

Our Mission (Some Fresh Perspectives)

I want to share some directions I sense God leading me in what would be a series of teachings I would want to begin with when I have the opportunity. (I have used several concepts such as Disciple Making and Community Transformation and terms such as DNA, Irreducible and others that would be expounded upon in individual teachings)

Many would say our mission is Matthew 28:19, and that is certainly a life verse of mine. But might I submit one recorded by John a few years later and which I would argue is the result of Matthew 28:19

A Great Multitude from Every Nation

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb Rev 7:9

As Christians is it not our Mission to populate eternity for our Lords worship and Glory?If so, then is not the best method for doing this found in Matthew 28:19, 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 all that I have commanded you. What I would call Disciple making. And if we answer yes, then would not then the evangelization of our community be our first step? So then, it is about is going!

Jesus said, Matthew 8:20, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." So Disciple makers will live a lifestyle of stepping outside of comfort zones in order to join Jesus in the adventure of extending the life of The Kingdom.

In church what we are really good at is gatherings. We are real good at putting together gatherings. But, it seems to me that by focusing first on the gathering, we miss the point that Jesus' focus was first on the going way of life. And so should we not then focus on developing gatherings that support a dynamic, outward, super natural lifestyle; gatherings that will be powerful and relevant. We work so hard to make our gatherings comfortable, but there is no life in comfort, I would suggest doing whatever we can to make them powerful.

Something I have found and would like you to think about is that most of the truly defining moments of our lives take place because we are willing to step out and trust that God has more for us. And what I have found is that it is really about a new mind set. We have to unlearn our old mindset and then reconnect with the true life giving meaning.

Most churches have a program approach to things. And it sells well in the Christian Bookstores. But with a program, things tend to become a duty. And then we get into the duty mode. And when we get into a duty mode we really begin to serve God for all the wrong reasons. We reach out with the wrong motivations, and then lost people become a project and we end up with the wrong results.

Often the result of programs is a kind of feel good ministry. Start a program, measure the results then we feel good. But, here is the problem; nothing is integrated into the

DNA of who we are in Christ. What should that be, well a couple of things it should be is lovers and blessers of other people.

And the end result when we are program driven is that we begin to have feelings of manipulation, uncomfortable feelings, both with ourselves and the programs we are taught to implement. No matter what it is a church is trying to do; the only type of real growth will come with authentic organic growth. This will only be achieved when we start with the proper DNA;that of Christ.

I do not want to just get people involved in programs. So the contrast is then getting them involved in the real adventure of accomplishing Rev. 7:9 by the obedience to Matt. 28:19, but accepting Mat. 8:20. This is the adventure we are all called to, following Christ. How, by truly loving others with no strings attached, not influencing, but trusting others that this can happen naturally, organically, contagiously and relationally. My experience has taught that this is possible.

Our world has changed so much in just the past 20 years. It has become so obvious that we need to change how we think about making Disciples of Christ Jesus. And so often I think as Christians what we want and tend to do is just wait. We want to wait for the Lord's direction, rather than act and trust that He will lead us in His way. But what happens when we sit back and wait....we become spiritually stagnant, and we become dull and tend to forget the harvest that is all around us. We forget about the everyday need to be birthing the Gospel in new people whom God puts into our lives daily. We must be about going, constantly about plowing forward in the harvest in new people, affecting not just them but the entire community and culture we live in. So I would like to offer some fresh...biblical perspectives.

1) Don't wait for them, go to them.

See, the days of "come to us" kind of ministry is over. And while the primary emphasis of church should be conversions, the current two younger generations have changed tremendously from the builders and boomers. Our culture has modified and society has transformed. A church can no longer expect that any particular type of worship service or special event will automatically attract people who have no connection with church at all.

And, our reaction, to the world today, should be a church that says, we are coming to you, just as we are! We must move toward a missional, more incarnational model, rather than a model that insist on saying, Come to us. And, conversion growth then should be from the bottom up, rather than the top down. Church leadership should be servants of new Christians, serving them as disciples of the harvest. In this type of approach, the approach of Jesus I must add, the focus shifts from self-glorification to God-glorification.

