

Jesus says, "Make Disciples" (Pt. 1 – The Preparation)

Matthew 22:37-39; Matthew 28:19-20

Temple Baptist Church

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Introduction: In my humble opinion, outside of the act of love and obedience in certain cases, I believe having an attitude of admiration for another person is the sincerest compliment and encouraging act that we can offer someone. In fact, I believe that the three facets of love, obedience, and respect all play a role in an individual's admiration for another. And to be admired? To not only be liked, but to be respected and held in high regard - what a wonderful sensation!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who I'm certain most of us are familiar with, is a man that I admire. Born February 4, 1906 in Breslau, Poland, Bonhoeffer was the sixth or seventh (depending on who came first – he or his twin sister Sabine) out of eight children born to Karl Bonhoeffer – a psychiatrist and neurologist – and Paula Bonhoeffer – a teacher and granddaughter to famous Protestant theologian Karl Von Hase. Bonhoeffer was raised in a healthy, yet rigorously driven environment. He was an accomplished pianist who many thought would become a professional musician until, at the age of 14, he informed his family of his desire to become a theologian.

Bonhoeffer earned the equivalent of a bachelor's and master's degree from a Protestant University and then obtained his doctorate of theology degree from the University of Berlin in 1927 graduating summa cum laude. He spent several years traveling throughout the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Spain, Italy, and Libya where he first witnessed the degradation and oppression that people of color faced, which led him to passionately preach against social injustice and on the peace of Christ that is for all peoples.

When Hitler and his Nazi comrades unconstitutionally imposed new church elections, which resulted in schism, Bonhoeffer stood his ground and refused to sign-off on any documentation that would take away the freedoms of the Confessing Church. In righteous resistance, Bonhoeffer headed an underground seminary that trained Confessing Church pastors that had not been corrupted by Nazi involvement. For the next couple of years Bonhoeffer would travel from one Eastern German village to another supervising his seminary students, most of whom were working illegally in their churches.

Following his return to Germany after a second brief stint in the United States, Bonhoeffer was harassed by Nazi authorities who forbade him to speak in public and required him to regularly report his activity to the police. At this time, he joined the Abwehr, a German military intelligence organization, where he acted as a courier to gain support from Western Allies. Bonhoeffer also played a vital role in helping German Jews escape Switzerland prior to his arrest in April of 1943. Two years later, Bonhoeffer and other fellow prisoners of war were stripped naked and were led into the execution yard where they were hanged. An individual who witnessed Bonhoeffer's death said these words: "I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer... kneeling on the floor praying fervently to God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man

prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the few steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God." Dietrich Bonhoeffer was 39 years old when he met his Savior face-to-face. What an admirable man that lived an admirable life!

Being admired is something each one of us desires, yet can be very unsettling if we disagree with the compliment others are bestowing upon us. Has it ever happened to you where someone compliments you on being gifted in the very area where you are most critical of yourself? Receiving that admiration from an outside source feels incredible not only because someone sees in us what we've always wanted to see in ourselves, but for the briefest moment we too believe it to be true. Yet, after a short time we slip back into an attitude of inferiority where we once again believe that we could never achieve the admirable status that others have attached to us. We feel like an outlier. Like a fraud.

This morning as we talk about the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, how many of us feel intimidated by these weighty commands given by Christ for our lives? *I can't do that! I'm not a great missionary! I'm not even a great Christian!* That's not me! I would be willing to bet that if you are feeling this way it's because you feel ill-prepared or ill-equipped to tackle the mission at hand. And for how many of us do we feel ill-prepared because we are looking at our own spiritual formation in the wrong way? Rather than treating our formation to Christ as a life-long pursuit we feel this overwhelming combination of fear and guilt that makes us buy into the lie that if we don't know how to make disciples by this stage in our Christian walk then we never will.

Jesus' words in the Great Commission, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19-20) is both a summarization of Christ's life and a charge for Christians to live every day of their lives in the same way that He lived His. As His disciples, we are tasked with the mission of making disciples who make even more disciples. In order to be fully obedient to our marching orders laid out in the Great Commission we must do so with Christ's Great Commandment, "Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind....and love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37-39) written firmly on our hearts, our lips, and in our actions.

This morning we're going to spend the rest of our time unpacking the preparation process that Jesus undertook to ready himself for disciple-making, the same process we as believers are to follow.

Prayer

Jesus is like us in every way

To fully grasp the notion that we can be as effective at making disciples who make more disciples as Jesus was we must recognize that Jesus took “on the likeness of humanity” – He is fully human; like us in every way. We see this recorded in Paul’s letter to the Philippians where in chapter 2:6-7 it reads, “Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.... he had come as a man...”

