

ACTS

Disciple-Making: Teach the Word
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DISCIPLE-MAKING: TEACH THE WORD Acts

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, I invite you to open to Acts 2. I am thankful to God for Chris Nichols and his willingness to open up his life to us last week. We have a lot to learn from a man with nine children whose family and whose home has been such a clear display of the gospel to many, many, many people. Chris is a constant reminder to me that disciple-making is not an easy step-by-step program to participate in, but it's a difficult, oftentimes, messy process to invest your entire life in, and there's nothing more important that we can do than invest our lives in multiplying the gospel in other people.

One Core Conviction ...

Every disciple is a disciple-maker.

So, here is a little recap review for us just to bring us all up to speed, especially, if you've missed the couple of weeks. We've gone through Acts; now we're taking a step back these last four weeks that lead up to Easter and saying, "What is really mean to make disciples?" We've got one core conviction around here that every disciple is a disciple-maker, and every follower of Christ in this room is created by God, commanded by God, saved by God, and intended by God to make disciples of all nations. Jesus has said to each and all of us... "going, baptizing, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Which means that we are all going; we share the Word.

So, we talked about a couple of weeks ago how the Spirit of God is on all of us, and on each one of us, to share the gospel with other people. The gospel advances, not as people come into one location, but as people go into all nations. You go with the Spirit of God into our homes and our neighborhoods and our workplaces and this community and the city and throughout this country and to the ends of the earth, and this is how the gospel advances. So, we go and we share the Word.

Then, Jesus says we're baptizing; we show the Word. That's what baptism is, and baptism is a picture of our identification with Christ, and His life, and His death, and that's the beauty of baptism which...I want to pause here real quick, and just ask every single follower of Christ a question, "Have you been baptized? If not, what in the world are you waiting for?" I'm always amazed at how many professing followers of Christ have not been baptized. This is the initial step in obedience to Christ as you are in a relationship with Christ. So, if you've not been baptized...and with all due respect and with as much gentleness and compassion that is in me...get baptized. Be baptized. You're looking at what we're talking about here; every disciple is a disciple-maker. We're all supposed to go and baptize. How can we be obedient to the Great Commission, leading others to be baptized, if we have not been baptized ourselves? It makes no sense. So, here's the reason I want to mention this at this point.

As a part of our Easter worship gathering, we're going to celebrate baptism together. So, if you are a follower of Christ, and you have not been baptized, then be baptized.

Okay, so that's what we do. So, we make disciples...we're going, we're showing the Word, identifying our lives with the life of Christ, and Jesus says we teach the Word; and that's what we're going to talk about today. What does it mean to teach people to obey everything Christ has commanded us?

One Obvious Conclusion ...

Disciple-making revolves around the Word of God.

Now, before we get there, let's look at one obvious conclusion from what we've talked about concerning disciple-making so far. If disciple-making revolves around sharing the Word, showing the Word, and teaching the Word, then this conclusion is clear: disciple-making revolves around the Word of God. It revolves around the Word of God, and that's the picture we see all over the book of Acts. You will read Acts this week, like we're doing this last four weeks, and you'll read it all through in one week. My encouragement is for you to circle every time you see the "word of God" mentioned. You'll have about 40 different circles averaging more than one per chapter. You'll be circling the "word of God" everywhere.

Let me show you a couple of them; look at Acts 2:41. Now, Peter preaches the first Christian sermon here in Acts 2. So, he's preaching the Word, and you look at the sermon even; 12 out of the 23 verses here are quotations from the Old Testament or involved quotations from the Old Testament. So, it's Word saturated in and of itself, and then you get to verse 41, and you might just go ahead and start circling the "word." He says, in verse 41 after he preached, *"So those who received his word were baptized..."* So, circle "word" there. *"...and there were added that day about three thousand souls."* So, they received the Word. This is one of the ways you'll see the Word mentioned in Acts. You have people at different points receiving, receiving, receiving the Word.

Then you get over to Acts 4...look at Acts 4:29 and 31. I want you to see this twice. In verse 29, they're beginning to experience persecution in the church, and so they're praying, and verse 29 says, *"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word..."* So, circle it there: "word" and *"speak your word with all boldness."* When you get down to verse 31, it says, *"And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."* They're speaking it; so, now those who've received it are speaking it, which we will come back to in just a minute.

