

How We Make Disciples: Reviewing the Three C's Series

Jesus Transforming Convictions

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At A Glance:

- I. Introduction
- II. Transforming Convictions in the Expose Stage
- III. Transforming Convictions in the Educate Stage
- IV. Transforming Convictions in the Equip Stage
- V. Transforming Convictions in the Engage Stage
- VI. Conclusion
- VII. Questions for Further Thought

These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Jesus Transforming Convictions

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: The Difference Convictions Make

1. I wasn't very good at making disciples because I had almost nothing to offer, despite having been in the church for over ten years. When I tried to have a conversation with one of my classmates (who was a Jehovah's Witness) in high school, I did a terrible job of trying to make a disciple.
2. Our conversation was focused on the most basic element of Christianity: the identity of Jesus. I told my classmate that Jesus is God. He immediately responded by saying Jesus couldn't be God because He was a human. I responded by repeating my original assertion: Jesus is God. He responded by repeating his original assertion. All I was able to do was repeat what I had been told. I wasn't able to give reasons for thinking Jesus is God, and I didn't know how to have a conversation with a Jehovah's Witness about the identity of Jesus. Thankfully, neither did he. Both of us just repeated what we were told by others and neither one of us could go any further.
3. Fast forward a few years, I found myself in a complex conversation about the logical coherence of atonement—Jesus restoring humanity to God through His death and resurrection on the cross. I fielded much more difficult questions on topics far beyond the basics. This time, however, I was able to have the conversation and respond intelligently to a challenge I had never heard before. Eventually, the person I was having ongoing conversations with hinted they trusted Jesus.
4. What made the difference in my effectiveness in disciple making? The depth of my convictions. The more I understood Jesus and His message, the more equipped I became for having a kingdom impact. Jesus understands and promotes the critical role our thinking plays in our own spiritual development and our ability to impact others.

B. As was stated in the last message, the Three C's were a central part of the disciple making strategies of Jesus. Jesus spent a significant amount of time investing in the development of the disciples' convictions. There were times when Jesus taught others daily (Lk. 19:47). He invested in other people's convictions at least weekly (Lk. 4:16). He also preached to large crowds when He had opportunity (Mk. 6:34). Jesus intentionally traveled to various towns through Israel for the purpose of teaching and preaching—influencing people's convictions (Lk. 4:43-44). The teaching and preaching work of Jesus is one of the most prominent aspects of His ministry. Why? Because Jesus knew how important it is to invest in the way people use their minds.

C. We will be looking at examples of Jesus transforming people's convictions at each stage of the discipleship process. Jesus spent a considerable amount of time and effort attempting to influence the way people think. Even though Jesus was the best teacher to ever live, those who were being taught by Jesus didn't always understand what He was saying. Jesus' instruction didn't always result in understanding, yet Jesus still thought it was worthwhile to instruct those who weren't able to learn. At every turn, Jesus acted as a teacher.

