

“Upon this Rock I will Build My _____”

Part 8: What Makes a Good Discippler?

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

Healing!

I had the opportunity to pray for someone's healing this past weekend. He needed healing in his back. I had talked with him on the phone early that day and had wanted to pray for him, but then did not have the chance. Later that night I was prepping the sermon at Starbucks and who walks in? The guy I wanted to pray for!

When I go to pray for someone I often think “who am I?” That's actually your place of strength! That's a decision point. One approach is to then bolster yourself up to prove to yourself that you are good enough to heal them. BAD DECISION! You will not have it in yourself to heal anyone! Your righteousness will never be righteous enough to pray for someone's supernatural healing by simply laying hands upon them. Your hands don't qualify. You can't wash your hands enough to make them clean enough to make them supernatural healing hands!

So when I have that pre-prayer thought “who am I?” I think this “when I am weak I am strong ... His grace is sufficient for me!” (2 Cor. 12:9-10) I think “actually I do have NO BUSINESS doing this ON MY OWN” but but but I am not on my own! The same Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead (Rom. 8:11) lives on the inside of me and I am about to lay my hands upon somebody and something is going to happen! The same God who spoke the universe into existence, raised His Son from the dead, raised Lazarus from the dead, gave blind eyes sight, deaf ears sound ... that same God is about to reach out and touch someone ... NOT BECAUSE OF ME, but because of Him!

So before I pray for someone, I often rehearse just how dependent I am upon Him to do anything. Sometimes I do that out-loud so that the person I am praying for can understand who the testimony belongs to! I want them to think “God healed me!” not “Peter healed me.” So I will often say “do you realize how incapable these hands are to heal you? What can my hands do? Nothing! It's never been my hands that have healed anyone, but God lives inside of me and He has healed everyone He has ever touched. So I am just going to ask God to touch you right now.” That's fun!

Thesis for this Series

Jesus said that He would build His EKKLESIA upon this rock. Ekklesia was the Greek and Roman democratic ruling body that governed all matters of society (from moral issues to trade tariffs!) Why did Jesus choose to call his church an “ekklesia?”

Jesus tells us that it is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. The ekklesia is the governing body of God’s Kingdom on this earth. So we pray Matthew 6:10 *“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”* That’s the ekklesia-type prayer and we are stepping into that as a body.

I taught this entire series but only shared the thesis of the series on June 3rd. The thesis is this: Jesus said He would build His ekklesia. Jesus said He would build His ruling, legislative body who governs the Kingdom on this earth. “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Who knows how to accomplish that?!? No amount of white-boarding ideas is going to figure out how to do that!

Good thing Jesus said He would be the One to build the ekklesia - to build that level of influence in every sphere of society! He did not say He would disciple nations. That part is ours.

This is the thesis of the whole series. We disciple nations. He builds His ekklesia.

Why does Matthew 28 say “disciple nations?” We are not just supposed to disciple people. We are supposed to disciple people groups and spheres of influence - 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.”

It’s your Father’s good pleasure to give you the keys of the Kingdom. What you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven. What you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven. That’s the nature of this Kingdom mandate.

How could we possible bring the Kingdom on earth in all these areas? How could we possible bring this Kingdom level influence in all these areas? The answer is “we don’t have to!” Jesus said He would build His ekklesia and that we would disciple nations.

You want to disciple nations? Here’s what you do: disciple people IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. Keep them in their sphere of influence and have them disciple people in their sphere of influence.

What ends up happening? Every sphere of influence has leaven that got snuck into it. Every sphere of influence is preserved by salt. Every sphere of influence has darkness fleeing because of the light that is shining in it. That’s the way of the Kingdom.

The way of the typical church model (I'm not being critical, but simply offering comparison for clarity) is to get someone saved and then tell them that the people that they are around are a bad influence so "let me get you out of there ... now come to the church for a one year discipleship program until you are weird enough that the people that you are friends with and have access to no longer want to interact with you ... now I will spend 2 years trying to convince you to go evangelize to them about which you are going to feel very awkward about because they don't like you any more."

If you are an electrician, that's your sphere of influence. Your neighborhood is your sphere of influence. I (personally) have authority and influence in education. It's natural for me. They get me and I get them, so I can disciple teachers! We can see discipleship happen IN EDUCATION ... not to steal them for the C-H-U-R-C-H church but to equip them for the EKKLESIA church!

