

Why Make Disciples?

Over the past **5 weeks** we have been taking a look at spiritual gifts and last week we concluded our study by giving you a link to a spiritual gifts test that you can take to help discover what your spiritual gift is so that you can find your role within the Body of Christ (The Church). For those of us who are followers of Jesus, God has gifted you in a certain way so that you can use your grace gift to grow the church and bless others. I hope that you have taken advantage of that resource. If you haven't yet, there is a **QR code** at **NEXT** that will take you to that link and I want to encourage all of us who have said **YES** to Jesus to take that test if you are uncertain as to what your spiritual gift may be.

And here's why? Because today we are beginning a new series called **ON TARGET** where we are going to explore the **MISSION** we have as followers of Jesus and what it is that we are supposed to be doing with the spiritual gifts God has given us. God does not give us spiritual gifts so that we can live our best life now or use them for our own benefit. He gives us spiritual gifts because he wants to use us to build His church. We need to understand that what we are building is not being built out of bricks and mortar or is focused on a specific building or a Sunday morning service, but it is being built with eternal souls that will never die, flesh and blood people who are in desperate need of salvation. In other words, God wants to use our giftedness to reach people with the Gospel of **HOPE**. What is this **HOPE**? It's that God sent His Son Jesus to live a sinless life, to die in our place, and be raised back to life from the dead so that sinners who turn from their sin and trust in Jesus will be forgiven and have eternal life. This is the **TARGET** of our mission and this is what we are to use our spiritual gifts to accomplish.

So over the next 4 weeks, as we prepare for Easter and our resurrection celebration, we are going to **ASK** and **ANSWER** FOUR QUESTIONS regarding our mission to help us stay **ON TARGET** with what God has called us to do and what He has equipped us for. So as we begin, let's **PRAY** and ask God to **OPEN** our hearts to all that He has for us and that we would be **WILLING** to respond in obedience to what He has called us to **DO** (**PRAY**)

The first question we are going to deal with is **"Why?"** More specifically, **"Why are WE to make disciples?"** In order to answer this question let's look at what God gives us through His word. First, I want us to look at a familiar passage that we have preached on and spoken of many times before here at Vertical Church.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) 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."

To help us understand the weight of this passage we need to have a picture of its context. At this point Jesus has been resurrected from the dead for a little over a month. He has revealed to

His disciples that He has conquered death and has finished what He came to do, which was to pay the debt we owed God for our sin and that through His blood we have forgiveness of sin. Jesus is just before returning back to His Father in heaven and before His departure He has some final instructions for His disciples regarding what it is he has for them to DO. And what does He say, “GO and MAKE disciples.” It is also at this point that we need to understand that not only is this a command and instruction as to what Jesus wants them to do next, but there is also a sense among the disciples themselves that they are looking to know what is next regarding their lives and journey with God. In other words, with Jesus returning to the Father and the work of salvation being completed, WHAT DO THEY DO NOW?

When it comes to the question of “WHY are we to make disciples?” The answer is pretty simple. **It’s what a follower of Jesus does!!** Now, as we explore that concept a little further I want to prompt us with three other questions. Here’s the first one I want you to consider.

Is Jesus your LORD? If your Lord gives you a command regarding what He wants you to do then what is the appropriate response for one who is following their Lord? Is it not to do what He has commanded you to do? **Matthew 28:18** reminds us that Jesus is not just a lord in a general or limited sense but that He is LORD of ALL!! He has been given ALL authority. “**Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”**” You see, Jesus isn’t a president presiding over a country and he ain’t the chairman of the board overseeing a Fortune 500 company. He is LORD and KING over ALL entities. Jesus has full authority over all matters. Meaning there is no place in the universe that doesn’t belong to HIM and His Kingdom. There’s no place that He doesn’t rule over. All God's enemies are defeated and He is in charge. Now, if this is true and Jesus is your LORD and you are following Him, doesn’t it stand to reason that you would be willing, ready, and waiting for His instructions? As followers of Jesus we have been commanded by our LORD to GO and MAKE disciples. This means that we have been commanded to tell people what God has done for them. And what has done? Look at what Paul said to the Colossian church.

