

Make Disciples 1

MAKE DISCIPLES

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DISCIPLESHIP—SESSION 1

September 28, 2015

MAKE DISCIPLES

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Take notes. Statistics show we retain only 30% of the sermon by Sunday evening & 5% by Friday. **Click to see a chart** which compares the percentage of truth retained with the method by which the material is presented and received.

Robby Gallaty says " As you study and grow, remember that you are not merely learning for your own benefit, but also for the benefit of others. Again, **you must take notes. How else will you pass on the information you have learned?** Guiding others in their walk with Christ is a joy many overlook. The first and foremost way to make disciples is to become a disciple, and the only way to teach others effectively is to continue as a lifelong learner. We are closest to Christ when we are doing what He has commanded us to do, and the best way to learn is to teach." ([Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples](#))

To reiterate the most efficient way to maximize retention of truth is to teach truth. Therefore, take time each week to teach the truths you have gleaned in our sessions. And who should you teach? I would encourage you to teach them to your wife, your children and/or someone with whom you are meeting (cp the divine pattern in Dt 6:1-2, 6-7). If you carry out this exercise, your retention percentage will be significantly increased! Although notes will always (usually) be provided the following week, be sure you take your own notes, for we will often discuss something in our group that is not in the notes.

Let's begin...

Making disciples is not easy but it is the last command of Jesus. To not make disciples (in the power of Spirit) is to disobey Jesus. **Renaut van der Riet** (pastor Mosaic Community Church, Oakland, Florida) writes about the difficulty of making disciples - "In this fast-food, instant-access generation, we have often substituted true discipleship for a superficial community experience and a program-driven approach to faith. These require far less work and a much lower level of commitment. Our churches may grow numerically, but we are left dabbling in the shallows of God instead of diving into the depths of God. We have come a long way since the days when someone would drop everything for the honor of following their rabbi...As a young pastor charting a course through the jungle of planting a church and now shepherding that church, I've discovered that it is increasingly difficult to find mentors who will guide me through the ins and outs of practical, biblical discipleship."

Max Anders writes that "evidence suggests that on the whole, the church is dramatically falling short on discipleship. As I speak with people about this subject, there seems to be a pervasive sense among church observers that we are categorically failing at this central responsibility." ([Brave New Discipleship-Cultivating Scripture-driven Christians in a Culture-driven World](#))

Dr Howard Hendricks, beloved professor at DTS who went home to the Lord in 2013, said that **every believer** should foster three relationships in their life for as Solomon said "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17):

- A [PAUL](#)—an older and wiser believer from whom you can learn (I would add one who has had time to make more mistakes).
- A [Barnabas](#)—a friend who encourages, and holds you accountable
- A [Timothy](#)—a young believer in whom you are investing

This short list begs several questions. If you are a Paul, an older man (woman) in the faith, do you have a Timothy (or Timothea)? Why not? If you are like Paul or like Timothy, do you have a Barnabas to encourage you and keep you accountable? If you are a young believer, have you prayerfully sought out an older, more mature saint to be your Paul? Why not? The "Jesus way" is to make disciples and by implication to be a disciple who will go on to make disciples (2 Ti 2:2+). Obedience to Jesus' last command will bring lasting joy, not only in this life but in the life to come (read Jn 15:16, Mt 6:19-21+, 2 Cor 5:10+, Rev 22:12+)! You are not under law but under grace (Ro 6:14+, cf Gal 5:18+), so take this to the Lord in prayer as to how He would have you respond.

Where are the older Paul's discipling the younger Timothy's? 30 years ago I tried to find a Paul at the largest Bible church in Austin and could not, even after to appealing to several of the lead pastors. I was forced to find my "Paul" by reading works by other godly men, especially C H Spurgeon, John Piper, John MacArthur, Chuck Swindoll, Wayne Barber, et al. That's why I am excited about what we are beginning. I am almost 70 and have walked seriously with Jesus for 30+ years and feel a strong urge to pass on person to person many of the things the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7, Php 1:19) has taught me over the years.

