

This past Spring, women on the campus of Harvard University were protesting. A protest on a college campus is hardly anything new, but the reason that these women were protesting is very interesting. In May, Harvard effectively banned all male only clubs by punishing anyone who would join them. One such club has been around for over 200 years. All male clubs have been dropping out of favor for the last few decades. You would have thought that the women on campus would have cheered this decision as they usually have hatred for male only clubs except the ban affected them as well. It turns out that Harvard decided that fairness would dictate that the university also ban all female only clubs, which applies to its six female-only clubs and four sororities.¹ So 200 women turned out to protest losing their right to gender exclusive clubs.

I'm no fan of politically correct bastions like Harvard but in this case I have to at least agree with their consistency. It would absolutely not be fair to have punished the male only clubs and not have it also apply to the female clubs. These Harvard women truly do not understand the concept of fairness.

But fairness is the standard by which people want to judge Christianity. And what is the fairness standard by which it judges? The standard is that all religions are equal. You can't say that one religion is better than another because that is intolerant, bigoted and unfair. If a person's eternal destiny was not hanging in the balance than it would not be such a big deal. If I don't like your sport's team, we can joke about it. If you are a Viking's fan I can poke fun at our differences but if you are Jewish, I can't say anything about your religious beliefs. But the stakes are high—either eternity in hell or eternity in heaven. There is nothing more important than this. Which is why we must follow the Good Shepherd's teaching and not be afraid of being called names.

4. The Exclusivity of the Shepherd.

Among other things, we are reminded in John 10 that the Good Shepherd is exclusive. It's been three weeks since we were in this passage so let's read it again.

1 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." 6 This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

7 So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

19 There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. 20 Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?" 21 Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

There is more than one expression of the exclusivity of Jesus but probably the most clear verse is verse nine. *I am the door; If anyone enters by me, he will be saved all who came before me are thieves and robbers.* There is one way into the sheepfold and it's through the door. If you enter through this door, you will be saved. And the clear implication is that if you do not enter through the door you will not be saved. This is what I mean by exclusivity. Jesus did not say that there are many doors and many paths. Jesus did not hint at the idea of some sort of hidden back door and exemption clause that would allow you to get in another way or possibly even not worry about getting in at all. IF you go through the door you are saved if you do not, you are condemned.

This is equivalent to the well-known John 14:6. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one come sot the Father except through me." Peter made a similar bold proclamation before the High Priest and Sanhedrin. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." I cannot imagine Peter's boldness in the face of such religious power and potential persecution. In Acts 4 Peter was only threatened. In Acts 5 Peter was arrested and beaten. In chapter twelve, Peter was arrested and awaiting

execution until the angel of the Lord rescued him from certain death. And of course tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down about the time the apostle Paul was beheaded.

Peter was crucified and Paul was beheaded because of the exclusivity of the Shepherd. These men suffered and died because Jesus and Jesus alone is the door. There is no other way into the sheepfold. There is no other way to the Father. “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Why is this point about the exclusivity of the shepherd so important to us? Because Christianity and your faith stands or falls on this one point. If there are many ways to the Father, then to say otherwise is the height of arrogance and intolerance. How can I force, shame and frighten someone to believe in Christ alone for salvation if it doesn't really matter? That would make me a very horrible person. However, if Jesus is the door—the only door—then we not only can declare that he is the door, we must declare that he is the door. If belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father and into the eternal sheepfold, then telling others about this truth is the logical choice and the loving choice.

So what does that have to do with us? Does it mean that we must go to the middle of Africa and proclaim the truth that Jesus is the door? Maybe, but let me offer a few applications.

First, if you have not yet placed your faith in Christ, you must turn from your sin and do that today. I really appreciated hearing Sylvan's testimony when he got baptized last Sunday. Even at his age he had already been considering surrendering his life to Christ but he knowingly put off that decision. He thought that he could always wait. There's always tomorrow—that sort of mentality. But then the urgency of his eternal destiny got a hold of him and he decided not to wait any longer.

The second application is that Jesus' words helps us have greater confidence in the message. Let's face it—the gospel is not an easy message to share. To tell a person that they are eternally lost unless they completely deny themselves and surrender to Jesus is offensive. Once you understand it, there is no greater news. But for most unbelievers and those resistant to the message, we often become the bearers of really bad and offensive news. It's bit like the men who carried news to Job. Can you imagine being those guys? The first man had to tell Job that robbers stole his 500 donkeys. The next man had to break the news to Job that Fire from heaven consumed all 7000 of his sheep. The third guy had the burden of telling Job that a different set of robbers made off with his 3000 camels. And finally, after all of this accumulation of tragedy, the last guy had to tell Job that all 10 of his children were killed in a freak windstorm. That was difficult news to share.

