



Kingdom-Driven Discipleship



*Making Disciples in the
Middle of the Harvest Field*

P A U L S C H L I E K E R



About the *Open Your Heart* Series

Each computer has an operating system. Only with a functioning operating system, such as Windows, Mac, or Unix, can a computer fulfill its purpose. Discipleship is the operating system of the church. Jesus built his operating system by creating a discipling culture. Discipleship is life-on-life transformation. From Jesus we learn that success is not about size. Success is succession.



The *Open your Heart Series* offers four distinct studies that are uniquely designed to introduce Christianity, explain foundational principles, create authentic disciples and train disciple-makers. These ready-to-use materials include discussion questions and a leader guide. They are perfect for individuals, small groups and classes of any size.

STUDY

1

Bible Basics

Bible Basics is for those who don't know what the Bible is ...let alone what it's all about. This study assumes no Bible knowledge or background. These six full color lessons identify fundamental truths about God, the Bible, Satan, Sin and Jesus.

STUDY

2

What's Missing Inside You?

Do you want to discover foundational principles for Christian living? *What's Missing Inside You?* will benefit people at all stages of faith. This study answers two questions: What does Jesus have to do with me? and Does God have a plan for my life? Starting at square one, thirteen lessons explore important topics such as God's existence, man's purpose, forgiveness, temptation, the Holy Spirit, and much more. You will love the clear scriptural teaching, practical application and over fifty real life stories.

STUDY

3

Kingdom Disciple

Is there a difference between a Christian and a follower of Jesus? What is a disciple? What does Jesus really expect? Explore the answers to these questions in *Kingdom Disciple — Building Your Relationship with Jesus*. This five-lesson study is not a new program about "doing discipleship." It is a guide to create authentic disciples. Learn the lifestyle of Jesus and model a life worth imitating.

STUDY

4

Kingdom-Driven Discipleship

Why is it important to make disciples where you live, work and play? Have you ever considered your job as a kingdom assignment, or your office as a kingdom outpost? *Kingdom-Driven Discipleship — Making Disciples in the Middle of the Harvest Field* equips disciples to be disciple-makers. This five-lesson study is excellent training for seasoned believers.

All four books are available at www.bible-study-lesson-plans.com. To learn more, read online what others say about these discipleship books. In addition, many free resources are available including our discipleship newsletter, small group leader training, devotions, Sunday school lessons, audio sermons and more.

Visit our Website: www.bible-study-lesson-plans.com

Leader Guide

PURPOSE

The intent of this study is to help you make disciples in your everyday world.

LAYOUT

Kingdom-Driven Discipleship is composed of five lessons. Each lesson contains clear scriptural teaching and practical discussion questions.

STRUCTURE

This study is designed for a group setting. If you have a mid-size group, consider having members sit at tables with one leader per table.

PREPARATION

Ask each member to read the lesson before you meet. The leader should read through all five lessons and discussion questions before the first session. As you prepare, look at the material through the eyes of your group to anticipate potential questions.

THE SESSIONS

Read aloud each lesson section by section (choose a "reader" for each lesson). Note the **Supporting Verses** which reinforce the main idea of the lesson. Discuss the **Let's Talk About It** questions at the end of each section. Conclude each session by reading the **Last Word** and ask each member to share their personal response in the **Final Wrap**. From start to finish, each lesson will require about 60 minutes.

TIMETABLE

Jesus taught people, not lessons. If necessary, devote multiple sessions to one lesson.

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THE OPEN YOUR HEART SERIES

*If you can read it
...you can lead it!*

Kingdom Driven Discipleship

Making Disciples in the Middle of the Harvest Field

OVERVIEW

Kingdom-Driven Discipleship equips disciples to be disciple-makers. Learn how to make disciples wherever you live, work and play.

LESSONS

1 A NEW WORLD Post Christian Culture

2 MOTIVATION Christ Himself

3 FOCUS Relational Network

4 SUCCESS Becoming Like Jesus

5 VISION Discipling Movement

A New World

Post-Christian Culture

Milfred Minatrea tells the story about a man named Don Wade. He was a wilderness guide from Texas, who, on September 8, 2001, took a client on an expedition to Northern Alaska. A pilot dropped them off on a small lake just beneath the Arctic Circle. From there, without radios or cell phones, Don was responsible to ensure their safe arrival fifteen days later.

On September 11, 2001, Don was eating breakfast while those who had access to televisions were witnessing over and over again the horror of commercial airliners flying into the Pentagon and the Twin Towers. For Don, oblivious to the tragedy that rocked the nation, September 11 was simply day four of a fifteen day wilderness trip. On September 21, the pilot retrieved Don and his client and began telling them about the events of 9/11.

Minitrea writes, “That night, Don lay awake, trying without success to grasp the reality of what happened to the world. While Don was away enjoying the beauty of the natural world, our world had changed. The change was so dramatic that his isolation from the world’s reality made it almost impossible to comprehend. Don’s experience may be extreme, but it has much in common with the situation in which many of our churches now find themselves.”¹

Where are we headed? It feels like our world has changed overnight. We now find ourselves living in a post-Christian culture. There is a distinct impression that Christians have lost their home court advantage. What will the face of Christianity in America look like in the next twenty years? Although our world has changed, Jesus hasn’t. He is still in charge and nothing happens without his permission.

Discipleship is about learning and modeling. A disciple is a learner. A disciple-maker is model. Discipleship is learning the lifestyle of Jesus and then modeling a life worth imitating.

Kingdom-Driven Discipleship is an introduction to making disciples wherever you live, work and play.

Lesson 1 takes an honest look at our current condition. Lessons 2-5 describe four arenas that are directly linked to reaching people: motivation, focus, success and vision.

