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Disciple-making 101: A 90 Day Challenge *Asking* Luke 6-12

I have been on this job now for 27½ years. I cannot remember an initiative in the life of our church that has done more to unify, inspire and motivate this congregation than our 90 Day Challenge. I began visiting LifeGroups this week, and they were buzzing about it. I heard from someone who said, "Just walk into Forza's Coffee shop; you see 90 Day Challenge journals all over the place." I am delighted—and a little astounded—that something so simple could be so profound.

If you are visiting this morning, 90 Day Challenge is an invitation to read one chapter of a gospel every day and answer just two questions: "What did I learn about Jesus" and "What did I learn about disciple-making". So our moment of accountability: how many read some part this week? All 7 chapters? And for those who are behind and feel overwhelmed about catching up, don't! Just start tomorrow with Luke 13.

Our challenge as a preaching team is this: to pull together themes from our readings that help us understand how Jesus made disciples, so that we, too, can make disciples for Jesus. Last week we discovered that when Jesus said, "Go and make disciples," he was actually saying, "As you are going—along the way of your life—make disciples." Jesus made disciples as he was going. And this morning, we discover that Jesus made disciples as he was asking great questions.

One of boring aspects a Mexico mission is the return border crossing. Often you sit for two hours as hundreds of cars wait to be inspected before crossing into the States. This year, we had the excitement of a drug-sniffing dog catching someone, and we watched as they were led away in handcuffs. So when you finally pull up to the booth and the immigration officer starts asking questions, everybody takes the process very seriously. No joking around; no flippant remarks. Why? Because, that officer is trying to figure out who you really are, where you've been and where you are hoping to go.

Jesus was always doing the same thing. He was a champion question-asker! We don't think of Jesus this way. We think of him as prophet, teacher, miracle-worker, exorcist... but he was also an expert at asking questions. For instance, in this week's seven chapters, did you notice how many times Jesus asked a question? 38 times! In his disciple-making, the effective use of questions was essential.

If we are going to be disciple-makers, we must learn from Jesus how to ask great questions. One of the things that overwhelms people about sharing their faith is the feeling that we must have all the answers. What if someone asks questions to which we don't have the answer? (Part of my response would be, "Of course you don't have all the answers. If they stump, you say three words. "I don't know." No shame in that. You promise to find out, and you get back to them with your answer.)

But notice this: Jesus, who did have all the answers, still asked questions. If we are going to obey Jesus and make disciples the way he did, then we need to master this art.

In this last week, Jesus asked many profound questions: Luke 6:46: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?" Or this amazing question when, in the middle of a crowd, one sick woman reached out to touch the hem of Jesus' garment: "Who touched me?" Or how about this exasperated question to his disciples in Luke 9:41: "How long shall I stay with you and put up with you?" It is the question asked by every parent with a teenager and every teenager with a parent.

But in these last seven chapters, we also find perhaps the four most important disciple-making questions you can ask. If you are willing, or even if you want to be a better friend or parent, I would urge you to write down these four questions. They are simple and powerful.

Let's start with a quick flyby over the four. We'll do it in order. Turn first to Luke 8:25: "Where is your faith?" Luke 8:30: "What is your name?" Luke 9:20: "Who do you say that I am?" Luke 9:25: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

Any given Sunday morning, this room is filled with people at different places in their spiritual journey. On one end of the spectrum are mature Christians who are already making disciples. At the other end, some of you are just exploring what it means to follow Jesus. But God can use even the youngest in the faith to encourage others in their spiritual journey. One man who went to Mexico—and who would describe himself as younger in his Christian walk—had such an impact on some of the students, that they wanted to meet with him this week to talk about their faith. He doesn't feel qualified, and yet God seems to have opened a door for him with these young disciples.

Whether you are qualified or not, mature or young in the faith, there is one thing that all of us can do without fear that will help others grow in their relationship with Jesus. Ask questions! The nice thing about asking questions is it comes easily! We do it all the time. "How ya doing?" "Did you see the game last night?" "Have you been to the new shop in Uptown?" "How's your daughter's soccer team doing?"

We already know how to ask questions. Our learning opportunity is this: how can we ask the kinds of questions that help people grow in their spiritual lives?

Let's take a closer look at the four questions we read earlier. Let's return to chapter 8. One day, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's take a boat ride to the other side of the lake." So, they jumped into a fishing boat and started across. Jesus must have been exhausted and felt like he needed a rest from the crowds, because they were hardly away from shore before he fell fast asleep. The Sea of Galilee sits 700 feet below sea level and is surrounded by mountain ranges on all side. Nasty winds come whipping down from the east and can turn a placid lake into a very dangerous storm in just moment. I have seen it.

That happened here, and suddenly, that boat was being tossed all over the place. It must have been pretty bad, because at least four of the disciples were fishermen—men used to the sea—but they were all terrified and dismayed that Jesus was sleeping through all of it. They cried out in terror, "Master, master... we are going to drown!"

