

The Command and Model of Jesus

Matthew 28:18-20; August 5, 2018

Introduction:

- When I reflect on my spiritual journey, one of the seasons of exponential spiritual growth occurred in the 4 1/2 years while I was in college at Appalachian State University. Now some of this growth was me being out from underneath my parents' direct supervision and me having to decide and own my faith for myself in a very intentional way. But in addition to this very ripe season in life, God used some key people in my life in very strategic ways to help me become more like Jesus. I can't introduce you to all of these people today, but I do want to introduce you to two of them.
- **Britt Pettigrew**
 - I met Britt my freshmen year (he was on staff with CRU and probably in his 20's) and at some point he began meeting weekly with me, studying the Bible, calling out sin in my life and challenging me to share my faith and make disciples on campus. We would go out and share the gospel together on campus. Britt was the guy who listened as I confessed that my eye was set on Leigh. He prayed with me and walk me through pursuing her. Additionally, I'm super grateful for his wife, Amy, who discipled my wife and taught her how to be a woman of God. I would describe my relationship with Britt as very intentional and formal. There was plan and structure.
- **Roger Critcher**
 - I also met Roger my freshmen year. He was the college minister at the church I attended. He owned and worked full-time for a trucking business and his ministry with college students was strictly volunteer. In addition to sitting underneath his teaching on Sundays, I spent time with him and his family about every week. On Tuesday nights, the guys in our college group would meet at Roger's business (a huge warehouse) and we'd chop wood with him for an hour or two (which we'd later deliver to those in need) while the women in the college group would hang with his wife, Denise and prepare a meal. After chopping wood, the guys and girls would then all sit down and eat together with Roger and his family (4 kids). In the summer, Roger hosted a Bible study in his home and we'd eat a meal and spend an evening together each week. Roger and I spent very little time in a formal and intentional discipling time, but he discipled me while we were cutting wood, eating a meal together, delivering wood, watching him lead his family and disciple his kids.

Transition: both of these men discipled me but in different ways and as a result they have a ministry that's continuing even to this day through my life and this ministry extends to places that they'll never even go...because they multiplied their lives in my life. My prayer for this 4-week sermon series is that God will raise up some Britt's, Amy's, Roger's and Denise's to spend their lives making disciples who make disciples.

Context: Today, we're going to look at the last words of Jesus that he spoke to his disciples

before he ascended into heaven. These verses are known as the “Great Commission.” I can’t emphasize enough the significance this passage should play in how you think of ministry and all of life.

Read Matthew 28:16-20

The Point: Disciples follow Jesus and multiply disciple-makers.

Starting with this text, I want to give you five reasons for why you should strive to multiply disciple-makers.

I. Jesus Commands It.

There is one main command in these verses and it’s “to make disciples.” This command is then followed by three participles explaining how we are to make disciples: going, baptizing and teaching. Here are a few observations and implications of this command.

1. Disciplemaking is *the* ministry of the church.

- While I’ve preached this passage before and challenged us to “go” and make disciple-makers among the nations (“...of all nations”), this command first starts with making disciples “as you go” right here where you live.
 - It’s not an either/or, but a both/and. Our heart beats for the nations because that’s the heart of God. We want to keep praying about sending people to the ends of the earth. As we do that, we should see that disciple-making is the central task for us right now in Boston.
 - Colin Marshall and Tony Payne have written an excellent book called *The Trellis and the Vine* and their main argument is that disciple-making should be the normal agenda and priority of every church and every Christian. Given this they conclude, “Thus the goal of Christian ministry is quite simple, and in a sense measurable: are we making and nurturing genuine disciples of Christ?” (Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*).
- What is a disciple?
 - “The word *disciple* is used more frequently than *Christian* to refer to believers in the Bible (269 vs. 3; Luke uses these interchangeable in Acts 11:26). This repeated usage tells us that disciple is a fundamental category for Christians. We are disciples first and parents, employees, pastors, deacons, and spouses second. Disciple is an identity; everything else is a role. Our roles are temporary but our identity will last forever” (Jonathan Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 29).
 - “A disciple of Jesus is one who has heard the call of Jesus and has responded by repenting, believing the gospel, and following Jesus” (Stephen Smallman, *The Walk*). In other words, a disciples has responded to the gospel and is following Jesus with the aim to become like Jesus.
- How do we make disciple-makers at RHC?