View yourself as a disciple-maker. Jesus already has you where he wants you — right in the middle of His harvest field. He’s already working in the hearts of people you see every day. It’s time to join him. ■

Non-Discipleship Christianity

“Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity with out discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”² Although you may have never considered the possibility of calling yourself a Christian without following Christ, in many Christian circles this is quite common. Bill Hull writes, “The church culture in the Global North — along with Australia, New Zealand, and South America — has largely accepted the idea of non-discipleship Christianity: People can be Christians without making any effort to submit to or follow Christ.”³

Non-discipleship Christianity is fellowship without expectations or direction. It is “accepting Christ” without becoming his disciple. Agreeing with Jesus is easier than following him simply because it takes less effort. In this belief system, faith is reduced to endorsing a set of religious ideas or a doctrinal test. Carving out the time to actually obey the commands of Christ is considered optional. Friendships in this environment are valued, but they are often aimless relationships. “We’ve been in the same group for years,” is a familiar testimony.

In sharp contrast to this paralyzing condition is kingdom-driven discipleship — a discipling movement that Jesus began 2,000 years ago. Jesus calls his followers to a movement that is dependent on the leadership of the Holy Spirit and devoted to advancing God’s kingdom. The movement is spiritual, relational and intentional. There is an unspoken belief that discipleship is for super Christians with a special anointing. Not true. Every follower of Christ is included. The focus is not gifting, but availability. There is no “gift of disciple-making.”

The calling, message, need, power and scope for this world project is rooted in Scripture:

CALLING

“Come, follow me. I will make you fishers of men.”
Matthew 4:19

MESSAGE

Jesus went throughout Galilee preaching the good news of the kingdom.
Matthew 4:23

NEED

“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”
Matthew 9:38

POWER

“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me...”
Matthew 28:18

SCOPE

“Go and make disciples of all nations...”
Matthew 28:19

Jesus gives us commands to obey, not just facts to know. He commands us to be and make disciples. To Jesus, faith means following him daily (Luke 9:23). “A disciple is so intent on becoming like Christ that he systematically and progressively arranges his affairs to that end. In contrast, a non-disciple has something more important to do than to become like Christ. Most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have not yet decided to follow Christ.”⁴ ■

1. Milfred Minatrea, *Shaped by God’s Heart*, 2004, reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1963, Macmillan Publishing Company

3. Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 2006, NavPress

4. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 1988, HarperCollins Publishers



Let’s Talk About It

1. How does non-discipleship Christianity describe the environment in many contemporary American churches?
2. What is the difference between agreeing with Jesus and following Jesus?

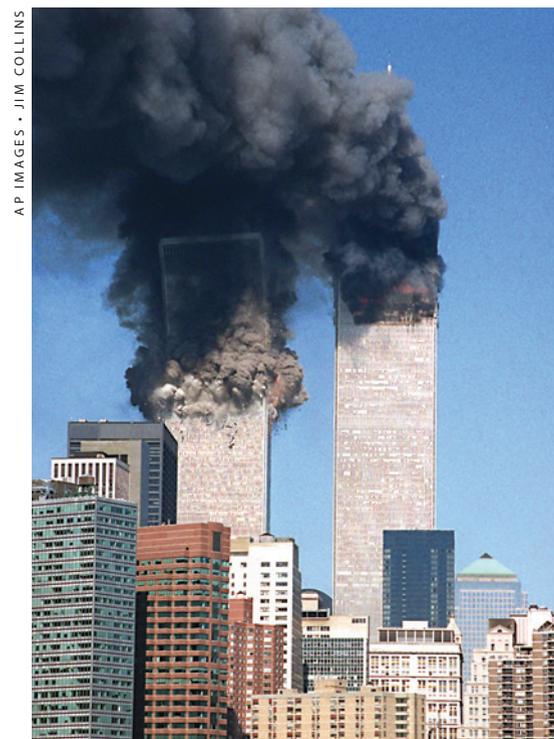
Following is Obeying...

▼ “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

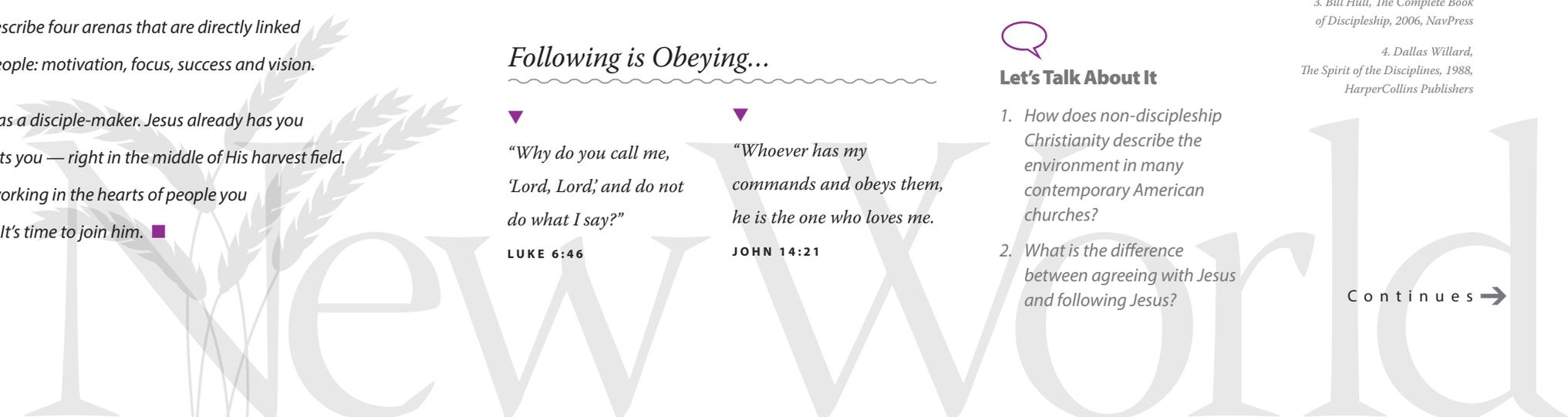
LUKE 6:46

▼ “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.”

