

## Maximum Discipleship

Vance Havner writes,

“Dr. Torrey used to say: ‘In order to have a revival let a few members of any church get thoroughly right with God.’ We have been doing things the extensive way in our church life. It is time to start doing things the intensive way. We’ve been doing it the big way; it is time to start doing it the little way. You will remember that God told Gideon that he had too many soldiers in his original army of thirty-two thousand. He had too many of the kind he had for the king of battle he was out to fight. The church is in spiritual warfare and the weapons of that warfare are not carnal. The average run-of-the-mill church member is untrained and unqualified for this kind of fighting.”<sup>1</sup>

The difference between someone who professes to be a follower of Christ and someone who actually follows Him is immense.

Before Jesus returned to His Father He commissioned His followers:

<sup>16</sup>“But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

<sup>17</sup>When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.

<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

<sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

<sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:16-20).

Matthew’s gospel records that Jesus had been crucified, was buried and had risen from the dead. He then writes this section which contains the Great Commission. The Great Commission is Jesus’ final words in which He commissions His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. In fact, if someone were to miss this final point of Matthew’s gospel he would have missed the point of the entire book.

MacArthur writes,

“This central message of Scripture pertains to the central mission of the people of God, a mission that, tragically, many Christians do not

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<sup>1</sup> Vance Havner, *The Best of Vance Havner*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1969), p. 121.

understand and are unwilling to fulfill. It seems obvious that some Christians think little about their mission in this world, except in regard to their own personal needs. They attend services and meetings when it is convenient, take what they feel like taking, and have little concern for anything else. They are involved in the church only to the extent that it serves their own desires. It escapes both their understanding and their concern that the Lord has given His church a supreme mission and that He calls every believer to be an instrument in fulfilling that mission.”<sup>2</sup>

According to this Scripture Jesus, who has all authority in heaven and earth, has given us orders to make disciples of the world, as His purpose for our lives. The church’s responsibility is to be disciple making body in submission to Christ. The goal of every disciple is the redemption of sinful men – salvation of the lost.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them... and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19).

So many of us attend the church that meets our needs, whether that need is for fellowship, friends, or for music, or for preaching. The purpose of the church is to equip us to be in the world as witnesses for Christ.

Ask the question: Why do we attend church?

Fellowship – love, friends, acceptance, encouragement, prayer, social life.

Learning the word – preaching, teaching

Worship – word, song, praise

All of these are good but not the priority of the church.

MacArthur writes,

“If God’s primary purpose for the saved were loving fellowship, He would take believer immediately to heaven, where spiritual fellowship is perfect, unhindered by sin, disharmony, or loneliness. If His

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), pp. 329-330.

primary purpose for the saved were the learning of His Word, He would also take believers immediately to heaven, where His Word is perfectly known and understood. And if God's primary purpose for the saved were to give Him praise, He would, again, take believers immediately to heaven, where praise is perfect and unending.

There is only one reason the Lord allows His church to remain on earth: to seek and to save the lost... a believer who is not committed to winning the lost for Jesus Christ should reexamine his relationship to the Lord and certainly his divine reason for existence."<sup>3</sup>

When reaching the lost is our purpose then we have the greatest motivation to pray, attend church, serve our communities and live a positive and wholesome life for Jesus.

For the athlete training is preparation for competition, not an end in itself. For the musician personal practice is essential to master an instrument, for the purpose of performance. Practice is the painful means to the end result.

Christians must be aware that the process of discipleship is for the purpose of reaching the lost and not an end in itself.

Winning souls is something that can only happen on earth. In heaven there will be no lost to be found.

The lost will be gone along with the opportunity to win them for eternity.

Our job is to prepare the saints for action in this lost world.

It's called discipleship

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

What does discipleship look like?

The first step in discipleship is availability.

## **I. Availability**

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<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, p. 333.

<sup>16</sup>“But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee,  
to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

Eight days after Jesus rose from the dead He appeared to the disciples.

