

UNIT 1 - JESUS, THE ULTIMATE DISCIPLE MAKER

Jesus did it, Jesus had no plan B, Jesus commands us to do it

TRUTH

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

LUKE 19:10 (ESV)

IN BIBLE

In this unit, we will see Jesus as the ultimate disciple maker. Jesus made disciples, had no plan B to carry out His mission, and commands us in His Word to make disciples. We can see from His actions that Jesus had an intentional strategy for making disciples. His strategy, of what could be called Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship, was very effective, so much so that He did not have another plan to carry on His mission after He left the disciples and ascended into heaven. He has called His church and sent the Holy Spirit to empower us to make disciples. He modeled the strategy to reach all the nations.

John 17:1-8 – Read Jesus' high priestly prayer as if you were a disciple with Him and overheard what He was saying to His Father.

What are some of the key things that Jesus did to "accomplish the work" He was given to do by His father?

Luke 19:10, Mark 10:45, Philippians 2:5-11

From these passages, write Jesus' mission statement as if it was on a plaque hanging on His wall.

Mark 1:17 and 3:14

What do you notice about Jesus' strategy to carry out His mission?

Matthew 28:18-20 – Put aside the initial thoughts of how this verse relates to missions and consider how Jesus modeled this strategy with His disciples before He told them to do it.

As Jesus was taking ordinary men and making them into disciples, what are some of the ways He taught them to observe all that He commanded?

TO SUMMARIZE

There are two questions that must be answered as we look at the vision and mission of Jesus. The first question is, "Before God, with a sincere heart, would you call yourself a Christian?" The second question is, "Before God, with a sincere heart, would you call yourself a Disciple of Jesus?" When asked in a church setting many hands confidently go up for the first question, but there is hesitancy with the second. Many Christians think these are different, but the Bible says they are the same. Why is there a separation gap on this question of being a Christian and a Disciple of Jesus? We see in church history the unhealthy idea that clergy's activities are sacred while laymen's efforts are secular.

The Bible is clear that someone who is Christian is a follower of Jesus, a disciple of Christ (Luke 14:26, John 8:31). One definition of a disciple is: one who is called by Jesus, who has repented and is trusting in Jesus for their salvation, and as such, they are seeking to follow Jesus with their WHOLE life while training others to do the same.

As Jesus prays the high priestly prayer in John 17, we see a glimpse into how Jesus viewed His mission from His Father. He taught His disciples that eternal life comes from knowing His Father, the only true God. Jesus was given authority by the Father to give eternal life to all those who believe in His name.

In verse four, Jesus says that He accomplished the work that the Father gave Him to do. One might think Jesus' only purpose was to die on the cross and wonder why He would say this before His crucifixion. It makes us consider all of Jesus' work and begs the question, "What work was Jesus referring to before He went to the cross?"

Jesus' ultimate and primary mission was His work of redemption, His atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is evidenced by His mission statements in the Bible such as "I came to seek and to save the lost," and "I came not to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many" (Luke 19:10, Mark 10:45). As mentioned in John 17 above, Jesus' mission also included the selection and training of men who would carry on His work. His disciples grew in their maturity as they were with Jesus, and He equipped them as they ministered together. They became disciple-makers, and, after Jesus delegated the ministry to them after His resurrection, it was said of them, "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13). It was their relationship with Jesus that made all the difference. (See also Luke 4:18-19)

Key principles emerge as we read the “black words” (in contrast to the red words which Jesus spoke) of the Gospel accounts and focus on what Jesus did with His disciples. He was consistently with His disciples in a life-on-life way, modeling how to be a follower of God. Jesus’ humanity (His perfect humanity) enables us to see what it means to walk in dependence and obedience to the Father. He called them to a high commitment with great cost, sending them out to minister and providing them feedback, exposing them to His teaching and miracles, and asking them hard questions that led them to the heart of the matter. When Jesus gave them the Great Commission, they would begin to understand He was instructing them to “Do unto others as I have done to you.” (John 13:15)

We must consider the question, “Did Jesus model the ninth or tenth best way to reach the world?” Of course not! He modeled the best way to reach the world. According to our success-oriented culture, it would appear that Jesus really messed up in the way He set up His world-changing initiative. He unwisely spent more time with just a few ordinary and uneducated men rather than traveling and speaking throughout the known world. After He rose from the dead, He should have gone around showing the people who killed Him that He was alive. Jesus messed up! Or did He? For these reasons, the church may ask itself if Jesus’ example of ministry is a viable model for its spiritual formation today.