I have a whole line of vision associated with this thesis but I have no idea what I am doing. If you don't like research and development ... Agathos will probably not be a comfortable church for you. We have been called prophetically a "prototype church." Personally, I am a designer ... I design and I re-design. We are a prototype church.

When I became lead pastor, I thought "some day I will have a vision as lead pastor but I can't force one." I am telling you, I have one now.

It's around this ekklesia thing. We are only starting to dabble in "what it is" and next I will be starting to move us into "what does it look like?"

I am telling you that I have no idea what it looks like. When God tells us "behold I do a new thing" He doesn't name it ... because we don't have words for it yet.

So it's a pretty grand vision, but do you know (boots on the ground) what it is going to basically amount to? Disciple people in your sphere.

Don't wait for people to come to our church to disciple them. Find someone that you have a heart for and bring them up in the Lord. Then do NOT steal them away from their sphere of influence by telling them "come to all of our church functions all week long so you don't have any time to meet with people that aren't in the church." Whoops.

It is problematic. Church is typically yeast in a yeast jar. I'll tell you what my vision is: "yeast in the dough."

That's the Kingdom. We still get together. We still love each other. We still do all of these things. But you have SOMEONE in your life RIGHT NOW that you have a heart for and I am saying "what if you brought them up in the things of the Lord?" What if they didn't come to our church? What if

they didn't go to any church? I am not saying they should forsake the gathering of the saints, I am just saying "who cares to start with?!" Give them an encounter with God and then start teaching them the things of God! Eventually they will probably ask you where you go to church (so they can get more of what you have ... not so they can check a box!) I am not trying to grow our church. The church is to serve the Kingdom.

There's the vision.

That's why we are talking about discipleship. Last time was about 7 characteristics of a good disciple. Now we are going to start looking at the characteristics of a good discipler. This list is not in the Bible so we are just trying to pull together some points that stand out to us from the Word based on our experiences. Surely there are more or different characteristics that could be highlighted, but these 7 I believe are a solid place to start. We said a good disciple is:

- Hungry
- Humble
- Available
- Faithful
- Teaches Others
- Is Known
- Is All In

One thing about "new initiatives" is that many people have learned to just "weather the storm ... you know it will be gone in a year. Act like nothing is happening. Keep doing what you've always done. It will be gone in a few years any way. You keep doing what you've always done, keep getting the results that you've always got and you won't have to change anything."

I'm not going to let this one go by the wayside. I don't know what we are doing exactly but I am pregnant with this vision and I believe I received it from the Lord over a period of time and it keeps getting stronger and stronger in me. So our church is going to be a church of influencers that spread Kingdom influence to their sphere of society.

You are going to find out that every single one of you is an influencer and every single one of you does have a sphere.

Testimony: “What Being a Discippler Did for Me”

When Megan met me she was already 2 years into college and at that point in time she wasn't having a thriving relationship with the Lord. She wasn't fellowshiping with others and didn't have the leadership roles with others that she was used to having while in High School. She wasn't having input from the Lord (-1), she wasn't having regular fellowship with peers in the Lord (0), and she wasn't playing a mentoring role (+1) where she was giving out a lot and discipling people. As a result of all of these things, Megan wasn't growing in the Lord and was kind of coasting on fumes when she met me.

When she met me she could tell the Lord was drawing me. The Lord gave her a vision for me. She started praying for me. I didn't know the Lord at that point so she started praying for me. That rejuvenated her prayer life with the Lord. She was talking to the Lord again (about someone else) and that gave her an opportunity to approach the Lord again. Additionally, I was so hungry because I was so needy (REALLY needy) that it made her hungry again.

When you've been in the Lord for a long time, it is harder to be hungry because you already have a foundation, you know how things go, and you can kind of coast in life. If you don't have something new going on it can be easy to coast. Having a hungry, needy baby around changes all of that. They have needs that need met (which demands something new of you) and it helps remind you of all the Lord has done for you!

NOTE: Bill Johnson runs a school of supernatural ministry and their students are on fire for the Lord (praise God). Bill tells them how happy he is to see that but what will really impress him if they are on-fire 15 years from now.