We find further Scriptural support for Jesus being like us in every way when in Hebrews 2:14, 17 we read that Jesus was made of flesh and blood as well as once again restating the fact that He was like His brothers and sisters in every way.

Further proof that we can make disciples like Jesus made disciples is found in Luke 2 where we read about the baby Jesus and then later about boyhood Jesus who it says “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.” (Luke 2:52). Jesus was a baby, then a boy who physically grew taller, stronger, and more intelligent. In Matthew 4, 21 and John 4 we read that Jesus became hungry and thirsty. In Matthew 8 and Mark 4 Scripture says that Jesus became weary and He slept. In addition, throughout several places in the Gospels we read that Jesus experienced sorrow, grief, and even wept. Except for our sinful nature, Jesus is like us in every way.

Yes, in addition to Jesus’ full humanity He was fully God (Col. 1:15; Col. 2:9), yet when we read that Jesus “emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant taking on the likeness of humanity” I believe that God chose to temporarily veil Jesus’ divinity so that His humanity could find full expression. The implications of this act by the Father toward the Son for us as believers is profound! As fully man, Jesus did not always know the next step in life to take. Does that sound familiar?! Jesus knew what it was like not to have a clue! Yet, He knew exactly where to go to find the answer. He wasn’t downloaded with Biblical data at birth – He had to study the Scriptures. He had to learn faith and obedience. Jesus is like us in every way and throughout His life He modeled the perfect process for believers to follow in order to make disciples who make more disciples.

The resources that Jesus had available to Him are the same resources available to you and me

You may be thinking, Surely Jesus’ miracles are proof that He pulled the God card on several occasions in order to heal, provide, and cast out demons. Not necessarily. In John 5:19 Jesus says these words, “Truly I tell you, the Son is not able to do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing.” Jesus’ miracles were not proof of His deity, but rather of His Messiahship (Luke 5:24; Matt. 11:4-5). Think about it: the apostles in the book of Acts reproduced many of the miracles that Jesus performed. They too healed the sick and raised the dead (Acts 3:6-8).

In his book *4 Chair Discipling* author Dann Spader asks his readers to think of it this way - imagine a king who has everything that a king ought to have: a rich wardrobe, servants who attend to his every request, and massive banquets for every time meal. Everything that he desires is brought to him. One day, as the king surveys his kingdom, he observes beggars in the street and pities them. He has an overwhelming desire to help. But how? He realizes that the only way to truly help the homeless is by becoming like them. So, while still remaining king, retaining every authority, right, and riches of his kingdom, he removes his royal garments and puts on the clothes of a beggar. The king then proceeds to leave the comforts of his castle to become a vagabond.

He lives exactly as the beggars live, surviving on the generosity of strangers and sleeping in the cold dank streets. While some give to him, others pass by mocking and spitting on him. The king suffers greatly. As king, he has every right and ability to call for his army to retaliate against those that have treated him unjustly, but he chooses not to, for if he did he could not fully experience life as a beggar. The homeless person has no royal army to call on to protect them. The king never stopped being king, and he never surrendered his authority over his kingdom. Nevertheless, in order to fully experience the beggar's life, he refused to exercise the rights and privileges that were his as king. This is what we see in the life of Christ.

Jesus wanted his disciples, and even those that opposed Him, to recognize that His miracles were not testimony to His own authority or power, but rather proof of the authority and power of God the Father. We see this clearly in John 14:10-11 where Jesus says to Philip, "Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves."

Although Jesus did not make use of His God card during his earthly life, He was indeed privileged to some extraordinary resources – the same resources that we as Christians are privileged to access.

In his text, Spader lists four critical resources that both Jesus and we are able to call upon and utilize. The first of these is the resource of the Holy Spirit. The Gospels reveal how every aspect of Jesus' life was saturated in and reliant on the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke 1 - 4 tell us that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and even filled and led by the Spirit. In the Gospels we read that Jesus was sealed by the Holy Spirit and that "He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" and even drove "out demons by the Spirit of God" (John 6:27; Luke 10:21; Matthew 12:28).