II. Transforming Convictions in the Expose Stage

- A. A helpful strategy when it comes to studying the life of Jesus from various angles on specific topics is to quickly scan (skim read) through each of the gospels, looking for every place where the topic being focused on appears. I went through the gospels in this way and identified every instance where Jesus was intentionally trying to influence and transform the way a person thought. When I found a passage where this was happening, I slowed down, read the text more carefully, and took notes about how Jesus was discipling people in their thought life. As I did this, I also classified each text into the stage of discipleship the situation best fit using the four E's: Expose, Educate, Equip, and Engage. This Bible study technique can be very useful when studying specific topics.
- B. We are going to take a quick look at the most helpful and clear examples from each stage of discipleship so we might learn how to follow the example of Jesus and make disciples by impacting other people's convictions. Let's pay attention to Jesus's disciple making strategies. Jesus was very careful about the way He went about influencing people's thinking, and those of us who want to become more effective in making disciples will do the same. Helping others transform their convictions is a skill that can be learned.
- C. The first stage of the Jesus journey is the Expose stage, in which people come into first contact with Jesus and they begin learning about Him. At this stage, people will determine whether they think Jesus is trustworthy in the statements He makes or not. People will judge whether the perspective of Jesus is a reliable explanation of reality or whether they think Jesus is mistaken. The accuracy of Jesus' message is inseparably connected to the identity of Jesus. If Jesus is a reliable person, what He says will be accepted as truth and will be viewed as reliable. If Jesus is rejected as reliable, what He says will either be assessed on a statement-by-statement basis or rejected altogether. Our goal in discipleship at this stage is to convince people that Jesus is a trustworthy and knowledgeable person who communicates the true message of God.
- D. As Jesus makes disciples in the Expose stage of spiritual development, we see Him focusing His attention primarily on presenting and defending both His identity and the reliability of His message, including what Jesus can do for people's soul and their relationship to God. In short, at this stage, Jesus tries to convince people that believing in Him is good for them and they will benefit from His way of life. He also persuades people that their current way of life is not healthy. Jesus continually encourages people to believe in Him—trust Jesus after being given good reasons for doing so. He also spends a lot of time answering questions and challenges related to His identity and His message.
- E. One of the primary disciple-making strategies Jesus uses for transforming convictions in the first stage of discipleship is moving people from ignorance to insight. Jesus repeatedly helps people understand His identity and what His identity means for the person He is talking with. He provides people with accurate information so they can either accept or reject Jesus for who He claims to be. One example of this comes from Jesus's interaction with the people at his hometown synagogue:

¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of

the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,¹⁸ “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.”²⁰ And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Lk. 4:16-21)

- F. Jesus is using the Bible to explain who He is as He quotes from Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus repeatedly claimed the Bible was written about Him (Lk. 24:44, Jn. 5:39-40)! This is an incredible claim. The purpose for doing this is to help people understand who Jesus is and the impact of who He is. After reading from the scroll of Scripture, Jesus takes the position of the primary teacher in the synagogue, “sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him” (v. 20). After reading Scripture, Jesus begins His own personal instruction: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (v. 21). Jesus claims to be the person being talked about in Isaiah 61. Jesus teaching in this very synagogue is a fulfillment of at least one of the activities He was sent by God to do! This is a truly shocking message. The glory of God has appeared to help His people in Jesus (Isa. 60:2). Righteousness and worship will be visible to all nations (Isa. 61:11).
- G. In quoting this passage, Jesus provides His audience with a method of testing the truthfulness of Jesus’ identity claim. Jesus provides six testable pieces of evidence: 1) a person with a special empowering of God’s Spirit 2) given the task of preaching the gospel to the spiritually poor 3) Proclaim spiritual freedom to those in bondage to sin 4) To help people see in a spiritual sense 5) To spiritually set free those who are oppressed (likely by the false religious teachings of the Pharisees/scribes) and 5) Tell people about God’s beneficial work happening in the current moment. If Jesus’ claim is accurate—if He is the person Isaiah is talking about—He will be fulfilling all these activities in His life. Those who hear this claim can compare it to Jesus’s life to see if He is telling the truth. Jesus provides good evidence to accept the identity He claims for Himself. If people are open to an honest evaluation of His life, Jesus will be acknowledged as the person who accomplishes each of these tasks predicted by God.
- H. Jesus provides all of this information and evidence to encourage people to trust Him (or as He usually phrased it, “believe in Me”). The objective Jesus was attempting to move people toward was for them to accept what He says as truth. He wanted everyone to accept His identity claims. Jesus used this disciple making strategy repeatedly, in many ways, when He encountered new people. Jesus encouraged everyone to accept His identity, yet He did so in the humblest of ways. Jesus didn’t point to Himself selfishly; rather, He did so for the benefit of others. Jesus took people who didn’t know anything about Him and gave them what they needed so they could understand who He is.

