

# The Command

LEARNING TO MAKE DISCIPLES  
AS JESUS COMMANDED



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FORWARD BY DANIEL PORTER

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# FORWARD

The Great Commission was given to believers after the resurrection of Jesus. It was then that Jesus stated:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

*(Matthew 28:18-20 NASB)*

Discipleship reveals God's heart for humanity. Discipleship builds on a foundation of Christ-centered relationships that equip and empower believers to live the life Jesus modeled. It binds believers to Jesus in a way that leads to ever-increasing transformation. This transformation of people into the likeness of Jesus serves as evidence of God's expanding Kingdom on earth. The disciplined life brings glory to God through active and obedient faith.

I have had the privilege of knowing Ryan as a close friend for thirty years. He has dedicated his life to obeying Christ's command to make disciples, and I can attest to the fruit resulting from his commitment. The foundation of discipleship is continually pointing sons and daughters to Jesus Christ. Ryan does this well. He is radical in his pursuit of reaching and making disciples of the people Jesus died for.

I started encouraging Ryan to write down his thoughts on discipleship after I sought his advice on how I might better disciple some people I was serving. I found his guidance to be valuable and effective. In this book, you will find the expanded version of the ideas Ryan shared with me. You will discover practical insights and tested wisdom. You may even feel challenged by some of the ideas he proposes.

I encourage you to prayerfully consider what you find in these pages. In a world where believers often feel pressured to develop better "strategies" or more "entertaining" services to attract people to Jesus, Ryan directs our focus on what our Lord Jesus commanded: go and make disciples.

In Christ,

Daniel Porter

## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

# INTRODUCTION

I am tempted to say that a new movement has begun, but in truth, the movement never stopped.

If you believe the words of Jesus, “The gates of hell will NOT prevail,” and if you believe that He has reclaimed all the victory and all the power over sin and death, then Jesus has indeed never stopped moving forward in victory. When we fall into the trap of being “excited for a new movement,” we put into question the greatest power the world has ever known: The Son of God’s victory, 2000 years ago!

Kids these days use an acronym as slang: O.P.! It stands for “overpowered” and refers to video game characters, comic book superheroes, and even animals in creation that are far more powerful than any of their counterparts. My generation would accuse these superheroes of being a “Mary-Sue.” A character so perfect that he/she is unbelievable.

Jesus is the ultimate overpowered, “Mary-Sue.” His authority is limitless, His perfection unequalled, and His power unrivaled. He has NEVER needed our help, our methods, or our new movements.

Jesus already has “all authority” given to Him, and the Holy Spirit was sent as The Helper. What more must God do? He has already adopted us as sons and daughters, given us the inspired word through the Bible, communion through His Spirit, a relationship with His Son, a vast family of believers to rely on, and an army of angels to assist. The only opposition to our journey is an insecure world to love and a defeated enemy to fight.

In fact, we’ve been asked to win a rigged game. God loaded the dice, and then commanded us to toss the bones while He eagerly waits for His winnings!

**So - why is it that we think that we need a “new move of God?”**

**Bluntly, it is a result of you and I not doing our jobs  
and not allowing Jesus to do His.**

Imagine playing in a city-wide soccer tournament and on your team is a young Pele; the greatest player ever to touch a soccer ball. Your coach tells your team, “The plan is simple, get the ball to Pele, on their half of the field. No one can stop him!” And you know what? Your coach is right. Your first game is amazing! You crush your opponent, 20-0.

The next game, you do the same, 17-0, then 25-0, no one can even come close to Pele’s incredible skill, speed, and knowledge of the game. But as you get to the finals, you decide following the coach’s game plan has become a bit boring, it’s too simple and even easy. You’re sick of always giving the ball to Pele and letting him score. You’re sick of always doing it the coach’s way.

So for the first 45 minutes of the final, you take charge. You make your own plans, telling Pele to sit on the bench. Now, it’s your turn to shine. You have a new, better plan! And for 45 minutes, the other team crushes you. At the end of the first half, you are down by four goals and Pele is sitting in the corner of the locker room, silent and scowling. Your coach screams at you, “Just do what you’re told, get Pele in the game!”

You and your teammates shrug your shoulders and go back to the coach’s game plan for the second half. You spend 45min passing the ball to Pele over and over, as you watch him destroy your opponent, scoring 20 unanswered points.

Throughout the church’s history, we have often finally given the ball back to Jesus - the church’s only star player. Then we sit back and watch Christ do what He’s always done - WIN! But then we make a mistake. After crushing the enemy and seeing thousands come to Christ, we begin grandiose claims of “God is doing something new” or “There’s a revival.” However, we have failed to identify the original problem, which means we are doomed to repeat it! Not only had the church not done what it was told, but in the process, we had inadvertently benched Jesus Christ!

Before stating that the gates of hell will not prevail, Jesus said - I will build My church, and THEN throughout all four gospels, Christ told us to do what He did.

**He COMMANDED, not suggested, but COMMANDED, “GO MAKE DISCIPLES.”**

Therefore, the issue is simple to explain:

**We have taken over Jesus’s job and ignored our own.**

In order to build churches, our way, we often sacrifice our own responsibility of making disciples of Jesus.

We are going our own way and then hoping Jesus will jump on board with our more “modern and clever” grand plans and strategies.

This book proposes a different way, a biblical way: His way.

Many have suggested something similar, through mentoring, discipleship, home churches, simple Bible study, cell group systems, etc. To solve this issue we even created systems such as the 5X5, Simple Church, G12, or the home group method. Others have proposed the answer to all our church ills is through new worship, new Bible translations, bigger buildings, fancier evangelism, and professional production values on a Sunday morning.

Whereas some of these ideas sounded good or even contained vital truths, none have delivered all they promised. Over the past 20+ years of church leadership, I have witnessed most church issues become exponentially worse - not better.

**Don't get me wrong - I can't fix the church, and neither can you!**

And in that we have always found our answer. Just as we all must come to God, through the cross, with no answers, no power, nothing to give. So too must we 'fix' the issues plaguing the church by kneeling before the cross. We must all admit defeat, in order to turn back to the original and simplest of winning methods: His method.

**We must be a church that asks:**

***"What has Jesus told you to do? Are you doing it?"***

I invite you alongside me for a journey, as we explore a strategy that every believer, from every country and every denomination can get behind.

**Read what Jesus said and did.**

And then...

**Go out and do what Jesus did.**

## CHAPTER 2

# What is Discipling?

# What is Discipling?

Simply put, a disciple is a student of a teacher. However, to truly understand the Bible's definition of a Jesus disciple, we must first understand who the Teacher was.

Jesus or Yeshua - was also known as the Christ or Messiah. He was a carpenter, but not just any carpenter. After He retired from His business, Jesus taught the Old Testament Bible (the Torah). But, He was not just a Bible teacher, He was also a healer: healing the sick, healing the lame, raising the dead, and cleansing the lepers. But wait, there's more! He was not just a teacher of the Bible, a retired carpenter, and a healer, but also a prophet: foretelling the future. He called out people's past, even what they were thinking in real time...amazing stuff...but that's not all! He told monster demons to go away, and they listened. Other evil spirits were so scared of Jesus, that they asked permission to run away into a herd of pigs. To top it off, to save His students/disciples from a nasty storm trying to kill them, Jesus went to help them, by walking across the water.

This impossible standard is our teacher, and as the apostle Paul stated, we are expected to imitate Him (1 Corinthians 11:1). So, how on earth could we ever sit in a classroom or a church pew and learn to do what Jesus, the Messiah, did?

We can't.

You see, the word 'teacher,' as used in the gospels, is closer to our modern-day word INSTRUCTOR. Someone who shows you HOW to do something. I liken it to a shop teacher, a personal trainer at the gym, a ballet instructor, or a boxing coach. However, my favorite example is a downhill snow ski instructor.

I was a snow ski instructor from high school into my 20s. I became a very good ski instructor. Being a highly qualified ski instructor is far more complicated than just being a very good skier or even being a competitive "pro." Pros can focus on themselves all day, make mistakes, and try again, over and over, perfecting their craft. As an instructor, I had to perfect my technique, take meticulous notes on how I learned to improve my technique, and then teach that proven technique to my student/disciple. If my teaching method did not work, I had to go back to the drawing board and try, try again.

You see, even in Jesus's day, He had "professionals" focused on little else, other than perfecting their own abilities. These "professional spiritual people" did impressive things that even I would probably applaud and praise as God's ultimate work! However, Jesus addressed these folks when He said:

*"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?  
And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?  
And then will I not profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me."  
(Matthew 7:22-23a)*

You see, a disciple is not simply a churchgoer or someone who has been baptized. Not even being a bible scholar or a worker of miracles makes you a disciple. A disciple of Jesus Christ is **an imitator of His life. Living in His teachings.**

*"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)*

*"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples." (John 8:31)*

A disciple can't be satisfied with weekly Church services, Bible studies, passionate Jesus t-shirts, or blaring worship music. A disciple/mentee of Jesus Christ is someone who not only follows Christ's example - picking up his cross and following Him - but has a need for others do the same. A disciple of Jesus reads the Bible for one main reason, to become more like Jesus.

Do you remember the "Parable of the Talents"? (Matthew 25:14 - 30).

*"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. (Matthew 25:14-18)*

An investor and boss gave a wad of cash to three of his employees. The sums of money were called talents. Sources do not agree on the exact amount of each talent, but they do agree that it was a massive sum. The first employee received five talents, the second employee had two talents, and the third employee had one talent. Each was given according to their ability.

The first two servants went out and invested their talents where they would do the most good and earn a profit. The third only found a safe place, dug a hole, and hid all that was entrusted to him.

After many years, the master came back to collect His interest. The first servant gave the boss his five talents back, plus five more. The second gave his boss two talents plus two more. Both servants were praised and promoted. However, the last employee gave him only one talent back and made excuses to his boss that he was too scared to do anything with the talent. The lazy and wicked servant was scolded by the master and thrown out into the *“outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* (Matthew 25:14-30)

The grace you enjoy, and the peace you live with have all come at a cost. The price of Jesus's blood on the cross, the hours someone spent praying for your soul, teaching you the Bible and how to pray and hear His voice. The spiritual giftings, the physical giftings, and even the daily provision given by our faithful Heavenly Father all come with an expectation.

I am a father of two amazing children. No matter how lazy and evil they could ever be, I will always love them, feed and clothe them. However, when I am generous and take the time to ensure a good education and tools for my kids to succeed in this life, I have certain expectations of them. I expect them to learn to take care of themselves, to take care of each other and their mother if I am not around. I expect them to love their neighbor and share God's love with those around them. I expect them to be generous and kind with the toys, clothes, and money my wife and I have given them.

**How much more, does our heavenly Father expect of us?**



## CHAPTER 3

# The “Secret” to Making Disciples: One-on-One Mentorship

# The “Secret” to Making Disciples: One-on-one Mentorship

Have you ever heard the phrase, “There is no such thing as a silver bullet?” The silver bullet allegory originates from monster lore, specifically during the early 20th century, as werewolf stories became popular. Essentially, the story goes that there is only one practical way to kill the mythical beast, which is a silver bullet to the heart. Henceforth, a “sure-fire-way” to solve a monster problem was referred to as a ‘silver bullet.’

I’m sure that most of us have surmised that any person or company promising the silver bullet of solutions, is a fake, flimflam, or con artist. So, as I claim to share the “secret” to making disciples, I do so with a tense tongue pressed sharply into my cheek.

My secret is - there is no easy way, there is no simple method, and there is no shortcut! Rather, we must roll up our sleeves and get to work. Specifically, with a doctrine Jesus was very clear about, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” Also known as - treat others the way you would like to be treated.

Imagine life as a new believer in the average modern church. You are excited for this new peace and joy you feel bubbling from your soul. You are eager to volunteer, be generous, and share the Good News with others. You get baptized and are placed in a small group with 10-15 others and life is amazing. You go to church every Sunday, giving money to support this ministry that you love. You have been sharing Jesus with your family, not always the easiest of tasks, but you are still hopeful!

After six months your small group ends so your small group leader can take a break. You're still attending on Sunday, giving as best you can, but financially life is harder since you became a Christian. Your brother mocks you about being a Christian and your mom is polite but doesn't seem to care, all the while your dad ignores you. Honestly, you're not sure what to do about the worsening situation in your finances or the negative attitude from your family.

You try a new small group, but it's not the same. You have to force yourself to show up every week, which is getting tougher and tougher to maintain as your boss is demanding more and more from you. Compounding your frustration, your old small group leader already knows your entire life story, but now you have to “re-educate” another leader about who you are and where you come from. It all begins to feel a bit forced and awkward.

It's now been almost a year since you accepted Jesus. At the beginning of your journey, you really did think that Christ was real and that His peace was amazing. However, you begin to think that maybe your family is right. Maybe it was just an emotional high and just a 'phase.' As a last resort, you attempt to meet with your pastor. Fair enough, you have to speak to his receptionist, he's a busy guy. However, your heart sinks as his assistant tells you the pastor's next available appointment is more than a month away. Church life doesn't make sense or feel practical anymore. You fade into the background and eventually stop showing up on Sunday.

This hypothetical individual actually had a good church experience. I have known many such cases. There is not one person in this narrative doing anything wrong. A new believer, after the "honeymoon phase" of coming to Jesus is bound to experience hardship in life, especially with work and family. Small group leaders often serve for a specific period; it's just practical. Any pastor with 100 or more congregants will need to schedule meetings. However, by the time a new believer is desperate enough to reach out to the pastor, a reasonable wait time for an appointment will make them feel as if the pastor doesn't care.

All that being said - after a year of financial giving, sharing Jesus with family and friends, and regular attendance - don't you think this baby Christian deserves a bit more? Aren't we failing to disciple effectively? Have we not been guilty of acting like a used car salesman, who no longer cares about their client once we can claim; "Their salvation is ours, their rears belong in our seats, money in our basket!"

"So then, Ryan, what is the magic bullet? Come on preacher, wow us with your fix to all the ills of church."

Again, there is no secret, just hard work paired with an old saying - quality over quantity, specifically:

**Every new believer needs a one-on-one friendship  
with a mature believer for at least the first year!**

That's it. There is no reason for the above hypothetical church to change anything, other than assigning a mature believer to every baby Christian. This is not earth-shattering news. It is something that has been talked about and lamented over in the church since I was in diapers.

In the early years of my ministry life, I visited a church in South America. I was one of a dozen young adult missionaries there to serve and evangelize with a local older pastor and his family. I said maybe four words to this pastor the entire two weeks my missions team was with him. Yet, he impacted me far more than I could have ever imagined.

You see, all I heard about for the previous six weeks was how amazing this pastor was. After arriving in his city we attended his church. It was a small, humble building attached to his home with old wooden benches for seating. The entire room seated forty people, max. However, by the time the service began, besides my visiting team and the pastor's family, there were only a handful of attendees, all of them single moms and grannies. I was SO judgmental! "What's so amazing about this guy? Nobody even bothers to show up?"

