

DISCIPLE MAKING

A PODCAST WITH DR. JOHN TOLSON

Episode 10: Definition of Disciple-Making

The last words Jesus uttered come from Matthew 28: “Then Jesus came to them (the disciples) and said ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.’” The command, the imperative, was to go make disciples. So, what does it mean to make disciples?

Jesus has given us a plan to change the planet. The problem is that we have not taken his plan seriously and employed it in the way he intended and commanded. There may be a handful of churches in America that are actually doing what Jesus said to do in terms of making disciple-makers.

Physical infertility can be a painful journey for married couples. Infertility in the faith realm is unthinkable to Jesus. We were born to reproduce. We were born *again* to reproduce.

So, what is the definition of disciple-making? Look at 2 Timothy 2:2, a very familiar verse to many. Here’s the apostle Paul trying to galvanize the faith of his young disciple, Timothy. Scholars say Timothy was around 16-18 years old at this point, but he had enormous responsibility for other followers of Christ and their maturing process. So, this is what Paul said to Timothy: “and the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

Let’s look more closely at Paul’s words. “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” It’s obvious here that there is to be an ongoing passing on of the basics of the faith. So, what are “the things”? He’s talking about the content of the faith. Then he says “which you have heard” so in order to hear something somebody has to speak and then somebody has to receive or listen. So here is someone who is faithfully passing along the content of the faith, Paul passing it along to Timothy. Then he says, “in the presence of many witnesses.” What does that mean? “These things,” the content of the faith, can be verified. They can be verified because there are people who heard them and passed them on and people who have thought them through, even memorized them and so it verifies the truthfulness of the content.

Then he uses the word “entrust.” This word comes from the banking world. It can be translated “to make a deposit.” So, he’s saying here that these things that have been heard in the

presence of many witnesses, entrust them, make a deposit, to faithful men or women who will be able to teach others also.

So, what does it imply then about a definition of disciple-making?

1. It implies a personal growing, a growing love for Christ and a growing obedience to His Word, to actually be serious about looking at it, studying it, reading it, and attempting (by God's grace) to do what it says to do.
2. It implies helping or enabling others to have a growing love for Christ and a growing obedience to His Word. So, in other words the very things that are going on in my own development (my growing love for Christ and my growing obedience to His Word) are what I want to impart in essence to other believers who want to become disciple-makers.
3. It implies equipping others. On top of loving those you are discipling and helping them love Christ more and obey His Word more, we aim to help them help someone else come to know Christ. In other words, helping a nonbeliever understand who Jesus is, what He did, why He did it, why they need it and how they can get it.

So, all that is to say this: The natural outcome of a growing love for Jesus Christ and obedience to His Word is spiritual reproduction. So, here's my question to you today: Are you engaged in spiritual reproduction? If you are loving Christ in a growing, maturing way by obeying His truth the natural outcome of that will be making disciples.

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