



MAKING DISCIPLES

Lessons from the Church at Ephesus



BRUCE ZACHARY

Making Disciples

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By

Bruce Zachary

Eccl. 12:12-14 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books *there is* no end, and much study *is* wearisome to the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

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Introduction:

Important Lessons To Learn From The Church At Ephesus

Why should I bother reading this? The purpose of “Making Disciples” (and the companion resources, “Reaching the Lost” and “Developing Leaders”) is to create a Biblical and practical tool to help church leaders more effectively do those things. This resource is a tool to help you to actually do what you, and every other spiritual leader, are called to do.

1. What are the primary functions of The Church? You could easily defend the ideas of worship, evangelism, glorifying Christ, loving God, loving others and living His word, knowing Christ and making Him known, etc. Nevertheless, I would suggest all of these goals and others flow from what **the primary functions of the Church are: to reach the lost, make disciples, and develop leaders.** All true Church growth happens when we reach the lost, but to effectively make disciples of these new converts, we must develop committed leaders. If we want to expand the kingdom, and engage in the essential functions of the Church, we must discover how to more effectively reach the lost, make disciples and develop leaders.

2. Where should be the primary place we look to discover how to more effectively reach the lost, make disciples and develop leaders? There are countless leadership books, blogs, vlogs, and podcasts available to us, and information in a host of formats. Many of these resources are offering to help church leaders, “Break the 200, 500 and 1,000 barrier.” Realize I’m not suggesting these resources be avoided. There are undoubtedly insightful ideas to help church leaders to overcome a host of problems, but many of the proposed solutions appear to reflect solutions that have been cultivated from the marketplace rather than from the pages of Scripture.

What I am suggesting is the Bible is the **primary** place we should look to discover what the Church is called to do and how to do it most effectively. I presume that Jesus intended the Bible to be a sufficient resource for the job [2Tim. 3:16-17]; and that Church leaders have liberty to supplement their toolbox with lessons learned from their cultural context. A challenge of relying primarily upon the Scriptures is the material is not organized to be a primer for church leaders. Nevertheless, if you decided to use the Bible for your primary resource it would be reasonable to ask, **“What church in the pages of Scripture seemed to most effectively reach the lost, make disciples, and develop leaders?”**

3. What evidence do we have the church at Ephesus is an effective model for reaching the lost, making disciples, and developing leaders? About one-third of the New Testament books are connected to the Church at Ephesus: Ephesians, Acts, Revelation, 1st and 2nd Timothy, and 1st 2nd and 3rd John. The effectiveness of the church at Ephesus is noted in a summary statement in Acts, *“And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks”* [Ac. 19:10]. Space will not allow me to fully develop the idea here but suffice it to say the church at Ephesus not only proclaimed the gospel

to the local metropolis, but also the surrounding region of Asia Minor. They not only reached the lost, but made disciples and developed leaders by establishing neighboring churches in Asia Minor as referenced in Revelation 2 and 3 [effective church planting].

As we will see in the following lessons, the church at Ephesus is arguably the most effective biblical model for reaching the lost, making disciples and developing leaders. Our hope is to learn principles from this church that can be applied in a practical way to our cultural context so that we too can be effective in what God has called us to.

Lesson 1: Be a Disciple Maker [Eph. 1-3]

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them [Eph. 2:8-10].

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called [Eph. 4:1].

A fundamental duty of any local church is to make disciples for the glory of Christ.

Accordingly, making disciples should be the pursuit of all believers. One test of biological maturity is the capacity to reproduce. Similarly, one measure of spiritual maturity is the capacity of disciples to reproduce disciples of Christ. **If you are going to be a disciple maker you must consider the motives and the measures.**

A. The Motives: there are two aspects to the motives focus.

1. Why should disciples make disciples? Jesus' Great Commission commands us to go and make disciples because of His complete authority [Matt. 28:19-20]. The essential answer is that Jesus has commanded His disciples to go and make disciples. In addition, you have the pleasure of being part of the work of advancing God's kingdom that is inherent in making disciples. And you have the assurance that you are making progress in your own spiritual development when you assist others to grow as disciples.

2. Why should converts become disciples? The challenge is how should disciples motivate converts to become disciples? Paul begins the fourth chapter of Ephesians begging them to, *"walk worthy of the calling with which you were called"* [Eph. 4:1]. In the chapters that follow, Paul will help us to understand what it means to live the Christian life ("walk worthy"). However, the letter did not begin with this exhortation. Eph. 4:1 begins, "I therefore ..." What preceded the encouragement to be a disciple was the believer's identity in Christ [Chapters 1-3]. So, we could assert that **a primary motive to become a disciple is to understand what God done for the believer.** Paul understood that reasonable people would respond to God's love and blessings in Christ by choosing to live for Christ.

In Eph. 1-3 Paul explains that we have been redeemed to God by the blood of Christ and now possess every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm [1:1-14, 2:1-13]. We also discover unity and peace in Christ [2:14-18]. Paul deftly reveals God's mysterious plan that Jews and Gentiles would share equally in the blessings and responsibilities of God's chosen people in Christ and His Church [3:1-14]. Repeatedly Paul prays for and encourages them to have spiritual insight and wisdom to appreciate these tremendous blessings as God's children and heirs together with Christ [1:15-23, 3:14-21].

But the call to be a disciple revolves around Eph. 2:8-10. The essence of the gospel message is that we have been saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* It is God’s gift, and we are unable to attain it regardless of the extent of our religious activity. Yet, once we have received this gift of salvation, we are to respond with a life of good works prepared for us by God, *“created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”* (my emphasis). In essence, because of this great gift of salvation, obtained at the great price of Jesus’ life, it is only reasonable for me to follow Jesus and be His disciple [Eph. 4:1 “walk worthy ...”]. In summary, **the more we help the spiritually immature understand what Jesus has done for them the more likely they will be to become His disciples (spiritually mature).**

B. The Measures: Before contemplating how to make a disciple, it is imperative to consider what does it actually mean to be a disciple of Jesus? Here is a working definition: a disciple is one who adheres to the teaching of another, a follower, or learner.

In regard to Jesus, a disciple is someone who learns from Him to live like Him; or someone who is conformed to the words and ways of Jesus. While the definition is meaningful it is also lacking. **We yearn for a set of measures that helps the new convert to understand some of the milestones so that the convert can measure whether she is making progress and has become a disciple.**

Paul clearly sought to help us understand some of the measures of a disciple in Ephesians 4-6. Nevertheless, we also intuitively understand that it is not a full measure since Paul’s letter does not contain all that Jesus taught. A great challenge to make disciples is to agree upon some of the more meaningful measures of what a disciple is.