Over the next two weeks, I would find out. You see, we first traveled outside the city, to help with a relief effort, as the area had been affected by bad wind storms and wildfires. We also fed the poor through a church that was planted in the slums. We then held services on the other side of the city in a large suburban church with over a thousand attendees. The next day, we were in midtown, with an evangelistic church, doing dramas, street preaching, and playing soccer with kids. We were with a different ministry every day and every night. One evening, I asked one of our leaders how our pastor knew all these ministers, and why they gave him such respect every time we visited and served with them.

My leader looked at me and she grinned, "That's what makes this pastor so special. He's been running his church for twenty years and has never had more than twenty attendees, because once he identifies a mature Christian, he focuses on discipling them until they can launch their own ministry. He believes it's selfish to keep those who can be leading others."

Slightly stunned, I asked a confirming question, "You are telling me that all those ministries...."

"Came from his tiny church, and we won't be able to see them all." She finished my thought for me. "He has launched more than 40 churches and ministries all over the city."

"Awesome," I replied, "That's a church I would love to be a part of!"

The last I heard, this humble, unknown pastor was still discipling one person at a time, and helping them launch into their ministries, in another part of the city or even other parts of the country. I imagine by now, he has discipled more than a hundred, and they have discipled hundreds and their disciples are into the thousands, even tens of thousands! All because one humble pastor focused on training one person at a time until they were ready to do the same.

I remember an old famous evangelist was quoted as saying that if he were to do it over, he'd have chosen 12 men and poured his life into them. However, to quote my Oklahoman Grandpa Pat, "hog-wash!" That famous evangelist lived another 20+ years and never did any such thing. He could have taken on some young men and discipled them, but the allure of the crowd and the priorities of the pulpit was far too much of a temptation for him.

You know what, church? We are all guilty of the same - especially us in church leadership. We keep saying we need more discipleship, but we do not lead the way nor do we set the proper example. Modern-day church leaders are far too enamored with the excitement of a crowd, the "power" of an incredible sermon, and the heartfelt emotion of amazing worship! Yet, the crowds all abandoned Jesus - several times; an audience's inability to remember a sermon for much more than a day is infamous; and singing is only a tiny fraction of true worship to the living God!

**However - there is another way! One-on-one big brother, big sister friendships.**

We see them all over the Bible: Elijah and Elisha, Samuel and David, Barnabas and Paul, Paul and Timothy and also Paul and Silas, and of course, Jesus Christ and His twelve - The list goes on! But really, I should not have to sell this point very hard. We know that a real church is where two or more are gathered in Jesus' name: "For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20). Also, the vast majority of stories in the New Testament are about different individuals and small groups of people reaching out to other individuals and small groups of people.

I have mentored dozens of individuals for more than 20 years. Early on, I found that most just wanted a friend to share true, intimate, and embarrassing struggles with. Most needed a friend who would respect them enough to earn the right to give them advice. And virtually none of them showed any lasting fruit or maturing for at least 12 months.

To be honest, it was not always easy to meet with these folks. For the first few months, there is sheer glee, everything we talk about is incredible and Jesus is on fire in their hearts! Usually, about 5-8 months in, enthusiasm wanes. They have work commitments pop up and have to cancel, or forget we were supposed to meet. Sometimes they just act like they don't care anymore. However, months later, after I had backed off and given them up to the Lord, I often got a call from them desperate to meet. The effects of not talking about Jesus, one-on-one, for several weeks catch up to them.

*"You will know a tree by its fruit." (Matthew 7:17)*

I have learned, from experience, that if I continue to meet once or twice a month for no less than 1 year, then 10 years on, more than 90% are still strong and active Christians. If we met for two years or more, almost all of them have consistently found ways to share the gospel, pray for the lost, or serve in a ministry far beyond their previous capability. And for those I have mentored for more than three years, 80% of them have gone on to make at least one or more disciple-makers, who have gone on to mentor one or more disciple-makers, etc.

It has been more than a decade since I fully embraced the disciple-making lifestyle, and for the first few years, I saw little fruit. Yet, by the grace of God, and the encouragement of a few key people in my life, namely my amazing wife, I stuck with it. Now, almost twelve years later, I know of folks I have mentored impacting people representing at least four continents in more than a dozen countries. Of course, I am not the only one to minister to all of these folks. However, I do feel blessed to be a significant part of their journey. I believe the difference has been through mentoring and disciplining one person at a time - ensuring quality over quantity.

1 Corinthians 3:10- 15 says:

*“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss, but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”*

As disciples/mentees of Jesus, as ambassadors of His church that He builds, and as elders in the modern family of God, are we ready for the day of days? Are we ready to stand before Jesus, and say:

“Here are the souls I loved into your arms.”

“Here are the ones I loved so much, the world recognized us as your children.”

“Here are Your disciples, Your saints and they too have disciples, and they too have saints, tested by fire - more in love with You than ever!”

Do you feel ready for that day?

Neither do I.

However...I feel quite a bit closer now than I did a decade ago.

## CHAPTER 4

# **Change your Mindset: The First Steps in Making Disciples**

# 1. Make Followers of Jesus - Not Followers of Yourself

I have no delusions that I have everything figured out, nor that I won't make mistakes when discipling new believers. To be honest, there will most likely be at least one statement in this book that is inaccurate.

**So, how could I ever possibly expect anyone to follow me or take my advice?**

**The answer: I can't, I shouldn't, and I won't.**

Our mandate 'to make disciples of all nations' has little to do with you, me, the latest church fads, the most famous preachers, or even what "type" of church you go to. Our mandate is to make followers/mentees/disciples of Jesus Christ - not ourselves.

You may find that a simple and obvious observation. However, you would be surprised by how many church leaders have been distracted from this foundational truth. Whether the focus is on the gifting of song, preaching, prophesy, healing, or just the admiration of the congregation - thousands of leaders have abandoned their original calling of making disciples of Jesus. Instead, they pursue making disciples of themselves, teaching others to serve their own ministry needs, and allowing themselves to be placed on unhealthy pedestals.

In contrast, if my focus is to teach those I am mentoring/discipling how to follow Jesus, I teach them about Jesus, not Ryan. I do my best to keep myself out of it. A disciple's goal should always be to hear and obey the Holy Spirit in all things. We should do ourselves a favor and never listen to or obey Ryan, or anyone else, in all things.

*"Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)*



## 2. Preaching To The One:

### Encouragement For The Modern-Day Minister

In theory, all of us preachers, pastors, ministers, priests, etc. ...claim that sharing with the 'one' is just as important as sharing with a crowd. However, our actions most often betray our true priorities. Most pastors spend far too much time behind a computer, preparing yet another sermon, or sitting in another committee meeting - or a marketing meeting. We often look like something akin to a large corporation planning on how to attract new customers, not Father God's children asking how to obey Him.

Has the church become a for-profit business? Unfortunately, many pastors have fallen into treating their parishioners as clients. This often turns a person into a number on a spreadsheet, not the individual brother and sister the apostle Paul spoke of.

*"So then you are no longer strangers or people far away.*

*But you live with God's people and belong to God's family." (Ephesians 2:19)*

Imagine if you would, that your dad asked you and your little brother to help him put on a new roof. Your father gives each of you a hammer and a pile of nails.

He tells you, "Take these boards, and nail them onto the rafters."

Your little brother gets to work, but you are not sure. You stick your nose up into the air and scoff, "Um, Dad, this hammer is a bit old, a bit dented, and has some grease on the hilt!" You shake your head in dismay, "Here, Pops, you keep this old yucky thing and I'll find my own tool which will be more exciting, look more modern and cleaner." You hand the hammer back to your unimpressed father and take off in search of the "right" tool.

One year later, you return, the roof long finished, but you have it, a "better" tool!

You have invented a smartphone, encased in steel, and properly weighted, so you can pound nails with something modern, useful, and impressive!

**For many of us, discipling is as simple as saying, "Yes, Father, I'll do it Your way!"**

Then we pick up that hammer and pile of nails, climb up onto the roof, and get to work.

For others, such as myself, when I first began making disciples, we must first rid ourselves of all the reinvented wheels we have been taught are necessary for ministry.

**We need to prayerfully question where we are putting  
our time, energy, and money.**

We need to be humble enough to go all the way back to the basics, allowing Father God to be in charge. Then obediently use His tools, and trust His instructions - one day at a time.

The truth is that Jesus clearly demonstrated keeping church life simple. Specifically, Christ modeled focusing on the individual and not the crowd. Our Lord God while on earth, **left the many to pursue the one**. Specifically, Christ gave us the invaluable allegory of the Good Shepherd leaving the 99 to bring back the one lost sheep in Luke 15:3-7.

*Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

*(Luke 15:3-7)*

He also instructed us in church "structure" when He said, "Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I will be" (Matthew 18:20).

Yet, what are the constant foci and the "praise reports" we can't wait to share? Thinly veiled bragging about a giant new building, or that our attendance was up and the "best news" ... giving has increased!

In contrast, Jesus said "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matthew 5:3)



### 3. “Do your Job,” Is a Word We all Need to Start Taking Seriously.

Remember, Jesus said He will build His church. And, as we all know, the buildings we meet in on a Sunday are not church. There has never been, in the history of the world, a “church building.” It DOES NOT EXIST.

Only humans, created in the image of God, can make up the church. The group of folks meeting to worship and read the Bible on Sundays are a part of the church. The interaction in the name of Jesus makes them church - not a building, not a sermon, not light projectors, or a non-profit status, not the singing or programs.

For thirty years, I have heard old and young alike, men and woman, speak of the need for true discipleship. And for thirty years, I have seen less focus on mentoring, small groups, prayer meetings, and Bible studies.

Within the USA, there is growing emphasis on marketing, incredible sound systems, projectors, laser lights, Christian media, and smoke machines. In those 30 years, we have seen a massive decline in the family, misunderstandings about salvation, and even who God is. To my horror, I have also witnessed a rise in sexual confusion, sexual abuse, and a significant spike in crime in most major U.S. cities. There is growing mistrust of education, healthcare, and government. In short, as the Sunday services have become more elaborate and larger resulting in pastoring becoming less personable - the entire community, not just the church, has suffered.

Considering that two-thirds of the population of the United States considers themselves Christian ([pewresearch.org](http://pewresearch.org)), the church must take responsibility for much of the influence in North America and the world.

However! It is not too late! Individuals worldwide have spent most of the past ten years laying modern traditions before the cross. They are repenting by asking God what we should keep and what we should leave behind. Honestly, instructions differ from person to person, but most are beginning to agree on this one thing:

**Jesus changes one person at a time,  
therefore His church grows one person at a time.**

## CHAPTER 5

# How to Make Disciples: The Jesus Method

# How to Make Disciples: The Jesus Method

It was only at the age of 34 that I first heard the concept of a “Person of Peace” (Luke 10:6). The more I have learned and meditated on this principle from Matthew and Luke, the more concerning it is that most of us have never been taught this crucial, yet basic doctrine.

I believe that as Matthew quoted Jesus’s famous edict, “*Go, make disciples of all nations.*” He fully expected us to remember His words from only eighteen chapters earlier, on **how** Jesus told us to make disciples. The early church fathers chose the Gospel of Luke to be a part of what we call the New Testament. Within it, we have the same explicit instructions of **how** to make disciples when Jesus sent out the 72. Not only did Jesus command all 72 to make disciples, but He also told them exactly **HOW** they were to make new disciples for Him.

Because we can all count ourselves as a part of the extension of the 72, a disciple of Jesus, I find it a little more fitting to focus on Luke 10. However; Matthew 10 is also very telling with a few extra details on what to expect when making disciples.

*1 “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go.*

*2 He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*

*3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.*

*4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*

*5 “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’*

*6 If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.*

*7 Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*

*8 “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you.*

*9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’*

*10 But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say,*

*11 ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’*

*12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”*

(Luke 10:1-12)(NIV)

**Disclaimer:** The next section explains my personal understanding of the principles of disciple-making by identifying persons of peace. I have spent many years learning this through prayer and experience. However, I too am living in a state of learning, growing, and yielding to the Spirit of the living God. I am in a relationship with Him, and relationships grow and develop. As I stated several times already, a disciple obeys the words of Jesus, not Ryan nor any other brother or sister.

Therefore, I reserve the right to not be 100% correct. I challenge you to be inspired by my understanding of how to make disciples and to use it as a springboard into your own disciple-making journey. I hope and believe my insights will spur you on to do greater things with Jesus than I could ever imagine!

## **#1 Jesus Sent Them Two By Two - Not Alone**

(Luke 10:1)

I cannot tell you how important it is, not to walk this journey alone. The apostle Paul first traveled with Barnabas, then later with Silas. We also see evidence that Peter and the other apostles traveled in groups, specifically with their wives. *“Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? (1 Corinthians 9:5)”*

You may find the person of peace you are meant to minister to at work, at the gym, or in your neighborhood. God may make it your responsibility to love them and minister to them one-on-one. However, your spouse or a best friend is necessary to back you up in prayer. You must also have someone ask you, “How are you and Jesus doing: how are your thoughts? How is your attitude, are you reading your Bible?” It is essential that you are asked these questions regularly.

I have ministered to the poor, the wealthy, the educated and uneducated alike; I have prayed for the sick, cast out demons, and prayed for folks in the Spirit - all the while sharing the gospel - But it never ceases to amaze me, that as soon I begin the work of discipling one person: reaching out to a person of peace, one-on-one: then the devil really starts to kick, scream and attack!

Jesus said, that a wise man plans before setting out to build a house (Luke 14:28). Your first plan must be to make sure you have a ministry partner, a brother or sister, who knows you and loves you.

My wife and I have been partners in ministry for two decades. The dozens of disciples I have been privileged to be a part of making over the past 20 years, owe her every bit as much gratitude as they do me.

## #2 - Jesus Commanded Them to Pray for More Workers

(Luke 10:2)

Pray, pray, pray, and then....pray some more! After you have your ministry partner in place - it's time to get to work - and the hard work begins first! To make disciples, you must first ask for more disciples.

Prayer is the fuel or ammunition for any effective ministry. I often find that discovering the person of peace, or the person you will mentor/disciple, is like a budding plant, rising towards the sunlight, due to the spiritual watering through the prayers of His saints.

Yes, once, that little seedling begins to bud, it needs a lot of help to grow bigger, stronger, and eventually bear fruit on its own. But, until you witness which seed is going to grow, and is open enough for the "Living Water" there isn't a way to know who to focus your efforts on when discipling.

