

Matthew 28:18-20

We began a new series called “Essentials” last Sunday. Here is why...

70% of churches are declining or plateauing.

1. When you consider that the majority of the 30% who are not plateaued or declining are “growing” by transfer growth, it is even more disturbing.
2. According to a map developed by Operation World and their research, North America is one of the few places in the world where Christianity is growing at a slower rate than the birth rate!
3. Times are a changing....and they are changing fast.
4. If we are to flourish in the future, there are some Essentials we must, not only believe, but embrace.

Last week we saw the essential importance and necessity of embracing the mission globally. This morning, we will see a second Essential: embracing the mission locally through intentional disciple making.

I want to begin this morning by having you to ask yourself this question: Am I personally embracing Christ’s command to make disciples?

- a. Notice that I did not say **approving** of disciple-making
- b. I did not say **supporting** disciple making.
- c. I said **embracing** disciple making.
- d. Personally embracing the command to make disciples.

This is Essential for the church if we are to flourish into the future of this 21st century.

READ/PRAY

Our commission as we saw last week, is to make disciples of all nations.

1. Some of the first words of the mission are “go therefore:” Literally translated, “as you go.”
2. These words remind us that as we strive to make disciples of the ends of the earth, we have credibility in that because we are making disciples “as we go” as well.
3. Making disciples is the mission, both to the ends of the earth and locally!
 - a. It is not either/or
 - b. It is both/and
 - c. The light that shines the farthest should shine the brightest at home!
4. I ask you again this morning: Are you personally embracing Christ’s command to make disciples?
5. This is what our Master, with all authority, has commanded us to do!
 - a. This is what he left us to do.
 - b. And the question we have to answer is...will He find us faithful when He returns?

If we are to be found faithful we must know 3 things. We must know...

1. What a disciple is
2. How a disciple is made
3. And our role in this Commission.

Let's ask and answer 3 Questions...

I. What is a disciple?

A disciple is one who is learning and following the teaching of Jesus.

1. Verse 20 *"Teaching them to observe (or obey) all that I commanded you."*
2. A disciple is one who is learning (in process) and following (in process) the teaching of Jesus.
 - a. Discipleship happens only when people practice what they learn.
 - b. 90% vs. 10% and spiritual maturity
3. A disciple of Jesus follows in Jesus' steps, doing as Jesus taught and lived.
4. Mark 8:34 *And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."*
5. Leonard Ravenhill said, *"People aren't looking for a new definition of Christianity, but a new demonstration of it!"*

What is a disciple? A disciple is one who is learning and following the teaching of Jesus.

II. How is a disciple made?

Back when I was a kid and teen we had something in my church called "Discipleship Training." Maybe it started differently, but what it really was was another Sunday school class. It just happened in the evening. So discipleship became...and in many places has become "being at the church building."

1. If I come to the church on Sunday morning for worship that is good, but if I come to Sunday school and to "big church" that is better.
2. And if I happen to come on Wednesday night, that is even better. And if I come back on Sunday night to top it off...that is even better!
3. Let me just say that if being present and accounted for at church was what makes disciples our families and our nation wouldn't be in the shape they are in
4. In fact, what we have inadvertently and unintentionally done is create a total dependence on teachers and literature to bottle feed us the Bible.
 - a. We don't learn to read and study the Bible in a way that results in transformation
 - b. We don't learn to pray in a way that results in change.
 - c. We don't learn to obey and walk with Jesus.
 - d. We don't really learn to practically follow in His steps, do what He does, and obey what He taught.
 - e. We learn to become co-dependent on programs and professionals to increase our knowledge—and we become those who are always learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - f. 1 Cor 8:1 says, *"knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies."*

How did Jesus do it?

1. Designation

- a. He chose 12 men...and really invested in 3 of them.
- b. Victory is never won by the multitudes.
- c. Christianity did not start with a mass market product roll-out.
3. It began with a series of personal engagements among a small group of men over a three year period.