For example, ask a local pastor, “What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?” You are likely to receive the definition noted above (or a derivative) in response. However, when you ask, “What are some of the milestones or measures so that I can know that I’ve become a disciple?” you may find a leader struggling to give a response. Or alternatively, giving a rapid reply that may fail to properly direct the genuine truth seeker.

I’ve seen countless attempts to summarize some of the measures. People are told that it means, “To be a worshiper, servant and witness.” Or perhaps, “Put Jesus first, follow Jesus’ teaching, bear fruit, love other disciples, and engage in evangelism.”

It may be helpful to realize that providing measures is good and arguably necessary but also has an inherent flaw. The measures will reflect the values, bias and prejudice, of the local church leadership. For example, we will often describe regular *Bible reading* as a measure of a disciple. This seems to naturally flow from Jesus’ command to teach the new converts to obey all the commands that Jesus gave. And although I highly value learning the Bible, keep in mind that there is a difference between learning the Bible and reading it. In countless cultures that are primarily illiterate learning is done through story, oral, and visual learning – not reading. Furthermore, the latter description of learning was far more common in the early church than individual Bible reading. Yet, we project our cultural values as part of the process.

Another example could relate to fasting. Jesus' disciples apparently did not fast like the Pharisees or disciples of John [Mk. 2:18]. On the other hand, Jesus apparently presumed that we would fast [Matt. 6:16]. Yet, in many church cultures you are unlikely to hear this mentioned as a measure of a disciple. And in other church cultures it may be emphasized more than is appropriate in light of the fact that the Church is never commanded to fast.

In every local church culture it is helpful to appreciate the need to give those who are seeking to grow in Christ meaningful measures of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. And in doing so we must be aware of the potential flaws in the process that are inherent because of our bias, prejudice, and cultural values.

Lifework:

1. How would you describe some of the key measures of a disciple? Begin a list and add or delete as you keep learning. Share your list with other more mature believers and consider their wisdom.

2. How does the leadership of your local church describe some of the key measures of a disciple?

Lesson 2: Be a Disciple Maker [pt. 2] [Eph. 4-6]

What it means to be a disciple

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ [Eph. 1:2-3] (emphasis mine).

If we are going to make disciples we need to help people know what it means to be a disciple. Paul used the expression “Lord Jesus Christ” twice in the opening verses of Ephesians [1:2-3]. One could assert that a disciple is someone who has made Jesus Lord of his or her life. Paul explains what motivates us to become disciples throughout the first three chapters of this letter. Paul starts with God’s grace and peace, and every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. He continues to amplify our new identity throughout the first three chapters to encourage us to become mature followers of Christ (disciples of Jesus). So, the reasonable question would be, “What does it mean to be a disciple?” As noted in my preceding thoughts (“*Be a Disciple Maker*”) we yearn for some measures to see if we are making progress and have become disciples.

A disciple makes Jesus Lord in every sphere of life. Some of the common spheres of life include: community, calling, personal, marriage, family, and career. Paul spends the latter half of Ephesians (chapters 4-6) describing a disciple by showing what it looks like for Jesus to be Lord in these common spheres of life. When you understand what it looks like for Jesus to be Lord in these realms of life, you will know what it means to be a disciple. So for our purpose let's consider an overview:

Community [4:1-6] the community sphere focuses on our relationships with others, especially outside of the marriage, family, and career realms. The key concept that Paul reinforces is unity. Fourteen (14) times in the fourth chapter we see the word “one” [NKJV]. He urges us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace [v.3]. Maintaining the unity of the Spirit will be a challenge to an assembled group, because of the conflict between flesh and spirit, varying levels of spiritual maturity, and conflicting personalities priorities, and positions. The ability to maintain unity among an assembled group of people reflects the presence of disciples. The community sphere can be applied to a local assembly of believers (church), and to a person’s neighborhood. What would it look like for Jesus to be Lord in reference to how you interacted with your neighbors? How would your life be different if you were humble, gentle, patient, and helped to bear the burdens of your neighbors in love [v.2]?

Calling [4:7-16] the calling sphere focuses on the work we do to advance God’s kingdom, especially outside of the marriage, family, and career realms. A disciple is built-up in their faith and equipped for the work of ministry to help develop the body of Christ [v.12]. The effective working of a disciple causes her to do her share so that others are built-up in the faith (become disciples) and the body of Christ is developed in love [v.16]. The calling sphere is often applied

in the context of a local assembly (church) or a ministry that comes alongside the local church (Para-church organizations). What would it look like for Jesus to be Lord in the calling sphere so that you discovered and did your share to advance the kingdom in the context of a local church and/or Para-church ministry?

Personal [4:17- 5:21] this sphere focuses on the believer's sanctification - the process of being set-apart to God or personal holiness. A disciple must change his thinking [attitude] about God and sin, and then align behavior [actions] to submit to Jesus as Lord. Paul's detailed description has its origin in the Ten Commandments [Ex. 20] and could be summarized as: sexual sin, lying, unresolved excessive anger, stealing, corrupt words, and coveting. Disciples must be careful to be wise in the sense of applying the Word of God to their lives; and to understand (and presumably do) the will of God [5:15-17]. Disciples must be controlled by the Spirit (submitted to and empowered by God), and thus sober in mind [5:18]. What would it look like for Jesus to be Lord in the personal sphere of your life?

Marriage [5:22-33] this sphere is limited to those who are married, but is also relevant to prepare for marriage. Disciples who are married demonstrate mutual respect to one another [21]. As a demonstration of submission to Christ's authority, a wife will respect her own husband's leadership role in the marriage and affirm him [22-24]. A husband who loves his wife like Christ will know that he is a disciple. The love of Christ is demonstrated by sacrifice, setting-apart the marriage relationship, scripture encouragement, viewing one's bride as spotless, and loving your bride as you love yourself.

Family [6:1-4] this sphere is relevant to all as each has been a child, and has particular application to those with children living in their home. Children display that they are disciples by obedience (behavior) and honor (attitude). As long as children are in the parents' home they are to obey. The attitude of honor continues for a lifetime – the parents' and the child's. Parents demonstrate that they are disciples by training, teaching, encouraging, and correcting their children so that they walk in the ways of Christ. A parent that is a disciple learns to mentor or coach their child in such a way that they are not discouraged nor made unduly angry.

Career [6:5-9] the cultural context of slavery in the ancient world and the Roman Empire were distinct from the history of the United States. The principles described for disciples in the context of Paul's world are applicable in our world to the employer-employee or career sphere. Workers are to be obedient and hardworking with a right attitude. A disciple is motivated to please Christ even more than their employer. A disciple seeks to represent Christ in the marketplace. Supervisors demonstrate their submission to Christ by not abusing their authority, and by being just.