But if you think about it, the bad news that we have to tell others is actually worse than what these men had to share. As bad as it was for Job, his losses were material losses and loss of loved ones. Horrible and dreadful, yes, but they were temporal losses. The bad news that we have to tell people is that unless they repent and trust Christ, they will spend an eternity separated from Christ. Now what comes next is really good news. That's the part I like to share but the bad news must come first. In fact, if you do not fully grasp the bad news first, the good news won't seem so good at all.

So how do Jesus' words give us confidence in the message? It's just another reminder of the truthfulness and integrity of the gospel message. It's like what Pastor Lee shared last Sunday. We are always looking for shortcuts in life. If there was any way we could take a shortcut around the bad news of the gospel, we would be inclined to do it. If sharing the bad news really is worse than breaking bad news to Job, then of course we would like to take a shortcut. But we can't. Jesus and the rest of Scripture teach the same message over and over again. Jesus is THE door. There is no other way into the sheepfold. There are no shortcuts to the gospel message. Those believers and churches who do take shortcuts, if you look at them 10-30 years down the road, they will have begun an irreversible decline toward full-blown liberalism.

The third application then is this—what do we do with this message? I haven't done much to encourage you to get out there and share it, have I? "Oh sure, go right ahead. You'll be fine. Just go out there and tell people this offensive message. It'll be fun!"

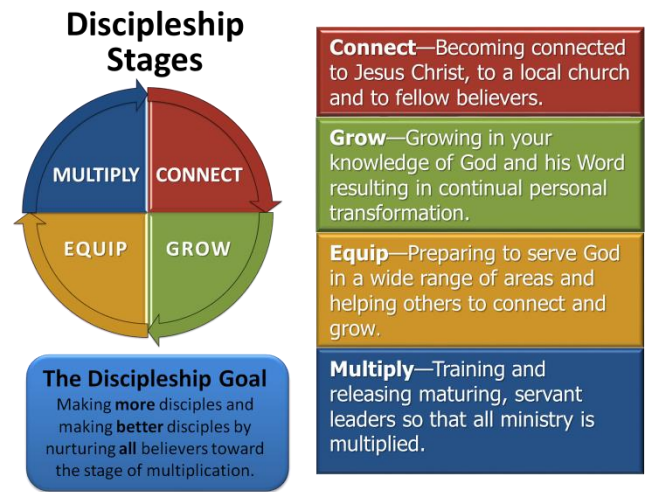
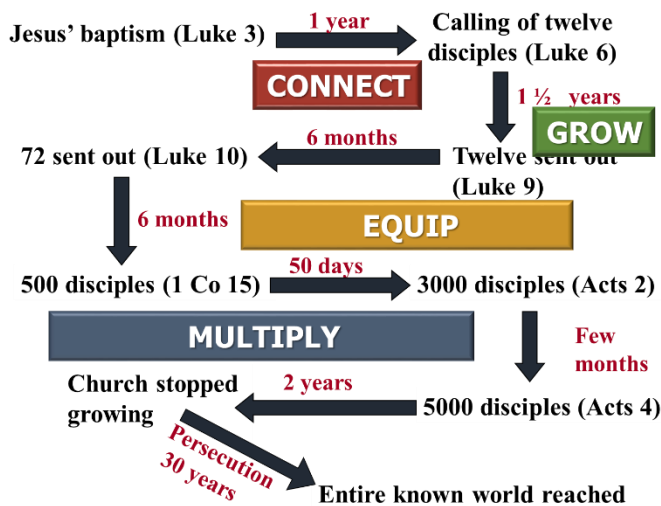
It's not easy. As the saying goes, "If it were that easy, everyone would be doing it." It's not easy but it's the most important work that can ever be done. And I don't just mean sharing the gospel with unbelievers. That's difficult enough all by itself. I mean the whole Christian life. Your personal spiritual growth and your personal ministry service.

I want to go back to something Lee Heyward said last week. If you were in the first service, you did not hear him articulate this in the same way. But toward the end of the message, he raised his hand and said, "Are you willing to raise your hand and say 'I am all in?'" At the end of an excellent message, this really resonated with many of you. I talked to several people who really appreciated the message and that challenge in particular. They want to be all in. It was a great message and a timely challenge but what exactly does it mean "to be all in?" If that resonated with you but you are not able to both define and pursue what that means, then Lee's challenge would have meant nothing.