Babies don't choose hunger, they just are hungry. The mature must choose hunger. The mature must choose progress which causes hunger. If you are seasoned in the Lord, stagnation becomes very easy - because you actually need to put yourself in positions where the Holy Spirit needs to be your comforter again in order to grow again into greater things in the Lord. You may think “why did I grow faster when I was new in the Lord?” I often say “if you think you've arrived, you're right.” I'm consistently coaching myself. “Lord, help me start again. Help me start afresh. Help me take some new ground.” I thrive on having some external challenges that cause me to step in again with hunger.

As Megan was praying for me she was having more communication with the Lord. Concurrently, she is realizing I didn't understand the super basic things of God so she dug into the Word again for herself because she was thinking “he needs fed; he needs these basic principles!” She was getting into the Word again to remember what it is that she has known.

In Matthew 13:52 Jesus said *“Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”* At that point in her life, Megan was just bringing out old treasures. She wasn’t having any new treasures. She was thinking “this old vintage is really good” but she wasn’t gathering in anything new or planning anything new. She wasn’t making new wine. She was drained at that point but as she started to minister to me it rejuvenated her relationship with the Lord.

When Megan was growing up she had a really vibrant relationship with the Lord. She spent a lot of time with Him and a lot of time in His word. She therefore ministered to a lot of people at church and a lot of people at school.

She actually had a Daniel type anointing. Remember from the beginning of the book of Daniel that he was 10x better than all his peers. She was salutatorian (some of the highest grades), drum major, prom queen ... all of these things AND everyone loved her at school. There was a certain group of people that would come to her daily for a hug or prayer in the hallways. When we get together with her high school classes it is amazing because they almost revere her. It was nothing about her - there was no pride in it. It was just that she was so walking in the Lord and was so effervescent in God that she made people feel great. She made people feel comfortable. She made people feel blessed. Since people have come to her and said “your example caused me to go into this career field.” This was Megan’s influence in high school! That’s how Daniel was and more. He was sold out to God and Daniel was 10x better than all of his peers he was going to school with. He was wiser than his teachers. Megan’s personal time with God was causing her to have extreme external impact for a high school student as a +1 to other people.

After Megan started discipling me again she began to minister to all the rock climbers at our mountaineering club. She started ministering again and it jump started her relationship with the Lord again.

Characteristic #1 of a Good Disciplex: Has a Vibrant Connection with God

This can’t be overstated. When you are ministering to someone else, they will draw on you. When you first take a new-born home you can feel “this one is mine???” The reason it is intimidating is because they are going to draw upon you. They are going to have needs and their needs are going to need to be met!

I had anxiety so bad as a young believer that the Christian counselor I was meeting with strongly encouraged me to go to the doctor and get OCD medication. Seriously.

When Megan first met me I was so anxious that my hands constantly shook so bad I couldn’t eat apple sauce as a kid in the school cafeteria without the apple sauce falling off the spoon. So before I

was a believer Megan laid hands on me and prayed and I was able to stop taking the hand tremor medication I had taken for years. I was healed.

Yet as a young believer I had anxiety going on so badly in my thought process that this seasoned Christian counselor was telling me that I probably needed to go to the medical doctor for OCD medication. I remember that it didn't sit right with me so I didn't do that. Praise God. As I started to learn who I was in Christ something dramatically changed and the anxiety started to go away! Multiple years later I overheard a teacher I had team-taught with for a year tell another staff member "I don't know what it is about Peter, but it seems he is unflappable. Nothing seems to get to him." I was thinking "boy if you only knew where I came from!"

When I first met Megan I thought "wow, what a genuine love for people!" There was a clean-ness to how she loved people. I thought "what is this about you?" That love was a sign that made me wonder!

Additionally when Megan prayed for my hands I saw a demonstration of the power of God. I also was set free of demonic oppression the night I got saved (March 15, 2005). I told Megan "I am seeing these flaming arrows coming at me." She said "that's not good, come here, we are going to pray." We sat down and Megan said "just call on the Name of Jesus." I said "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." I said "it's leaving. It's going." Megan said "that's great!" I questioned "what if it comes back?" Megan said "well it will. The only way you can make sure it doesn't is to ask Jesus into your heart." So I accepted Christ that night.

There was a demonstration of the things of the Lord with Megan. She demonstrated love in a way that was so striking to me that I thought "what is it that's different about you?" This is why Peter said if you are walking with God you are going to have to be ready to give an answer for something. They are going to ask "why do you have that hope" and Peter said "be ready to give an answer for the reason for the hope that's within you!" Have that answer ready because that question is coming.

