

"Building a Culture of Discipleship"

Matthew 28:16-20

Intro: ...more often than not we think of church as a place ("that's a beautiful church") or an event ("I'm going to church @ 8:00am"). But we know the Bible uses the word church not to describe a place or an event but a people who exist for a specific purpose (see Matthew 16:18). We know that every individual who is added to the church, is added by the Lord Jesus through His Spirit as they believe the good news about His death and resurrection. His death pays for our sin; His resurrection provides for our new life. But it's also important that we know the specific purpose we exist for. I believe that purpose is spelled out for us Matthew 28:16-20.

I. Discipleship requires Relationship:

A. (16a) "the eleven disciples": Jesus pursued a relationship with each of these men:

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:" Luke 6:12-13(NIV)

"... I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you..." John 15:15-16a (NIV)

*LIKE JESUS we need to take the initiative...

B. (20) "and lo, I am with you always": Jesus assured them the relationship would continue:

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." John 14:16-18

*LIKE JESUS we need to endeavor to maintain relationships as much as we can...

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Romans 12:18

C. (19) "make disciples of all nations": Jesus knows relationships communicate in every culture:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my My disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

"[Jesus prayed] that [believers] may be made perfect in one, that the world may know You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." John 17:23

*31 "one another" commands in scripture. The frequency of these commands demonstrates the reality that making disciples relationally is not a program the church should have but a culture; a way of life; the church needs to develop.

"be kindly affectionate to one another" (Romans 12:10)
"through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13)
"be kind & forgiving to one another" (Ephesians 4:32)
"don't grumble against one another" (James 5:9)
"confess your faults & pray for one another" (James 5:16)
"be hospitable toward one another" (1 Peter 4:9)

**Paul (who was Jewish) making disciples in Thessalonica (gentile area)...*

"So affectionately longing for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us." 1 Thessalonians 2:8

**LIKE JESUS we need to pursue relationships with people who are "different" than us...*

"... the Word was God...and the word became flesh and dwelt among us..." John 1:1, 14

II. Discipleship requires Transformation:

A. Jesus was clear man's need

1. sin is serious

"If your hand or foot cause you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." Matthew 18:8

2. man is sinful

"What comes out of man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, and evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within and defile a man." Mark 7:20-23

3. Jesus came specifically for sinners

"And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, 'How is it that He eats with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'" Mark 2:16-17

B. We can't transform people but Jesus can:

1. only Jesus can set men free

"Most assuredly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." John 8:34-36

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matthew 26:28

2. only because of Jesus can we born again

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again [lit.; born from above], he cannot see the kingdom of God...That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit...for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes [trusts] in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:3, 6, 16

C. Because Jesus does transform people we call people to trust Him:

1. every disciple needs to pursue the transformation

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

2. every disciple should be able to say "Jesus is transforming me"

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

3. water baptism is an outward symbol of the inward transformation

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:3-4

III. Discipleship requires Instruction:

A. (20) Good News must be communicated & understood:

1. preaching = "this is what God says"; to communicate the gospel as it is: FACT

"And [Jesus] said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim ["preach" NKJV] the gospel to the whole creation.'" Mark 16:15 (ESV)

2. teaching = "this is what God means"; to explain our need for and the sufficiency of Jesus as Lord and Saviour

"Go, therefore and make disciples...teaching them to observe all things I commanded you..." Matthew 28:19-20

3. not every disciple is gifted to preach/teach but ALL disciples are commanded to preach/teach

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Colossians 3:16 (ESV)

B. Like Jesus, our message is Jesus:

1. Jesus presented Himself as the only opportunity for a right relationship with God

"Jesus said to [His disciples], 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father'". John 14:6, 9

2. We need to instruct others in the same way

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake"
2 Corinthians 4:5

C. We can only give what we've first received:

1. no one believes gospel without hearing the gospel

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'"
Romans 10:14-15 (ESV)

2. we will only share what we've truly received

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received:" 1 Corinthians 15:3a

3. what we share needs to be accurate

"...that Christ died according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again according to the Scriptures," 1 Corinthians 15:3b-4

"Jesus said to them, 'Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?'" Mark 12:24

4. what we learn needs to change & equip us

"and do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." Romans 12:2

"and from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15

"And [Jesus Christ] Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry..." Ephesians 4:11-12

IV. Discipleship requires Obedience:

A. Obedience is the result of God saving us; NOT the reason for it:

1. Obedience characterizes the one who has humbled himself before God.

"...[Jesus] humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross...therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence..."
Philippians 2:8, 12a

2. Obedience is NOT working for, NOR working in BUT working out our salvation.

"...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Philippians 2:12b-13

B. Obedience is about life not law:

1. Its God who made us able to obey

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

2 Corinthians 3:6

2. Its obedience that demonstrates our love for Jesus.

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." -Jesus (John 14:15)

C. Obedience resolves "freedom" issues:

1. Our accountability to God should motivate us:

"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way." Romans 14:12-13

2. Serving others not self helps us use our freedom wisely:

"For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men." Romans 14:18

3. Wanting the best for others is the goal:

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification." Romans 15:2

D. Individual obedience leads to corporate growth

"from [Christ] the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:16

Conclusion: ...I believe Jesus is building His culture of discipleship. Let's not let our culture interfere with it...