



• PASTOR'S STUDY •



Fellowship

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it

1 Corinthians 12:27

I have just returned from a Nine Marks Weekender Conference in Washington, DC. The conference was hosted by Capitol Hill Baptist Church (which interestingly was the church Joyce attended when she grew up and where she was baptized.) This church has a passion for developing healthy churches which follow Biblical essentials like expositional preaching, Biblical theology, Biblical understanding of church membership and church discipline, Biblical leadership and a culture of evangelism, discipleship and spiritual growth. One of the things that stood out to me during my time there was the openness among the leaders of the church to give and receive criticism. The pastor meets every Saturday with key leaders and goes over the sermon he plans to preach the next day, asking for feedback and suggestions to improve it. The next day, the pastor and the elders meet to offer feedback and critique of every aspect of the worship service earlier that day—including the sermon. I thought to myself that their pastor is a great model of humility.

I have been thinking to myself, “How do I react to feedback?” “How welcoming am I to criticism and suggestions?” Clearly there is a lot to be gained by listening to other believers who offer suggestions from a loving perspective. One of the ways Christians express love to one another is to admonish and exhort one another. (Heb. 3:13; Col. 3:16) If I am helped by heeding the reproofs of the word of God (II Tim. 3:16) it would make sense that I can be greatly helped by listening to the corrective words of others.

So, how do we represent the gospel well in the workplace? Here are a five ways to grace your workplace:

1. Be bold, but smart. We can and must think on Paul’s boldness before Felix in Acts 24 or Jesus’s words on being brought before governors and kings in Matthew 10. Just because we are at work does not mean we are no longer a disciple of Jesus. We are never exempt from the call on our lives to make much of him. However, we must be smart and keep in mind passages like 1 Peter 2:13: “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution.” At work, we are subject to our bosses and to the leader or leaders of the company. So be bold, but keep in mind where you are.
2. Take risks. I realize this somewhat contradicts the last point, but the Christian life rests in that tension between risk and prudence. (For this point, I really should tell you to just go listen to anything that John Piper says about risk.) Practically though, take steps in work friendships to bring up Jesus. I am a relational evangelist, meaning I like to establish some type of friendship and then bring up Jesus. I am rarely the “can I tell you about Jesus?” guy. My weakness is to never actually bring up Jesus, or to do so in softened ways. Risk a friendship, risk a promotion, risk not “fitting in,” or maybe even risk your job if God would call you to that. Of course, we don’t want to be reckless just for the sake of being reckless.
3. Pray for your enemies. There will be people who do not like you for any number of reasons. Make it a practice to pray for the people that don’t seem to like you, who you don’t really get along with, or who just always seem to have something snarky to say to or about you. This is incredibly hard, which is why you need to rely on the Spirit in this. You will also discover God ministering to you even as you pray. Pray for them, for their families, their kids. Most importantly, pray for their relationship with Jesus.
4. Use your gift(s). I am a teacher/pastor type. I usually go into a teaching or pastoral mode at some point during my faith encounters with coworkers. The church is still the church both gathered and scattered. While at work we continue to be part of the church scattered and in the church we are called to use our gifts to build up the body. Pray about and find a way to use your gift(s). Start a Bible study, start a prayer group, take people’s prayer requests and pray for them, give of your time, talents, or treasures to those in need. Do whatever it takes to be a reconciling minister of the gospel (2 Cor. 5:18-20).
5. Work hard. Be on time, care about your job, follow the rules, get your work done, and help others. Of course, nonbelievers can be good employees, too. What makes us different is really captured in the household codes contained in many of the epistles. “Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust” (1 Pet. 2:18). We should be that “good” employee no matter who we work for, what the conditions are, and/or whether we like the job. It is sharing in these sufferings of Christ, light they may be, that we can make much of Christ by working hard with integrity. Never let laziness or grumbling be your calling card.

May God bless us as we seek to serve and make much of Christ in all areas of our lives.

“To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” (Col. 1:27-29)

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Let's Mass Produce Discipleship

(editorial note: This article is taken from www.gcdiscipleship.org – our featured resource for this month's newsletter)

Discipleship. Discipleshift. Disciple-Making Disciples. It's all the rage right now to talk about discipleship and we must. The current state of the declining church is the fruit of our lack of engaging in discipleship in recent history. It's so bad that few even know what this looks like and so we're left with a dilemma.

How do we disciple all of these people who are in the church and have never been disciplined?

JESUS COULD HAVE MASS PRODUCED DISCIPLESHIP. . . BUT HE DIDN'T

Jesus had the thousands waiting for his every word and the opportunity to mass produce discipleship was available. He could have told them to sit down; he would keep the food miraculously coming; he would download all the information they needed to become disciples and to go make disciples. But he didn't. Instead he gathered twelve men (Matt. 10:1-4), three who were extra close to him (Matt. 26:36-46), seventy that hung around on the periphery and spent years with them (Lk. 10:1-12). He shared more than content, though he did teach them more than anyone else would know. He shared meals, laughter, probably made fun of Peter A LOT; he shared hurts, struggles, tears; he exhorted, encouraged, and modeled devotion; he performed miracles, taught them how, spoke vision into them, and rarely criticized. He shared his heart, his doctrine, his every step of life, and his platform with them.

