

## **Stop Dating the Church**

### **“Part 2: The community everyone needs”**

Matthew 28:16-20

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on September 23, 2018, by Steve Edelman

What keeps you from connecting with others? What keeps you from deeply knowing people and being known? How do find the community that you need?

#### **STORY: THE REDIRECTION.**

This summer, as we were traveling home from Alberta, we got redirected in a major way on our trip. The drive from BC to Alberta is one of the most beautiful drives in the world. There are glimpses of beauty popping up everywhere as we progress down the road: The rocky mountains, countless evergreens, frosty waterfalls, elk and mountain sheep! What does the sheep say? Baa! The girls had never driven through the Rockies before, and they were in total awe...their little Costco toy cameras clicking away as we drove. A few hours into the trip, just past Revelstoke, we passed a sign that said, “road closure in both directions on the number one.” No travel weary parent wants to see that sign. We discovered that there was a large accident, unfortunately with a fatality, that caused the midday road closure. They were predicting it would last about eight hours. Megan, my wife, was on Google maps and noticed that google had automatically rerouted us to an alternative route we had never heard of! We had to make a decision: Sit for about eight hours and listen to the kids complain about the fact we are not going anywhere? Or, take the unknown alternate route that we were being led towards. We decided to take the redirection.

When we made the turn it was a pretty decent gravel logging road. The longer we drove, the rougher the road became and we started to question our decision. The potholes were getting bigger and bigger. The gravel road turned to a windy dirt and dust path with very little visibility. I started to wonder if this was going to be our last family trip? It felt like we were lost in a totally uncharted territory. About 20 minutes in, we saw more and more cars passing in the other direction, which soon after led to stopping at a complete standstill in a lineup of at least 100 cars. It was then that we realized, we weren't the only ones being rerouted. **Everyone driving the number 1 that day between Kamloops and Revelstoke was being re-routed onto this sub-par logging road.** As we proceeded it became increasingly difficult to see and maneuver with now a stream of oncoming traffic and a perpetual cloud of dust. It was mirrors touching mirrors. It was stop and let others come by so they don't fall off the cliff or get stuck in the ditch. As we continued, we came around one corner and a motorhome just fell into the ditch and half the wheels were still spinning in the air. After 2 hours, when we finally made it back on to the highway there was a big cheer of celebration because of what we just experienced together. Once we found civilization, we got out at an A&W and the truck behind also stopped and said: “we made it out alive!!!”

**What keeps you from connecting with others? What keeps you from redirecting your life so that you can build relationships with others so you can experience togetherness through Christ? Just like in the story, a life of discipleship is a deliberate decision to take the detour from the comfortable paved road.** It's rerouting our lives to a life of connection and community so that we can better follow Christ. You can't control the story. There is going to be potholes and dirt.

There is going to be difficulty and risk. You are going to want to give up. You will probably see people fall off the road. You are going to see people spinning their wheels and going nowhere in their walk with God. **When we are disconnected we stand still in our spiritual growth, we complain, we become cynical, and we become disengaged. But, Jesus gives us a blueprint that redirects our lives to a community of helping others become like Christ.**

**We just started a new series called, “Stop Dating the Church” and we are on “Part 2: The community everyone needs.” Last week we talked about Jesus’ heart for the church. This week, we want to give you a vision of how the church functions. I am not here to guilt you or make you feel bad, but I want to invite you to participate in the gospel-centered communities that we are all made for. In order to create community the way Jesus intended, we need to talk about discipleship.**

**Which brings us to a number of questions: How do we begin to make disciples? How do we know if we are making disciples? (We often hear Christians saying that they are making disciples and is that even true!?!?) Do we really need community to make disciples?**

Today, I want to show you the foundational importance of biblical discipleship and how it happens in togetherness. This isn’t just a nice idea that Jesus threw out there before he left. But rather, it’s an essential calling for all of us if we want to build His kingdom. I want to take you deeper and unpack the final instructions that Jesus gave us before He returned to heaven.

Have you ever thought about what your final thoughts or words would be? If you were completing your days on earth who would you speak to...who would you speak for? Jesus chooses not to give emotional sentiment or messages of love and gratitude to his disciples. He utters what is at the top of his heart; what is of utmost importance; HIS legacy: Instructions for His bride...what to do next.

As you are going to see, the Great Commission gives us clear directives for disciple making. I am praying that you can see this familiar passage comes to life for you and that Spirit of God redirects you this morning.