Lifework:

1. Consider what would it look like for Jesus to be Lord in the following spheres of your life:

a. Community:

b. Calling:

c. Personal:

d. Marriage:

e. Family:

f. Career:

2. What changes have you made to submit your life to Jesus as Lord in these various spheres?

3. How does the progress encourage you that you are a disciple?

Lesson 3: Be His Workmanship [Eph. 2:4-10]

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them [Eph. 2:10].

To make disciples we must instill in them the sense of awe that they are God's works of art.

My family is full of creative artist types. My wife Karen is a gifted photographer, our oldest son Josh is a graphic designer, and our youngest Jonny is a talented artist. I on the other hand, do not possess those gifts. Yet, one day I walked into the art class at our after school youth center and watched as students were drawing a bowl of fruit next to a blue vase. I asked inquisitively, "How do you do that?" The art leader simply replied, "You look at the bowl, the fruit, and the vase and you draw what you see." I could never imagine it being that simple. So I asked again, "No really, how do you do that?" This time she repeated the same reply but slowly, like she was talking to someone who speaks a foreign language. When she saw the puzzled look on my face, she urged me to have a seat, grab some paper and colored pencils, and give it a try. After several minutes, and plenty of erasing and revisions, I had drawn something that actually resembled an avocado, banana, and grapes in a bowl, alongside a blue vase. I have to confess, I was so excited that I put the date and my signature in the bottom corner, and then brought it home and showed my wife. Again, I need to confess because this is embarrassing. She put the picture on the fridge, and I felt good about my handiwork on display. That day I learned another lesson about being God's workmanship.

A disciple displays the workmanship of the master. Since we are Christ's disciples we are to reflect His handiwork. Disciples have been made alive together with Christ through the grace of God that saves us. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ, not our works. So there is no reason to boast [Eph. 2:4-9]. God's unmerited favor is displayed in and through us for God's glory. So Paul reminds us that we are God's workmanship [v.10 NKJV] or "God's masterpiece" [NLT]. The Greek term *poiema* conveys the idea of a work of art or our English term poem. We are exhibited for God's own purpose and for His glory. We have been created in Christ Jesus [NKJV] or "He has created us anew in Christ Jesus" [NLT]. God is making something new and beautiful of us. His transforming love changes us as we yield to Him and become mature disciples. The process of creating the work of art is the process of becoming a disciple. The stages of development of the work(s) of art [disciple] display the creativity and glory of the Creator.

My wife seemingly has every picture our small children drew. Many of them were proudly displayed on our fridge for all to see. Stick figure mom, dad, kids, dog, and a sun with a smiling face, were all on exhibit. But as our sons grew, their works of art (like their mom's art) revealed a creative gift. There were prizes in art contests in the early elementary years. Then as the gifts matured art was displayed in a portfolio rather than on the fridge. Then there was the professional stage and the art was displayed very publicly. All the while we enjoyed exhibiting or viewing their works for they are wonderful, and the artists are our sons. And God received all the glory for the gifts that were manifest in and through them.

Sometimes I think about my life on display on “God’s fridge” or “God’s gallery.” In every stage of maturation and development God has delighted to exhibit the growth and change because it reflects His glory. But mostly just because I’m His son and He’s proud of me - stick figures and all. There has been plenty of erasing or sculpting as I’ve yielded to Him. Proper proportion is better reflected today as I’m learning that He must increase and I must decrease. Also, I’ve discovered that too many happy colors may not make the best works of art. So I’m more willing to embrace God’s full palette of life experiences that help me to become the disciple that God planned for me to become long ago.

To make disciples we must instill in them the sense of awe that they are God’s works of art. Help followers of Christ appreciate that in each stage of development and maturation that the picture reflects the work of the Creator. Finally, assure them that the process is to continue through every season of life until we are united with Christ in eternity.

Lifework:

- 1. What thoughts or feelings come to mind as you contemplate your life as God’s work of art?**
- 2. In what ways have you seen changes in the “canvas” of your life as you have matured as a disciple?**
- 3. How can you instill in others the sense of awe that they are God’s works of art?**

Lesson 4: Be Equipped to Live for Christ [Acts 16:3]

I'm looking at one of my favorite pictures sitting on my desk. Our oldest son was about twenty years old, and he and I are walking along a broad beach not too far from where we live. He stands at least six inches taller than me as we walk in the distance. And in the foreground are a series of footprints that my son and I have just left behind as we walk together. Looking at the picture brings back a flood of memories. I remember when he began to crawl, and then started to take his first steps. I think about when he was small, and I got to hold his hand when we walked. I vividly remember the time when he was very young and we walked along the beach, and I looked back to watch my son step in the footprints that I had just made in the wet sand. He was following in my footsteps, and I was making a disciple ...

A disciple of Jesus is a person who is equipped to live for Christ. Paul summarily described a disciple as one “who walks worthy of the calling with which they were called” [Eph. 4:1]. The challenge is to learn to walk [live] in a way that is worthy. As newborn followers of Jesus, our first efforts appear more like crawling than walking. Yet in the natural (or supernatural) development we begin to take our first steps. In the process it is ideal to have someone who is more mature to support and guide. Someone whose footsteps we can step into knowing they are headed in the right direction. We crave someone who will enjoy the journey with us. Whether it is your firstborn son, or a brand new convert to the faith, making a disciple is a solemn, wonderful, and memorable experience.

Timothy became an influential and effective leader for Christ, and the pastor of the church at Ephesus. These were natural developmental steps in *his* calling as a disciple and leader. Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice had genuine faith that fostered his young faith [2 Tim. 1:5]. Later Paul saw in this young disciple a prospective leader, and he wanted to further equip Timothy to live for Christ. Paul prepared for his second missionary trip, and invited Timothy *to join them on their journey* [Ac. 16:3]. This is **a wonderful picture of how we make disciples – we invite them to join us on the journey.**

The process presumes that a disciple will mentor the apprentice(s) to equip them to live for Christ by developing biblical knowledge and character, preparing them to share their faith, and to serve Christ. Along the journey, the discipleship training could be distilled to five (5) reproducible steps:

1. I do, you watch, and we talk.
2. I do, you help, and we talk.
3. You do, I help, and we talk.
4. You do, I watch, and we talk.
5. You do and someone else watches.