So if I may, please allow me to further define what I think it means "to be all in" and how and why you should begin to pursue this. And I want to do this by staying largely within John 10, because I believe all of the elements of what we need are found here.

Let me start with a simple phrase. What you and I are after are the character and priorities of Christ. We must come to know, love and imitate the character and priorities of Jesus. The first part is simple enough—the character of Christ. If I were to ask you what it means to be like Jesus, I guarantee you the vast majority of the answers would be related to Jesus' character. You would mention that we need to be humble like Jesus, and love like Jesus; to turn the other cheek like Jesus did. Too often we boil down the Christian life to essentially being nice. Jesus was nice. Be nice like Jesus.

These are related to his character and to our character and they are vitally important. But there's much more to following Christ than merely imitating his character. We must also learn to love and imitate Jesus' priorities. The best way I have found to summarize Jesus' priorities is the strategy I showed you a few weeks back.



You can easily trace Jesus steps from when he first began his ministry to when he ascended to heaven. There are different names you can apply to these steps but in the end they are all the same. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost but he did so by pouring his entire life into twelve men. This is what we call discipleship.

This is how we developed our “Discipleship Circle” which is just a way to quickly show Jesus’ strategy. But unless you see that it actually comes from Jesus’ whole life, you might just think this discipleship circle is just something we made up or found on the internet somewhere. Jesus’ priority was making disciples who would in turn make more disciples.

As you can see in the bulletin insert, we are starting an inductive study through the book of Luke, just like we did last year with Philipians. Since we can’t possibly get through the entire book of Luke so we have decided to study the passage that directly relate to Jesus’ disciple making strategy.

Let me give you two more points in the outline and tell you how you can be all in.

5. The Authority of the Shepherd.

Lest there be any doubt that Jesus was crucified against his will, he made it perfectly clear in verse 18. *No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*

Did you know that Jesus’ authority relates directly to us as well? Most of us know the famous Great Commission passage in Matthew 28 but we forget that it begins with the topic of authority.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The shepherd has ultimate authority but he shares his authority with us. He gives us his authority to do what? To make disciples.

6. The Intimacy of the Shepherd.

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

No one cares for the sheep like the Good Shepherd. This has to be one of the reasons why King David was “a man after God’s own heart.” David made some enormous mistakes which had horrible consequences to himself, his family and the nation of Israel. But he also understood caring for the flock—a literal flock of sheep. David routinely laid down his life for his father’s sheep. They weren’t even his sheep. Before his battle with Goliath, David told King Saul that he had killed lions and bears in the protection and care of his flock. David knew what it was to lay down his life for his flock and when he became king, he did the same for his people.

Once again we are to imitate the character and priorities of Christ. Caring for the flock is foundational to making disciples. In fact, you could say that unless a church is making disciples, you are not really caring for the flock. If we have a church filled with Christians who mostly show up on Sunday morning, then we are not caring for you because we are not making disciples. Caring for the flock is inseparable from making disciples.

Alright, so how can you “be all in”? If that resonated with you last Sunday, if it tugged at you even a little, how do you put it into action? One good option would be to join us for our LEAD group this year. This will be the fifth year of LEAD and we are making some significant changes. It started as training for current elders or prospective elders but now we are opening it to men and women who are in any kind of leadership role at Grace.

This past week Ryan and I met with two foundation camp grads to talk about how to integrate their leadership roles into church life. Part of why foundation camp is so successful is because the teens are pushed really hard. It’s challenging and in general, they love the challenge. So I told these teens that I planned to push them pretty hard, which in the context of FC, they knew what I meant. But one of the guys said, “Well how far can you push us?” Now he may have meant that to mean that he didn’t want to be pushed too far, so he was wondering about how hard I would push them. But I took it to mean that he wanted to be pushed as far as possible, which is awesome. He saw the vision of what could be and he wanted to go far.

Now I would never tell you all that I want to push you hard because that doesn’t sound very appealing, and it’s really not what I mean. But I will ask you this? How far do you want to go in your spiritual life? Are you content to stay where you are at? Or would you like to, in a healthy environment, be trained and supported to go much further?

Rich Maurer
August 14, 2016

¹ <http://qz.com/681594/harvards-crackdown-on-male-only-clubs-has-an-unfortunate-side-effect/>