

DISCIPLE MAKING

A PODCAST WITH DR. JOHN TOLSON

Episode 14: Characteristics of a Disciple: Part 3

So we've been talking about this concept of disciple-making. In Matthew 19:28 Jesus says "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." If you take the 269 times the word "disciple" is used in the New Testament and do your research on the context of each one and put all of those in the top of a funnel, what you get out of the bottom of the funnel are three things that "disciple" means in the New Testament. First, it's a person who is a learner, and we have established that true learning only takes place when it changes how you live. Secondly, a disciple is a follower. The idea of a follower is like that of an adhesive- something that sticks to something else, in this case a follower of Jesus who sticks to Jesus. The implications of following Jesus are very demanding.

Now we will look at the third thing that disciple-making means in the New Testament and this is the one that a lot of people in this country are leaving out. The third thing is that a disciple is a reproducer. Scripture says in 2 Timothy 2:2 (Paul talking to young Timothy) "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses these entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." So you can see that Paul had discipled Timothy and he's now saying you need to find reliable people and teach them so that they teach others so that there's this ongoing exponential reproductive factor.

So what is reproducing? Discipleship is never an end in itself. It's always a means to an end. God is not building into your life or my life to end it, but in order to multiply it. The Lord wants to build into your life to multiply the impact of Scripture and the tremendous news of Jesus coming to rescue us, and for us to build that into the lives of other people in such a way that they will build it into the life of other people. In other words, this is to be the lifestyle of the believer. This is what we are supposed to be doing as followers of Jesus Christ.

So what if we just preach? Wouldn't just preaching in churches get the job done? Most evangelistic crusaders like Billy Graham and Greg Laurie and others would tell you that about 4% of the people who attend would make a commitment to Jesus Christ. So let's say a preacher preached to 100,000 people per day and 4% came to Christ. That's

4,000 coming to Christ daily. If that preacher preached for 365 days, that would be 1,460,000 converts per year. If he did that for 16 years, that would be 23,360,000 followers of Jesus. That sounds pretty good. That guy would probably be up for a raise in that church.

Now let's use the model of disciple-making. You take two people per year and go through a process to disciple them. You build basic truth into their lives as you disciple them. At the end of the year, each of those people take two more people and you take two more people. With no attrition and no fall-out, you would have 59,000 people at the end of 10 years. If 10 people started discipling, you would have 590,000 followers of Jesus after 10 years. If you had 100 of your church members doing this, you would have 5,904,000 disciples after ten years. This is God's plan to change the planet. Let's make it personal. Who are you discipling? Who are you building your life into in such a way that what Jesus told us to do could be accomplished through you? In your church are people trained and equipped to multiply in the lives of other people? If you or your church are not making disciples who are making disciples who are making disciples, then you are simply not doing what Jesus commanded you to do. I hope that gets your attention.

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