

“Making Disciples”

Matt. 28:18-20

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

Last week, I introduced to our entire church a future vision FOR our church that we are working out and laying out in this FOCUS series. I’ve been very grateful for the response...for the affirmation and encouragement via emails and notes and conversations.

As a reminder, this series is going to go for three more weeks and it has both personal and corporate elements to us. That’s why we put in the subtitle: For yourself. For our church. For the future.

Now, we encapsulated what our FOCUS was going to be for the foreseeable future in a statement, and what we said is that this is what we want to be about. If we are going to make a maximum impact for Jesus in our generation and in the generation following us then we have to be laser-FOCUSED on keeping the main thing, the main thing – and for us this is the MAIN THING.

We said: **Champion Forest advances the Kingdom by making disciples, loving our community and strengthening the Church.**

Last week we talked about “advancing the Kingdom” and worked out what we mean by that – if you miss any of these messages, please go online or download or app and stay up to date with us because the next three weeks build on what we introduced last week.

Today, we are going to unpack the first of three what we are calling our “Focus Priorities” and it’s the title of the message today as well: **Making Disciples**

Champion Forest advances the Kingdom by (Focus Priority #1) making disciples. I want to show you some pictures as we begin today and hopefully this will encourage, inspire, and set the tone for where we are headed today.

This is a picture of my great-grandparents Mamma Lula and Pappa Buford (**SHOW PIC**).

Now, you know you’re a BOSS if your name is Buford. This couple right here loved Jesus and probably had more of an impact on my family than anyone. Pappa Buford was a contractor that built the church my dad’s family worshipped in growing up. He sang in a southern gospel quartet – and he and Mamma Lula taught my dad in word and deed the importance of follow Jesus.

My dad at 78 years old still talks about his Pappa Buford and how the last time he ever saw him was when my dad was 15 years old – Pappa Buford had leukemia and they took him away for treatments and never saw him alive again. It’s safe to say though, I probably would not have been raised in the church if it was not for this man.

This next picture is a picture of Joyce Shoebridge (**SHOW PIC**). I've talked about her before – tonight, I'm going to be at the Winter Leadership Huddle of our North Klein campus and then next week, here – and as it relates to the impact of a life group leader – my gosh, she's a picture of it.

She came to a group of us in the 6th grade and stayed with us every year until we graduated. She took us through Experiencing God. She loved us, but was no nonsense (Life is Football...) Out of the 8 or 9 of us she had in class regular through the years, 4 of us are in full-time Christian ministry. I would not be who I am today without her shaping me and molding me and without her prayers for me. She passed away in May of 2017 and I was able to go and preach her funeral.

This next picture is of a man named Mike Fechner (**SHOW PIC**). Now, not a day goes by that I don't think about Mike Fechner. When I first joined the staff as an intern in Dallas, Mike took me under his wing. He was a very successful businessman that sold home security systems. God got a hold of his heart in a big way (share story) he eventually sold his company, joined the church staff and started an inner-city ministry that I continue to serve on the Board of to this day.

No one taught me more about living a Kingdom life...no one taught me more about giving, about the importance of prayer and fasting then Mike Fechner.

He died at the young age of 53 to cancer. And interesting fact. The first and ONLY time I had ever been to Champion Forest was when I came with Mike when he was receiving treatments as MD Anderson and he was staying up this way. He wanted a place to work out and we worked out here at the Family Life Center. I didn't put it together until I walked through there for the first time when I was meeting with the pastor search committee. I considered it a wink from God and Mike because I certainly would have sought his counsel about the decision my family and I were making had he still been alive.

I could go on and on, and show 4-5 more people that have been a top influence in my life as it relates to me being a passionate, committed follower of Jesus. These people invested in me...shared with me...inspired me...challenged me...most of all taught me by word and example how to follow Jesus.

Now, I bet it's the same for many of you. Many could stand up here given the time and share 2-3, 4-5 people of your own that have done for you what these people did for me. They made you who you are, and you are the follower of Jesus you are today because of their example and influence in your life.

Here's the question I want to pose for you though as we talk about making disciples. Could someone say this of you? If we passed the mic around and had people list the names of those in their life that mean the most to them from a faith standpoint:

- have spurred them on to follow Jesus more closely...
- challenged them to love Jesus more deeply...
- encouraged them to read and take in God's Word...
- and taught them how to apply it to their life...

Would your name be given by anyone...would anyone put your picture on the screen and with a grateful heart testify that they are the follower of Jesus they are today because of the difference you made in their life.

“Making disciples” – it is a focus priority in our church and should be a focus priority in our life.

Matt. 28:18-20 (Context) – “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This is known as “The Great Commission” in the scriptures, and I want to remind you this command is given to ALL those that have made the decision to follow Jesus. This command...and I want to highlight this was:

- NOT given to “professional clergy”...
- NOT given to seminary students training for ministry...
- NOT given to a chosen few...this is not for some spiritually elite unit...

