

“Upon this Rock I will Build My _____”

Part 7: What Makes a Good Disciple?

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

The Tongues of Men and of Angels

Four or so months ago I was driving to church and praying in tongues. As I was praying I heard the Lord say “the angels are hearing your prayers.” It took me about 10 seconds to realize what He was saying “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels ...” (1 Cor. 13:1) He was revealing to me that I was speaking in an angelic tongue (language) and they were listening to my prayers. Powerful things happen when you pray in tongues. It builds us up (1 Cor. 14:4) but I also believe it commissions angels to be released into certain assignments.

Testimony: Financial Provision for Medical Expenses

Megan and I met a precious brother and sister in Christ from California: Allen and Laura. They recently had a beautiful baby, Harper, and she has some physical needs. We’ve been praying for her and Allen sent a financial testimony the other day I want to share with you:

“Hey Peter, Laura has been listening to your series about financial provisions and w were worried about expenses from all these medical bills from our baby being in the hospital. God has been amazing! We found out that we are covered up to \$250,000 through Samaritans Ministries and our daughter qualifies for MediCal and we continue to get money coming in from random people we have never met but they follow me on YouTube and through people from our church! We just opened up a card today that had \$900 in it from the women’s ministry at our church! God is good! God blessed you with your words right when we needed them! You are a blessing!”

Allen gave me permission to share this testimony and said “let it be known that GOD IS GOOD!” Amen!!!

Intercession ... for everyone

I recently had the opportunity to speak with Mark and Tammy from The Mission Church in California. They have been intercessors there for decades. Tammy mentioned that nearly all believers will identify as being a worshiper ... but very few will identify themselves as being an intercessor. We

know that it is not only worship leaders who are worshipers, but we fail to understand that it is not only the intercessory leaders who are intercessors!

We all are called to intercede and to pray.

The Lord gave me a dream recently which spoke to me that our intercession needs to go up at our church. We are stepping into traction with discipleship and we need to pray. Nehemiah was not significantly opposed by Sanballat and Tobiah until they started rebuilding the wall.

Pray like this: “Father, in Jesus’ Name, I ask that You would minister to every member of our church today, this week, this month, and this year - that their full kingdom potential and purpose would be accomplished in them.”

If you do that, God will listen to you. We will see an up-tick in you having breakthrough and others having breakthrough because we interceded for one another.

I want to encourage you to intercede for one another. Remember, you are not heard because of your many words. You are heard because you pray from your heart, with faith, and according to His will. He wants to minister to each of us.

Everyone is called to be a worshiper. Everyone is called to be an intercessor. You don’t need a title for either. It’s just part of being in the kingdom.

Ekklesia

Ekklesia was the Greek and Roman legislative / democratic body that governed all the issues of society. This is very different than the Christian social club concept of church. “That’s where I go to get away from people that I am uncomfortable to be around in order to be insulated from the world.” Ekklesia, on the other hand, says “you are going to govern the world and you are going to pray like this *‘Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.’*”

Ekklesia operates as Jesus said ... it is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. We have been given the keys of the Kingdom. What we bind on earth will be bound in Heaven and what we loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven. That’s ekklesia.

What is church? First, it is an ekklesia.

Since the beginning of the series, I’ve now been focusing on how we are commissioned to disciple nations. The ekklesia - the governance body of the Kingdom on earth is inherently called to disciple nations. The commission screams “disciple nations! Influence every sphere of society!”

The model I am proposing for our church is that instead of church being what it is often been thought of which is “yeast in a yeast jar.” (Listen: yeast in a yeast jar with other yeast) I’m proposing taking the lid off of the yeast jar so that the yeast can be in the dough.

How do you disciple nations? You disciple people ... and you keep those people that you disciple in their sphere of influence so that once they are discipled they bring the Kingdom into that sphere that they have authority over!

Hear that again. How do you disciple nations? You disciple people and you keep them in their sphere of influence instead stealing them for the church ... so that they will exercise Kingdom authority in every sphere of influence of society until the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God! *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”*

The huge vision of discipling nations boils down to discipling people and equipping them to bring the Kingdom into their sphere of influence.

That’s what this sermon series is about.

Foundation of Discipleship

The core of discipleship is love. If we could just get the simple things and do them, we would rock the world. I know it is not ground breaking to say that the core of discipleship is love, but if we knew it ... it would be ground breaking because we would actually start something.

We don’t need more knowledge, we just need more action. We will get more knowledge when we need it as we act more. The satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

There are two sides of the learning process. The first side of the learning process is getting the input of information / knowledge / understanding ... this is the same as eating. The second side of the learning process is doing the work ... which causes you to get hungry again.

Many believers are loathing the sweetest of words because they haven’t worked enough to develop their appetite again.

