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Sermon Notes

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The Church's Great Omission: The Pattern of Discipleship, Part 2

Philippians 3:17

Introduction: The Quiet Beginnings of the Mighty Church

A. The Headwaters of the Church

If you were to trace the mighty Mississippi River back to its tiniest origins, you would find that it begins as a trickle flowing out of Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota. From there the river flows 2,348 miles until it pours into the Gulf of Mexico below New Orleans. The Mississippi River drains 33 states and its watershed covers one-half of the nation. It fosters cities and commerce, transports people and goods, provides habitat for fish plants and wildlife, and enriches human life with natural and recreational opportunities.

In like manner, if you were to trace the human origins of the mighty thing called the Church of Jesus Christ, you would find that it began one afternoon in an insignificant portion of Palestine called Bethany on the far side of the Jordan River.

It was an exciting time for the Jewish nation... thousands of people were flocking to hear John the Baptist preach and to witness his bizarre and compelling practice of baptizing natural-born Jews in the Jordan River. It was a shock originally, because the ritual of baptism was usually reserved for the cleansing of filthy idol-worshipping Gentiles who wanted to become Jews. But John made no distinction and baptized Jews, a baptism of repentance for sins.

One day at a small place called Bethany across the Jordan, a day like any other during that time in Israel's history, an obscure man stood among the throngs to be baptized by John. John looked stunned, overcome with emotion. Perhaps only a few people around John could see the radical change in his demeanor, the awe-struck look on his face, the reverent tone in his voice:

I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?

And the stranger's answer was beyond their comprehension:

Let it be so now... we must fulfill all righteousness.

The next day, the church began in the quietest way... it would not have been noticed even by the most astute observer there. But Jesus began to gather His church together. The most massive things sometimes have the tiniest and least impressive beginnings... God delights in making small things eternally significant.

It began when John saw Jesus passing by and made a prophetic statement about Him to two of his own disciples who were standing nearby:

He said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

This quiet beginning started it all... the church that would spread from shore to shore, the mighty throng of children of God who would one day trust in Christ and worship Him as their God began with a quiet afternoon spent with Jesus, spending the late afternoon, starting about 4:00 I would guess, just being with Christ.

Since that time, the church has grown to reach every political nation and the vast majority of the people groups of the world.

And it all began with a simple concept: discipleship of ordinary human beings by spending time with Jesus... a quiet afternoon of discipleship by the greatest discipler the world has ever seen

B. Review of Last Week's Sermon

1. Paul's Pattern of Discipleship

Philippians 3:17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.

Philippians 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

2. Two key aspects of discipleship:

- a. a pattern of Christian doctrine
- b. a pattern of Christian lifestyle

3. Supported by MANY scriptures

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

[NASB] 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.

1 Corinthians 4:15-17 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

I. Christ's Pattern of Discipleship

John 13:15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Two key books: A. B. Bruce: *The Training of the Twelve*... an in-depth look at how Jesus actively shaped and prepared His Apostles for a world-changing ministry... His wisdom in guiding them through all aspects of their training

His careful lessons for them on the nature of the divine kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount; His teaching on and example of faithful prevailing prayer; His teaching on and example of unimpeachable personal holiness; the way He modeled ministry for over a year before entrusting to them any particular responsibilities; His example of self-denial and of loving compassion in ministering to the physical needs of countless hungry, sick, poor people

Having received the best doctrinal instruction in the history of the world, they were then trained in practical ministry as He sent them out two by two to preach the gospel and to heal...

This is the content of A. B. Bruce's book, *The Training of the Twelve*...I have never forgotten the cover art, which is also on the cover of your bulletin

The second book is the one we will follow even more closely:

[Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, first published in 1963]

- A. Selection
- B. Association
- C. Consecration
- D. Impartation
- E. Demonstration
- F. Delegation
- G. Supervision

H. Reproduction

A. Selection

1. Jesus' method were MEN... He didn't work with programs or techniques... He chose Twelve MEN through whom He would change the world
2. He was the initiator in the relationship...

