

Why Do We Do That?, 9.21.16

Intro.

1. Next Sunday – **40 Days of Love** Kick-off (find a group); Kris Calvert's Recognition Luncheon & Love Offering.
2. Why do we do these 40 Day studies – unifier, connecting people into the church & focused on one topic. Every church has activities for its membership – worship services, Sunday morning Bible studies, KQ/BO, Wednesday youth, FCL, Inside Out, Ladies BS, etc – what are we trying to accomplish with them? Our vision is "**Encounter the life changing presence of God**", what does that "life change" look like? How do you know you are experiencing God's life changing presence?
3. This all fits either directly or indirectly under becoming a mature disciple of Jesus. We have ideas about discipleship, but we aren't sure what the end result should look like.

Our Call to Discipleship - Mt.28.18-20

- A. Definition of a disciple: a follower, student or pupil or a particular person or belief system.
 - a. Image of Star Bucks
 - b. Image of Apple
 - c. Image: Michael Phelps/Usan Bolt/Simone Biles
 - d. Image of Jesus and His disciples: Mt.10.1f. They moved from disciples (students of Jesus) to apostles ("sent out ones" to gain disciples for Jesus).
- B. Def of discipleship: D is growing in and living out the life of Jesus and passing this life to others.

Discipleship Is Not:

- A. **A program in the church.** One of a number of things the church must do (worship, service, outreach, children's activities, youth ministry, etc). The programs help facilitate dimensions of discipleship, but they are only one of many sources that God uses in our lives to disciple us. Other sources include: family of origin, spouse, friends, experiences, etc.
 - a. http://ag.org/discipleship_downloads/what_is_discipleship.pdf
- B. **Optional.** Some view it as an add-on to their Christian journey. We mentally connect it to the discipleship activities of the church or a small group Bible study. We see discipleship as an activity that we can opt out of if it's inconvenient, irrelevant, etc.
- C. **A knowledge based effort to make sure a person believes the right things.** It's not an indoctrination course meant to get everyone to believe the same things. The great mistake of American Christianity is to think that getting a person to believe the right things will always end up causing them to do the right things.
 - a. Americans believe that if we can just get a person better educated then they'll be a better person. They may become a more productive, but not necessarily a better person. The same is true with our approach to discipleship. Biblical information does not lead necessarily to life transformation.

- b. Truth can set you free, but that's assuming you know where you are in bondage. Truth by itself does not transform. Only truth that is empowered by the Holy Spirit which is targeted to a desperate and open heart brings liberation. A person can sit under the ministry of Jesus himself year after year and be exposed to truth that makes the angels marvel and yet never be changed, b/c their heart is not open. Just ask Judas Iscariot.
- c. I can teach on forgiveness all day and everyone be in agreement, but then some of you would still have bitterness, offense, anger and resentment to someone who hurt you 10 years ago. Discipleship is not a knowledge based program to get you to believe the right thing.
- D. **Behavior modification**. It is not teaching people to learn to live by a new set of rules. We are not teaching people to give up one set of rules to take on a new set. "You used to watch TV but now you must watch Christian TV; you listened to R&R, but now you must listen to Christian rock...". This type of discipleship is teaching them to live from external rules rather than an internal relationship. It may prove helpful, but this does not need to be the main focus of the discipleship effort.

So, why do we do what we do? What is the end game? What are we trying to accomplish

- A. The typical end game: <http://purposedriven.com/books/pdlbook/#purpose>
- B. <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=38263>. I am in agreement with all those attributes and the Purpose Driven Life, but they are absolutely incomplete. There is one major element not only missing but which supersedes these others 10:1. Btw, this is great stuff!
- C. The typical end game to everything we do is: Stop the bad stuff, do the good stuff and believe the right stuff. In Jesus' day, who were the most Biblically literate, spiritually disciplined and religiously dedicated group of people? Pharisees and Sadducees. They knew more and did more. They were true disciples, but they lacked one key thing (actually two, but one of the two was faith in Jesus). What was the second thing they lacked?
- D. Outside of Jesus, which disciples do you want to emulate(pattern your life after)? Mary, John, Paul? No, Adam & Eve in the Garden before sin. They are the true examples of what it means to be a disciple. They perfectly emulated God himself. They were the most mature of all believers ever to live. What was it that made them so mature? Knowledge, authority, proximity to God? I believe what made them the most mature believers to live is what will make use a mature believer. **They experienced the unconditional love of God and gave it to each other.**
- E. **The End Game to discipleship is Unconditional love for each other.**
- F. **Jesus said the defining mark of a true disciple is: Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples; the mark by which all men will know you are my disciples will be the love you have for one another - John 13.35.**
- G. It is NOT love for God that defines your discipleship. Jesus assumes you love Him. Loving Him is the easy part, because He's perfect; if my wife were perfect and my kids were perfect it would be easy loving them too! It's loving all those imperfect and messy people around you that's difficult. Jesus said the very core of being a disciple is loving unconditionally those around you. Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command...This is my command: Love each other." (John 15.14,17)

- H. True discipleship is not worship, missions, evangelism, fellowship, power ministry. Do those things and do them in abundance, but end game is how well do you love others?
- a. Paul said, "What is important is faith expressing itself in love." (Gal.5.6)
 - b. James said, "It is good when you obey the Royal Law...to love your neighbor as yourself?"
 - c. Peter said, "Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers over a multitude of sins." (1 Pet.4.8)
 - d. John said, "No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is brought to full expression in us. (1 John 4.12)
- I. It is a love that is patient, and kind; it isn't jealous or rude or proud; it is not selfish or demanding or irritable. It rejoices with truth; it lets go of things and doesn't keep a record of wrongs; it always hopeful of people and situations; it doesn't give up on God or others; it endures regardless of how it's treated.

Conclusion:

- A. Why does Willow do what we do? How do I know I am experiencing the life changing presence of God? Is it how much I proclaim my love for Jesus...I do for him...I know about him...how dedicated...zealous...faithful...committed...sincere is my faith?
- B. No. One thing. How deep is my love for others? My 1 Cor. 13 translation: "For if I had deep knowledge about God and proclaim the greatest prophecies; if I could heal the sick and cast out every demon; if I could pray the most sincere prayers and lead hundreds to faith in Christ; if I could be the most dependable servant and teach with great insight; but if I did not love others, I would have gained nothing."
- C. The 40 Days of Love study – get in a group and bring your children. Learn how to do the most important activity of this life and the next.
- D. Bob Jones near death experience. God told him the thing that he will be judged by is how well did he love.