Jesus woke up, stood up, and we are told, rebuked the wind and the raging waters. I wonder what a rebuke to nature sounds like? "You winds, stop it this very instant! Behave yourself! You are making a mess of things, and you are scaring my friends!" Whatever he said, the winds obeyed him! Then, when all was calm, he turned to them and asked one question: "Where is your faith?" Okay, tuck that one away.

Then they landed on the other side. Remember, Jesus wanted to get away from it all; to get a rest from the crowds who were constantly asking for help. But the minute he stepped ashore, this is what Jesus saw: a naked man running toward him, crying at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the most High God? I beg you, don't torture me?" So much for a day off!

This guy was demon-possessed. He freaked people out. The residents of the area tried to chain him to control him, but he was so freakishly strong he just snapped the chains like they were made of plastic. No one wanted this weirdo living in town, so he slept in the tombs that were carved into the hillsides—a naked, demon-possessed, superhuman who slept with dead people. You can hardly find a more pathetic or frightening figure in the gospels.

So this naked, filthy, scarred, crazed man runs toward Jesus, screaming at the top of his lungs, and throws himself at his feet. And Jesus asks one question. Do you remember? "What is your name?" The man replied, "Legion, because there are so many demons living inside of me." And Jesus sent the demons into a herd of pigs who rushed off a cliff into the water—they did a swine dive—and he set Legion free. Where is your faith? What is your name?

Next scene, Luke 9 18: Jesus was praying in private with his disciples nearby. Matthew tells us this took place in Caesarea Philippi, a beautiful site 40 miles north

of Capernaum that was dedicated to the X-rated worship of the half-man, half-goat, sex-crazed god named Pan. Jesus looked at his disciples and asked a simple question: "Who do the crowds say I am?" as if he were saying, "This is what these crowds say about a mythical, pagan man-goat named Pan. What do they say about me?" The disciples told him: "Some say John the Baptist or Elijah or another prophet from long ago."

Then, Jesus asked the most important question he ever asked: "Who do you say that I am? It's easy to speculate about what others believe, but tell me... what do you believe about me?" It was Peter's finest hour. "You are the Christ, the anointed one of God." Where is your faith? What is your name? Who do you say that I am?

And then, later on in the same conversation, this question in verse 25: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?" In other words, "What are you living for?" Again, a very powerful question... So what if you are so smart, so clever and so powerful that you accumulate more wealth than you can ever spend, all of the influence you can ever wield—the biggest house, newest car, largest office, greatest retirement plan—if you lose you, if you forfeit what it means to be truly human as God created you to be—what have you gained? The obvious answer: Nothing. Worse than nothing! You have sacrificed you on the altar of success.

Where is your faith?
What is your name?
Who do you say that I am?
What are you living for?

Four of the most important questions Jesus ever asked. And four of the most effective questions we can ask. Let's look at them more closely, and in a little different order. Again, I urge you to jot these down and to think about how you might use these questions in relationships that have been, up till now, pretty much on the surface.

First: What is your name? Do we really think that Jesus didn't know Legion's name? What Jesus was asking was, "Who are you, really?" In other words, "I want to get to know you... the real you. Would you tell me your story? What has happened in your life that makes you, you?"

The next question might be: "Where is your faith?" In other words, "What do you believe about God, about life, about eternity? In times of crisis, to whom or what do you turn? Is there something more than this life, or is this all there is?"

As your relationship deepens, you reach the point where you can ask the next question: "Who do you say Jesus is?" Is he just a historical figure, a good man, a prophet, the divine Son of God? Tell me what you believe about Jesus. I want to know.

And finally, this question: "What are you living for?" What are your dreams, your aspirations? When you reach the end of your life, what do you hope will be said of you? What must you do to be true to yourself as you were created to be?

What is your name, where is your faith, who do you say that Jesus is, what are you living for? Can you see how powerful those four simple questions can be? Can you see how they would open doors of relationship wherever you are spiritually? But only under one condition: that you actually listen to the answers... that you actually care about the answers! If you view question-asking as a gimmick for guiding people toward the answers you want, then you aren't really asking questions at all. You are manipulating them. Or if these are "gotcha" questions intended to trip them up and prove how smart you are, it will only embarrass them and make them mad. Want to know whether you are really asking questions to build relationships? Use this principle: never ask questions you already know the answers to.

In a moment, you are going to hear from our high school kids about their Mexico trip, but it's not just kids that grow on these trips... adults do, too. I met a man in on our trip that I did not know. The first day, as I was setting up my tent, I asked him to come inside, and all I said was, "Tell me about yourself", and it was the beginning of a wonderful relationship that is still blossoming. I'm not sure where it will lead, but I am sure that a relationship built upon asking the right kind of questions is going to honor Jesus, build his kingdom and make disciples.

The question we asked our Mexico team this year was this: What were you born for? As they come forward, I want you to watch this video.