



John 1:35-51

I not only bring your greetings from Tim and Mindy Seeley but also from Dave and sandy Hart. We had dinner with them on Monday night. Dave told us about a marriage conference they had been to the past weekend. Of course, Dave and Sandy already love one another to the moon and back but Dave was telling us how he was inspired from the conference. He tried to go the extra mile by sending Sandy a nice little text: I love you (kissy face emoji). I am so blessed to have



Well Jeff, you caught me! I hope you will not be upset to learn that I don't feel that way about you!

I'm glad. Your wife is blessed.

Actually I'm the one who is blessed. My wife married an idiot 😊

you as my wife. Not bad, eh? Like a lot of guys, Dave may not be the most romantic guy around but ladies, you'd have to admit that this is better than a typical text from your husband, right? The only problem is that Dave sent it to a guy named Jeff who immediately texted back that he missed his intended target. It went back and from from there where Dave finally calls himself

an idiot.

Good stuff, right? I mean you just can't make up this stuff. Just so you know, Dave gave me permission to share this with you but told me that now I owe him a killer illustration. I do enough

dumb things that won't be any problem whatsoever. The moral of the story I would like to draw out is that good intentions will only carry you so far.

This is also true when it comes to our search to fill the pastor of Discipleship and Worship. We had really good intentions, but it did not turn out the way we wanted. The gist of what happened is that we made a mistake and we learned some new information about them while they were here. We'll explain it the best we can at the congregational meeting later. I want to share a question that was asked by one of the applicants. He asked, "What is the biggest issue facing Grace Church?" How would you answer that question? Reflect for a few seconds and bring something to mind. Maybe write it in your sermon notes. What is the biggest issue facing our church?

I'll tell you how I answered it. Without missing a beat, I said, "Our church is too big." Did any of you have that as your answer? You probably didn't see that coming. Most churches would like to have this as their problem. Most churches in the U.S. are plateaued or declining. All of those churches would like to be growing. Last Sunday we had a record attendance. Our average weekly attendance in both services is 210 but last week it was 253. I assume the bump in attendance was driven by an interest in Jared and that process. And that's great. But I'm telling you, that's too many people. For some reason, God has brought people into our body. He has allowed us to have a certain level of health within the body which has helped people find and settle into our church. But it's too many people. Now please, don't leave. We love that you are here. Don't be offended Let me explain.

Our number one priority needs to be to grow deeper and not wider. If God chooses to allow us to add more people, that's wonderful. We will gladly walk in His plan for us. And I'm not saying we are a church filled with shallow, immature believers. But we all need to go deeper. Right now there are too many people for one pastor and four elders to care for and to disciple. If we cannot connect the people that we do have and help them to lean deeper into Jesus, we will eventually join the other churches who are plateauing or in decline. It will happen.

But isn't that why we are hiring a Pastor of Discipleship, so he can do more discipleship, so the load of church ministry can be shared by another full-time professional pastor? Isn't that what the candidating weekend was about?

Absolutely not. If that is what you think, then we have failed to communicate the larger vision. Unfortunately, we are not voting on any candidate this afternoon, but even if we were, we would actually be voting on three different yet unified topics. First, we are voting on calling a pastor to serve alongside of us. Had there been an affirmative vote, we would have been saying that he is the guy that the Lord seems to have chosen to work with us. Second, you would be voting on the finances to this pastor. If we can't afford him, we can't hire him. Thankfully, even though our giving has taken a dip of late, you have all been donating to the New Staff fund for over six years and only nine months of that time did we actually have a second staff person. You have been very generous but your giving in this area has mostly been without result. It is difficult to keep giving under these circumstances. But once we add a well-qualified second staff, it may begin to feel like your giving in this area will have more of a purpose.

So we would be voting on the person and the finances to pay this person but more important than the other two—we would be voting to approve our disciple making vision. Our disciple making vision is not to hire a Pastor of Discipleship. That would be too small of a vision and it would not be a Biblical vision. As we continue to hone in on what may be one of the most important decisions our church has ever made, let me remind you of the vision of making disciples. It is about one man, and his name is not Rich or Jared. His name is Jesus.

35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

In this brief passage we see Jesus' master plan of discipleship.

Making Disciples is Relational

Making disciples is about relationships. Andrew immediately went and found his brother Peter. As soon as Philip could, he went and found his friend Nathanael. Neither Andrew nor Peter went to the synagogue to tell everyone that they had found Jesus. They didn't announce it to the crowds or to the governing authorities. They first went to their closest relationships. There will be the necessity of proclaiming to the crowds, but as I said on Easter Sunday, disciple making is fundamentally about having conversations about Jesus. But it is also fundamentally driven by relationships. If you were on a desert island with a Bible, could you grow in your faith? Of course you could. You would still have the word of God and the Spirit of God but you cannot make disciples unless you are engaged in relationships. Andrew and Philip used the natural relationship bridges of a brother and a friend. We can use the natural relationship bridges that we already have and we can create new relationship bridges but either way, you need to be engaged in relationships in order to make disciples.