And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, Peace be with you.” Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.” Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

(John 20:26-28).

Jesus said he would meet His disciples in Galilee. An angel, speaking to the women who went to visit Jesus’ tomb on the morning that He rose, said,

“And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you... And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me” (Matt. 28:7, 9-10).

The disciples journeyed about a week to Galilee and there they saw Jesus.

“Jesus’ postresurrection appearances covered a total of forty days (Acts 1:3), His giving of the great Commission on the Galilean mountainside would have had to occur some time between twenty and thirty-five days after His resurrection.

We are not told who was present when Jesus gave the Great Commission, but it seems probable that it was the group of more than five hundred that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 15:6. That has been the view of many biblical scholars throughout church history.”<sup>4</sup>

What made the disciples special wasn’t their wealth, abilities, intellect, power or influence. It was their availability.

Our Greatest Ability is Availability.

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<sup>4</sup> MacArthur, 336.

## II. Attitude of Integrity

<sup>17</sup>When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.

Integrity means wholeness.

Service comes from a heart of worship. When Jesus appeared they worshiped. The last time most of these people saw Jesus was on a cross, where He died. Imagine how their hearts must have rejoiced, as their hopes were renewed. Before them stood the living Christ, raised from the dead. Christ's resurrection is proof that everything He taught, did, promised is true.

Paul wrote about this most important Christian essential:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. And after that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

(1 Cor. 15:3-8).

When the disciples saw Jesus they worshiped Him, but with doubt.

[Whatever happened to “seeing is believing”?]

If we doubt our beliefs long enough, soon we will believe our doubts.

The one who doubts can settle all doubts by talking with Jesus.

<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came up and spoke to them...

Song: “We don't need to understand; we just need to hold His hand.”

Don't doubt in the dark what God has revealed in the light.

V. Raymond Edman

Doubt is rooted in contrary desires between what I want and what God' wants.

### III. Authority

<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,  
'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Jesus was God who became a man. He came to earth to accomplish salvation by dying on a cross as payment for man's sin. After He finished His work on the cross Jesus rose from the dead and conquered death for all of us. Now Jesus is stating the fact of His absolute authority over heaven and earth.

**All Authority** – absolute and universal

Exousia – freedom and right to speak and act as one pleases.

- Absolute and unlimited.

“Submission to the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ is not a believer's option but is his supreme obligation. It is not negotiable or adjustable to one's own particular inclinations and plans. It is rather the attitude that says with absolute sincerity, 'Whatever the Lord commands, I will do.'”<sup>5</sup>

### IV. Obedience

Willing obedience/submission to absolute authority in total dependence on Him.

**Jesus' Command:**

<sup>19</sup>Go therefore  
and make disciples of all the nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father  
and the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
<sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you

Matheteuo – make disciples is the main verb and central command.

Root term – believing and learning

Continual learning and obedience –

If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.” (John 8:31)

Jesus commissioned His disciples to **make disciples**.

We must become disciples who make disciples.

Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy:

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, p. 340.

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

### **The Math Miracle:**

All of us reach out to one over the next six months.

Then each of us and the one we have won and disciple reach out to one.

- Available
- Attitude of integrity
- Dependence on the Authority of Jesus
- Purpose to live in Obedience to Jesus’ Great Commission
- Results in Duplication
  - 30>60 6 mo.
  - 60>120 1 yr.
  - 120>240
  - 240>580 2 yr.
  - 580>1160
  - 1160>2320 3 yr.
- Duplication becomes Multiplication

**All of life works this way: Every cell divides, duplicates and then multiplies.  
Nothing in life simply adds for growth.**

**Jesus promises His presence as we obey His commission.**

<sup>20</sup>and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

***Always*** – literally means “all the days”

- Individually – ***all the days*** of our lives
- Church – ***to the end of the age***
  - until Christ returns and sets up His earthly kingdom rule.