

Multiply Disciple-Makers

2 Timothy 1:1-14 & 2:1-2

October 15, 2017

This is our final sermon in our 5-part Disciple-Making series. We've been talking about the 4 Chairs of Discipleship and how each one represents a different phase.¹ Chair #1 focuses on "Win the Lost." Chair #2 is "Build the Believers." Last week we focused on Chair #3 "Equip the Workers." Today, we finish with "Multiply Disciple-Makers." But what does that mean, Multiply Disciple-Makers? Matthew 28:19 says, "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." But, it doesn't say "go and make Disciple-MAKERS;" it says go and make DISCIPLES. Is multiplying Disciple-MAKERS really what we are called to do? In short, yes! You see, the calling for every disciple of Christ is to make disciples. We just read that in Matthew 28:19. Therefore, we'll know we've succeeded in making a genuine disciple, when they themselves become a Disciple-Maker.

Getting to Chair #4 does not mean that we can now sit back and put our feet up. Rather than thinking we've arrived at the end, Chair #4 means we can now fully visualize the repeating process that we're involved in. Another way to think about this is to arrange these chairs in a circle, rather than in a line. Once we ourselves are won to Christ, built up in our faith, and equipped as a worker, then we multiply Disciple-Makers: by continuing to win/build/equip others who can then win/build/equip even still others and so on.... I'd like to impress this on your memory a bit with a silly video. Check out this You Tube link called the "4 Chair Trick."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQJtV_YLuNE Find 3 friends and give it a try. 😊



As fully devoted followers of Jesus, we are on mission with the Great Commission to make disciples. We are here to make disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples. It's meant to be a never-ending circle until the Lord returns. In order to Multiply Disciple-Makers, we need to:

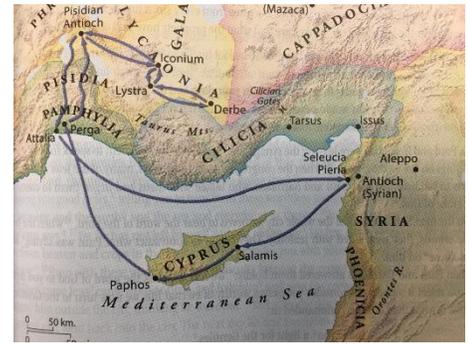
1. Value mentoring other people. Multiplying Disciple-Makers is about supporting and empowering other believers who are younger in their faith and mentoring them to become Disciple-Makers along with us. In this way, we can help other Christians reach their full spiritual potential.² This is what Barnabas did for Paul. Barnabas discipled Paul when he was young in his faith; he came alongside him as a spiritual mentor. There's a long story that could be told here but it would require us to read a large portion of text from the NT book of Acts. Let's look at just a few highlights in their relationship.

Soon after Saul was won to Christ, Acts 9:26-27 tells us that: "When [Saul] came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus." Saul had been persecuting Christians and throwing them in jail up until his conversion. So, the believers were afraid of him, fearing that this was just a trick to get close to them. Barnabas came alongside Saul (aka Paul) and coached him toward his full potential. He stuck his neck out a little bit and through a ministry of encouragement, Barnabas takes on a discipleship role in Saul's life.

¹ This Sermon series consults closely with the Sonlife ministry model and Dann Spader's book, *4 Chair Discipling*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, 2014. Visit www.4chairdiscipling.com

² Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 8th ed., 2012, NCD Media, Emmelsbull, Germany, p. 24.

And this began an amazing ministry partnership. The Holy Spirit commissions the two of them on Paul's 1st missionary journey. They end up traveling from Antioch to the island of Cyprus, and up as far as Lystra and Derbe. Acts 11:26 says that Barnabas, "...brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people...." Later on, Acts 14:23 reveals that "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust." So, all throughout their ministry together, Paul and Barnabas are raising up and mentoring new Christian leaders who could then multiply other Disciple-Makers.



As some of you probably know, eventually Paul and Barnabas parted company over a disagreement regarding John Mark. But this is where a young man named Timothy comes into the Disciple-Making picture. After being discipled by Barnabas, Paul now disciples Timothy.