**I often use this rule - Pray until either someone asks you about Jesus or it comes up naturally in a conversation. If you feel you have to "force" anything, you have not prayed enough.**

Over a decade ago, I began feeling spiritually awkward. I was working in an office space, where almost no one else knew Jesus. I had no illusions about "making" everyone a Christian. However, over the years, I figured out that these co-workers of mine had no idea what the true gospel was. Most of their beliefs were based on guesses, movies, and second-hand information from others who did not know Jesus.

After several months of the spiritual awkwardness contorting my soul, I went to God in prayer. "Lord, what do I do? I just want a chance to share Your true gospel with everyone at my office."

Father God's response was just as jarring as it was practical, "It's about time you asked!"

I was dumbfounded until I sat back and thought about my work situation from His perspective. Here I was, a trained minister with years of experience, a lay pastor in my current church - placed in a work situation with very kind and open people, and it took me three and a half years to lift their salvation to God in prayer. I usually am a slow learner, but that was negligence.

I repented, accepted God's forgiveness, and got to work. I began prayer walking through and around my office during my lunch hour when I was able to do so: about two or three times a week. After four months, I had my first breakthrough.

A coworker I often conversed with, was talking to me about something I was only half listening to. If you've ever worked in an office suite before, doing your best to keep up with administration work on your computer, you can probably relate to my situation. Often one might be chatting with the person 'next door' while also working, but only really half paying attention to the conversation.

One day, as I was trying to finish a pile of paperwork, as well as speaking to my coworker, suddenly the phrase, "So, Ryan, who do you think Jesus was?" stole my attention. I shook my head from its administrative fog and looked up at an inquisitive face, "Sorry, what did you say?"

She repeated her question, "Who do you think Jesus was?"

My jaw dropped, and for a moment, I froze. 'Say something, you idiot, this is what we have been praying for!' I screamed in my head before my mouth finally began working. As words fell from my lips, the gravity of the situation proved to be a little bit much for me. The words escaped faster and faster. Somehow, I had expressed an overview of the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation in about five minutes flat!

Realization of how I must have sounded sank in. Embarrassment reddened my cheeks. Before I could apologize and try again, my coworker cut me off.

She looked at me with an expression I can only describe as 'awe' and shook her head, "That's amazing, I have never been told that before," She looked straight into my eyes, "Thank you, very much."

She went back to work and hardly said another word for the rest of the day, hopefully contemplating the possibility of a God who would send His only Son to die for her.

Yes, I completely fumbled the landing, and obviously, God did a miracle - helping her to understand the truth in my word salad. But that, dear reader, is the point. Every time someone hears and contemplates the true gospel, it is a miracle of God. I may have messed up my "speech" but the hard work of four months of prayer had already been done.

To enter a strong man's house and spoil his goods, you must first "*bind the strong man*" (Mark 3:27). This is not as much of an analogy as you might think. It is very specific. Before you or I belonged to Jesus, we had partnered with a mess of other bad, dark spirits. Those spirits had to be "bound" or "shut up," and their authority taken away. Whether it was a friend, an aunt, a spouse, or a teacher - someone prayed and interceded for you and me!

According to the Strong's Concordance, intercede is to intervene and converse, also to entreat (aka - begging for someone's life).

"So," you may ask, "That's a wonderful story, but where do I begin?"

Wonderful question, and thank you for asking.

## **A) Ask God to Give You a Heart for Your Coworker, Neighbor, or Family Member**

*“You have not because you ask not.”* (James 4:2-3). When we are honest with ourselves that we don’t care if friends and family don’t know Jesus, God honors that, as long as we are willing to change. Ask Him to give you a heart for those around you who need Him.

## **B) Pray, Pray, and Pray Some More**

Only commit to praying 5 - 10 minutes a day at the beginning. It’s better to be consistent in prayer every day than to commit to praying for an hour, which you do once, but never “get around to” ever again. However, if you stay committed, I am certain that soon your prayer time will expand to hours a day as you “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17) organically, through a growing love for the lost and the Holy Spirit.

*“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit.”*

*(1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)*

## **C) Remain Open to Allowing God to Share His Love, His Way**

Sometimes I have broached the subject of Jesus myself. I have taken a baby shower dedication and turned that into an opportunity to share the gospel. I have prayed for injuries and illnesses, and have been asked probing spiritual questions leading to conversations about Jesus. No matter the path taken, when the strong man has been bound (Matthew 12:29), and hearts are open, then chatting to your friends, family, and coworkers about Jesus will begin to feel effortless, natural - and even fun!

*“Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. (Matthew 12:29)*



### #3 - Making Disciples is Typically Out of Our Comfort Zone

(Luke 10:3)

Now, I am just contradicting myself, right?

“How can it be effortless to share the gospel with my friends if I am out of my comfort zone?”

The simple answer: Faith.

Hebrews 11:6 says,

*“And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”*

Hebrews 11 goes on to highlight all the heroes of the faith, stating the difficulties they each had to overcome through trusting God for a miracle.

If you are comfortable and do not feel the need to accomplish something difficult or even impossible, you will not require God’s help - Hence, you will not have faith for God to show up because you can “do it yourself.”

**Newton’s Third Law of Motion states,  
“Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.”  
If you accept an impossible task, you require an impossible solution.**

A rich man once said, “When someone requires millions of dollars for something like an orphanage, even though I have only half the money, I commit to the entire amount. I know God will provide, ‘cause I’ve seen Him do it for orphans frequently. It’s like diving into an empty pool blindfolded, knowing my Heavenly Father will make sure it’s full of water before I hit dry concrete.”

Here’s a question. Why have a personal relationship with the God of the universe if we are not going to use some of that miracle power to tell others about His kingdom? That’s why He gave us that power in the first place, right? *“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added.”* (Matthew 6:33) Have some faith, jump from the diving board, and see if you get wet or go splat. Either way, it will be exciting and God will reward the effort.

## #4 - Do Not Ask for Compensation or Extra Provisions

(Luke 10:4)

In their day, the disciples would have been used to seeing spiritual sages (street preachers) drifting up and down the highways and byways, sharing wisdom, and in turn, asking for pay. By stating, “Take no purse,” Jesus is forbidding His disciples from even implying they could be paid, much less asking for payment. Let’s not forget that the gospel must be understood as the “Free Gift” from God (Romans 6:23). We may need money to survive, but expecting that money to come from those to whom you minister will only result in misunderstandings, and in many cases, abuse.

“But what about supporting churches, ministries, and missions?” That is an excellent question. If you are a full-time minister or missionary, such as myself, you must be an example of living on faith.

In the past decade, I have directly asked very few people to support my ministry; none of them were individuals to whom I was ministering. They were all mature, older brothers and sisters in the Lord, looking for missionaries to support. However, most importantly, I felt God tell me to ask them.

My wife and I’s support comes from people I have known for years and/or I have disciplined in the past. Considering that they too can hear from God on their own, I have left it up to them to decide if they want to support our work, as we take Jesus’s message of the Good News to the next person of peace.

Not only does this work well, but it is Biblical; as we see in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul chastises those whom he had disciplined/mentored in previous years for not supporting his new work of making new disciples as they had promised. In Corinthians 9:1-12, Paul tells the Corinthians for their own sake, they should live up to their word and support himself, Barnabas, and the rest of their team, as they continue the work of making disciples in a new city.

However, Paul is speaking to those who are already disciples of Christ. He is not asking those in the current city he is ministering to for help.



In the last several decades, many evangelical churches have begun similar practices decried 500 years ago by Martin Luther and John Calvin. Some of the same reasons that required the emergence of the evangelical church. I have seen guilt trips for money from behind the pulpit, multiple offerings in the same service, and demands of congregations to buy pastors unnecessary luxury items.

One church said that in order to be a disciple in their church, one must volunteer, yet to volunteer you had to pay your “tithe” of 10% - And they tracked your giving! In politics that is called “pay to play” and is illegal.

I believe you should be giving regularly to a ministry that has given to you or has discipled and supported you in the past. *“Freely receive, freely give.”* (Matthew 10:8). Also *“The Lord loves a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). *“Do not muzzle the ox as it is treading grain.”* (Timothy 5:18). But the implication that you must ‘give 10% or God won’t bless you’ or even that it is a “Command from God” was born out of a heart of condemnation and fear. Fear from preachers and pastors whose faith was weak, believing they would never have enough to pay their bills. This rule makes way for condemnation towards those we are called to love, NOT condemn.

Finally, the most dangerous and sad part of manipulating brothers and sisters from their money is ignoring yet another principle used throughout scripture to teach those we are discipling. *“The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil! (Timothy 6:10 NLT).”* There are hundreds of verses and stories in the Bible warning us about greed and the dangers of money.

When teaching someone to walk with Jesus, new believers must learn how to be good stewards of what God entrusts to them every day. That means, we don’t give them an easy out, a ten percent tax, like we are back in Bible times, demanding the Temple Tax, right? That would be silly since you and I are the NEW eternal Temple of the Holy Spirit. *“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). The Temple is no longer a building or an earthly organization.

Instead, we must teach one another how to present every dollar and earthly possession before God, every day. We must teach one another to live with a spirit of generosity. We must teach one another to take seriously the words of Jesus when He said *“Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and thieves do not break in and steal!”* (Matthew 6:19-21) and *“Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and **all these things** will be added.”* (Matthew 6:33).

Not only will you see disciples who learn to be generous with all God gives them, but you also will have given them another tool to learn how to hear and obey the voice of God for themselves.

**Special Notes:** This in no way lets me off the hook, that I must not be generous.

Jesus said, *“If someone asks for your tunic, give them your cloak as well, and if they ask for you to go one mile, go two! Give to the one who asks and don’t refuse the one who borrows.”* (Matthew 5:40-42). For further reading on this topic, I have included my Bible proofs in the appendix about why “tithing” is not biblical and how it has been used to manipulate and turn believers into taxpayers.

## **#5 - Go Straight to Where God Tells You to Go**

(Luke 10:4b)

“Do not pass GO, do not collect \$200.”

When you get a Holy Spirit feeling that you must go in a certain direction, just go for it and don’t get distracted.

I was once driving past a large bookstore when a testimony of a guy I met came to mind. After he and his friends found Jesus, they had been given a big heart for folks practicing the occult, especially witches. These new believers, on fire for Jesus and filled with the Holy Ghost, would go to a bookstore and wait for witches in the occult section. After praying with them they would see God do amazing things. After I heard that story, I asked God that one day I would have an opportunity to minister to someone like that.

Eight months later, as I passed a bookstore, I felt I was being given my shot. I called my wife and told her that I wanted to stop off at the bookshop on my way home and see if I could find some witches to minister to. Becoming accustomed to my lunacy, my amazing wife said it sounded good and to have fun.

I pulled into the parking lot, turned off the car, grabbed my backpack with my laptop and Bible, and headed inside, not sure what to expect. I didn’t know to whom I would speak or even how I would strike up a conversation.

I made for the occult corner of the shop, which I knew well. Ironically, the occult section was right next to where all the Bibles were kept. I turned the corner only to discover that there was a bigger crowd in this section than I had ever seen before. It was as if the entire store was packed only into this one corner. Every other foot, someone stood reading in the Christian, Bible, New Age, and occult sections.



Yet, as I made my way through the crowd I spied an open chair. “That’s odd,” I thought, “More than 20 people standing around reading and this chair is open?” Then I noticed why. The chair next to it was occupied by one of the biggest men I had ever seen in my life. He was about 6’5” and weighed in at well over 300lbs. His forearms were as big as my legs and covered in tattoos. He wore all black and was readying a book on the occult.

I slunk into hiding in another aisle of books, “No way,” I thought to myself. My enthusiasm of only 30 seconds ago dropped through the bottom of my stomach and settled somewhere around my ankles.

“What’s wrong, Ryan? That’s who I want you to talk to,” a soft, grinning voice chided my spirit.

“But he’s huge...and scary. I was thinking of talking to a calm, 150 lb goth with dyed black hair and too many piercings. Not ‘crusher’ over there who looks like he just got released from prison!”

“Ah, he’s a teddy bear, besides aren’t I bigger? Just pray, then go and say, ‘Hi.’”

Tingling heat made its way up and down my spine, a surefire way I’ve learned to identify God telling me to do something that I did NOT want to do. I prayed, binding any spirit that was not of God, telling them to leave in Jesus’ name - whilst I was there, they would not be - then quickly, before I lost my nerve, I went in!

After sitting down next to the giant, I glanced at the book he was reading and turned to him, “How’s it going? Do you like that book?”

He sighed, dropped it in his lap, and turned to me, “Not really. I thought it would make me happy, as my grandpa and grandma were traveling gypsies reading cards and crystal balls for people all their lives. I wanted to see if that stuff would make me happy. So far, it just feels like a dead end.”

I shrugged, “Well, if you let me buy you a cup of coffee, I can tell you how to be happy and at peace, forever.”

To my shock, he agreed! Twenty minutes later, he accepted Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior, and for the next year, I disciplined him and taught his family about what a relationship with Jesus Christ was and how they could know Him.



All the stories I have of God doing miraculous fun things like He did with my friend from the occult book section, began with obedience to a feeling of going somewhere.

When Christ commanded, “**Go make** disciples.” He literally meant “GO!” That means we have to be where the person of peace is. Remember, Jesus went to the demoniac. He went to the woman at the well, and ultimately He was sent by Father God into our world, to reclaim us from sin and death. If we never GO, the Gospel won’t get there!

Now, which direction God might send you is between you and the Holy Spirit. God may send you next door or across the street or to the other side of the world. He may tell you to go to a coffee shop, a bar, or a pub, to go hiking, to the gym, or on a walk around the city or your suburb or a church meeting. No matter where God tells you to go, just go!

There are times that I have gone places and all I did was pray under my breath for whomever was there. There was no need for them to know that I was blessing them in Jesus's name. I prayed that they would get to know God as their Father through Jesus, that they would be kept safe, and that they would be drawn closer to God. I prayed that their heart would be that much more open to Jesus. Guess what, not only is that just as valuable as physically leading someone to Jesus, but in many cases, it is more valuable. Prayer is always the first step in someone’s heart opening up to Jesus.

During one period of my life, much of my day was spent driving the streets of Johannesburg, South Africa. I ended up praying over apartment complexes, stores, rich neighborhoods, townships, and even infamous areas. At the end of one such day, I felt discouraged, “What did I do all day? I didn’t talk to anyone, mentor anybody, share the gospel with anyone, or pray for the sick. What a waste.” I growled. Immediately, the Holy Spirit jabbed me in the guts with conviction. “You lowered the crime rate by almost 10% in your area. Your prayers prevented two rapes and a murder, all because you took the time to obey and pray!”

Never underestimate the power of asking Father God to protect and bring others to Him, especially those who will only thank you in heaven.



## #6 - Extend Goodness and Peace: If Someone is Open to a Spiritual Conversation, Stay with Them for However Long it Takes!