What were the results? A viral movement that changed the world.

In Acts, we see this personal viral approach spread beyond the original twelve. Thousands come to faith at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), yet the scriptures track the individuals who influenced and shaped the lives of others rather than the mass gatherings. Pieces of discipleship happened (and continue to) in mass gatherings, house to house, and personal investment, but the development of individuals is the primary concern. As we enter into the letters, Paul references specific people by name (Rom. 16), faithful workers and he didn't just impart his theology through sermons, mass classroom teaching, online discipleship pathways, and more! No, he gave them his life. They knew him, his strengths and his weaknesses.

HAVE A LONG-TERM VIEW THAT IS BEYOND YOURSELF!

The innovation that is taking place is good and healthy. New contexts require new approaches, systems, and ideas. But discipleship is more simple than we make it and takes longer than we ever wish it would. It has massive setbacks, discouragements, and slow progress toward great victories. There's nothing more sanctifying, challenging, and rewarding.

But it requires that we not be in a hurry to mass produce disciples and end up making Pharisees with a massive amount of knowledge, little intimacy, and no holiness. We are trying to reproduce Jesus in people and that takes time. It took the church decades of neglect to get us to this big need and it will take decades of engagement in discipleship to get us out.

Is your vision only for your ministry, your church, and your time on earth, or is it for the next generations?

JESUS' MASTER PLAN

Learn from the content that is produced out there, but gather four to six men or women near you, invite them into your life, open the scriptures with them to teach them scriptural systematic theology that is transferable, pray with them, and fast with them. Hurt with them, fight with them through their struggles, celebrate their small victories, and give them opportunities to succeed and fail. Speak vision into them.

Take the content and teach it through your own life. It has greater impact in those you are discipling than gathering them around a DVD, curriculum, or teacher they don't know.

Practically, this looks like Barnabas and Paul, Barnabas and John Mark, Paul and Timothy, Timothy to faithful men, faithful men to others also, and the same goes for women. This personal discipleship must be combined or supplemental to the engagement in the broader community aims of the local church so it fulfills God's call for that specific church. It is not a separate system; it is personal, communal, and driven by vision. We mass produce discipleship by discipling a few who then disciple more and it multiplies. If we try another way, we're just gathering crowds and assuming that our different variations of sermons will do the trick—that hasn't worked for decades. The master, Jesus, has shown us the plan. Let's follow Him.

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All of us are blind to our faults. Wise are those who listen humbly to the suggestions and correctives of other believers God places in our lives who express love by using their words to help me improve and grow.

Pastor Mark Musser.

Our self-sufficiency is blocking intimacy with Christ. *When Churches Are Prosperous*

There is tremendous relief in knowing that [the Father's] love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion Him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench His determination to bless me...[F]or some unfathomable reason, He wants me as His friend, and desires to be my friend, and has given His Son to die for me in order to realize this purpose.

Jl Packler, Knowing God

"Jesus calls us to his rest, and meekness is His method. The meek man cares not at all who is greater than he, for he has long ago decided that the esteem of the world is not worth the effort."

A. W. Tozer, Pursuit of God

"The 'show business,' which is so incorporated into our view of Christian work today, has caused us to drift far from Our Lord's conception of discipleship. It is instilled in us to think that we have to do exceptional things for God; we have not. We have to be exceptional in ordinary things, to be holy in mean streets, among mean people, surrounded by sordid sinners. That is not learned in five minutes."

Oswald Chambers

JUNE 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p style="text-align: right; color: red;">1</p> Sunday School Worship Service	2	<p style="text-align: right;">3</p> Fusion Youth Group	<p style="text-align: right;">4</p> Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer	5	<p style="text-align: right;">6</p> Ignite Youth Group	7
<p style="text-align: right; color: red;">8</p> Sunday School Worship Service	9	<p style="text-align: right;">10</p> Fusion Youth Group	<p style="text-align: right;">11</p> Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer	12	<p style="text-align: right;">13</p> Ignite Youth Group	14
<p style="text-align: right; color: red;">15</p> Sunday School Worship Service	16	<p style="text-align: right;">17</p> Fusion Youth Group	<p style="text-align: right;">18</p> Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer	19	<p style="text-align: right;">20</p> Ignite Youth Group	21
<p style="text-align: right; color: red;">22</p> Sunday School Worship Service	23	<p style="text-align: right;">24</p> Fusion Youth Group	<p style="text-align: right;">25</p> Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer	26	<p style="text-align: right;">27</p> Ignite Youth Group	<p style="text-align: right;">28</p> Men In The Morning
<p style="text-align: right; color: red;">29</p> Sunday School Worship Service Soup & Salad Fellowship	30	1	2	3	4	5