Get over to Acts 6; look at Acts 6 verses 2 and 4. Things were growing; a lot of people coming into the church, and there were a lot of needs that needed to be met, and so they raised up the deacons, basically. Stephen among one of them. It says in verse 2, *"And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God...'"* So, there it is..."word of God"...*"...to serve tables."* Verse 4 says, *"We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."* So, there in verse 4, the picture is there's a primacy...a focus on the preaching and ministry of the Word in the church.

Then, you get down to verse 7 and listen to this verse; this is the last one we'll look at right now. Verse 7 says, *"The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the*

faith." Do you see that? The Word of God increased, and as the Word of God increased, the number of disciples multiplied. So, there's a direct correlation between the increase...spread of the Word and the multiplication of disciples.

Making disciples revolves around disseminating, communicating the Word at the center. So, sharing the Word, showing the Word, teaching the Word; now, it's important because when we start talking about making disciples some people start thinking, "That sounds a little uncomfortable; maybe even a little arrogant. Like, are we making disciples of ourselves? Isn't that kind of presumptuous? Who's saying that we need more of you around anywhere?" The picture is that would be the case, and it would be a bit presumptuous if the whole point was us sharing our thoughts and our ideas and our ways and our opinions in order to multiply more of us, but that's not the picture. Making disciples is not multiplying our image as much as it's multiplying the image of Christ and the fruit of Christ and the life of Christ and the glory of Christ to the ends of the earth. That involves sharing, not our words, but His Words; not our ways, but His ways; not our opinions and our thoughts, but His opinions, His truth. So, it all revolves around the Word of God.

So follow this, by God's grace...and you know, it's there as it says, "*we received God's word.*" That's the picture that we saw in Acts 2:41. When you read Acts this week, you'll see the other points; people receiving the Word by God's grace. This Word that we hold in front of us, church, is a gracious gift. This is the revelation of God; the Word of God that brings us into relationship with God. So, we receive it like the Bereans in Acts 17, and I don't know if you remember, but it says, "*They received it with eagerness.*" That's the picture: by God's grace, we receive God's Word, but that's not all. Yes, by God's grace we receive it, and then for God's glory, we reproduce it.

We want this revelation from God to spread so more and more and more and more people are brought into a relationship with God. That's why we ask around here and have for the last five years, "Are we receivers or are we reproducers?" If you remember, it kind of takes us back to Sudan. You go to Sudan with me; you go into the mud hut in the middle of the Sudanese village, and you're sitting there with church members and church leaders in this little mud hut like you would picture on TV or in a movie. The whole time, you're teaching the Word to them, and you hardly ever see their faces. It's not because they're sleeping or kind of daydreaming off; it's because they're writing down every single thing you say. When you get to the end of that time, they come up to you, and they say, "David, we know that we have a responsibility to take everything you have taught us from God's Word, translate it into our tribe's languages, and teach it into our tribes." They're not listening to receive; they're listening to reproduce.

Now, bring that into this setting; not a little mud hut, but here we are. Now, I realize that there are some who might sleep or daydream here, but even among those who are listening intently, even on the edge of your seat, thinking, "Okay, what can I get out of this Word this morning?" Still missing the point because, if the end game is you and that seat, then we have still engulfed ourselves in a self-centered Christianity that is all about us. This Word that is taught is never taught just for us; it's never intended just to be received by us. Yes, to be received by us, and then to be reproduced by us in the world; to be translated into the different contexts that are represented all across this room, but the point is, we don't want to be caught in self-centered Christianity; it misses the whole point. We want to receive God's Word by His grace; we want to reproduce God's Word for His glory.

One Important Distinction ...

Some of us are called to teach the Word formally.

Now, one important distinction here...and some of you are thinking at this point, "Okay, I hear what you're saying, but I'm not really a teacher." Some of you are thinking, "I don't have the gift of teaching. So, how am I supposed to teach the Word?" That's an excellent question, and it drives us to this distinction that's really important according to Scripture, and we see this all over the book of Acts. Some of us are called to teach the Word formally; Scripture talks about a gift of teaching; James 3 says a responsibility of teaching.

Even some positions like we're seeing in Acts 6 where teaching in the church is particularly important. The Scripture is saying, "We need to raise up some other people, so we can give ourselves devoted attention to the ministry of the Word; more intensive time in the Word than even others in the church." So, there is absolutely a picture like that of the reality that some of us are called to teach the Word formally. However, not everybody is called to stand or sit in front of a group of people and to teach the Word to them in more of a lecture style kind of format.