This command was given to every single person that names the name of Christ, and following and fulfilling this command should be the priority of our lives. EVERYTHING else should be secondary.

Like...this is a question that should be ringing in our ears when we wake up and be on our minds when we go to bed – “Am I making disciples? Am I doing the ONE thing that Jesus told us to do before he left this earth to ascend back into heaven?”

Illus. Driving question: Speaking of questions, when we were coming up with these “Focus Priorities”, each priority has what we call a “driving question” behind it. And here is the driving question behind this “focus priority” of making disciples.

When I stand before the Lord, will I be happy with what I have to present to him?

I said it last week, the only way “faithfulness” and “success” is to be stamped upon our lives when we stand before Jesus (and that could take place today!) is if we are being obedient to his Great Commission.

This has a personal element to it: Are you making disciples? And I’m going to clearly define discipleship here in just a moment.

This also has a corporate element to it. As a church...I asked our staff this a few weeks ago: Will we be happy with what we have to present to the Lord when we stand before him?

In every ministry we engage in...every life group that meets on our campuses...every program we initiate – we should be asking this question – “are we making disciples?” It should be the air we breathe...it should be what everything orbits around.

If it doesn't have an element of making disciples, then I would suggest taking a step back and asking the honest question of whether or not we should be engaging in that ministry, program or event in the first place!

Let me give you a definition of discipleship:

Discipleship – a developmental process whereby believers intentionally pass on to others what they know, have experienced, and are learning so that others become more like Jesus.

You can see in this definition that how long you have been following Jesus does not matter. Sometimes we make the excuse that I don't know enough...or I'm not ready...I wouldn't know where to begin.

Well, you start with what you are learning currently...what you've experienced as a follower of Jesus. One of the fundamental ways we grow and mature as a Christian is bringing others with us.

Spiritual growth is a process, it's not an event. And when we disciple someone, we are simply passing on to them what we know, have experienced, or learned. If you trusted Jesus last week, you know enough to share with someone else...pass on to someone else that you realized you were a sinner, that Jesus can save you by placing your trust in him. You know enough about his love that you can share with someone about his forgiveness and his grace.

If you are spending time alone with Jesus, intentionally passing on what you learned to someone else in the context of a friendship...a relationship – that is discipleship! I put the word “intentional” in my definition because it denotes this is something we are purposefully thinking about...it's a marked decision...a volitional choice we are making.

Now, the Great Commission involves both evangelism and discipleship. When you read the Great Commission, nearly all scholars and commentaries you read make note of the verb tense that is used.

Properly translated and read, Matt. 28:19-20 should be read – “As you go, make disciples...as you baptize, make disciples...as you teach, make disciples...”

See, the Great Commission is what tells us as we go to the office tomorrow, you don't just go as a teacher/coach, businessman or businesswoman...you don't just go as a contractor, engineer or lawyer into the office to do your work.

No! As you go, you go on mission – you go with a purposeful intent to use the skills, education and acumen God has given you to be a witness for him – because before you can make disciples, God has to make converts – and he uses us to do it.

And once those converts have been made, we use the talents, education and skills he has given us and we use those as a platform to make disciples!

Illus. Missions – Talk to our IMB, they desperately need people in the business world, teachers, contractors as a means of getting the gospel into countries pastors and preachers could never get into! You go to earn a paycheck, but you are really going to make disciples.

It's not just the nations though – it's here and now! God has given you that team you serve on, those employees to lead that locker room you have authority over and as you go there each and every day, the thought should be, “as I go, am I making disciples?”

Moms that stay at home with your children...this is your primary calling – to make a disciple of Jesus in that home. Dads, your primary calling is to not raise an all-star that gets a college scholarship – great if they do, but you want “success”...you want “faithfulness” ascribed to you when you stand before the Lord, the question you have to answer is, “Did I teach them to love Jesus with all their heart, mind and soul and follow him with everything within them?”

Discipleship – it's intentionally passing on to others what we know, have experienced, and are learning so that others become more like Jesus. I like that phrase “pass it on” – it's a picture of passing a baton...a relay race.

Paul put it like this to Timothy in **2 Tim 2:2** – “**And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.**”

The word “entrust” there carries with it this idea of a safety deposit box...that's what it means – you take what you know, have experienced and learned (Jesus with his disciples) and deposit for safe-keeping into others so that they in turn will do the same.

Just get the picture...this is what we should all be doing...this is what we should all be consumed with. Who am I passing my faith onto? Who is becoming more like Jesus because of my intentional investment in their life.

And again, this isn't some program...discipleship is not another Bible study – you can do Bible studies all day long and it be information transfer – and the head grows big and the heart grows cold.