JOHN 14:21



AP IMAGES • JIM COLLINS



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Relational Ministry

Many overestimate the lasting impact of *events* and underestimate the power of *relationships*. As a result, contemporary Christianity is often a mile wide and an inch deep. Jesus' ministry was relationship-driven, not event-driven. His emphasis was on people, not programs or classes. Jesus knew that drawing a crowd was not the same as making disciples. While large group events can attract, instruct and inspire, they cannot fully transform. Transformation requires relationships. Jesus called plain fishermen to spend time with him and then transformed them into *fishers of men*. If God can change the lives of these ordinary non-theologians, he can produce disciple-makers today.

A mature follower of Jesus obeys, loves and bears fruit (John 8:31; 13:35; 15:8). These and other verses describe the *outcome* of disciple-making more than the *process*. In the Olympics we see athletes with flawless physiques. What we don't see are the years of personal commitment and training required to produce their world-class abilities. While a mental picture of what a mature disciple looks like is needed, equally important are the components that produce such a disciple.

Jesus is the perfect model. His approach to disciple-making involved two basic elements: *time* and *practice*. First, Jesus called his disciples to spend time with him in a variety of life settings. Second, he expected them to practice a godly lifestyle. This kingdom lifestyle was clearly taught and visibly modeled for them every day. Jesus showed his followers how to love God, neighbors and enemies. They grew spiritually through their daily commitment to stay with him and obey his teaching.

Developing a new skill always requires training. To run a marathon, you might begin by attending a class or listening to an experienced runner. A training video may introduce you to various techniques that will help you endure 26 miles, 385 yards. But seminars and videos are not enough. Can anyone get in shape by watching

a workout video? Training for a marathon calls for hours of running. Likewise, spiritual development requires practice. We learn by doing. Habits are formed by discipline, commitment and effort. No one becomes like Jesus by merely thinking about him.

Jesus sees what we can become and wants to enlarge the way we see ourselves. The original disciples certainly realized that the words, *"I will make you fishers of men"* were Christ's agenda. The simple phrase *fishers of men* significantly shaped the mental picture they had of themselves and their future. Ask Jesus to help you see yourself as a disciple-maker.

A gentle warning: unless a new self-image begins to form, the lessons contained in this study will be mere information and nothing more. ■

Time...

▼
Jesus called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve — designating them apostles — that they might be with him . . .

MARK 3:13-14

Practice...

▼
"I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

LUKE 6:47-48

5. Jim Collins, *Good to Great*, 2001, HarperCollins Publishers

6. Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future*, 2003, reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

7. Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 2006, NavPress



Let's Talk About It

1. Why is spending time in a variety of life settings so important?
2. What spiritual disciplines and habits have you developed in your life? How did you develop those habits?

Christ's Harvest Field

The necessity to make disciples in the middle of the harvest field is based on two perspectives: **(1) This was Jesus' personal approach to disciple-making,** and **(2) We are becoming a non church-going culture.**

Admiral Jim Stockdale was the highest-ranking United States military officer in the "Hanoi Hilton" prisoner-of-war camp during the height of the Vietnam War. During his eight-year imprisonment from 1965-1973, he was tortured over twenty times. Stockdale did everything he could to create conditions that would help prisoners survive. Despite his efforts, he saw many comrades lose heart. When asked, "Who didn't make it out?" Stockdale said, "Oh, that's easy, the optimists."

To Stockdale, the "optimists" were prisoners who believed that someday they would be getting out. They believed they were going to be out by Thanksgiving, then Christmas

and then Easter. When it didn't happen they died of a broken heart. Stockdale said, "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end — with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts in your current reality, whatever they might be." Stockdale told his fellow prisoners, "We're not getting out by Christmas; deal with it."⁵

The *Christian optimists* are those who believe that someday unsaved people will see the error of their way and come to church. If that is our view, I predict we will die of a broken heart. Like the overly optimistic prisoners, our problem is one of denial. A brutal fact facing the North American church today is that the majority of people Jesus wants us to reach are not coming. There is no reason to assign blame. We all share some responsibility for the current condition.

Reggie McNeal writes, "Church leaders seem unable to grasp this simple implication of the new world — people outside the church think church is for *church people* — not for them."⁶ This is not to suggest that we give up on the church — but that we give up on the notion that someday massive numbers of lost people will start coming. While certainly some will come, the majority will not — and we must deal with it. Since they aren't coming to us, we must go to them.

The good news is that Jesus knows how to lead us to the people he wants us to reach. He knows their address, cell number and email. He can use seemingly random events to bring people together. His presence, power and perfect timing make him unstoppable. Our greatest need is to credit Jesus with having enough intelligence to know what he's doing. He is calling you to join him. Can you hear his voice? ■

The Lord Sends...

▼
"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

MATTHEW 9:37-38

Disciples Go...

▼
While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men were looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

ACTS 10:19-20



Let's Talk About It

1. What evidence have you seen that we are becoming a non-church going culture?
2. What do the words, "his harvest field," in Matthew 9 mean to you?

Final Wrap

What idea from this lesson spoke most personally to you?



The Last Word

Unfortunately "non-discipleship Christianity" dominates much of the thinking in the contemporary church. In addition to sucking the strength from the church, Christianity without discipleship causes the church to assimilate itself into the culture. And sadly, whenever the difference between the church's and the culture's definition of morality ceases to exist, the church loses its power and authority.⁷

End →

Motivation Christ Himself

Motivation is often a missing factor. “Most teaching on discipleship assumes that believers are already motivated and thus ignores this crucial area.”¹ Our closeness to Jesus is usually the root issue. Jesus had a personal source of motivation that initially his followers did not understand. He simply told them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about. My food is to do the will of him who sent me and finish his work” (John 4:32, 34). Spiritual motivation comes from drawing close to God and aligning your heart with his. Formulas, strategic planning and mission statements pale by comparison.



