

Making Disciples in the Context of Christian Community
Dr. Gene Getz, Thursday, July 17, 9 am

I don't believe it is possible to make disciples unless it is in the context of Christian community. Ephesians 4:16, "What every joint supplies" is Christian community.

How do we measure maturity?

By the qualities of faith, hope and love.

The degree of these three

Faith = the which is being worked out in our walk who He is.

Walking our talk.

Hope = stability, steadfastness, not being tossed here and there.

We know what we believe.

Love = that expression of who Christ is through us.

Galatians 5 = we personalize and individualize everything.

This passage is in the context of Christian community.

They are not feelings that flow out of our lives.

When you walk in the Spirit you will reflect to other people....

Contrasted with the acts of the flesh...all in relation to other people.

You are either in bondage to Christ and in relation with others or

You are in bondage to people.

My focus today: Making disciples in the context of community with other people.

We all need Bible learning experiences in the context of life.

Without the Word we don't know what love is.

Love = Jesus Christ laid down His love for us. We ought to lay down our lives for others.

The Word is foundational to making disciples.

But this is always in the context of community and relationships.

These relationships with each other was inseparable from relationship with God.

How can you love someone to the God you can't see when you can even relate to those who you can see?

The "community of Christ" is the context in which we learn discipleship and learn to walk with Christ.

1. Learning experience with the Word
2. By relationship experiences with each other and with God.
3. They were having dynamic witnessing experiences with those who did not know God.

They were to build bridges to those around them *by the way they lived* so that when asked for a reason for the hope that was in them that they would have the answer. How many people are asking us for the reason of the hope within us?

Acts 2:42-46 There the qualities are in sequence!

Word

Relationships

Witness

Let's go back to the first community!

Acts 2:42-46 "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

So important to see the "big picture"

We need the frame of reference!

Luke gives us the frame of reference!

I go back here at least once a year.

We take people who come into the church back here

No NT literature written yet.

Didache = apostles actually teaching.

The 1st Experience: The Word

Significance of interpreting Scriptures. Go to the upper room. Jesus Christ laid the foundation. He said he was going away. They got nervous. He said don't be troubled. I'm going to send you another encourager. Paracaleo = to encourage, comfort, to exhort. That's what the HS is called. "the Spirit of truth".

When He comes He will bring everything to your remembrance. For 3 and ½ years they've forgotten more than they remembered. They didn't take notes. He will guide you into all truth. He will tell you things to come.

In Acts 2:42 – the HS is speaking through these men. Ultimately, the teaching of the Apostles is recorded for us. Peter, John, and the 13 Epistles of Paul, one born out of season. If we are going to produce disciples we have to continue in the apostles teaching.

I am amazed in the churches today the superficiality of what is taught.

People never getting below the surface. Their ears are being tickled. We have to get beyond our stories to the stories in the Bible. It is only as we get into the apostles teaching that we will manifest faith, hope and love.

The foundational experience.

This is where we get off track.

Those who teach the apostles teaching and assume that they will produce disciples.
But those who know what the Bible teaches but don't live it become carnal.

2nd Experience: Living out what is taught in community

Participation, relationships. And in that koinonea they lived it out.

They went from house to house taking meals together. It is more than eating together.
For them there was a higher purpose. It goes back to the Passover meal. Before the supper he passed the bread. After the supper he passed the fourth cup.

The important thing we've lost is that meal was in the context of community.

Today we meet in our churches and have communion.

Nothing wrong with this as long as you understand the meaning. The bread and the cup were never separated from the meal. No better opportunity than to celebrate this in the context of the home.

“bread”

supper

“cup”

in the context of the local church.

And in some churches they argue about the texture of the elements and lose sight of the “communion” with God and “community” among them.

Notice that fellowship in community **they devoted themselves to prayer.**

Prayer: in most instances prayer was done in the NT in relationship with each other.

Praying for each other. Can't pray for each other if we don't know each other.

Nothing wrong with impersonal prayer.

Go back to Paul – prayer is in relationship to praying for each other.

Emphasis of prayer in the NT it is in the context of community, and the deepest needs of our hearts. The horizontal and vertical tied together.

They ate together.

They prayed together.

The cared for each other.

A special situation. Jews from around the world. They used the 2nd tithe to get there.

There were there by the 1000s. Their bags were packed on the 50th day and they were ready to go home. When the HS came. They did what we would do. They stayed to see what else God would do. Those who lived there said, stay. We will kick in and take care of you if you have need.

The greatest demonstration of generosity you can find in the NT. They even sold land.