Steven Cole had a similar experience writing "When I was younger in the faith, I prayed about this and explored a few opportunities, but everything I tried fell flat. I couldn't find anyone to be in the role of a Paul to me. Finally, I started reading the lives of the great men of God, such as George Muller, Charles Spurgeon, John Calvin, John Bunyan, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and a host of others. They have served as my spiritual

mentors. I look forward to meeting them and sitting down for long chats in heaven! But ask God first for a living model." ([Handing Off the Truth - 2 Timothy 2:2](#))

My goal is that after a period of time (12-24 months) you will pass the principles I teach you to a group of younger men. **Spiritual Multiplication** is my goal, obeying Christ's command to **make disciples** who make disciples. My time on earth is short and God has impressed on me that the highest eternal "yield" (see Jesus' charge "to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last" forever! Jn 15:16, 8) is to invest in a group of younger, **trustworthy, reliable men who are willing and able** to pass the spiritual baton to other faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2- note).

But it will not happen by my power or so-called "adequacy" for sure--

Jesus' words keep resonating through my mind (these words are in a different context but applicable in principle. Context = When Jesus taught that He Himself was the Bread of life)...

(1) John 6:63 "It is the **Spirit** Who gives **life**; the flesh profits nothing; the **words** that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." ("are spirit-giving and life-producing")

So what is our great need from Jn 6:63? – dependence on the **Spirit**, diving into His **Word** = these are "spirit-giving and life-producing." So throughout our time together over the months to come the **Holy Word** illuminated/taught by the **Holy Spirit** will be our goal for **only** therein are we "adequate."

(2) John 15:5 **Jesus said** "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who **abides** (**active voice, present tense** = habitually, as his routine practice, as his general lifestyle, "is at home") in Me, and I in him, (= oneness, covenant, intimacy – cp marriage covenant = man becoming one flesh with his wife – Ge 2:24) he bears much fruit; for (**term of explanation**) **apart** from Me you can (you have power [**dunamai**] to) do nothing (**absolutely nothing**)."

(3) 2Cor 3:5-6-note **Not that we are adequate** in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a New Covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but **the Spirit gives life**. –

What's the key word? Adequate.

What's "letter"? the Law.

Comment - Note the clear, striking contrast between law and Spirit, like oil and water! And again notice that **any** spiritual fruit that comes from us that possesses spiritual life and eternal value is produced by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, which emphasizes the disciple's desperate need to continually abide in and depend on His filling and His enabling if he or she is to be a fruitful follower of Christ.

[Bill Hybels](#), Senior Pastor of [Willow Creek Community Church](#), publicly apologized to his congregation for **failing to produce disciples** in his church. Hybels instructed his staff to evaluate Willow Creek's effectiveness, and the results caused Hybels to experience the "wake-up call" of his ministerial life. After investing 30 years of ministry and tens of millions of dollars in facilities, programs, and promotions, Willow Creek was admittedly **unsuccessful in producing disciples**. Resources were prioritized on attracting visitors, but a step-by-step plan for personal growth was ignored. (Here is a direct quote – "*When you're three decades into leading a church as I am you think you 'get it' and the data proved there's some things I don't 'get it' yet!*")

David Platt author of books "[Radical](#)" and "[Follow Me](#)" writes that "In Jesus' initial call to four men standing by the Sea of Galilee, we see that the inevitable overflow of **being a disciple of Jesus** is **making disciples of Jesus**. "Follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). This was a promise: Jesus would take **His disciples** and turn them into **disciple-makers**. And this was a command: he would call each of his disciples at the end of Matthew to go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey him (Matthew 28:19-20). From the start, God's simple design has been for **every single disciple of Jesus to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples** until the gospel spreads to all peoples on the planet. Yet we have subtly and tragically taken this costly command of Christ to go, baptize, and teach all nations and mutated it into a comfortable call for Christians to come, be baptized, and listen in one location. If you were to ask individual Christians today what it means either to be a disciple or to make disciples, you would likely get jumbled thoughts, ambiguous answers, and probably even some blank stares. In all our activity as Christians and with all our resources in the church, we are practically ignoring the commission of Christ. Evangelism is relegated to a dreaded topic, **discipleship** is reduced to a canned **program**, and the majority of the church is currently sitting sidelined in a spectator mentality that delegates disciple-making to pastors and professionals, ministers and missionaries."