Your disciple making relationships don't have to arise out of Grace Church but that is the benefit of being in a body of believers. You have relationships already established.

Making Disciples is Intentional

Disciple making is always intentional. Jesus sought out Andrew and Philip. Andrew and Philip sought out Peter and Nathanael. These things do not happen accidentally. This is true of individuals and of churches. You have to be intentional. You need some sort of a plan, however simple it may be. This is why we hired Ray Olson as our discipleship consultant. It was an intentional decision on the part of the elders to help improve our overall purpose of making disciples. I believe that we have a healthy church. God has been exceedingly kind to us these eighteen years. We have done many things right but in many ways, I feel like we are just getting started in our disciple making efforts. Being intentional is why we are hiring a pastor of discipleship. The vision is not for him to do the work but to train and equip all of you to become disciple makers yourselves.

Remember, when we do get to the point of casting a vote, we are voting on the person, the budget and the vision. It's a package deal. If you like the person and the vision but not the budget, you should vote no. If you like the person and the budget but have not bought into the vision, then you should vote no. If you don't think we should be involved in making disciples and if you are not willing at some level to enter into making disciples, then you should vote no.

Three weeks ago I started a weekly men's huddle. That was an intentional decision guided by Ray Olson. There's only five of us in the huddle. There's nothing special about us. We just decided to commit together for a year, seek the Lord, be transparent with one another and see what happens. The goal is to start one or more new huddles from this one huddle. If it doesn't happen right away, that's OK, as long as we are making forward progress. I have to say that the first three weeks were very impactful for me. I'm quite excited about hanging with those men for the next year. But again, none of us accidentally fell into this. It required an intentional decision to do something. And these huddles will be the core of our disciple making vision

Making Disciples is Invitational

Did you see the simple way that Jesus invited the two future disciples? "Come and see" was all he said to them. It was a simple invitation to join Jesus to see what he was all about. We are so used to hearing about all the disciples immediately following Jesus when he asked them.

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him (Matthew 4:18-22).

This is often touted as the only way to follow Jesus. You need to drop everything, lay down your proverbial nets and follow Jesus to your inevitable death. There's no question the disciples eventually did, that but this meeting recorded in Matthew 4 was not their first meeting. Between

Jesus' baptism (Luke 3)

1 year

Calling of twelve disciples (Luke 6)

He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." (John 1)

9 months

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt 4)

3 months

In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:

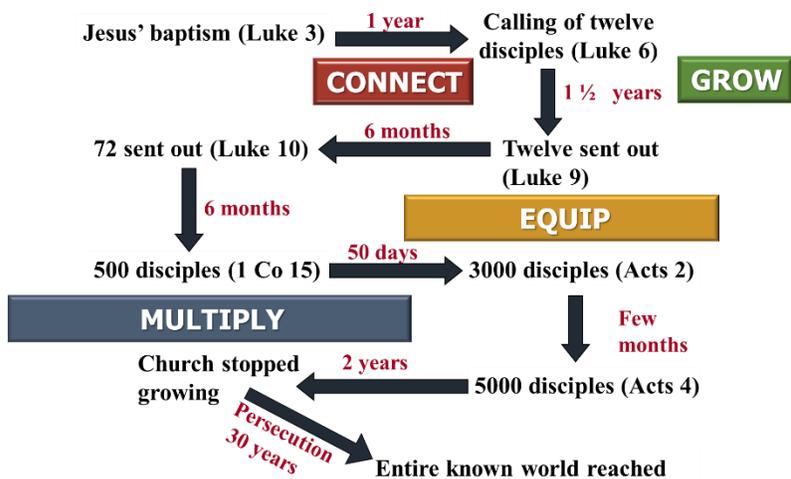
Jesus' baptism and the calling of the twelve disciples, an entire year passed. The first time Jesus met the disciples was not when he called them to leave their nets. They first time the met Jesus was about nine months before that. This is what John recorded for us. Jesus invited them to "come and see" a full nine months before he told them to "come and follow me and I will

make you fishers of men."

This means that they had spent time together in those nine months. There's no way he visited them once and said "come and see" and then the second time he saw them Jesus said. Come and follow me." There was a progression over those nine months. They got to know Jesus. After those nine months they were ready to drop their nets and follow Jesus. But even then they went back to fishing for three more months until Jesus officially called the twelve disciples into service.

So my point is that all discipleship begins with a simple invitation. The first invitation does not have to be "come and die with me." Now you will get there but at first it can be as simple as "come and see." Come and learn about Jesus. Take the first few steps and we'll see where it leads us. But even this simple invitation can be progressive. You may have walked with Christ for years but you need to be challenged to the next step of discipleship. Maybe you will be asked to lead a discipleship huddle one day. Maybe you don't feel ready but can you take that first step? Can you trust the Lord enough to walk by faith and not by sight? Come and see.