2) Don't isolate lives, transform lives. (Very, very, important)

People today are no longer asking us the question, is Christianity true. They are asking the question "What works for me?" They have a very experiential outlook on life. Today, in order for people to understand God, they need to experience God. This is only possible through a personal life transformation.

So churches need deeper, stronger, spiritual bases that flow out of a powerful relationship with Christ. Authentic changes in people demonstrate the true power of the gospel message. Only when new converts are experiencing life transformation will there be the multiplication of disciples. And, hear me, only if they are not extracted and isolated from their existing network of relationships. (This is huge) (Which leads to 3)

3) Don't just form groups, form communities!

A group is made up of people, but a community is made up of groups. In a community, whole spiritual families are birthed out of the harvest, and members of these families should then be engaged in activities based on the mission of the community. And by fighting spiritual battles, communities form, by strengthening and pulling together.

So our focus should be on multiplying our community through groups. As we form these communities of disciples we must see the importance of authentic relationships within our groups. To achieve this, our lifestyle should include belonging, supporting and serving.

Another important aspect is that our groups should have an irreducible, unchangeable core. So we start with the smallest unit of church life, the 2 or 3 gathered and emphasize its constant reproduction.

Another important aspect is that it is important to avoid forming communities around one person, any kind of specific curriculum, or task. Not saying we do not use these things, but when we do this the focus is directed away from God. So we train people and use curriculum and tasks but with a mindset that points always at Christ. Remembering that it is important to stay on track with the mission of the community and always to remain in the harvest; if it is of Christ...there will always be harvest!

4) Don't ignore culture, emerge within it. Transform it! (Community Transformation!)

We must adapt to the steady wind of the Spirit. There will be many ways to catch hold of the Spirit's wind within our culture. See, a movement is the result of God's grace pouring out locally. We must align ourselves with what God is already doing in our community. True disciples of our Lord must be formed, developed, and released. We seem to sometimes get caught up into making waves in our little play pools when God had something much bigger and more powerful in mind for us.

Jesus gave us principles that are timeless and transcultural for making Disciples. We tend to try and use models; models that are one size and style will not fit. We must find out what God wants us to do. Then discover His approach under the guidance of His Holy Spirit. And as always, if we will plant the seed of the Gospel, disciples will emerge.

What I have found is that everyone is trying to find some Discipleship model to follow. There's only one that works and it is in the Gospels. My advice is to get ourselves on mission with Christ, and follow His simple principles to Disciple making.

5) Don't start big, start small...Macro vs. Micro.

See organic development happens "all by itself" Jesus said Mark 4:26... "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. So our part is a divine partnership with God. Organic development is so simple and so reproductive, but the most important characteristic is God changing lives! We need to begin to get on our knees and pray God will transform people in noticeable and remarkable ways in our community so that we can change our city and beyond!

So what Micro to Macro looks like is first Multiplying the basic DNA of the church, the disciples, so multiplying disciples making disciples, then multiplying leaders, then multiplying the community, then we multiply our mission! Jesus started with 12, but despite this small number they went on to go unto the world and changed it.

6) Don't add, multiply. This is the key!

Many say they plan to birth a new disciple, but very few actually do it, very, very few, Barna says as little as 8%. But the very nature, the DNA of the Body of Christ is to grow and multiply, and then something very dramatic has to change from the inside out. It has become apparent that it is our genetics that must change. We have become a sterile and infertile body.

But hear me the change we need to make is apparent. We must start with the end in mind. We must make disciples, the building block of the church, the most basic part of her DNA, is that we are disciple makers. Disciples that are fertile, that reproduce, that multiply.

For our Lord it was never about adding to, it was about multiplication. He said, 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 all that I have commanded you. So that, there will one day be, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

And that is, my friends is, Our Mission!