

16. Jesus Taught the Disciples How to Develop Reproducing Christians

In our last topic, we talked a little about the difference between the Greek method of teaching and the Hebrew method of teaching. We saw that the Greek form of instruction was to give classroom instruction. We saw that these are often called class lectures. The Greek form of instruction focuses primarily on giving knowledge. The Greek form of education has become the most common form of education today.

In contrast, the Hebrew form of instruction was instruction by showing. Christ invited the disciples to go along with Him, so He could show them how to minister. Christ wanted the disciples to gain more than just knowledge. He wanted to show them how to develop godly character. He wanted to show them how to do effective ministry as they learned to understand and apply the knowledge He shared with them. In the same way, Christ wants us to teach by showing so that we help people to gain and apply knowledge, grow in godly character, and grow in effective ministry.

Let's look at the difference this makes when we apply it to the passage known as the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:18-20, we read, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.' Amen." In the Great Commission, we have one command that is to be carried out by doing three things. The command is: Make Disciples. Doing three things carries out this command: going, baptizing, and teaching.

Christians who have been taught through the Greek form of instruction have interpreted the Great Commission in several different ways. Some have changed the command in their thinking and interpret the command as help people to make decisions and profess to become Christians. Those who have done this feel that they have fulfilled the Great Commission when they get people to come forward in a church service or when they get a person to repeat a prayer after them. Such individuals have interpreted the Great Commission to say that we are to evangelize the lost. We are to evangelize the lost, but that is only a small part of the Great Commission.

Others place their focus on what happens after a person makes a decision. They feel that they have discipled a person when they have taken that person through a series of topics. With some people, these are a series of doctrinal topics. With others, it involves taking the person through a series of study books on different topics in the Christian life to help the new Christian gain knowledge of these topics. These individuals have interpreted the Great Commission to mean that a person has been discipled when he or she has gained knowledge of certain doctrines or certain topics on the Christian life. We are to help new Christians learn these things, but these are also only a small part of the Great Commission.

Probably the greatest misunderstanding of the Great Commission is to think that the Great Commission is only given to a few Christians. This seems to be the attitude of the majority of Christians who feel that they have done their part when they have gone to a church service, sung

some songs, put something in the offering, heard a few announcements, heard a few prayers, heard a sermon preached, and then gone home until the same time the next week when they repeat the same pattern again. These groups of people think they have done their part by going to the service and listening to a sermon. That is why the example of Christ is the opposite of the Greek model of teaching.

A true disciple is a person that has become a reproducing Christian. Let's see how Christ provided an example of how to obey the Great Commission by His example. Christ gave an invitation to all to follow Him. Some followed and others did not. Mark 10:22 says about the rich young ruler, "But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." The rich young ruler made the choice not to follow Christ. Christ allowed him to leave and did not try to make it easier for him to follow Christ.

However, there were also those that did follow Christ. When Christ met Andrew and John, in John 1:39, "He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour)." About a year later, Christ said to these same men, "Come and grow." Mark 1:17 says, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'" Between six and nine months later, Christ said, "Come and serve." Mark 3:13-14 says, "And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach." After His resurrection, Christ invited Peter, and the others, to, "Come and shepherd." John 21:16 says, "He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.' Throughout a period of three-and-a-half years, Christ had been showing the Twelve how to become disciples and how to make disciples that reproduced.

It was only after showing the disciples what to do, by His example, that Christ gave the Great Commission to Make Disciples. The disciples knew what to do and what to teach to make disciples, because Jesus had shown them how to make disciples. They had also learned that they could do nothing in their own strength but had to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through their lives. One of the last things Christ said to the disciples is recorded in Luke 24:49, where we read: "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Christ's final words are recorded in Acts 1:8, where we read: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." They had been shown how to make disciples, and then, they were given the power to make disciples.

Christ had shown the disciples what to do to make disciples. This included three main things. First, as they were going, they were to be sharing the Gospel wherever they went. They were to do this in the power of the Holy Spirit, not in their own strength. Mark 16:15 says, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'" They shared the Gospel wherever they had the opportunity. Acts 2:46-47 says, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and

simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” They also showed those who became Christians how to share the Gospel. When persecution came, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. However, Acts 8:4 tells what happened to the rest of the believers. That verse says, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”

Second, there are at least eight kinds of baptism mentioned in the New Testament. All eight deal with identification. The disciples helped the new believers become identified with a group of other believers where they could all grow together. Acts 2:41-42 says, “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The apostles helped the new believers identify with Christ and His body, the church, both by the act of baptism and by gathering them in groups small enough so that they could enjoy regular Bible study and fellowship together with the breaking of bread and prayer. The disciples understood that true identification with Christ meant helping the new believers both identify with Christ, as well as learn to function as a part of the body through Bible study and fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer.

Third, the disciples understood that the process of making disciples included helping all who believed learn to obey what they learned. This meant that they had to learn to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples knew that would only happen as the earlier disciples showed the new believers how to yield to the Holy Spirit so they would have the power to obey what they were learning from the Word of God. Acts 4:23-24 shows how the disciples reacted to persecution. Those verses say, “And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.’” Acts 4:31 gives the results, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” The evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit was speaking the Word of God with boldness.

The period of Acts 3-5 covers a period of about five or six years. Acts 6:1 tells us the results of showing people how to become disciples, “Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” Here, we see that the number of disciples was multiplying because they were being shown how to serve Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples immediately took action to solve the problem. The results are seen in Acts 6:7, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Acts 9:31 adds a few years later, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”

We see that Christ showed the disciples how to make reproducing disciples. To make disciples involves the process of showing a person how Christ can change and transform his or her life as

that person sees your example. It then includes leading that person to Christ. It also includes helping that person identify with a group of Christians who will help that new Christian grow. Then, it includes showing that person how to obey all that Christ has commanded through the power of the Holy Spirit. The process is only complete when that person has become a reproducing Christian. That is what the Lord has called us to do. May the Lord richly bless you as you show people, by your example, how to become reproducing Christians and equip them to do the same.