Strong motivation begins with remembering God’s mercy. Despite our failures God is not done with us. Starting over is one of Jesus’ specialties. If persecuting the church did not disqualify Saul of Tarsus from becoming an apostle, there’s hope for anyone! Consider his testimony: “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Grace energizes. The impulses of fear, guilt and duty do not last. Jesus provides the motivational resources we need through his love, truth and power. Christ died for all. This undeserved gift ignites our love and safeguards us from spiritual pride. God’s Word instructs, corrects and protects us from being seduced by worldly ambitions. The presence of God’s Spirit enables followers of Jesus to experience joy regardless of circumstances. The example of others provides a passion to keep growing. With Christ’s love directing our lives, here are some important dynamics that sustain motivation. ■

Humble Dependence

Biblical Christianity is not *principle centered*, it is *person centered*. Christianity is a Living Person living in a living person; Somebody living in somebody. Christ in us. This was the secret to Jesus’ earthly ministry: “It is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work” (John 14:10). Today, Jesus works through us exactly like the Father worked through him. The ministry of Jesus is what he does through us, not what we do for him. Only Jesus has the power to change people. For the super human task of making disciples of all nations, disciple-makers must have supernatural power. God wants worshipers before workers. It’s not the lofty sails that move the ship, but the unseen wind. Whatever we are not praying about, we are doing ourselves.

“There are no superstars in Christianity except Jesus. You can’t make Christ look wonderful and yourself look clever at the same time.”² A spirit of humility wants God to reveal himself — nothing else. How God does it and whom he uses is his right. Whether he honors himself through us or without us does not matter. Make Jesus famous and keep yourself nameless. R. T. Kendall writes, “The greatest freedom is having nothing to prove.”³ A humble person is willing to be used, overlooked, ignored or forgotten. His primary motive is to glorify Christ, not to validate his worth, vindicate his reputation or leave a legacy. The main concern is not grieving God’s heart or quenching his power.

God alone determines our role in his kingdom; the initiative always belongs to him. Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last” (John 15:16). In the Bible, there is no record of a God-fearing person who chose the life he wanted and then informed God of his decision. Our calling is to die to the dream of being a success and live to the dream of being a blessing. ■

Humility...

▼
Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God ...made himself nothing ...and humbled himself ...and became obedient to death...

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

▼
“I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”

ACTS 20:24

Dependence...

▼
“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

LUKE 24:49, 53

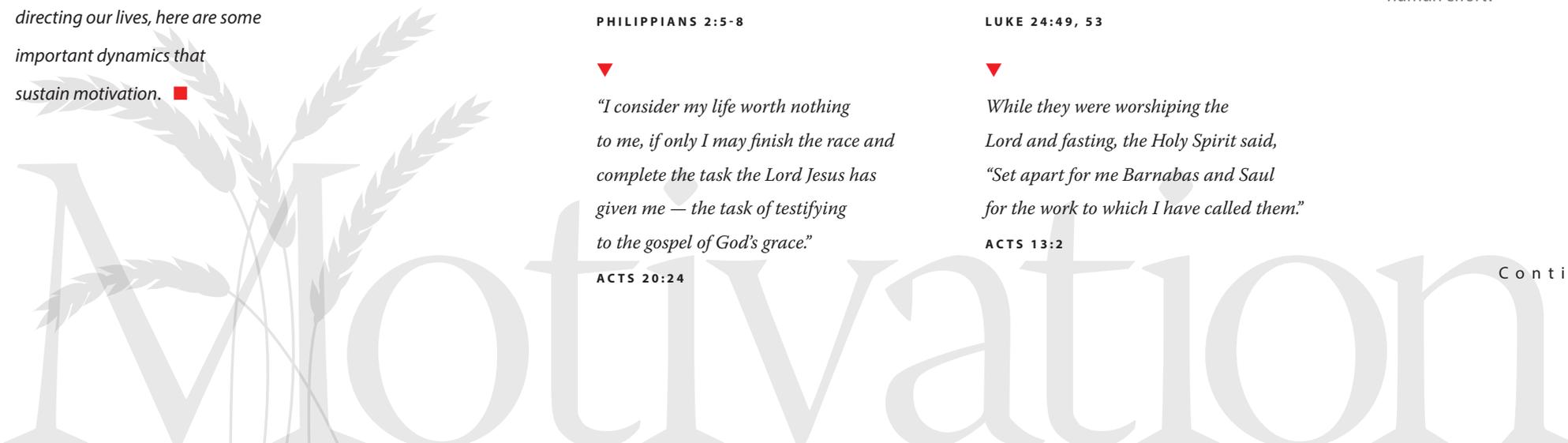
▼
While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

ACTS 13:2



Let’s Talk About It

1. Why should the definition of Christianity center on Christ himself and not merely biblical principles?
2. How do you know when you are relying on God and not solely your own human effort?



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Experiences of God

The Bible is filled with many stories of life changing encounters with God. When the Lord spoke to Abraham, Moses and Mary — to name a few — it was a personal experience. It is inconsistent to advocate the authority of the Bible, yet oppose personal encounters with God. Having the correct theology about Jesus cannot replace our need to personally experience Jesus. Without an experiential reality to our faith, Christianity is reduced to “come to Jesus and go to heaven.” Sadly for many, Jesus has become little more than a spiritual insurance contract. “The ultimate goal of the gospel is not just to get man out of hell and into heaven, but also to get God out of heaven and back into man.”⁴

An experiential faith is the heartbeat of the New Testament. What changed Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus was more than a small group Bible study. This vital truth has often been neglected. In 1744, John Wesley (the founder of the Methodist movement), confronted a group of religious teachers at Oxford University:

*Who of you is in any degree acquainted with the supernatural work of His Spirit in the souls of men? Isn't it true that you can barely stand a church that regularly talks about the Holy Spirit? Don't you naturally assume that anyone who begins to discuss the Holy Spirit is either a hypocrite or a fanatic? In the name of the Lord God Almighty, I ask, "What religion are you of?"*⁵

The tendency of fire is to go out. A fresh anointing comes from a simultaneous and equal emphasis on the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The Bible is more than a book that was once written; it is a voice that is now speaking. To give the truth of God's Word a pulse, Jesus opened the scroll of Isaiah and read, “*The Spirit of the Lord is on me...*” (Luke 4:17-18). To be people of the Word and people of the Spirit we must obey God's Word and listen for God's immediate and direct voice. Theology without experience is lifeless. Likewise, the Spirit without the Word is incomplete — like a soldier fighting without a weapon. ■

Fresh Encounters with God...