All of us are commanded to teach the Word relationally.

All of us are commanded to teach the Word relationally, meaning that God intends all of us in Christ, and the Great Commission commands every one of us to be involved in teaching people to obey everything Christ has commanded.

This doesn't require a gift of teaching; a position of teaching. It doesn't even require a setting like we would normally equate with teaching. As soon as we think of teaching the Bible, our minds kind of go to a setting like this or a lecture style format in a classroom, but you dive into and look at the ministry of Jesus, you don't see classrooms; certainly, you see some points where He is speaking to crowds, but you see some of His most important teachings are when He is walking along the road with His disciples. It's what you see here in the book of Acts. There's no college or seminary here. Instead, you see the people of God teaching the Word to one another wherever they can...in their homes, community, as they're walking along the road.

It's like Deuteronomy 6 comes alive when Deuteronomy 6 says, "*Teach these words diligently to your children...talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*" Dads and moms: think about how you teach your children; how you teach them to eat or to go to the bathroom, or you teach them to read or teach them to play sports. Most of that is not done in the context of a lecture style classroom; it's done in a context of your relationship to them, right? So, in the context of your relationship with them, why would you relegate that which is most important for them to know just to a classroom, or even more so, just to a time when they're with somebody else instead of with you? No, the most important thing you could do...and more important than teaching them to eat, more important than teaching them to go to the bathroom, and certainly more important than teaching them to play sports...the most important thing you could do is pour the Word, the eternal Word of God into them; in the context of your relationship with them; saturating your conversations with the Word. Can the same not apply to husband or wife or to friend or co-worker?

Now, we're seeing...okay, the gospel, this Word, is not intended just to be spread at certain times in certain locations. We totally miss the point of discipleship when we limit it to one hour a week in a church location. It misses the whole point. This Word intended to be

spread in the context of our relationships with each other; when we gather together with other people.

So, that's what I want us to think about. When you hear "teach the Word" I don't want you to think, "Okay, he's talking about those who teach in this kind of setting." We see that in the book of Acts, and certainly, that's important; some are called to teach the Word formally, but I want you to think about the reality that all of us are commanded to teach the Word relationally. So, with that foundation, I want us to think about what this Word does as we teach it; when you think "teach," think "as we pass it on; as we share it with others."

This last week, I was sitting in an airport and sitting next to a man who is walking through some struggles in his life. So, this was an opportunity for me to encourage him, to build him up, to share Word with him, to, in a sense, teach him. Now, I didn't say, "If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, pull out your notes, and you'll see this right here." It was not that kind of teaching, but the kind of teaching where I had an opportunity...a short ten-minute conversation with him...to really pour into him the Word.

I was having a meal with a friend this week who is walking through a variety of different things. So, this is an opportunity for me to speak the Word into his life. That's what we're doing; always looking for opportunities, not to preach and lecture one another, but always looking for opportunities to saturate our conversations with the Word, and so we are going below the surface here; not keeping our conversation at weather and sports and cooking and fads and clothes, not that that's bad; weather's good, but there's deeper level here that the Word takes us into. When we get into the Word, this is what happens.

Teach the Word ...

This Word saves.

First, this Word saves. Now, we've already talked about this some when we talked about sharing the Word, but I just want you to think quickly about this initial picture. Come back to Acts 2 when the Word is, for the first time, taught after the Spirit comes down. Listen to what happened; this Word saves.

How does it save? Well, first, God's Word awakens conviction. You speak this Word into others' lives, it awakens conviction. Peter speaks the Word, and you get to verse 37 in Acts 2, and it says, "*Now when they heard this...*" i.e., heard the Word, "*they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'*" Cut to the heart, and remember Hebrews 4:12, "*The word of God is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*"

Ephesians 6:17 says this Word is "*the sword of the Spirit.*" I've got to show you this; okay, so I was in India, and when I was there, we're working with one of our partners, Cooperative Outreach of India. This is a group that many of you have gone to work with in India that are doing ministries in slums, doing ministries among persecuted areas, doing ministries among rural villages that we're partnered together to plant churches all across India with. Many of you have gone to work with this partner in ministry in India, and have taught the Word in different house churches. So, when it came to the end of our time, they said, "We want to give you a gift." What they said was, "What we appreciate most about you and the people from Brook Hills is that you always come to India with the Word." So, they said, "Here's a sword." I'm not really good with swords. What it is, it's an Indian

sword, and it's a double-edged Indian sword. They said, "This is what we think of when we think of The Church of Brook Hills." I don't know if that's good...I think it's good.