Let's take a brief bunny trail here. Paul probably did not win Timothy to faith in Christ. Scripture seems to indicate that Timothy was already in Chair #2 by the time they met. And this just illustrates that God works in different ways through various people throughout the discipleship process. Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:5, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." Praise God for godly women; for godly moms and grandmas, for godly aunts and cousins and neighbors.³ Paul doesn't say it exactly, but it seems likely that Timothy's biological mother and grandmother are the ones who won him to faith in Christ. Acts 16:1 tells us, "Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek." Now, certainly Greek's can also be believers in Christ, but apparently Timothy's dad had not been won to Christ. So now, Paul comes along as a spiritual mentor and builds Timothy up as a believer, equipping him for ministry, and eventually launches him as a Disciple-Maker.

So Barnabas discipled Paul. Then Paul discipled Timothy. Then Timothy discipled still others. In fact, notice how Paul commissions Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others." By the time Paul writes the book of 2 Timothy, he seems to know that he is reaching the end of his life. He compels Timothy to boldly press on in his own faith BUT ALSO to make sure that he entrusts the ongoing discipleship mission to reliable people. Put another way, "Timothy, make sure that you continue to multiply Disciple-Makers!" Disciple-Making is about mentoring other people, including those in the next generation.

In order to Multiply Disciple-Makers, we need to:

2. Reach the next generation of Disciple-Makers. Near the end of His own earthly ministry, Jesus called His disciples to go and make more disciples. Then, that group of new disciples went out and made more disciples. That process was repeated for some 2,000 years. And that's why you and I are here this morning as followers of Christ, because another disciple invited us to become a disciple. This process needs to keep repeating if we intend to fulfill our Great Commission mandate and to bless the upcoming generations. Psalm 78:4 declares, "We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done." When we read about discipleship in the New Testament, we read a very intergenerational account. Women and men from all the different age groups are valued. From Jesus inviting the little children to come unto Him, to the concern for widows who were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food, we see that every generation matters.

That being said, if we stop making disciples in even one generation, we risk having the Great Commission come to a grinding halt. I don't mean to be alarmist but that's just how easily the gospel could be hindered: failure to tell this next generation. This is why we need to pray fervently for Pastor Albin and our Youth and Young Adult Ministries. It's why we need concerted prayer for the right

³ My own personal faith story demonstrates how I was greatly impacted by the discipleship of a woman named Bev during my high school years.

person to fill our Children's Ministries Director position. It's why we need to fix the problem we currently have with a shortage of volunteers in our children's ministries. We need to make sure that we don't mess up the baton pass to our youngest Disciple-Makers.

I was recently at a pastors meeting with Jarrod Norvold, Jarrod grew up in our youth ministry here in Bemidji. He is now the Youth & Worship Pastor at the Efree church in Walker. I overheard him make a comment that America's current generation of young people are the first "Unchurched Generation." Almost like an unreached people group. The majority of them have basically no Bible knowledge and no church background. This has radically changed the way Jarrod is teaching new students about Christ.

He has to start with the very basics of the faith. What is a Bible? What is a church?

We need to instill a Disciple-Making identity in our youngest Christians so that the Christian faith can flourish even more in the generations that will follow them. I am happy to report that, here at our church, there are good signs that we are telling the next generation about Jesus. Here's a recent example. Two weeks ago, I met at Burger King with a young man from our church, named Ben Fultz. He was telling me about some exciting things that God is doing in his life right now through Eagle Lake Camp. Ben is one of the people we are supporting through our new Barnabas Teams. His sign-up sheet is out there next to many others in the Fellowship Hall. Ben shared a story with me about this guy named Jack. Actually, 2 guys named Jack, Big Jack and Little Jack. Big Jack is a young man that Ben had a chance to disciple. It took a lot of time and relationship development, but eventually Big Jack's faith was built up enough so that he became equipped to disciple others. This is where little Jack comes in. Little Jack really seemed to click with Big Jack. And, before he knew it, Big Jack was discipling Little Jack. So, spiritually speaking, you might say that Big Jack is Little Jack's spiritual dad.