- Review RHC Discipleship Strategy
- The reason we call our strategy a “discipleship” strategy is because this is the mission of the church.
- Tag line: Helping all people become mature and multiplying followers of Jesus.
 - As a church, what we are called to do based on Matt. 28 is to make disciples. Here’s how we do that:
 - Sundays, NEXT, Groups, Teams, Covenant Membership, Multiply Local and Global - these are all about making disciple-makers.
 - “The goal of all Christian ministry, in all its forms, is disciple-making” (*Trellis and the Vine*, 153).
- Define Personal Disciplemaking
 - They then offer their perspective: “The pendulum seems to swing in these matters. As we write this, in most of the churches we know and visit, the problem is that there is not nearly enough one-to-one personal work happening” (*Trellis and the Vine*, 153).
 - A few definitions:
 - “Helping others to follow Jesus” (*Discipling*, Mark Devers, 13).
 - “...discipling is deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ” (Mark Devers, *Discipling*, 13).
 - “Discipleship is intentionally equipping believers with the Word of God through accountable relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to replicate faithful followers of Christ” (Robert Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship*, 155).

2. Disciplemaking begins and ends with Jesus.

- *The authority of Jesus* (confidence; assurance of victory)
- *The commands of Jesus* (the gospel; obedience to everything I’ve commanded you).
- *The presence of Jesus*
 - Jesus does not say “I *will* be with you” but “I *am* with you.”
 - The greatest hindrance is not the self indulgent mentality of our society but the self reliant trust in ones self. Are we dependent on ourselves or are we desperate for his Spirit to lead and empower us?
- Jesus empowers us and Jesus is our aim.

3. Disciplemaking is for all disciples.

- The command to “make disciples” was for the original 11 and all future disciples.
 - Jesus did not envision these eleven disciples making disciples of all the nations.
 - They were to teach their disciples to obey *all* the commands of Christ (v. 20), including this one.
 - Jesus’ promise to be with them to the end of the age looks past the initial eleven disciples to those that would come after them.
- The reality and norm should be that disciples make disciple-makers. Jesus doesn’t have

two classes of disciples (cf. Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Cor. 5:15).

- Pause and reflect: this is a command, not a suggestion. For the early church, “The great commission was not a choice for them to consider, but a command for them to obey” (David Platt, *Follow Me*, 179). He continues: “This kind of movement involves all of us. Every single follower of Christ fishing for men. Every single disciple making disciples. No more spectators. Instead, ordinary people spreading the gospel in extraordinary ways all over the world. Men and women from diverse backgrounds with different gifts and distinct platforms making disciples and multiplying churches through every domain of society in every place on the planet. This is God’s design for his church, and disciples of Jesus must not settle for anything less” (David Platt, *Follow Me*, 180).

II. Jesus Models It.

Read Matthew 4:19-22

- Jesus disciplined through association and imitation: “Follow me” (cf. John 1:39, 43, 46; Mk. 1:17; 2:14; Luke 5:10).
 - “Having called his men, Jesus made a practice of being with them. This was the essence of his training program—just letting his disciples follow him” (Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 33).
 - Being *with* his disciples, he not only taught them, he demonstrated for him: how to pray (Luke 11); how to read the Bible (Luke 24); how to preach the gospel and evangelize the lost (John 4).
 - “The method of Jesus here was more than a continuous sermon; it was an object lesson....He did not ask anyone to do or be anything which first he had not demonstrated in his own life, thereby not only proving its workability but also its relevance to his mission in life” (Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 68).
 - This is the same method that we see in Paul.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV)

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. (Philippians 3:17 ESV)

- From the very beginning, Jesus anticipated and expected multiplication from his disciples (“fishers of men”).
 - Matt. 4:19

Read Matthew 4:23-25

- Jesus taught and ministered to the crowds, especially early on in his ministry

Read Matthew 5:1

- Jesus taught and increasingly ministered to his disciples, especially the twelve.