This is us, but this is the picture: what do we have to bring to India? Our thoughts, our ideas, or our opinions? No, what we have to bring to India is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God that over last year alone has awakened conviction in many peoples' hearts and brought them to salvation for the very first time. That's what we bring, and so that's why we go. So, you picture yourself this week with this, okay? I needed to bring this up here because Caleb pulled it out with a friend of his this last week at home which was not positive.

All right, so what happens when that Word is spoken? Here it is: people realize the gravity of their need; that's what's happening; they realize, "We've crucified the Messiah. What shall we do?" People realize the gravity of their need, and they realize the greatness of His provision. "Yes, yes you have crucified the Messiah. Yes, you have sinned before a Holy God, but..." You look at the very next verse, "*Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'*" Do you hear that provision? The Holy God on high will forgive you of all your sins, and will fill you with His very presence...bring His life into you. This is what we've talked about, so what does the Word do? It awakens conviction and accomplishes conversion.

In Peter's response, he says, "Repent. Repentance. Turn." People turn from sin and self when this Word is spoken; people turn from sin and self. It's what repentance is. When this Word is spoken, we begin to see our sin the way God sees our sin. We begin to hate our sin and want to turn from it. Then, what have we talked about? There are two words that I've used all throughout the book of Acts when the gospel invitation is given: repent and believe. Repent and believe. Faith: people trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

This is what the Word does, and maybe you're here, and you're not a Christian. Maybe you've come in here for a variety of different reasons or with different people, and you've never become a follower of Christ. If that's the case, I would want you to know, more than anything else today, that there is a holy and good and just and loving God. We have all sinned against Him; in our hearts, we have turned to ourselves instead of Him; turned from Him to our own ways. The penalty for that, the payment for that, what we deserve in that from an infinitely holy and just God is death...eternal death. However, God has sent His Son, and He has died on the cross for our sins. Jesus has taken the payment of your sin upon Himself, and He has died and risen from the grave and conquered sin and death and the grave, so that everyone...anyone...you can trust in Christ and what Jesus has done and who Jesus is...Savior and Lord. You will be reconciled to God forever; your sins totally forgiven, and a relationship with God begun that will last forever and ever and ever from eternal death to eternal life. So, that's what this Word brings about. I've been praying that even, now in this moment, it might bring about that kind of life in people.

This Word satisfies and sanctifies.

So, first this Word saves, then second, this Word satisfies and sanctifies. So, here's the deal. Go to Acts 13. You know, the Bible says that the Word of God is more valuable than gold, much pure gold. It's sweeter; it's more satisfying than the finest of foods, so when you think about teaching the Word, passing the Word on in daily conversations with kids, wife, husband, parents, friends, co-workers, and neighbors just picture...like, you're handing out money, except it's better than money; sweeter than the finest of food. It's like sharing good food with somebody else. You have got to taste this thing, and it's better than white bread and barbeque sauce at Dreamland; this is good.

It creates hunger like good food; you taste, and you want more. I want you to see this, look at Acts 13:7. This is when Paul and Barnabas had just gone to Cyprus, and it says...verse 7 starts off talking about the proconsul, *"...with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God."* I want you to see desire here. He wants to hear, so Paul and Barnabas come because he wants to hear. This is Roman ruler wanting, longing to hear the Word. You get down to verse 12, and what happens? *"The proconsul believed [the Word], when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord."* You see how this Word, *"the teaching of the Lord,"* is actually creating hunger and desire in this ruler? Then, later, you see Paul and Barnabas speaking to the Jews.

Go down to verse 42; they're speaking to Jewish crowds in the synagogue and listen to verse 42. It says, *"As they went out..."* they had been speaking. It says the people *"begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath."* "So, come and tell us some more about the Word." They begged for them to. In verse 43, it says, *"And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God."* Then, in verse 44, it says, *"The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord."*

See what the teaching of the Word is doing? It's exciting hunger and desire better than food or money...the Word; that's the Jews, and then you get down to the Gentiles, and he starts preaching, and Gentiles are now hearing it. It says in verse 48, *"And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing..."* – see the joy here – *"...and glorifying the word of the Lord."* What an interesting phrase; they were *"glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region."* Isn't that a great picture there in Acts 13? Starts with this ruler. He says, "I want to hear it," and he hears it, and he believes, and he's astonished at the teaching of the Word. Then, Jews hear it, and they say, "We want more. We want more." The whole city gathers to hear it, and then Gentiles catch on; they rejoice as they're hearing the Word of the Lord, and the Word of the Lord is spreading throughout the region...that's the picture: satisfaction.

Okay, how does God's Word satisfy? Well, God's Word shows people the glory of Christ. That's the whole picture, and it's what's happening here in Acts 13. People are seeing, for the first time, Christ the Savior and Lord, and they're responding with joy, and they're glorifying; they're worshipping because of the Word, and the picture of God and Christ that they've seen in the Word. The Word is doing this work.

This is what I love about something like Secret Church. In a couple of weeks on Good Friday, we will gather together for Secret Church. We're simulcasting this year and around 30,000 people have signed up. Isn't that a good picture? Thirty thousand people coming together to study the Word! This Word is good!

However, the whole picture is the Word brings satisfaction, and because we see the glory of Christ in the Word. You know, one of the things I've been thinking about along these lines here that I want to encourage you with, especially, when it comes to making disciples is that we will all find ourselves in relationships with people who are going through difficult times. The Word is a rock for people to stand on in difficult times. As I was praying this week and thinking through this this week, I couldn't help but to think that there are a variety of things that are going on that...even in our faith family right now, people who are walking through and battling cancer, whose child has died. On Friday, Pastor Charles Card from our faith family that was in the ICU after major surgery this week, Jonathan who we've

been praying for with a tumor...in all of these pictures, we feed each other the Word. I'm standing there Friday at Charles's bed, I'm not talking about the weather with Charles. I'm saying, "God is strength in weakness, Charles, and He is present with you and an ever present help in trouble. He's your refuge."

I talked with another brother this week who's walking through some decisions and to say, "Here's how maybe the Word can serve you in this." This is what we do, and the Word brings satisfaction and sustenance in the middle of suffering, so build people up with the Word. Satisfaction and in sanctification. God shows us the glory of Christ, satisfaction; and then God changes people into the image of Christ. That's the whole point of the Word, really.

Go with me to Acts 20:32. Do you remember this? When Paul was recounting what he had done with the church of Ephesus with the Ephesian elders. In Acts 20:32, I want you to listen to what he says; when he leaves them, I want you to hear what he leaves them to. Acts 20:32...and you remember what Jesus said in John 17, and when we studied disciple-making a few years ago, and we saw in John 17 that Jesus prayed for His disciples, and He said to the Father, "*Sanctify them by your truth, and your word is truth.*" The way by which we were sanctified...and to be sanctified; sanctification means to grow into the image of Christ; to grow into His character, His likeness, and begin to think like Christ, live like Christ and that's what sanctification is. The means that God uses to bring that about is His Word.

Look at Acts 20:32, and Paul leaves them and says, "*Now I commend you to God and to the word...*" – here it is again – "*...word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*" What a great verse. The Word builds us up; gives us an inheritance among those who are being conformed into the image of Christ. This is the essence of disciple-making; in our own lives and in other's lives, we are wanting to grow into the image of Christ.

The Word does this, and now, it's at this point that I want to point out two things that are particularly applicable and important here. First, disciple-making is not about sharing helpful tips. Here's what I mean. Sometimes when people think of disciple-making, they think of sitting down and reading a good Christian book together on this issue or that issue; and that's disciple-making. I want to be careful here because I'm not saying that Christian books are bad. I have even written one. So, they're not all bad, and you judge for yourself whether you think that one's bad, but I'm not saying Christian books are bad, but here's the deal. Those books are only good inasmuch as they point you to this book. When it comes to disciple-making, what we need is not thoughts of David Platt, the thoughts of this person or that person, no matter how smart or wise or whatever those people might be. What we need is the Word, and it's not that those aren't helpful; but what I do want to say is those aren't necessary. This, the Bible alone, is necessary; if we had no Christian books and only this book, we would have all we need to grow into the likeness of Christ. This Word is sufficient for that task.

Now, what's dangerous is sometimes we start to think, "Well, yeah, but there's a lot of things that I'm walking through in my life that this Word doesn't address that I need some help from those other books, because this Word doesn't say a lot about parenting teenagers. You don't see teenagers mentioned." The closest to it is you got Eutychus, like, falling and sleeping and dying. So, you have little pictures here and there, but you don't have a handbook on how the parent teenagers. I know it's prom season, and you don't have anything about prom in here...nothing about prom. You don't have information on divorce recovery in here; it's a huge issue all across lives in the church. You don't have a lot of advice for single parenting. You don't have money management advice; you don't have

what to do with 401k or investment with this or that. You don't have a step-by-step on how to walk through cancer in this book.

Now, it doesn't mean that this book doesn't have some truths and principles that undergird those things...certainly that's the case...but this is where I want us to realize that the purpose of this book...this book is given to us, and it was inspired by God not to be a handbook for financial needs or for this or that situation that you will face in 21st Century American life. Instead, the purpose of this book is to conform you into the image of Christ, which is your greatest need and my greatest need.

We're walking through, maybe, difficulties...we'll go with the difficulties of parenting teenagers. So, you're walking through that, and you can start to think if you're not careful, "Why do I need to read Habakkuk? What does that have to do with parenting teenagers? A story about what a prophet said 2500 years ago to a bunch of Israelites. Why do I need to look at that? Why is that helpful for me when I'm going through this or that struggle in parenting, being single parent, divorced, or cancer, or whatever?" So, we walk through those things, and we start to think, "What does this have to do...?" Here's the deal: you're walking through parenting, and your teenager...the greatest thing for you and your teenager is a mom or a dad who is growing into the image of Christ, and Habakkuk is ordained and promised, guaranteed by God to help you grow into the image of Christ. The greatest thing you'll need as a single parent is to be walking in the Spirit of Christ, with the wisdom of Christ, with the love of Christ knowing that the sustenance and sufficiency and satisfaction of Christ.

Here's the beauty: when the Word is taught, and you are conformed into the image of Christ and into the Spirit of Christ...you're living and walking with the Spirit of Christ...and the beauty is the Spirit takes this Word and applies it in your life; walks with you into the middle of that parenting situation. In that moment, when you're alone and nobody else knows what you're walking through, He is with you. This Word brings you into deeper and deeper relationship with Him, and that is our greatest need. So, be careful in dependence on other things that you don't forget that what we need is this book in disciple-making. Our greatest need is not thoughts from men; our greatest need is truth from God. So, disciple-making is not about sharing helpful tips as much as disciple-making is communicating biblical truth, feeding one another with truth.

Second point I want to emphasize is that disciple-making is not about teaching for the sake of information. Disciple-making is not about more information download. Disciple-making is about teaching for the sake of transformation. Jesus did not say, "Go into all nations, teaching them what I have commanded you." He says, "*Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*" This is not knowledge-based disciple-making, this is obedience-based disciple-making.

The Character of Christ

So, when we think about disciple-making, we're not just saying, "Okay, how can I get more biblical truth into somebody else's mind?" We want to say, "How can we get more biblical truth into one another's lives?" Think about concentric circles that we've talked about before. So, this is review if you've been around here, but I just want to remind you and relate this to disciple-making. We've talked about...right in the inside of that circle, those concentric circles, that smallest one in the middle, put "the character of Christ" right there in the middle. I want you to think about how this is at the core of who a Christian is. Once somebody has trusted in Christ, the Spirit of Christ lives in them, and the more you study the Word of Habakkuk, Leviticus, Acts, whatever it is, this Word is promised by God to form

the character of Christ at the core of who you are. Then, the character of Christ begins to affect everything outside from there. It's transformation from the inside-out.

So, put the next circle, put "conscience." That's the way we think or feel or believe, and the reality is, the more we grow in Christ, the more we begin to think like Christ. The more we think differently, the more we begin to want what Christ wants; the more we begin to feel what Christ feels...it's conscience; it begins to affect how we view the world around us. We begin to view the world very differently; it changes our desires.

Third circle outside that: "conduct." Then, that affects the way we act. We always live out what we believe, always. Anytime we sin, it's because we believe that it's better for us to do this than obey God. So, our sin at the core is not as much a behavior problem, but at the core, it's a belief problem. We need to change the way we're thinking; what we're desiring. What can bring that about? The Word of God; it transforms the way we think, feel, and believe, then transforms the way we act.

