

The Map Maker's Guide

Map 18 - Disciple Making God's Way

Spiritual Exercise

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! Luke 11:9-10

Prayer

Father God, we believe that you are the Giver of great gifts. You are Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. Yet most of us have experiences where You did not give us what we had asked for. We have sought, only to find dead ends. We have knock on doors that have not opened. We take this time to acknowledge that You are a perfect loving Father. We acknowledge that the only explanation is our selfish asking, our misguided seeking, and our knocking on the wrong doors. We desperately need the Holy Spirit to transform, guide and direct us. We believe You have given Him to those of Your children that have asked You. We submit to His counsel and work in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

A search for "disciple-making" on ChristianBook.com returns 311 resources. Just imagine, if you read one "disciple-making" book a week, it would take you six years to complete your research. At the end of those six years, you would likely discover that ten or twelve more had been written... and you might decide to write one yourself.

We do not lack for resources when it comes to the Great Commission. So what's gone wrong? Why is it taking so long for us to complete the primary task that Jesus Christ gave to us - over 2000 years ago?

First, it bears repeating that we have lost our focus toward God's primary purposes. As we discovered in the section on Surrendering to His Purpose, God lost three things when man rebelled against Him in the Garden of Eden - and He plans to get them back. What He has done for us - in the midst of His story - is so wonderful we find it hard not to assume that the story is about us.

That is what Satan would have us believe. Such deception keeps our eyes on ourselves and what God can do for us. It distracts us from the prize and the One Who offers it. The story of the Bible is about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit getting back what They lost. The story is about Them!

Secondly, we are failing in Christ's Commission because we are going about our assignment in a most unproductive way. It is by grace that we are given a part in God's story. To play a part, we must see His plan from His perspective; and realize that He has His own way for getting things done. His ways, though sometimes uncomfortable, are the best ways.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ." Notice that he did not say "Christianity without evangelism..." Becoming disciple makers is the way we enter into the work God is doing to redeem the world to Himself.

Similarly, discipleship without Christ will not produce a Christian. Our problem is not so much our neglect of making disciples, but of trying to make them in the ways of our own invention. Christ will only involve Himself in the ways of His Father.

In this lesson, we will discover just how involved Christ is when we surrender and sacrifice ourselves to disciple making God's way.

Definition

Edify (*oikodomē*): (the act of) building, building up; the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, happiness, holiness; a building (i.e. the thing built, edifice).

Blue Letter Bible Outline of Biblical Usage

There is a mystery here. Edifying the Body of Christ is a part of disciple making (along with equipping and encouraging). It is a "building up" of the Body of Christ. We are commissioned to make disciples (to build them up, together), yet Christ said that He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). So who is doing the work?

Searching Out the Matter

(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; footnotes excluded)

How Did Jesus Do It?

Have you ever considered that Jesus could have died, been buried and rose again in less than a week? That is all the time it would have taken for Him to accomplish what many believe to be His only mission. So why was He about the Father's business for more than three years? It is simple: Because death, burial and resurrection was not His only mission.

Jesus Christ also came to show His disciples how we should live in the kingdom of God. Having completed that work, He commissioned them to do the same:

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."
John 20:21

Notice that Jesus was sent by the Father. This may be news to some. It may also be surprising that we are sent as the Father sent Him. Recognizing the deeper meaning of this, A. W. Tozer said, "Only a disciple can make a disciple." Tozer understood - as we must - that Jesus was not only the first disciple maker...

Jesus was also the first real disciple!

Let that sink in for a minute. As the first real disciple, Jesus is the One we can and should look to as our example. He was a disciple - and He made disciples - God's way. Therefore, as our example for both, it is important to fully understand that Jesus was a man. That's right: The Son of God was a son of man.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:5-8

In making Himself "of no reputation" (meaning, "empty, void, deprived of force"), the Son of God became the Son of Man to show us what was possible for a son of man that becomes a son of God.

To make the point, Jesus called Himself "Son of Man" approximately 10 times more than "Son of God". It was His favorite title for Himself.

He Could Do Nothing...

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. John 5:19

Very early in His ministry, Jesus said that He could do nothing of Himself. The Son watches what the Father is doing, so the Son can do them. As we will soon discover, this is more than doing as imitation. It is doing in participation - where the Father does the work. Lastly, it is important to note that "the Son gives life to whom He - the Father - will". All that Jesus did was the will and work of the Father.

