

Listening to Jesus – about Love

Love one another; go and make disciples.

Growth Groups for Disciple-Making

We have discovered that Growth Groups are very popular. Let's share some of the stories we have heard.

What do people like about them?

Churches have spent years trying to teach people through preaching and bible-studies, but through Growth Groups we have discovered that Jesus is the best disciple-maker and that the Holy Spirit is the best teacher. We have discovered the truth of Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12 "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God" ... "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

So it looks like we now have an effective tool for disciple-making.

But just because they are popular does not necessarily mean they are effective! So how should we measure effectiveness in disciple-making?

What is a Disciple of Jesus?

How do you define a disciple of Jesus?

How does Jesus define a disciple?

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Matthew 7:21-27

Are you a Disciple of Jesus?

What is your response to Jesus' warning in Matthew 7:21 (above)?

If this warning does not make us tremble, we are being like the foolish man.

Why does Jesus condemn these people who call Him Lord and are doing such Christ-like things?

Love: the X Factor

What is the principle command of Jesus?

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

We cannot separate love from discipleship. Those who do are foolish builders building on sand.

"Love one another; go and make disciples."

Brotherly Love

Brotherly love is what marks us as disciples. It is a bond of affection which comes from the heart of God. It is the effect of His Spirit living through us. Thus Paul writes:

"But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;" 1 Thessalonians 4:9

Even though the Spirit teaches us to love, we very easily set this aside and let other things take priority. Paul has to remind the Corinthians:

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing." 1 Corinthians 13: 2-3

Even "bestowing all my goods to feed the poor" can be done without love!

The absence of brotherly/sisterly love between Christians, and especially between Christian leaders is probably the biggest sin and the biggest hindrance to mission that afflicts the church.

If we as leaders do not let the First Commandment of Jesus be our own First Commandment, we will perpetuate shallow discipleship and leave others vulnerable to Jesus saying to them "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"

Tough Love

Jesus' love is tough love. It is true love. What do these two examples of Jesus' love tell us?

"While Jesus was still talking to the crowd someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:46-50

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Matthew 16:23

Jesus' love keeps obedience to God at its heart. Obedience comes before natural relationships, such as family ties and deep human friendship. True love requires brotherly/sisterly affection **and** God's penetrating light of truth:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

Our Response

Take time to sit with Jesus and pray over these issues. Look through the scriptures about love in the document "[Scriptures about Love](#)".

Love is the mark of discipleship because Jesus' command to love is impossible without His empowering presence.

Will you make brotherly/sisterly love the measure of your obedience to Jesus?

Will you endeavour to make brotherly/sisterly love the first command of GG's?

Will you endeavour to make brotherly/sisterly love the first command of Missional Communities?