So that Christianity is no longer about the grudging obedience. "Okay, so I'm a Christian. So, I have to do this, I have to do this, I have to do this in order to save my skin." No, Christianity is about living a life that is the overflow of Christ and His desires and His mind, His truth in us. Then, all that brings to the outside circle, the "church." As the character of Christ grows in us...change the way we think, feel, believe...change the way we act in this world, then the world judges who Christ is by what they see of the character in Christ in the church.

Now, the reason I wanted to put those circles before you is so that you might want to think about that in the context of your relationships with others, especially other Christians. What we want to do is teach the Word. We want to pour the Word into the center there, and then, as we hear one another saying things...for example, hear people saying things that don't square with the Word, then we gently and graciously say, "Hey, what do you think about the Word here?" We begin to help each other and begin to think more like Christ.

Then, we look at each other's lives, and again...huge disadvantage in this room which is why we've got to be in small group relationships with one another when we see each other's lives, because we can talk for however long each Sunday about the Word. However, if we're walking away, and it's not taking root in our conduct and the way we're living then our exercise is pointless every single Sunday. It's what James says, "*Anyone who hears the word and doesn't do it is like a man who looks in the mirror, walks away, and forgets what he looks like.*" It makes no sense; it's pointless. So, we help each other say, "Hey, how does this Word apply in our lives?" That's what disciple-making is; helping work out the context of the Word in the context of where we live.

This Word sends and spreads.

Final thing this Word does is it sends, and it spreads. This Word sends us out and spreads in the world. Look at Acts 19:20. So, you're in Acts 20, take a left, back one chapter and just look at Acts 19:20. This is...Acts 19 is when Paul was in Ephesus, and he was speaking the Word, and it says in verse 10, "*...that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord.*" Because of that, I want you to listen to what verse 20 says. It says, "*So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.*" Maybe underline that verse, and then just get that image in our minds and in our hearts.

What does it mean for the Word of God to increase? What an interesting phrase. "*The word increased and prevailed mightily.*" That's the goal in disciple-making, right? We want the Word to increase and prevail mightily.

So what we don't want...faith family, we don't want this Word to stop with us in the church, all right? That's the last thing we want; for this Word to stop with us here. Go back to receiving and reproducing. God's design is that we would receive, yes, receive and reproduce this Word. This church, this body of people...His design is not just so that the Word will infiltrate this building and the minds of this building, but His Word would infiltrate this community and this city and nations for His glory...that's God's design. His Word in us would be translated into different contexts represented all over; kind of like the Sudan picture.

You think about it. Just raise your hand...how many of you live in Inverness/Oak Mountain area? Okay, all right. Now, how many of you live in Chelsea? Okay. How many of you live in Hoover? Okay, how many of you live in some other area? Leeds, Vestavia, Trussville, East Lake, Montgomery? Okay, so you live in all these different places around this church. Now, how many of you go to elementary school, middle school, or high school? Raise your hand really high. Okay; how many of you are in college? Okay, all right, I have tons of college students. Okay, how many of you work at home? You work at home. Okay, how many of you work outside of your home? Okay. How many of you will travel outside of Birmingham this week? A lot of people. Okay, all right, that's cool. I want to come back to that. How many of you will travel outside of the United States sometime this year? Okay.

Now, you just look...you think about the potential in this room for this Word to spread if it doesn't just stay in here, right? The potential for this Word to go into all kinds of communities all around us right now, this week, if we are reproducing the Word. A number of you who said, "I'm traveling outside of Birmingham this week," the potential for the Word of God to spread into contexts far beyond Birmingham. So, many of you will go outside of the United States sometime this year; the potential for this Word just to spread from this room to the globe...you can't imagine that God made the Word increase and prevail mightily. Certainly, He does not intend this Word to stop with our consumption. Instead, He intends for this Word to spread through reproduction.

We don't want this Word to stop with us in the church; we want this to spread through us in the world. The potential for that happening, even this week, is amazing when we are all teaching the Word...not giving lectures, holding classes, but in the context of relationships with family, friends, co-workers, strangers intentionally saturating conversations with the Word of God. The potential for what can happen, even this week, from this room is mind boggling.

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