The 2nd Characteristic of a good discipler is that they demonstrate results. She was demonstrating love that was from Heaven. She was demonstrating the power of God in seeing me healed from hand tremors. She was demonstrating deliverance "tell those demonic visions to go in Jesus' Name. Now get saved so they don't come back!" So leading up to being saved I was having these power encounters without even having a grid for it.

More on Having a Vibrant Connection with God

I probably had a better personal relationship with the Lord before I was an associate pastor. I still had a good relationship with God then but I needed to learn some wisdom in how to walk out my relationship with God in the context of having ministry responsibilities.

When Megan and I felt the grace for me to step into the lead pastor role I asked Brad “how do you structure your week?” Brad said something to me that I took and ran with (remember that one of the characteristics of a good disciple is faithfulness ... which LOOKS LIKE follow-through!) Brad told me that 90% of my effectiveness is going to come from my time in prayer and time in the Word. I thought to myself “I have my marching orders!” I had this thing on me “you need to make a DECISION - that you are going to hold your time in the Word and in prayer sacrosanct.”

We were up at my wife’s family’s lake house. The kids were taking a nap. I was on my face in the living room, praying, and reading the Word. The Lord speaks this to me: “never give up the golden goose ... only give golden eggs” and He directs me to John 15:4-8. You can take this set of verses to the bank! 90% of your ministry effectiveness is right here in these verses.

John 15:4-8 *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch **cannot** bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

What’s the amount of fruit you can bear apart from Jesus? ZERO. If you would like to have fruit to disciple someone with, where should you get it? I know it sounds silly but the average pastor who quits the pastorate spends less than 30 minutes a week in the Word and in prayer TOTAL. I am NOT being critical. That is not why they got into the pastorate. Here’s the progression:

When you are a branch in the vine, you bear fruit naturally and so you show yourself to be a disciple and bring glory to God. If you get disconnected from the vine, you wither. When you wither, do you bear fruit? Nope. But if you are ministering, people still come to you for FRUIT!

I had fruit they were eating and I wasn’t working for that fruit. I was just abiding in Christ and I had fruit. People come up and say “can I eat your fruit?” I am thinking “that’s fine, freely I’ve received. Freely I give. More will come where it came from because I am connected to the vine.”

Now if I get disconnected from the vine (God-forbid) now I am on the ground sort of withered and with no fruit. Now people come up to me and say “can I have some fruit?” Out of pride I may respond “go ahead because I get my identity and value from having fruit for you so I won’t be honest and tell you that I am actually ALL OUT OF FRESH FRUIT!” Don’t do that!

They think “I don’t see any fruit but I’ll eat the branch.” So now they are not eating fruit, they are eating wood! Yuck. And the wood they are eating is YOU!

That is what is called BURN-OUT scripturally. You’ve been eaten alive by those whom you were supposed to feed naturally and without any effort through a connection you happen to have. Instead, now you are in a disconnected place, you don’t have the fruit, but they will still eat you.

I did this not so well as an associate pastor. Now I have been constant as a lead pastor and the results have been incredible. Brad told me about where 90% of my effectiveness would come from so I said “sign me up. I’m going to do that.” This is exactly why in Acts 6 that the apostles said “look, we can’t wait tables ... we are going to minister the Word and devote ourselves to prayer. Someone else can wait tables.” It’s the scriptural model. Pastors shouldn’t be running all about if it is getting in the way of that.

Re-Establishing Connection with God

If you feel like you are in a place of disconnection right now, raise your hand IN YOUR HEART to the Lord. There is no condemnation in it. I pray God would release a grace to you to get back into that place.

As a young teacher I worked such long hours (and I had that anxiety thing!) so the Christian counselor who I told you about before prayed a very powerful prayer for me: for supernatural shortcuts at school! I started doing this weird thing ... I would go to school and instead of planning my lesson, I would read the Word (Psalm 139 for about a year). Instead of taking 45 minutes to plan I would spend 30 minutes or so reading the Word and only having 10 or 15 minutes to prep my lesson. But with 10 or 15 minutes left a brilliant lesson would drop in my heart, I would write it down on a post-it note, whip up some supporting documents, print it out for the entire day ... and it would be done in 10 minutes and it would be the best lessons I had taught. I was getting great results - even on a state level based on my student growth.

