

1. Introduction

For the last couple of weeks we have been talking about calling. Some people think only nurses, doctors and ministers are called – all other people just have a profession. But I have been saying: everyone is called – even in their chosen vocation.

Our understanding of our calling is shaped by the answer to these three questions:

- Who am I created to BE? (identify)
- What am I created to DO? (mission)
- Where am I created to GO? (place/potion)

I have suggested that all Christians can answer this question in a general way: we are children of God/disciples who make disciples wherever we are. There is also a particular way in which you and I as individuals can answer that question personally and specifically for ourselves.

Last week we concentrated on the “who am I created to BE?” questions. This week I am concentrating on the “what am I created to DO?” question. And I hope to challenge you in a profound way as to what your mission/purpose is.

2. An old measure

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

I know this is a well-known passage, but consider what would happen if the church was shaped by this verse!

A. For you

Not for ministers and missionaries, but for every Christian

B. Where you are

Not about leaving and going to serve in some far-off land where you don't know the culture or language or food

C. To make disciples

Not just about evangelism – it is about people becoming obedient followers of Christ (that is what a disciple is); finding the fullness of following Jesus; fully surrendered follower of Christ.

D. Like the master

In John 20:21 Jesus says, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” That means that the way and the

3. The call to make disciples

So discipleship is the backbone of calling. The call to discipleship is the call to let the fullness of Jesus in me overflow to others; intentionally placing the fullness of Jesus that is in me at the intersection of my relationship with others.

If you have a look at what the 12 disciples did in Acts, there can be very little argument as to what they understood Jesus to mean in Matthew 28. They took his words literally and seriously. Think of Peter and Paul: relationships, time, modelling, accountability, practice. They did what was done for them.

Francis Chan says this,

Why is there so little disciple making taking place in the church today? Do we really believe that Jesus told his early followers to makes disciples but he wants his 21st century church to do something different? None of us would claim to believe this, but somehow we have created a church culture where the paid ministers do the ‘ministry’, and the rest of us show up, put some money in the plate, and leave feeling inspired or ‘fed’. We have moved so far away from Jesus’ command that many Christians don’t have a frame of reference for what disciple making looks like.¹

He is too right to ignore. Especially the part about not having “a frame of reference”. So here is my addition: we are making disciples, they are just after the model in which we were discipled. And that’s the problem!

In fact let me ask you a question: were you discipled (and if you answer yes you are more responsible)? I do not mean: did you attend a Bible class, Bible study, or discipleship course.

- Who discipled you in read your Bible (perhaps that’s why you struggle today... still)?
- Who discipled you in prayer (perhaps that’s why you only pray in a crisis, or when you need to find a parking place next to the entrance)?
- Who discipled you in evangelism (perhaps that’s why you avoid it like the plague)?
- Who made space to grapple with the difficult questions of faith (perhaps that’s why you are still haunted)?

For too many of us, discipleship was a haphazard assortment of different individuals making various inputs, NOT the intentional intersection your life with the fullness of a more mature Christian over a period of time so that you fully surrendered to Christ / become mature and equipped.

¹ Multiply, Francis Chan

Let me refer to my own experience, because I grew up in ECCC. Of course, there were many people who contributed to my growth. No one intentionally disciplined me in prayer (Bill Hybles), bible reading (SU), evangelism or accountability – and by the time you are the youth pastor / bible college student it's too late (but well that's what people think – he's been a Christian for so long and look at what a great leader he is). I knew something was missing all along. It didn't even happen at Bible College. Every Christian should be offered the opportunity for true spiritual formation no matter where or whether they lead.

We are meant to model what was modelled to us. The problem is that, if the model is broken then we need to go look for the original. I want to encourage you this week to go read one of the gospels. What is your impression of the balance he had between the crowd and the 12? When he was with the masses what did he do? When he was with the 12 what did he do? Next week we will look at what that model is.

Billy Graham just died at the age of 99. He was a great evangelist, the greatest our century has known. He was once asked this question: If you were a pastor of a large church in a principal city, what would be your plan of action?

I think one of the first things I would do would be to get a small group of eight or ten or twelve people around me that would meet a few hours a week and pay the price! It would cost them something in time and effort. I would share with them everything I have, over a period of years. Then I would actually have twelve ministers among the laypeople who in turn could take eight or ten or twelve more and teach them. I know one or two churches that are doing that, and it is revolutionizing the church. Christ, I think, set the pattern. He spent most of his time with twelve men. He didn't spend it with a great crowd. In fact, every time he had a great crowd it seems to me that there weren't too many results. The great results, it seems to me, came in this personal interview and in the time he spent with his twelve.²

Graham had a great stage, He spoke to more people about Jesus than Jesus ever spoke to himself! But he still recognises that the small group discipleship setting is the core of gospel ministry.

4. Two sides of a coin

Last thing: although this seems like a one-way street, disciple-making is for the sake of the disciple and the disciple-maker. If you really want to grow as a Christian, start to give of your faith. You will never feel completely qualified and confident – ant that keeps you humbly dependent on

² The Master Plan of Evangelism (1963), Robert Coleman

Christ. The disciple-maker models the fact that you never arrive, you never 'finish'. In this sense it is like raising a child: there comes a day when you are both adults and you walk side by side but there will still be the space for guidance and encouragement when needed. *I have certainly been in discipling relationships when I as the disciple-maker have been challenged and excited by the enthusiasm and passion of the person I am meant to be discipling.*

If you look at yourself and see the need for discipling don't wait for someone to approach you! Pursue them. Seek them out. Find someone who is further on in their faith, be willing to submit yourself to them, give them permission to speak into your life, share the deep things of your heart and look forward to growth.

5. Impact for eternity

Imagine if we wholeheartedly embraced, as the primary measure of our legacy as Christians, the number of people we have disciplined to a fullness in Christ. Rather than measure ministries or giving or attendance or hymns vs choruses or chairs vs pews we measured people disciplined into the fullness of Christ, not-yet-disciples who became disciple-makers. What would Jesus say now about us if that was the scorecard he was going to use?

Imagine the affect the church could have if we were to disciple well. If each just 10 people were to disciple two others every three years. In 3 years there are 30, in 6 years there are 90, in 9 years there are 270, in 12 years (I've been here 12 years now!) there are 810.

Is this something to which you are prepared to give the best of your time and effort? Who has God put into your life who need to be disciplined? There are no accidents with God. If they are there, they are there for a reason. Open your eyes to how God wants to use you.

Questions

Read Matt 28:18-20

- 1) Read Francis Chan's quote again: discuss
- 2) What has been your experience of discipleship?
 - a) Was there an intentional intersection your life with the fullness of a more mature Christian over a period of time so that you fully surrendered to Christ / become mature and equipped.
 - b) Were you disciplined in simple Christian disciplines: bible reading, prayer, giving, ministry?
 - c) Were you disciplined in evangelism?

- d) If you were intentionally disciplined, did you carry it forward by doing the same for others that was done for you? Who were they and what was your experience of doing this?
 - e) Do you resonate with Grant's experience? Have you also felt like something was missing? Do you think it is ever too late to be disciplined? What are the barriers that prevent someone from asking to be disciplined?
- 3) Read Billy Graham's quote again: discuss
 - 4) Discuss: The model of discipleship that we employ produces Christians that are not deep enough and who do not take the task of reproduction seriously enough. What should or should not change at ECCC?
 - 5) Do you find the time frame of about 3 years helpful or unhelpful? Why?
 - 6) How is discipleship a two-way street?
 - 7) What do you think a church would look like if it wholeheartedly embraced, as the primary measure of their legacy as Christians, the number of people they disciplined to a fullness in Christ?