

You Can Make Disciples

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus commanded in the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. Can we really do it? Is it really possible? Or, are these words just for preachers and bigshots?

Jesus Himself gave us this command, but also promised that He would be with be with us. He has all authority in heaven and on earth! If we walk with Him and trust Him, He will use us to make disciples! I hope these words will encourage your faith to believe that God will use you to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

1. God uses ordinary people.

The first people Jesus chose to follow Him were fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James and John. Why did Jesus choose fishermen to be his first disciples? They were uneducated ordinary men. I think He wanted the world to know that ordinary people can be disciples and can make disciples.

If you are really following Jesus you can make disciples!

Many believers know that Jesus commanded us to make disciples, but feel that they are unqualified. They think that they do not know enough or that they are not gifted enough to make disciples. They think that in order to make disciples that we must go to seminary or be able to explain the entire Bible.

How would a person know if they are qualified to make disciples? This depends somewhat on their definition of what a disciple is. The most basic definition of a disciple someone who is truly following Jesus and who is becoming like Him. If you are a disciple of Jesus, He will use you to make disciples.

God uses ordinary people.

Acts chapter 4 gives the account of Peter and John talking with the Jewish leaders who were upset with them because they had healed a man in the name of Jesus. When the conversation was over verse 13 records the following:

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13

Peter and John were uneducated fishermen, but God used them powerfully. The Jewish leaders were astonished by their words and presence. The key is simple. Those leaders took note that Peter and John had been with Jesus. The key is to be with Jesus. The key is to walk with Him step by step and to remain in love relationship with Him.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew on the shores of Lake Galilee, He said to them: *“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men”* (Matthew 4:19). This is simple. When we are following Jesus, He will use us to make disciples. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. He promised to be with us always! If we are walking with Jesus, He will enable us to make disciples!

2. Make Friends and Let them See How You Follow Jesus

Friendship is really important. God created us to live in love relationship with Him and with other people. Most people come to faith through a friend or through someone they are close to. And people grow as disciples of Jesus through people they are close to and trust.

Jesus became a human being and lived among us. He chose twelve men to be His disciples. They lived together and did everything together. They were friends. They were always with Jesus and saw how He lived. Of course, He taught them many things, but it was His relationship with them and His life example that transformed them.

We cannot make disciples unless we build trust relationships.

We cannot make disciples by just teaching people in a classroom. Disciples are made heart to heart and life to life. In order make disciples we must form intimate friendships with people and establish a close relationship with them. We cannot make disciples unless we build trust relationships.

My good friend Ralph Moore said, *“Discipleship is an intentional friendship with Jesus at its core.”* Discipleship is opening our heart and life to others. If we are walking with Jesus and growing in Him, we will have true life to share with others. They can see His love and His life in us. When they see that our faith and life are real, they will be hungry to learn from us. Disciples grow together with friends as they focus on Jesus and experience His life together.

Making disciples is not about imparting knowledge. It’s about imparting life.

Discipleship is opening our lives so that others can see how we live and walk with Jesus. Through this relationship we can help them to trust and obey Jesus in every area of their lives. Making disciples is more about loving and serving others than it is about teaching them. It is more about being an example than it is about trying to get people to agree to a set of teachings. Making disciples is not just about imparting knowledge. It is about imparting life.

Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”* This is discipleship. We are asking others to walk together with us as we follow Jesus.

We do not have to be able to explain or answer every theological question. In fact, it is more important to listen to others than it is to try to give them all of the answers. The main qualification needed in order make disciples is to be a growing disciple of Jesus. People will grow as they see us walking with Jesus and trusting Him in every area of our lives.

3. Reproduce the Life of Jesus in Others

“Be fruitful and multiply.”

The first command God gave after creating mankind was, *“Be fruitful and multiply.”* All living things grow to maturity and then reproduce. The same is true of spiritual life. God intended us to grow to maturity in Christ and to reproduce His life in others. This is another important metaphor

for making disciples.

In II Timothy 2:1-2 Paul wrote to his spiritual son Timothy:

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

There are four generations of disciples discussed in these verses:

1. Paul,
2. Timothy,
3. the people Timothy was discipling
4. the people Timothy's disciples would disciple.

God wants each of us to grow to maturity as disciples of Jesus Christ and to multiply Christ's life in others. He wants us to make disciples of Jesus, who make disciples who make disciples.

This is Christ's plan for reaching the world.

This is actually Christ's plan for reaching the world. We will never reach the world just by adding people who attend big meetings. We must multiply. Suppose a person makes one disciple in one year. After one year there are two disciples. The following year each person makes a disciple, so after two years there are four disciples of Jesus. If they continue to multiply like this year by year after 3 years there would be 8 disciples, 16 disciples after four years and 32 disciples after five years.

$$\begin{aligned}1 + 1 &= 2 \\2 \times 2 &= 4 \\2 \times 4 &= 8 \\2 \times 8 &= 16 \\2 \times 16 &= 32\end{aligned}$$

Does this sound slow. In the beginning it may seem slow, but if we continue to multiply in this way after 33 years there would be more than **8.5 billion** disciples, which is more than the present population of the world! Jesus' plan to win the world is for disciples to make disciples who make disciples.