▼
Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting” ...the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with a friend.

EXODUS 33:7, 11

▼
The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

I SAMUEL 3:19, 21

▼
“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

JOHN 10:27

▼
So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...”

HEBREWS 3:7-8



Let's Talk About It

1. Describe your time alone with God. How do you draw near to Him?
2. What does it mean to hear Jesus' voice?

Ministry Partners

The people of God are a people apart. They belong to each other in a sense in which they do not belong to anyone else. Spiritual friendship is powerful motivation. As the old hymn by Howard Walter goes, “*I would be true, for there are those who trust me; I would be pure, for there are those who care.*” Nothing can compare with a group of genuine Christ centered friends who are set free from pretense and artificiality. They have no one to impress. They accept others as they are. Their devotion to God's Kingdom and to one another creates a fellowship that is second to none. ■

Ministry Partners in Scripture...

▼
Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

ROMANS 16:3-4

▼
I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier... honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for me the help you could not give me.

PHILIPPIANS 2:25; 29-30

▼
May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

II TIMOTHY 1:16



Let's Talk About It

1. How might you find a ministry partner?
2. What role does a ministry partner play?

The Last Word

The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. What the church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations, not more and novel methods. She needs men whom the Holy Spirit can use — men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come upon machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans but men — men of prayer. Nothing is too hard for God to do if He can only get the right kind of man to do it.⁶

1. Dr. Stephen Lim, Academic Dean, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO

2. Jim Cymbala, *Faith In and For the Holy Spirit*, 2006, Herald of His Coming

3. R.T. Kendall, *The Sensitivity of the Spirit*, 2002, Charisma House

4. Major W. Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ*, 1988, Zondervan Publishing

5. Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Power*, 2001, Zondervan Publishing

6. E.M. Bounds, *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds on Prayer*, 1990, Baker Book House

Final Wrap

What idea from this lesson spoke most personally to you?

End →

FOCUS

Focus *Relational Network*



*It is God's intention to spread the gospel by using ordinary people as informal missionaries. Jesus called them his witnesses. God knows that every follower of Jesus has inside access to a unique set of relationships. They are **insiders** to families, neighborhoods and workplaces. "Insiders do not need to go anywhere or join a program to have a legitimate ministry. They play an indispensable role in bringing the gospel into any social context."¹*

Extended families were the original infrastructure God created to disciple the nations. In addition to our immediate and extended family, relational networks include those we know through routine contact (co-workers, business associates, neighbors, friends, classmates, relatives).

Wherever we live, work and play provides many opportunities to serve people and open doors for Jesus.

*The challenge is to integrate ministry with all of life. Both the definition of ministry and the place where ministry happens must be expanded. **Ministry** is more than a program inside a church building. When we segment Christianity into weekend events held on church property we forget how God and people interface every day. "Making disciples in the middle of the harvest field" means that our kingdom assignment is right in front of us — with people we see day by day. Jesus wants us to follow his leading, do everything in his name and be a channel for his grace. ■*

God's Guidance

Jesus was sent by the Father and led by the Holy Spirit. He was humble, loving and obedient. He submitted himself to the will and agenda of his Father. He was fully aware of why he was sent when he said, "I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 6:38). Following his resurrection Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). For every member of the body of Christ there is a purpose, a plan and a place.

"None of us is the leading character in the story of our life."² Like Jesus, David understood this truth. He recognized that his time on earth was by design, not by accident. "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). Jesus sends us to our relational network because God often finds people in the middle of their daily routine. When God is at work, doors open. At any time God can guide us to someone who is searching. He can arrange events to get us where he wants us to be even when we don't know he is doing it. God puts us in the right place at the right time to say the right thing to the right person. ■

Providential Guidance

▼
"And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

ESTHER 4:14

▼
This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

ACTS 8:28-29

Daily Routines

▼
When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

JOHN 4:7

▼
The jailor woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

ACTS 16:27-28



Let's Talk About It

1. How has God guided you to your current situation?
2. What doors have you seen God open during your daily routine?

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God's Glory

Jesus had an undivided heart and lived an undivided life. As both the Son of God and the son of a carpenter, there were no compartments labeled “secular” and “sacred.” Jesus always pleased God and brought him glory on earth by completing the work he was given to do. God accepted the offering of his total life.

Bringing the kingdom of God to your relational network will please God and bring him glory. However, many Christians unconsciously segment their life into the *sacred* and *secular*. Their assumption is that *sacred* acts please God and *secular* acts, while necessary, are generally considered a waste of time as it pertains to matters of faith. From God's perspective, time spent doing our job or talking to a next-door neighbor is just as sacred as Bible reading and church attendance.

Is your career field just as spiritual as a pastor's? Does running a company please God as much as leading

a church? Can selling insurance be as holy as preaching a sermon? Aren't motherhood and mission-work equally high callings? Don't be distracted or discouraged. Jesus has a different view. Your job is your kingdom assignment. Your home and office are your kingdom outposts.

The key is not *what* we do, but *why* we do it. The motive is everything. In order to sanctify the ordinary, we must devote our whole life to Christ and do everything in his name and for his sake. This simply means that we do, for Christ's sake, what we had formerly been doing for our own. Every deed begins with God's will and ends with God's glory. “The whole world is then a sanctuary and our entire life is an act of worship.”³ ■

Every Deed...