(Luke 10:5-7)

Leading people to Jesus is not about keeping score. We are specifically shown and told to find one person at a time and stay in a relationship with them as long as it's necessary for them to learn to obey God themselves. Remember John 15:5, *"I am the vine, you are the branches, remain in me and I in you and you will bear much fruit."* Every new believer must be mentored one-on-one until they begin bearing fruit. Seeing spiritual fruit and change in the lives of those we disciple is proof that they are becoming a strong tree, taking root and no longer easily knocked down or swayed by changing winds.

One of the most important reasons for staying focused in our one-on-one discipleship, besides the fact that it was modeled by Jesus, is as follows.

**Every new believer can share the gospel with one person at a time, hence, it's replicable.**

Most do not have a preaching gift or the time or confidence to minister to a crowd. However, when you model a ministry of one person at a time, anyone can get excited as they can do the same thing: they too can mentor one person at a time for the rest of their lives.

We also begin a new believer's walk on solid ground with practical advice and proper expectations as to what the average Christian's day looks like. What happens when we allow new believers' early experiences with the church to always be well-programmed, exciting, and explosive? If there are always a lot of people around, shaking their hands in congratulations and creating a 'hoopla' - we set an expectation of 'excitement.' These folks are spiritual babies, they only know what we show them.

Just like the average newborn on earth, spiritual babies observe every tiny interaction. These early interactions imprint onto their brains, so a spiritual baby is soaking up and thinking through every little thing every person in the church says and does and also what they do NOT say and do NOT do.



If we have new believers who have been taught that church is always big, exciting, and fun, what happens when the new believers are on their own? How do they keep interacting as the church from their homes, work, or gym? What about if Sunday church goes through a season of being boring, and normal ‘humdrum’ prayers and bible study? Or when a leader makes a mistake or has a moral failing?

Most of us have witnessed the devastation of mega-churches and large ministry organizations falling apart. The horrifying result is that new believers drop like flies.

Alternatively, if we meet with new believers, one-on-one. If we help them slow down, think, and talk through all the excitement of their new life with Jesus, then when the tough times come or a ‘boring period’ happens, they will fall back on what they know: a solid friendship with Jesus.

**Even more importantly, possibly the most important part of this book, is that the one-on-one relationship is a model of our relationship with God.**

Don’t get me wrong, there are Holy Spirit prayer sessions with healings, miracles, and God doing unexplained and awesome stuff. But, those of us who have been walking with Jesus for any length of time know that those exciting times are just icing on the cake.

Remember 1 Kings 19? Elijah went to the mountain to meet with God, and there were massive exciting things that happened. Huge winds blew by, an earthquake happened, and then a wildfire - but through all that craziness, God was not there. Afterward, when everything settled, God came to the old prophet in a “still, small voice.” *“And after the fire came a gentle whisper.”* (1 Kings 19:12)

What is fascinating is the Bible says that God made these massive explosive exciting phenomena happen, yet He was not “in” any of them. Wow, that’s a crazy thought. How many times have we been excited for massive conferences and giant “revival” meetings where God has done amazing things - no doubt it was from God, yet even when He blessed the effort, was His intimacy truly “in them?” Because what I am reading says that He is truly “in” the still, small voice.

I find this concept similar to the day of Pentecost. God was explosive that day, using the 72 disciples to preach in languages they did not know and He gave Peter an incredible message. God did that! But, until those who believed were individually baptized, one at a time, God was not IN them. Millions, maybe even billions, have experienced the incredible power of God. But the ones who truly believe are those who learn to wait patiently, allowing the storm to pass and the excitement to die down, so that they might hear that all-powerful, kind, loving, and miraculous still, small voice.

How does one learn to hear that still, small voice? Amongst massive crowds with laser lights, smoke machines, and loud music, or with a single trusted friend over a cup of coffee or a meal?

If God Almighty's primary mode of communication is through a gentle one-on-one interaction, then as His ambassadors on earth (2 Corinthians 5:20) we must not only convey what God says but also how He says it. *"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us."* (2 Corinthians 5:20a)

## **#7 - Eat Together: Be Real Friends**

(Luke 10:8)

Do you remember when the Pharisees accused Jesus of sitting and eating with the "wrong crowd?" In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, a story is told of the religious leaders hurling judgments at Christ for sitting and eating with "sinners." All the wrong people were at Jesus's table. His response was, "Only the sick need a doctor." (Luke 5:31)

For a long time, this confused me. I mean, what's the big deal? I've eaten with many folks I liked and didn't like. Some I did not know, barely knew, and some I've never seen again. Why did the Pharisees show so much contempt for Jesus eating with naughty 'sinners'?

Back then, who you ate with was a statement of your support and a statement that you considered those at your table as very good friends, almost family. In a modern context we might recognize from our school days, Jesus was stepping up next to the geeks and freaks, telling the jocks and popular kids to take a hike. The guy who changed water into wine, healed the lepers, cast out demons, and preached the best sermons of all time wrapped His arms around a bunch of Hells Angels, alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, and terrorists, squeezed them tightly, and said, "They're with me now!"

*Brothers and sisters - you will be sent to be like sheep among wolves.*

*(Matthew 10:16)*

When I first moved back to South Africa in 2019, I noticed a group of men, hanging out in a shopping center on the main road just down the street from my house. After making a few inquiries, I discovered it was a local branch of the Nigerian mob: local organized criminals which are a staple in Johannesburg, South Africa. It wasn't my first time connecting with a criminal element, so it didn't concern me much, that was until a certain Sunday afternoon.

My wife and two kids had a birthday party to attend, so I was left at home alone, excited for some lazy time to watch a movie. Alas, Jesus said “No.” Instead, I felt compelled to grab my Bible and go for a walk. As I did, I found myself passing through the middle of a mob of gentlemen. They were busy selling prostitutes, drugs, and various other vices. One of their salesmen began walking alongside me, striking up a conversation.

“Big man, big man - how you doing?” Inquired the 18-year-old pusher.

“I’m blessed, brother, how are you?”

“You from America? You sound like you're from the States.”

“I sure am.”

“Well, if you need anything,” he winked with a coy smile, “Girl - boy, something to help you party, I’m your man!”

I smiled back at him, trying not to wince. I lifted my Bible slightly, “I’m just walking around telling people about Jesus and asking if I can pray for them.”

He frowned, “Oh, you're a pastor?” The young drug pusher did not seem convinced.

I shrugged, “Something like that.” But then, as I opened my mouth to move the conversation towards asking if I could pray for him, my words shifted as I pointed, “And you are not supposed to be here, are you?” The young man’s mouth dropped as I continued, “Your grandmother is praying for you, and tells you that Jesus still loves you, all the time, doesn’t she?” His eyes, went wide as he nodded an admission of guilt. I continued, “This life isn’t for you, it’s not too late to walk away before something bad happens.”

He swallowed hard and hid his face slightly from mine, “I know, I know. I’m just not sure I’m ready.”

I smiled and placed a hand on his shoulder, “God loves you very much, but if you stay in this life, it will kill you.”

After that day, I never saw that young man again, and I take that as a good sign. Part of my proof that he may have gotten out of that life, was that after my encounter with him, whenever I walked through the same crowd of dealers and pimps they would all say “Hi”, and make a gap for me to pass through. As a matter of fact, that area, controlled by the mob, became one of the safest places for my family and me.

Every once in a while, a new guy would be working my street as a pusher and approach me as I walked past. I’d politely decline the offer as one of the higher-ups in the gang would come running up, smack him in the back of the head, “I’m sorry, pastor, he is new, have a good day.” I’d smile and shake my head, “No problem, bless you guys,” and walk on past.

When we obey the leading of the Spirit, allowing Him to put us in awkward, and scary situations, we are often able to tap into the unseen, limitless power of God.

*“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.....  
For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

*(2 Corinthians 12:9-10)*

The way I see it is that I get credit for sharing the gospel with the young drug dealer because I obeyed the Holy Spirit to pick up my Bible and go for a walk. I allowed Jesus to make me a sheep in front of wolves, and whenever His sheep end up in front of wolves, the Good Shepherd always shows up.

## **#8 - The Kingdom of God Has Come Near to You!**

(Luke 10:9)

Growing up, I quoted this passage without any real understanding. Being raised an American, in a cultural Republic, not a Monarchy, how could you blame me? As an American, I was raised to be able to vote for my country’s leadership and laws. My ancestors fought a long and bloody war against the greatest power of its time, the British Empire. The founding fathers fought that war so that I would not have to know what it was like to be told how to live from on high. This is an incredible privilege and a joyful tradition to follow. My fellow Americans and I get to decide our country's direction, together. As the axiom goes: “You get what you vote for.”

However, this creates a subtle, yet dangerous problem for most of the modern-day church. God is not and nor will He ever allow Himself to be a duly elected deity, subjected to a constitution. Our Father in Heaven, is the Creator with all the rights, power, and authority of every emperor, dictator, king, and president combined - times a billion. He does not follow your rules or regulations. Psalms 115:3 says “*God does as He pleases.*” Fortunately for you and I, His pleasure is love and kindness, “*Slow to anger and abounding in love.*” (Exodus 34:6)

For most of us, raised in countries with human rights, voting rights, employee rights, and even student rights, we can have a very difficult time understanding the impact of the statement “The Kingdom of God has come near to you.” In its purest form, my understanding of that statement is: “It’s God’s turn.” The Creator will do what He wants.

As we begin a relationship with people of peace, we model the rulership of God through our hearts and minds.

When we are told at the end of Mark to “Go into all the world,” there is a reason. This is not hyperbole or a suggestion. As stated previously, we are the new Temple of the Holy Spirit, you and I. God has entrusted us with His peace, His authority, His power, His love, where we go, His Spirit, and all His amazing fruits go. Those fruits are the result of His kingdom, God’s rules, taking effect.

*If we hide away in our own comforts of home, work, and church - His Spirit will not be delivered where It is needed. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:14-15)*

Some years ago, I hopped into my car, started it up, and pulled out of my driveway on my way to a meeting. As I passed the park next to my house, I noticed a disturbance.

A young man, about 20, was ranting and raving in the middle of the rolling grass next to the playground. Shocked parents and grandparents sheltered their children and covered their ears from what I assumed was a barrage of swear words and profanity.

I scoffed aloud to no one in particular, “What is this world coming to?” Then, I drove towards the main road, satisfied that someone else would call the cops. They would take care of this guy, after all, it was their job, right?

“No!” I voice in my guts shouted. “You take care of it.”

“No ways!” I countered, “It’s not my job, it’s the cop’s job. It’s what they are paid to do. Besides, no one is getting hurt.”

“Ryan, why do you think I brought this young man to the park, near your house, and he was set off just as YOU were driving past?”

I gritted my teeth, as I indicated, and made a U-turn. I shook my head and growled slightly. I could feel the Holy Spirit laugh at me as I did.

As I parked my vehicle, I sighed and looked up, “Now what?”

“Just go to him.”

I was not given any special prayers, plans, strategies, or spiritual words from God, just “Go.” So I went.

As I approached, I felt a vicious, spiteful spirit cursing everyone and everything. I sensed an abusive impulse from this young guy. It felt very chaotic. I threw up a quick, “Help me, Jesus,” and went in. The kid did not see me approach as I came up from behind him and when I was about five feet away, I instinctively snapped my fingers as a sign to break off anything in the spiritual that was not of God. I then spoke out the word “Peace” as a command. In my heart, I knew I was telling everything around me to submit to Jesus’s peace.

Bringing Jesus’s peace is a major part of God’s Kingdom which has come.

As soon as I spoke the word ‘peace,’ the young man sighed heavily and his head dropped, then snapped straight up, as if he had just been awoken. “Where am I? What? Who? Oh no.” He whined out loud, “Not again.”

“Hey man, how you doing? Are you okay?” I asked gently.

The kid turned around to face me, the expression on his face pulled at my heartstrings, “No, man, I don’t know where I am or how I got here!”

I smiled and put a hand on his shoulder, “Well, you are in luck, ’cause God sent me to take you home.”

An hour later, I dropped him downtown, at the bench he was living on, with a burger, fries, and a new Bible. After praying with me, he understood that only Jesus could keep his demons away and promised to meet with me again to chat. He never reached out, and I couldn’t find him again after this. I hope and believe that was because, after connecting with Jesus, he was able to talk to his parents again and get the help he needed.

## **#9 If There is No Positive Response, MOVE ON;**

### **“The Harvest is Plentiful,” and You Are a Valuable Resource**

(Luke 10:10-12)

One day, I was on my way to my favorite coffee shop/office, to get some paperwork done when I felt a twinge to go elsewhere. “Ugh, Lord, I don’t like that place, its coffee isn’t good,” I whined aloud.

“I didn’t ask,” was His sharp reply.

I sighed as I pulled into the parking lot of the subpar coffee spot. Ninety minutes later, as I finished my second cup of terrible and weak coffee, I rolled my eyes questioning if I had even been sent there by God or if I was just imagining things in my mind. I packed up my stuff, stood, and headed towards the door. As I did, I made eye contact with someone I knew, one of my neighbors: a very reserved, yet friendly, Indian man. My wife and I, and our two kids had befriended his grandkids, daughter, and son-in-law.

The daughter and son-in-law had told us only a few weeks prior that he was dying of a brain tumor.

“Pray for him,” my spirit prompted.

I stopped at his table and sat down across from him, “How are you?” I asked.

He nodded kindly, “I am fine.” He paused, “Actually, I am feeling a little bit sick.”

“What’s wrong?” I asked, knowing full well he had only months to live.

“Just a cold.” He lied through smiling teeth.

I took a chance, “Can I pray for you to get better, in Jesus’ name?”

He nodded and smiled, “That would be very kind, thank you.”

I surprised him by reaching over and placing my hand on his. Most expect me to pray for folks when I get home, but the Bible teaches laying on of hands and praying in the name and power of Jesus Christ without shame!

I commanded illness to leave and asked Jesus to heal everything damaged in his body.

After praying, I asked, “Do you feel any better?”

“Yes, thank you, very much.”

I did not hear anything from him or his family for a year. However, the day before we left California to move back to South Africa, I saw him again at his granddaughter's birthday party. He looked much better!

The older gentleman waved enthusiastically at me, hunted down my wife, and dragged her over to me, “Listen,” he told my wife enthusiastically, “Your husband prayed for me, in the name of Jesus and I was very, very sick.” He turned to me, “I didn’t tell you, but I was not good.”

I smiled, “Yeah, I figured.”

He turned back to my wife, “So he prayed for me, and I am healed! It’s amazing, Jesus is SO powerful!”

We were elated and praised God, “That is amazing!”

“Does that mean you believe in Jesus now as your Lord and Savior?” My wife asked.

“Oh, yes Jesus is powerful and I believe in Him.” He smiled and took a breath, “Just like I believe in all the other Hindu gods.”

Miracles, evangelism, and all types of ministry allow us an opportunity for the lost to have a taste of who Jesus is. After that, whether they are ready to kneel and accept His forgiveness, grace, and sovereignty is between them and the Father. They do not answer to us. You have done your job, and God is exceptionally proud of you. Move on to your next assignment.

