

The Bride: A Disciple-Making Community

2 Cor. 5:17-21

This week we're finishing up with our series and we're going to be discussing the last of three categories that we as a church are going to operate within. And this last category really serves as the end goal of everything we've talked about so far—and that is the church's responsibility to make disciples! And to really understand the weight of our calling to make disciples, we need to place this conversation in its proper context.

You see when sin entered the world, man was separated from God and condemned outside of God's presence. But God wasn't done with humanity. He was going to reconcile them to himself and exercise his rule in the world. But he wasn't going to do it directly. He was going to do it through a people. And he started in Gen. 12 with a guy named Abram whose name he changed to Abraham and said that God was going to bless all the nations of the earth through him. And as he had children and they had children, the children of Abraham known as Israel, were God's special people with a specific assignment of displaying God's glory to the world and extending God's reign in the world.

You get to the NT and you see that God's plan to bless the nations through Abraham is coming true—through the work of one very exceptional son of Abraham—Jesus—covenant relationship with God is now for all nations! What previously only available to the few is now available to the many! And when you get to Gal. 3 you read this, **“And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.”** But in calling into fellowship with his people, God's also enlisted you in the mission of his people. The church has been entrusted with continuing God's global rescue plan that he began in Gen 3 when he came walking after Adam and Eve.

“It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God's mission.” —Christopher Wright

“17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled **us to himself and gave **us** the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to **us** the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through **us**. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** (2 Cor. 5:17-21)

This is breathtaking. God's method for going global with the message of reconciliation is...us. Count! Really important you realize this is everyone! Everyone who is reconciled has been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation! We are ambassadors! What an astounding privilege! Think about the myriad of ways God could advertise and advance the message of the Gospel. Angels? Sky Writing? Do it himself? He has chosen us to be the means by which the message of reconciliation is announced to the world!

We don't just see this in an isolated passage in one of Paul's letters.

And this gospel-sharing disciple-making enterprise is at the core of Jesus's ministry from beginning to end. In fact it's how he starts and ends his ministry. From the very beginning he goes up to Peter and Andrew and says in Mt. 4, **“Follow me and I will make you a fishers of men.”** From the very beginning, Jesus says I

don't just want you to follow me—I want you to lead others to follow me. I want disciple-making disciples. He wants self-replicating disciples. And in the last chapter of Matthew chapter 28, he says,

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt. 28:28-20)

This is the mission of the church—to make disciples. And if we're doing everything else. If you're doing everything else—you missed it.

Fire truck illustration! (Platt?) And yet it this not so easy to do! Is it not possible, even easy for us to go for weeks months, for some of us years, doing lots of really *really* good things—that aren't sharing the Gospel and making disciples. And yet this is our mission! I fear for so many folks that if you asked them, “Are you making disciples?” they would say a ton of good things they're doing other than making disciples. Like everything but. And we need to ask ourselves this question....

Salvation doesn't depend on disciple-making—breathe. God's love for you doesn't depend on your performance for Him—Are you making disciples? Like actually making them? Not the person next to you. You! Because if you're not and you're not and you're not then we're not! And that has massive implications not only for the lost who need to hear the Gospel but for our church...

I remember asking the question, “Does God want every church to grow?” “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.’² ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.’” (Rev. 2:1-5)

“They have lost their first love...this probably means they had lost their passion for the message of the gospel. Their focus was on the inward purity of the church, for which they are commended so the rebuke must deal with their focus toward the outside world. A passionate love for Christ leads us to love those outside and seek to win them. This they have lost...if they do not respond Jesus Himself will come in judgment and the church at Ephesus will be no more...[removal of their lampstand] indicates the removal of the church as a light of witness to the world.” (G.K. Beale, *Revelation Shorter Commentary*, 55-56) He's saying, “I'll let you have your Bible studies and sing your songs but the privilege of being used powerfully to advance the Gospel will go to someone else. The privilege of a full baptistry will go to the church who's making disciples.” God will use someone else! God doesn't need New Century! So does God want New Century Church to grow? If we're making disciples, yes. If not, then no! And why would he?

And so don't miss how crucial this is...and even as I say this I know most people who attend a church agree that sharing their faith is something they're supposed to do.

2013 LifeWay study showed that 80% of people who attend church one or more times a month believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith. 39% shared the gospel in the last 6 months. Why is this? It's amazing how many ideas we come up with to make ourselves feel better about not sharing the Gospel.

Top Three Excuses:

“I don’t have time to make disciples”

I have a job, I have a kids, and we’ve got practices and rehearsals. I want to say this gently but clearly: If you don’t have time to be fishers of men, then you don’t have time to follow Jesus. “Follow me and I’ll make you fishers of men!” And if that’s us then it shows we’ve built our lives around priorities and goals that are not God’s priorities and goals. We’ve taken our busy lives and maybe tried to take God’s mission for us and tried to fit it around our lives rather than taking our busy lives and shaping them around God’s mission. Imagine that I came in each Sunday and said, “I don’t have time to prepare and preach sermons anymore.” “Yea but I’m too busy working out at the gym, improving my golf game, doing school and hanging out with friends.” Disciple making is one of the primary purposes for your life in Christ.