▼
Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.
COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

▼
“Lord, when did we see you hungry ...thirsty ...a stranger ...needing clothes ...sick ...or in prison?” The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’
MATTHEW 25:37-40

For His Glory...

▼
And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
COLOSSIANS 3:17

▼
So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
I CORINTHIANS 10:31



Let's Talk About It

1. In what ways do you segment your life into the sacred and the secular?
2. What difference is made when we view our jobs as kingdom assignments, and our homes and offices as kingdom outposts?

God's Grace

Leaving his throne of grace, Jesus came to earth and lived his life among the lost. He was known for being a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19). He brought God's grace into everyday settings like people's homes, social events and the marketplace. Problems and life circumstances were his classroom. The compassion of Jesus softened hearts, opened minds and gave hope to the hurting.

When serving others, being aware is more important than being smart. With an acute spiritual and relational awareness, Jesus looked for people. “Ministry was the person standing in front of him at the time.”⁴ Jesus gave common grace to the needy and amazing grace to the receptive.

No situation was hopeless. Jesus never let anything hinder the flow of God's love.

The discipleship journey begins with friendship. When unbelievers see us as friends, they are more likely to see Jesus as one. We should approach our relational networks like Jesus would — as servants and friends. Offering grace and truth, we can be spiritual guides to those who are struggling with life. Confidently believe that your daily work serves his kingdom. Your specific occupation, position and company are irrelevant. What matters is your availability to God. A testimony is more valuable than a title. God is able to channel his grace through us. ■

Home...

▼
Jesus said, “Go home to your **family** and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.”
MARK 5:19

Neighborhood...

▼
Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs **among the people**.
ACTS 6:8

City...

▼
So, he (Paul) reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the **marketplace** day by day with those who happened to be there.
ACTS 17:17



Let's Talk About It

1. How do you build a friendship with an unbeliever?
2. What opportunities do you have to serve people within your relational network?

1. Jim Petersen and Mike Shamy, *The Insider Workbook*, 2003, NavPress

2. Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 2006, William B. Eerdmans Publishing

3. A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, 1993, WingSpread Publishers

4. Richard A. Swenson, MD, *The Overload Syndrome*, 1998, NavPress

5. Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 2006, NavPress

Final Wrap

What idea from this lesson spoke most personally to you?

End →

Success

Becoming Like Jesus

A tendency in Christian circles is to measure progress and achievement in terms of visible results such as attendance and size. While statistics tell a partial story, there's more to spiritual maturity than "how many?" Successful parenting is not based on the number of babies born but on how the children turn out. Likewise, in God's family, a new life must become a mature life.

The mission is transformation. Discipleship is about a change of character. Our influence begins with who we are. Jesus defined success when he said, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). Becoming like Jesus is more than changing behavior. It is slow work because we are dealing with the subtle power of **self**.



"Saying, 'yes' to Jesus means saying, 'no' to sin, self and secrecy. Either our discipleship will destroy our secrecy, or our secrecy will destroy our discipleship."¹ Since Jesus did not downplay the cost of following him, neither should we.

A. W. Tozer writes, "Because man is born a rebel, he is unaware that he is one. His constant assertion of self appears to him a perfectly normal thing. He is willing to share himself, sometimes even to sacrifice himself for a desired end, but never to dethrone himself. No matter how far down the scale of social acceptance he may slide, he is still in his own eyes a king on a throne, and no one, not even God, can take that throne from him. The only instrument that can deal with our self-life is the cross."²

Becoming like Jesus means learning to view God, others and life itself like he does. The process is intentional and progressive. It combines grace-based, truth-telling relationships with on-going steps of obedience. By God's grace we accept; with his truth we instruct. We must not assume that heart-habits change automatically by regular attendance, more information or osmosis. Here are some of the personal and practical elements God uses to change the hearts of people. ■

Spirit of Jesus

Spiritual new birth is the creation of a *new person* where another person has been. Bill Hull writes, "At the moment of spiritual birth, the Spirit of God plants himself in us and provides the source of our motivation. The Holy Spirit *factory installs* in us a desire to be like Jesus. Whether we like it or not and whether we admit it or not, this places within us a perpetual hunger for holiness."³

Christianity is a Living Person *living in* a living person. Since Jesus makes our heart his home, an important step toward becoming like Christ is being conscious of his presence. The greatest pleasure is the pleasure of his company. Jesus is indwelling and reclaiming his throne.

Spirit Born...

▼
Because you are sons,
God sent the Spirit of his
Son into our hearts.

GALATIANS 4:6

Spirit Formed...

▼
And we, who with
unveiled faces all reflect
the Lord's glory, are being
transformed into his likeness
with every-increasing glory,
which comes from the Lord
who is the Spirit.

II CORINTHIANS 3:18

Spirit Filled...

▼
Do not get drunk
on wine, which leads
to debauchery. Instead,
be filled with the Spirit.

EPHESIANS 5:18

Spirit Led...

▼
Those who are led
by the Spirit of God
are sons of God

ROMANS 8:14



Let's Talk About It

1. How do believers learn to be conscious of Christ's presence?
2. How do we more fully cooperate with the transforming work of the Spirit of Jesus?

Continues →

Success

Continued →

Accountable Relationships

Becoming like Jesus cannot be packaged into programs because disciples join a person more than a program. As a result, the starting line for disciple-making is relationship building. Influence is based on trust. To drop our defenses and become vulnerable, we must feel safe. Only in trusting relationships are we open to change. “Grace means treating people better than they deserve.”⁴ It means undeserved forgiveness, acceptance despite weakness and the freedom to fail. Learning to love is the greatest spiritual achievement there is. How we love is more important than what we know.

Grace...

▼
Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you in order to bring praise to God.

ROMANS 15:7

▼
Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

GALATIANS 6:1

Life changing relationships are based on grace *and* truth. The twelve apostles found Jesus safe, not soft. When necessary, he was extremely blunt. Jesus once confronted Peter and told him exactly what he thought about him: “*Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men*” (Matthew 16:23). Jesus was truthful but not mean spirited.