In the first step, the mentor leader models a behavior such as personal evangelism, prayer, Bible reading, or greeting visitors while the apprentice observes. They later discuss the training and provide opportunity to discuss questions, challenges, and ideas. The second step involves the apprentice in an assisting role. For example, if the apprentice is learning how to greet visitors for a weekend church gathering the leader and apprentice both participate in welcoming the guests. Or if the apprentice is learning to teach the Bible, the leader can model teaching and then have the disciple teach a short devotional study. Again there should be a debriefing time afterwards. In the third step, the apprentice takes the lead, and is assisted by the leader. In the fourth phase the leader is simply an observer as the apprentice performs the tasks. Nevertheless, the mentor and apprentice engage in feedback and discuss the process after steps three and four. In the fifth step, the apprentice has been sufficiently equipped that she is empowered to identify, recruit, and begin the same process with a prospective disciple.

The picture of my son and I walking along the beach reminds me that my mentoring of my son(s), along with others that I have influenced, has essentially been to equip them to live for Christ. The process is easily understood as simply being intentional to invite and experience the journey together.

Lifework:

- 1. Who were the people who mentored you to live for Christ? What were some of the profound lessons that you learned from them along the journey?**
- 2. If you are unable to identify people who have equipped you to live for Christ, then prepare a short list of people that you will approach to ask to train you [take you along on the journey]. Be intentional to identify a mentor in the next 30 days.**
- 3. Whom are you currently equipping to live for Christ besides family members? If you are not presently mentoring someone to be a disciple, plan to invite one or more people to join you on the journey.**

Lesson 5: Be a Marriage Builder [Eph. 5:21-33]

If we are to make disciples, then marriage is a factory, a forging furnace and a final exam. For two to become one requires a process of dying to self. This is a great mystery, but it is the essence of the unity of a marriage between disciples, and the relationship of Christ and His disciples [Eph.5: 31-32].

Generally, disciples help the other parts of the body develop so that the body is healthy, growing, and full of love [Eph. 4:16]. If you are married and seeking to determine if you are a disciple then a key issue is, **are you a marriage builder such that your spouse is growing, healthy, and your union is characterized by love?** Ephesians 5:21-33 helps us to see the marks of a disciple as a marriage builder. Preliminarily, the marriage-building blueprint presumes a foundation of submission to Christ and being empowered and controlled by (filled with) the Holy Spirit [5:18]. Furthermore disciples will respect one another and show deference to one another because of reverence for God [5:21].

How will a wife know whether she is becoming a disciple who is building her marriage? A wife will encourage her husband to be her spiritual leader [22-24]. The Greek reveals that a wife who is a disciple will voluntarily submit to her husband's leadership. As an aside, women are not called to submit to men generally. The Bible teaches that men and women are equals in Christ [Gal. 3:28] so the issue is not who is superior. Furthermore, the Hebrew term that we translate "helper" [Gen. 2:18] is one of four Hebrew words that are translated helper. But the term that was used is generally used to refer to God helping Israel. So the wife as a helper to the husband is not inferior. Submitting is a challenge and a test because it is contrary to our human nature. A wife will desire to exercise authority in the marriage, because this is part of the consequences of the rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden [Gen. 3:16]. So for a wife to voluntarily submit to her husband's leadership she must be motivated to submit "as to the Lord" [22]. In essence, because she is yielded to Jesus (a disciple) she will be motivated to submit to her husband.

A wife is to honor her husband as the Church is to honor Christ [22-24]. The Church honors Jesus by yielding to Him, and expressing adoration and praise. A wife who affirms her husband, expresses adoration and praise, and encourages his spiritual leadership not only honors him but also helps him to become the man that God has called him to be. Undoubtedly this is a challenge in even the best of circumstances. So, a wife who is able to encourage her husband's spiritual authority and yield to it has reason to know that she is a disciple of Jesus. So, wives are you primarily expressing adoration, praise and encouragement?

How will a husband know whether he is becoming a disciple who is building his marriage? A husband will love his wife as Jesus loved His Church [25-33]. The Greek term used to express the ideal of Christ's love *agape* pictures affection and devotion that are pure, unconditional, committed, passionate, and undeserved. **Here are five marks of Christ's love** that Paul describes:

1. Sacrifice: Jesus *gave Himself* [25]. Jesus lays down His life and puts the life of His bride, the Church, before His own. Husbands, you imagine taking a bullet for her, but will you put her dreams and desires before your own? A disciple lays down his life.

2. Sanctify: Husbands are to sanctify or set apart the marriage relationship. The marriage relationship is to be the priority above all other relationships. When you walked down the aisle as husband and wife for the very first time, you passed family and friends together as a married couple. In effect you made a declaration that your marriage was more important than all of those other relationships. If you keep the marriage set apart you are doing well as a disciple.

3. Scripture: Husbands shall cleanse by the washing of water by the word [26]. In the Greco-Roman world a bride would be taken to water [e.g. lake, river, ocean] to be cleansed of all pre-marital defilement. For disciples the Word of God provides renewing. A husband is to encourage Bible learning and help equip his wife to be a mature follower of Christ. If you talk about the Word of God you are doing well as a disciple.

4. Spotless: Jesus sees His Church as spotless and without blemish [27]. A husband is to continue to view his wife as that beautiful bride on their wedding day. Like Solomon you want to declare, “You are all fair my love, and in you is no spot” [Song of Sol. 4:7]. Clearly the Church has faults, but because we are in Christ we are viewed as spotless. If you see your wife through a soft lens that obscures faults you are likely a disciple.

5. Self: A husband is to love his wife as he loves himself [28, 29, 33]. The problem is not needing to love self, but failing to love our spouse as we love ourselves. A husband who remains tenderhearted and compassionate, and chooses not to hurt his wife is reflecting the love of a disciple of Jesus.

The marriage relationship is like no other relationship. To become a disciple, or to become united with your spouse requires you to die to yourself. That’s why marriage is a factory, a forging furnace, and a final exam. If you are disciple in your marriage you are likely a mature follower of Christ. So, next time you hear your spouse say, “You’re killing me ...” Just tell them, “That’s my job.”

Lifework:

1. Being a disciple and becoming one in marriage is a process. Describe some ways that your marriage is growing spiritually, healthy, and is characterized by love?

2. Wives how do you encourage your husband to be your spiritual leader?

3. Husbands how do you love your wife as Jesus loved His Church?

Lesson 6: Be a Family Builder [Eph. 6:1-4]

If we are to make disciples, then the family is the garden where children grow to become disciples and parents can cultivate their relationship with Christ. One of the reasons for marriage and family is God's desire to produce godly offspring [Mal. 2:15]. Yet, in a culture that is opposed to a Christian worldview, raising children to know and love the Lord is a difficult challenge. The local church should support parents in this noble calling, but parents cannot delegate this responsibility to the church, a Christian school, a youth center, or any other surrogate. When a parent is following the Lord, and raises a child to do likewise, the parent can rejoice. The parent has arguably accomplished the most important role of successful parenting. And both parent and child have ample reason to believe that they are truly Jesus' disciples.