In 1 Timothy 1:2 the Apostle Paul writes, "To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." Therefore, one could reason that if Little Jack was Big Jack's "son in the faith" then that would make him Ben's "grandson in the faith." Let's back up a little. I was given permission to show you this picture. Do you recognize this little guy? Yeah, that's Ben back when he was about 7-8 years old. Back when Ben was in 2nd grade, he attended the Awana T&T group at our church. Does anyone know who Ben's Awana leader was? This would be one of the people who disciplined Ben when he was younger. So, one could say that Little Jack would be this person's "great grandson in the faith." Does anyone know who Little Jack's spiritual Great Grandparent is? Daniel Carpenter who serves on our Global Connections Team.



At the risk of being a little silly, I trust I've made my point. We need to Multiply Disciple-Makers. Today, we can celebrate our spiritual heritage in terms of our spiritual family tree. Multiplying Disciple-Makers is about supporting and empowering other believers who are younger in their faith and mentoring them to become Disciple-Makers along with us. We should help other Christians reach their full spiritual potential.⁴

In order to Multiply Disciple-Makers, we need to:

3. Embrace Jesus' vision for our spiritual potential. Shortly after Jesus declares in John 14:6 that He is the way/truth/life, He shares His vision for the ministry future of His disciples. In John 14:12 Jesus says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." Here Jesus gives a solemn affirmation of His vision for our spiritual potential as His followers.⁵ We fail at a key point in our own Christian maturity when we underchallenge ourselves as disciples. Some of you may be thinking what I was thinking: But, Jesus was God. I'm not God, how could I do greater things than God? Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the Spirit of God lives in us!

Now, I suppose Jesus could have stayed on planet earth a lot longer. Instead of 3-4 years of public ministry, perhaps he could have done 30-40 years. But, apparently that was not the Heavenly

⁴ Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 8th ed., 2012, NCD Media, Emmelsbull, Germany, p. 24.

⁵ See text note on Mark 3:28 in *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011p. 1658.

Father's plan. It's interesting to consider that, during Jesus' earthly ministry, He never traveled more than ~100 miles from home. But as we read through the New Testament, we see that Jesus took a pretty motley group, of mostly ordinary people, and equipped them to turn the world upside down.⁶

When I do leadership retreats, one of the things I often talked about with my leaders is that none of us can hope to reach all 7.5 BILLION people currently on our planet. Even though Jesus ministered to large crowds, He had a tighter focus on his inner 12 and in that 12 there were about 3 that got even more of his attention. And, it was Peter in particular that Jesus was pouring into and preparing to lead His church at its start-up.

Here's the point: "Jesus's mission was not to reach the (entire) world (by Himself) but (rather) to make disciples who were capable of reaching the world (together)."⁷ That's why our church is still on this corner of Bemidji. That's why we haven't been taken to heaven yet. Disciple-Making is our purpose for being on this planet; it's an Every Day Commission for every believer.

So, as we consider how to multiply Disciple-Makers, let me ask you a question: Who are the "Barnabas" and "Timothy" in your life? **Do you have a Barnabas in your life?** If not, get one. Find a spiritual mentor. Once you find them, keep learning from them, keep growing as a disciple so that you become an effective Disciple-Maker. Let them encourage you in your faith. Show up for your 1 to 1s, or your Bible study or small group and let it mature you in your faith.

Do you have a Timothy in your life? If not, find one. There's likely already someone around you who is open to being mentored by you. Could you offer them some of your time and wisdom this week? Perhaps, for some of us, it is time to mentor our replacement; to pass along the torch of all that God has taught us before we go to heaven? How can you encourage and equip another person to become an even stronger Disciple-Maker? Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "It is the righteous man who lives for the next generation."⁸ This is true of a righteous man OR a righteous woman. As brothers/sisters in Christ, let's commit ourselves to our role as spiritual parents and grandparents! Let's multiply Disciple-Makers.

1 Corinthians 15:58 reminds us, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Amen

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
on October 15, 2017 by Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

⁶ See p. 19 of *4 Chair Discipling*, Acts 4:13, and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.

⁷ Spader, p. 50. (brackets mine)

⁸ As quoted by Dennis Rainey in the "Stepping Up" video series, Disc 3, "Having a Vision for Your World" by Family Life, 2012.