Spiritual employment is key to spiritual health. It accomplishes the other half of the learning cycle. There is the input side (which is like lecture) and the output side (which is like lab where you go use the knowledge and “do the stuff”). The output side is when you are asked to prophecy. The output side is when you disciple someone.

When we are spiritually employed we often think “ah! I don’t know what to do!” What’s that do? It makes me hungry for more of Him. More of His Word. More of His Spirit! “Why did I get afraid of

the darkness in that environment? I should have been the light in that environment. Lord I need to realize more of who I am in You!”

The breakthrough in Nehemiah happened in chapter 3 when the PEOPLE started to build! They build in 52 days (if I recall) what had not been accomplished in decades! Nehemiah gave the vision (that’s what I’m doing here). Jesus commissioned us to disciple people and promised He would build His ekklesia, His ruling body. We are not responsible for producing that governmental level impact; we are responsible for discipling people.

The victory here will not be me having the vision, it will be you all doing the work!

Characteristics of what Makes a Good Disciple

Isaiah 61:3 says *“To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”* Those who have been set free by Jesus will be the planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor! Discipling nations is a huge task, but when people are discipled and stay in their sphere of influence, they will be an oak of righteousness for the display of His splendor. As we grow into a mature oak in whatever field we are planted, we are going to display the glory of the Lord.

Ephesians 4:11-16 is familiar *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

Discipleship is meant to bring us into maturity (perfect or finished man) ... until we have the stature of Christ in our life in manifest / measurable form.

that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

Notice that discipleship is spoken of in family language “no longer children.”

but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

The five-fold ministers equip the saints but THE BODY causes itself to grow ... when every part does its share it builds itself up IN LOVE! This is a radical paradigm shift. Every part doing its share is what causes the body itself to build itself up IN LOVE! What’s the mechanism by which the body builds itself up? LOVE! Remember, the core of discipleship is love.

It's in love that we're built up as a body and in order to attain that stature of Christ we have to be renewed in our mind. Ephesians 4:23-24 continues "*and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*" That is the goal of discipleship. This is not a self-help sort of thing. This is not you going to someone else and they are going to help you "get better." We are attaining to the measure of Christ - which means knowing Him, being with Him, and being one with Him!

You never step out of the place of being a disciple. You always want to be a disciple. This sermon is an invitation to those believers who have been orphans to experience the blessing of having a mother or father in the Lord - to build them up. So many in the body of Christ have never experienced what it is like to have someone in their life who speaks the truth to them in love ... someone they can just receive from and develop them - and who isn't looking for anything from them. The tone and the tenor of this message is about how you can position yourself so that you can receive.

Characteristic #1: A Good Disciple is Hungry

Megan shared how I have consistently been hungry in the Lord. I would call her and others when I needed help "I don't know what to do in this situation." "I think I just heard from the Lord ... does that sound like Him?" Megan would respond "yes that sounds like the Lord" or "no, try again!"

As children, we are fed by our parents. We are cared for. We learn how to eat and how to crawl and the whole thing is a very natural process. We don't even realize that it's happening because we are just in such great hunger and need that we are not even really aware of it. As infants we need to learn so much and are learning so much.

As we grow up, we don't necessarily need a whole lot of input any more (at least about the basics of life). As we grow spiritually, as we are older and more mature, we actually have to CHOOSE to be hungry. If you are hungry you will get something that you didn't have before. The older you get the more you have to choose hunger.

Reading the daily Proverb helps keep me from being stupid. Proverbs 12:1 says whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. I recently opened to Proverbs 3:1 and read "My son do not forget my law ..." Instantly the presence of the Lord came upon me and I realized that 5% of my heart had turned to a place of being "too mature to be a son." Just a little bit of my heart ... and anxiety was creeping in. All of a sudden I felt that father's covering again and peace came upon me like a river.

We never grow past the point of hunger, but when you are older and more seasoned, you have to choose hunger out of a place of humility. Which is our second characteristic of a good disciple ...

Characteristic #2: A Good Disciple is Humble

The effort to be a disciple is in the hunger. A man's hunger spurs him on. You have to choose to be hungry. The effort as we grow in maturity is to choose to be hungry. The key to hunger (which is absolutely necessary to be a disciple) is humility.

In order to hunger you have to be humble.

Matthew 5:3-6 says *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."*

A lot of times when we think about humility we think of it as an end goal. We think "I am going to be humble and lower myself." Jesus was saying they are blessed not JUST to be poor in spirit ...but because that poverty of spirit would cause them to receive the Kingdom of Heaven! That is why they are blessed. They are not blessed simply in that low space. It's because of that low space that they are able to exalted and receive the kingdom of Heaven.