**We are going to be talking about these three things:**

In order to make disciples, we need to seek:

- 1. THE NECESSARY COMPONENTS FOR DISCIPLESHIP.**
- 2. THE NECESSARY COMMUNITY FOR DISCIPLESHIP.**
- 3. THE NECESSARY COUNSELOR FOR DISCIPLESHIP.**

In order to make disciples, we need to seek:

- 1. THE NECESSARY COMPONENTS FOR DISCIPLESHIP.**

**If you were to rank “The Great Commission” in terms of a priority for a Follower of Christ, where would you put it? Would you say that it’s something to keep in the forefront of your mind as we go about our days, but we don’t really need to do much about it? Is it only for the able and gifted? Or would you put it as the top one or two priorities for all Christians? Meaning that disciple making is a significant priority requiring our time, energy, and resources.**

If we are to look at how Jesus started a life changing movement, it was primarily through a life of discipleship. Yes, he spoke to the multitudes. Yes, he sent out the 72. **However, the majority of His ministry effort and investment was spent in a “life on**

**life” relationship with a group of 12 and 3.** This methodology in many ways is a slow and painful process, and yet, a powerful movement was birthed through a discipleship community. If Jesus is our ultimate example of bringing about change in a broken world, disciple making should be the **vision statement** for every church and every Christian. It’s how we, “Renew Our Community Through The Gospel.” It’s the necessary technique of bringing about heart change that was modeled by Jesus himself. **This was the top effort of his ministry. It’s the primary directive for followers of Christ until His return. Last week we discussed Jesus’ love for the church. He laid down His life for the bride (us) so we would do what?**

**So, what does this look like for you and I?**

Look with me at Matthew 28:19 which says, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”*

Bible scholars translate Jesus’ words “go” to “As you go” or “when you go” rather than simply, “go.” In other words, as you go about your life you need to make disciples. God may call you to the ends of the earth to make disciples or whatever community you call home. Disciple making is not just the job of a missionary that we send to the ends of the earth.

Jesus couldn’t conceive of His disciples not going and multiplying what he so clearly modeled for them.

**So, how do we know if we are making disciples? What do we aim for? As you are going, Jesus gives us a clear blueprint for discipleship making. As you are going to see, this blueprint involves: baptizing, teaching, and obeying. It’s a lifelong process of helping people identify with Christ.**

Jesus says that a component of discipleship is baptism.

**a. Baptism (v 19).**

**Look with me at verse 19 which says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.”**

In the early church and today, baptism is a public declaration that says you are a follower of Jesus. You are declaring to a community of believers that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ and are joining a disciple making movement. This is why we get so excited about baptism. You are no longer hiding. **Baptism is a vivid picture of the gospel. You are identifying with Christ. As Romans 6:4 says, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

So, what does this have to do with community and our relationship with God’s people? Everything. We can’t baptize ourselves in the hot tub on a Saturday night. It loses the declaration to the community and the meaning God intended. **I Corinthians 12:12,13 says it well, “we are baptized into one body.”** Paul makes the point that the Christian community is solidified through baptism. All our differences are swept away in Christ. We are ushered into a community into one body. **It is the idea that the emphasis should be on individuals becoming one with Christ despite race, age, talent, and social status. In other words, our relationship with Jesus leads to baptism which establishes a common concept of identity and community.**

Writing this brought to mind Jane’s baptism a couple weeks ago at Willows beach. A group of people standing in the rain; listening to a woman share how God

reached her, and that she is living for Him. It strengthens the body, it re-ignites us as a family. Baptism means that you belong. You have a place here. No matter where you came from. In baptism, a person is welcomed and you also publicly saying you are responsible for sharing the mission of Jesus.

Next, Jesus says another component of discipleship is teaching.

#### **b. Teaching (v 20a).**

Look with me at verse 20 which says, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

In other words, a follower of Jesus is both a lifelong learner and an imitator of Christ. Jesus becomes your Master teacher through the Word of God. His teaching redirects us to a wholehearted commitment of following Jesus in every area of our life. This includes our relationships, workplace, parenting, how we use our time, and money. He gives us examples of how we should treat our enemies and ultimately how to forgive. As we observe His words and behaviors, we are to pass His ways and His teaching on to others. To put it in other words, we study the Word of God, so that we can know God. Once we know Him, then we learn to obey Him.

