

Matthew 28:16-20  
Sharing the Love of God: Discipling  
WRCOB 4.30.23

*Prairie Home Companion*

Was a radio show I listened to for years.

It ran from 1974 to 2016.

It was on Saturday night

Filled with music and old-timey fake commercials

And a monologue by Garrison Keillor

The Founder and MC of the program.

I share a story from one of his monologues.

His monologues were stories of people

In the fictitious town named *Lake Wobegone*

*Larry the Sad Boy ... was saved 12 times in the Lutheran church, an all-time record. Between 1953 and 1961 he threw himself weeping and contrite on God's throne of grace on 12 separate occasions*

*And this in a Lutheran church that wasn't evangelical, had no altar call, no organist playing "Just as I Am Without One Plea" while a choir hummed and a guy with shiny hair took hold of your heartstrings and played you like a cheap guitar.*

*This is the Lutheran church, these are Scandinavians, and they repent in the same way that they sin: discreetly, tastefully, at the proper time.*

*Twelve times! Even we fundamentalists got tired of him. God did not mean for us to feel guilt all our lives. There comes a point when you should dry your tears and join the building committee and start grappling with the problems of the church furnace and ... make church coffee and be of use, but Larry kept on repenting and repenting.*

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According to the website *Discipling Another*

*80% of those who decide to follow Jesus walk away from faithfulness within 90 days of professing Jesus as Lord.*

One of the biggest reasons for the digression  
Is that most of these people  
Have no one to walk with them  
On this new journey of faith.

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Today, we will look at the third and last sermon  
In this series "Sharing the Love of God".

We began by acknowledging that listening  
Is a very effective method of evangelism.

When we listen we offer ourselves as a friend

In listening, we hear a person's story  
And we hear how God is already at work.

Last week, then, we suggested  
That if an opportunity arises  
That opens the possibility for sharing our faith  
We will do so with respect and gentleness.

If a conversation leads a person to follow Jesus  
Our commitment to the relationship must continue.

In today's sermon I seek to answer the following question

*How do you help someone follow Jesus?*

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It's called discipling.

Not everyone is called to preach or teach  
Or stand up before the congregation to lead worship.

Not everyone can sing like an angel  
Or play an instrument.

However, every Christian is called  
To make a difference in someone's life  
In deliberate, encouraging relationships.

Mark Dever, pastor of Capital Baptist Church in DC  
Wrote a 12-week course on discipling.

I've collected some thoughts from him.

He writes that biblical discipling has four key components.

1. Biblical discipling is *intentional* and *deliberate*
2. Biblical discipling is *relational*
3. Biblical discipling is *loving*
4. Biblical discipling involves *training in God's Word*

The goal in discipling is to walk alongside someone  
Who has decided to follow Jesus.

It is a one-to-one relationship  
But done within the larger context  
Of the community of faith.

For we all need support from each another  
No matter where we are on the journey.

**Hebrews 10:24 NLT Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.**

We disciple someone, intentionally and deliberately.

It might not happen spontaneously.

The imperative is found here  
In what is known as the Great Commission  
In today's Scripture Lesson.

**Matthew 28:19a CEB Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations . . . .**

We aren't just trying to grow the church  
Add to its numbers, help pay the bills.

We are not simply telling people about Jesus  
And then leaving them to their own devices.

We are to make disciples.  
It takes intentionality.

We deliberately walk with someone  
To help them become mature in the faith.

We do so with the awareness that both are on a journey.

And though we may be farther along the path  
We don't necessarily have it all together either.

We need humility as we disciple someone on their journey.

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Secondly, it must be in relationship.

We can't just order a Bible  
Or a course entitled Christianity 101 from Amazon  
And have it delivered to our friend's address.

We understand salvation to be relational  
Our relationship to God through Jesus  
Our relationship to one another  
And our relationship to God's creation.

It is in our commitment and loving relationship  
That helps convey the love of God.

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Thirdly, we disciple someone because we love them  
And want the very best for them.

We are to be there for them  
As they walk this journey towards maturity in Christ.

Just as Jesus prayed and preached, and taught  
And loved the disciples who left all to follow him

We are to do everything within our abilities  
To be with the one we walk alongside of as well.

**1 John 3:16 CEB This is how we know love: Jesus laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.**

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You have walked with this person  
And they have decided to follow Christ.

Don't quit now, thinking you have succeeded  
In doing what Christ has called you to.

The ultimate goal in the Great Commission  
Is not winning souls for Christ  
But teaching people to follow Jesus.

In his blog,  
Mike Rose, pastor of the First Federated Church,  
In Des Moines, Iowa writes

*A convert is one who has come to faith in Jesus as Savior. They've opened their heart to receive the grace He purchased on the cross at Calvary. But for many, that's where it begins and ends.*

*Secure in the love of Christ, a convert may or may not mature. They may or may not be a public witness for Jesus and they may or may not reproduce another spiritual life.*

*A convert is happy to have eternal life and the forgiveness of sin, but may never actually follow in the Savior's footsteps.*

I've heard someone call this the Evacuation Plan.

Its main interest and goal in life is getting to heaven.

The Great Commission, though  
Is actually teaching us something else.

You might call it the Transformation Plan.

Its main interest and goal in life  
Is transforming individuals  
And transforming the world  
More and more into the kingdom of God.

This is what we mean by discipling!

Quoting again from Mike Rose:

*A disciple on the other hand is one who follows after Christ. Of course, a disciple is a convert. One cannot follow after Jesus until they have opened their life to Him.*

*But a disciple moves beyond the benefits of salvation to learn how they can live like the One they are following.*

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Fourthly and finally  
Biblical discipling teaches God's Word.

**Matthew 28:20 CEB . . . teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you.**

It is not our wisdom and guidance  
Nor our level of maturity  
The new follower of Christ needs, it's God's.

God is the sustaining and redeeming presence  
In helping someone follow  
The way, the truth and the life of Jesus.

We need to know enough of God's Word  
To be able to help someone in understanding  
The history of God' redeeming grace.

So, guide the person into reading one of the Gospels  
Before diving into the books of the Old Testament  
Or the writings of the Apostle Paul.

Although we know that all Scripture is inspired by God  
Some of it is complex and unnecessary  
For the new believer/follower.

In all, the Great Commission's instruction is simply this  
To go into the world and help others be like Jesus.

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This sermon series is an attempt  
To speak of evangelism in a different way.

For I confess, I am a reluctant evangelist.  
In the traditional sense of the word.



But what I've found in my own ministry over the years  
Is that I have always had someone  
I walked beside as a pastor and friend.

Sometimes I have witnessed their decision to follow Christ  
And then I've walk with them  
In those initial steps with Christ.

It's called relational discipleship.

The Oak Hill church website gives this great definition.

*Relational discipleship is the process of being connected in relationships that equip us and encourage others to be more like Christ.*

*The purpose of this model is for disciples to make disciples through relationships. Disciples are in healthy relationship when they have a mentor, peers and someone they are discipling.*

Evangelism is something we all can do.

If the word evangelism sticks in your craw  
Call it something else.

Call it for what it relational discipling.

As in any relationships  
There will be good times and hard times

Sometimes it will be mutually edifying  
And sometimes it will be completely one-sided

But through it all  
Through providence, prayer and practice

**Colossians 3:16-17 NLT**

**<sup>16</sup> Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. . . <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.**