

Life on Mission Series – Part 5

Fully Devoted Followers

Pastor Lester Zimmerman

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Today is part five of our Life on Mission series. In this series we have been talking about the “whys” and the “hows” of sharing our faith.

The title, “Life on Mission”, implies we each have a mission to fulfill. Being a Christian is not just trying to live a good moral life and running across the finish line into our final reward of Heaven when we die.

We have been placed here on earth with a mission. With an assignment to complete before we get to Heaven.

Jesus gives us our assignment in Matthew 28. Every Christian has this same assignment.

Matthew 28:16-20 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So, what is our mission assignment? **Our mission is to make disciples. Making disciples means helping people become fully devoted followers of Jesus.**

Whether we are a parent, teacher, leader or friend we have the mission assignment of not only leading people to faith in Jesus but also helping people understand what it means to follow Jesus.

Last week Pastor Brian explained how we can lead someone to that decision point and pray for them to receive Jesus into their life.

But our mission does not stop with having someone pray a prayer of salvation.

Our mission is to help them become a disciple. What does it mean to be a disciple?

It is not just someone who has prayed the sinner’s prayer. The biblical definition of a disciple is one who has fully repented and is fully devoted to following Jesus.

Sadly in American Christianity there is often a disconnect between being a professing Christian and actually living as a disciple of Jesus. But according to the Bible a disciple is

- One who patterns their whole life according to the teachings of Jesus.
- A disciple is one who makes Jesus both Savior and Lord of their life.
- A disciple is one whose goal is to be like Jesus in every area of their life. In speech and action.

Jesus said; *“Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* What he is saying is teach them not to just be a professing Christian, but a disciple, fully surrendered and committed to following me.

Being a disciple is more about learning to walk in obedience than it is learning lots of head knowledge. As disciples of Jesus we are called to take up our cross and following him no matter what suffering or rejection we might encounter.

Our mission then is to help people grow from new believer to mature believer.

In the bible, a new believer is described as an infant in their spiritual understanding and growth.

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, (NIV)

We all know a baby cannot survive very long on its own. It needs to be fed and eventually learn how to feed itself. To be healthy it needs to grow and become strong.

In the same way, we need to come alongside these new believers and help them. Whose job is it? It is all of our jobs because- **Discipleship is more about relationships than it is about giving information.**

In other words, a discipleship class or book is not enough. Jesus made disciples by living and walking with them through life's experiences. He showed them how to respond to opposition. How to use their spiritual authority. How to pray and interpret the scriptures. How to resist temptation. How to love, be patient and kind.

We learn these things from walking with someone who is a bit ahead of us in the journey. Someone who can show us the way and explain how God's Kingdom functions.

It is a little like learning to play the guitar. I had a book to help me but what I really needed was a friend to sit down and teach me the fundamentals.

Following Jesus includes many things but here are some things to start with as you come alongside someone who has decided to surrender their life to Jesus. These are the foundations of discipleship. These are things I emphasize with all believers new and old.

1. Teach new believers the importance of water baptism.

Jesus said the first step in the Christian walk is water baptism. This is the first step for every disciple. We need to be baptized. Jesus requires that of us if we want to be one of his followers. It is not optional or just a nice suggestion.

Acts 2:38 Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

- Baptism is an act of covenant. It is like what marriage vows are to a couple making their covenant commitment of marriage to each other.
- Baptism is a public declaration of your allegiance to a King Jesus above all other kings, religions and authorities.
- Baptism does symbolize the washing away of your sins but also a decision to obey and follow Jesus as your Lord and Savior. It is an act of surrender.

Your first step of obedience as a follower of Jesus is to declare your loyalty to Jesus through water baptism.

We also welcome people who have walked away from their relationship with Jesus and want to renew their commitment by being re-baptized. It is not required that you be re-baptized but it has been helpful and meaningful to many people.

We will also re-baptize those who upon their parent's wishes were baptized as infants but now are making their own decision to declare Jesus as Lord of their life.

2. Help believers get connected to a church.

In the book of Acts, we see many people coming to faith in Christ. They were baptized and then immediately joined a house group for encouragement and further teaching on how to be a disciple of Jesus.

Acts 2:41-42, 46-47

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ... ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

They would meet in their church or temple courts and also in smaller groups in homes for teaching and fellowship.