Discipleship is not about information, it's about transformation and it happens in the context of relationship. When you think about discipleship, don't think program, think relationship. It's **Prov. 27:17** – “**Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.**”

This was Jesus's idea of discipleship. He combined the Greek model of discipleship which appealed to the mind – think Socrates, Aristotle and Plato. It was more enlightenment and education and you sit still, while I instill – it was asking questions to make one think and wrestle with issues before coming to a conclusion.

Jesus certainly used this form of discipleship, but he also combined it with the Hebrew model which was life on life. It was more of an apprenticeship if you will, and you received on the job training (carpenter).

He taught but he also wanted his disciples to follow and watch him so that how he lived was caught as well. Information without mobilization will lead to a cold, dead, unattractive orthodoxy.

So, I want you to think about this...who are you intentionally passing on what you know, have experienced, and learned so that that person/persons becomes more like Jesus. I'll show the definition again.

Discipleship – a developmental process (that's important! Discipleship doesn't happen overnight! It's a process and when we work with and serve and disciple often times it will be three steps forward and two back because Satan is alive and well and this is what he doesn't want - us taking Jesus command serious! That's why he is just fine with this NOT being a priority!) **whereby believers intentionally pass on to others what they know, have experienced, and are learning so that others become more like Jesus.**

Can you list out 2-3, 4-5 people that you are right now intentionally passing on what you know, have experienced and are learning so that they become more like Jesus?

Allow me the grace to be very blunt right here. And I want to say this with as much pastoral love as I can muster. You should. It's what we are going to be most proud of (in the pure and good sense of the word – “proud of”) when we stand before Christ – people who have trusted Jesus and grown in him because of your witness and intentional investment in them.

Illus. PB&J – Is there anything better than a good PB&J? – it's incredible – when I think of the Great Commission, this is what I think of – one side peanut butter (v. 18) – “all authority” has to with right and power – he is the head coach!

The other side is the jelly (v. 20) – “I am with you always” – takes away all the excuses. When we don't think we know enough, not at a place where we can disciples, He's got this! Put them together and it's magic!

You say, Pastor Jarrett, I don't even know where to start on this idea of making disciples. Well, let me tell you where to start:

1. Ensure you are a disciple

Listen, you can't make disciples until you are a disciple. And it starts with turning from your sin and calling on the name of the Lord – this is the gospel (share gospel).

In just a moment we are going to have an invitation, and if you have never received Christ and been baptized, we are going to ask you to do it today!

We already have a number of people ready to be baptized...we've done this before where we just make a spontaneous call to come and follow Jesus in baptism. Your first act of obedience as a disciple of Jesus is water baptism because this is what identifies you as a disciple.

Illus. Driver's License – your identification

Some of you need to make this decision...you know who you are and in just a moment come and go "all in" with Jesus. We have everything you need to be baptized – what a time of celebration. The Bible says all of heaven rejoices when one comes to follow Jesus and identify with him. Making disciples begins with making sure you are a disciple.

2. Pray for a disciple

This is what Jesus did! He spent all night in prayer (Luke 6:12) before choosing his disciples. Who is it that God is laying on your heart that you could see yourself investing in...meeting together to read a chapter of God's Word and just talk about it?

In the midst of it, you are going to intentionally pass on what you know, have experienced and learned so that they can become more like Jesus. Start slow and ask God for one person for you to intentionally pour your life into.

3. Select your disciple

Jesus selected tax collectors and fisherman. Once you select that person, just go to them and ask, "Would you be willing to meet once a week or once every other week to read God's Word together and just talk about what we're learning?"

4. Instruct your disciple

This simply means you are leading the way. If you ask them to read the chapter, you better make sure you are reading it. If you ask them to memorize a verse, you better make sure you are memorizing the verse – this is the great thing about discipleship, it stretches the one being disciplined!

Remember, this is not about a program, it's about a relationship. And you could be here and be a follower of Jesus for a long time but no one has ever intentionally invested in you.

If that's you, I want you to let us know...just text "making disciples" to 77379 and our team will follow up with you and connect you in a discipleship relationship with someone a bit more down the road in their faith so to speak.

And you will get to walk through a new discipleship curriculum our team wrote that will help lay a great foundation in your life and you in turn can take others through it once it's done – it's called Next Step – and the purpose of it is to walk in relationship with someone – this is a conversation starter that will help you pass on to others what you know, have experienced and learned.

I started with some pictures and a story, and I want to end with a picture and a story.

Illus. John Potter – This is John Potter (**Show Pic #1**) – (Tell story of conversion) This is John's baptism (**Pic #2**) – We started walking in discipleship relationship (**Pic #3**) – and still meet every Thursday via Zoom.

? – Are you making disciples?

May God make this a FOCUS priority in our church and in our life.

Let's pray together.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.