You are an adopted son or daughter of the Creator of the universe. *“God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.”* (Ephesians 1:5). Your big brother is Jesus Christ. *“For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.”* (Matthew 12:50). And, the same Spirit and power from the Ark of the Covenant, now resides inside of you. No sermon, no worship song, no conference, no building, no book, no podcast can hold His Spirit - only YOU!

**THERE IS NO GREATER RESOURCE ON THIS EARTH, THAN YOU!**

A great example of this was the time Jesus healed ten lepers:

Luke 17: 11-19:

*“On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”*

There will come a time when God will use you to share about Jesus with others and you will even see miracles happen, yet the folks you are praying for and loving regularly for months, or even years, will reject what you have to offer. Let them go, and move on to what God has next.

## #10 Finally, If You Do This Right, There Will Be Pushback From the World and Demons.

(Matthew 10:16–41)

A few years ago, I felt God take me to a new level of authority. Moving to another level in the Spirit is a lot of very hard, often tedious work. What growing in authority really means is being forced to grow in God through harder challenges than you have ever faced before in your life. For example: In the course of one year, I had financial challenges I'd never faced before, health challenges I had never faced before, and spiritual attacks I had never faced before. And do you know what God's answer to all my sufferings was? "Consider it pure joy."

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4)*

My big brother had a word, a while back, with this particular verse that I found very helpful. "'Consider' means to imagine or fantasize about what pure joy in that situation could look like!" Whoa, that's totally different than just -grin and bear it- isn't it? That means we need to actively dream, with God, about what good things are going to happen because I persevered through the hardships God has allowed.

Matthew 10:17-25 (NIV) says:

*"Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account, you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!"*

As you begin your disciple-making journey, one of the best signs of being on the right track will be the resistance from the world and evil spirits around you. Keep in mind that the evil spirits will not attack with pitchforks dressed in a cape, nor will they willfully identify themselves as Beelzebub or Satan. They will try to make you angry and bitter at someone you have already forgiven. Or, you will have intense lustful thoughts that seem to emanate from nowhere. Maybe their attacks will come in the form of fear: Fear for you and your family's safety, fear for your financial future, or fear of failure. No matter how the demonic attacks, their goal is always to shift your focus from Jesus and place it on anything else but Christ.

For instance, while writing this book, yesterday and today, I have had songs I don't even listen to, and have heard only a handful of times pounding through my skull for six, sometimes even twelve hours at a time. I stop, pray in the Spirit, tell all thoughts and spirits around me to be subject to the authority of Jesus Christ then sing another song about Jesus in the opposite spirit. This works for about 20-30 minutes, but then another evil spirit comes to attempt the same distraction. These demons have also disturbed my sleep. Voices shouting in my ear as I slept; they were loud enough to awaken me with a start at 4 a.m.

When I first experienced these attacks, it made me frustrated, tired, and angry. I didn't know what to do or even how to describe these attacks. Most usually call these irritations "earworms" and dismiss them as a psycho phenomenon. Or, sleeplessness just being insomnia or being awoken by a noise. So, when I did describe these attacks to some, they just thought I was being over-sensitive and a bit fantastical. If you don't live a life as a serious Jesus disciple, it can be very difficult to relate to and understand these attacks from the enemy.

Finally, after months of dealing with this onslaught, I went on a walk around my San Jose home with Father God and asked, "What was going on? Why would You allow me to be so beat up by the spawn of the devil?"

"Ryan," I could feel the warmth of His smile as He spoke, "Do you think I know what is going on?"

"Yes," I replied with a frown.

"Did I create everything?"

"Yes," I sighed heavily.

"Don't you think I can stop them (demons) whenever I like?"

"Yes, Dad." I let a whine escape my lips but did my best to submit.

"Son, even the demons serve a purpose."

If there is no need for us to contend and fight for the sake of the gospel, our Dad in Heaven would not allow it. However, God not only allows us to fight but told us to, when Jesus told us to rob the Devil's house after we bound the "strong man." Mark 3:27

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul states: *"Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, stand."* (Ephesians 6:11-13)

God gave us this armor for a reason: Salvation, righteousness, faith, truth, peace, and His Word - are all there to protect, defend, and defeat the enemy (Ephesians 6:14-18). The only way to lose this fight is to quit!

*"But the one who stays strong to the end will succeed!"* (Matthew 24:13)

*"Fight the good fight, finish the course, keep the faith!"* (2 Timothy 4:7)

A while back, a day before I was to baptize a dear brother in the Lord and share the gospel with his friends and family, I fell flat onto my face! After days of spiritual attacks, I got some very frustrating news from my family and the next day, disturbing news from a friend. The next day my car broke down for the third time in two weeks! I admit that it wasn't right, but it happened! I lost my temper, swore very loudly (and those who know me, know I can be very loud!), then I punched a door, very hard - more than once. (Stick a fork in me, Ma, I'm done!)

So, I am not perfect, and my armor gets a bit beat up. Would it be fair to my friend, who is eager to be baptized, and his friends and family who don't know Jesus, if I quit? Do you think my friend cares that I made a mistake? Of course not, he knows, as does the Lord, that it was the exception, not the rule. He knows that I am fighting by faith for something much bigger than both of us: The chance for billions to live in Heaven with God forever! So much bigger than Ryan or any mistakes I might make.

*"Bigger is He that is in me than He that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4)

*"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalms 103:12)

So, after my big fall, I raised myself to my knees, apologized, and admitted my wrongdoings to whoever heard my blow-up. I asked the Lord to forgive me - then, I stood, brushed off my breastplate (I am saved by grace), adjusted my helmet (I am bought by the Blood of the Lamb!) Put my shoes back on (I am whole and at rest in His Peace, not mine). I checked my belt (I live in His Reality, I live in God's Truth, not mine!). I pick up my shield (All things work together for good! I have faith in His Power and His Might) and finally, the Sword of Spirit (I wait on the Lord, focusing on Him, as long as it takes, until I get His Word from the Holy Spirit, which includes the Bible.)

I half-jokingly say this to my wife. "The reason I am so good at ministry is because I have so much practice apologizing and asking others for forgiveness. That keeps me from ever having the chance to become prideful." I have a big mouth, and I take a lot of risks, but I do so for the sake of the gospel and I feel it puts my spiritual armor to good use. I'd prefer having beat-up armor from taking big risks, leading to some mistakes. I believe this results in me spreading the gospel and making disciples more, not less.

As I see it, the alternative is to bury your talents and have nothing to show when the whistle blows and it's finally eternal quitting time (Matthew 25). By forgetting about our talents/giftings, a majority of us have lost our armor! It's been buried underneath excessive retirement plans, massive student loans, former friends or family we refuse to forgive, or maybe something we don't like about ourselves that we refuse to accept.

Some of us are just too busy doing things at church, that we no longer have time to go out into the world and be the church. Others are enjoying God's blessings so much, that the breastplate of righteousness or belt of truth will no longer fit over their spiritually obese bellies.

Brothers and sisters, it is not too late. There is still time and God has a vital role for you to play in His Kingdom. I guarantee that if you ask, He will give you another chance. Just be humble and start small.

### **Pray with me.**

*"God, please forgive me for letting my pride and the things of this world distract me from what you have called me to do. Change my heart. Please give me opportunities to share Your love and make at least one disciple before I die. Amen!"*

Pray this every day for a month, I promise that God will do something amazing through YOU!

And that is treasure that you can take with you into Heaven!

## CHAPTER 6

# **Bad Habits: What is Holding the Church Back from Making Disciples?**

## #1 Bad Habit: Disciples Have “Jesus Expectations”

### - Members have “Sunday Expectations.”

*“Do what you have always done and you’ll always get what you always got.”*

*- Henry Ford*

For more than two decades, I have served in leadership for mega-churches, medium churches, and small churches. I was the children’s pastor, the marriage pastor, a young adult’s elder, the evangelist, the missionary, and the senior pastor. With all the time and experience, I am beginning to understand one major habit leading to an attitude that is holding back our God-given desire to share our faith, and joy with the world around us: Sunday Expectations.

“Sunday Expectations,” as I have termed this bad attitude, is the expectation of Sunday worship we have inadvertently accepted as a religious yolk on ourselves and placed on those around us. In the simplest of words, “Me and my Sunday team are the best. Other Sunday teams similar to my team are second best. Every other ‘team/church’ might get to Heaven - but just barely.”

It was the apostle Paul who came down hard on the Corinthians for “picking teams.” He said, “What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’; another, ‘I follow Cephas’; still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul brings this problem up twice. In Chapter 3, when he brings it up again, Paul tells the group of believers that this topic is preventing him from speaking to them as one who speaks in the spirit. Instead, fighting over titles and labels was keeping them from maturing. In other words, Paul told them, “Stop being babies and grow up. Which person disciplined you and where you worship means little, as long as you do it!”

I currently run a discipleship group, a church for orphans, and a home church from my house. Even so, several well-meaning believers have told me that since I do not have the right “type of worship service” I should seriously consider going to an “official” church.

In the past, I would combat this “Sunday expectation” attitude with a sly quip and a clever ideal. But with time and the experience of falling on my face more than once, some of God’s wisdom has found its way into my thick skull. So, instead of continuing another pointless debate, let us simply go back to what Jesus said. Remember, our purpose is to hear and know what Jesus said and then obey it.

Jesus said “*Where two or more are gathered, there I will be.*” (Matthew 18:20)

I have disciplined many wonderful brothers and sisters from all over the world. Many of those I have mentored attended Sunday services with which I had many issues. As these men and women matured in the Lord, they began to recognize the same issues in their Sunday services that I did. Yet, when they asked me about leaving their church to find a “better one,” I too had to lay aside my “Sunday expectations.” Instead, I recognize that:

**Even if I don’t 100% agree with the way a church does things on a Sunday, they are still God’s family. Therefore, they are still MY FAMILY.**

Then, I re-enforced the most important question for each person I am mentoring/discipling. “What does God want you to do? Have you asked Him; and if so, did He permit you to leave?”

You see, it’s all too easy to say, “Yes, that church is not perfect, leave it, and come to mine.” Then we can thump our chest like a big gorilla claiming, “I’m the best because they belong to me now!” Yet, that is one of the biggest reasons we fail to make disciples in Jesus’s total victory. Because we forget that we don’t know what God wants for another believer, and even more importantly: we are not in charge.

**Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd.”**

**Not me, not you, not your pastor, priest, or reverend-**

**Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are ALL His sheep.**

Now, I may be a more mature ram, who can hear His voice better than the little lamb who just joined the flock, but that lamb’s goal is not to follow me. His or her goal is the same as mine - to learn to follow the voice of the Good Shepherd.

Jesus said His ministry was for the Jews, not the Gentiles, yet He revealed Himself as the Messiah for the first time to a Samaritan woman, with a bad reputation. Jesus also healed the centurion's servant and told His disciples that the pagan, Roman soldier had more faith than they did. And even when he told a gentile woman, “NO” and the woman begged for “scraps” from Jesus’ spiritual table, Christ relented and gave her what she wanted.

Jesus chose imperfect people as His disciples. The wrong people! Even the 12 were against all types of “Sunday expectations.” Matthew was a traitor and a tax man; Simon the Zealot was a terrorist and had vowed to kill guys like Matthew. Judas was a thief and Peter was over serious and self-righteous. Finally, James and John were either fighting with themselves or the other disciples so much that they were nicknamed the ‘Sons of Thunder.’

Can you imagine if Jesus allowed His Sunday expectations to influence His decision about who to reach out to, who to disciple, or who to heal? I know I wouldn’t be writing this book. I would be a pagan Gentile of Barbarian descent and would never have been chosen.

How about you? Would you have been picked if Jesus stuck to “Sunday expectations?” Of course not, no one would have.

**So, if the only perfect man to walk this earth could see the potential of Godliness in you and me, then we should start seeing the potential in others, no matter what they do or don’t do on a Sunday morning.**

***"It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick" Mark 2:17***

## **#2 Bad Habit: Disciples Study Doctrine - Members Study Theology**

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, theology became popular around the 14th century (that’s almost 13 hundred years after the last book of the bible was written!). The root word making up ‘theology’ originated from the Greek word ‘theologia.’ The meaning: "an account of the gods," or from ‘theologos:’ "one discoursing on the gods." It’s a pagan word, inspired by Greek philosophy and demeaning to our belief in an all-powerful and loving Creator.

Even if we ignore the pagan roots of the word, as we explore theological implications, its danger becomes even greater.

Theo - “god or gods”

Logy - the origin is to “speak or tell.” However, in the modern day, we use it to describe the “Study of or learning” for example: Philosophy or Biology, etc.

Therefore, theology is: “The study of God, speaking or telling of God.”

The problem, ladies and gentlemen, is that we are not talking about a passing psychological fad or microbe that fits underneath a microscope. We are speaking about the Creator of the universe! Father God, Elohim, the original “I Am!”

The Jews would not even speak His proper name, out of fear and respect. Even now, the name of His Son sends spirits fleeing and His voice makes natural disasters look like tiny incidents.

For centuries, schools of theology have taught generations of “scholars” how to pontificate or only discuss topics ABOUT God (AKA - Philosophy). Their greatest sin has been accepting the title of experts about Father God, yet failing to teach how to walk in a relationship with the Father. Theologians are great at discussing aspects of God, yet unable to convey how to be in relationship with the Spirit of the Father.

*“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?” (Matthew 7:16)*

Now, if the word theology is not acceptable, then what is? As I have stated over and over again, I am not attempting to create new fantastical information. Instead, let's see what the apostle Paul said.

*“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”*  
(1 Timothy 4:6)

According to Strong's concordance, doctrine means: “Instruction (the function or the information), teaching or properly applied teaching.”

Do you remember in my introduction when I discussed what it was like to be a snow ski instructor? I made the case that an instructor is a better example of what a teacher was in Jesus' day.

The word DOCTRINE that the apostle Paul uses lines up perfectly with the concept of making disciples of Jesus.

Doctrine is instruction on HOW to apply God's word to our lives:  
Today, Tomorrow, and Throughout Eternity.

Imagine if you would, that you would like to learn how to snow ski. You have never tried before, maybe you have never even seen snow before. But you are willing to be humble and learn. Excited and nervous, you pay for the skis and ticket to ride the slopes, then come to me and ask, “Will you teach me to ski?”

I flash a cocky grin and flip my head in acknowledgment, “Of course, kid, that’s what I get paid for! I am a professional!” So, I pull out a binder of notes, and spend the next six hours, describing the theory of skiing. After I finish, I give you a bill for my services, suggest a 10% tip, and tell you to come back tomorrow if you want to go to the “next level.” You are left stunned. You never touched the snow, nor did you put on skis, you didn’t have fun. Since you still have yet to even touch snow or ski, all the science and techniques of snow skiing went in one ear and out the other.