I recently watched an adorable video of a very young boy learning a memory verse as his mom encouraged him to repeat Isaiah 9:6, "Unto us a Child is born ..." I've known the mom since she was ten years old, and I've been blessed to watch her grow to become a lovely godly woman. Yet, there are times she wonders, "Am I being a good mom?" In reality, she is a great mom. She is loving, consistent, godly, compassionate, patient and more. The truth is all of us parents wonder if we are being good parents. All of us wonder, "Was I too selfish, too harsh, too insensitive, too impatient? Was I not enough like Jesus?" Our kids, like their parents, are imperfect, so we doubt whether we've been good parents. We do the best with what we know and as we know better, we should do better.

I remember one day when my boys were small and their room was a mess, and I told them, "Start cleaning and I'll be back in fifteen minutes." When I returned, not only had they not started to clean, but the room was even a bigger mess! Again, I instructed them to clean, and told them I'd be back to check on the progress. This scenario repeated three times, and each time there was no progress. I became more frustrated and angry. Finally, I kicked the door with my right foot, and my shoe went right through the hollow door creating a small hole. As you can imagine, my sons were now very motivated and determined to clean their room, but I felt that I was a horrible parent. When I returned to their room, not only was it clean but also they had taken a poster of Jesus and covered the hole in the door. **Moral of the story, Jesus covers a multitude of parenting shortcomings.**

The Bible is not organized as a handbook for parenting, but it has much to say on the subject [100s of verses]. Nevertheless, in only four verses in Ephesians 6:1-4 we have a blueprint to build a family of disciples. Preliminarily, it appears that although the children are addressed first, it is the parents' responsibility as a mentor to disciple and develop the right actions and attitudes.

Obedience and honor are the marks of a child who is a disciple of Jesus. Parents are to mentor their child to obey their parent(s) so that they are able to obey God. A child that is submitted to Christ will likewise obey her parents. The actions of obedience are right, because they reveal that the child understands submission to God-ordained authority. The attitude of honor from a child to her parent reflects that she honors God. From a Hebrew perspective the commandment to honor mother and father [Ex. 20:12] is listed as the fifth of ten

commandments and is generally seen as primarily a duty to God, and than to man (parents). Children are encouraged to yield to God and parents with the promise of a blessed life and the knowledge that it is right. As long as a child is living in her parents' home she is to be submitted to authority such that she obeys. Adult children who leave the parents' home are not required to obey, but continue to display the attitude of honor to parents.

Equipping and encouragement are the marks of a parent who is a disciple of Jesus. Parents must be careful in their training not to provoke their children to wrath. Unreasonable expectations, discouraging words, and harsh discipline are to be avoided. As an aside, we should understand what a radical concept this represents in the ancient world. In the Greco-Roman world a father had absolute authority over every aspect of a child's life, including authority to punish by death. So, the practice of being sensitive to a child's feelings and exercising restraint reflects Christ-like compassion and self-control.

A parent's affirmative duty is to bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Generally, a father is called to be the primary source of training, but both parents share in the responsibility. This calls for teaching Bible doctrine, talking about God and His word regularly, prayer, and being an example of a disciple. A parent is to lovingly encourage, equip, and ensure corrective discipline. Thus a parent who discipless or disciplines a child under God's control has assurance that they themselves are a disciple, and that they have helped their child to become a disciple as well.

Five family building best practices to consider:

1. Consistent love for God: Your child needs to know that you love God. Your children discover very early in life what you care about and what you love. If you have a genuine love for God they will know it.

2. Consistent love for your spouse: Your kids need to know that you love your spouse even more than you love them. When a parent has more affection for their child than their spouse it destabilizes the home. When a child knows that her parents love one another more than any other it provides security.

3. Consistent presence: Your very presence is a sign of caring. Learning what each child likes to do and spending one-on-one time to do their thing is critically important to building family. Occasionally, make time for each child to have a special day with you. Spend time playing together and creating memories.

4. Consistent expressions of affirmation: Regardless of their age, children should receive consistent affirmation. Communicate love and value. Give lots of hugs, and tell them, "I love you often." Tell them that they have the right stuff, and be encouraging and warm. Avoid performance focused shame and discouragement.

5. Consistent discipline: don't discipline when you are angry and out-of-control. Ideally, be under God's control, and consider how you would want God to discipline you. Be consistent with discipline and follow-through.

Lifework:

- 1. Review this lesson with your spouse and children (assuming they are old enough to understand)**
- 2. Where would you like to grow as a parent? If your kids are older, ask them for some feedback on your parenting, and how they would like to see things change in the home. Ask your spouse too.**
- 3. Celebrate the progress that you are making in building a family and keep building. All buildings require regular maintenance and improvements. So keep up the good work!**

Lesson 7: Be Equipped for Battle [Eph. 6:10-17]

If you are going to make disciples, they must be equipped for battle, because as soon as you submit your life to Christ you become engaged in an epic conflict. Many of you are familiar with the concept of a spiritual battle and the need for the armor of God. Spiritual armor is something that we want to put on daily, yet sometimes we forget to think about it. I live in Southern California where the weather is seemingly perfect. I don't even own a coat. So, I rarely think about outerwear or the need for protection. Sometimes, I find myself unprepared and suffering for it. Similarly, there are times that I'm lulled in the spiritual climate, and I'm unprepared and I suffer for it. Recently I had one of those experiences, and unfortunately it wasn't the first time (and it probably won't be the last). I was in the midst of a difficult situation, and was feeling discouraged and distressed about my service to God ...

Do you ever have the sense that there is a battle between good and evil? You're not alone in that feeling, because it is a universal idea associated with the human experience. **There are times that I struggle feeling discouraged, distressed, distracted, defeated, doubtful, and divided. I'm sure you do too. Those feelings may be related to a spiritual battle.** Being equipped for battle will help us to respond to those feelings in a way that glorifies God. What is the nature of the battle, and what shall we do to be victorious?

Paul begins the stirring summary of his letter to the Ephesians by declaring, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" [Eph. 6:10-11]. Paul's reference to "finally" connects us to the preceding chapters where we discovered our identity in Christ and the marks of a disciple. Then he prepares us for this new life with a solemn exhortation: 1. There is a spiritual war, 2. You must be strong in the Lord, 3. Put on the whole armor of God.

1. There is a spiritual war: Literature, philosophy, art, and religion all recognize the conflict between good and evil, but may vary widely on the cause and nature of the conflict. In the iconic "Star Wars" franchise there is an energy field created by all living things and that surrounds and holds the universe together – the force. The force is impersonal and can be appropriated equally by the dark (evil) and light (good) sides in this fictional cosmic conflict. Ironically, both sides in the Star Wars franchise believe that the other is evil.

The Bible explains the actual nature and the source of the conflict in describing the spiritual war. The forces involved are spiritual or angelic beings. The spiritual combatants are either loyal to God; or in rebellion to God, or thus loyal to the initiator of rebellion the devil. It should be noted that although these spiritual created beings are more powerful than humans they are less powerful than God who created them. In contrast to an all-knowing, ever-present, all powerful, eternal, and infinite God, Satan is a created and finite being. Pardon the spoiler alert, but in the end of this epic conquest God and those who are aligned with Him completely defeat Satan the adversary. The existence of the battle is part of God's ultimate redemption plan, and is also a consequence of man's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. So, if you are sensing there is a

battle between good and evil in the world you are right. And now you see the source and the nature of the conflict. If you are ignorant of the spiritual battle, or ignore the reality of it, you are likely losing the battle.

Two dangers related to the battle are over-emphasizing or under-emphasizing the existence of a spiritual war. Over-emphasizing assumes that every struggle, whether physical or emotional, is a spiritual attack. Satan's resources are limited, and it is fair to say that not every hardship or temptation is a result of a direct spiritual attack from the devil or fallen angels. On the other hand, under-emphasizing ignores the spiritual reality and thus is likely to fail to appropriate God's resources in the conflict. So, don't be quick to rule-out potential sources of the difficulties. The struggle may be primarily related to something physical, emotional, spiritual, or perhaps a combination of factors.

So, as soon as I made a connection that my feelings of discouragement and distress may have been related to a spiritual attack, and not just the physical circumstances, or my emotions, there was a new approach to the situation. Which brings us to our next step ...

2. You must be strong in the Lord: A disciple will appropriate the Lord's power to experience victory. A disciple accepts that there is a spiritual battle as described in the Bible, and that man is incapable of victory apart from God's strength. As a disciple matures in the faith they become stronger in the Lord. The purpose of being strong in the Lord is to be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. **The devil's strategy is to distract, discourage, divide, depress, distress, and sow disbelief. The purpose is to neutralize a disciple's effectiveness.** The schemes are often subtle and unfortunately have been effective in neutralizing many Christians from engaging in the epic cause of advancing God's kingdom.

As soon as you submitted your life to Christ you become engaged in an epic conflict. **Growing in spiritual maturity is like basic training to prepare you for battle. You are strengthened in the Lord and discover how to utilize weapons and protective armor.** Nevertheless, the weapons and armor in and of themselves are ineffective if the soldier is not strong in the Lord. In the saints' war against the devil, the disciple is constantly encouraged that it is the Lord's strength imparted to the believer that provides victory in battles, and ultimately victory in the war.

When I'm discouraged or distressed the awareness of the availability of God's strength encourages me. I've learned that God is trustworthy, faithful, and able. Knowing that He will strengthen me, and guide me, immediately gives me hope and peace.

3. Put on the whole armor of God: Paul wrote the letter while under custody of Roman Soldiers. The uniform of the soldiers was very familiar to his audience. So Paul uses the analogy to describe the spiritual resources provided by God for the campaign. First, the belt of truth represents the Christian faith. Putting on the belt is a soldier's first step to prepare for battle. This action holds other pieces of protection in place. The better you know and believe the truth about God and the faith the stronger you are in the Lord. Second, put on the breastplate of righteousness. Our confidence in battle, that protects our most vital and vulnerable parts is

knowing we are right with God, because of faith in Jesus' sacrifice for us. If our righteousness were based on our efforts to be righteous it would offer uncertain protection. Third, the Roman soldier's sandals studded with sharp nails to ensure a good grip, represent preparation with the gospel of peace. The gospel provides the sure footing or foundation for the Christian life.

Fourth, disciples are to take the shield of faith so they can quench the enemy's fiery darts. The large shield used by Roman soldiers protected the whole body from blazing arrows, and extinguished them as well. When the enemy seeks to cause despair, discouragement, division, or distress, it is the shield of our faith, or trust in God, that protects us. Fifth, a disciple puts on the helmet of salvation. The reality of our salvation provides hope in our difficult times, and encourages us that our ultimate victory is certain. Finally, a disciple is equipped with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. A disciple learns to protect herself from the enemy's temptations by knowing and using the Word of God. A disciple will use the Word to defeat the devil's temptations just like Jesus did in the wilderness [Matt. 4].

So, although my circumstances had not changed, I remembered there is a spiritual battle; and chose to find my strength in the Lord. And like a Southern Californian who needed to be reminded to prepare for bad weather, disciples need to be equipped and reminded to prepare for the spiritual battle.

Lifework:

- 1. When was the last time that you felt that you were in the midst of a spiritual battle? What made you think that it was a spiritual battle?**
- 2. How were you strong in the Lord? How did the spiritual armor help in that situation?**
- 3. What did you learn from that experience (or what you've learned in this lesson) that will help in the future?**

Lesson 8: Be Supremely in Love with Jesus [Rev. 2:1-7]

Have you ever been in love? Have you experienced compelling, intense, strong feelings, or emotions for someone? Have you yearned to spend time with someone because it felt so good to be in his presence? Have you ever dreamt about spending the rest of your life with him? Have you ever eagerly anticipated reading a love note, and wondered what will he say?

I am passionately in love with my wife. I love to spend time with her. Being with her feels great to me. The twenty-five years that we've been married have been the best years of my life. And I don't want to imagine life without her. My wife assures me that she loves me too, but she has also confessed that there is another man in her life. She has no shame about it either. Furthermore, on more than one occasion she has let me know that her feelings for him are stronger than for me. Although the first time she told me I was upset, I've now come to accept that this is how it should be. It's not that we have some forward-thinking marriage, it is because we have an upward thinking marriage, and the man is Jesus. **Jesus is the master passion of a disciple's life.**

Jesus wrote a love note to the church at Ephesus [Rev. 2:1-7]. It was delivered through the Apostle John about thirty years after Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians. It is a love note from a man who appreciates the one He loves and offers abundant praise for her many good traits and behaviors. But He also confronts the one He loves that she has drifted from Him. He wants her back because she is loved, and He urges her to return to her first love, because she needs Him, whether she realizes it or not. In essence, Jesus commends, corrects, and offers a cure.

