

Reach. Connect. Equip. Go.
John 17:18

Announcements:

1. Potluck
2. 5 people to call list
3. Saturday @ 10am Packing Party for OCC
4. Mission Aid Tuesday @ 9am

Many of us are familiar with Matthew 28:18-20, which is known as the Great Commission. “Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

For some, the thought is that Jesus was talking to missionaries. For some, the thought is that Jesus was talking just to the disciples. For some, the thought is that Jesus is talking to the ‘super Christians’: pastors; Sunday school teachers; those Christians who know more scripture than you do, those Christians that seem to have it figured out. For some of us, we think it is the church that is supposed to do this. But, the reality is that every person who is a follower of Jesus is called to do this. Every believer is commanded by Jesus to ‘go and make disciples.’

In John 17, Jesus is very clear in the High Priestly prayer about the mission. This is after Jesus spends time in the upper room with the disciples washing their feet and having a meal with the disciples...what we call the Lord’s Supper or Communion. And this is just before they go to the Garden of Gethsemane where they arrest Jesus. Jesus prays for Himself and what He is about to face. He prays for His disciples, what He has taught them, what it will do for them, what they will face, and their mission. He says in John 17:18, “Just as you sent Me into the world, I am sending them into the world.”

But listen to the previous verse, verse 17, “Make them holy by YOUR truth; teach them your word, which is truth.” This is a piece of discipleship. Now listen to verse 19, “And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by Your truth.”

I believe there are a few truths in these verses about making disciples that we are to embrace. How do I know that? The next part of Jesus’s High Priestly prayer is for future believers, you and me. He prays, “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all those who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray they will all be one, just as You and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.”

Paul says this another way in his letter to the church of Colossae in Colossians 2:28-29, “So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.”

Here are a couple of the truths:

1. We have been sent with the message of hope
2. How we do this is by and through God’s Word
3. We will have to give of our ourselves, it will be a sacrifice on our part
4. But there is a reward! People will be made holy. You will be part of the process of people knowing and experiencing God’s love and forgiveness.

Some of us will hear this and think, “it’s one of those messages that makes us feel guilt to go and share the gospel.” It isn’t meant as that, but if you feel guilt or fear, I would ask you why? Is it that you are afraid to some degree? Is it that you don’t trust that God can and will use you? Is it that you feel you don’t know enough? Is it that you struggle with your own faith or you don’t feel good enough? Is it that you think you don’t know how to lead someone to the Lord? You’re in good company. I have found that a lot of people struggle with one or many of these. But we have a Spirit of God who enables us.

Everyone is a disciple of something. And, everyone disciples someone: in a job, in your family, with friendships, and more. We were created this

way. We were created to follow and we were created to lead. But, there is not a cookie-cutter way of this happening. We have both positive and negative experiences that are personal to me-to you, passions-those things that excite me, excite you, abilities, spiritual gifting's that each individual believer has been given, as well as we are born with a personality that will connect with some and not connect with others.

So let's follow some of the same pattern we have been following over the last few weeks: the questions of who, what, and how.

What is a disciple?

In scripture, the idea of disciple is literally someone who follows, and imitates what they have seen and heard and then passes that on in what they do and what they say.

Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "Be imitators of God." or in the NLT it says, "Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are His dear children". We have the what: Imitate; the why: because you are God's children. Paul describes a needed attribute of an imitator of God, the how. "Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God."

This is an act of worship. This is tied to Romans 12:1, "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will find acceptable [a pleasing aroma]. This is truly the way to worship Him."

What a disciple is not!

- 1) Hears the words of Christ and does not seek to make them a part of their life. James 1:22 "But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves."
- 2) Lack of fruit in their life. Understand, though, your job is not to produce fruit but to prepare yourself for fruit to *be produced* in and through you. Your job is to abide or remain in Christ, to meditate upon His teachings and obey His commands. From that, the fruit will come. Listen to John 15:4-5, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce

much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” We should ask the question what does the fruit look like? Galatians 5:22-23, “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

- 3) One who continues on living for themselves. Galatians 5:24 says, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.” Said another way, Mark 8:34-35 says, “Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.”

The honest truth is, there is a cost to following Christ. Jesus even tells us this in Luke 14:25-33. The cost is anything from moments of being uncomfortable *to* turning from things that may not be bad in and of themselves but aren't helpful *to* your relationship or someone else's relationship with Christ *to* giving up some time you wanted for yourself *to* serving *to* sharing a resource *to* being put on the spot *to* admitting your wrong *to* literally losing your life.

A disciple is one that takes the servant attitude of Christ [Phil 2:3-5]. Remember the High Priestly Prayer that I mentioned in John 17? Jesus says we do not belong to this world, as He doesn't. We have an eternal home, we are travelers in this world. It's not all sacrifice because there are blessings we are given in this world too...lots of them. But, this is not our final destination. This is not where we build up treasures. We have an enemy that is going to seek to devour and destroy our testimony of Christ and tempt us with all he has to get us to be a disciple of him instead of Christ. There doesn't need to be fear because of this, just respect. Respect to the power of the enemy and the power that our sinful life can have if we don't constantly die to our desires.

But, the cost is not without reward. There is great reward, actually. Anything of true value is worth paying attention too and will also grow with value as time goes. Being a disciple of Christ is not just an expense to our account, it's actually an investment that grows with interest over time. It

will grow in our hearts and it will pour over into other people's hearts because it is infectious.

