

The Great Opportunity:

Making Disciples of Jesus in Every Vocation

Introduction

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18–20)

If we could rewind time and be present in that very moment when these words of the Great Commission fell from Jesus’ mouth into the ears of His disciples, I think we would better understand how they heard it. In the context of their journey with Jesus, it would have likely translated to them as: *What I’ve lived and poured into you the last three years—just go and do that with others!*

When looking at The Book of Acts—which we will a little later—we see these same disciples carrying on this disciple making mission of Jesus. As a matter of fact, disciple making was their primary mission, it’s how they launched the Church, and it radically changed their world!

Have you ever considered that our families, communities, country, and the world are in the condition they are in because we, as followers of Jesus, have disobeyed His last command to make disciples? I like how my long-time friend Randy Young says it, “It’s like Jesus’ last command has become our least concern!” That “least concern” has had lots of consequences, both in our world and in His Church.

Our daily headlines reveal a world that has totally lost its moorings! Constant culture clashes over values. Extreme reactions in reply to initial overreactions. Authority figures routinely destroying trust with those they are supposed to be leading and serving. Unresolved racial injustice and inequity. A global pandemic presenting challenges on both personal and national levels. Massive confusion over things forever held as true. And, today’s leadership equation often has nothing to do with character, competency, and connecting well with others, but instead looks more like this: Little experience + lots of loud opinions + leveraged social media = A leader people should follow!

What about the Church, Jesus’ deeply loved and blood-shed-for Bride?

We are likely living amongst one of the most scripturally illiterate generations in all of history. This has created a “spiritual thinness” and powerlessness among God’s precious flock. At times, the lives behind the voices leading today’s Church are often unproven, lacking tested character and the seasoned wisdom of

the ways of God. We have disciples disavowing their faith yet are being applauded and promoted based on their unfaithfulness to Jesus and the Scriptures. We've lost our way in being both true to Jesus while also winning the world to Him. Then there's the rootless, creative, multi-gifted, and wonderful next generation, who are very drawn to Jesus but are not so sure of His Church.

Jesus, revealed and reflected through His Church, is still the answer to the world's greatest issues, needs, and challenges! The Church is still His Beloved Bride, the love of His life that He sacrificed everything for. However, she won't be able to fully function like He dreamed about unless we recalibrate to His Great Co-Mission of making disciples makers.

Think about it with me. Jesus asked His disciples to reproduce His character, ways, and mission in others who would follow Him. This allows disciples to carry the heart, attitudes, words, and actions of Jesus into every setting and situation of life they find themselves in. This includes their families, relationships—and within their vocations!

Herein lies the great opportunity!

Without connecting our calling and the Great Co-Mission, our vocation and disciple making, how can we ever disciple people to reveal and reflect the life of Jesus so that His Kingdom is advanced and those around us practically experience His grace and goodness?

- How can a business owner, who sincerely loves Jesus, understand that their “bottom line” is much more than just dollars and cents without someone discipling them to think and act out of scriptural values?
- Without developing disciples in the media who view life through the lens of the ways of God, how can we really expect truth and inspirational stories to replace biased reporting and constant divisive analysis?
- Unless we pour God's ways into our artists and athletes, instead of using their God-given gifts and platform to glorify His name and serve as examples to young people, we can expect even more self-focused adulation and the exaltation of selfish living.
- How will we ever have a president or prime minister of a nation governing in the ways of God if no one has disciplined them to reflect God's character in their attitudes, words, and actions, and to reference His ways in their decision making?
- Unless pastors and churches are disciplined around the character, ways, and mission of Jesus, the impact of faulty foundations and the ongoing trend of spiritual thinness will impact generations well beyond our lifetimes.

The changes we desire to see in our lives, families, churches, vocations, and societies don't just happen automatically. They happen because of the deliberate reproducing of disciples.

Vocational disciple making. This is likely a new and, possibly, an odd word combination to you. If you're like most people that I know, these two ideas—vocation and disciple making—have never met in your heart or mind before.

It is interesting to note that three out of four Christian workers do not connect faith with their work.¹ According to David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, “A failure to provide vocational discipleship could be a failure to help Christians, especially younger ones, keep their faith.”² Speaking of discipling Millennials, Barna Group’s research revealed that 65% believe that God gave them certain gifts and talents to use for His glory; 67% of them want to use their gifts and talents for the good of others; and 37% wish they had a clearer understanding of how they should use their gifts and talents to serve God.³ Talk about a great opportunity to shape a generation regarding connecting their calling with the Great Co-Mission of disciple making!

As we begin our journey through this book together, we’ll take a fresh look at calling and vocation. Then, in the second half of the book, we’ll look at the disciple making blueprint of Jesus, how He did it, and how you can engage it too! Also, to help you get your arms around making disciples in your vocation, I begin each chapter with a story from my life or about friends (whose names I have changed) that I’ve had a hand in discipling and who have practically applied God’s ways within their vocations. Later, you’ll find an entire chapter dedicated to more stories to help you see the kind of fruit that can result from blending your calling with the Great Co-Mission, your vocation, and disciple making.

This book is aimed at envisioning, equipping, and engaging you in one of the greatest opportunities that you’ll have in your lifetime. I trust that the Holy Spirit will reveal much to you, helping you to personally connect your calling with the Great Co-Mission, your vocation with reproducing disciple makers. This is how we can participate with Jesus in bringing real and meaningful change to the people we love and the world we live in.

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. (Ephesians 5:15–17 NIV)

~ Dave Buehring