2. Education

- a. He poured truth into them.
- b. He taught them formally in the synagogues and in the streets
- c. He taught them informally by the roadside as they rested and reclined.

3. Demonstration

- a. He allowed them to observe Him praying, teaching, and serving
- b. He demonstrated for them what a life of obedience, service, and ministry looked like

4. Participation

- a. He allowed them to participate in ministry with Him
- b. He brought them alongside of him
- c. Very seldom do we see Jesus working alone.

5. Delegation

- a. He began to teach them to do for themselves.
- b. He delegated tasks to them and held them accountable and encouraged them

6. Dissemination

- a. He eventually sent them out to reproduce.
- b. They multiplied so rapidly that they were accused of turning the world upside down in just a matter of a few years.

It was simple. It was reproducible and it worked.

III. What can I do to be obedient?

Follow Jesus' Example.

1. Designation

- a. Find a non believer, a new believer, or a fellow believer to invest in.
- b. **We will help you tonight at 5**, but you can do this if you make it your goal!
 1. Visitors, new members, lost people
 2. Start praying for God to bring one person into your life to share with/disciple
 3. Look for them! But you have to make it your goal to look for and designate!

Mark Dever in Discipling. If you have never seen pigs come to a trough for mealtime, you can probably imagine it. Pushing. Shoving. Snorting. Swallowing as much as they can with no thought for others. Here is a funny question worth thinking about for a moment: Is that how you attended church last Sunday? No, I'm not calling you a pig. But stop and consider: Where did you park? What time did you get to church? Where did you sit? Who did you speak to? Each one of these decisions provided you with an opportunity to give yourself for others and so join in the work of Christ. Or they provided you with an opportunity to look out for yourself, and do what is best for you. So which was it? Did you consciously strategize how to bless others with each one of those decisions? Being a disciple of Jesus means orienting our lives toward others, just as Jesus did. It means laboring for the sake of others. This love for others is at the heart of discipling. We set our sights on serving others for Christ's sake, just as Christ came into the world not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

2. Education

1. 1 Timothy 4:13 *Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.*

- a. READ
- b. TEACH
- c. EXHORT
- d. We will explain more of the “in’s and out’s” of what this looks like tonight.

2. It is just this simple. Because it is this simple we can all do it!
 - a. Some better than others
 - b. But we can all do this!

3. Demonstration

4. Participation

- a. Don’t lead alone
- b. Always involve those you are discipling as much as possible.

5. Delegation

6. Dissemination

- a. The goal is to multiply...not to grow a big group of disciples
- b. Multiplication increases faster than addition!

You might be thinking...this is not my thing.

1. I am happy going to my Sunday school class, attending church, and as far as I am concerned that is sufficient and satisfactory.
2. Well if the fact that Jesus commanded you to personally make disciples isn’t enough, let me ask you a question.
3. How many of you have children/grandchildren or close friends that you are grieved over because they are lost? You pray for them constantly.
 - a. Suppose that next Sunday that child, grandchild, friend decides to attend a church in their area. How would you want that church to receive your loved one?
 - b. You would want them ALL to give 100% to reaching and teaching and keeping him right?
4. Now....do you receive and seek to disciple the guests and visitors or your church like this?
 - a. Have you been seeking to help others follow Jesus and grow in Jesus?
 - b. Are you the answer to the prayer of Christian parents, grandparents and friends from elsewhere?

Conclusion:

Are you personally embracing Christ’s command to make disciples?

1. That is what Christ left us for and He is coming again to see what we have done for our Master.
2. We act like that on judgment day we will be able to say, “Lord look at my service, the books I have studied, my perfect church attendance, my tithing records” and He will say well done

good and faithful servant.

3. But what if He said, “where are your disciples?” That is what I left you on earth for!
4. We have people who are already striving to be obedient in this area...listen to what God is doing in their lives through discipleship groups/d-groups.