Second, Jesus relied on the resource of prayer. More than forty times Scripture indicates that Jesus would withdraw to a lonely place and pray (Luke 5:16). Also, in the book of Luke we are told that Jesus began His ministry after forty days of fasting and prayer and ended His earthly ministry in prayer when He "called out with a loud voice, 'Father into your hands I entrust my spirit.'" (Luke 4:1-11; Luke 23:46-47). Furthermore, in the Gospels we see Jesus' reliance on the resource of prayer when He utilizes it to walk on water (Matt. 14:25), choose His twelve

disciples (Luke 6:12), and also when showing compassion on a woman who had been caught in adultery (John 8:1-10). For Jesus, prayer was a source of strength that allowed Him to resist temptation and gave Him the opportunity to best learn His Father's desires (Matt. 24:41; Mark 1:38).

Third, Jesus had access to the resource of God's written Word. The New Testament, primarily the Gospels are littered with stories and situations where Jesus called upon His knowledge His Father's Holy Word. Jesus knew the Scriptures, made a point of studying them, and used them in ordinary ways throughout his earthly life. His understanding of God's Word made it possible for Him to clearly understand the events that lay before Him as He knew the Scriptures must be fulfilled (Matt. 26:54, 56; Luke 22:36-37; John 19:24, 28).

Finally, Jesus had access to the resource of supportive friends and family – perhaps a clearer term is community. Although Jesus' brothers were not initially supportive of His ministry, He gained strength from His parents who were a source of strength for Jesus when He was young. We see the familial bond between Jesus and His mother when we're told that Jesus was concerned for Mary's care all the way up until his crucifixion (Luke 19). Jesus' twelve disciples were both a source of great joy and sorrow, yet Hebrews 2:11 tells us that Jesus was not ashamed to call them (nor us!) His brothers and sisters.

For Jesus, relationships were not strategy; they were part of what it meant to live as a fully human individual. As God the Father is in community with Christ and the Holy Spirit, so the Son of God established community with His earthly brothers and sisters and drew strength from His relationship with them (Matt. 26:36-38). It is the reason why in Hebrews 10 Jesus tells us not to neglect gathering together, but encourage one another in this way. This was a resource that the early church in Acts clearly understood and utilized effectively.

Do not underestimate what God wants to do through you

Jesus isn't only our reason for making disciples, but His life is the perfect model for us to make disciples. He leads us in this process through His written Word, His authority as our resurrected Savior, and the presence of His Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us. Given Jesus' resurrected authority and the indwelling presence of the Spirit in our lives our tendency is to underestimate what God wants to accomplish through us.

In his book, author Dann Spader writes, "I personally believe that the greatest grief we bring to the heart of Jesus is our lack of faith in what He wants to do in and then through us. We underestimate what God wants to do!"

On several occasions throughout the Gospels we find Jesus rebuking His disciples for their lack of faith (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 16:8; Mark 16:14). One of these occasions takes place in Matthew 17 when a man brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus. The man informs Jesus that he had asked the disciples to drive out the evil spirit, but that they could not do it. Jesus, with anguish in His heart, replies: "You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How

long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.’ Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and from that moment the boy was healed. Then the disciples approached Jesus privately and said, ‘Why couldn’t we drive it out?’ ‘Because of your little faith.’ He told them. ‘For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.’”

Far too often we underestimate what God wants to do through us for His glory. And because of this, we look at the mission of Jesus as being beyond our ability. If that’s you this morning than you’re making a mistake.

While in the upper room on the night before He was put to death, Jesus’ last words to His disciples were simple and profound – “Ask” (John 14:13, 14, 16; 15:16). When we, as believers, simply ask we can approach the mission Jesus has given you and I with great joy and anticipation, because we know that the power to make disciples who make disciples does not within us, but within the resources that Jesus has made available to us. The same resources that Jesus in His humanity possessed!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer understood and utilized the resources of the Holy Spirit, prayer, God’s Word, and a supportive community. It’s clear to see this in both his writings and people’s recollections of the famous pastor, prophet, and spy. And as a result, Bonhoeffer made disciples who made more disciples.

The Great Commandment and Great Commission are woven together into one thought. Because we love God, we love people. Because we love people, we make disciples. Dietrich Bonhoeffer made disciples who made more disciples just like Jesus made disciples who made more disciples. This too is our mission. We have received from our heavenly Father what it takes. Now go and make disciples who make more disciples.

Amen.

Sermon-based questions:

- 1) What questions do you still have about Christ’s humanity/deity? How would you articulate the relationship between Jesus’s divine and human natures?
- 2) How does having the same resources available to you as Jesus had change or challenge your understanding about Jesus and the mission He has given us?
- 3) Read Hebrews 2:8-18 and Hebrews 5:7-10. How do these verses reinforce the fact that we can make disciples who make more disciples the same way as Jesus?