Accountability is ownership. The freedom to choose and the responsibility for those choices is

Truth...

▼
Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

JAMES 5:16

▼
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

the foundation of accountability. Ultimately, we are accountable for what we choose. Accountable relationships help us *own* the commitments we make to God. “Love protects” describes the function of these relationships. Without some form of mutual submission we forget our commitments and invariably revert back to old habits. Individualism and personal autonomy hinder character development. By contrast, humility expresses itself through submission. ■



Let's Talk About It

1. What makes people feel “safe?”
2. What are the practical benefits of accountability?
3. When is unsolicited confrontation appropriate?

1. Alistair Begg, *Jars of Clay Sermon Series*, www.truthfortlife.org

2. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 1961, HarperCollins Publishers

3. Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 2006, NavPress

4. Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 2006, NavPress

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Progressive Challenges

Jesus’ most repeated words, “*come... follow... go...*” represent an invitation and a challenge. He accepted his followers unconditionally, yet challenged them to continually develop. Jesus called his disciples to be *with him*. Within this equipping community, they spent time together in a variety of life settings. Jesus modeled the heart and behavior he wanted and prepared his followers for their world-mission.

Non-discipleship Christianity is fellowship for the sake of fellowship. In many American churches, this is the prevailing environment. This reality reinforces our consumer mindset and creates more spectators than disciples. The solution for this condition is to train

as Jesus trained. Jesus challenged his followers to practice a godly lifestyle: to know his words, obey his commands, follow his leading, love others and multiply.

Spiritual disciplines are the key. Spiritual disciplines are to transformation what exercise is to an athlete. We don’t try to become like Jesus, we train. We choose to be trained by submitting, serving and sticking with it. Habits are formed through practice. Just as taking a class cannot cure cancer, biblical facts alone cannot change us. Are you a disciple-maker-in-training or merely a consumer of religious goods and services? ■

Spiritual Training...

▼
Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

HEBREWS 5:13-14

▼
Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

I CORINTHIANS 9:25

▼
Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

I TIMOTHY 4:7-8



Let's Talk About It

1. What is the difference between training to be godly and trying to earn your salvation?
2. How are progressive challenges communicated?

Final Wrap

What idea from this lesson spoke most personally to you?

The Last Word

I suspect you can do evangelism programmatically. And you can do infant-level discipleship in programs. But mature Christians do not grow through programs or through the mesmerizing delivery of a talented speaker or worship band. Would-be saints are mentored: one-on-one or, better yet, one-on-small group. The mentoring takes place in the streets and the living places of life, not church classrooms or food courts. And it’s not necessarily done in Bible studies or the like. Mature Christians are made one by one through the influence of other Christians already mature.⁵

End →

Vision Discipling Movement

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Since Jesus has never changed, he has always had the same vision. He envisions a worldwide kingdom that faithfully represents the living God. He envisions obedient followers who give themselves to each other and their world. He envisions a day when the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of God and of his Christ.

Followers of Christ are a counterculture not a subculture. Their motto: Kingdom First. The moment we make God's kingdom our first concern we step out of the world's parade. Others will not understand our priorities and values. Pastor Mark Ashton says it best: "There are two types of humans on earth — followers of Jesus and normal people."¹

Our Lord's final command was: "Go and disciple the nations" (Matthew 28:19). The impetus for a discipling movement resides in Christ who deploys his followers as his missional body on earth. Christ calls us to be disciple-makers, not merely institutional volunteers. We must learn the lifestyle of Jesus and then model a life worth imitating. To launch a discipling movement a transforming vision is needed. ■



Transforming Vision of God

The Scriptures reveal that the living God, the maker of heaven and earth, is uncreated. He is eternal, perfect and unchanging. God dwells in eternity, not time. God has no past or future because time has no effect on him. He is the first and the last — the beginning and the end of everything. God is holy and just. He is the creator, savior and judge of all the earth. God's wisdom, love and power are limitless, boundless and measureless. His goodness and mercy make him slow to anger and quick to forgive. He knows everything, sees everything and is always present. God has never been confused or unsure of himself. He has never been in a hurry or frustrated over his lack of progress. The Word of God is truth. He never guesses or utters opinions. He knows the difference

between good and evil, the righteous and the wicked, and always keeps his promises. This is a brief summary of what the Scriptures teach about the KING OF KINGS — yet the words, *"Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10), mean very little to the average believer.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."² While the Bible is about both God and man, the focal point is God. With no conscious intention to do so, contemporary Christianity has shifted the emphasis almost entirely to man. By transferring the emphasis to the *wants of the consumer*, an extremely low view of God has spread, even among God's people. Currently the Jesus many people believe in has very little power. Modern-day concepts of our risen Lord do not consistently conform to what he is really like. Regardless of our statements of faith, what we actually think and believe about God

is the most important thing about us.

Considering the vastness of God's global movement, it is difficult for our natural mind to grasp that God does not need our help. God is self-sufficient and does not need helpers, supporters or defenders to boost his confidence. While God needs no one, he chooses to work through obedient people. *"It is God who works in you..."* (Philippians 2:13).

Although God needs no one, with faith he works through anyone. Faith is not imagination. We don't imagine that God is real; we recognize that he is real and place our total confidence in the one who never fails. The greatest privilege in the world is to learn that Christ himself stepped out of eternity and into time — and then into us. A discipling movement is possible because Christ is with us. Nothing is too hard for Jesus. We need to see Jesus as he is today — **exalted and eager**. Exalted with all power at the right hand of the Father, and eager to be our friend and continue his work through us. ■

Lord of Heaven and Earth...

▼
*The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding
no one can fathom.*

ISAIAH 40:28

▼
*"For nothing is
impossible with God."*

LUKE 1:37

▼
*Then Jesus came to them
and said, "All authority in heaven
and earth belong to me."*

MATTHEW 28:18

▼
I the Lord do not change.

