

01 | Jesus Chose Multiplication, Not Growth

Multiplying Churches and Leaders

God's first recorded words to mankind were "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..." Nobody hearing that command was thinking that Adam and Eve were going to, by themselves, fill the earth with children. In fact, even the most fruitful procreator probably isn't going to exceed about a dozen kids. And let's just say going into ancient times, we double or triple or quadruple that, we're still not going to fill the earth. But after five days of creation, setting up food and water and atmosphere and color and beauty and smells for His crowning glory, His people, His command was "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..."

These things are not just natural. These are spiritual things. God began the world with a command to be fruitful and multiply, and He intended that that would be a command for all of time. He, in fact, repeats it multiple times. But how do you get to the point that you could fill the earth? Well, if you were to look back just a few days prior in creation, you would see when He created plants, He said these words, "whose seed is in themselves." Whose seed is in themselves. In other words, if you have an apple tree, the apples on that

tree have a seed that produces more apples. Well, no, they don't create more apples. They create more apple trees. The seed inside of a fruit produces not just new fruit. They produce the producers of that fruit. It's multiplication. See, if I just want another apple. I can't plant an apple seed and expect another apple to pop up. Instead, I expect another tree, the producer of that fruit, in which case one apple seed can produce infinite numbers of apples.

Do you know it's the same way with people? When we have a child, that child is not simply just an addition to the family, because that child itself has the ability to procreate with another human and bring more children. Multiplication is how God intended that the Earth would be filled. Multiplication is how God intended for us to have enough food to eat. And when Jesus came on the scene, He followed this same pattern. In fact, He goes ahead with His 12 disciples. He doesn't get one guy. He doesn't say, "Hey, Peter, follow Me. I'm going to explain all the things of the kingdom of God to you, and I'm going to have you find someone else, and you can pass that message along to them." He gets a dozen guys. Well, let's be honest. There are even more disciples, more followers that come around. But He chooses 12. Now, what's interesting about that is He didn't choose 1200. I mean, it's Jesus. He's only here for a few years. You'd think He's got to get as many people as possible. But I want you to hear this. Jesus did not try to find as many people as He possibly could. He did not try and accomplish

everything. He had his ministry assignment, and He focused on what God had called Him to do, and He did it through people. When those 12 disciples were reached, they then had the ability, because they were disciplined, to then disciple others. They were able to follow Jesus' model and take that and multiply it out.

So, just looking at that picture, if Jesus' 12 disciples then had 12 others that they disciplined in just one generation of fruitfulness, you now have 144 disciples. That's amazing. But He could have had more, right? Do you remember the guy who had the legion of demons? Remember Jesus set him free. Man, it was just such a powerful miracle! At the end of that passage, in Mark 5, Jesus is begged by this guy. He says, "Please let me follow You. Let me come with You. I want to be on Your ministry team." And Jesus said no. He said, "You go tell your family. You go tell your people. You tell the people in this region the wonderful things that God has done for you." What was He telling him? I don't want to just add people to My team. We've got to multiply. It's got to go beyond just this group. You know, this is not common in our modern way of thinking. I mean, come on, we're all about social media, right? We want to be influencers. We want everybody to like us, to follow us, to see us, to know our name. And yet that was not Jesus' mission. He wasn't trying to be the most famous, even though He had every right to be the most famous. Even though He deserved to be the most famous. Instead, no, everybody needs to hear. But I'm

not just going to try and tell everybody, I'm going to disciple, I'm going to train, I'm going to pour into, I'm going to make disciples.

You know, that word "make" is an interesting word. It's not a one-and-done kind of word. You don't go to the grocery store and pick up a cake and say, "Look at the cake I made." Well, you shouldn't go to the grocery store and tell somebody that you made that cake, right? Why? Because you didn't make it. Making insinuates that you went through a process to get that. If you make a cake, you're going, and you're getting the ingredients, you're putting them together, you're preheating the oven, you're putting it in the oven, you're pulling it out. You're icing that cake. What are you doing? You're making something. When we make disciples, when Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples," He was not asking us to invest in a short-term process. Can I say it this way? He didn't say, "Go create converts." He said make disciples. What is a disciple? A disciple is a follower. But it's a follower who obeys. Take out the Christian context for a minute. If you were to look at some of the Eastern religions we've seen and you heard about the disciples of that teacher, you can already right now picture in your mind how they're all dressed the same, shave their heads the same, living in a commune together. Why? Not because they're people who are believers in Jesus, but they are disciplined, obedient followers of the message they've received. Their whole life shifts to follow after what their teacher has instructed

them. This is what multiplication is about. It's not about passing along a message. Jesus never intended for us to just transfer our knowledge of God. "Hey, there's a good God. He loves you. Amen." Those things aren't bad. But it's not making disciples. And so often what we see in our churches and in our Christian contexts, especially in Western churches, is what I might call seedless grapes. You know, grapes naturally have seeds in them, but you can get genetically modified grapes at the grocery store. They don't have any seeds. They don't bother you when you're popping those grapes in your mouth; you can just enjoy how delicious they are. The problem is that seedless grapes can't multiply. There's no seed. And so often we've had fruit, we've reached people, we've told them about the love of God, but because they haven't been discipled, because they haven't learned how to disciple others, that fruit doesn't last.