Read Matthew 9:35-38; 10:1-4

- After expressing compassion on the crowds, Jesus calls his disciples to pray for laborers because the harvest is ripe. Right after this it says he appointed twelve disciples (cf. Luke 6:12-13; Mark 3:13-14).
- “Regardless of the symbolical meaning one prefers to put on the number twelve, it is clear that Jesus intended these men to have unique privileges and responsibilities in the Kingdom work” (Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 24).

Read Matthew 17:1-2

- Within the twelve disciples, Jesus chose three to invest even in a more intentional way.
- See also:
 - **Matthew 26:36-37**: the Garden of Gethsemane
 - **Mark 5:37**: when Jairus’s daughter was raised to life

Summary and Conclusions:

- Jesus taught and ministered to the masses and crowds (our primary focus on Sunday mornings)
- Jesus increasingly taught and ministered to his twelve disciples (ministry in small groups)
- Jesus in particular poured into three men: Peter, James and John
 - Jesus’ plan to reach the multitudes would be through a few men.
 - The smaller the number, the more effective the instruction.
 - “Teachers often overestimate the impact of our words when we stand before a group. And too often we underestimate the impact of how we live before people, demonstrating what we truly believe” (Reid and Robinson, *With*, 20).
 - These men were ordinary men

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13 ESV)

- There was only one thing that was impressive: “They had been with Jesus.”
- “Jesus can use anyone who wants to be used” (Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 23).

III. You will grow exponentially.

- Why? Because you’re going to be saying to someone else, “Follow me as I follow Jesus.” Making disciples is going to place an increased awareness on your life to strive for holiness and set an example, not of perfection, but of pursuing Jesus.
- You want to expedite your growth in following Jesus? Spend time making disciples of a

few.

IV. Others will grow exponentially.

- This was my story in college. Other brothers and sisters pressing and challenging me to follow Jesus.
- Every single one of us is influenced by others and we in turn influence others.
 - “The people around you *will* influence you, for better or worse. And for better or worse you in turn *will* affect the people around you” (Mark Dever, *Discipling*, 25).
 - “The only question that remains for you is, how will you use your influence?” (Dever, *Discipling*, 25).
- Personal discipling is really a fruit of our 2018 vision as a church: “The fullness of God in me overflowing through me.” A people full of the Spirit will overflow into the lives of others.

V. You will leave a legacy.

- “For me, discipling is the only way I can evangelize non-Christians and equip Christians in that one place where I can never travel—the future beyond my life. Discipling others now is how I try to leave time-bombs of grace” (Dever, *Discipling*, 34).
- Who’s going to reach Boston with the gospel long after you are gone?
- Who’s going to lead RHC long after you and I are gone?
- Foundational for any leader at RHC is learning how to follow Jesus and help others follow Jesus.
- “When you step out of the hallway of this life into the room of eternity, what will you have left behind in the lives of others?” (Dever, *Discipling*, 26).

Conclusion

- My goal today has been to cast a clear and compelling vision for why you, as a disciple following Jesus, should spend your life multiplying disciple-makers.
- If you are already doing this...keep it up.
- If you aren’t doing this...my prayer is that you would begin praying today: “Lord, show me a man or woman whom I can intentionally invest in to help them become more like Jesus.”
- The rest of this sermon series (the next 3 weeks) is going to flesh out “how” we actually go about personal discipling.
 - Instruction (the role of God’s Word in discipling)
 - Imitation (the role of relationships in discipling)
 - Multiplication (the goal of reproduction over time)
- Will you join me in praying that audacious prayer?