MALACHI 3:6



Let's Talk About It

1. How has the emphasis in your Christian circle shifted away from God and toward man?
2. How do you enlarge your concept of God? What has to happen?



Continues →

Continued →

Transforming Vision of the Gospel

The gospel of Jesus Christ is both personal and social. Jesus cares about personal salvation and social transformation. *“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people”* (Matthew 4:23). The message of the gospel of the kingdom is both *here* and *hereafter*. Jesus cares about forgiveness of sin and poverty, disease and ignorance. To follow in his steps, our knowledge of God must be translated into deeds of mercy toward suffering humanity. It was the loving good deeds of Jesus that paved the way for his message.

When John the Baptist asked if Jesus was the one, our Lord did not send him a copy of his sermon notes, but rather described the lives that he had touched: *“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor”* (Matthew 11:4-5).

This response not only authenticated Jesus’ divine power, but also demonstrated God’s character. Loving deeds that reflect the power and character of God naturally draw people. In Acts 10, Peter summarized the earthly ministry of Jesus as a combination of spiritual power and human goodness. People knew he was a good person and that God was with him.

In Matthew 25, Jesus rewards those who reflect his likeness by providing others with the basic needs of life.

The gospel is the good news of what God has done for all people through his Son, Jesus. *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). The good news of Jesus Christ gains an audience and is perceived credible through good deeds. This is our message and approach — combining the **good news** of salvation and is perceived credible through good deeds. This is our message and approach — combining the **good news** of salvation by grace with the tangible expression of **good deeds** that demonstrate God’s character. ■

Good News...

▼ *When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”*

MARK 2:5

▼ *Jesus said to her, “Your sins have forgiven.”*

LUKE 7:48

Good Deeds...

▼ *“Come and take your inheritance, for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”*

MATTHEW 25:34-36



Let’s Talk About It

1. Why does the combination of good deeds and good news empower evangelism?
2. What happens when one emphasis overshadows the other?

Transforming Vision of Multiplication

We adopt a core kingdom value when we envision more people coming to Jesus and becoming like him. This means multiplication. Healthy organisms reproduce. Multiplication is a clear expectation of discipleship. The reason disciple-making often fails is that we don’t expect it to reproduce. The challenge is to not allow disciple-making to become optional. Maturity must lead to multiplication. When Christians meet only with themselves, they become trapped in a comfortable yet closed system. Nevertheless, the status quo has many defenders.

The kingdom of God grows through relationships that are devoted to multiplying. The parable of the mustard seed teaches that the kingdom of God begins small and eventually grows very large (Mark 4:30-32). Neil Cole notes that during his earthly ministry Jesus invested in five distinct social groupings: (1) an inner circle composed of Peter, James and John, (2) a spiritual family of the twelve apostles, (3) a team of seventy he personally trained, (4) a network of 120 who gathered in the upper room, and (5) the multitudes he taught, healed and fed.³ Jesus’ approach is clear: *less is more*.

He began small. He invested the greatest amount of time with the smallest grouping.

“Spiritual generations” of believers must continue to pass on the faith. In the Scriptures, the original multiplication structure is the family. A father passes down the faith to his children who in turn pass it down to their children. God swore to Abraham, *“Through your offspring all the nations will be blessed”* (Genesis 22:18). The apostle Paul reminded Timothy that he was a third generation believer; the faith was passed from his grandmother — to his mother — to him (II Timothy 1:5). When Jesus gave his great commission in Matthew 28, he was in effect saying, *“I’ve trained you, now you go do the same thing.”*

We long for a movement of God that will impact every segment of life. Societies change when individuals change — but not until then. As individuals come to Jesus, neighborhoods, cities and nations are transformed. Kingdom disciples build bridges in every segment of society: business, education and government. But these bridges happen one life at a time. The visible effect of any spiritual movement begins with the individual. ■

Spiritual Generations...

▼ *He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.*

PSALM 78:5-6

▼ *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

II TIMOTHY 2:2



Let’s Talk About It

1. Whom are you currently discipling?
2. What is your greatest challenge as a disciple-maker?

Final Wrap

What idea from this lesson spoke most personally to you?



The Last Word

This new Reformation, turning members into missionaries, will precipitate a crisis, both in individuals and in a congregation. Member values clash with missionary values. Member values are all about church real estate, church programming, who’s in and who’s out, member services, member issues (translated: am I getting what I want out of this church?). Missionary values are about the street, people’s needs, breaking down barriers, community issues (translated: am I partnering with God’s work in people?). One of these value sets will triumph over the other. They do not coexist peacefully.⁴

1. Mark Ashton, Lead Pastor, Christ Community Church, Omaha, Nebraska

2. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 1961, HarperCollins Publishers

3. Neil Cole, *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader*, 2007, William Carey Library

4. Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future*, 2003, reproduced with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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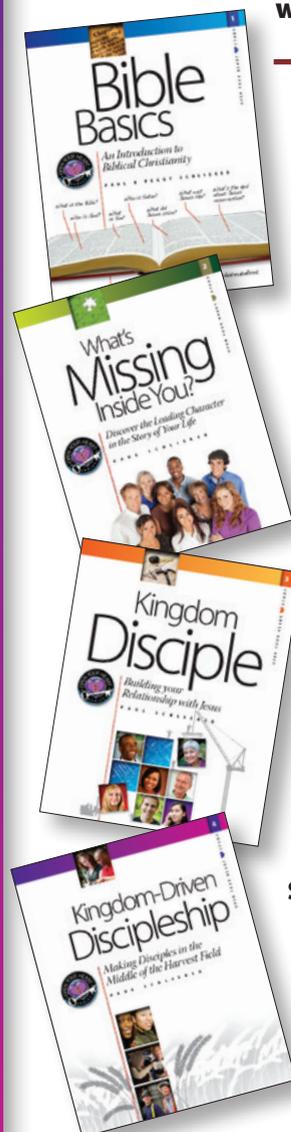
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