I started to learn something ... that my connection with the Lord in the Word and in prayer was actually driving my success, not inhibiting it! Your connection with the Lord is actually driving your success, not inhibiting it. You think “I don’t have the time for it” and I am saying “you don’t have the time not for it!” I think it was Martin Luther who said that when he had a busy day he spent 2 hours in prayer instead of 1. That guy got it.

There are many days where it’s like “what did you get done this morning?” “Time in the Word, time in prayer, answered some emails.” I’m talking with you about a lifestyle.

You might think “that wouldn’t fly at my job” I want to challenge you. If you would get serious and consider your time in the Word and time in prayer as the most important aspect of your life ... and the most important success driver in your job, I believe God will do what He said in Matthew 6:33 that because you are seeking first His Kingdom (which starts with seeking first HIM) ... He will give you all the other things.

You may think “that doesn’t work ... I work for myself.” Then God will probably give you an employee. Or He will give you a bigger, better job. If your job isn’t working WITH the Word of God

then cause the Word of God to work for you so that your job BECOMES a job that works for you! that's been my story.

I am encouraging you guys "in the Word. In prayer. In the Word In Prayer." I am not telling you how much. In the wilderness, with the Israelites some gathered little and some gathered much, but no one lacked. Gather something. Gather something. Gather something.

Make it a point. "I am going to open the Word every day." "I am going to pray at a certain time or place every day." First the natural, then the spiritual. If you make an appointment, you can have an encounter.

Let's start there as the first characteristic of a good discipler. This is the backwards Kingdom. Freely I have received, freely I give. As disciplers and as ministers we should stop giving the things that we did not freely get. They are not that good! If you didn't receive it by grace, it's not worth giving to someone. What's that mean? Anything that you have to give, just get out of your connection with Him!

I can teach the Word academically but if what I share is not coming out of my connection with God it will lack something very distinctly ... it will not be OILY! It will not be anointed. It will just be facts. But that type of wisdom is not from above. The type of wisdom that's from above is the one that comes from a connection. You cannot properly hold revelation in the Kingdom apart from a connection. It comes from connection and it can only be safely maintained in the context of connection.

It's made all the difference in my ministry! What Brad taught me that day "90% of my effectiveness ..." I humbled myself and thought "let's not try to do a lot on just what the other 10% can provide." Now I have a big problem when I teach you all ... I have way too much to say. It's out of the overflow of the heart that the mouth speaks and I often have rivers of living water flowing out of my body ... and it's through connection with God.

Grand vision: Ekkelesia! Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done. How do we do that? Disciple people in their sphere of influence? How could I possibly start to disciple someone? Point 1: have a vibrant connection with God. Time in the Word, Time in Prayer.

Look at Megan. As soon as she was spiritually employed, it drew her in deeper with her Father. I am not telling you to wait a year to be in the Word and in Prayer before finding someone to disciple. How about getting in the Word and in prayer today and finding someone to disciple 3 days from now, OK? It will stir your spiritual growth. You will be drawn on and God will give you more!

We pray for fruit that would come naturally and for fruit that would remain because it came from connection! I release a grace for re-connection and re-prioritization of connection. I command things

that are in the way of connection (time and schedules) to get out of the way in Jesus' Name that you might have connection with the Father.

Now, reading the Word is not a religious experience ... PLEASE GOD! You are NOT checking boxes reading the Word. You are giving God an opportunity to bless you. Stop having a wrong relationship with God (I am not talking from His end). What I am saying is this: the relationship He wants with you is the one where HE gives to you! That's it!

The only relationship we are to have with God is the one in which He gives to us. He gives to us. "But I want to give Him something back ... I want to love Him!" Then let Him love you first! We love because He first loved us!

JUST RECEIVE from the Word.

If you are getting reconnected, just go to the Word. Do not make it a religious experience. Do not check boxes. Do not try to make it a big academic experience. It's fine to study the Word but only do it with one heart and one heart only. It's the heart of faith (the only way to please Him). It's the heart that says "God minister something to me today. Speak something to me today! You know I need to hear from you!"

Receive. Receive. Receive. You are not going to the Word to give give give your time! You are going to the Word to receive receive receive His heart!

We also release refreshing. Freshness. Rejuvenation. There would not be a fear about the new thing that you are doing in us. Just receive receive. You will bless God by receiving from Him!