Can I tell you a story a friend of mine just recently told me? He was really involved in missions many years ago, and he still is. And he heard a story of some missionaries who reached an area of Indonesia that is so remote that the people in this island, in this area, it's called Irian Jaya. And the people there had believed they were the only people on earth. Where they were was surrounded by mountains that were so high you had to peak above where breathable air was. So, people did not traverse those mountains. Well, some missionaries were able to get into that area and find this tribe. They reached them. And there are cool stories about what happened. In

their oral tradition there was a story that people with skin the color of the clouds would come and bring truth to them. Well, they didn't even know there was such a thing as white people. And here these missionaries come. Not only that, but when they brought the words of truth because they were ready for them, this whole village, almost the entire village, was saved. They threw away their idols. They burned them. There's a story that they went up onto a mountaintop and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, literally repeating the Pentecost miracle that they saw tongues of fire on their heads. Guys, I'm not making this up. Incredible testimony! Well, this guy heard about it. He wanted to go and see this place. So, he went. He heard the stories, they're recounting to him what happened in their village. They are just on fire for Jesus, excited for what God has done--delivering them from the demonic oppression of their idolatry--and how they feel free and joyful and set free by their Creator God. Well, this friend of mine said, you know, I wanted to go back. I decided that, you know, some years later, I want to go back and see what's going on in that village. So, I intentionally made a trip. It was within about 7 to 10 years of that first trip, went back to this village, got up into this mountain. There's a whole story about even trying to get up into this area. He finds the guy who told him all the stories and he says, "Tell me what's happened since then." And the man looked dejected. He looked disappointed. And he said, "We didn't disciple our children. They've gone back to the old ways. In just seven, eight, nine years, this

man went from rejoicing over what God had done to deliver and set free their village to recognizing that what happened faded away because they didn't disciple others. They received the message for themselves but didn't multiply it. What a tragic story. But do you know it's repeated time and again in so many cultures?

I recently had the opportunity to visit a nation in West Africa where it's heavily influenced by Islam. And there had been more than 40 years of missionaries working in that area. Incredible work and diligence. I know good people with good hearts who gave up so much to try and break into this area that was so heavily oppressed, not receptive to Christianity. And the missions organization I was talking to, they said, you know, before we went into this area, we wanted to just see how many Christians are left. What is the result right now, so that as we go in, we can know what we're starting with. Do you know, in all of their research--now, there hadn't been an active missionary movement there for a little while--they were able to track down seven names. Three of them had moved out of the area completely. They couldn't track them down. They knew within the last few years they were still Christians, but they had moved. Three of them had moved to the United States. They were able to track those people down. One person remained. One person, who before this other missions agency, came in to do their work, that person actually married someone and moved out as well. After years of plowing and tilling and I'm sure prayer and giving of their lives,

missionaries worked in this area, and the result was that there was no influence left for the gospel. In that same area, they began a movement of planting people, reaching them for Jesus, going to the Word of God, teaching them how to see the Word for themselves with the express intention that they would disciple others, with the express intention that they would reach people who they knew and they would disciple them, not bring them to the missions agency, not bring them to a church, not take them somewhere else. But right here, right now, this person I know, my brother, my sister, my friend in the next village, I'm going to open up the Bible with you and we're going to just talk about the Word of God, and you know what has happened? Dozens of villages have opened up to the gospel, and it's thriving with no outside input. How? Because the gospel is the power of God to salvation.

Romans 1:16 tells us that it is the power, not it has the power. Not it accesses the power. It is. Jesus intended that we would multiply because He gave us the power to work with. This is not about putting pressure on ourselves, a burden, a yoke on our shoulders that we've got to do this thing. No, He's saying, would you just do it My way? Would you make disciples who make disciples who make disciples? You know, I visited this village where they brought out a group of seven men. One of them was a leader who had planted churches in different places, who had reached out and created discipleship groups in other villages. And he was sent there to see if maybe something could be started in this village.

