

***Jesus says, "Make Disciples" (Pt. 5 – The Disciple-Maker)***

*John 15:1-11; Luke 10:1-2;17-21*

Temple Baptist Church

July 16, 2017

**Introduction:** September 1<sup>st</sup> of this year will mark the two-year anniversary of Sarah and I moving to Jamestown. For me, it's the second go around as I was born and raised in the area, but for Sarah it's a place that she would have never envisioned herself. But, that's the risk you run when you marry a guy from North Dakota! When Sarah and I were first dating, I remember asking her what came to mind when she thought of North Dakota prior to us being a couple. Her response – "Cold". Today if you ask her the same question her response would be, "Cold...but, with pretty sunsets." Yet, all jokes aside – Sarah and I are thankful for where the Lord has called us. Most importantly, we're thankful for the church community and friends that we've made and been able to reconnect with.

For those of you that have moved to Jamestown, or moved anywhere for that matter, you know the difficulties that come with making friends. It can be really awkward, right? In a sense, it's like dating – we want to be ourselves, but not expose *too* much of our craziness or our potential love interest will go running for the hills. For some of us, we may feel like we're a bottle of poison and if we force our new acquaintance to drink the entire bottle they'll end up dead, but if we give them small doses of our crazy true selves over an extended period of time they'll build up an immunity and voila, we're friends!

Making friends is also difficult because it requires vulnerability, especially when you're the new kid on the block. *What did you say your name was? Oh, nice to meet you. My name is Lonely – will you tolerate me?* It's awkward and kind of humiliating!

For some of us, we have certain criteria that people need to meet in order for us to befriend them. *Do we have a similar belief system? Do we have the same interests and hobbies? Do we see eye-to-eye on politics? Are our children the same age?*

For others of us, my wife being a prime example, all that is required to be our friend is that the other person have a pulse. What a blessing it is to be married to someone that befriends others right off the bat!

Throughout his Gospel, John records the disciple's progression of spiritual growth as well as the changes that take place in their relationship with Jesus. In John 1 we first witness the disciples as *seekers* and then as *followers* in John 4. In John 13, Scripture tells us that the disciples progressed even further to the position of *coworkers* or *servants* as fishers of men. Finally, in John 15:15 we see Jesus make an amazing statement when he says, "I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father." Pretty incredible, right? Like Moses and Abraham before them, Jesus' disciples are now identified as "friends of God"! (Exod. 33:11; 2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23).

Dann Spader writes, “Friendship goes beyond servanthood. We long to meet with friends. We are free at any time to call our friends and pour out our heart to them. Friendship involves a deepened relationship, a freedom to enter into one another’s presence, a security of position.” In this fourth and final stage – *the disciple-maker* – there is no longer a striving to please God as we realize we are accepted and beloved by Him. Being a friend of God means that we enter into a rest and find joy by simply being in the Lord’s presence. Perhaps most importantly, as a friend of God – as a fully-fledged disciple-maker – we know that the relationship is not about us, but rather about what Jesus has done *for* us.

After nearly three and a half years into His ministry, Luke 10 tells us that Jesus is making His final approach into Jerusalem for the Passover, where He will be betrayed and put to death on the cross. About six months prior to this event – in Luke 9 – we find Jesus sending out His twelve disciples two by two to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick as they traveled from village to village. They came back full of joy.

Luke 10 tells us that Jesus is once again sending out His followers, but rather than it being only the initial twelve, v. 1 and 2 say that “the Lord appointed seventy-two others, and he sent them ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself was about to go, He told them, ‘The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.’” The workers referenced here would be those that fall into the category of *fishers of men* that we learned about last Sunday. These fishers of men were the next generation of workers – like teenagers – they were eager to prove themselves and would have brought much charisma and enthusiasm with them as they preached the Kingdom of God. Scripture says that when the seventy-two returned from ministering they did so “with joy” (Luke 10:17), just as the twelve had in Luke 9.

If we jump ahead a few verses to Luke 10:21 we read that at this time Jesus Himself “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” or was “full of joy through the Holy Spirit.” This is the only time that Scripture tells us Jesus was full of joy. So, what was it that made our Savior so happy?

### **Jesus’ Joy Is Our Joy**

I believe that Jesus’ joy is a product of His difficult, yet productive labor for His Father’s Kingdom. At this moment, after approximately three and a half years of pouring Himself into the lives of His disciples, Jesus knows that they are now ready to repeat the process and invest themselves into the lives of others. Spader writes that Jesus’ “efforts to build a movement of multiplying disciples are now bearing fruit. He knows that 2,000 years later, you and I will also be Christ-followers because His ministry calling was being realized. He had made disciples who would make disciples.” It’s clear that Jesus’ mission was not to reach the world with the good news of His Father’s Kingdom, but rather to birth a movement of disciples who would make more disciples who could reach the world with the good news. Jesus’ joy was rooted in the fact that His disciples understood their mission to make fruit and were doing it!

Over the span of four years, Jesus had taken His disciples from *seekers* (John 1:39) to *followers* (John 10:27) to *fishers of men* (Matt. 4:19) and now finally to *disciple-makers* (Luke 10:2).

He then instructed them to do what He Himself had been doing: to go and make disciples of all nations. The book of Acts is testament to the fact that the disciples followed through on Jesus' command. We see the Commission given in Acts 1:8 where Jesus informs His disciples that they will receive power from the Holy Spirit and will be His witnesses. Furthermore, in Acts 2:5 we read that the disciples' work began in Jerusalem and moved into Judea and Samaria in Acts 8:5, and then continued throughout the remainder of the earth in Acts 8:26. The disciples went out into the world and duplicated the process, making disciples who could make more disciples.

One sure way of knowing that you've reached the pinnacle of this progression as a disciple-maker is you no longer strive or try hard to win God's favor. If you've reached this point in your faith journey than you know that you have the Savior's favor due to His work on the cross. If you're a disciple-maker than you feel the freedom to be yourself with God and love to meet with Him. If you've reached the status of "friend of God" than you are assured of His love for you and long to be in His presence.

Being a disciple-maker – a friend of God – doesn't come easily. If I can be honest with you all this morning, there are days that I wouldn't put myself in this category. In fact, I would be willing to bet that many Christians never reach this fourth and final stage. In his book, Spader equates the disciple-maker to a mature parent. He writes, "So many of us want the benefits of parenthood without the pain of getting there. So many of us want spiritual children, but not the life of hard work, disciplined living, sacrificial giving, and hours of prayer and concern. Maturity takes time. It can't be rushed." The cost of being a Christ-follower is great, but we will experience no greater joy than bringing joy to He who made it possible for us to have joy eternally. If you're not yet a disciple-maker, like me, that's okay. But, don't draw back from the mission to which you have been called – lean into life's difficulties with faith and endurance (Heb. 10:38-39). Once you have endured, you will reap the reward of the harvest and will bring joy to the Son.

### **The Needs of God's Friends**

God often calls His friends into unique ministry situations such as turning a youth group into a youth ministry that is effective at making disciples or helping a women's group become focused on making disciple-makers. Dann Spader writes that the disciple-maker "is no longer content with just leading Bible studies or being involved in church activities. They come to understand the mission of Jesus and the mission given to us, and they too want to experience Him fully. They too want to experience disciple-making and building a movement of multiplication."

Making the shift from a bible study group to a disciple-making ministry often brings attacks from the enemy and the disciple-maker needs to know how to defend themselves. The truth is that Satan doesn't mind when we simply stay busy with church activities – he relishes it. But when the church begins to reach the lost, grow new believers, and equip them to go and repeat this process, friends of God become targets for the enemy.

In many cases, the friend of God knows that the Holy Spirit can do something amazing through his or her life. They know how to work, serve and have a heart for discipleship and evangelism, and know how to make disciples. As a result, God often calls the disciple-maker to unique tasks such as launching new ministries, often in radically new ways. People like Dawson Trotman, launching the Navigators - a ministry to military men or Bill Bright, being burdened to see Christ's presence move on college campuses developing Campus Crusade for Christ.

Ironically, and tragically, it is not uncommon for the person in the disciple-maker stage to become the enemy of the traditional church system.

This friend of God who is led by the Spirit in such a direct way to reach their neighborhood or a specific population with the Gospel that their ministry grows by leaps and bounds apart from the local church. As a result, the disciple-maker is frequently viewed as *trying to do their own thing* and experiences pushback from the very institution that should be encouraging their God-ordained venture.

Spader writes that "while many traditional churches see these people as a threat, they should be championed, commissioned, supported, and sent out. When a church truly gets effective in making disciple-makers, these types of people multiply." These friends of God need exhortation from the pulpit as disciple-makers and can be incredibly effective for the Kingdom of God when they are commissioned by the local church and sent out with prayers to launch new ministries, revitalize dying churches, or plant new ones.

### **Our Goal is Multiplication**

One of the biggest reasons I believe we struggle to make disciples who make more disciples is because the concept of multiplication is counterintuitive to our culture. In America we value getting bigger, adding more people to the fold, and growing in both number of activities and options. Growth isn't inherently bad – in fact it's good. But multiplication is much better.

Spader asks his readers to look at it this way – "If you attended a church of 100 people and it grows by a healthy conversion growth rate of ten percent a year, your church would double in size every 7.2 years. Within about thirty years, it would grow to include 1,600 people (if no one left or died). But if that same church of 100 people each multiplied themselves into one other disciple who could also make disciples, and if you allowed each disciple three years to produce themselves, in ten years that church of 100 would become a church of 1,000. In twenty years it would grow to more than 10,000 people. And in thirty years, this same church would now be over 100,000 people strong, all through the power of multiplication." Wow! There's a reason Jesus focused on multiplication instead of growth!

Perhaps no passage in Scripture more clearly provides a blue print for multiplication than John 15. In John 15:1-5 Jesus says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it

remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.”

One particular aspect of TBC that I have been encouraged by from the get-go is the way our body wants to grow in the Word of God together. In our church this is played out on several different avenues, e.g., Life Groups, Sunday School, Youth Group, Children’s Church, Bible Study Fellowship, prayer groups, and all sorts of other small group gatherings that take place each week. This is awesome - discipleship is a great. Yet, Jesus says that discipleship is not our primary mission.

This summer our adult Sunday School class here at TBC has been going through a preaching series on the book of James by Francis Chan. In his session on faith and works, Chan compares the believer’s life who has faith, but not works to the graphic image of an obese man sitting on a couch. The man on the couch is so large that he is physically unable to get up to feed himself so he relies on someone to feed him. Chan says that the believer with faith, but without works is like the obese man in that they keep consuming, but never put what they’re taking in into action. In what ways are we as Temple Baptist Church continually going through the all-you-can eat buffet of Bible studies? What will it take to get off the couch?

Multiplying believers is our primary mission.

When Sarah and I moved to Jamestown in September of 2015 it took effort and diligence on our part to make friends and to sustain those relationships. The same is true for those that befriended us – it took effort and diligence. As friends of God it takes continuous effort and diligence to abide in the Vine, Jesus. Yet, this is what is required to bear fruit. Our task is to abide. The Vine’s task is to bear fruit. As disciple-makers we will make disciples who make more disciples to the degree to which we abide in Jesus and do as He did.

#### Sermon-based questions

- 1) From your perspective, what are some of the challenges that come with parenting? How might these same challenges apply in “spiritual” parenting?
- 2) How does family living differ from just living alone? What are the advantages of family living, and what are the difficulties?
- 3) Read 1 John 2:12-14. How do fathers, children, and young men differ in what they have accomplished?