Now, imagine an old mountain man with a big gray beard, sipping coffee, saw us talking. He watched me, the professional, lecture you about skiing for hours, never leaving the table. Then, after I shove my bill in your face and walk away, he rolls his eyes at my “lesson,” approaches you, and says, “Hey, newbie! Grab your skies, follow me and I’ll show you how to get started.”

After you get outside, onto the snow, this “non-professional” then puts his skies on, walks you up a gentle slope, and helps you put your skies on. Then, shows you an example of how you can stop and turn. And when you struggle to do it yourself, the old, bearded man even takes off his skies and gets on his hands and knees in the snow to help guide your feet the right way. In twenty minutes, you learn more about snow skiing from an old skier with no “official training” than you did from me, the professional who lectured you for six hours.

Learning and teaching through doctrine requires humility and being a servant. There is no ‘study of God,’ or a need to speculate or know ‘more stuff.’ What is necessary is KNOWING GOD and a passion to share that relationship through being Children of God together.

Also, through doctrine, we learn what The Creator has deemed necessary to share through our relationship with Him! Through that act, we grow with “faith as a child” and experience an organic desire to instruct others to do the same.

Before allowing himself to be sacrificed for our sins, Jesus taught us His leadership model: *“So He got up from His meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.”* (John 13:1-5)

As per Jesus’ example, an instructor does whatever it takes to teach his/her student how to do something. Doctrines are the instructions left to us by Jesus and the founding members of the church, on how to be in a relationship with the Father and teach others to be the same.

**Love God, love others as we love ourselves and who God made us to be.  
- That's it, the entire message. (Matthew 22:34-40 Paraphrased)**

Unfortunately, through 'theology' we are only taught to think, not do. We are taught to stretch our thought processes and understanding in order to be 'right.' We pontificate with pride, debate with cutthroat precision, and speculate about 'new,' exciting aspects of God. The problem is, that those are the actions of an ambitious adult, not an innocent child. *"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven."* (Matthew 18:2-4).

No sir, a theologian is too dignified and smart for those outdated, unsophisticated notions of coming to Christ as a child.

Rather, I feel we should continue our work of simply trying to learn from the Holy Spirit every day, through the still small voice and the Bible, then share that fresh word with those around us in obedience. "Freely receive, freely give" (Matthew 10:8b).

### **#3 Bad Habit: Disciples are in a Perpetual Relationship - Members are in a Perpetual Debate**

*"Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ,  
you do not have many fathers." (1 Corinthians 4:15a)*

If you are brave enough, venture online and flip through some of the Christian videos discussing church life. In general, there are two types: testimonies and arguments.

The testimonials, or amazing stories of God's work in and through others' lives, are incredible tools to bolster our faith in what Jesus and the Holy Spirit are doing on earth right now. We also know testimonies play a vital part in victory over the demonic forces around us (Revelation 12:11).

*They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony; they did not love  
their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Revelations 12:11)*

The second type of video focuses on debate and arguments. The misguided folks making many of these videos are some of the best examples of modern-day Pharisees.

Now, I must admit that I love a good debate and argument. The brothers and sisters I am journeying with often do not agree with me on various points. But that's okay, we agree to disagree and still love one another.

Then, I allow our differences to challenge my thought process in a direction it would not have gone otherwise. This is possible because I generally only debate with those I know and have a relationship with.

However, much of the mud thrown back and forth online is far from loving or mature. As these zealous folks clammer for views, 'likes', and sponsorships, the mudslingers use technical truths and side issues to attack other Christians, all the while they throw grace out the window, like the servant who was forgiven tens of millions, but wouldn't forgive his coworker twenty bucks (Matthew 18:21 - The Parable of The Unmerciful Servant).

Or the hypocrite telling on the brother who had a spec in his eyes, all the while harboring a plank of wood in his own eye. *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"* (Matthew 7:3-5).

As a matter of fact, in Jesus's day, the Pharisees used the same tactic of 'technical rules' to attack Jesus' disciples that today's self-described "guardians of the Gospel" use. On one occasion, Jesus' disciples crushed grain in their hands for a snack on the Sabbath. The religious "leaders" lost their minds! In the same way, online "professional critics for Jesus," eager to prove their point begin beating other believers over the head with technical "proof:" winning the battle - but sadly, losing the war.

Do you know how an unstoppable army in the wealthiest country with no equals is defeated? Not by its enemies. Read the history of Rome, Babylon, Persia, Greece, the USSR, etc. Overpowered nations always fall apart from within before being conquered. It happens through infighting, laziness, and a lack of focus on a country's true identity. We have already established that Jesus has the victory and the devil has lost. We are fighting a battle that has already been won. *"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Our job is to look for ripe fruit, those ready for Jesus, then to teach them to follow Jesus. *"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field."* (Matthew 9:38). So, what can the devil do against an unstoppable force? What is the only option available to him to stop an army that has already won?

One of Satan's most successful tactics is to convince us to compromise our own power and authority. The enemy tricks us into taking our eyes off Jesus by convincing us that the brother or sister in the church next door couldn't possibly also know Jesus because they worship in a slightly different way and have a few differing beliefs.

Then after we attack the church up the street or the preacher on the internet, the retaliation from the church next door or the preacher's internet followers takes their focus from Jesus and puts their focus onto us. Instead of a handful of believers, focused on Jesus and working towards a common goal of spreading the Good News, we create divisions of Christians glaring at one another across pretend battle lines.

The demons who started this ruckus lean back and enjoy the show. Their job is done, we have been tricked, duped, and seduced by the literal dark side. And what is the cost? The cost is ignoring our source of peace, joy, love, and power. We are no longer keeping our eyes on Jesus, all the while influencing others to do the same.

*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)*

There is a time and place to stand by the foundations of the Bible, and to die on that hill - specifically the cornerstones of our faith.

However, I also do remember hearing of an old preacher who at the end of his life, dropped a beautifully simple truth. He said something akin to “All my doctrine and beliefs have boiled down to this, ‘Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!’”

We must never forget that on the cross, one last person became a disciple of Jesus before Christ's death. The thief on the cross. He didn't understand who Jesus was, how to ask for salvation, say a sinner's prayer, or take communion, nor was he baptized. He simply said “*Lord, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.*” (Luke 23:42)

These childish bouts of mudslinging are rarely salvation-dependent. They are based on a competitive spirit and are usually perpetrated by men. Do not take my word for it, but we follow the example of the Master. “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*” (Matthew 5:9).

Jesus spent the bulk of His time with those He deemed, “persons of peace.” He avoided those who only wanted to argue. Even when they tried to “trap” God on earth, His retort was concise, loving, and based on truth. Plus, Jesus even gave every Pharisee a way back to God through Him.

*“He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of Heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” (Matthew 13:52).*

## **#4 Bad Habit: A Disciple Devotes Their Ministry to Individuals**

### **- A Member Believes Large Gatherings Equals Success**

Matthew 5 is the beginning of the most famous sermon ever given. We refer to it as the Beatitudes. Whereas the famed introduction is where we are generally focus, we often miss the first verse, stating an important and irrefutable fact. Jesus gave this sermon to His disciples, not the crowd.

*“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and He began to teach them.” (Matthew 5:1-2)*

Jesus made a massive statement to His disciples. His people, not the crowd, had made the effort to leave all they'd known to follow Christ. Jesus rewarded this act. Even though He had, “A multitude” at His fingertips, Christ continued up the mountain waiting for His true disciples to come to Him. When His true followers finished climbing the mountain, THEN He taught them! Yes, Jesus let the massive audience listen in. However, Christ never stopped focusing His people on the individual.

We see several times in the Gospels that Jesus “escaped” into the wilderness, or got into a boat, to get to the other side with only His disciples, and I believe that was partially to avoid the multitudes in order to be alone with the twelve.

In any case, it is made very clear in the gospels, that Jesus focused on individuals, and called them to Himself, one at a time, not 50, 100, or 500 at a time.

Many charismatic brothers and sisters are screaming at me right now, “What about the day of Pentecost? Three thousand were baptized in one day! (Acts 2:41)” I get it, and I admit you are right. That there are times when God goes big. So, if God brings tongues of fire in a prayer meeting, leading to street preaching with a dozen languages never learned. Then, praise God, let Him work. But those are the exceptions, not the rule.

One aspect of the day of Pentecost that must be considered was Jesus's discipleship. The day of Pentecost miracle was a culmination of over three years of hard work. Christ was the first to faithfully make disciples. The reason the disciples were in the upper room on the day of Pentecost was in obedience to His command to “*Not leave Jerusalem until the power of the Holy Spirit comes upon you.*” (Acts 1:4) The day of Pentecost was the fruit of discipling the twelve, one by one.

Many years ago, on one of my first missionary experiences I was ministering in a town through a local pastor, I was asked to deliver the main message by our missions team leader. I was very nervous. However, I prayed and gave it up to God. I allowed Him to speak through me and share what I felt He wanted me to.

At the end of my message, I gave an opportunity for the church congregation to respond. I was so terrified that no one would respond that I closed my eyes, feigning prayer, but honestly, I was just scared. After a few moments, I summoned the courage to take a peek. To my shock, more than a hundred came forward and were on their faces crying before God. I blew relief out through my nostrils. I felt good and successful. Now I was an accomplished minister.

A few days later, my team and I, still working with the same church, were on our way back from a youth camp we had hosted. We were driving through a mountain pass when we came across a horrible car accident. One of the moms, driving a group of kids back from the youth camp had taken a turn much too sharply. She had rolled her vehicle several times before it had come skidding to a stop upside down in a meadow.

When our team came upon the scene, a crowd of passers-by had stopped to help and found the driver of the car on the ground, refusing to be touched as she thought her back was broken. Meanwhile, one of the middle school children from our youth camp was sitting with a lady who had wrapped a cut on her arm with an old t-shirt. As soon as I approached, the woman handed the youth over to me so she too could join the crowd surrounding the panicked adult.

Still unsure of what was happening, I reintroduced myself to the 12-year-old in broken Spanish. After noticing an ominous pool of blood gathering from under her arm, I unwrapped the wounded arm to see what was happening. A friend came over to help me out as he had first aid training. As I opened up the bandage on the arm, blood gushed from the wound and the girl turned white, passing out. Her arm had been fractured and sliced by a piece of glass across the forearm, down to the bone.

So, here I am with my buddy, one First Aid class between the two of us, 19-year-old Americans, on the southern tip of South America, desperately trying to use broken Spanish to wake up a little girl who was bleeding to death. With warm blood dripping down my forearms, we did our best TV doctor impressions, praying a lot and applying pressure to her arm.

Unfortunately, neither of us had enough training to confidently apply a tourniquet and the only place to apply pressure, in order to stop the bleeding, was on the fracture. This made the poor kid scream and pass out again. After the longest five minutes of my young life, we managed to stop the bleeding and were able to procure transportation to the hospital.

That night, my friend who helped me stop the bleeding, our Spanish translator and I, talked our way into the hospital after visiting hours to see how the young lady was doing. She had a compound fracture, a lot of stitches and had lost several pints of blood. In fact, the doctor told us that if she had lost any more blood, there would have been nothing they could have done.

We left that town almost two weeks later, on to our next ministry opportunity. The day before we left, a group from the local church took us around town, spoiling us with coffee and food. Two of those spoiling us were our little patient in a giant white cast and her father. A father who hadn't been to church and refused to talk to God since his wife had died.

**One of the greatest gifts you can ever give is how to become a friend of God  
- A gift which cannot be shared from behind a pulpit.**

*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.  
You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants,  
because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called  
you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known  
to you. (John 15:13-15)*

You see, I was able to share like a “big man” behind the pulpit and be a “star” seeing hundreds on their knees before God in a church building, giving me the satisfaction of being a “successful” minister. But to this day, I have never heard of that message of mine bearing any lasting fruit. However, I found out later that my new little patient's father considered my mission team saving his daughter's life an act of God. After we had left, he went back to the church and met with the local pastor.

The church will always have a platform for teaching. Yet more than 90% of spiritual fruit will always happen one person, or one family, at a time.

## #5 Bad Habit: Disciples Don't Offer Answers Easily

### - Members Always Have the Answer

When making disciples, it can be very easy to always be “The Bible Answer Man!” Again, our ego/pride is ready and eager to take over. However, we must remember that our job is not to be the smartest guy or gal in the room. Rather, we must teach those we are discipling how to find the answers from the smartest guy in the universe: Jesus!

Jesus demonstrated this repeatedly in the Gospels, asking impossible questions His disciples could never fully understand or answer before they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The filling of God's Spirit could only happen after Jesus went back up to Heaven. *“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”* (John 16:7).

In Matthew 16, Jesus asked His disciples, *“Who do you think I am?”* Peter made his profound statement “You are Christ!” Yet, that profound statement came only after some flailing and shoulder shrugging, “Some say you are John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah.” Jesus didn't shut them down, mock their ignorance, or give the “right answer.” He asked another question, “Who do YOU think I am?” We must always remember that those we disciple will not always have us around, they must learn to rely on God themselves, sooner, rather than later.

The way I have taught this in the past has been first, simply ask those I am discipling what they have been reading in the bible and what have they been praying about. They too can learn from the Bible by the power of the Spirit. Also, If I can get them to talk about their relationship with God, I have often found myself being encouraged and learning from them! I relay this to those I am discipling, bolstering their faith and mine in God's willingness to communicate with His children and the validity of the words from the Lord for the church.

Secondly, I use what is sometimes called the “Simple” Bible study method. I have used these methods with my children, friends, wife, Chinese Communists, isiZulu's, Xhosa's, Afrikaners, Hindus, Buddhists, occultists, and atheists, plus most church denominations you can think of. It begins with you praying together, something akin to, “Holy Spirit, please, teach us something through this word, amen.” Then read a passage of scripture.

**(Side Note:** I believe the four Gospels are the center and foundation of the Bible. Since they tell of the life and deeds of God on earth: Jesus. When using this method with a new or growing believer, I focus on Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.)

Now, this is the difficult and important part. Do NOT share first. Instead, ask those you are discipling to share what they think the passage means and what stood out to them or a question they have. Fight the urge to fill empty awkward silences with your own thoughts. As a big-mouthed American, I can attest to how tough this can be. To be perfectly honest, I don't always win this battle and still often speak far too much, but the Lord is working on me. I encourage you to also be willing to allow the Lord to work on you.

I have used this method dozens of times with folks from all different types of backgrounds and beliefs and I have never heard a thought or question that was invalid. On the contrary, some of the most inspired and fresh insights have come from the least likely people. When we give Him a chance, the Holy Spirit shows up, every time.

