

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES

“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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
—MATTHEW 28:19-20

In the above command, which Jesus gives to every Christian, the primary verb is “make” – we are to make disciples. The subsidiary verbs are ‘go’, ‘baptizing’ and ‘teaching’, but we can “go” and accomplish nothing. Baptizing is a necessary expression of our response to the Lord Jesus, but it is not to go and accumulate as many baptisms as we can. Neither is it teaching them to obey. These are supportive actions that make the main objective possible which is to “make disciples”.

The first step in making disciples is in recognizing we are under the Lordship and authority of Jesus Christ. We can be Christians and do our own thing, but we will not be fruitful in making disciples. That is the corporate agenda of the church of Jesus Christ, and is one to which all our personal agendas must be a contributing factor.

There are many good and valid projects taking place in the church of Jesus Christ: missions abroad and domestically, education, literature distribution, media ministry, addressing justice issues and fund raising for needy causes. These things, however, are all temporal. The danger is that sometimes they become substitutes, overriding and eclipsing the eternal dimension, which is to make

disciples. If the church does not have a disciple-making agenda as its central thrust, then we are simply rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

As making disciples involves teaching people to obey Christ's commands, how are we to do this? Jesus ends His commission with, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). His presence is not a nice finishing touch to encourage us. It is the essential ingredient. In John 15:5, He said, "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." What enables us to bear fruit is that we are identified with Christ, and His presence in us provides the motivation, strength, direction and empowerment to make disciples.

It is in union with Christ that His Spirit works in us and through us to produce fruit that will last. Though we may have doubts as to our ability, the antidote is obedience. John Stott, author of 'Basic Christianity', said, "Preach what you can trust and be willing to go beyond what you can trust on the grounds this is what the Bible says." It is not intellectual rhetoric, nor our strategies that will make disciples for Christ, but the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of the word of God penetrating the hearts of people.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for being everything we need in helping to bring souls to salvation and in making disciples.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit in my witness for Christ?