[J.D. Greear](#) author of the provocative book "Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart" writes "Scientists and theologians agree: everything that is alive grows and reproduces. How is it, then, that so many Christians are not growing and not **reproducing spiritually**?"

With that as a background, our primary resource for making disciples will be God's Word.

WHO IS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS?

A key passage for us will be John 8:31b – Jesus said "If you **abide** in My **word**, then you are **truly disciples of Mine**."

What kind of sentence is this? If...then. A conditional sentence.

What is the condition? What is the promise? Whose disciples will we be?

So what does it mean to abide? Remain, live, be at home.

What is the "home" in Jesus' declaration? THE WORD.

LET'S SUM IT UP - what is Jesus saying? What do you do at home? Do you just visit your home? I hope not! You don't just visit the Word as an occasional guest. You move in and live with the WORD. You wake up WITH THE WORD and you GO TO SLEEP WITH THE WORD percolating through your heart and mind (Ps 63:6, Ps 119:55; Ps 119:148; Cp importance of **memorization** and **meditation**). The Word shapes your worldview (cp Ro 12:2-note). It governs and guides your thinking, your attitudes, your speech, and your behavior. There isn't any area of your life that is not subject to God's Word or influenced by it (cf Col 3:16-note). Continuing or abiding obviously implies time spent in the Word over the long haul." You become **Scripture Saturated**. (not satiated but saturated!) But is the goal just for **information**? Of course not – it is for **transformation**. We must seek to master the Bible well, so that the Bible masters us....

***our purpose together is not to make us smarter sinners,
but for us to become more like our Savior.***

2 Corinthians 3:18-note - Let's read **2Cor 3:18** – "But we all, with unveiled face **beholding** ([present tense](#) = continually, not just occasionally or once or twice a week!) as in a mirror **the glory of the Lord**, are **being transformed** ([present tense](#) = continually signifying it is a life-long process [i.e., it is the process of progressive sanctification], **passive voice**; **metamorphoo** = "the caterpillar to butterfly word") into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

Here is the **Amplified version** – "And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit."

So how do we behold the glory of the Lord? In the creation you might say, and that's true (cf Ps 19:1-2). But for the Holy Spirit to bring about true inner changes that shows forth on the outside we need to behold Jesus in the Word of God.

Dr. H. A. Ironside told the story about an old Scot who lay suffering and, actually, dying. The physician told him he didn't have very long to live. A friend came to spend a little time with him and said to him, "They tell me you'll not be with us long." That's a nice thing to say to a man who is dying. Then he continued, "I hope you get a wee glimpse of the Savior's blessed face as you are going through the valley of the shadow." The dying man looked up when he gathered a little strength and answered, "Away with the glimpse, mon; it's a full view of His blessed face I've had these forty years, and I'll not be satisfied with any of your wee glimpses now." How wonderful to behold Him today.

The goal of our time together will be for us to **abide in His Word** and **BEHOLD THE GLORY OF JESUS** and **be transformed by His Spirit** into **CHRIST'S image**, disciples becoming more like their Master, being crafted into disciples who will be prepared and passionate to pass the baton, seeking to make more disciples.

LAST WORDS ARE ALWAYS WORTH LISTENING TO

Especially if they are from Jesus

Let's look at Jesus' last command to His disciples and by default to all of us today who would call ourselves true followers of Jesus...

Matthew 28:18-20-**note** (**Context** = Mt 28:17 = When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.)

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

"Go therefore and **make disciples** (verb = **matheteuo** from the noun **mathetes** = learners = those who direct their mind to another's teaching and follow them as their leader) of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching **them to** observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

WHAT IS THE ONLY COMMAND IN JESUS' GREAT COMMISSION? **Make Disciples.** It is a command in the **aorist imperative** meaning to "Do this Now!" "Don't delay!" In Greek the aorist imperative conveys a sense of urgency!