And this was Paul's passion. He wanted to see great numbers of people believe in Jesus and to see His life reproduced in them. He said in Galatians 4:19, *"My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you."*

It is possible!

Is this reasonable? Can it be done? Well, it is the command of Jesus and He is God so we must conclude that it is possible. And it is!

I went to church three times a week until the age of 15, but was never disciplined in church. It was a good church. They had many good teachings, good music and good programs. However, they did not lead me and other young people to grow as disciples of Jesus. Sadly, many young people came to church meetings for a while, but eventually they fell away.

When I was 15 years old, I fully surrendered my life to Jesus as the Lord of my life. Three days later I met a guy named Bob Schultz at a Young Life Bible study group for young men. From that week Bob began to disciple me. We met once a week and shared, studied the Bible and prayed. For the first time in my life I began to establish a daily habit of spending time with God and meditating on His Word.

We memorized Bible verses together, served others and shared the gospel together. Sometimes we argued and fought together. We were friends and brothers. This was a very important time in my life. My spiritual foundations were laid through this relationship and through relationships with others in our group.

After 6 months or so I began meeting one to one with some of my friends who had believed in Jesus. I just shared the things with them that I learned from Bob. I did not know much, but I was on fire and was passionate about following Jesus. He was alive and working in our lives. Most of those friends who I met with for discipleship are still following Christ today.

Someone said, *"It is not how much you know, but who you know that matters."* If we love Jesus and are walking with Him, we can make disciples! We do not have to know everything in order to share His life with others. We can show them how to walk with Him by the way we live. This is how we can reproduce the life of Christ in others. This is how we can make disciples.

4. Focus on Love Relationship with Jesus.

The main thing is Jesus Himself!

There are many things to learn about making disciples. And there are many things that we want growing disciples to understand and apply. We want them to learn to pray and to feed on the Word of God. We want them to share the gospel, to build up the body of Christ, to trust and obey Jesus, and to love and serve others. These are all important foundations of walking with Christ, but the main thing is Jesus Himself!

As mentioned above, I was discipled by a guy named Bob. He was discipled by a guy named George, who was discipled by Dick, who was discipled by Jack (who also had a great impact on my life). Jack was discipled by a man named Doug Coe, who is now with the Lord.

I met Doug Coe twice. I will never forget the first time I met Doug. He shared with me passionately for an hour and a half about 1 Corinthians 2:2:

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Doug talked about how easy it is to get our focus off of Jesus and on to a myriad of other things. Sometimes we want to be successful so we tend to focus on new teachings, strategies, programs and methods. Paul declared that he focused only on Jesus!

Jesus is the center of all things. He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the bread of life and the light of the world. Everything depends on our love relationship with Him! Our main job is to connect people to Jesus. We want them to love Jesus, to trust Jesus and to live by His indwelling life through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the goal of discipleship. Paul expressed this clearly in Colossians 1:28:

“We proclaim him, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

There are many things to learn and foundational areas of growth as disciples of Jesus. However, they all center in Jesus Himself. Our focus must be on Him and on leading others to follow Him, to love Him and to live in Him.

Jesus is the goal of discipleship. Jesus was a humble servant and expressed love in all that He did. This is the essence of who He is. Jesus commanded us to love others the way He loved us. If we are truly following Jesus, we will become like Him. We will love as He loved and serve as He served. Jesus said that people will know that we are truly His disciples by the way we love one another.

Fruitfulness Comes from Union

I shared about growing as a disciple of Jesus as a teenager and that I began discipling others soon after I began to grow as His disciple. This was an exciting time. We experienced Jesus working in us and through us.

We were changed by Jesus as we were learning how to walk with Him. He led us and spoke to us through the Scriptures. We experienced God working in our lives and in the lives of others. We were learning to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind. The focus was on love relationship with Jesus.

Fruitfulness comes through union with Jesus. He is the One who produces fruit in us. And He is the one working in the lives of people we are discipling. Our main task is to abide in Him. This means to stay connected to Jesus and to live in love relationship with Him.

Jesus made this clear in John 15:4-5:

Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can't bear fruit by itself unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Jesus said that if we remain in Him, we will produce much fruit! This main thing is to know Him, love Him and live in Him. We do not have to know everything in order to make disciples, but we must know Jesus! If we focus our heart and life on Jesus and remain in that love relationship with Him, He will use us to make disciples. He will work through you and He will use you to make disciples!

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