

## Making Disciples – The King’s Church, Ilford – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2007

### **1 Thessalonians 2: 6-12 – English Standard Version**

6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were **gentle** among you, like a nursing mother taking **care** of her own children. 8 So, being **affectionately desirous** of you, we were ready to **share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves**, because you had become very dear to us.

9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we **worked night and day**, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how **holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers**. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, 12 we **exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God**, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

### **The Great Commission – Make Disciples...and Teach Them...**

This passage speaks of how the Apostles laboured among the Thessalonians in order that they might walk in a manner worthy of God.

This is the work that we were called to at the great commission ‘*Make disciples...and teach them all that I have taught you*’. (Matthew 28: 18-20). We do not all carry the same responsibility or authority that an apostle carries. But we are all called to help one another to display more Christ-like character.

Some have particular responsibility as spiritual leaders, whether in the Church, or in the home: Apostles, Elders, Life group leaders, Youth leaders, Children’s workers, Husbands, Fathers, Mothers, etc... This passage contains all the ingredients that will help us to make disciples.

Here are some things that we can learn about making disciples from the Apostles: 1. Gentleness, care and affection. 2. They shared both the gospel and their own selves. 3. They were hard working. 4. They set an excellent example. 5. They exhorted (urged), encouraged and charged (commanded). 6. Their goal was to see people walking in a manner worthy of God. This means A. That they may know Christ better. B. That they may become more like Him in character.

### **Gentleness, care and affection**

*Luke 13: 34: ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!’*

*Philippians 1: ‘8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.’*

In all of these things, Christ Himself is our example. Jesus was full of compassion towards us. He wept over lost people. He showed care and kindness, even comparing Himself to a mother hen. We can also follow the example of godly people. Paul often spoke very warmly of the affection he had in his heart. How he genuinely desired such good things for those he had taught and shared so much with.

Make disciples begins with genuine love. If we don't care about people we will not disciple them well. How can we convey the love of Christ if we don't have His love in our hearts?

As a mother develops a bond of care towards her children, so we have found ourselves, like Paul, having affection towards those we disciple. It is a joy to work among our friends at Pulse. We have come to know much warmth and love for them. This is something that God has produced in us. If we ask, the Holy Spirit He is delighted to produce the compassion of Christ in us, so that we may laugh with those who laugh, and weep with those who weep.

### **Sharing the gospel...and ourselves**

You may have heard the expression 'preach the gospel, if necessary use words.' The sentiment of this saying is good. We need to be good news. However, there is no question, we are called to speak of Jesus as well as conduct ourselves in love.

In the great commission, Jesus tells us to teach disciples all that He has taught us. Sound doctrine (biblical truth) and ethics (how we should live) are absolutely indispensable in discipleship. Bible teaching has been central to the youth discipleship at Pulse over the years. If we are going to make mature disciples, who know Christ and are becoming like Him, we need to know and teach the Word of God.

We are responsible for making disciples. We need to take responsibility in getting the Word into us. We need to grasp the amazing things that God has done. We need to be familiar with the Scriptures from creation, the fall, the old covenant, the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ, the blessings that we have in Him, the work of the Church, through to the hope of eternal life.

It was evident that the Apostles knew these things. They didn't only speak of this good news, but as they shared their lives with the believers it was clear that the truth of God had produced godliness in them. We follow the example of Christ. He didn't just speak God's message, He personified it '*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*' We must show the love and freedom that we have in Christ as we speak of it.

### **Diligence (hard work)**

We read in Romans 12, that those who lead should '*lead with zeal*'. Zeal means passion and intensity. Some versions translate the verse as '*lead with diligence*'. There is nothing passive about spiritual leadership. Those of us who carry specific responsibility in discipleship in the Church or in the home should display passion, intensity and diligence.

I enjoy Christmas, but I'm not a fan for Santa. Nevertheless I do enjoy the movie 'Elf'. Buddy the Elf is so enthusiastic about the festive season. His excitement results in hard work. The excitement is contagious and inspiring. We know Christ. We have something to be excited about. It is our passion for Jesus that provides the motivation to work hard in the kingdom. It is our passion for Jesus that will inspire those who follow us. People must see from our lives that God is worth living for, that God is worthy of our worship. If we are not excited about Jesus, why should they be? If we do not work hard in His kingdom, how will they?

Even if we do grow weary or discouraged on occasion. We know the One we believe in. We know He is worthy of our best. We know that He is faithful in every circumstance. We know that the work we do in His service is worth the cost.

### **Setting an Example**

*1 Timothy 4 '11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.'*

If we're going to help others in discipleship, we need to be good disciples. We need to give attention to knowing Christ and becoming more like Him. For example, last week we taught about marriage and singleness at Pulse. As we taught from the Scriptures about God's plan, and how we are to conduct ourselves in marriage, we were encouraged to find people pointing out how my Wife and I were practicing these principles in our lives.

As we live among the people we disciple, they will see whether we practice what we preach. They will know whether walk the walk or just talk the talk. So we must ask ourselves these questions: How is my walk with Christ? Am I devoting myself to Him in the spiritual disciplines of: Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, giving, fasting, evangelism...? Am I allowing the Holy Spirit to change me, so that I walk in a manner worthy of God?

We are no less dependant upon Christ than those we disciple. We need to seek Him and cooperate with Him. We are not perfect, but we must seek to allow God to produce godliness in us, and to spend time in the presence of Christ, so that we can learn from Him and become like Him: in love, in faith, in purity and humility.

### **Urge, encourage and command**

Paul taught Timothy (a young leader in the Church) to teach and exhort the believers (*2 Timothy 4: 1-2*). Paul teaches Fathers to raise their children in '*the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*' (*Ephesians 6: 4*). Believers are taught to '*stir up one another to love and good works... encouraging one another*' (*Hebrews 10:24-25*).

Exhort: To urge, to stir up, to spur or cheer on.

Encourage: To put courage into someone, to raise faith.

Charge: To command and instruct

We need to be those who help one another to walk in a manner worthy of God. In appropriate ways we need to take hold of opportunities to help people to fulfil their God given calling. We need to remind people of God's faithfulness and sufficiency, that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We must have our eyes open so we can strengthen those who seem to be flagging and praise those who are allowing God to use them. In appropriate ways we must seek to keep people in the way of Christ, even to rebuke the person who is going astray, in love, to do them good.

We are responsible for helping one another in the pursuit of Christ and of Christ-likeness.