



gracefellowship

Stay The Course
August 12, 2018
Identify, Equip and Release Leaders

:: John 17:4-8 (don't ready yet)

We are doing a series on our 7 essentials of discipleship to end the summer. Making disciples is a long, arduous task and to make sure we don't lose focus or get off course, there are 7 essentials, or guidelines, we use to keep us moving forward.

So far we have looked at...

Abiding in Christ

Reaching the Lost

Shepherding People Toward Spiritual Maturity

Chasing the Strays

Functioning as a Team.

And today we are looking at making disciples by Identifying, Equipping and Releasing Leaders.

Jesus knew His mission was two fold:

1. To offer His life as a sacrifice for our sins and make the only way for us to be connected with God in relationship.
2. To make disciples who could carry on His mission after He left to return to heaven.

:: John 17:4-8

4 I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.

5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

Before Jesus ever went to the cross He said he had finished the mission God gave Him. The work God gave Jesus was to make disciples who would know Jesus, be transformed by Jesus and be on mission with Jesus.

Jesus made disciples in order to glorify God. If we make disciples for any other reason we are missing the mark. Everything about making disciples is about bringing glory to our Father.

How did accomplished that task is what we want to focus on today to stay engaged with our calling to follow Jesus as disciples and disciple-makers.

To be a disciple-making church we need to constantly be working to Identify, Equip and Release Leaders.

Looking back at the gospels we can see how Jesus did this and learn from his example.

IDENTIFY

The first several months of Jesus' ministry he attracted crowds and had people who were following Him everywhere He went. Around 120 people were faithfully near Jesus and in proximity to Him. From those 120, Jesus called 12 to join Him and be in a unique discipling relationship.

:: Luke 3:13-15

13 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.

14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

15 and to have authority to drive out demons.

Mark tells us Jesus' first priority was to call these 12 men to be with him- He appointed them specifically to be with Him.

Jesus made disciples by calling people to be with Him in close relationship.

Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that the first step of leading in the church is doing- give people a job, but it's not. The first step of leading as a Christian is being with Jesus. Which goes back to our first essential- abiding in Christ.

Last week we had "Team Sunday" and many of you helped us identify people who can be next level leaders for our ministry teams by expressing an interest in different ministries. What I hope you'll find as we begin plugging people in is that you won't just be given a job to do, but you'll be invited into relationship with another person or people on those teams and given a chance to be equipped and learn from them what the team does and what the needs are. Before you are thrown into working we want to make sure you understand the importance of

abiding with Christ and having a deepening relationship with Him.

EQUIP

Jesus didn't just call His disciples in and immediately give them a job- although He would do that. The verse we looked at in Mark said "He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out..."

But to send people out unequipped is sending them out to fail. Every sports team has a minimum number of practices before they ever play a game. Can you imagine what it would look like to put two football teams on the field, one that had been through 2 months of practices and one that had just stepped on the field as a team for the first time as the game was starting?

Jesus knew that for his disciples to succeed in their future role of making disciples He first had to equip them. The same is true of our role in the church today. In fact, Paul talks about this in Ephesians 4:11-16. Look at that text with me.

:: Ephesians 4:11-16

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,

12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- The roles Jesus created are divine institutions, not human inventions. They were created for the purpose of equipping the body for works of service.

To Equip = mending a net; setting a broken bone; training an athlete.

Leaders in the church work to produce strong, mended, fit Christians who can carry the baton in the next leg of the race.

- The Ultimate Goal: ...so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
 - Then we won't be infants in our faith (vs. 14)
 - We will become a mature body (vs. 15)

Equipping people is important, but it has to go beyond head knowledge. We have too many people in the church who are told or believe they should, sit and spectate while others work and serve. But that wasn't Jesus method of making disciples. He equipped them and then He gave them a place to play! This is where we see Jesus release leaders.

RELEASE

As Jesus felt his disciples were ready for more responsibility, he would send them out to do what he originally called them for- to preach and do spiritual warfare against the forces of evil in this world.

:: Mark 6:6b-13

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

7 Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

8 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff —no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.

9 Wear sandals but not an extra shirt.

10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.

11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

12 They went out and preached that people should repent.

13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Jesus understood something important: None of us lives up to our potential by sitting on the sidelines watching others!

Discipleship happens as mature Christians call people to join them on life's journey, equip them to hear from God and follow Him and then release them out to do the same thing with someone else.

After He equipped them, Jesus was always challenging the disciples and calling them out to greater things.

The passage we just read in Mark described how Jesus sent them out into surrounding towns where he was going to go and do ministry. They weren't to take much with them because Jesus wanted them to depend on God to provide for them. They were to preach the same message they had been hearing Jesus preach everywhere he went- like a stump speech a politician might give from city to city; they had heard Jesus' message about repentance and the coming of the Kingdom of God and were supposed to deliver the same message.

Jesus also recognized that growth happens outside our comfort zones.

I love the story of Jesus feeding the crowds of 5,000 men plus women and

children. When the disciples come to him and say they should send everyone away to get food Jesus pushes them to get out of their comfort zones. He asked them, "What do you have to feed them with?"

Talk about a question that would push you out of your comfort zone! What were they supposed to feed that many people with? One of them spoke up and said there was a boy with 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish. Silly, right?! But Jesus said, "Bring them to me!"

Can you imagine how the disciple's faith in Jesus grew as they watched him feed thousands of people with that meager lunch? That's what Jesus does when we trust him and step out of our comfort zones into God's amazing plan.

Challenge: Some of you need to take that next step in your faith journey. You need to be discipled by someone with the expectation that you will one day disciple others.

We challenge all of our ministry leaders, small group leaders, Staff Team and Elder Team to constantly be looking for people they can disciple with the goal of producing future leaders.

- Every Small Group should have a leader and an apprentice who is learning to make disciples through our small groups. When the time comes to multiply, the leaders are able to branch their group and continue to add new people to our Small Groups who will be discipled through those environments.
- Every Ministry Team leader should have people they are discipling to help give leadership and make disciples through that ministry.
- Our Staff Team is always looking for people to plug into ministries and trying to find people we can disciple who will lead in different capacities around our church.
- Our Elders are encouraged to disciple people we believe may be future Elders and leaders for our church.

Obviously not everyone will be a leader. But everyone has a role to minister and serve within the church and in our community. God didn't create any of us to just come to church, sit and watch.

When you look at your life within the church you can probably define pretty easily where your comfort zone lies. Ask God today to move you outside your comfort zone. The place to start is just to tell Jesus that whatever He asks you to do this coming year you will actively obey. That's called putting your "yes" on the table. Illustration: At the end of last year Brent Long, who leads our Next Supper Team, told me that he sensed God telling 2018 was going to be a busy year and he wanted Brent to say "yes" to whatever He asked him to do.

- Interview with Brent

Close in Prayer