Matthew 4:18-19 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

3. At the core was SELECTION

Mark 3:13-14 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

4. He chose them at the leading of the Father

Luke 6:12-13 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles

5. Principles for the selection:

men willing to learn

concentrated upon just a few

Coleman notes that the “mass evangelistic revival” is not necessarily a bad thing... but Jesus’ central method was concentrated discipleship of Twelve... and especially of the core THREE (Peter, John and James)

“Here is where we must begin, just like Jesus. It will be slow, tedious, painful, and probably unnoticed by men at first, but the end result will be glorious, even if we don’t live to see it.”

B. Association

1. Basic concept: He stayed with them constantly
 - a. already seen in John 1: the whole church began with an afternoon spent with Jesus

b. also seen in verse above

Mark 3:13-14 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

c. this was the price of admission

Matthew 8:19-20 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

In effect, to be my disciple, you have to be willing to say goodbye to earthly comforts and relationships

My training will be the best in the world... but the price is the willingness to go to bed with a rock as your pillow and with little to eat

2. Jesus taught constantly, lessons woven together with life

They learned from Him as He walked along the road, as He sat down in the field, as He urged them to consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air... they saw with their own eyes His tears as He wept over Jerusalem, His power as He raised Jarius's little girl from the dead, His anger as He drove the moneychangers from the temple

They got private sessions of explanations of His parables, they got private encouragements at their successes, and private rebukes at their failures

Everything happened while Jesus was living with them constantly... the whole world was a classroom

3. As the end drew near, He spent even more time alone with them

John 11:54 Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

John 13-17 is Jesus' private ministry just to His close and loved ones... His Apostles; He washed their feet, taught them intense and private lessons about love, the Holy Spirit, the coming persecution, the future glory; and He prayed for them powerfully and movingly

4. This kind of discipleship took lots of time... He sowed the seed deeply in their lives

Coleman: "When will the church learn the lesson? Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism. Nor can occasional prayer meetings and training classes for Christian workers do this job. Building men is not that easy. It requires constant personal attention, much like a father gives to His children."

5. Modern application

Coleman: "Clearly the policy of Jesus at this point teaches us that whatever method of follow-up the church adopts, it must have as its basis a personal guardian concern for those entrusted to their care. To do otherwise is essentially to abandon new believers to the Devil. This means that some system must be found whereby every convert is given a Christian friend to follow until such time as he can lead another. The counselor should stay with the new believer as much as possible, studying the Bible and praying together, all the while answering questions, clarifying the truth, and seeking together to help others. If the church does not have such committed counselors willing to do this service, then it should be training some."

C. Consecration

1. Christ required total obedience
2. The way of the cross was clearly understood and followed
3. Disciples had to count the cost before following
4. Not many would be willing to follow Him even to the point of death
5. The way of growth was the way of obedience
6. YET this pattern of total obedience was constantly MODELLED by Christ

Hebrews 5:8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered

John 14:31 but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

John 8:29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

7. Modern application

Coleman: "We must learn this lesson again today. There can be no dilly-dallying around with the commands of Christ. We are engaged in a warfare, the issues of which are life and death. There could be no insubordination in His command. No one knew better than Jesus that the Satanic forces of darkness against them were well-organized and equipped to defeat any half-hearted effort of evangelism."

The church is defeated in its efforts at evangelism primarily because it is unwilling to bear the cross and obey Christ commands unquestioningly

D. Impartation

1. Christ gave Himself away to His disciples
2. Even more, Christ gave directly of His Spirit

John 20:22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

3. To love means to give... the more you love the more you will give
4. Jesus was willing to sacrifice everything He had for the benefit of His disciples... nothing He had did He withhold from them
5. Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit becomes the key power for the evangelism of the world... the power of disciplemaking is the power of Christ's imparted Spirit working in us
6. By the Spirit of Christ we walk in the Way of Christ... the gift of the Spirit is the permanent imparting of Christ moment by moment to every disciple

John 16:13-15 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

7. Modern application: disciplers must give themselves away to their disciples, especially in their personal relationship with Christ by the Spirit

self-sacrificial giving love

openness and transparency

generosity of time and other resources: "You get the best I have"

constant reliance on the Holy Spirit... your disciples should be experiencing your love relationship with Christy