Listen, we will never grow to be mature disciples by ourselves. It is impossible.

It is important that every new believer and all of us stay connected to a good bible believing church where other believers can show us how to follow Jesus.

We notice in this passage they not only got together for teaching but also for fellowship.

In this series we encouraged you to make friends with non-Christians, but we also must stay connected to fellowship in our faith community. If we get isolated, we become very vulnerable and weak.

Stay connected. Keep it a priority in your life as a disciple of Jesus.

3. Teach believers to embrace the scriptures as the authority and guide for their lives.

Help them develop a trust and confidence in the Bible as God's inspired word.

The trustworthiness of the Bible is under great attack on all fronts. Help them understand why they can trust the Bible as the reliable inspired word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. (NLT)

If Satan can get us to doubt the trustworthiness and authority of the scriptures, he can then easily deceive us and lead us astray.

As a baby develops and grows, they learn to feed themselves. Our goal is for each of us to learn how to feed ourselves and not just rely on teachers to feed us. We should all learn how to read and study the bible for ourselves.

We want followers of Jesus to fall in love with the scriptures. To draw life and strength from them. To learn more about the amazing God who is their father.

PURPLE BOOK: Something we like to give to new believers is what we call the Purple Book. It covers basic topics of the Christian faith.

4. Show believers how to develop a devotional life of prayer and time alone with God.

Christianity is about a relationship with God. It is important for each person to nurture that relationship with Jesus in their private place of prayer.

Jesus modeled this for his disciples. **Mark 1:35** **Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.**

We want new believers to become dependent on God and not us. Our goal is for each person to learn to know and hear God's voice. We want them to learn to rely on God's strength as they grow in knowing him.

The fruit of the Spirit grows in our life as we spend time with him.

5. Help believers embrace the Holy Spirit and discover their spiritual gifts.

We need to help each believer understand that the Christian life is not about self-effort and performance. We need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to help us overcome sinful habits and walk in victory.

1 Corinthians 4:20 For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power. (NLT)

Jesus has also given each of us spiritual gifts to serve others with. Our goal is to help each person discover their gifts and then help them find a place to serve with their gifts.

Every person that goes through the *Belong Journey* has the opportunity to discover their spiritual gifts and find a place to serve.

6. Encourage every believer to keep growing in their faith.

Every living thing is healthy as long as it keeps growing. This is true of all of us as followers of Jesus. I want to encourage all of us to keep growing.

Colossians 2:7 Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. (NLT)

There are many opportunities all around us to keep growing and putting our roots deeper. So when the storms come, we are not blown away, but we endure and become strong.

- Small groups studies – some go deeper each week in discussing the Sunday message
- Adult Education classes - EHOP
- Dove/Hopewell School of Ministry

What have you done in the past year to grow spiritually besides coming to church on Sundays? Read any spiritual books? Attended a marriage conference? Taken a class? - Be intentional about growing. Do something that will stretch you.

There is a next step for everyone. So take your next step in your growth.

7. Encourage believers to share their story and become disciple makers.

We should all be reproducing ourselves. Introducing others to Jesus who has transformed our lives. Teaching others what we have learned. Sharing our faith.

Acts 1:8b And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere.

You don't have to wait until you have been a Christian for a while. Start right away. You still have contact with a lot of your non-Christian friends. Tell them how Jesus has changed your life.

Start making disciples with the people God has put into your life. Encourage people to keep pursuing Jesus.

Conclusion:

These are ways we make disciples. These are ways we all grow into fully devoted followers of Jesus and not just Sunday Christians.

As I said in the beginning, making disciples begins with our children and continues throughout life.

I leave you with two questions. "Would you call yourself a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ this morning? A fully devoted follower of Jesus? Striving to applying his teachings to every area of your life. If not, what are you going to do about your spiritual condition?

The second question. Is there anyone you are discipling? Someone you are walking alongside of as they are trying to understand and grow in being a follower of Jesus?

It doesn't have to be a formal thing. But we can be intentional in encouraging others to become fully devoted Jesus followers.

And whether we are aware of it or not, new believers around us are taking their cues from us as to what it means to be a Christian.

Let's all of us keep pursuing Jesus as our Lord and make him known to others.