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. John 5:26-27

Why did the Father grant life to the Son? Because He, the Father, has life to give. Why did He give him authority? Because He is the Son of Man.

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. John 5:30

Again Christ says, of Himself, that He can do nothing apart from the Father. He also said that His judgment was righteous; not because of anything He had done and not because of who He was; but because He sought the will of the Father. His mission was about the Father's will and work, not His own.

If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him. John 10:37-38

Jesus is saying that our belief in Him should be based on Him doing the works of His Father. Whose works were they? They were the Father's works. And it was the works that proved the Father was in Him. In other words, the Father was doing His works through Christ.

Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. John 12:44-46

Belief in Christ is not just belief in Him, but in the Father, also. And the One we see is not just Him, but the Father. To appreciate the mystery of Christ's identification with the Father we must keep in mind that He has become a Son of Man. The mystery of this is almost too deep for our understanding, but Christ is trying to show us the normal life of a son of man that is a son of God.

For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak. John 12:49-50

Next, Jesus points out that the Father has given Him a command that "is everlasting life". What is this command? I believe the Father has commanded Jesus to only say what He (the Father) is saying. It's not that the Father told Jesus what to say and He later said it. It's more like He is an instrument of God's voice, saying what the Father says, as the Father says it. We see this again later in Chapter 14.

He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. John 14:24

Jesus is saying that the very word that is coming out of His mouth is not His word. How could Jesus say that the works that He did and the words that He spoke were not His; they were the Father's? Let's back up a few verses to better understand their relationship.

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. John 14:7-11

Again, Jesus is doing everything He can to reveal the Father - Who is in Him. It is the Father who does the work. The works were enough to prove that the Father was in Christ. It's like Jesus was saying, "Look at the works that you have seen. Don't you know that I cannot do them? I'm just a man. Someone more powerful than me had to do the works. That was my Father."

The works prove that the Father and He are one, because only the Father in Him could be doing the work that they are seeing. And that is why He could immediately say...

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. John 14:12-14

The Father's works that Jesus did are to be the same works that we do. More so, now that He has gone to the Father, the works will be greater. How can this be? The secret is found in what Jesus had to say about His disciples.

The Master's Disciples

One of Jesus' primary missions was to show us how to be disciples that make disciples. He did exactly what He expects of us. If we are to be productive disciples in the kingdom of God, we must become like Him. He made this clear in a number of ways. First, He told them directly:

It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master.
Matthew 10:25a

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."
John 20:21

We must not confuse "disciple" for "student". "Disciple" is much closer in meaning to our understanding of "apprentice". For example, a disciple spends considerable time with his teacher (versus visiting a classroom once a week). A disciple's intention was to become like his teacher - to take on the teacher's lifestyle and character.

An apprentice also expected to be made into a man that would, so to speak, carry on his Master's "trade". And that is what Jesus does with His disciples; with one significant distinction. Jesus did not commission the disciples to make disciples of themselves, but disciples like them - those that would "observe all things that I have commanded you". Today's disciple-makers are called to the very same commission.

We Can Do Nothing

You will recall that Jesus said, "I can of Myself do nothing." He said the same for us in the Parable of the True Vine:

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. John 15:5, 7-8

It is in this abiding - "without Me you can do nothing" - relationship that our desires are met, the Father is glorified, we are productive fruit bearers, and we become His disciples.

In our abiding, we must walk as Jesus walk:

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1John 2:6

How did He walk? His most famous walk was the Via Delarosa.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:8

This section is called Sacrificing for His Plan for this very reason. Jesus sacrificed His life by first deny Himself for the three-plus years He spent making disciples, and then by dying on the cross at Calvary. He requires nothing less of us:

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." Luke 9:23-24

Denying oneself is putting aside all self-interest, self-centeredness and self-awareness. It is laying down all desire to protect our life in this world. It is a fundamental step in our receiving His life; the life that shall save us (Romans 5:10) and enable us to walk as He walked.

Taking up our cross does not mean becoming a martyr; and it does not mean suffering through some form of affliction. The Romans forced the one being crucified to carry a portion of their cross as a sign of their surrender to the nation they had been rebelling against. Our cross is a sign of our surrender... daily.