E. Demonstration

1. Jesus never expected His disciples to do anything that He had not already modeled for them
2. Key test case: prayer
 - a. constantly let His disciples see Him pray
 - b. His obvious delight in prayer became a motivator for them

Luke 11:1-10 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say: ""Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation. "" 5 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and

he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' 7 "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

3. Constant training in Scripture

- a. Jesus constantly was explaining and reasoning with them from Scripture
- b. culmination of this was post-resurrection forty-day seminary

Luke 24:44-45 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

4. Above all else, soul-winning

- a. practically everything Jesus did focused on winning the lost
 - b. evangelism class was always in session
- the Rich Young Ruler
 the demon-possessed man of the Gadarenes
 the Samaritan woman... and the whole village later
 the crowds of Jerusalem
 Simon the Pharisee

5. Modern application: EVANGELISM CANNOT BE TAUGHT ONLY IN A CLASSROOM... in this area more than any other, we need courageous role models

F. Delegation

1. Jesus assigned His disciples work to do... He entrusted specific tasks to them

Luke 9:1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Several missions during the three years with Christ... they would go out, have certain experiences, then come back and get further training based on those experiences

2. Full instructions: Matthew 10
3. Also the mission of the seventy in Luke 10
4. Supremely in the various “Great Commissions” at the end of each Gospel and the beginning of acts

John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

5. Modern application: very important for disciplers to entrust key tasks to their disciples, allowing them to succeed and fail, then training them based on the outcome

G. Supervision

1. He kept check on them... He constantly followed their progress
2. There was a pattern of constant review and application

Matthew 17:14-20 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16 I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." 17 "O unbeliefing and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." 18 Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" 20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

3. Jesus asked them probing questions and caused them to reflect on their own lessons
4. He didn’t just let them coast, or “assume the best” about them... He kept very close to their successes and failures
5. He always kept His final goal in mind: their own spiritual maturity in the work of the Gospel

H. Reproduction

1. Christ EXPECTED them to reproduce
2. This was the whole goal of the gospel work... the reproduction of the image of Christ in people all around the world

3. This would in the end be the acid test of His ministry... if the disciples were not successful at reproducing themselves spiritually through evangelism and discipleship, His ministry would fail
4. This was the essence of the Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- A. Selection
- B. Association
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We have now seen Christ's pattern for discipleship and that of the Apostle Paul... and they are one and the same:

A body of doctrine resulting in a pattern of godly lifestyle... resulting in multiplication... more and more disciples

II. The Modern Church's Failed Pattern of Discipleship

- A. The Greek vs. Hebrew Model of Training

1. Greek model

Acts 17:21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

Focus on content, a constant desire for knowledge

Debate, discussion, argument... all done by a leisure class who had the time to probe the depths of some concept to see that it was internally self-consistent

Logic and reason were used to develop a system of ethics which was thoroughly discussed in the cognitive sense

The disciples were then go out on their own and try to live it

Greek wisdom was an abstraction, and the assumption was that life would be changed and molded according to a pure understanding of philosophy

2. Hebrew model

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Constant interactions with real-life situations made wisdom a daily life matter

The physical world was created good by God, so life was physical and wisdom had to engage the physical life in which they lived

The Modern Church follows the Greek model, not the Hebrew model

3. Jesus' discipleship was CONSTANT and out in the real world

Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

Matthew 4:19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

4. The church's discipleship is OCCASIONAL and removed from the real world

We meet in dedicated buildings, sit and listen to learned teachers, take in data, information... and go home

B. Critique of Modern Discipleship

1. Remember the Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

a. teaching them... there MUST be content

b. TO OBEY... there must be a lifestyle of obedience, or the Great Commission is not completed

- c. "I am with you always" ... the same as with the Twelve... Jesus wants to teach you constantly

2. The Great Omission

- a. lifestyle discipleship
- b. role models and mentors who will say what Paul said

Philippians 3:17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.

Philippians 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

- c. detailed discipleship in which daily life Christianity is taught and modeled
 - how to pray with fervency and scriptural knowledge
 - how to study the Bible and rightly divide it
 - how to win the lost to Christ
 - how to behave in church... worshiping in spirit and truth
 - how to glorify God in everything you do, whether you eat or drink
 - how to discipline yourself for godliness
 - how to live as a Christian family
 - how a man should treat his wife and Christ does the church
 - how a father should train his children up in the nurture and fear of the Lord
 - how to handle money as a steward of the Kingdom of Heaven
 - how to bridle your tongue, using it only as a fountain of blessing
 - how to handle lust and worldly temptations
 - how to live a disciplined life in eating and earthly pleasures
 - how to work hard with your own hands and provide for your families
 - how to maintain a good reputation with outsiders
 - how to care for the poor, both inside the church and outside
 - how to suffer persecution with eternal joy
 - perhaps even how to die with dignity and for the greater glory of Christ

Where are the role model disciplers? I don't just mean godly people who are doing well in their Christian lives... I mean men who will become fully trained themselves, and pass on their knowledge and godly lifestyle to a disciple; I mean women who will become fully trained themselves and pass on their knowledge and godly lifestyle to a disciple?

We desperately need this... there is too wide a division between the soaking in of knowledge from good teachers and the translation to a healthy Christian way of life

C. The Role of the Community of Faith

1. Discipleship is meant to be done in the context of a community of faith... a local church
2. It isn't meant to be just one man and one younger man; or one woman and one younger woman
3. All of us must take a responsibility for the Christian lifestyles of our brothers and sisters
4. Spiritual gifts come into play: exhortation, giving, service, teaching, prayer
5. Harder aspects come in as well: correct, reprove, rebuke, with great patience and careful instruction (2 Timothy 3)
6. In this area we are also very weak... some of our Sunday School classes seem to take barely a notice when someone hasn't been there in a few weeks...

D. Modern Lifestyle: The Enemy of Biblical Discipleship

1. TOO BUSY!!!!
 - a. way of life discipleship takes a great deal of time and commitment
 - b. people have to hold down jobs
 - c. extracurricular activities: every advantage for children... music lessons, sports leagues,
2. How to relate to the family
3. Personal sin... skeletons in the closet... don't want people to get too close

IV. Suggesting a Remedy

Step 1: Identify a Pattern of Discipleship

- 1) *Biblical content* to impart: knowledge of milk and meat doctrines
- 2) *Godly character and lifestyle* to impart
 - Godly personal habits: Bible intake, memorization, meditation; consistent prayer, fasting, active church life, family devotions
 - Well-ordered lifestyle: discipline in sleep, eating, lawful pleasures; good order at home; discipline in speech; faithfully working at employment
 - Putting sin to death: regular pattern of mortification of the flesh by the Spirit

- Active ministry: full use of spiritual gifts, passion for missions and evangelism
- Stewardship: time, money, spiritual gifts, relationships, opportunities

Step 2: **Assess yourself** through prayer and godly input from spiritually mature people: ask “Am I spiritually mature enough to disciple someone?” or “Do I need someone to help prepare me further?”

Step 3: **Choose someone**: Seek God in prayer concerning making a commitment in a discipleship relationship, and follow the leadership of the Lord.

Step 4: **Set up the relationship**: either be discipled or disciple someone for a set amount of time; make a covenant together to meet for a year (or longer or shorter, as the Lord leads), then reassess; be consistent

Step 5: **Follow Christ’s pattern** as set out in Robert Coleman’s book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*

Some insights:

- Be willing to sacrifice in order to involve people in your life... open your home in hospitality; think “How can I involve the person I am discipling in this or that activity?” Take someone with you when you go on errands or to Christian conferences; purposefully organize your life so you can pour yourself into someone
- Busy families: understand your primary discipleship is going toward your children... don’t neglect them to disciple someone else
- BUT: families can open themselves up enough to put their patterns on display to a younger couple...

1 Peter 4:9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

- Godly and spiritually mature senior adults should be flexible and willing to go to younger and busy families to get involved in their lives and help disciple them if needed