“I’m just not talkative or extroverted—I’m shy”

I get it. This does not come as easily for some as it does for others! But that makes the mistake of thinking that my ability to be a fisher of men is no better than my speaking abilities. But’s it’s not true! There’s the old saying effort does not take talent. God doesn’t make disciples with talented individuals, he makes them with willing individuals. The most talented evangelist can’t change someone’s heart. Only Jesus can. That’s why he takes responsibility for making a you a fisher of men. Notice Jesus says I will make you a fisher of men. I will make into something that you are not currently. I’m not looking for talent—I’m looking for trust!

“It may be awkward”

I would build relationship first. But at the end of the day—maybe it is awkward! [Penn Gillette Video](#)

And this should of course should be one of the things that motivates us to share the Gospel and make disciples...we’ve said that obedience is certainly a motivating factor—making disciples not an option for believers to consider but a command to obey...but also we share out of love for individuals who will otherwise spend an eternity apart from Christ—many of whom fully expected to go to some sort of heaven because they felt like they lived a good life. Does this weigh on our hearts? Like when was the last time you felt burdened for the lostness in our city—burdened to the point of doing something about it? Jesus weeps over Jerusalem even though they’ve heard the Gospel! “There is no higher form of selfishness than that of the man who is content with going to heaven alone.” —J. C. Ryle Do you feel that?

And yet at the same time I want to be really careful here because it is possible to hear something like this and be motivated to share the Gospel by nothing more than guilt! And while it’s true that we need to be properly convicted with respect to not making disciples guilt cannot be the driving force behind our disciple-making efforts. In fact I want to suggest ultimate motivation for sharing the Gospel isn’t because we feel sorry for people. Shouldn’t we care? Yes! Our ultimate motivation for making disciples is not pity for people but glory for God! It is a burning passion to see every nation tribe and tongue bowing before God and giving him the worship and praise he is due! Ps. 67:1-5 “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah 2 that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. 3 Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!” God has purposed to have a universe filled with praise and songs that exalt his infinite glory and worth and has given us the incredible privilege of assembling the choir!!! For the cosmic eternal worship of God!

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.”—John Piper Men stacking bricks illustration (One is making a cathedral one is just making bricks). I’m here because I’m zealous for his glory—even if my feelings go away! This is the only thing can sustain a disciple-making life.

I want close by discussing the two primary arenas of disciple-making: local disciple-making and global disciple-making. And we see that in Acts 1:8 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Now when we read this verse, it’s very easy for us to just read it as saying, you’ll be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth. But that’s not what it says. Jesus is teaching that our witness whoujls move outward but he it starts at home. He starts with Jerusalem—that’s where they were and the surrounding area. And for us that’s Roanoke! 60% haven’t heard the Gospel (SBCV surveyor estimate) Do you know why God has placed you in Roanoke???? To make disciples in Roanoke! God wants you to make disciples where you are! And this may seem obvious but I know people who have taken mission trips to Africa but haven’t shared the Gospel with their neighbor. Global obedience doesn’t justify local disobedience. Don’t go to Africa to be something you’re not in Roanoke! We will happily send you overseas to make disciples but if you live 99% of your life in Roanoke, then you need to be making disciples 99% of the time in Roanoke! It is so much easier to pray for a missionary than it is to share the Gospel with your neighbor.

You say well Chase wouldn’t local-mission distract from global-mission? Not at all! Local mission fuels global mission! Hudson Taylor said the light that shines the farthest shines the brightest at home! And as more and more come to know the Lord the more the passion to make disciples grows! And it overflows from Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria—to the ends of the earth. Disciple-making must start at home but it cannot stay at home—it must extend to the ends of the earth!

The reality is that out of the 7.6B people in the world 3.13B are unreached (41.2%)—not just unbelieving! Luther said, "It wouldn’t matter if Jesus died a thousand times if no one ever heard about it." tied And yet making disciples of all nations is something God has called us to do! And the way we participate in global disciple-making will most likely be different than the way we participate in local disciple-making. In fact you may even be wondering—how can I participate in global disciple-making without being a missionary. (1) Have an open hand about going (2) Go on a short term trip (3) Pray (4) Give (5) Support a missionary It was William Carey who told Andrew Fuller “I’ll go if you hold the rope”.

Oh God for revival in the Roanoke Valley; for a fresh passion to see thy will be done in Roanoke as it is in heaven. What I wouldn’t give to see every member of this church baptize someone who’s come to faith because of their witness. For more missionaries. For a discipleship culture to absolutely explode in this church. We are going to do a series on this in January! 2019 is the year of disciple-making.

Closing!