

## “Disciple-Making, Win, Build, Equip, Multiply”

Matthew 28:16-20

September 17, 2017

I was recently given a book called *4 Chair Discipling*. It was written in 2014 by a guy named Dann Spader.<sup>1</sup> I recognized his name because I've heard it before. It made me think back to 1992 when I was in my early 20s beginning my first official role as a pastor. Early on, I heard about this guy named Dann Spader and a ministry approach called Sonlife. Back then I didn't know that Dann's ministry credentials were from Moody Bible Institute & Trinity Ev. Divinity School, which is part of the EFCA.

Dann had been a Youth Pastor from the Chicago area who learned that many of Jesus' disciples were young, probably in their 20s, some possibly even in their teens. So, he began a journey to study Jesus' life, the Son's life. He wanted to model his own youth group ministry after Jesus' ministry. He developed a curriculum called Sonlife.<sup>2</sup> This began a Disciple-Making movement that swept our nation. Youth Pastors all over the place were getting trained in it. Even though many of us had studied theology and Bible Study methods in college and seminary, this stuff was so on mission and filled with practical “how to” information. It left a permanent impact on how I personally think about Jesus' Great Commission mandate and how we can succeed in it as Christ-followers.

Every Christ-follower should have a laser-like focus on our Great Commission of making disciples.<sup>3</sup> It's so easy to get distracted in this life by lesser things. So, as we begin this message, I'll ask you the question, “are YOU a Disciple-Maker?” We are going to spend the next few Sundays focusing on how to be a Disciple-Maker. Could there be anything more important than this?

In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus gives His followers a clear sense of their mission on this earth: “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.” Let's define some terms. A disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. This is someone who has come to believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; that He is the only way to a right relationship with our Heavenly Father. Baptizing has to do with a disciple's public declaration of living a New Life in Christ. As we are plunged beneath the water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Teaching has to do with a disciple's life-long commitment of learning to live out the teachings of Jesus. Disciples live Bible-centered lives.

Once we have become a disciple, it's vital that we recognize our mandate to live out our lives as Disciple-Makers. That's why we're here. As we consider how to accomplish this Great Commission ministry, it's helpful for us to consider some key distinctives in how Jesus lived out His Disciple-Making ministry. What were some key distinctives of Jesus' disciple-making ministry? Jesus had a...  
**1) Deep commitment to relational ministry.** As we read through the 4 Gospels and consider how Jesus spent His time and where He kept His focus, it's not hard to see that He put people first. For example, John 3:22 tells us, “After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized.” Later on, in John 15:15, we see how Jesus' relationship with His disciples has been deepening over time, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

Jesus spent time with people. He spent time with his disciples but He also spent time with large crowds. He spent time with sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors. He spent time with the Pharisees and with the sick and with all kinds of people. His disciple-making ministry occurred throughout His daily life, not just at the synagogue on Saturdays. He didn't lock Himself up in a lofty tower or let Himself get too busy with His carpentry shop or his hobbies. As we pursue our mission to make

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<sup>1</sup> Dann Spader, *4 Chair Discipling*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, 2014. Visit [www.4chairdiscipling.com](http://www.4chairdiscipling.com)

<sup>2</sup> *4 Chair Discipling*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> We do this with a Great Commandment burden of loving God and loving people.

disciples, we also need to make time for people. We need a deep commitment to relational ministry; with fellow believers but also with not-yet believers.

Another key distinctive of Jesus' disciple-making ministry is that He had a... **2) Life of prayerful dependence.** Luke 5:15-16<sup>4</sup> tells us, "Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." It's easy to think that ministry was easy for Him. After all, He was fully God. We need to keep in mind that Jesus was also fully human. Philippians 2:6-7 reminds us that when Jesus came in the flesh, "[Jesus], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."

Thus, Jesus modeled dependence on the Heavenly Father. Jesus' earthly ministry was a model for us, of prayerful dependence. Being fully human, Jesus demonstrated for us how to live a godly life and how to minister to the hurting world around us. Professor Bruce Ware says it this way: "So many people minimize or demean the obedience of Christ by saying, 'Of course He obeyed. He was God and had God's nature in Him. He had no choice.' Scripture does not let us draw this conclusion. It presents Christ as a man who faced every temptation and succeeded not because He relied on His divine nature, but because He relied upon the Word, prayer and the Spirit."<sup>5</sup>

Jesus lived a life of prayerful dependence, and so should we. In John 15:5, Jesus reminds us, "'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'" As we pursue our mission to make disciples, we also need to practice a life of prayerful dependence.

Another key distinctive of Jesus' disciple-making ministry is that He had a... **3) Profound love for sinners.** Jesus was ridiculed for this. He was ostracized and persecuted for His strange behavior. For someone who claimed to be so holy, He sure spent a lot of time around dirty old sinners. In Matthew 11:19 Jesus says this about these allegations, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds." Jesus didn't seem to mind too much that a few people were saying these things about Him. He knew His focus was in the right place, on helping sinners to become disciples.

Jesus rep for hanging out with sinners only increased when He chose to disciple a man named Levi.<sup>6</sup> (aka Matthew). Luke 5:27-32 recounts for us, "After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. 'Follow me,' Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. 29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' 31 Jesus answered them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

The Great Commandment calls us to love God and love people. Jesus love for people is what fueled His passion to make sinners into disciples. Jesus wasn't passionate about building a mega-church or making a bunch of money or anything else. He was passionate about discipleship. As we pursue our mission to make disciples, we also need a profound love for sinners. I have to ask myself sometimes, when is that last time that I've wept for the lost?<sup>7</sup> We need a profound love for sinners.