III. Transforming Convictions in the Educate Stage

- A. Once a person is convinced that Jesus is reliable and He teaches truth, they move to the second stage of discipleship. In this stage, Jesus frequently made disciples by taking fragmentary knowledge of the Scriptures and expanding it so the person develops a more robust understanding of the life of discipleship. Jesus regularly helped deepen people’s understanding

of Scripture so they would know the type of life God wants them to live. Jesus moved them from a fragmentary understanding of Scripture to a full understanding of Scripture. One example comes when Jesus and the disciples were in a grainfield on the Sabbath:

¹ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads *of grain* and eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” ³ But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, ⁴ how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? ⁶ But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ But if you had known what this means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.” (Mt. 12:1-7)

- B. The Pharisees had inherited a long history of religion. This caused the Pharisees to understand the world in certain ways and have a particular view about a life that pleases God. When Jesus didn’t see the world their way or follow the rules they thought needed to be followed to please God, they questioned Jesus about it. For the Pharisees, you weren’t supposed to “work” on the Sabbath, since it was a day of rest devoted to God which included a long list of do’s and don’ts. Picking heads of grain on the Sabbath was considered work and a violation of the Sabbath. This is why they ask Jesus, “Look, your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” (v. 2). The Pharisees could easily refer to different passages of Scripture to support their view.¹ Many people have a short proof-text list of certain passages that they think support their view.
- C. In response, Jesus refers to other passages of Scriptures (that the Pharisees don’t connect with the Sabbath issue) to help the Pharisees and His disciples develop a deeper understanding of God’s perspective on the Sabbath. While the Pharisees understand some of what God says in His word about the Sabbath, they have pieces missing. By referring to 1 Samuel 21:1-6, Numbers 28:9-10, and 1 Chronicles 9:32 (among others), they expand everyone’s understanding of God’s perspective on the Sabbath. Further, Jesus add how His influence impacts the Sabbath (vv. 6, 8) and the heart of God that lies behind the Sabbath commands (v. 7). Jesus hopes to move both the Pharisees and the disciples to a life that pleases the Father by how they understand and act on the Sabbath. Jesus says the Pharisees have misjudged the disciples’ actions as a violation of God’s Sabbath commands, but it is not. The disciples are innocent, and the purpose of the Sabbath is to benefit, not burden, people.

IV. Transforming Convictions in the Equip Stage

- A. Once people had a good understanding of the Scriptures, Jesus continued to transform their convictions by moving them from thinking about God’s word as information to implementation. Jesus expected people to not just know what God says but respond appropriately to what God says. Just because a person has knowledge of God’s Word doesn’t mean they will realize how

¹ However, even if the Pharisees could demonstrate God’s desire to cease work on the Sabbath, they would have a more difficult time defending each of their rules that were considered “work” from the Scriptures.

God’s Word impacts how they act in their daily conduct. People who know the Bible don’t always know what to do with the Bible. Jesus repeatedly focuses people’s attention on how God’s Word makes a difference in their lives. He wants disciples to comprehend the relevance and application of God’s perspective. Jesus regularly helped others connect the Bible to their current situation—both their understanding of and their response to it. Frequently, this involved internalizing the word of God so it can be lived out consistently.

- B. One example of Jesus helping someone develop their convictions by moving them from information to implementation occurs on the topic of divorce:

² *Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.* ³ And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴ They said, “Moses permitted *a man* TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her* AWAY.” ⁵ But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, *God* MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. ⁷ FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, ⁸ AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” ¹⁰ In the house the disciples *began* questioning Him about this again. ¹¹ And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.” (Mk. 10:2-12)

- C. The Pharisees and the disciples both know what God’s word says: “Moses permitted *a man* to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” They even quoted from Deuteronomy 24:1-3. However, as Jesus makes clear, just because they understood what God’s word said didn’t mean they knew how it was supposed to be implemented in their lives.
- D. Once again, Jesus communicates the heart of God behind His words, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.” (v. 5). God didn’t desire or look positively on divorce. He allowed it due to the regrettable realities of life in a corrupt condition. If humanity would do what God wants, divorce would be unnecessary. But as it is, sometimes divorce is the best option in some circumstances.
- E. Jesus also explains the design and intentions of God for marriage by talking about Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. Divorce goes against God’s good plan for families and humanity. As people understand the heart and design of God, it will impact how they implement the allowance of divorce. Further, Jesus tells the disciples that those who treat divorce casually against God’s desires for marriage, they are committing adultery in their misapplication of God’s instructions about divorce (vv. 11-12). Jesus helped the disciples further develop their convictions by developing the ability to connect the world of God to life.

V. Transforming Convictions in the Engage Stage

- A. The last method of Jesus’ disciple making strategies that will be examined comes when Jesus is training His disciples to do kingdom work the way He is. At this point, the disciple knows who Jesus is, they understand how to live life according to His teachings, they can take the Bible and use it in life, and now they continue to develop their convictions by moving from confusion to

clarity in how they spiritually care for others. Even though people know how to follow Jesus themselves, they don't always know how to help others do the same. Disciples must learn how to make other disciples for Jesus. Jesus trained the disciples so they could view their kingdom work from God's perspective. He taught them how to spiritually care for others and what to expect when they do.

- B. Following the conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, Jesus knew people from the city were going to come to Jesus out of curiosity. The disciples had gone into the city to get food while Jesus helped the woman believe in Him. Now, more kingdom opportunities were coming. Jesus wanted to help the disciples to see and understand the importance of the kingdom opportunities God gives to them:

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him *anything* to eat, did he?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. ³⁶ Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷ For in this *case* the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor." (Jn. 4:31-38)

- C. Jesus started by saying His soul is nourished by obedience to the Father and spiritually investing in others (v. 32, 34). He then promotes the idea that the disciples should do the same and explains the kingdom's work in terms they will understand. Just as the disciples knew physical life was dependent on crops being harvested so there would be food to eat, the disciples can also spiritually feed on a kingdom harvest—bringing people into the kingdom of God through belief in Jesus (v. 35).
- D. Jesus explains they are going to have an opportunity to spiritually invest in the people of Sychar because other people (perhaps only Jesus) had already prepared them to meet Jesus and hear more about Him (vv. 37-38). The disciples must first change their perspective to think about their situation in spiritual terms ("lift up your eyes and look on the fields" v. 35). Once they adopt a kingdom and eternal perspective on the people around them, they will see the opportunities God places before them ("they are white for the harvest" v. 35). Further, the disciples will be gathering kingdom fruit through spiritually investing in others and they will earn heavenly wages as a result (v. 36). All those who work for God's kingdom work together; each plays a unique role, and they rejoice together when God's kingdom produces fruit on earth. Jesus is inviting the disciples into a lifetime of kingdom service, and He helps them begin to see their life through the eyes of eternity. He wants them to know and value the important work of spiritually investing in other people. Later, He will provide specific skills to do so. Here, Jesus is simply laying the foundation for the disciples to have a kingdom perspective on their lives.

VI. Conclusion

- A. Even this short snapshot of the life of Jesus makes it clear: Jesus placed a high priority on transforming the way people think. He employed specific disciple-making strategies to impact the way people use their minds. Jesus carefully laid brick after brick so people would see the world the way He does, so they might possess a true worldview and live in harmony with reality.
- B. Each of the four gospels presents Jesus focusing His time and attention toward convictions. So important is shaping our thinking around the word of God that Jesus said, “man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” (Mt. 4:4)

VII. Questions for Further Thought

- A. Have you ever noticed Jesus’ strong emphasis on convictions before? If so, what have you observed about the way Jesus made disciples in this area?
- B. What can we learn about the expectations Jesus has for people to know and understand the word of God from Matthew 21:42? How does Jesus expect Psalm 118:22 to be understood and applied?
- C. How are you currently using your mind in your pursuit and love of God?
- D. In what ways does the church devalue convictions and the importance of the mind when it comes to the things of God?
- E. Do you know any other disciple-making strategies Jesus used regarding convictions? If so, what are they?