Colossians 2:13-15 (NIV) 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you[d] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

And for those whom God draws to Himself through this message we are to teach them how to live for Him and to go and do the same with others in their lives. **Is Jesus Your LORD?**

But there is a second question we need to wrestle with, **Do you desire to experience His intimate presence?** What if there is an opportunity for you to experience His intimate presence through what He is asking us to do for Him, would that compel you to do it? Notice verse **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.**” One of the things that has always intrigued me is that God wants to use me to accomplish His mission. I imagine that God would certainly be a whole lot more efficient if He didn’t use me. But the whole purpose for God’s mission is that we all would have

an intimate relationship with Him. He died for our sins, not so we could come to church and no longer feel guilty any more, but so we could now enter into an unhindered relationship with Him. He wants us to KNOW Him in a much deeper way. What better way to cultivate that intimate relationship than for us to join God in His mission where we walk along with Him. We see this with the disciples. Jesus built relational connections with His disciples as they joined Him in His work. They might have read about God and even worshiped Him before meeting Jesus, but they became more intimate with God after they said YES to Jesus and joined Him in His work. I have experienced this in my own life and I have witnessed it also in the church. Those who join God in His work by allowing God to use them to GO and MAKE disciples always grow in their intimacy with Christ. [\(Share your Testimony of how God has done that with you\)](#) **Is Jesus Your LORD? Do you desire His intimate presence?** Here is one more question we need to consider.

Do you have a NEW IDENTITY in Christ? Imagine for a moment you are one of Jesus' disciples there with Him as described in the pages of scripture. You have pledged your life to Him. Given up all of the old life to follow Him. Then He is crucified and buried. You find out a few days later that He has come back to life. He hangs out with you for about 5 weeks and then says, "I am leaving to go back to the Father." At this point I would be like, "What am I supposed to do now?" I am different now after having met Jesus. I can't return to the way I was before. I have a new perspective. I can't continue with business as usual. I have a NEW IDENTITY!

If your answer to the last three questions **Is Jesus your LORD?, Do you desire to experience His intimate presence?, and Do you have a NEW IDENTITY in Christ?**

If your answer is YES to all three, then there is only one thing you can do! And here it is: **2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NIV) 17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is to be our mission and our calling based on our new identity in Christ. We have been given a ministry of reconciliation. We are to help build relationships between God and people who need to be reconciled to God (which, btw is ALL of us). Paul uses the term **ambassador**. An **ambassador is an official who represents a specific country who purposefully goes to another foreign country in order to foster a beneficial relationship between the country the ambassador represents and the foreign entity**. In essence ambassadors are relational bridge builders that help foster relationships where one currently does not exist.

If you are a genuine follower of Jesus, He is your Lord, and you have personally experienced the grace of God yourself, then I should not have to convince you that you are supposed to do this. The desire to do it should already exist through the groanings of the Holy Spirit within you. There should be a spirit of, **“yeah I need to tell people about this message of reconciliation.”**

Now, you may not fully understand how to do this and you may not have realized or felt as if God could use you to do this, but when you read or hear passages like **Matthew 28** and **2 Corinth. 5** you should immediately feel a tension within your soul that this is something you should be a part of. I believe this is why God gives this command in Matthew 28 and it's why the disciples didn't fight against it. This is something a new man or woman in Christ should feel compelled to be involved with when they hear Christ instruct us to GO and MAKE disciples.

Let me also say this, maybe you have become distracted with life and thus the desire or awareness to do this has become overshadowed by certain life circumstances. You are so distracted with just trying to survive and get through the day that you have little time or energy to think about anything else. You just don't have the bandwidth to even consider how you are part of God's mission to the world. Maybe the ways of the old life are trying to lure you back and as a result you have allowed your passion for God and His word to become snuffed out.

If either of these describes you, this is a product of a busy or frustrated life where you are spending too much energy pursuing the things of the world than you are the KINGDOM and that is why you are frustrated and unfulfilled. Would you STOP, TAKE a deep breath and RECONNECT with God and the mission for which you have been called. (Btw, I have been there. The problem wasn't God or my lack of understanding regarding my mission, it was that I had become distracted. Kingdom people will never become satisfied with temporary twinkies of this world. You were made and redeemed for so much more!! Will you turn back to God and reconnect with His mission) I get it! Sometimes life hits us in the face with difficulties that we aren't prepared for and it knocks us off track. I want you to know that even though the apostle Paul faced difficulties and challenges designed to distract and discourage him, he leveraged them for His mission purposes. In fact, He saw them as opportunities to share Jesus with others. (Paul in the Philippian jail, where through His worship in jail was able to lead the jailer to Christ. Paul's journey to Rome which involved a shipwreck. He used it to preach Jesus to those who helped rescue them and take care them afterward.) What about you? You don't have to give in to the distraction or your circumstances. Use it as a platform for the Gospel..

