

LESSON 2: Causes of Discipleship Not Happening

I. Diversion from the Leader's Primary Calling

- A. Primary Calling: Eph 4:11-12 - Equipping the saints for service
 - 1. Leader's primary task is equipping
 - 2. All members are the ministers
 - 3. Result of all members as ministers - Body grows and matures
- B. Diversion:
 - 1. Other high sounding activities that have little to do with growing people to maturity
 - a. Micro-managing nuts and bolts operations that ought to be delegated
 - b. "Pastoral Care"
 - 1) Emotional contract between church and leaders - "If I am having a difficulty, I expect you to be there to get me through it, if not you are failing your job"
 - 2) This is appealing, because it seems like such a high calling
 - 3) If all you do is respond to needs, how does it equip the saints for ministry?
 - 2) Example: (Acts 6:2)
 - a. Leaders saw caring for these people as a diversion from their primary calling
 - b. They assigned the task to the church, the church was to pick people to take care of the need
 - c. They did not accept a task that was meant for the church to do
 - 1) (1 Cor 12:25) The church is to care for one another, it is not left to the leaders to do it
 - 2) Responding to and caring for all of the member's needs is not the primary job of church leaders
 - 3. Good is always the enemy of the best

II. Program Orientation toward Discipleship

- A. Scriptural examples demonstrate discipleship happens in relationship
 - 1. (Mk 3:14) - Jesus called disciples to be with him
 - 2. (Rom 10:12-14) - The need for a person
 - 3. (Acts 8:30-31) - Someone needed to guide the Eunuch
 - 4. Paul trained Timothy (Acts 16:1f; 1 Tim 1:2) & Titus (Tit 1:4)
 - 5. Proximity produces disciples

B. Program Orientation

1. Replacing person-centered growth with programs
 - a. Age-graded Sunday schools
 - b. Adult education classes
 - c. Needs based seminars
 - d. Highly structured discipleship programs
 - e. These contribute to discipleship, but miss a central ingredient - Personal attention
2. Problems with programs
 - a. Tend to be information/knowledge based
 - 1) Assumption - Information is transformation
 - 2) Not true, many people grew up memorizing scripture, but it not automatically transform them
 - b. Typically the one preparing for the many
 - 1) One, or a group prepares the material
 - 2) The rest come usually as passive recipients
 - c. Characterized by regimentation or synchronization
 - 1) Programs do not consider individual growth rate
 - 2) It is like a "mass production" approach
 - 3) Making disciples requires a customized approach
 - d. Generally have low personal accountability
 - 1) May have the illusion of personal accountability
 - 2) If there is accountability, it is usually on completing an assignment rather than committing to life change

III. Reducing the Christian Life

- A. Many reduce the Christian life to benefits we receive from Jesus
 1. It is all about being saved from Hell
 2. May be about living a more peaceful life
 3. May be about forgiveness
 - a. Bumper sticker - "I'm not perfect, just forgiven"
 - b. Reduce Christianity to forgiveness
- B. Jesus placed high demands for discipleship
 1. (Mt 10:34-39) - Take cross follow Christ and lose life to Christ
 2. (Mt 28:18-20) - Make "disciples"
 - a. Involves not just baptism
 - b. Also involves learning obedience to Christ
 3. Sermon on the mount rarely is followed as a lifestyle (Mt 5-7)
 4. We are to be apprentices for Christ
- C. This problem is in part an effect of the consumerism of our culture

IV. Two Tiered Understanding of Discipleship

- A. Exercise:
 - 1. How many of you can say, in the humble confidence of your heart, that you are true disciples of Jesus?
 - 2. How many of you can say, in the humble confidence of your heart, that you are a true Christian?
 - 3. Why is it that some can affirm being Christians without being disciples?
- B. (Lk 9:23) - If anyone wants to be my followers, he must take up cross daily and follow me
 - 1. Is this the standard for all people? What do our actions show?
 - 2. Being a Christian also means being a disciple

V. Unwillingness to call people to discipleship

- A. Afraid to ask too much or people will leave
 - 1. Some have seeker services, lower the bar to lure people in
 - 2. Some keep the high demands of Christianity in the background until someone gets really committed
 - 3. Maybe it is because leaders are afraid of a no-holds barred commitment themselves
- B. Jesus never pulled the punches on the demand for discipleship
 - 1. (Lk 9:57-62) - Nowhere to lay head, dead bury dead, etc.
 - 2. (Mt 19:21) - Give all possession to poor and follow me
 - 3. (Mk 9:43-48) - "Amputation" to keep from stumbling
- C. "If we start with a no-pain gospel, then it will become disillusioning, for it will not deliver what was promised. I know how empty the no-pain promises can be. I believe the infomercials for exercise equipment that tell me I can lose weight and have rock-hard abs in only three minutes a day. My wife and daughter ridicule me mercilessly for having accumulated the worthless gadgets in my exercise equipment graveyard. Just as the no-pain promises in the fitness field leave me feeling foolish, the same is true with our terms of discipleship. Jesus pleases only when we come to him on his terms. It is when we lose our life for his sake that we find it." - Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, p. 50

VI. An Inadequate View of Church

- A. Some do not see the church as a discipleship community
 - 1. The individualism of our culture has weakened the tight-knit

bond God created the church to have

- 2. Discipleship happens in relationship, not mere membership
- B. Eph 4:16 - Each individual part contributes to the growth of the body
 - 1. Discipleship happens in relationship with other Christians
 - 2. Discipleship is indispensable part of church
 - 3. (Jn 13:34-35) - Love is a sign of discipleship
 - 4. (Jn 17:20-23) - Tight knit unity a sign that we are his disciples

VII. No Clear Pathway to Maturity

- A. No clear, public pathway to mature and grow
 - The purpose (transforming into disciples) does not have a clearly identified process to go with it
- B. Jesus had a clear plan
 - 1. Stage one, early in his ministry - Disciples observe Jesus
 - 2. Stage two - Disciples invited to question and struggle
 - 3. Stage three - Disciples are short term missionaries
 - 4. Stage four - Disciples have baton passed to them as Apostles

VIII. Lack of Personal Discipling

- A. Many Christians have never been personally discipled
- B. The primary way people grow into self-initiating, reproducing, fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ is by being involved in highly accountable, relational, multiplying discipleship units of three or four people.
- C. One on one mentoring is good, but according to research, doesn't reproduce as well, while triads and quads do.

EVALUATION

<i>On a scale of 1 to 5 rate yourself on these characteristics of discipleship</i>					
Cause of Deficit	Evaluate Yourself				
Diversion from the primary calling of equipping the saints for ministry	Not True 1	2	3	4	True 5
Program Orientation to Discipling rather than a personal orientation	Not True 1	2	3	4	True 5
Reducing the Christian Life to benefits, or something else the minimizes discipleship	Not True 1	2	3	4	True 5
Two-Tiered Understanding of Discipleship, Disciple is a super-Christian	Not True 1	2	3	4	True 5
Unwillingness to call people to discipleship because the cost is too high	Not True 1	2	3	4	True 5
Inadequate View of Church as a Discipling Community	Not True 1	2	3	4	True 5
No Clearly identified Pathway to maturity and spiritual growth	Not True 1	2	3	4	True 5
Lack of Personal Discipling, Never having been discipled	Not True 1	2	3	4	True 5