The commendation: Jesus praises the church in verses 2-3, *"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary."* The church was commended for good works, steadfast faith, and sound doctrine. First, it is wonderful and encouraging to know that Jesus is aware of all that we do for Him. Second, the commendation is impressive. Any church that does good works to advance the kingdom, patiently endures through steadfast faith, and is known for doctrinal integrity is deserving of an accolade or two. What were the conditions that created such a praiseworthy assembly? We can attribute the health of the church to the legacy of great leaders connected to the church at Ephesus: Paul, Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos, Timothy, and the Apostle John. Undoubtedly the church's passion to make disciples, develop leaders, and reach their world for Jesus influenced the commendation. But I believe the clue that reveals the key to their commendation is found in the correction ...

The correction: Jesus corrects them in verse 4, *"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."* First, I believe this is the clue that reveals why this church was

praiseworthy. **Because they loved Christ supremely they passionately sought to advance His kingdom and remained steadfast during adversity. The love for Christ was kindled by the sound doctrine they received. And they sought to live (apply) the solid teaching because they loved Christ supremely.**

Yet, The church was corrected for drifting from Jesus, *"You have left your first love."* First love speaks to priority not chronology. They had made Christ their master passion, but over the course of time other passions, unbridled objects of affection, had crept in. At first the seemingly innocent flirtations of these other affections appeared harmless enough. There was still so much to commend about this sure union. But then the love letter is delivered, and we are gently confronted by the One who has loved us supremely. The one who not only knows our good works, but also knows our hearts better than we know our own. And unless we have become completely callous to this One whose love has been so compelling towards us we are convicted if He delivers this letter to us. Nevertheless, the words not only bring conviction, but they bring comfort – even before we consider the cure. These words bring comfort to every disciple, because they confirm that there was a time when Jesus was the master passion of their life. It reveals that they are loved and even though they have drifted, the One they have loved continues to love them supremely, and He wants them back. I am yearning to come back and when I wonder how, I discover that He has made the way.

The cure: Jesus reveals the cure in verse 5, *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works ..."* **First, we are called to remember** from where we have fallen. In essence to reflect upon a time in your life when you were supremely in love with Christ. What did it look like? Remember your passion for Bible learning. Recall how you read the Scriptures like you were reading a love letter from God and hanging on every word. Reflect upon your prayer life, worship, sharing your faith, service, giving, and relationships with other believers. **Second, we are called to repent.** I need to change my thinking about God, my drifting from Jesus, and the reality of allowing other affections to obscure the One I'm committed to truly love. Then **third return and do the first works.** When we return and do the first works there is the depth of mature love. A passion that is distinct from the zeal of young love. A supreme love that has been nurtured through seasons of testing, discovery, and realization that no other love satisfies like being supremely in love with Jesus.

Lifework:

- 1. Describe a time in your life when you were supremely in love with Jesus.**
- 2. Reflect upon your current situation. Have other affections obscured your love for Jesus? What might they be?**
- 3. If Jesus is currently your supreme love rejoice. If Jesus is not your current supreme love consider what changes you will make to return to Jesus.**

Lesson 9: Be a Bible Teacher [Ac. 20:25-27, 1Tim. 1:3-11]

There will likely come a time where each church leader will wonder if Bible teaching will be effective for a successful church. There will likely be a temptation or test to adopt a philosophy of ministry that minimizes Bible teaching, because a church down the street had adopted a model that attracts a crowd and they minimize Bible teaching. Nevertheless, **if you are going to make disciples you must teach the Bible.** The understanding and application of sound doctrine is a primary tool for making disciples. Converts cannot develop spiritually nor live in conformity to Christ's commands absent Bible teaching. You can arguably entertain, motivate, mobilize, and attract people without teaching the Bible, but you cannot make disciples.

Researcher George Gallup observes, "Americans revere the Bible - but, by and large, they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates." For example, Gallup research revealed that fewer than half of all adults could name the four gospels. A Barna poll indicated that at least 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. Another survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that Billy Graham preached the Sermon on the Mount.

In a culture that is increasingly secular we should not be startled by post-Christian America's general reply, but the greater concern is biblical ignorance among Christians. **Albert Mohler, President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, observed, "Christians who lack biblical knowledge are the products of churches that marginalize biblical knowledge."** Bible teaching now often accounts for only a diminishing fraction of the local congregation's time and attention. The move to small group ministry has certainly increased opportunities for fellowship, but many of these groups never get beyond superficial Bible study. The decline of Bible teaching in corporate worship, and youth and small group settings, hinders the formation of disciples.

Nevertheless, there is hope. The church at Ephesus discovered the connection between Bible teaching and effective disciple making in a culture that in many ways was similar to the pluralistic, relativistic, hedonistic, and materialistic world that we live in. **Here are two key principles that reveal how making disciples is related to Bible teaching.**

A. The need for the whole counsel of God. As Paul bid farewell to the elders of Ephesus he affirmed that *he was innocent of the blood of all men because he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God* [Ac. 20:25-27]. Paul had just announced that he *kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it ...* [Ac. 20:20]. The whole counsel is presumably contrast with the idea of partial counsel. In essence, to teach the whole counsel you need to address issues that may be contrary to the greater cultural narrative and thus controversial. It can be challenging, but it allowed Paul to declare his innocence.

There is reluctance on the part of some to communicate the whole counsel, because of the inherent risk of offending some who will depart from the assembly. This tension has caused some to adopt a philosophy of seeking to be sensitive to the values of the curious and guarding against offending them until they can consider the benefits of the gospel and receive Christ as Savior. Their weekend gatherings tend to offer teaching that is focused on perceived needs, and attracting rather than possibly offending people. **In the “seeker sensitive” model, it is not that the teaching is heretical or unorthodox, but the problem relates to neglecting what isn’t taught. If on the other hand, you adopt an expositional approach that explains the Scripture in light of their historical and grammatical context, and teach verse by verse through books of the Bible, you are likely to address all of the issues that God intended.** If we are going to make disciples people need to be taught the whole counsel of God in order to live in conformity to Christ.

B. The need for sound doctrine. Paul’s first recorded letter to Timothy was written about three years after Paul established the church. Paul recognized Timothy’s leadership prior to departing to Macedonia, and wrote to encourage, equip, and establish the church. Eight [8] times in the letter Paul affirms the need for sound doctrine. In the beginning of the letter we learn that the purpose of sound doctrine is to establish love and expose sin such that people discover God’s righteousness, and their need for Christ and His gospel [1Tim. 1:1-11]. There were threats to sound doctrine from Greek Gnostic philosophers, and Jewish teachers of fables and myths whose teaching did not build up in the faith.