The incredible thing is that every time you use the "simple Bible study method," you are introducing someone to the Spirit. You are teaching a new brother or sister not only how to read the Bible, but also how to pray through the Bible. Most importantly, you are at the front end of their relationship with God as they learn to hear from the Father. As we all know, He is all too eager to make Himself known to them!

Again, it fits perfectly with our theme, that we are not on this earth to make disciples of ourselves or our own 'grandiose' ideas. Rather, we are here to convey a relationship with Father God through His Son, Jesus: no more - no less.

## **Bad Habit 6: Disciples See Growth In Relationship**

### **- Members See Growth In Numbers**

The need to know how many disciples are made through your efforts is pride and a need to control: plain and simple. Yes, there are a few times God commanded those in the New Testament to count people, but that was an exception, not the rule. For the vast majority of disciple-makers, we are there to simply be the next link in a massive, unbreakable chain that God is making for Himself - a chain that is for His use, not ours!

**You are not running a business, but relationships with eternal purposes.**

A few years back, a well-known preacher and teacher traveled to Asia, eager to learn about some of the most explosive churches on earth today. I enjoyed hearing his insights, but one specific principle he learned, stood out to me. The longest-lasting move of God he visited seemed to have no origin. The visiting preacher asked some of the leaders about this. The elders of this multiplying church movement told the visitor that the Holy Spirit had given them a clear word that if anyone discovered the origin of this work, the movement would end.

For those of us who want a biblical warning against the need to revel in our success, we can go to the life of the man said to be “after God’s own heart:” King David. In 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21, we see a story of David commanding a census. David wanted to know how many people ‘he had!’ The result was a punishing plague, killing 70,000 men.

Jesus said, “*Go out, make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*” There is nothing about your need to track “your” success, especially if the work is God’s and not yours.

## **Bad Habit 7: Disciples Prioritize Relationships**

### **- Members Prioritize Programs**

Several years ago, I was asked to step in and help lead a wonderful little church. One of the first things I told several of the men of the congregation, I think shocked them a little bit. I said, “If you and your wife are having a hard time connecting, or if you have failed to spend time with your children during the week, then don’t come to Sunday church. Rather, spend time together as a family. You are the head of your home, not me. God has called you to love and minister to your family, first! You absolutely have my permission to miss Sunday service if you need to.”

How revealing are the words Jesus speaks to us through John 15?

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.” (John 15:1-8)*

It is very clear to me that Jesus prioritizes relationship and intimacy with Him, not an organization. I have a hard time discovering much of an organization in the New Testament at all. The clearest example of programming is when Peter and the other apostles appointed the “seven” in Acts 6, to administer help for the poor, orphans, and widows. Otherwise, much of our extreme planning, although not overtly sinful, must be recognized at the very least as ‘extra-Biblical.’ Therefore, facilities nor a program should not be a priority - relationships must be.

Let me bolster my argument with incredibly underrated words of our Lord and Savior in Matthew 6:25-34:

*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*

*“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

How can we be the church, modeling the Christian life for new believers, yet relying on programs and organizations for survival? Jesus explicitly forbade His followers from worrying about tomorrow.

**Can you rely on your plans and strategies, plans made months or even years in advance and still keep teaching and keep your faith in God?**

Throughout almost my entire childhood, into my 30s, I do not remember a preacher teaching this passage, not one time! I could have forgotten a sermon or two, but I have heard teachings on Romans dozens of times, the first part of Matthew 5 many times, the Christmas story, the crucifixion and resurrection, Revelation, 1 John, and Colossians... You get the picture. I have heard a lot of messages over the years, but this command, “*Do not worry about tomorrow*,” has never been a popular one in America or most of the world. What is scary is that I feel as though its popularity is shrinking.

For example, pastors have been taught in Bible school to plan their sermons 8-12 weeks out. We have been told that we have to spend upwards of 30 hours a week planning our grand weekly speech that should allow our congregants to eke out their salvation for just one more week. This way, “our” congregants can continue on OUR grand plan.

I, too, planned my sermons like this - acting as the spiritual sage of the community, “ONE MAN TO SAVE THEM ALL!” However, I was just insecure and immature. I was afraid that at any moment, leadership would see through me and say, “What an unholy, unrighteous fraud! Leave and never return...we’ll see to it, that you shall never preach - ever again!”

However, one Sunday, I got up to share my carefully planned message, when that inconvenient, sick feeling of conviction began pulsing through my guts.

“Don’t preach that, go to Colossians 3, read from there, and let me guide you!”

“No!” Was my childish, disobedient response “*This can’t be God! I have carefully planned sermon notes to stick to!*”

His response was a phrase that has changed how I minister to God’s children, “Who you are, affects people far more than you can ever say.”

I don’t worry about tomorrow, not simply because I have been told not to, but because if I make my own plans, they can keep me from hearing about His plans. When I do take the time to listen and hear His commands, I get to be a part of Jesus’s far greater and more influential schemes.

On one occasion, I was heading out to my usual coffee shop to do some sermon prep, but the Lord had different plans. Before I left the house, I felt a strong urge to change shirts. I obeyed what I thought could be the Holy Spirit.

An hour later, I found myself driving to the other side of town, 22 minutes out of my way. I didn’t know why I had to go to another nearby city, to sit at the same brand of coffee shop. However, I obeyed and went where the Spirit told me.

After settling down with my coffee and laptop, a tap on my shoulder stole my attention. “I like your shirt, it’s a sign.”

“Excuse me?” I turned to see a smiling middle-aged blonde woman peering down at me.

“Your shirt is a sign. I have been missing my sister since she passed away last year. I asked for a sign, and now I see you with a T-shirt with her favorite quote about dreams.”

I asked the woman to sit down, and after more than an hour of chatting about her sister and other of life’s ups and downs, we prayed together and she accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. For the next ten months, she came over to our home church every week, learning more about living and loving like Jesus.

Only six months earlier, I would have given this sister a business card and let her know that she could “make an appointment.” After all, I was busy and important, wasn’t I? Besides, I had to plan for my Sunday sermon. However, I recently learned to recognize that God has divine appointments set up for all of us. If only we learn to prioritize relationships over programs.

**Special Note:** How then, do I prepare? Am I just an aimless drifting hippie, swayed by emotion and every other thought passing through my head?

Of course not, and neither was Jesus. Living life one day at a time is difficult and takes a lot of discipline. It’s a life of “going against the grain” that many will not understand.

How did you write this book if you organize nothing?” I believe it is more than okay to organize, specifically as the Lord tells you to. It’s not so much that you can never plan or organize, the question is if you NEED to plan and organize and if you RELY on your plans rather than rely on faith in God’s plan and power. Do you NEED to be in CONTROL? Or, will you throw away your plans in favor of God’s plan at a moment’s notice?

Specifically, I have found a special need for administration in compassion ministries: Orphan care, widows, and the poor.

Also, I do plan before sharing with a group or ministering to an individual. Yet, my preparation is rooted in prayer and getting in line with the Holy Spirit! I find some of my most effective teachings shared through me by the Holy Spirit came from hours of prayer and 10 minutes of scratching out a few notes. However, there have been a few times when, after several hours of prayers, the Lord did have me pound out pages and pages of notes to share. Other times, I have found myself led to a coffee shop, praying for the sick, or sharing the gospel with people on the street. This leads to inspiring the group I’m teaching, so they too will go out and minister themselves. These Bible stories we share on Sunday can still happen today! But, only if we are willing to cede control, be inconvenienced, and let Jesus take the lead.

**Although I often still fail, I try to achieve this goal every day.**

**I wait and listen until I hear what God tells me to do, and then I go do it.**

## CHAPTER 7

# M28: What next?

Has this book left you excited to go out and make disciples but you are a little overwhelmed? M28 Mentoring is here to help. A community of believers, spreading the gospel by making disciples one person at a time.

Moms, dads, aunts, and uncles have seen family members become disciples of Jesus Christ! Security guards, pastors, retirees, coffee baristas, social workers, gym owners, engineers, and doctors have all taken part in changing the world around them.

For more information on how to make disciples, read more about M28 Mentoring on the flyer below. Review how it can serve you as an individual or your church in fulfilling Christ's Command to "Make disciples of all nations."

Be a part of a startup...  
launched 2,000 years ago!

# M28

**“GO UNTO ALL THE WORLD,  
MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS.”**

MATTHEW 28:19-20

# READING THE GOSPELS DOING THE GOSPELS

## WHY ONE MORE GROUP?

There is a move of God, spreading across the globe. Ordinary people, just like you, accepting the call of God, to take responsibility for mentoring one person at a time; loving them into Jesus's arms and journeying alongside them in faith.

From mega corporations in the Silicon Valley, to the streets of Tehran, the villages of North Korea, the marbled halls of Sandton and even the veld of Mpumalanga, thousands every day are answering the call of our Savior, Jesus Christ – Go! Make disciples of all nations!

## WHO ARE WE?

There are many amazing Christian principles being taught and fought for today. However, being a disciple who makes disciples of Jesus Christ is one directive that will last throughout eternity.

M28 is a course that teaches the basics of making disciples through the example given to us by Jesus. (1 Corinthians 3:13)

### **The 8 week long course consists of:**

- Weekly 2-hour online course (8 sessions)
- One-on-one coaching (4 sessions)
- A Holy Spirit Day

*"You have 10,000 guardians, but few fathers."*

*1 Corinthians 4:15*

*"To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.'"*  
*John 8:31*

## WHO WE ARE NOT

M28 mentoring is not a new church family, meant to replace your current church family nor an indictment of any organization. M28 is a mentor leadership group of Jesus believers who wish to take their following of Jesus to the next level.

# WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

## Hearing the Voice of God

Whether through His Spirit in us, the Bible, the principles God set in creation, or our Christian brothers and sisters, Father God created a system of communication with each of His children which is accessible and necessary. But, how can you follow and obey someone if you can't recognize their voice?

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27

## Making Disciples

Do you want to heal the sick, and raise the dead? How about share Jesus and eventually baptize a new brother or sister into the faith? That's what we do! That's our goal. To be a disciple who makes disciples.

"As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give." Matthew 10:7-8

## Learn to Lead on Your Knees

Jesus gave us one style of leadership development – Being a servant of all, whether physically or metaphorically. At home, at work or in your community, to be a leader for Jesus, you will need to learn to "wash other's feet".

"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." Matthew 20:26

## Becoming more like Jesus every day!

We aim to set you on a path of *never* being satisfied, but to become like Jesus a little more each day, until we all see Him face to face.

"...so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God." Colossians 1:10

# WHAT WE WILL DO

## Read The Gospels – Do The Gospels

We have four books of God walking this earth and telling us over and over again. "DO WHAT I DID... Know Me, obey Me, follow Me... If you want to know the Father God, you must go through Me."

Therefore – Let's make it EXTREMELY simple. Read about the life of Jesus, then, set out to copy the life of Jesus.

"Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:6

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:29

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

## Expect The Unexpected

If God is Boss, then we work on His schedule and His venue; He is in charge. Often times, being a follower of Jesus is the opposite of being prudent or wise – according to this world we may look foolish.

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness.'" 1 Corinthians 3:19

## Weekly Online Mentor Group

Using an online platform, we will meet once per week, as a group, for eight consecutive weeks, to discuss our efforts to be more like Jesus.

## 1:1 Meetings

It is crucial to have personal 1:1 time to meet with your instructor. The commitment is every other week for one hour.

## Holy Spirit Day

After the 8 weeks, we will spend a full day, in person, focusing on prayer and teaching about being filled with God's Spirit.

# WHAT WILL IT COST?

## **Pride**

Ego must go – and most of us will need to put it down, multiple times.

## **Discomfort**

Whether it's emotional, physical, or spiritual – only discomfort gives room for more muscle growth and more capacity.

## **Holy Spirit Day**

Willingness to release expectations and control and allow the Holy Spirit to take the reigns.



## **MEET THE INSTRUCTORS**

### **RYAN & KIRSTEN GRAY**

Ryan's passion is to see God's family grow through relationships. Over the past 20 years, he has mentored over 50 individuals, through one on one coaching and discipleship.

Ryan has trained and coached hundreds of mentors within the US and South Africa. He has also led multiple short and long term missions trips all over the USA, Latin American and several parts of Africa.

Over the past two decades, Ryan and Kirsten Gray have served as marital, children's, family, youth and lead pastors. They just celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary, and have two amazing children.

Together their family serves all over Gauteng, caring for orphans and vulnerable children; providing for their physical and spiritual needs. Ryan and Kirsten also pastor a home church, designed for those of any belief who wish to explore faith in Jesus through a small group family atmosphere.

# TESTIMONIES

"Cindy and I definitely know God uses Ryan at this hour to raise up disciples. I trust his discipleship group is the stepping stones to what the Lord wants to do to reach the next generations of disciples in Africa.

Stan and Cindy - California, USA

Brother Ryan has been a friend and mentor to me in growing my faith in the past 10+ years. When I was recently born again, he led a small group that I was part of. He helped me overcome lies from the enemy, grow in the truth and is now helping me to make disciples. He leads by example through his humility and dependence on Jesus. His love for his family and his faith has been an inspiration to me.

Alain - Canada & California, USA

"Ryan provided excellent teaching and mentorship to us in the discipleship group. He encouraged us to rely on wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit and the Bible as we live out God's purpose for our lives in every situation we're in. Ryan practices what he teaches and I learned a lot from his example, such as drawing close to Father God and praying prophetically in faith."

Claire - California, USA

## AVING M

"I met Ryan about 3 years ago at our Crossfit Box. We quickly became friends. This friendship grew into a deep spiritual mentorship, which saw me through some challenging life situations, and lead to positive growth, not just for me, but also for my community. I feel invigorated and full of peace after every conversation we have. His humility, sincerity, faith, compassion, wisdom and love never ceases to amaze me. I am truly grateful to have him as a friend and mentor in my life."

Armand - South Africa

# REGISTRATION

**Sign me up!**

**Each course consists of 8 weeks**

**Online Weekly Sessions:**

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

**1:1 Mentorship Sessions**

Four: One-hour sessions, bimonthly over the 8-week course

**Holy Spirit Day**

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**To receive additional information about upcoming courses,  
contact Ryan Gray at**

Email: [ryantgray2@gmail.com](mailto:ryantgray2@gmail.com)

WhatsApp: +27 81 003 6143



## APPENDIX A

# The Father Speaks: Hearing the Voice of God

Imagine, a few years from now, my cute little boy, Ryan Jr, runs up to me one day, excited to see his daddy. His little arms wrap around one of my legs and he buries his thick cheeky smile into my pants with excitement. I reach down and squeeze his little body with my hands and firmly scruff his hair. His hazel eyes stare up at my face with admiration and he says, "I missed you, Daddy." An even larger cheeky smile beams down at him, my eyes exposing desperation to hear about the day MY son has had.