#### **STORY – I KNOW MEGAN BETTER THAN THE DAY I GOT MARRIED.**

**Jen Wilkin says, “The heart cannot love what the mind does not know.”**

As Timothy writes, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man (and woman) of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

If we want to make a disciple, at some point in the relationship we need to pass on truth to others. This will not happen by simply being a good neighbor, serving, having coffee, playing games, or going for a bento box. We may even participate in social justice and never make a disciple. Teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness happens best in relationship. If we want to make disciples, we need to recognize the importance of passing truth on.

The third component of discipleship is obeying.

#### **c. Obedience (V 20b).**

**Look with me at verse 20 which says, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”** The Greek word for observe means: **to keep or to obey or watch over** all that Jesus has commanded you.

#### **What happens when we mention the word obey?**

We flinch or duck and run for cover! Or we puff up our chest and stand defiant. We do everything we can to hide transgressions under the carpet from others and hope no one starts to look under there. Or we give a list of reasons for why it’s not our fault. We push the mute button. Or pretend it didn’t happen - hoping that it will go away.

So often when we hear about how to make disciples; pastors and leaders talk about baptism and teaching, but leave out the “to obey” part. Why? Our culture is all about knowledge. I mean knowledge is so easily accessible with a click of a button. We are one of the most educated cultures in history. So, why do we have so many problems? It’s because we are not obedient. A Christian who has biblical knowledge and lacks obedience is like Mr. Potato Head. **When we become all about knowledge we can get really big heads and no movement because of the weak arms and legs.** Jesus says our knowing needs to turn into **being and doing.** **Jesus is calling us to BE** people who are ordering our lives around what He said is best and will always be

best. Can we call a method of discipleship without obedience disciple making? No, we can't.

I was just listening to Ravi Zacharias the other day and he said the hardest question he has to answer is this, **“How can Christians claim to be changed by a transforming God and yet, still act the same as everyone else?”**

We long for God to move in our midst. We long for more. We sing things like revive us again. We pray that God would show us what we need to do to bring renewal to our city. Actually, God has already shown us. We need to bring it to the forefront of our attention so that we can bring about renewal in our own heart and in the heart of others. We, God's people have an obedience issue. Central certainly doesn't have a knowledge issue. If we want to produce followers of Christ, we must first be followers of Christ. Jesus says following includes the necessary components of: baptizing, teaching, and obeying. Now that we have identified the necessary components of disciple making, we want to talk about the best environment for disciple making.

In order to make disciples, we need to seek:

## **2. THE NECESSARY COMMUNITY FOR DISCIPLESHIP.**

As we have been saying, discipleship is the process where believers help one another become better followers of Christ. This “helping one another” only happens when we actually support one another through teaching and obeying, on a regular basis. It's a group of people that meet regularly to practice faith, work through the challenges of life, and nurture each other with the gospel. Discipleship should be the primary byproduct of a gathering of Jesus followers. In other words, Community Groups are really Jesus' idea. The function of the church is to create disciple-making hubs or villages. In the early church, the gathering flowed out of effective discipleship. It's kind of like learning to drive.

### **ILLUSTRATION – DISCIPLESHIP IS LIKE LEARNING TO DRIVE**

**Discipleship is like learning to drive. You go from a passenger; to a student. To a driver. Jesus just happened to be driving a 13 passenger van. What is the primary function of a driving instructor?**

#### **a) The unique spiritual growth in community.**

**Confucius captured this idea: “Tell me and I will forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I will understand.”**

All throughout the New Testament, we see Jesus building relationships and redirecting people. He spends time with them. He redirects them. He earns the right to speak truth into their lives. This is what Jesus did so powerfully. When Jesus saw them fishing on the Sea of Galilee, he knew there was more for them. For their whole lives, these men had dreamed only of catching fish and making a living for their families and doing what they have always done. Jesus had a greater vision. They would no longer be catching fish because they would be fishing for men! Their lives could count for more. God could use them to ignite a movement that would change the world. This is the same vision He is calling you to!

**Do we really need community to grow spiritually?**

**In community we experience unique growth. It was God's idea by design from the beginning. As we relate with God and others with the gospel we grow. We show others that Jesus makes us better!**

**i) In community we can show others how to study the Word of God.**

It becomes alive in a group setting as you explain how you go about reading and understanding the biblical text. Discipleship is working out the "good news" in the context of a gracious relationship. It's the "what do you think this means" conversations. "You mean I shouldn't do ABC?" No, here is why.

**ii) In community we model how to actively be the body of Christ.**

We can't limit the essence of the church to a Sunday morning gathering. The overall purpose of the body is to saturate the world with Jesus for their benefit. The body of Christ needs to be at work all around the city, all week long as individuals and groups. Meeting in homes, workplaces, parks, and coffee shops to use and develop our spiritual gifts.

**iii) In community we learn how to encourage one another.**

We spur one another on to continue the good fight. We minister to each other when needed. We cheer our community on when they make progress. We make a point of celebrating what God is doing. There are weeks when our group is jesting in fun and the atmosphere is uplifting, and there are weeks where small clusters gather with tears.

**iv) In community we can hold each other accountable.**

We need a community or a village to help us learn to obey Jesus in every area of our life. That means we need to be known and know others in a close relationship. We need to develop the type of relationships in which we can help others see victory over sin. There is healing power in confessing our sins to friends. You can't battle sin alone and win. True character change happens best in community. Obedience can transform the entire community.

As you can see, community is needed for our spiritual growth. If this is SO important, it only makes sense that the enemy doesn't want it to happen and it's our sinful tendency to pull away. So, we must look at the barriers that keep us from connecting in community and how we can overcome that.

**b. The barriers hindering community.**

While there may be many barriers that keep us from connecting in community, I only have time to talk about a few of them. One is a lack of time.

**i) Lack of Time**

In reality, many of us are tired after work and then we have to wait in traffic or prepare a meal. The last thing we want is another night out. Most of us are going in so many directions that we can't comprehend adding another thing. Let me ask you this, what is prioritized in your calendar? Is it building community with others and helping people be like Christ? Or is it the next episode of your favorite show, and social media, or maybe just a peaceful night in. All are not bad things, but none should be priorities. Part of the problem is that we don't get that instant gratification with discipleship. **It's counter-intuitive to everything else in our culture. Unfortunately, discipleship doesn't happen with a quick meeting or one-off. It happens when someone prioritizes a prolonged commitment to meeting and growing. If you believe that discipleship is our number one directive from Jesus, what can we stop doing so that we can be obedient ourselves? We seem to always make time for things we love. Evaluate**

**your schedule to see if it lines up with priorities like discipleship.** Get rid of the stuff that doesn't need to be there.

Another barrier is a lack of trust.

## **ii) Lack of Trust**

Do you struggle to trust other people? Maybe you have been hurt in the past and put up a shield of what you think is protection, so you don't get hurt again. Many use isolation as a shield – what really happens is you end up in your own prison. But, God designed us for deep meaningful relationships. The only way we overcome this as we seek to disciple others is by opening yourself up again. Opening yourself up to trust and believe that God can use other people to help you become who he wants you to be. Closing yourself off to others is also disconnecting yourself from God and His calling. Can we reconnect and let God do the work in us and in others?

Next, another barrier is a lack of connection.

## **iii) Lack of Connection**

How do you connect with those you're called to disciple? In many situations, it comes naturally and the relationship develops organically. But, in some instances, this simply isn't the case. Yet, if you put a group of guys or girls in a room at camp for a week many of them become best friends. Or you put a bunch of guys on the battlefield with a common enemy and they connect. They fight for the other. They protect. This is not about a program, but rather much more about our deep investment into the lives of those around us. Spending time on mission connects people better than anything else.

## **iv. Lack of leaders.**

The reality is that very few people want to lead and some should be leading and really some are not ready. Yes, if you are not following Christ and purposely living in sin, you are disqualified. But yet, Jesus calls all of us to make disciples. Why are people not leading? Maybe it's because you have a fear that God won't use you. Or maybe it's because it's hard and messy. Or you're doubting. Maybe you are being disobedient? Or you don't think you are qualified, but you really are. Did you know that some of our best people don't think they are "qualified?"

### **Here are some signs that you may be a CG leader:**

1. You have been a Christian for a couple of years.
2. You are teachable.
3. You are on board with the vision of the church.
4. The Bible is the guide for your life.
5. You are striving to honor Jesus in every area of your life.

Recognize that it's not your job to try to convince a person to be disciplined—it is only your job to give them the opportunity to be disciplined.