Most churches put a great deal of emphasis on the proclamational aspects of ministry (preaching and teaching) and neglect the incarnational aspects (relationships). Preaching is effective and necessary but not sufficient for bringing people to maturity in Christ. The Holy Spirit takes the written Word of God, spoken by a fallen yet forgiven preacher, and regenerates and sanctifies on the spot. But, why do we only have one recorded sermon that Jesus preached?

Jesus’ preaching was speaking into the hearts of a few. He commissioned His church to “make disciples,” but the methodology of the post Reformation church seems to understand this as “preach sermons.” It is interesting how Christians want to be like Jesus in their character, but very few are seeking to follow Jesus in their methods of ministry. Consider the power of transformation if biblical, Gospel-driven, Christ-centered preaching was also coupled with intentional life-on-life Missional Discipleship in our model of ministry.

An excellent resource to study the ministry of Jesus is found in Robert Coleman's Master Plan of Evangelism. Although the title says "evangelism," it is about the process Jesus used to train a few to reach the masses. This is a classic work, a must-read for any church and follower of Jesus who is serious about disciple making.

Throughout the other units in the Discipleship Foundations, we will explore the philosophy and practice of Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship. The reason the church should make and train mature and equipped followers of Jesus who can do the same with others is because Jesus did it. Yes, Jesus did it. Jesus has no other plan to reach the world, and Jesus commands us to do it. Let's follow Jesus – the Ultimate Disciple Maker!

EQUIPPING

Think of a person who has influenced your life in a way similar to Jesus’ life-on-life ministry to His disciples. What did this person do to influence you so much?

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What is your opinion on why the church has favored the proclamational approach to ministry over the incarnational approach we see modeled by Jesus?

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What are your thoughts, emotions, deep desires and choices about following Jesus to make disciples?

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Emotions

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Deep Desires

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Choices

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ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your group meeting, reflect on the questions below. You may be asked any of these questions, and you may be asking them of another group member. These questions can be helpful for you to examine your life and ministry in light of the truths you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to live fully in Christ.

How would you describe your relationship with Christ in this past month?

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What aspects of Jesus’ approach to Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship do you acknowledge are true and right, but your actions don’t support your beliefs?

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What have been some experiences you have had with discipleship?

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You may feel convicted by some of these questions. Rather than feeling shame, run to Jesus in repentance and turn to believe the truth of who you are in Him. Rather than trying harder, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the desire and power to obey. Rejoice in your status as a forgiven and righteous son or daughter of the King who wants to mature you and equip you as His child and kingdom laborer.

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MISSION

“Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’
6Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”
John 14:5-6 (ESV)

Your Mission assignment this week is to read the fourth Life Issues booklet, which addresses the question, “What is required to have eternal life?” Read the short introductory section and answer the questions in the margin that accompany the chapters from John’s Gospel. You can skip most of the readings in John, but be prepared to discuss the questions in your next Journey Group meeting. You can write in the booklet or on the space below.

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Now take a few moments to reflect on these last several weeks of focus on making the message of the gospel known. During this time, how has your desire to be a witness for Christ changed? How does witnessing fit into your life as a missional follower of Christ? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts at your next group meeting.

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SUPPLICATION

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

John 14:12-14 (ESV)

Jesus tells us we will do greater works than He. He tells us to believe in Him, and to ask anything in His name. Through our prayers, God is glorified.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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My prayer request regarding living a missional life:

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Prayer requests from others in my group:

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