Those who mourn are going to be comforted. That's the end goal - the goal isn't just to mourn! The goal is to be comforted. The meek are going to inherit the earth.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled! The goal isn't just to be hungry and thirsty in the Kingdom of God. The goal is to be filled.

Remember that humility is magnetic to grace. If you have humility in your heart, instantly the grace of God flows to you. If you have humility in your heart in a relationship with someone who is a +1 in your life ... the grace that they are carrying flows to you!

Remember their grace is their willingness to use their power and ability on your behalf. Your humility is what draws their grace. Honor a prophet receive a prophet's reward. It's the same concept. When you are humble it draws it in.

In John 4:31-34 the disciples find Jesus after He had ministered to the woman at the well. *"In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' But He said to them, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know.' Therefore the disciples said to one another, 'Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'"*

The Kingdom of God is completely different than the ways of the world. The world says "if I scratch your back, you need to scratch my back." That's lust not love.

Lust has something else other than God as it's source. 2 Peter 1 says we have escaped the corruption in the world due to lust BECAUSE of His very great and precious promises. When God is your source, you don't lust!

Love is Him as your source. Jesus was able to minister to this lady and He got MORE FILLED through ministering.

If you think of ministering as a worldly model then you think "if I give something away then it's cost me something." But the Bible says to freely give what you've freely received. So you should stop giving away something that cost you something ... because if you got it by your effort it wasn't by grace and it's probably not very good anyway.

Welcome to Christian ministry. We receive by grace something that cost us nothing and then we give away that same thing freely.

Jesus was doing that and told His disciples that He had food they did not know about. I receive from the Father when I give and what I give is what I have freely received.

Because of this, most people come with a worldly mindset into discipleship and think "I can't just receive from someone because they will get fed-up with me because I am not scratching their back sufficiently." That's not the love model of the kingdom. We need to model the grace and love model of the kingdom for those we are discipling.

Many times when I meet with people I need to deconstruct for them their expectation that they need to give me something. If the nature of our relationship is that they should just receive from me about something it actually blesses me the most when they just receive! It costs me nothing. I leave more filled than when I came.

A good disciple is humble. It is actually not humility to be afraid of over-imposing. It is actually pride. So often we don't want to let someone know how much we actually need but it's in letting them know how much we need that their grace can actually flow to us.

If you want to be hungry, prepare questions for your +1 before you meet with them. You may think "I don't have any questions." Then you are not hungry yet. If you force yourself to prepare questions it will stir your awareness of hunger.

If you want to be humble, actually ask those questions you've prepared! If you do these things it is amazing what sort of relationship you develop with someone who has something to give you. They won't think badly of you if you need to receive. All they are giving you they freely received too ... because they needed it too. Welcome to discipleship in the kingdom.

Characteristic #3: A Good Disciple is Available

A good disciple is available. Mt. 9:10 says *“Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.”* Where were His disciples? Sitting with Jesus.

Don't blink. It's that easy.

What made them good disciples? They were available. They were with Him. Matthew 10:1 says *“And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.”* Jesus gave them power that they had never dreamt of their entire life and they were about to go on a ministry trip that would be recorded and recounted for 2000 years and billions of people would read about the ministry trip they were about to go on based on the power they just received from their discipler - Jesus. Pretty awesome opportunity!

Why did they have the opportunity? When He called them, they came to Him. They were available. This is so simple but to be honest with you, many people are not available enough to be discipled.

Part of that availability is being in proximity (right next to them) but even calling on the phone will produce that life-on-life connection. If you are getting something from a preacher who is online, that is great, but you don't have life-on-life with that person.

So part of proximity is being intentional yet also natural / organic.

Megan and I are married. Our relationship is that we are married and we choose to have a date night. That is an intentional time but it doesn't mean that is the only time that we spend together. We don't only have conversation on date night!

There is both a formality and an informality to the concept of availability in discipleship. There ought to be relationship that persists all the time but then there also ought to be some scheduled times that are pretty intentional a few times a month or once a week where you can get together deliberately. But if you only talk at the formal times, there is something a little bit off relationally. Likewise, if you never schedule a time, you could probably benefit from some intentionality.

Characteristic #4: A Good Disciple is Faithful

2 Timothy 2:1-3 says *“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”*

Proverbs 20:6 says that many a man proclaims each his own goodness, but a faithful man who can find? What's the action item for being faithful? Follow-through!

You can measure someone's faithfulness by their follow-through. I am not talking about their perfection, I am talking about their follow-through. Even if they mess up, they follow-up and follow-through. "I messed up. I know I need to fix it. Do you have any thoughts for me?" Follow up and follow through. That makes someone faithful. You can count on them.

