

Making Disciples of Jesus

The church exists to make followers of Jesus who then make other followers. This is not just exchanging information or getting them to purchase, consume and then be repeat customers of a product.

We are seeking an earthquake in the human heart. Disciples are dead wood coming alive and instead of lying on the ground rotting they are living, rooted, and fruit bearing. The Good News is—our hearts have been telling us there must be something more—and our heart is right. Jesus sets us free to live.

HOW? How does one move into that life?

- 1) God gave us a beautiful capacity of forming habits. (See Dallas Willard RENOVATION OF THE HEART for details) Habits are engrained patterns that require less effort to perform than behavior that is not habitual.
- 2) God gave us a capacity for DESIRE (Greek word “epithumia” often translated as “lust” or “longing”). Desire is the ability to limit our focus. To “zero in” on an object (examples: goal, destination, object, person) and focus – bring to bear our energy (strength, will, thinking) in the pursuit of our object. This word is used in both negative (lust of flesh) and positive (Jesus longing to be with His disciples)

Sinful habits we call addictions. Addictions are habits (engrained patterns) + desire.

God works through these same two human capacities in bringing us into a life WITH and LIKE Christ. These are powerful aspects of shaping our person. Can you imagine going through one day without any of your lifetime of building habits? --- shower, brush teeth, drive, converse—all as very conscious effort (carefully choosing and crafting each of a thousand different behaviors) to accomplish just simple tasks. Interview a person going through therapy to recover from a stroke to get the idea.

God wants to replace habits and give us new objects for desire. Many of our habits and desires are rooted in lies of the enemy.

How does transformation occur at the level of -- my habits of how I will respond to the attack of my personal enemy, how I will react to my spouse failing to meet my expectations, my heart being deeply wounded in rejection by a rebellious child? Will there be habits, a maturing in my life, that make a Christ like response occur more and more consistently and with less effort?

We fail at disciple making because we often limit our making disciples to the same approaches used in formal education. We seek to TELL people into transformation. We seek to use words (by themselves) as a primary means to prompt radical repentance of exchanging objects of desire, and to encourage repeated choices that forge life giving habits.

Look in our culture at models of transformation that have proved to be more effective than our “telling” models.

- 1) Parabolic Stories (One Minute Manager time hundreds + Jesus)
- 2) Proverbs (distilled wisdom into memorable sayings)
- 3) Music (linking messages to powerful, deep emotional impact)
- 4) Mentors – Walking together, often with the partners exchanging roles of guide and student as they walk. Mutual learning with, learning from...asking questions, watching, coaching.

AND perhaps the movement most into deep transformation (death producing destructive bondage in addictions) --- recovery groups.

AA and its many spin offs use a common pattern to approach transformation from which the church can learn much in shaping how it makes disciples.

- 1) Little change occurs IN a person at the level of engrained patterns and objects of desire until they deeply want it. Open, hungry, thirsting heart required!
- 2) People come into the “want it” through (1) confrontation –usually makes deeper impact if performed by people whom the addict knows loves them and wants their best. But in most cases confrontation by itself is not enough, though it may be a critical step in the journey to “want it”. (2) Compelling vision – a story of someone else making the journey who demonstrates/resonates with the thirst in the heart of the addict that is not really touched by the current habits and desires. (3) Crisis (burning oil platform)—I must change or die. This is the most frequent tipping point that those in recovery call “bottoming out”. I cannot do this by myself---I am helpless.
- 3) Once a person “wants it” – then they can begin to receive support, help, grace and truth from a community. In this community there is a sense that everyone in the room is on the same journey although at different points. There is no room for pride or judgmental spirit...we are all a room full of drunks staying sober one day at a time.
- 4) The community is NOT JUST a large group. There is a web of relationships whereby every person has a sponsor—usually one that has been sober a little longer than you have. EVERYONE has a sponsor. Between these two they are held together by a commitment to always tell the truth – and to always be available 24 hours a day to come and help you not to revert to old habit and move back to focus on old objects of desire.
- 5) The goals of the people in the community are not to just stay sober. The goal is to give it away – to help others. The reality is – I gain as I give away what has been given to me. The goal is not just to gain control over a destructive lifestyle but to see an open, giving, loving person created from the trash heap.

Roy King
January 14, 2004