

DISCIPLE MAKING

A PODCAST WITH DR. JOHN TOLSON

Episode 11: What Is A Disciple?

So what is a disciple? In Matthew 28, Jesus' last words before he returned to the Father in heaven were this: "go and make disciples." If you ask 100 followers of Christ what that means, you will probably get 100 different answers. One of the things we need to understand is that the words and the verses in the Bible have definitions. They mean something. So if we study them, especially in the context in which they are written, we have a better shot at understanding what these words and verses and concepts really mean.

I believe with all my heart that the greatest need that we have today is to understand discipleship and involvement in the disciple-making process. Only a handful of churches in the United States of America are involved in a ministry of multiplication. I really believe that if we want to make a profound difference in our country, we need to take God's Son seriously when He says "go and make disciple-makers."

What a disciple is, will determine what a disciple does. It has always intrigued me to think about the leadership style of Jesus. For example, in Matthew 28 He says "go therefore into all the world and make disciples." So the last words He gives are these marching orders to change the planet by making reproducing disciple-makers. If you back up to chapter 25 of Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples that He's going to be arrested and put on a cross and that He's going to die, be buried and then raised from the dead. Then in chapter 28 He gives the Great Commission to go and make disciples. So what did He do when He was with his disciples? When He gave that command and all hell broke loose because He left to return to the Father, how did the disciples not duck and run or fold up like an accordion?

Go back to Matthew 5, to the Sermon on the Mount (which is recorded in Matthew 5-7). The first chapter, the first 12 verses are what we call the Beatitudes. Let's look at a couple: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). That means blessed are those who are willing to admit their spiritual bankruptcy before a holy God, not only initially, but continually. The next one: "Blessed are those who mourn" (Matt.5:4). Basically what that means is that those who are willing to see their sin and be sorry enough to quit it will be

blessed. Then He says “Blessed are the meek” (Matt. 5:5) (not the weak), which primarily means two things: a person that is under God’s control and a person who is teachable.

So in Matthew 5-7 Jesus gets out his spiritual scalpel and digs down deep into the disciples lives to help them from the inside out to develop His character. If you are in the process of allowing Him to work on you from the inside out, you need to know He’s developing something in you that you can’t develop in and of yourself on your own. The result of that will be an allegiance to Him and a willingness to do what He’s called you to do, and one of the most important things He’s called us to do is in Matthew 28: to “go therefore into all the world and make disciple-makers.” I would encourage you to begin to study the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) in earnest and I would encourage you to start with one and take two months to dig in deep and read it through several times. Get out a journal and begin to look up words and write down your questions and see what Jesus did to develop his disciples because what He was doing was developing them from the inside out. That’s the same thing He wants to do in you and me. You can’t lead someone you are discipling any further than you have gone yourself, so let Him do His amazing work in you.

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