Some of that reward is knowing that you will have made an impact on another person's life. Some of that reward is talking about God's Word with them or something you learned or heard in church or a Bible study. Some of that reward is seeing them begin a journey towards Christ. Some of that reward is sitting next to them in church. Some of that reward is seeing that person say 'YES' to receiving Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Let's ask the question of **'Why do we make disciples?'**

Part of the 'why' is the reward. But, at the core, it's because it is an act of worship. It is an act of obedience because that is what we are commanded to do. It is part of the life of being a disciple; disciples make disciples.

In the book "Discipling" by Mark Dever, he simply says, "We might not be his disciples if we are not laboring to make disciples." This is a hard saying to swallow for some. But, the reality is, disciples make disciples. I want to read for you a few quotes from this book:

"Discipling is deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ." Another quote says this: "Discipling is a relationship in which we seek to do spiritual good for someone by initiating, teaching, correcting, modeling, loving, humbling ourselves, counseling, and influencing."

"You need to be involved in the lives of others, and you need them in yours. God is the only one who doesn't need to be taught" You and I need to be taught. We need each other. This is one of the basic functions of the church.

"Discipling really is just a bunch of church members taking responsibility to prepare one another for glory."

"A lot of pastoring gets done when an ordinary congregation is characterized by a culture of discipling."

Why do we make disciples? We are commanded to; it helps people to experience more of Christ and be more like Christ; it helps us to grow; it prepares people for glory, eternal life; and a lot of pastoring gets done. That sounds an awful lot like what Paul meant when he said,

“I beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

Just for added bonus, here is another quote, “God wants you to be in churches not merely so that your needs are met, but so that you will be equipped and encouraged to care for others.”

This last quote moves us to the third and final question: **“How do we make disciples?”**

We are disciples, first! This is the first and foremost step. Be a disciple. It isn't about status or earning approval. It’s about worship to God and loving others.

Humility is important to the act of making disciples. We all have room to grow. None of us has the corner market on being a disciple. This is why it is so imperative to point people to Jesus. That is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6, “I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow.” Who makes it grow? God.

Scripture has much to say about how to disciple and gives some guidelines, but we only have time for a few. So, here they are:

- Be a disciple first—Mark 8:34-38
- Meditate and act upon God’s Word—Joshua 1:8; Psalms 119
- Walk humbly—Malachi 6:8, Prov 11:2; Phil 2:3; James 4:6

- Follow Jesus’s teachings—John 8:31-32
- Love for other disciples—John 13:34-35
 - This actually has a powerful impact upon those outside the church and those inside the church
 - There are so many in our world that don’t know what love looks like and have a hard time trusting actual love and even feeling like they are worthy of love
- Older women are to train younger women—Titus 2:4
- Paul trained Timothy to others to train others—2 Timothy 2:2
- Fathers are to train their children—Ephesians 6:4
- Christians are to use their gifts to serve others—1 Peter 4:10
- All Christians are to exhort each other every day—Hebrews 3:13

I want to look into this last verse. It’s Hebrews 4:24-25 and it says, “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”

“And let us not neglect our meeting together. Why? so we can encourage one another. In what? God’s Word and the good works that God has planned for us. This is a very large aspect of discipleship.

Discipleship doesn’t just happen outside the church but inside the church, to one another: the Christian to curious seeker, but very much also the mature Christian to immature Christian and immature Christian to mature Christian. Listen to a couple other verses:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is [\[a\]](#) inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man *or woman* of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.”

James 5:16 “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another”

Ephesians 4: 11-12 “Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.”

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give

them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.”

Being apart of a Bible believing, Bible teaching church is important. Discipleship with those of other churches is good, please hear that, but discipleship of those within your church is better because there is accountability, familiarity, similarity, and opportunity to work side by side. The first place you should pour into and also yourself be poured into is *your* church, the body of believers you congregate with.

The first place Christians should ordinarily look to be discipled and to disciple is through the fellowship of the local church both gathered and scattered. David Wells has observed, “It is very easy to build churches in which seekers congregate; it is very hard to build churches in which biblical faith is maturing into genuine discipleship.”

What does a disciple-making church look like? Mark Dever answers with six practices.

1. Pastors Disciple and Equip with God’s Word
2. Pastors Lead in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper
3. Pastors Provide an Example
4. The Congregation Receives and Supports the Pastors’ Ministry
5. The Congregation Must Sometimes Reject the Pastors’ Ministry (When the Pastor’s Reject the Word of God)
6. Members are Responsible for One Another

When these six things occur, a “culture of discipling” will emerge.

John 15:8 “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

So why do I title this, “Reach. Connect. Equip. Go.?”

Reaching those who are looking for the hope

- those who don’t know Christ

- happens outside the church mostly, in homes, at the supermarket, over coffee or a meal, working on a project together

- it’s really superficial to non-existent in spiritual relationship to another

- they know we are Christians and may have even been given small pieces of our testimony

Connecting them with the hope of Jesus

- this is people who have shown curiosity to this 'Jesus stuff' or it could be someone who knows Christ but has walked away from the church
- This step, if you will, is really connecting them to the things of Christ and even more so the body of Christ and the local church through a Bible study, small group, service project, some program of the church like AWANA's, etc
- This step also has more in depth sharing of what Christ is doing in our lives. We are revealing more of our every day testimony of Christ in us
- The most important piece to this, though, is the opportunity for salvation. It's asking questions and talking about the sermon or some other scriptural teaching.

Equipping them to know the hope of Jesus

Going to share that hope with the world.