Here's how it went for the disciples. Come and see, come and follow. Come and be with me. Then he sent them out on mission. They failed and he sent them out again. This went on for two and half more years as they worked their way through the greatest discipleship training program known to man. Then they held a graduation ceremony when Jesus said to make disciples of all nations.



Making Disciples is Missional

I first heard this word “missional” about ten years ago and I did not care for it. At the time, it was being bantered about by hip Christians, most of whom had poor theology. But since I have come to embrace the word as very Biblical and useful. The disciples were sent out on mission. The twelve were sent out then the 72 were sent out and eventually, due to persecution, believers spread throughout Judea and Samaria. They were on mission. They went out to fish for men and women.



Missional is also a useful word when compared with attractional. Many churches use an attractional model of outreach. In other words, they do all that they can to make their church and their programs attract believers and unbelievers alike. The attractional model invites the world into your church, but the missional model sends the church out into the world. At the end of the day, there will always be a balance in some ways. Just by the very nature of trying to have a Biblically healthy church, some people will be attracted to that. Paul recounts in 1 Corinthians 14 how an unbeliever can walk into a worship service and get radically saved because the Holy Spirit was at work in their midst. So there is no shame in attracting people to your church but we do not want to aim at being attractional. Does that make sense?

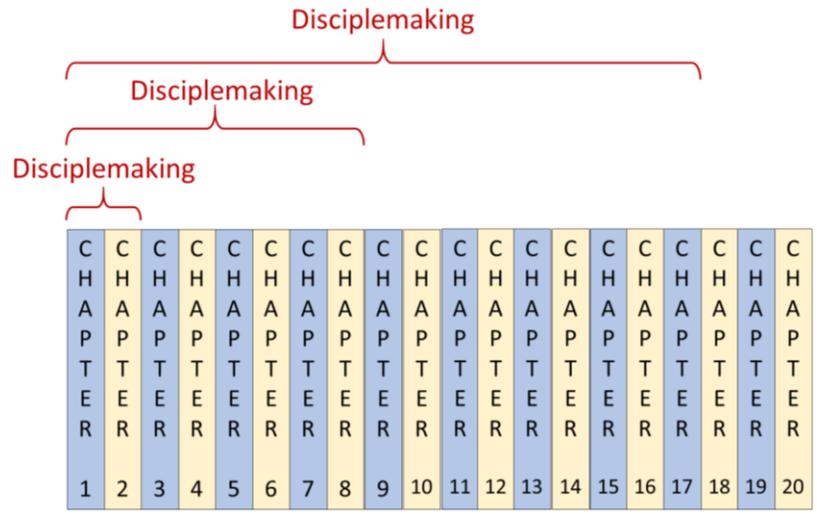
For us, being missional simply means that we don't wait until fish jump into our nets but instead, we go out on mission to fish for men and women. But we have to learn how to do this, and this is where the rest of discipleship comes into play.

Making Disciples is Transformational

When Christ is proclaimed and the Holy Spirit is active, lives will inevitably be transformed. On Easter Sunday we looked at Acts chapter four and were reminded how the church grew from 3,000 to 5,000 in no time at all. But those were unique events. Most missional work took place from house to house by ordinary believers and for that to happen, ongoing, personal transformation is absolutely essential. What happened in the early church was disciples making disciples. Our target can be nothing less than this. To be a disciple is to make disciples. If you are not engaged in making disciples, then you are not following Jesus.

Now let me qualify that somewhat. A few months back I shared a helpful illustration that I had read. Let's assume the Christian life is like a book with twenty chapters. Making disciples does not wait for you to get to chapter 10 or 15. If you are in chapter two, you can help the person who is still in chapter one. That is making disciples because you are helping this person advance in their walk with the Lord. Once you get to chapter three, now you can help people in the first two chapters.

But this is extremely important. Disciplemaking is NOT about getting to the next chapter. Discipleship is not just doing Christian things and growing as a believer. Discipleship is getting to the next chapter and then turning around and helping the next person get to where you are.



This illustration is so helpful because it is a model of progressive sanctification. Disciple making is not only for the professional pastor nor only for the most mature among us. Disciple making is for everyone. The bar is set high. Being a disciple necessitates making disciples, but that same bar can be progressively raised. As you grow and are further equipped, your capacity to make disciples is also increased.

Making Disciples is Worshipful

Do you remember what Andrew said to Peter? *“We have found the Messiah”* There was no doubt great excitement and expectation in his voice. Of course they did not understand all that was entailed in Jesus as the messiah. That would come three and a half years later, but they knew it was the most important person they would ever meet. It was what all of their ancestors were hoping to see. Their ultimate goal was Christ-centered worship.

As we work toward this vision of making disciples who make disciples, we must not lose sight of an even higher goal. John Piper states it so eloquently. As I read this and you see the word “missions,” insert the words “disciple making.” After all, missions is merely disciple making in a cross cultural context.

Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever...It’s the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God’s glory.¹

Rich Maurer
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¹ John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*.