You can't have this unless you have relationship. This is doing church in community.

They praised God together. While they were teaching each other with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, they were making melody in their hearts *together* to God.

Even a cup of water given in my name will not be forgotten.

They were going house to house. They couldn't go anywhere else.

Fascinating that you can now go under the city of Jerusalem. We can see into homes of that day. Some of them had huge homes. They were all over Jerusalem engaging in these experiences.

3rd Experience: They had favor with all the people.

The unsaved throughout Jerusalem seeing this dynamic of eating and sharing and praying and praising God together.

What happened? There were people added to their number daily.

What kind of forms or structures does it take to provide believers in community with these kinds of experiences?

The NT doesn't lock us into geography.

Some Christians imitate what they think were NT forms.

One of the greatest teaching of the NT is that there were not absolute forms.

You can imply forms and structures. But we are not taught absolute forms.

Example - Romania

If you had more than 4-5 people in your home you could go to prison.

They found ways even though they had to work in the context of buildings that were under surveillance.

God doesn't lock us into forms.

On the absolute side we have functions!

On the non absolute side we have forms that are implied.

Patterns we can apply with freedom!

Absolute = didache

Non-absolute = cultural dimensions of Christianity

To make absolute non-absolutes is to interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit.

How can 40 writers write over 1500 years on 3 continents and not lock us into culture?

That truth alone is a great apologetic.

We use our freedom and form more than you realize.

We can go to churches that learn the apostles teaching. But this alone does not produce maturity. It produces arrogance. They are the t crossing and I dotting people.

We can go to those who are “in relationship” but do not have the apostles teaching.
Don’t know what is going to happen. They don’t know what is going to happen.
Very dangerous! Results in cults.
Not making disciples in community.
They are relying on relationships and experiences.
They are not relying on the Word of God.

Can also go to those who focus on the 3rd experience.

Language = form!

Pastor-teacher

Brother so and so

The preacher – opens his Bible, reads the Bible, closes the Bible, and departs from the text and gives an invitation.

Form follows function!

But to be a mature disciple of Christ you need all three experiences.

- 1st, Learning the Word of God.
- 2nd, Being “in community”
- 3rd, Reaching out to the lost.

Whatever our forms we need to constantly evaluate our ministry to see if it is balanced in terms of all three experiences. All of this happened “in community”

One of the great truths that impacted my life was the concept of “one another”.

Used 60 times in NT We are told what to do in relation to “one another”

Paul = 40 times. 8-9 used in Romans 12-16 the practical section of Romans.

Romans 12:4 “we who are in Christ we who are many are one”

Body = 15 times to our body. 15 times to Christ’s body.

We are members of one another. That’s community.

The hand cannot say to others “I do not need you”

We cannot mature in Christ if we are not in community with each other.

One of the most practical forms is the small group we call “mini churches” smaller churches within the larger church.

Challenge them to focus on all three experiences!

Otherwise the smaller group become unbalanced.

These 3 experiences are great guiding principles for small group leadership.

Can’t unless we know each other.

How can we know each other without relationship.

NT – going from house to house.

How can you honor one another above yourselves if you don't know each other?
To encourage one another = 100X + in NT.

That the one another just from Romans and you will learn how to disciple one another.

“a spirit of unity among yourselves” so that with one heart and one mouth you will glorify Christ. Be of the same mind with one another.

Where the world can see this in a group of believers who love one another.
Incredible what kind of impact you can have on the world around us as we are in community.

ILL: Skiing – helicopter skiing.

On slopes in CO – incredible day. Got on the bus by myself and I looked at a man carrying a woman who was about 18. I watched and the man sat in a seat on the bus and he put his arm around on her so she wouldn't fall. She couldn't communicate without difficulty. She was happy and intelligent. She has a problem, probably from birth and her father took her out for a day of skiing.

I skied all day long and never thought of what it would be like to have a body that doesn't respond. The brain is working. Muscle memory. Muscle coordination and took it all for granted.

She was spastic. From a human viewpoint it is tragic. But I thought of a bigger tragedy. A spastic church that doesn't respond to its head – Christ and they are doing their own thing.

If we are responding to our head we will “have favor with all the people”
How can we structure our church so that the world can see us functioning in community?
House church is a great way.

Questions:

What was the last time you took on a sky hill?

Didache / discolea = doctrine = the body of truth God has given us through the HS.
= the NT.

Not the same thing as the “Didache” of the 2nd century. Very interesting document. But probably not written by the apostles. It reflects on the NT but it is not inspired.

Mini-churches = tell us more?

All the mini churches have “support couples”