I'm about to say something, but instead, I reach into my pocket remove my iPhone 50, thumb type for a few seconds, and shoot a text off. A millisecond later, Jr's front right pocket vibrates and he removes my old iPhone 49, which he now proudly totes as his own. Smiling, he replies to my text with genuine love and excitement. Happy and content, to be father and son, we sit on our couch together...communicating through an electronic server until bath time.

Psalms 119:105 says *"Thy WORD is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."*

What an incredible privilege we are given through the Grace of Father God. His Word will be illumination for our life's path. He will guide us and give us special insight into the unknown. We receive all of this and SO much more, if like a child, we simply hear and obey the Word of the Lord.

In Psalms 119:105, the Hebrew word for "Word" is straightforward. It essentially means exactly what you would think it means...A word from someone's mouth. Here is the definition according to the Strong's Concordance

1. speech, word, speaking, thing
  - a. speech
  - b. saying, utterance
  - c. word, words
  - d. business, occupation, acts, matter, case, something, manner (by extension)

Learning to hear and obey the voice of our Father, is essential to sustainable spiritual growth. God sent His one and only son to this earth, to close a great divide, so that His Spirit would be able to live on this earth in complete intimacy, or togetherness, with us! His heart desires to complete a work in us that would see our happiness completed through His heart as a Father. To truly live in intimacy and closeness with Father God, we must have a daily relationship with Him that is personal and real.

To reach this level of intimacy with our Eternal Dad, we must get past reliance on the Bible as the primary and only form of communication with our Father. If not we are children experiencing THE Creator only through text...He has SO much more! Look back at Psalms 119:105: Thy Word is a lamp...What that says is that His Spirit directs and guides me, if I listen through my constant focus on Him.

His instruction and encouragement as my Father is always there to counsel me and give me wisdom, if I will learn to take the time to listen. If you don't take the time to listen and stay focused on only hearing from Him through the Bible, He'll still speak to you, but you'd be like a son who can only communicate with his Father through text messages. You can learn about His truth and commands, but easily miss His giant, amazing heart for you and others.

"But How?" I am often asked. "How do I hear His voice?"

- First step, when you pray - Stop talking, be silent, listen! The most important step in prayer is asking Him to teach us what to pray for, then wait for the answer.
- Cut down on the background noise, turn off the TV, put away the phone, and turn off the radio in the car.
- Like any relationship, you have to make alone time a priority...go on a walk, go for a drive...find ways and specific times to be alone with Him. Then, ask the Father to teach you.
- Find someone you trust and respect who can hear God's voice, and ask to pray with them. Be humble, "Please, would you teach me?"

Lastly, Do NOT give up. How long does it take to learn a new language? How long does it take to learn to read? Do algebra? Learn the periodic table in chemistry. How about riding a horse, snowboarding, or playing golf? Learning to discern His voice will NOT happen overnight. It may take years for you to learn to consistently hear the voice of God, but that time spent will change your life and lead to:

- A. An explosion of understanding and revelation through the Bible.
- B. (Most importantly) Intimacy and identity with God as your Father.

## APPENDIX B

**“Tithe”:**

**Should It Be Taught to  
the Church - Even As a  
Principle?**

I remember the first dollar given to me that I earned. I was eight years old. I remember because I gave a dime of that dollar into the offering of my local church for tithe. From that time until age 19, I faithfully gave 10% as a minimum to my local church. I was taught that if I gave to God, He would be happy and then give back to me.

Then something changed, I met my God as a Father (Dad - He likes me to call Him), for the first time, at a missionary school in Denver. Since that day, over twenty years ago, God has challenged my faith in His love and grace for me, making it a little purer every day.

To be honest, it's not always fun or comfortable. Often it is frustrating and terrifying. However, the results always bring me a little tighter into His eternal bear hug. One of these challenges was simply this, "Would my Dad still take care of my needs if I did not tithe?" Hmmm...good question!

After three months of wrestling with this question, I felt I could not walk away from this question and had to get the truth from the source. So, for 14 months, I did not "tithe" or give regularly to a local church organization: The Result? In short, I was cared for the same, I even felt better in some ways as my obedience to His challenge gave me a new revelation of God's grace.

However! This in no way lets me off the hook, that I must not be generous.

I believe the change in my convictions went from "old law" to "new covenant." Jesus said, "If someone asks for your tunic, give them your cloak as well, and if they ask for you to go one mile, go two! Give to the one who asks and don't refuse the one who borrows." (Matt 5:40-42)

## **How My Wife and I Live and What I Believe**

To briefly explain my convictions: Everything I own, have, or am is His. Jesus is my Lord and Master, so He can ask me to give away everything or nothing I have at any time, all the time.

I endeavor every day (some days are much better than others) to surrender ALL, take up my cross, and get in tow behind my savior (Gal 2:20, Romans 12:1). Therefore, if at any time, Jesus prompts me to empty my bank account for any one person, I must be able to. On the contrary, if God says hold your money and wait, I must be able to. I obey Him.

This also includes my car, gas in my car, and stuff (clothes, furniture, TV, computer...etc.). My wife and I have concluded that we must take time aside every month and ask God to tell us who we are to bless that month.

We also stay available every day to give beyond that. Our giving includes being open to volunteer time, babysitting, giving rides, and buying lunch, dinner, or coffee for folks.

Through growing in this, we have three convictions that we have received over the past few years:

1. We support those who invest in our lives. This not only encourages and helps them, but it also allows us to be a part of their ministry at a deeper spiritual level.
2. We support those whom we are called to disciple and plant into ministry. Even if it's only \$20 bucks, our leaders have modeled to us the spiritual importance of putting your "money where your mouth is."
3. You can never be too generous to the poor, orphans, and widows.

### **What do the Epistles say about money?**

None of these examples is "tithing." I label these as follows:

- Paul's admonishment to be a "cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6)
- The model of the early church, always sharing everything all the time. (Acts 2:44)
- Supporting the missional calling. (2 Corinthians 11:8)
- Caring for the poor. (Especially orphans and widows) (James 1:27)
- Allowing the apostles time to devote themselves to prayer and studying the scriptures. (Acts 6:4).

What I share below are the convictions and beliefs I have come to follow, I feel most have been confirmed by the Bible, from the Holy Spirit, and much wiser, old mentors and teachers. In my mind, they also dispute/explain various arguments I have encountered.

**"Those who do not tithe never give generously and can't prove if they do!"**

I have heard this stated like a six-year-old calling someone names, with animosity in the voices of three preachers I respect. WOW! They are the same men who show absolute love and grace to those who attack them in public and then probe who they do not agree with regarding many, many more issues.

It's this unprovoked reaction by such mature and respected men that has me convinced "tithing" is a bigger issue than we may think. Plus, their argument is silly and baseless.

1. I was brought up in the YWAM ranks, a group of young crazies who live on faith and raising support. The founders, Loren and Darlene never took a salary. Yet, YWAMers are among the MOST generous of anyone I have ever met! A lot of them operate with the same convictions about being generous through obedience to everything we have like I do.
2. At the end of the year, my wife and I's budget almost always shows that over 1/10th of our finances goes to the Lord's work away from us...through obeying His voice.

Do We Believe in Free Will or Not? What is Your Doctrine? (1 Timothy 4:6)

Many "classical preachers," have adopted a complicated doctrine of God, leading to claims such as:

"We have been given free will, but God must choose us."

"He gives us money to choose, but some of it is for His work, therefore it's His. He will retaliate if you misuse or hoard it!"

Thinking of Father God like this keeps us from a healthy relationship with the Father. After all, if a child sees His dad act one way and then suddenly act differently in another way, wouldn't that child be confused and insecure?

I admire and thank God for the strength and bravery of a man like John Calvin, who swam upstream against the religion of the day, getting much closer to the Father than those around Him. Yet, as we also can see from Calvin; he based a lot of his "Principles of Christian Religion" on a religious way of thinking (That was the cultural mindset he was raised in).

Many have studied and based many beliefs on the greats like Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and even St. Augustine and have quoted many of their statements as absolute authorities on certain issues. But they are not. They are very, brave, intelligent men. Yes, you can learn a lot from them, but there must come a time when we turn back to the only gospel and truth: knowing Jesus intimately.

When I read the Bible and hear from THE SOURCE, I see Jesus telling me that everything must be centered around the relationship with the Father.

- A loving father always forgives, but also holds his children accountable...and my Father in Heaven is the MOST loving and forgiving.

My conclusion.....If you believe in free will, all the money is yours to use as a steward: 100% of it... and you are 100% accountable for how it was used. (1 Corinthians 4:2)

## **“Tithing Precedes that Law, so even if we are saved by Grace, we must still ‘Tithe.’”**

In Genesis 14:20, Abram gives a tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek, the King of Salem - which means peace.

Hebrews refers to Melchizedek as the Priest, and Jesus was “in the order of him,” the Priest forever. This is the only place after Jesus' Resurrection where tithing is mentioned in scripture, but the context has nothing to do with money. The 10% given is mentioned to establish the validity of Melchizedek as a priest.

The passage in Genesis 14 is what is used as the Biblical basis for tithing after the Law had been completed through Jesus Christ.

**HOWEVER**, three chapters later, in Genesis 17, also long before the Old Mosaic Law was created, God told Abram to be circumcised, him and his household. Yet, on numerous occasions, Paul the apostle tells his gentile church families not to allow themselves to be circumcised by the Jews as it was not required but simply “Mutilating flesh” (Philippians 3:2).

### **Ryan's Conclusion**

This way of thinking is highly unscriptural. Every word about giving in the New Testament has the same simple concepts stated over and over.

Be Generous, God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Every person must determine in their own heart. (Acts 5: Ananias and Sapphira)

If you want a model of church giving, look at Acts, chapters 2 - 6. On several occasions, it talks about selling everything believers had to share and give as needed. The model of church offering was a two-way flow. For instance: an offering plate is passed around with the leader putting in a few dollars first, stating their needs. So everyone gives AND takes, as needed. Some take a dollar, others ten, others take five but leave two...etc.

When the plate comes back, the leader and his wife have what they need, exactly! (There are numerous accounts of this happening)

Do I think churches need a budget and should folks determine to be financially disciplined to give? Should a congregation support their church staff and give regularly? YES!

But if Paul, Peter, and John were all hesitant to put a number to what EVERYONE should give, then why would I have the audacity to? Nope, I will instead continue to direct everyone to the Holy Spirit. Then they can get confirmation from their spouse, and trusted advisors.

Extra Note: <http://tithinginfo.com/> On the preceding link I saw this very simple but good thought. “Before the Law, Tithing was ~~80~~ voluntary.”

## “Jesus Praised the Pharisees and their Tithing”

In Matthew 23:23 Jesus told the Pharisee, paraphrased...Great job, you paid your money, even for your herb garden, but you won't be generous with justice, mercy, and faith. Do the latter and the former.

I have heard those who say the covenant law only began after the resurrection use this verse as an argument to convince their people to tithe. These are men I believe in and respect, so I know they are not being dishonest, nor are they ignorant. We are ALL subject to secondhand doctrine. If we base any belief in God in any way other than through Him we create a religious viewpoint that becomes a stronghold and blindspot in our lives.

In this verse, Jesus is speaking to teachers of the Old Law, who were still under the Old Law. It can not prove we should tithe in a covenantal law. We are justified by faith and saved by Grace.

Not to mention, the tithe the Pharisees were giving was the “Temple tax.” Since you and I are now the temple of the Holy Spirit, why would I have an obligation to give anything to a building? The family of God is the only sacred temple.

Jesus also shamed them for not encouraging the people to support their Parents first instead of the Temple.

“That 10% is God's money, you better not steal from God or He'll Get you!”

Does this sound like the father portrayed in Jesus' famous Story/parable, “The Prodigal Son?” Does it even line up with the teachings on grace and being made perfect? Again, I believe we will be held accountable, like the ten, five, and one talent servants (Matt 25:14-30).

I was raised with a loving father and he would not give me extra money if I were mean, wasteful, or stingy, but he would still give me enough just because he loved me. “If you ask for bread you think you'll get a stone, and water, He'll give you a snake? You being evil know how to give your children good gifts, how much more your father in heaven?” (Luke 11:11, Matthew 7:9)

**Note:** As a father, If my kids are sharing, I definitely am open to being more generous and being “fun” but I don't hold it over their heads vindictively! Do you think a God who sent His one and only son to die for our sins would do that with anything as temporary as money?

## **The shoe's on the other foot. This way of living requires MORE generosity and faith.**

If you consider yourself to be a passionate, mature discipleship of Jesus Christ, then I encourage you to examine your life and honestly ask the question, am I a generous person?

- Do you show a significant portion of your finances going to help someone else?
- Do you give of your time every week to volunteer, feed the hungry, take care of a single mom's kids, etc.?
- Do you HAVE to sell your secondhand stuff, keep the money, and don't first look to whom you can bless with it?

The scary thing about not being generous isn't that God will punish you, but rather it reveals that you have punished yourself by pulling away from His guiding hand. If you believe He will care for you, then you can give anything away, at any time. If you need it, He will replace it...He'll probably give you a better one. If you cannot do that, you don't trust Him and your faith and relationship needs work. After all, how can you trust, love, obey, and accept grace from a Father who you think will not keep His word and care for you?

### **Other Notes:**

- 1 Corinthians 16:2: Collecting a gift every Sunday - That was a specific gift from a specific church for the hurting brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. "Tithe" was not mentioned.
- How many Honor your Father and Mother sermons have you heard VS Tithing sermons? (This goes to the argument that there is a spiritual stronghold in many churches with this topic).
- Tithing is Method-focused. Which other methods are we commanded to do in the New Testament? - Jesus said that everything must be relationship-focused (John 15). I can't find anything that isn't. (In other words - 10% is a method, be generous like Jesus was is a principle).
- Just like the Bible itself, any physical thing on this earth can be used for good or evil. Even Satan himself is forced into giving when he's caught (Proverbs 6:30). Wouldn't you rather give because you are royalty with authority over Satan, a defeated foe?

**Response:**

1. Do you feel that you are not generous, that you want to give, but just don't see how it is possible? Don't worry, God is the best at helping you figure this out! Pray this prayer, "God, change my heart, to make me more generous." **Now, here's the important part.**

A) What is He telling you to do? You might be inspired to take a lonely person to lunch, buy a cup of coffee for a homeless person and chat with them, or go to a group home or orphan home with some entertainment gear and TV and donate it...Those are all great places to start!

B) Keep praying that prayer every day until you see your life change.

2. Did you get offended by reading this? If so, ask yourself why. "If Ryan's wrong, so what? Who cares? Why would that upset you so much?" Did Jesus get offended and defensive? Do you think that offense is the Spirit of God?

I encourage you to pray and ask Him to reveal why these thoughts bother you so much and ask yourself, "Why do I believe in tithing? Where did the doctrine come from? From the Bible or someone or something else?" I encourage you to be open to whatever the Holy Spirit says.

The Command,  
by Ryan Gray  
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