have a malnourished Body of Jesus if we are not willing to share those blessings with others in the same Body regardless of the “brand name”. It is time for the world to know that we are His, not by the way we do church or how big our parking lot is, but how we love one another daily and how we help each other to love Jesus more.

This is our “statement of faith,” which is not written on walls or in manuals, but in our hearts and lives. We can read our “statement of faith” by the way we treat our wife or husband or children or other believers or non-believers. We don't have to write it down with a pen on a sheet of paper for someone to read it. They can see it in our lives. With this kind of “statement of faith”, we will soon have true “Unity of Faith.”