As an aside, there are over 1600 commands in the NT and **none** of them can be carried out in our **natural** strength (e.g., In Eph 5:25-note "Husbands **love** your wives [**HOW?**] as Christ loved the church" is a **command in the present imperative** which is a charge to do this continually! Just try to accomplish that by relying on your fallen flesh! Cp Col 3:19-note). We must continually choose to renounce self-effort and rely on the Spirit's enablement. Yes, the Spirit is called the "**Helper**" (Jn 14:16) but a better name would be "**Enabler**" because to say we need just a little help implies we can do some of the supernatural work in our own power, which we can't! Remember that every **divine commandment** comes "pre-packaged" with **divine enablement** (the indwelling Spirit)! To try to accomplish divine commands (like "**make disciples**") with self effort will end up placing us under the frustrating, futile yoke of legalism, because **natural** strength can never carry out **supernatural** tasks! In summary, we commanded to make disciples, but the truth is we can only make disciples as God's Spirit enables us to make disciples. **Making disciples is a supernatural work calling for continued dependence on a supernatural Source, the Spirit of Jesus, the Master Disciple Maker! His power, our privilege!**

From this passage what kind of disciples does Jesus desire? Learners of the Word who are **doers**, men and women who observe and obey His Word (cp James 1:22-note). In Mt 28:19 Jesus says "**teaching them to observe**" or obey His Word. Recall Jesus' description in John 8:31 "If you **abide** in My word, then you are **truly disciples** of Mine." To **abide** in His Word in context implies that one **obeys** His Word. Does he or she obey perfectly? Of course not. But it is about the general direction of one's conduct and behavior. One of my favorite sayings is that it is about direction, not perfection! Hallelujah!

WHAT ACTIVITY IS CENTRAL TO THE MAKING OF DISCIPLES? Teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded.

How can Jesus be with us always? This is possible because every believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ (Ro 8:9-note).

How does this truth relate to ACTS 1:8-note? Jesus declared to His disciples "but you shall receive **power (dunamis)** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

If we seek to make disciples, what are the chances we will succeed according to what Jesus declared? Mt 28:18 says He has **all authority** and Mt 28:20 promises He will be **with us** forever! In sum we are assured of success in making disciples if we continually rely on His **power** (Acts 1:8-note) and His **presence**. We must never forget that we are not "**adequate in ourselves**" to make disciples, but that **the Spirit of Christ is always adequate** (2Cor 3:5-6-note).

Mt 28:18-20 is commonly called the **GREAT COMMISSION** but some have called it the **Great Confusion**. **Why?** Because as **Bill Hull** asks "Why does the church insist on trying to evangelize the world without making disciples?...Christ did not come to **make Christians**; He came to **make disciples**." Discipleship is not one of the church's various ministries. It is not something that the paid staff do. Discipleship is who we – as the church – are at our very core."

does preaching THE WORD make disciples? Most everyone would agree that while preaching is commanded and is necessary for a vital, dynamic local body, preaching by itself is not the primary means for making disciples.

Avery Willis, creator of Masterlife, when asked if preaching makes disciples replied "I really don't believe much discipling is done through preaching....Yes, you can impart information and emotion in preaching, but **discipleship is more relational, more one on one**... preaching to make disciples is like going to the nursery and spraying the crying babies with milk and saying that you just fed the kids.....I am not against preaching; I do it all the time. But Jesus chose twelve and lived with them, explained to them, gave them assignments, debriefed them...to shape and mold them to be like Him. His sermons no doubt helped convey the truth, but He had to follow up most of it with what I call discipling."

How important is discipleship to most pastors? In his recent book on making disciples Robby Gallaty writes "In study after study, pastors have repeatedly ranked **discipleship** at the bottom of their priority list. The average church today focuses on programs and the public worship experience. Few have any real emphasis on personal discipleship, much less any structure or instruction for

performing it.” ([Ibid](#))

TEACH SOMEONE WHAT YOU LEARNED THIS WEEK!
PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER THIS WEEK!

Make Disciples - Session 2

Make Disciples - Session 3

Make Disciples - Session 4