

BE ONE, MAKE ONE MATTHEW 28:16-20

Pittsburg's major league baseball team, *the Pirates*, got their nickname in a most unusual manner.

During the 1880 baseball season the team reportedly stole a popular and talented player from their cross-state rivals, the Philadelphia Phillies. Pittsburg showed no remorse for having *pirated* the *player*, and as a result the local newspapers called the Pittsburg team "*a bunch of pirates.*" The inflammatory nickname stuck and eventually became official. The *Pirates* became "*The Pirates*" because they were actually *pirates*!

In the Gospels, we're told Jesus had twelve followers, twelve players on His team that He set apart for special attention. Today, we call those twelve men, "*The Disciples.*" When you hear the term you think of Peter, James, John, Andrew, Matthew, Thomas, etc.

But before these men became known as "*The Disciples*" they were actually *disciples*. Like *the Pirates*, before the word became a noun describing a group of people, it first was a verb describing the actions of those people. *The Disciples* first became known as "*The Disciples*" because they were actually *disciples*.

The greek word translated "*disciple*" means "*a learner or a student or a follower.*" A disciple is an undergrad in the school of Christ. He or she is anyone who commits themselves to learn of and follow Jesus.

A disciple isn't just a member of an elite group of first century Christians. It's anyone who follows Jesus and patterns his or her living after the example of our Lord.

For the Master is still on the move. Today, Jesus travels down roads and trails and pathways not just in Galilee and Jerusalem, but in Stone Mountain and Lilburn and Loganville. The Jesus movement marches on and we've been recruited to follow and learn of Him.

Jesus wants us to deepen our understanding of Him, and watch His ways, and take our cues from Him.

Jesus wants us to pass on His perspective and values. Jesus intends for us to go out into our world *carrying out His heartbeat* and *carrying on His mission*.

With Peter, James, John, and the others Jesus turned aimless men into men on a mission. We call them *disciples*. And that's what He wants to do with us.

But our job is not just to be a disciple, we're also called on to make disciples! In Matthew 28 we find a passage of Scripture commonly known as "The Great Commission." Matthew records some of the risen Christ's final words. And I love how he positions this account at the end of His Gospel. It's as if he wants these words ringing in our ears until the end of time...

Matthew writes in verse 16, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. 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." Jesus had been crucified, risen from the dead, and had now appeared to His disciples. But this whirlwind of revelation had occurred in Jerusalem. Jesus now sends them into Galilee - *"to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them."*

Galilee was the sight of much of their early teaching and training. This is where they first followed Jesus, and became disciples (*in the truest sense of the term.*)

And they weren't just sent to Galilee, but to an *"appointed mountain."* I have no proof of it, but it's my personal hunch that this mountain was the Arbel.

The Arbel is on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It's a colossal cliff that juts out over the lake and overlooks Magdala, Genneserat, Tiberius, the Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum - all familiar names, for they were the places where Jesus worked so many of His miracles and uttered so much of His teaching.

I believe in sending them to Galilee Jesus was taking them back to their old stomping grounds - the place where He had first *disciplined* these *disciples*.

He was reminding them of the 3 1/2 years of training they'd received and the lessons they'd learned while traveling with Him up and down the Galilean coast.

It's against the backdrop of **their** discipleship that Jesus informs His *students* that the time has come for them to also become *teachers*! His *disciples* are to go into all the world and *make disciples* of all nations!

And this is not only Jesus' word to the original disciples, it's His command to all future disciples. We're not just *disciples*, we're also called to *disciple* others.

Many Christians have a shallow understanding of the Great Commission. They *get* that Jesus has called us to go into all the world and win people to Himself, but that was only part of the order. The goal is more than conversions. It's growth, and maturity, and usefulness.

To *just* go out and get'em saved, is to stop short. **Jesus is after far more than *decisions*, but *disciples*.**

Notice, how Jesus describes "*making disciples*" - it involves "*baptizing*" - which implies following through on your commitment. A person who's baptized **locks in and goes public...** *Making disciples* also involves "*teaching*" - or conveying information and instilling proper attitudes. It's **moving on and going deeper.**

Thus, discipleship is not about sitting still spiritually. It's about **both *locking in and going public* with my faith, as well as *moving forward and going deeper.***

Years ago, Time Magazine reported on a Billy Graham Evangelistic Crusade. One year after the crusade, they surveyed the folks who had responded to the invitation and committed their life to Christ. **Sadly, only 15% had become active church members.**

I'm not knocking Billy Graham. We should be thankful for the 15%, but the stats points to a problem. It's easier to *get decisions* than it is to *make disciples*.

I can talk to a person on the street for five minutes and lead them in the sinner's prayer. Conversion can happen in a minute, but discipleship takes months and years. It involves an expense of time and commitment.

When I lead a person to Christ, or come across a new believer, my responsibility doesn't stop with a pat on the back - far from it, I'm just getting started. You and I have been called by God to nurture, teach, and encourage that *new believer* into a *mature believer*.

And this is especially true with our wives and kids.

Don't think just because your child accepts Christ and gets baptized your spiritual obligation is over. Your job as a man is to turn *your family* into *Jesus followers*.

Certainly, the world today needs evangelists and preachers who can speak to thousands and move the masses, but I'm convinced that far more important are individual dads, and husbands, and common men who invest spiritually in the lives of others in their church, and neighborhood, and workplace. The world will be won to Christ not a thousand at a time, but one by one.

Let's say you're an outstanding soul winner. Every day you win three people to Christ - that's over a thousand people a year. For 15 years you labor and build a wonderful church of 15,000 committed saints.

That's good, but here's better... Let's say you lead to Christ and discipled just three people the first year, but you do a good job of it, and help transformed those three into committed disciples with the same desire to go and disciple others. The next year each of your three disciples goes out and discipled three more, and on and on this goes. In 15 years you won't have a church of 15,000 committed believers, but of 15 million.

It's the the marvel of multiplication. And this is why I'm not as interested in growing a church with lots of people as I am in growing disciple-making disciples.

Paul had this strategy in mind when he told Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:2**, "The things that you have heard from me... commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also..." It was impossible for Paul to win the world for Christ all by himself, so he set off a chain reaction. *One by one by one* the world **can** be *won*.

This was also Jesus' strategy. Study His ministry and you'll discover that in the beginning Jesus spoke to the crowds, but as time went on He spent less time with the multitudes, and more time with His disciples.

Robert Coleman writes, "Jesus spent increasingly more time training the twelve and increasingly less time ministering to the masses." Jesus' time on earth was relatively short, but His impact on earth has been enormous and long-lasting. And the reason for His continuing influence is the direct result of what He implanted and cultivated in the lives of His disciples and what they in turn passed all the way down to us.

And I for one I'm glad Jesus chose to win the world one person at a time. Most of us don't have the ability or courage to stand and command the attention of thousands. In fact, we read in Matthew 28 that we're to go into "*all the nations*" and we get intimidated. It's important we remember that "*all nations*" mean *one national* at a time. **The world will be won, one at a time.**

It reminds me of a little boy who walked out onto the seashore after a violent hurricane. The shore was covered with thousands upon thousands of starfish that had washed up on the beach and were now stranded.

Soon they would dry out and die in the hot sun. That's why the little boy started tossing the starfish back into the sea, one at a time. A cynical old man approached him and scoffed, "Hey kid, you'll never get all those starfish back into the water. Can't you see you'll never make a difference - there're just too many."

The young boy held up a starfish, pointed it at the old man; and tossed it into the water. He replied, **"It might be true I'll never get all the starfish back into the water, but I can certainly made a difference to one."**

And here's the moral of the story... You and I will never win *the world* to Christ, but we can all win *one*. We can share God's love with one person until they come to the Savior. Then we can take that *baby believer* under our wing, and feed'em, bath'em, burp'em, change'em, and help'em grow into maturity.

Jesus brought His twelve disciples back to the place where they were discipled, and challenged them to pass on the baton. He commanded them to *take* what they'd learned and *make* a new generation of disciples.

He took them to the scene of **their** discipleship, to remind them of how He had discipled them. And there has never been a better *discipler of men* than Jesus, thus it's important we pattern our efforts after His.

When you examine Jesus' discipleship strategy one passage stands out. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus said to those who followed Him, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Notice, how Jesus-style discipleship works... He calls to us, "*Come to Me, Yoke with Me, Learn of Me.*"

And in these three commands He makes three offers to us - *accessibility, and accountability, and activity.*

In essence, Jesus is saying "I'm opening Myself up to you. I'm giving you My time and attention. I'm becoming accessible, **so come to Me...**" Then He's saying, "I'm committing Myself to you. I'm yoking My life to yours, and taking on the responsibility for your welfare. I'm not going to let you go, so **yoke yourself to Me...**" And finally He says, "I'm going to be active in your dealings and teach you of life. I'm going to reveal My will, and thoughts, and intentions so **learn of Me.**"

And what Jesus promises in discipleship we should be ready to give to those we disciple - **accessibility, accountability, activity. Come, and yoke, and learn.**

As someone said of being a disciple, "*It takes one to make one.*" As I come to Jesus, yoke to Jesus, and learn from Jesus, I make myself **accessible** to other brothers, and take on **accountability** in relationships with them, and then become **active** in their lives.

The first step in being a disciple of Jesus, and in discipling others is **ACCESSIBILITY**. Openness, and time, and relationship, and honesty are essentials.

We can't follow the Lord unless we drop the walls we've put up around our hearts and open up to Him.

And we can't disciple others if we're not willing to share ourselves and our time with them. Some of us are stingy with our free time. *Why be bothered with a brother?* But if we're going to engage in discipleship we have to be willing to sacrifice some of our privacy, and our personal time, and become accessible to others.

For 3 1/2 years Jesus lived with His disciples. They ate together, and traveled together, and slept around the same campfire at night. Jesus was accessible...

It's interesting, on a Galilean mountaintop our Lord gave His disciples this Great Commission. And it was also on a mountain, perhaps the same mountain, where His relationship with His disciples began.

In Mark 3:13-14, we're told, "(Jesus) 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.” *Did you hear that?*

His purpose in calling out the disciples was that “*they might be with Him.*” From the beginning it was all about fellowship, togetherness, and being with each other.

Jesus disciplined His men just by being *with them*.

And the same should happen with us. To disciple another believer it’s vital we simply *be with them*.

Give them proximity... to how you make decisions, handle conflicts, face obstacles, deal with pressures, order your family life, and treat your neighbors.

So much of what we learn about the Christian life is *caught* more so than *taught*. We learn so much by example. This is how most people learn to pray, or witness, or study their Bible - by hanging out with an older believer and watching them do it themselves.

This was hammered home to me one day when my youngest son, Mack, was 3 years-old. He’d spent all spring at the ballpark watching his two older brothers and sister play on their respective Little League teams.

I thought he was being neglected, so I decided to give him a turn. He and dad went to play ball - *just us!*

When we got to the field I took all the equipment out of the car - helmets, bats, catcher's gear, gloves, and put it all in the dugout. Mack took a few minutes to organize the equipment; then he ran onto the field.

At first I didn't know what he was doing. He would hit a little; then he'd put on the catcher's gear; then he'd put on his

helmet on and hit some more; then he'd get his glove and run back onto the field. Finally, it hit me. My son *was acting out his own baseball game!* He was emulating what he'd been watching at the ball park.

He would go to the on-deck circle and wait his turn. Then he'd sit on the bench. Between innings he'd go outside the fence to warm up... And when it came time for us to leave, I bundled up the equipment and headed out the gate; when he yelled for me to return...

He stuck out his hand and motioned for me to do the same. At first, I didn't know what he was doing, but then it dawned on me, his imaginary team was huddling up, and putting their hands together.

The kid was just three. He'd never played organized baseball and no one had ever taught him the nuances of the game. Most of the time at the ballpark I didn't even think he was watching. He would just run around and get into trouble. But through access and exposure and osmosis he'd assimilated more than most kids learn when they play. It hammered home to me the power and potential of exposure to the right example.

And this is how discipleship occurs. You let a younger believer in on your relationship with God and they learn by watching. Access is the key component.

The second step in being and making disciples is **ACCOUNTABILITY**. We need to be willing to make ourselves accountable to other brothers, and love them enough to hold them accountable in return. Like two animals harnessed in

the same yoke, real discipleship involves a binding commitment to one another.

In Matthew 11 Jesus used an idiom packed with meaning. He invited us to *“take My yoke upon you.”* A yoke was a wooden harness that forced two animals to move in tandem and work together to pull the plow.

The yoke was constructed in such a way that the weight was shifted more onto the older, maturer, more experienced ox. He worked harder, while the younger ox came along for the ride - but both animals were part of the relationship and were responsible to each other.

As a disciple of Jesus I learn to lean on Him. He’s the stronger ox in our yoke, but in discipling someone else I might be called on to be the stronger and let that brother lean on me. I can’t get frustrated when he fails.

In the beginning it may be you seeking him out, and holding him accountable, and carrying the bigger share of the load. You can’t get discouraged when he shows his immaturity or carnality - when he shuns you or even backslides on the Lord. You’ve got to recall it takes time for a spiritual babe to mature and grow steady.

In today’s society we expect everything to be instant.

We have very little patience for downloading an app, or waiting in the drive through, or syncing our playlist, or brewing our coffee, or cooking in the microwave. And God forbid if expedited delivery isn’t available and we have to wait a whole week. **We want it all now!**

But spiritual growth doesn't work that way. It takes time for folks to grow and mature spiritually. We need patience with each other and patience with ourselves.

When it comes to discipleship there's no pill to pop, or laser surgery, or instant fix - *discipleship* requires a word that sounds a lot like it, *discipline*. Even in our day, suffering and hardship are still God's preferred methods for strengthening faith and building character.

Making disciples is a lot like rearing children.

It requires infinite amounts of patience, sacrifice, and stick-to-it-ness. You don't bring a baby home from the hospital; then leave it alone for a few days. *"Ok kiddo, your parents need to go out of town. There's a bottle in the fridge if you get hungry, and some diapers in the bedroom when you need a change. It's all on you now."*

Do that to a baby and he or she won't survive.

And the same is true with a new believer. They need immediate care, nurturing, and accountability. This is why it takes serious commitment to make disciples. There needs to be *access, accountability, and activity*.

If you want to disciple a brother in the Lord you've got to be involved and **ACTIVE**. It begins by opening your mouth and becoming outspoken about your faith.

I heard a story about a businessman who responded to the altar call and got saved at a Billy Graham Crusade. The next Sunday he went to a local church.

After the service he walked up to one of the leading elders in this church - a man he happened to know from business.

He told him, “Last night I gave my life to Christ.” The elder was overjoyed, “*I heard and I’m so happy for you.*” The man asked him, “How long have we been doing business together?” The elder figured it up, “*Well, I would imagine nearly twenty years now.*”

The new convert asked him again, “And have you known Jesus as your Savior and Lord all that time?”

The elder replied, “*Yes I have.*” The new believer responded, “*Well, I don’t recall you ever speaking to me about Jesus. In fact, I thought so highly of you, I felt if anyone could be as fine a man as you and not be a Christian; then I didn’t have to be a Christian either.*”

What a story... The man’s *silence about his faith* was misinterpreted as *a lack of faith*. God calls us all to be *active* not *passive* in regards to faith and convictions.

Whether it’s our witness to the world, or our efforts to disciple other believers, we all need to become more outspoken, and go on the record with our faith. We’re more like cops on the street. We’re not secret agents or undercover Christians. We need to be active and plain-spoken when it comes to our faith in Jesus.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:10 Paul writes of how he disciplined the believers in Thessalonica, “*we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom...*”

Paul uses the analogy of a father with his child. He taught them, and encouraged them, and challenged them. He was actively involved in their spiritual growth.

In a spiritual sense, Paul parented these younger believers. And this is what discipleship looks like. We need spiritual parents to take an interest in others.

Do you come to CC hoping someone pays attention to you, or are you looking for someone who needs your attention? Do you look *to serve or be served*?

There's a poem I love, which sums up the life of a spiritual parent...

"An old man traveling a lone highway, came at evening cold and grey, to a chasm deep and wide. The old man crossed in twilight dim, for the rushing stream held no fears in him, but he turned when he reached the other side, and built a bridge to span the tide. 'Old man,' cried a fellow pilgrim near, 'You're wasting your strength building here. Your journey will end with the ending day, and never again pass this way. You've crossed this chasm deep and wide, why build a bridge at evening tide?' 'Good friend, on the path I've come,' he said. 'There follows after me today, a youth whose feet will pass this way. This stream, which has been as nothing to me, to that fair-haired boy may a pit fall be. He, too, must cross in the twilight dim; Good friend, I'm building this bridge for him.'"

Spiritual fathers take the time, and go out of their way, to build bridges for younger believers to follow!

Here's what needs to happen at CC, we need relationships where men are being discipled. Where there's **accessibility** to each other, **accountability** among each other, and **activity** toward each other.

Men, God doesn't bless us, teach us, and grow us in Christ just to have us sit on the shelf without being used. A big part of *being a disciple is making disciples!*

For some of us we've been learning and learning and learning - *well, it's time to become a teacher.*

Jesus calls us to be disciples not disposals.

We're not just **decisions**, and we're certainly not **disposals**. Jesus wants us to be and make disciples.

If you've been a Christian for a while - and have dried up spiritually - if you've grown stale and stagnant this could be the problem. You're *taking in* more than you're *giving out*. You're a disciple who's not discipling.

Go to Southern Israel and dip your feet in the Dead Sea. No fish will nibble on your toes, because the Dead Sea is dead. Nothing lives in the Dead Sea.

Water flows in, but it never flows out.

And where there's *inflow* without *outflow* it produces a deadness. This is true of seas and people. Spiritual health requires that we *give out* as well as *take in*.

I've met Christians who experience this kind of stagnation and boredom, and they conclude they need a new church, or they need to chase some new experience to fill their emptiness. When in reality the problem is simple. They're not out making disciples.

They've become a *disposal* rather than a *disciple*.

When we settle into a selfish existence we dry up. What keeps the truths of Christianity fresh and exciting is when we share those truths with another believer.

For a long time I loved football. I played and cheered and followed my favorite teams... Then for a long time I lost interest. For a decade or more I could care less about football... But I fell in love with it again, and do you know how it happened? *My son began to play!*

I'll never forget Nick's first practice. The smells, sounds, adrenalin associated with football all came rushing back. I got re-excited about playing football because I experienced its thrills through my son.

And if you want to recapture the thrill of your salvation and the joy of your relationship with God relive it all over again through the eyes of a younger believer. Give away your experience and knowledge, and the joy will come rushing back to you.

Don't just be a **decision** for Christ. Don't only be a **disposal** of knowledge, but be a **disciple**... and even better, be a **disciple who's making disciples**. When it comes to disciples God wants us to **be one, make one**.