The antidote to liberalism, legalism, pluralism, relativism, syncretism, hedonism, and any other “ism” that can cause a schism is sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is teaching that is consistent with the Bible. A key need is for teachers to teach what the passage of Scripture declares. Every teacher approaches the Bible with some sense of a philosophy of ministry or systematic theology. Too often teachers impose that viewpoint on the text to try to make the text mean what the teacher wants it to mean rather than actually teaching: what it says, what the words mean in a historical and grammatical context, and how you can apply it to your life. Don’t impose your agenda or presupposition. **Also, do your homework to ensure that your interpretation aligns with the historic and accepted faith.** A great free resource for sound commentaries is Blue Letter Bible www.blueletterbible.org.

Lifework:

Here are some practical ideas to develop a culture of Bible teaching and learning:

1. Equip the local church by teaching expositional verse-by-verse Bible studies through books of the Bible to model and encourage Bible learning.

2. Encourage regular Bible learning using reading (or listening) plans. Plans that help people be intentional to learn the Bible in context are remarkably helpful. Reinforce the desired behavior by frequently discussing Bible learning, and celebrating those that are growing in this discipline.

3. Empower people to share what they are learning with others. Every disciple can be a Bible teacher. Each of us should be empowered to share with others what we are learning. Parents are called to teach their children [Eph. 6:4, Deut. 6:4-9]. All of us are to be diligent to present ourselves approved to God, workers who do not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth [2Tim. 2:15]. So each of us should be empowered to teach whether one-on-one, or to a few, or to a multitude.

4. Edify the community (small) group experience by using it as a platform for developing multiple Bible teachers. The smaller group should be a place of primarily robust Bible learning and teaching that builds-up believers. The more teaching prospects that are nurtured, trained, and developed through the experiences of teaching the Bible the better. Smaller groups do not need to compromise social relationships or Bible learning – ideally groups are “both and.”

Lesson 10: Be Filled with the Spirit [Ac. 19:1-7, Eph. 5:18]

I'm not a huge pastry fan, but I do enjoy a fresh hot slice of apple pie with a generous scoop of rich vanilla ice cream. The rich creamy ice cream luxuriously melting over the warm flaky buttery crust is pretty much irresistible. Pie a la Mode was invented about 1885. Fruit pies were common in the Roman Empire as early as the 5th Century B.C. and ice cream was available to the general public by 1660. Yet, the world would wait more than 200 years before ice cream and pie were combined to offer something wonderful – pie a la Mode. The moral of the story is that sometimes “both and” is better than “either or.”

What is the “both and” of making disciples? **We need to be filled with the Spirit and intentional to make disciples.** Some might assert that *not* being intentional is organic, and thus led by the Spirit. But that is not necessarily the case. Similarly, one could argue that if a process is intentional (strategic) that it is of man (flesh) and not of the Spirit. But again, a review of the Scriptures reveals that the claimed divide between organic and strategic is a false dichotomy. In fact, a review of Paul's ministry at Ephesus demonstrates the “both and” principle [Ac. 19:1-7, Eph. 5:18].

Have you ever met people who claimed to be followers of Jesus, but there just seems to be something missing that makes you wonder if they really are submitted to Him? When Paul returned to Ephesus, he found some disciples and asked the curious question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” On no other occasion do we have a record of Paul making this inquiry. What prompted him to ask? Presumably, there appeared to be something missing in their spiritual lives that prompted the question. Perhaps they did not seem to be submitted to Christ as Lord, or empowered by the Spirit for Christian living, or Paul had some discernment about what was lacking. These disciples at Ephesus confessed their ignorance of the Holy Spirit [2].

Yet, the text indicates they were disciples and implies they were believers. They understood the need for repentance and desired to follow Jesus [4]. **But they were apparently seeking to become mature followers of Christ by the power of self-discipline or man's efforts rather than the power of God's Spirit.** And Paul recognized the problem. Subsequently the Holy Spirit came upon them and was manifest [6].

Jesus declared that His followers would receive power to represent Him when the Holy Spirit came upon them [Ac. 1:8]. He likened it to being baptized with the Holy Spirit, or being filled with the Holy Spirit [Ac. 1:5, 2:4]. We believe that the baptism or filling of the Spirit is distinct from salvation, but may occur at the same time or subsequent to being saved. The work of the Holy Spirit empowers Christian living. Jesus affirmed that the Holy Spirit was available to those who sought this gift from God, and were yielded to Him [Lu. 11:9-13].

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he instructed them, “be filled with the Spirit” [Eph. 5:18]. The Greek reveals that it is a commandment, and the tense can be translated, “being constantly filled with the Spirit.” The terminology of being filled might cause some to assume that we can

leak the Holy Spirit like a car engine can leak a quart of oil. Or we might think that the issue is how much of the Holy Spirit a believer has. Nevertheless, the issue is not how much of the Holy Spirit we have, but how much of us the Holy Spirit has. **Being filled with the Holy Spirit flows from being submitted to Jesus. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to be disciples and to make disciples.**

Once the believers at Ephesus were filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul began an intentional process to mentor them to become mature followers of Christ [Ac. 19:8-10]. Paul taught the Scriptures daily to make disciples and develop leaders at Ephesus. The Bible helps us to understand God and know His commandments. Thus Bible learning is critical to being a disciple. For example, it is through the Scriptures generally, and Ephesians specifically, that we learn how being filled with the Spirit is manifest in praise, gratitude, mutual respect, marriage, family, and the workplace [Eph. 5:17-6:9]. **But knowledge apart from the power of the Spirit to apply the lessons is futile. So, making disciples requires us to be filled with the Spirit and intentional (“both and”).**

The filling of the Spirit is so critical to disciple making that Paul issued a sober warning, “And don’t be drunk with wine in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit ...” [Eph. 5:18]. Please pardon the pun about “sober” warning, for the issue is not limited to excessive alcohol consumption. Paul’s exhortation is connected to the earlier cautions to live carefully as wise, redeem the time, and understand and do the will of God [Eph. 5:15-17]. Excessive alcohol consumption is an obstacle to being controlled by God, and is sin. And Paul notes that being drunk is dissipation. Dissipation relates to squandering energy, time, money, or other resources. The only way to way to avoid wasting resources and wasting a life is to be intentional to live as Christ’s disciples who make disciples. And the only way to be a disciple is to be controlled by God or filled with the Spirit. Thus the moral of this story is that sometimes “both and” is better than “either or.”

Lifework:

- 1. How can disciples neglect the need for the filling of the Spirit?**
- 2. Why is it helpful to have an intentional process, along with the filling of the Spirit, to help become a disciple?**
- 3. How do you believe that being filled with the Spirit and an intentional process would help you as a disciple to make disciples?**