I meet with people, teach them grace and they say "wow that was incredible! I feel so refreshed." I send them a Brad's PDF of "who I am in Christ" and tell them "I want you to print it, laminate it, and then spend 5 minutes a day reading it out-loud for the next 3 months ... it will change your life." Do you know how many people do that? Almost no one.

I didn't give them a flippant assignment. Paul's telling Timothy to entrust these things to faithful men - the ones that when you give them something, they run with it ... and then they check back in with you and say "I did it, here's how it went, what else do you have for me!?"

If you are not that. Be that.

Faithfulness will cause you to grow exponentially. Entrust these things to faithful men.

Characteristic #5: A Good Disciple Teaches Others

Again 2 Timothy 2:2 says *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* This is the key verse to exponential discipleship. Look at the address: 2 x 2 x 2 (2 Tim. 2:2)!

Freely receive, freely give. Like Kenton said: "don't be a Dead Sea." You want what God has given you to flow through you and you will get more of it.

Paul's Timothy to find those with a particular ABILITY to teach ... I believe that is a specific admonition to Timothy as a senior leader in Ephesus "the people you are pouring into need to be able to pour into others." That's not always the case with just someone you are going to disciple.

I will say this ... beyond ability, you want to find someone who has a heart to give away what they've received! Don't invest things in people who won't give it away. You want to find people who when they meet with you end up sharing about how they actually ministered to someone what you ministered to them previously and how it blessed that person!

Able to teach others creates multiplicative Christianity and exponential growth in the Kingdom. Let's be strategic as disciplers. As disciples, let's have a heart of love for others so that we will give them freely what we received freely so that they can have the breakthrough that you received!

Characteristic #6: A Good Disciple Is Known

If you are listening to a teacher online, you are not going to be able to be known by that person. You need someone who is looking at your life (not with scrutiny) and you are available to them and open to their input.

When Megan was first discipling me, there were 4 or 5 people discipling me overall. Everyone knew that there were other people discipling me - and who they were! It wasn't like I was going to someone and sharing just some small part of who I am in one place and another part of who I am or what I need in another place.

When disciples do that (share bits and pieces all over but never the whole thing in one place) what is going on is they actually want to look good so they are afraid of anyone seeing the whole picture of their life.

This is a heart stance that is so important. It takes humility to be able to tell someone the whole picture. It's not even about things that are going wrong. It can be about things that are going right or visions that you have - a job you are considering, etc. Optimally, that person would already know your history with jobs such that when they are discipling you they can actually have the Word of the Lord for you in season because they can have an understanding of where you've been.

The action item for that is to share fully with the trustworthy - not just with anyone, but with the trustworthy. 1 Corinthians 4:15 says *"For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."*

Prioritize spiritual parents over teachers. They have a vested interest in your life and how it goes. Prioritize what they have to say. Bill Johnson has tremendous revelation and I would love to get to meet him some day. But he is not a spiritual father to me. Brad is. The relationship I have with Brad is way more important than any relationship I'd have with Bill Johnson because Brad knows me. Brad knows my personality, how I need to hear things, and the Lord speaks to Brad specifically about me and what I may need to hear.

Characteristic #7: A Good Disciple ALL IN

When I was a new disciple I would often be afraid "what if I don't want this?" Megan would tell me "it's your decision - either you want Him or you don't!"

Being all in. In order to be a good disciple you have to count the cost and ask yourself "am I choosing this?" It's not something you just fall into, you have to choose it:

Mt. 13:44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Mt. 13:45-46 *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”*

Lk. 9:62 *But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

Mt. 10:39 *He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

We are not looking for a co-dependent relationship here. You can be hoping that someone else has a vision for your life and they are going to pick you up and say “yes you and I see this in you ...!” We are hoping they are going to scoop us up and take us to where you need to go ... but you have to ASK FOR THAT! I have to choose this!

Luke 14:25-33 details this in very clear terms. Jesus was saying “if you are going to be a disciple, you have to count the cost and be all in, otherwise you won’t finish the build!”

The action item for “all in” is to count the cost and actually talk with the Lord about it.

You can’t work on discipleship ... you work on the individual people!

When Megan and I counsel marriages we say “you can’t work on a marriage ... all you can do is work on the individual people.” I can seek the Lord and Megan can seek the Lord and as we both seek the Lord and are transformed by Him, our marriage is simply going to get better!

Likewise people are asking “how is this discipleship going to work? How do you do discipleship?” This is why we are going through the characteristics of a good disciple - and then the characteristics of a good discipler. The disciple can work on being a disciple and the discipler can work on being a discipler ... and then you have a good discipling relationship!

If you ask someone “how do you do the discipleship? How does that happen?” What happens is you try to come up with a formula. But it’s not about formula. It’s about a relationship!

May we be good disciples and good disciplers!