

Perhaps the most well-known verse in the entire Bible is John 3:16. As a Christian your response might be, “Oh great. Know this one...blah blah blah.” I challenge you not to tune out under the assumption that you know this already as I believe the Lord has a fresh word for us and our church this morning.

We’ve been talking about becoming a “missional church” for over two years now and for many trying to define or nail down what exactly it means to be “missional” is a little like nailing jello to a wall because it is not a formula. But I want to put some meat on it this morning because I believe that it is the purpose of the church and yet it is largely neglected in the church both individually and corporately. And I believe that God wants us to re-hitch ourselves to his agenda and his purposes with a renewed calling from his Spirit in our lives and church.

Eventually, we will be camping out in Matthew 28, the Great Commission, but to get there we must start here in John 3. Why? Because in order to properly align our ecclesiology – meaning what the church is for – we need to understand the mission of God and let that inform what we do individually and corporately – but in order to get to the mission we must first understand who God and Christ are because God is the head of all things – that includes his church.

John 3:16

“God so loved the world” – we often read “so” as an adjective. Instead, a better understanding is that God loved that world “in such a way” that he gave us his Son. Some translations say “For this is how God loved the world. Belief in his son = eternal life. Nonbelief = eternal death (John 14:6 – one way to God).

v. 17 – “For God did not send his Son...” We can learn something about God from this passage. What we see is that God is a sending God. His sending agents are Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

John 20:21 – “As the father has sent me, so I am sending you.” – Being sent and sending is in the DNA of the God we serve.

This brings us to the Great Commission of Christ found in Matt 28:18-20. Note the emphasis is not “Go” it is “make disciples.” In fact, the spirit of the text and perhaps a better translation of it is “as you go/as you are going.” Everybody goes. We go to work, go to school, when we leave church we will go from here. As you go about your day to day, make disciples. Disciple making has two facets: baptizing and teaching, winning/building, evangelizing/bringing to maturity, connecting/growing. You get it? Disciple making a process that is both pre and post conversion of which we all are to be a part.

What is a disciple? – Jesus in calling his disciples, says in Matt 4:19, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” Just as God did...so I ought to. God tells all who would follow him that the task is to make disciples of all people.

In Mark 8:34-38, Jesus talks of the reality of a person who would follow him needing to deny himself to do so. This is an issue of the will. “Not my will, but your will be done.” Foundational question causes conflict in the church: Is being a Christian about the blessing and prosperity that Jesus brings us or is being a Christian about this Jesus responding to his call to deny ourselves?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is famous for his saying, “When Jesus calls a man he bids him to come and die.” In our culture that is fundamentally difficult because it is counter-cultural to the “American Dream.” We earn our prosperity, we earn our stripe, we do it ourselves by our hard work and tenacity, and the gospel turns that on its head and says that JESUS came to GIVE you LIFE and life to the full and there is nothing that you can do to earn it yourself. It is a call to come and die to your agenda, to your will and to get on his.

What is a disciple? A disciple says: I will be a fisher on men, I will deny myself, All that I have is God’s alone.

Jeff Vanderstelt – “Disciple making involves the process of leading others to increasingly submit all of life to the empowering presence and lordship of Jesus Christ.”

If you claim faith you cannot get around this command to make disciples. There are no outs in scripture. You cannot rationalize it away. We are called to go and make disciples.

6 lies/myths of making disciples:

1) I’m not a pastor – I don’t know the answer – incredible resources which are easily accessible – gotquestions.org – elders/leaders to ask

- Nowhere in the Bible does it say that it is the task of the leadership of the church alone to make disciples. In fact Ephesians 4 tells us that the leaders of the church have the responsibility of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry but all are called to be disciple makers. God has placed people into your life, into your path, into your sphere of influence who you can reach with the love of Christ and message of the gospel. It’s not about being a professional.

2) I’m not a missionary – The context of Great Commission is not about international missions.

- America is the 5th largest mission field on the globe. Countries (Korea, China) are sending missionaries to us! What would it look like if we, both individually and corporately, took it seriously that we are called to make disciples of the people around us?

3) I don’t know enough – Raising a child – I knew nothing – I learned as I went – I got better at the process – as you step out to make disciples you become better at the process.

- I wholeheartedly believe that stagnancy of faith and not having a pattern of disciple-making are directly related, you are not being obedient to his word. I’m talking true maturity of faith. We go through the routine of church but we are not making disciples. God forbid that we

get distracted by all the other things of life. Making disciples is it. It is the purpose of the church/mission of God.

4) I'm too busy! – Satan's main attack against the church – not new relationships in your life God has already put people in your life – if you don't know anyone who is not a believer that is an entirely different but related issue which needs to be repented of.

- The #1 apps downloaded have to do with scheduling your time. Satan scheme is to make us all the busier so that we don't do what we are supposed to be doing as Christians. The church is a part of this. People are interested in Jesus, God calls all people's hearts to himself, they are hearing the name of Jesus but Christians are not the ones at the front of the line telling them.

5) Spiritually healthy without making disciples - Not true! The process of discipleship is one of learning and regurgitating. Are we spiritual cul-de-sacs or conduits? Does the knowledge of God stop with us or are we the vessel which God uses to transport it to others?

6) Introverts can't make disciples – Yes you can! I am one. All it takes is the willingness to care. You say, "I'm not emotional." But you can care about things. You care if your routine is messed up. You care about a significant other. You care about things which you deem important. There is nothing more important in the faith.

Discipleship includes both evangelism and growing in maturity. It is pre-conversion. If you are believer this is where we need to go, I'm saying it because the Bible says it. Where you are you need to care. Where you are you need to be making disciples. If you are a Christian, God saved you to make disciples. Response: not true, that's works-based, our purpose is to bring God glory. One in the same – 2 Cor 4:15 – VY theme verse on the wall of the Apex "It is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God." Making disciples. In ours homes AND the people around us. Not either/or its both/and.

3 missional stories:

1) Tiffany – POP kids outreach

2) Alan – process of making disciples is not always difficult or painful.

3) Call for counseling

What would happen if every member of this church was actively doing these things? Actively engaged in bring Christ's love and healing into this world. That's not a special call that is THE call. That is what being on mission is about. That is what making disciples is about. The call of the cross is a call to come and die so that we might live to his glory.