Another key distinctive of Jesus' disciple-making ministry is that He had a... **4) Comprehensive discipleship approach.** One way it could be summarized is win/build/equip/multiply. Jesus didn't spend all his time on evangelistic crusades. He also spent time feeding the hungry and helping the hurting. He took time to go the synagogue on Saturdays and to teach the Bible. He invested time

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<sup>4</sup> See also Mark 1:35-37 and many other examples throughout the Gospels.

<sup>5</sup> From his sermon preached 11/12/96 at Christ Community Church in St. Charles, IL. Quoted in *4 Chair Discipling*, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> He is better known by his name, Matthew, which is the Gospel he wrote.

<sup>7</sup> The Christian band, Leeland, wrote a song called "Tears of the Saints!" Here are some of their lyrics: There are many prodigal sons on our city streets they run searching for shelter. There are homes broken down; people's hopes have fallen to the ground from failures. This is an emergency! There are tears from the saints for the lost and unsaved. We're crying for them come back home... There are schools full of hatred; even churches have forsaken love and mercy. May we see this generation, in its state of desperation, For Your glory. This is an emergency! There are tears from the saints for the lost and unsaved...Sinner, reach out your hands! Children, in Christ you stand!

sitting with a smaller group of 12 men and doing deeper leadership training. He did all of these! As we pursue our mission to make disciples, we need a comprehensive approach.

This leads us into a discussion of the 4 chairs. What are the 4 Discipling Chairs?

**Chair #1) Win the lost.** The first step in making disciples is telling people the Good News about Jesus. This is where the journey of discipleship begins.

**Chair #2) Build the believers.** The second step in discipleship is being built up as a believer. Day by day we are built up in our faith as we worship God, receive instruction from His word, and enjoy fellowship with other believers.

**Chair #3) Equip the workers.** As we grow in our Christian maturity, we become equipped for Christian work. This is not just referring to pastors and missionaries. This refers to EVERY Christ-follower finding his/her role in serving Jesus, as equally important parts of the body of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

**Chair #4) Multiply Disciple-Makers.** As we joyfully embrace our role in the body of Christ, we become part of a beautiful tapestry, a synergistic ministry of Disciple-Making. More and more we get to see a powerfully increasing wave of discipleship impact on our world: on individuals, families, workplaces, schools, and communities.

We see these four chairs illustrated as Jesus disciplined Matthew. This lost sinner is **won** to Christ. Luke 5:27-28 tells us, "After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him." Matthew is then **built** up as a believer as he travels with Jesus and studies under Him. In fact, Matthew learned so much from Jesus that he eventually becomes one of Jesus' 12 core followers. Matthew is then **equipped** to become a worker. In Matthew 10, we find Matthew's name listed as one of Jesus' 12 apostles. And as 1 of the 12 he is sent out to proclaim the message about Christ. Finally, we learn that Matthew began to **multiply** Disciple-Makers. Matthew is the Apostle who wrote the Gospel of Matthew and his book comes to its crescendo as he records Jesus' words: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations!"

This is what Matthew was called to but what is Jesus calling us to? Does this Great Commission extend to Christ-followers today? Or, was this just for the early church? Just for the 12 apostles? Well, even a quick glance at the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament make it clear that, until Jesus' returns for us, our ongoing mission is to make disciples.

If you'll give me a little liberty here, this is our Big Mac, it's our Whopper, it's our iPhone 8.

**Disciple-Making is our core focus!** This is how we measure our success in this life: by how well we are stewarding our opportunities to make disciples.

Write down these 4 chairs or 4 stages of discipleship: Win the lost, Build the believers, Equip the workers, and Multiply Disciple-Makers. Keep them in your pocket or purse or wallet. Or, post it on your mirror or in your car. I'm asking you to consider taking it out each day this week and asking yourself this question: "What could I be doing today to make disciples? Today, how can I win the lost, build the believers, equip the workers, or multiply Disciple-Makers?"

In Matthew 28, Jesus passed the baton to His 12 apostles and a group of early disciples. Those women and men are now with the Lord. Now, it's our turn. It's our opportunity and responsibility in this generation to make a gospel impact by being the Disciple-Makers that Christ calls us to be. So, let's run our part of the race hard! Let's go for the "well done." In Matthew 25:21 it says, "'His master replied, **'Well done, good and faithful servant!** You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" This is what brings God joy and pleasure; when He sees His children making disciples; obeying the Great Commission mandate.

I must warn you. Disciple-Making can be inconvenient. It can be a bit of a hassle to put this first and foremost in our lives. There is so much else that we need to get done. Disciple-Making is expensive. It will cost you time/talent/\$. There are other things you could be spending your time/\$ on. You will have to sacrifice and surrender your own agenda and priorities. Did I mention that Disciple-Making is expensive? It actually costs even more than your time/\$. It will cost you your heart. It takes a lot to be in relationship with people; it takes blood/sweat/tears to be a true, sold-out Disciple-Maker.

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<sup>8</sup> See 1 Corinthians 12-14.

It's not for wimps. Disciple-Making will cost you everything. Consider the Pearl of great value in Matthew 13:45-46, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and **sold everything he had and bought it.**"

**What do we value most? God values people more than anything. So should we.**

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji  
on September 17, 2017 by Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson