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## *Disciple-making 101: A 90 Day Challenge* *Intentional*

Matthew 1-7; 4:18-22

"Go and make disciples of all nations..." Last week we kicked off our New Year by looking at Jesus' Great Commission to his disciples in Matthew 28. If we believe that Jesus was speaking, not just to the 11 disciples—but to all his disciples for all ages—then we have to deal with one of the frightening words he spoke that day: "Go." If we are going to make disciples, what does it mean to "Go?" I'm repeating myself from last week because this is so essential... I want those who weren't here to hear it, and I want those who were here to remember it.

Some are afraid of "Go" because they think it looks like this: leaving family and friends and traveling to some distant, scary land. Some are afraid of "Go" because they think it means leaving family and friends and hunting for some stranger on the street with whom to share Jesus... like a spiritual door to door salesman. But that is not what Jesus was saying. Do you remember what the actual word "Go" means? "In your going... as you go." In other words, as you are making your family, making your career, making your friends, making your life—in your going along life's way—make disciples for Jesus, too." Do you see the difference?

This doesn't mean that it won't still be daunting—we may still struggle with a sense of inadequacy—but it does mean that your starting point in disciple-making is with the relationships God has already given to you. "In your going..."

So let me re-state the definition of disciple-making I offered last week. Disciple-making is "Intentionally sharing your life in Jesus with someone you already know and love in order to accompany them to a deeper place spiritually." As I said, this is going to be our focus for the next decade! We want to be a church that produces more and more disciples who are making other disciples for Jesus.

That's why we are doing this series called "Disciple-making 101." We want to learn how Jesus made disciples and do it His way. That's why we are reading the stories of his life called *gospels*. There are four of them. During our 90 Day Challenge, we are reading one gospel chapter a day for 89 days. If we do that, we will read almost everything the New Testament teaches us about Jesus' life and ministry.

That's what these journals are about. Every day, read one chapter and then write down the answer to two questions. What did I learn about Jesus and what did I learn about disciple-making? We ran out of journals last week because so many of

you took extras to invite friends to join you. Good job! We have more back at the Connect Center.

So, how many read at least some of the first seven chapters of Matthew this week? How many went to our blog to read some of my comments? You can find it on our web site. If you haven't started, it's not too late. You can catch up... or start where we are. And let me just say this: there will never be an easier or more encouraging way for you to begin a new discipline of reading God's Word every day.

This challenge means that the next three months of sermons will be different. We are going to cover seven chapters every Sunday morning. That means until Easter, my sermons will be three hours long. Just kidding! Obviously, we can't cover seven chapters in detail. This week alone we read the Christmas story, the story of John the Baptist, the Temptation of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount! It's too much. But what we can do is discover themes that help us understand what Jesus meant about discipleship and disciple-making. Bring Bibles... follow along.

This morning, it is the theme of intentionality. Let's go back to our definition of disciple-making: "Disciple-making is intentionally sharing life in Jesus with someone you already know and love in order to accompany them to a deeper place spiritually." There's that word. Intentionality. Jesus made disciples on purpose. Intentionality... let's define it this way: "Spiritual progress on purpose." Intentionality is essential to disciple-making. The question we should come out of here this morning asking ourselves is this: am I living a life of intentional disciple-making?

What do I mean? I mean most disciples of Jesus live haphazard spiritual lives. They may be focused and very intentional in other ways: their education, their career, the raising of their children, the pursuit of their financial goals. But when it comes to their lives as disciples, they bounce from experience to experience without much of a plan or focus. It looks like a pinball game.

One of the things we learn about Jesus' disciple-making was how intentional—how on-purpose—he was. We find intention throughout the first seven chapters. In chapter 1, we read the genealogy of Jesus that stretches back thousands of years. We might say, "This is boring; what difference does this make?" But it shows that God was planning to send Jesus thousands of years before he arrived... intentional. In chapter 2, we are told that the second name of Jesus was "Immanuel" which means "God with us." God came to earth as a human on purpose... intentional. In chapter 3, Jesus goes to John to be baptized. John is shocked. In verse 14 he exclaims, "...you come to me?" Yes, he did... on purpose... intentional. In the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 7, Jesus teaches us to "Ask, seek and knock." Live your spiritual life on purpose... intentional.

But there is no clearer example of intentionality than chapter 4 where Jesus calls his disciples. Let's read that text together.

*<sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."*

*<sup>20</sup>At once they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, <sup>22</sup>and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, but it was in the fishing village of Capernaum that he launched his ministry. As he walked those shores, teaching, healing and casting out evil spirits, he met people. In chapter 5, we read that "crowds" gathered around him for the Sermon on the Mount.

So, when it came time for Jesus to call the men as his disciples—he had thousands to choose from. He could have said, following his Sermon, "Hey, if any of you would be interesting in helping me spread this word, just raise your hand. Or, you can put a note on the blue card before you turn it in." But Jesus didn't ask for volunteers, did he?

We don't know what Jesus saw in these men, but on that day He approached them and invited them to be his disciples. Ordinarily, this is not the way it was done. Would-be apprentices came to the rabbi and applied to him. It was beneath the rabbi to approach prospective students; it just wasn't done. But it's the way Jesus did it.

Do you see how intentional he was? This wasn't a toss of the coin. It wasn't a, "What the heck, if you don't have anything better to do, what would you thing of hanging out together for the next three years?" No, out of the thousands of people Jesus met, he prayed about which of these people he should choose—and then he marched out to that lakeside and looked out across the water until he spotted the guys he was looking for... Peter and Andrew, James and John. And then he extended that life-changing invitation: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men!" Intentional.

One of my greatest moments of intention occurred within a few weeks after meeting Cyndi. I was tired of dating. And something about this girl really captured my attention. She was in her last quarter at PLU and so, I got in my car, drove to Parkland, went to the library, and started walking around the library looking for her. I had no idea where she was, but I was going to find her. I did. She was shocked. I took her to lunch and then—weeks into our friendship, mind you—I said, "I want you to know... you have the qualities of a woman that I would want

to marry." I freaked her out. Her response was, "Well, I'm not interested in marrying you." So much for intention! It's okay, a couple months later she came crawling back to me and the rest is history.

That's intention! And it is the opposite of a pinball... bouncing around aimlessly. It is more like a bullet fired straight at the target. Like I said, many of us live most of our lives this way, and yet when it comes to our own discipleship we bounce around aimlessly. Remember, intention is "Spiritual progress on purpose." Intentional discipleship will look different depending on where you are in our spiritual maturity. If, like Peter or Andrew, you've heard the invitation of Jesus to follow and are just ignoring it or putting it off... maybe your intentional act is to say, "No more living in limbo. I need to make a decision!" Last Sunday, 17 people heard the call of Jesus and came forward to be baptized. It wasn't very Presbyterian... but it seemed very Holy Spirit! That's intentional discipleship... spiritual progress on purpose.

Maybe you are brand new in the Lord, and you want to grow in your faith. Want to hear a risky "intentional" idea? What if you approached a mature believer and say, "Would you disciple me? Would you teach me what it means to follow Jesus? I have watched how you follow Jesus, and I want to learn from you!" That is intentional discipleship... spiritual progress on purpose.

Or maybe you are just a lazy disciple. Remember, the root word of "disciple" is "discipline", but you would have to admit you have none. You may or may not come to church on Sunday, depending on your mood or distractions. You rarely read the Bible or pray. You count on other people to give money to your church and you spend yours on yourself. You picked up this journal—maybe intending to use it or maybe just wanting to look like you were going to—but haven't cracked the Bible all week. If that describes you... come on! There's nothing intentional about that kind of spiritual life. You are a pinball bouncing back and forth! How can you possibly hope to experience the kind of abundant life Jesus promised if you live that way?

For you, intentional discipleship might mean promising yourself and an accountability partner that you are going to do the 90 Day Challenge... one chapter of gospel every day and write something about it. Or promise yourself and an accountability partner that you will make Sunday worship a priority for your family. Or you will volunteer to serve Jesus in some way. Or maybe you will finally admit that the reason you haven't ever really grown in your faith is that you have so filled your life with activity that you don't have any space for discipleship or disciple-making. One woman I talked to said, "I was too proper to do drugs or alcohol. Busy-ness was my drug of choice." Maybe your greatest act of spiritual intention would be to stop doing some things to make room in your life to be a disciple instead of hiding behind the over-full schedule you yourself have created!

But what if you are doing all these things? Maybe intentional disciple-making for you is putting your head on a swivel... watching for people with whom God wants you to share your in Christ. My Grandpa Bert was my best friend as a kid. One of the things I loved about Grandpa Bert was he was a gawker. He would take long walks and gawk the whole time at everything! He was so interested in people and he drank in everything. In fact, more than once, as he was walking through a parking lot, he would trip on a speed bump because he was so busy watching life! For some of you who are more mature in the Lord, maybe it's time to lift up your eyes, stop worrying about the speed bumps, and look at who God has brought into your influence!

I heard from one mature believer this week who wants to be a more intentional disciple-maker. He started a small Bible study in his circle of real estate developers. He is calling it ACRE (Acknowledging Christ in Real Estate). They are going to read Mark together. Another businessman decided to intentionally look for ways to share his faith with his colleagues. And a woman in our church took extra journals and invited several unchurched friends to Women's Life. They all came last Monday, and for four of them when they opened the scriptures it was the first time in their lives they had ever cracked open a Bible. That woman was living intentionally... spiritual progress on purpose.

This past week our elders were studying about intentional leadership. One elder said, "I see this like a traffic light. Green means 'go without thinking about it,' yellow means 'be on the alert' and red means 'danger, stop!' I see intentional disciple-making as living life on the yellow light... always alert for what God is doing, always watching for someone that God might bring into my life."

So what will it be? Are you ready to live your Christian life on purpose? One way to think about it would be to simply ask yourself this question: "Do I intend to be a faithful disciple of Jesus, yes or no? Do I intend to be a disciple-maker for Jesus, yes or no?" The answer to your own question will determine the trajectory and the quality of your spiritual progress.