There may be some of you here today and you are a new believer and didn't understand that this is your next assignment after receiving Jesus. On behalf of the church let me say that I am sorry we have failed you. Please forgive us. It isn't your fault. We are supposed to be discipling you, helping you understand your mission and teaching you how to make disciples. Will you let us do just that by opening yourself up to the Body of Christ. Engage with us through relationships. Be part of a small group. Become part of one of our ministry teams. Don't just be an attender or a spectator. You were saved by Jesus and reconciled to God and His family. You weren't made to sit on the sidelines. You were made to represent God and to follow Him. How

can you say you love God and people, if you don't make time for God, make time to share the gospel, make time for other believers? Could you imagine a quarterback signing a contract with a team and then refusing to be a part of the team in the mission to win? How about a lineman refusing to block? A cornerback who refuses to guard the receiver? As a Christian you are not a fan in the stands, you are a player on the field.

If you are here and you feel nothing! No responsibility! No desire to share! No tension whatsoever can I ask you a simple question, **HAVE YOU RECEIVED JESUS as your Lord and Savior?** Just like the spiritual gifts, it all starts with JESUS! Do you have a relationship with Him? If not, my prayer is that you would open your heart to HIM today because He loves you and He has made away for your sin to be canceled and for you to be able to have a relationship with Him. But you have to first see your need for Him and have a desire to leave the old life and embrace the new. **You will never have any desire to share Jesus until you have met Jesus. Your desire to share Jesus will directly reflect how closely you know Jesus.** Unfortunately, Some of you know CHURCH more than you know JESUS.

Lastly, I want you to notice this mission is totally a work of GOD in which we are to participate! **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,** The power and glory of the work we are called to rests in God the Father who draws them, Jesus who made it possible through His blood for their sins to be forgiven, and the Holy Spirit to transform them and make them new. We can't convince, manipulate or argue people into a relationship with God! If you can manipulate and argue someone into a relationship with Jesus then chances are they can be manipulated and argued out of a relationship with Jesus. It is on God to draw, convict and convince. It is simply our job to be available for God to use us to share the GOOD NEWS and to help foster relationships with those who are dead in their sin and help them find new life.

God doesn't need us but He wants to use us. This invitation to join Him in His mission has to do with His GLORY and our BENEFIT. Think about it! How glorious a display it is of God's power to overcome sin in the lives of people by using flawed vessels to reach flawed vessels. That is only something God could do. As for the benefit to us, nothing brings me greater joy and intimately connects me with God better than when I am working with God to reach someone who is far from God. Let us GO and MAKE disciples! Next week we will take a look at the question of "WHO?" as we set our target on WHO we are to reach. (PRAY)

Invitation:

Did you answer YES to the three questions? **Is Jesus your LORD?, Do you desire to experience His intimate presence?, and Do you have a NEW IDENTITY in Christ?**

I don't need to convince you then, you know what you need to do! You need to Go and make disciples! You are an ambassador for Christ. So let God use you to build relationships between those who are far from God and the One who loves them more than they could possibly understand. If you are unsure on how to do this, make sure you don't miss the rest of this series

and sign up for the special training we will be offering starting next Sunday. Beginning next week in Bladen immediately following the service we will be providing lunch and Mike Pennino will be conducting a training session on How to Share Jesus. Then the following weeks of **March 26th** in **Pembroke** and **April 2nd** in **Lumberton** we will be doing the same. If you don't know how, this would be a great opportunity to learn how to fulfill what you know God is calling you to do.

Maybe for some of us the reason you are struggling to follow Jesus is because you don't completely understand who you are in Christ. When you know who you are, you are more free to be who you are. When you know the WHY then you'll clearly see what to do and want to do it. So the question remains, do you know Jesus? Have you trusted in Him for salvation and the forgiveness of sin? If you have, are you walking with Him daily? God has given you three great resources to help you discover and walk in your new identity. The first is the Holy Spirit which you receive at the moment of salvation. The second is the word of God that allows you to activate the Holy Spirit in your life as He takes the word of God and applies it to your heart. And finally, there is the church. The people of God that have been placed around you to encourage you and where you can join with others in the mission God has given all of us. Have you taken advantage of these resources? It is hard to walk in your NEW IDENTITY with them.