Roy Moran says, "One day while reading the Great Commission, the scales fell off and I had an epiphany that changed me deeply. **As I looked at this passage, I realized that**

**it meant the same thing to me as it meant to my disciples.** They were to make disciples. Again, it may seem straightforward, but I saw that Jesus was calling me to make disciple-making disciples rather than simply to make disciples. The men and women that I discipled grew, they matured, they exposed their internal worlds, challenged their fleshly strategies, and learned to deny themselves and live with the cross at the center of their lives. They loosened their grip on their resources to allow more of their hard-earned cash to be available to God's work. They reached out to their coworkers and neighbors and invited them to church. They gave generously, served the poor and under-resourced, and they became better husbands and wives. What could be wrong with that? We are addicted to personal peace and comfort, so creating tension in people always promotes growth, and I love to be in the middle of it."

**The question we need to ask ourselves and each other is: Can my disciples make disciples? Was I working with them in ways they could use to work with others?"**  
As we have seen, we need community for spiritual growth and we need to overcome the barriers to connect in community.

**Lastly, we have the necessary counselor for discipleship.**

### **3. THE NECESSARY COUNSELOR FOR DISCIPLESHIP.**

**Look with me at verse 20b which says, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

Jesus is telling us that we are not alone in this journey of making disciples. It's primarily His work. Work that he wants to accomplish through us. Therefore, we can't be content with just being busy doing things. We need to ask God to change us so that we become hungry to see the future of what he wants to do through us if we baptize, teach, and obey. He not only gives us the instructions to live by; he also carries them out through His people. Do you want to see Jesus-sized outcomes in your life and in the life of others? Then we need to redirect our time and resources to disciple making through the counsel of Jesus. What would happen if we let Jesus build His church and we shifted our attention to what he commands us to do – make disciples-making disciples. What do we have to stop to do this? It may even be good things. Are you willing to stop?

**Can we even make disciples in this current culture?**

When we are obedient. The wind starts to blow. The Spirit of God starts to move in our heart and in the heart of others. He starts to give us a new rhythm in which we can live our life. It's a rhythm that involves collecting people and sharing the good news, baptizing, teaching, and obeying. Together, can we bring the gospel through our cul-de-sacs, to our work places, and into the wounded hearts that need it? I believe Jesus wants to build His church, and He wants us to disciple the world.

How much do we love the mission that Jesus gave us? Is it worth the sacrifice of our lives? Can we keep asking the question "Jesus, what needs to be done?" Who needs discipleship? Who needs connection and community to grow?



## **CONCLUSION.**

**Jeff Vanderstelt says, “Can you imagine every city, every neighborhood, every street, and every house saturated with Jesus presence through his people? What if, in every school, every classroom, and every extracurricular activity, students daily experienced the person and work of Jesus? Can you dream with me of a day when no business office, retail center, or industrial hub can get away from the good news of Jesus proclaimed in words and expressed in gracious deeds? A day when every café, pub, restaurant, or bakery smells of the aroma of Christ? The truth is, if you belong to Jesus, you are called to participate in his vision of saturation.” This is the vision of discipleship.**

So, what keeps you from connecting with others? What keeps you from redirecting your life so that you can build intentional relationships and experience togetherness through Christ? Just like in the opening story, a life of discipleship is a deliberate decision to take the detour from the comfortable paved road.

**At the end of our life, we will be measured by these two questions: 1. Was I a disciple of Jesus? 2. Did I help make disciples of Jesus?**

A Community Group is a group of people who pursue Jesus and discipleship together. **What would happen if everyone here joined a Community Group. If everyone was disciplined or discipling someone? What if every qualified leader lead?**

**Can you hear the call of Jesus to be disciple makers?**

**Rick Warren says, “You cannot fulfill God’s purpose for your life while focusing on your own plans.”**

In a moment, we are going to worship in song and have all the CG facilitators join us at the front. After we pray for them, they are going to make their way around the auditorium so you can meet them, ask questions, and consider joining a Community Group if you don’t have one.

**Steve E - Invite CG Facilitators to the front.**

**Ben B - Worship Song.**

**Josh - Pray for CG.**

**Steve E - Explain CG and how to sign up.**

**Steve E - Invite Facilitators to the sides of the church for connection.**

**BENEDICTION.**

**How do you sign up for a CG?**

**What if you are shift worker? Please talk to Josh and he will be collecting people**

**We also have all the groups listed on our website and you can sign up that way.**

**There will be a CG training meeting in 20 minutes in the Fellowship Hall.**