The following are a number of other ways Jesus demonstrated and instructed His followers in making disciples God's way.

Not Our Will

Looking back at John 5:30, we hear Jesus saying, "...I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." In the same way, through Matthew, He warns us:

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Matthew 7:21

Paul picks up on this in His letter to the Philippians:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

As the Father was in Jesus, He is now in us - working that His will and work would be done. Discovering and doing the Father's will is as important in our disciple making as it was with Jesus.

The Works We Will Do

In John 5:20, Jesus states that the Father "will show Him [Jesus] greater works than these". To His disciples, He promises that:

... he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. John 14:12-14

As with His Son Jesus, God desires to do greater works with is adopted sons and daughters.

The Light of the World

The very thing that Jesus proclaimed of Himself, He affirmed in His followers:

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. John 12:46

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:14

These are but a few of the ways that Jesus identified Himself with those that would be His disciples. Some we have covered (e.g., “love one another as I have loved you”); others are yet to be searched out. It may be that you are still asking yourself, “How can this be possible?” I encourage you to be patient. We will search this out in the section on Submitting to His Power.

For now, it is enough that we focus on God's plan for making disciples.

Conclusion

The key to disciple making God's way is walking as the Lord Jesus walked. Not “trying” to walk as He walked; nor walking something like He walked. It is not about imitating His life, but allowing His life to do what It naturally does, in the work we were created to walk in (Ephesians 2:10).

How He walked is carefully recorded in the Gospels. It was a walk of surrender, sacrifice and submission to the will and work of His Father. We can do no less and still call ourselves His disciples.

Making disciples has been called the Great Commission for a reason. It is filled with the greatness of the Lord's purpose, plan and power for ministry. Through it, God's children involve themselves in the greatness of God's story. Out of it, His way, truth and life greatly impact the world - for His great glory, name and kingdom.

But this is only possible if we make disciples God's way.

Application

If you are a Leader in the Workplace, then you are called to make disciples. To whom much is given, much is expected. You are expected to understand your commission and carry it out to the best of your ability. Most of the work will be His, for He will get the glory. Our responsibility is to choose and passionately pursue His way, His truth, and His life; and to share what we have with others.

Reckoning

He can do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20).

Assignment

1. Review your notes and the Scripture passages from this week's module. Share the ones that are most meaningful to someone in your spheres of influence.
2. How does this understanding of “disciple” change your perspective of the relationship you have with Jesus Christ? How does this impact the disciple making God is doing in you? How does this impact the disciple making God is doing through you?
3. Identify the three to twelve people that God has placed in your spheres of influence for you to be more intentional about making into disciples of Jesus Christ.

Devotion

Enable Others to Succeed

From Rob Streetman, Marketplace Ministry Tip, Chapel Hill News and Views Magazine

I recently heard a successful business owner share his heart for his employees, and what he was doing to better understand who they were as people. One thing stood out to me: This owner's heart for their success; and not just success in their vocation. He wanted to know how they defined success in the whole of their life - vocation, family, and personal/spiritual - and what he could do to help them.

His comments got me thinking about what our businesses might look like if they were truly mission fields. Think about that for a minute. Don't be frightened by the prospect until you have considered it before God. Is He not your CEO? Does He not have access to cattle on a thousand hills? Is He not looking to and fro to show Himself strong on behalf of those that will be loyal to Him?

It will help to understand, and consider, that He is infinitely wise with His resources. If He truly owns "your" company, will He not see to its success? How does He measure success in employee relations if not by the way we love those He has brought under our leadership?

In his book, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, John C. Maxwell says, "... the best leaders desire to serve others, not themselves." Servant Leaders lead in service toward others. Every godly leader has the desire in their heart to serve others in their spheres of influence. Surrender to that desire and the Lord will give it to you (Psalm 37:4). In the process you will become the best leader you can possibly be.

Marketplace Ministry Tip: Ask God to reveal the desire He has placed in your heart for your employees. Remember, He is a process-oriented problem solver, who will direct your steps in this adventure. Start with those that report directly to you. Once you show them you care about their success, in their whole life, bring them into the adventure by encouraging and enabling them to serve those under their leadership. Contact me (rob@inlightconsulting.com) if I can help you become one of the best leaders.