Well, he had gone in, and he started something with a local person right in that village. We'll call the local guy Bob (can't give real names). We'll say that Richard found Bob in the village, and Bob was willing to receive and become a disciple. Well, guess what happened? That discipleship group turned into a house church. That house church grew. And as that house church grew, they began to pray. How can we access the other villages around us? They need Jesus too. They prayed and they prayed, and they prayed. And they eventually said, this other guy in our midst, we'll call him Tom. Tom, we're going to send you to the next village. Would you be willing to go? And he said, Yes, I'm willing to go. And he went out to that next village and began to build relationship with them. He began to talk to them about spiritual things, open up scripture with them. And eventually a discipleship group started, which eventually became a house church, which eventually began to pray and say, How can we reach the next village? You know what I saw? I saw seven people in a chain, seven people who one went found someone, began the gospel with them. That person grabbed ahold of it and started something there. And then those people said, no, but we've got to share this with others. Why? Because they didn't have a gospel of just salvation for me. They had a gospel of the kingdom of God that the King's dominion must expand. The King's reign is meant for everyone. And if I've received so great a salvation, how can I keep it to myself? It must go further.

You know, it reminds me of ancient stories--stories of knights who swear their fealty to their sovereign, stories of warriors who declare their willingness to do anything for their tribesmen, their chief, who say "It's all for you, everything that I have. I will not come back failing because I will see this through". Somehow as we've received the gospel, somehow many of us received a gospel that was about me and forgot that the precious gift that I received was never meant for just me. Jesus paid for all, and He's reminding us and stirring us up and saying, Will you lay it down? For others. My kingdom is not full. Do you remember the parable of the king who threw a wedding feast for his son? And he invited people, and they didn't show up. And so, he said, just go into the highways and the hedges, find anyone, compel them to come in. Why? He said, so that my house may be full. God isn't looking for a bunch of highly skilled seminary graduates who have all this experience, who have the title of pastor on their nametag. He is calling each and every one of us to make disciples. To multiply. To be the people who say, if I just could reach this one and spend time and invest. You know what happened. You've heard of compound interest before, you know, in junior high. They teach you about compound interest. They tell you if you right now put your money in a high-interest rate, something, something. I'm really good at math. You can't tell. You know, you put your money, you could have like \$1,000,000,000 by the time you're 60 years old. And of course, in junior high, you're like, I don't have \$100. And how do you open a bank account? Why? Because

they're saying you get interest on the interest you earn right off. You start with \$100, and you get \$5 in interest the next year. Now you get interest on the \$105, and you didn't add anything to it. It just keeps compounding the more you leave it in there. Do you know if you were to say, I'm going to reach two people per year, I'm just going to disciple two people; I'm going to take the time, I'm going to spend time with them and invest. We're going to go to the Word. I'm going to teach them how to receive from the Word. You what happened in ten years. If you reach two people a year will, you're like, "Well, that's 20 people, Tammy, I can do that math." Yes, you're right, it's 20 people. But if each of those people reached only two people each year and that continued, every person who was reached was disciplined, not just converted, and they were disciplined. So, they disciplined two other people. You know, in ten years, the ripple effect of that would be more than 4000 people. You would hands-on touch 20 of them. Because He's not trying to get us to reach 4000. But are there two? Are there a few around you? Starting with prayer, asking the Lord, sowing the seed in the Spirit, and asking God for the wisdom of how to have the conversation. How to begin the process. And then using Jesus' model to invest, using the resources that we've offered, Jesus' Disciple and those resources that will help you walk people into salvation. Going straight to the Word of God. What if, starting this year, you just reached a few more? Not just with a gospel of salvation for them, but a gospel of the kingdom that calls

them to fulfill their loyalty to the king in a way that brings others who bring others.

Can I pray for you and for me? Father, it is our desire that we would walk in the multiplicative approach that you have shown us through Scripture that we would not be satisfied with "us four and no more," that we would not be comfortable, Lord God, in just being saved and letting our friends and coworkers and family members miss out, not only on salvation, but miss out on the beautiful things in this life that you want to show us, give us, lead us and help us with Lord. I think right now of the parents around us, the parents of young children who need wisdom from God, but they don't have it because they don't know how to receive from God. Lord, I think of the businesspeople around us, the entrepreneurs who feel like they're taking big risks but don't have the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to guarantee them that they're walking in the right direction. Lord, there's so much that we miss out on when we're not walking with You. And I pray right now for every disciple listening to me right now. Oh, God, that we would have a heart of compassion, a heart that is open, that we would be the people who are willing, Lord, to not only be a disciple, a disciplined follower, a follower of obedience, but we would also disciple others who would disciple others. Thank you, Lord, for this help, Lord God. And right now, wherever you're at, would you just take a minute and ask the Lord, who can I begin to reach? Who are the lost I know? Who are the people, Lord, is there anybody that You would

put on my heart right now? Lord, I thank You that you give us clarity and direction, so that we might not see more people lost but instead more people received into Your beautiful kingdom. We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen.