

# Discipleship Requires Relationship

## 1 Thessalonians 2:1–16

### INTRODUCTION:

- What is the vision of Revolve? Why do we exist?
  - Churches are, by God's design and command, single issue organizations.
  - Simply stated, we exist to glorify by making disciples who make disciples until the whole world hears.
  - We glorify God - that's the goal
  - We do that by making disciples who will spread his fame
  - We do it until the whole world hears or Jesus comes back
- Why do we elders exist?
  - To equip you to make disciples who make disciples, which is the work of the ministry
  - Our job is to disciple you so that you mature
  - To equip you to disciple others so that they mature
  - Like a family w/ a generational family tree - one big, happy, dysfunctional family
- What is a disciple?
  - Simply put "disciple" means learner.
  - Disciples are people who learn and keep learning to BE like Jesus and to DO what He did. Disciples learn to hear and obey King Jesus.
  - No matter how young or old, educated or not, experienced or new, we are always disciples, always learners. The process never stops until glory.
- What is discipleship?
  - Discipleship is the relational process of helping both Christians and not-yet-Christians to become who Jesus would be if he were them.
  - It is to help other people become like Jesus
  - Discipleship isn't just evangelism or just developing people, it is the whole journey b/c discipleship is teaching other people to follow Christ.
  - Naturally some will focus more on evangelism, others on development, but all take part in making disciples
- How did Paul make disciples? How should we?

*[1] For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. [2] But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. [3] For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, [4] but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. [5] For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. [6] Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.*

- WHAT DO WE NEED TO BE A DISCIPLE-MAKER?

- Every disciple-maker needs motivation, but an expectation of fruit (not in vain) isn't enough. Why not? Fruit isn't always guaranteed.
  - Paul saw fruit here, but not so much at Philippi - at least not as he would have liked to see it
- Since Paul's motivation was rooted in the right thing, however, he continued forward despite hardship and a lack of desired fruit. He had boldness and declared the gospel
- **We need to be motivated by the right heart; one that seeks to please God, not man**
  - This is what motivated Paul and what needs to motivate us as well
  - Paul doesn't make disciples b/c he's a trickster, selling snake oil (televangelists)
  - Paul doesn't make disciples b/c he needs someone to like him (insecure)
  - Paul doesn't make disciples b/c he needs money (prosperity gospel)
- Paul makes disciples b/c he has been entrusted w/ the gospel and wants to please God
- What do we need to be a disciple maker? The right heart and motivation. A heart that loves God and, therefore, wants others to love him too. A heart that knows we have been entrusted with a precious message that is too good not to share.

*[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.*

- HOW DO WE MAKE DISCIPLES?
- Discipleship happens most often relationally, not organizationally. We need a methodological approach (like DMM), but it happens within relationships, not a classroom alone.
- Like a mother... (v7-8) [Good Cop]
  - Paul gives us provocative words to describe how he interacted w/ the Thessalonians
    - Gentle... Like a nursing mother... Affectionately desirous...
    - Ready to share the GOSPEL and our SELVES
      - Two wings on an airplane
- Like a father... (v11) [Bad Cop]
  - Exhorted you... encouraged you... charged you...
- SUMMARY: If we follow Jesus way of accomplishing discipleship, it is not primarily done at the church building or study groups (though it certainly can and should happen there too), but rather, discipleship happens outside the church in our homes and families, our schools, our parks, our restaurants and our workplaces, in relationships with one another and those who do not yet know him.
- This kind of discipleship costs you. It requires sacrifice, labor, and toil

- For Paul, he often was bivocational unless someone helped pay his way
- Beyond that he talks about the burden of constantly thinking about the church
- He describes it as being in labor until maturity is formed in them
- We disciple people best when we are relationally invested in them. This means time, energy, focus, and - yes - often painful labor.

*[13] And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. [14] For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, [15] who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind [16] by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!*

- HOW ARE OUR EFFORTS MADE EFFECTIVE?
- By the Holy Spirit (evidenced by...)
  - “The word... at work in you...”
  - One of the principles we talk about in our disciple making training is that the Word does the work - it always has, always will, even when Jesus returns and ends it all w/ a word from his mouth
  - All of our labors, all of our energies, all of our best efforts and intentions - if not fueled by the Holy Spirit, are vanities, vanities, chasing the wind
  - Paul says elsewhere that one worker throws the seed. Another waters. God alone gives growth.
  - As a disciple maker, I have no real power to accomplish anything in you unless the Holy Spirit gives the word life
  - Without the Holy Spirit, our efforts are ineffective, even if they are biblical
- But this should not be confused with fatalism. We are called to practice, put off, put on, put to death, consider, hold fast, and other active verbs. The Holy Spirit works in me and through my obedience and my imitation
  - Practically, this means an exercise in intellect alone will not yield true HS fruit
  - Paul summarizes it in Philippians 4:8-9 like this, “Think about... and put into practice...”
  - Obeying the implanted Word, by the power of the HS to make this work effective, the Thessalonians imitated Paul, imitated the persecuted church in Judea, and - in so doing, imitated Christ.

#### WHAT DO WE DO FROM HERE?

- What do we need to make disciples?
  - Be a disciple worth multiplying
  - Relationships
  - Labor and toil - a posture of perseverance and grit
  - Disciples to obey and follow our lead (and then get feedback from us)
  - Holy Spirit to do all the work through these things

- What is one common thread that ties all these things together? Time.
  - Time to nurture our relationship with God
  - Time to nurture relationships with others
  - Time to labor and toil in disciple-making
  - Time spent not just modeling to people but watching them as they obey
  - Time for the Holy Spirit to work (which as we know takes a lifetime)
- What is the one thing that every one of you feels like you are lacking? Time.
- What do we do about it? (See Handout)
  - Spend time each day reading the Word and seeking God's face in prayer.
    - Trifold teaches you how and where to begin
    - Also check out [www.revolvechurchnj.com/resources](http://www.revolvechurchnj.com/resources)
  - Write down the names of 5 to 7 followers of Jesus to whom you can be an encouragement.
  - Each day of the week call or text one of them, let them know that you are praying for them and will continue to do so throughout the day
  - Share with them what you read in your Bible reading that day, what struck you, and ask them what they read in theirs.
  - Invite them (maybe once a month at first) to join you in something you are already doing to spend time with them.
  - Encourage the people you pray for to do all these same steps (and so on with theirs)
- These simple steps can break the static friction on a life that is currently not thinking about making disciples
  - If you spent ten minutes a day encouraging someone else and praying for them, you would add 5 hours of prayer and disciple making to your month.
  - If you spent 15 minutes a day in the Word and in prayer, just 15 minutes, even 5 times a week, over the course of the year you would spend almost 3 days in the Word and prayer
  - The flipside of that is if you spend 30 minutes a day on facebook, you lost almost 8 days of your year to nothing.
  - Our lack of time really isn't an excuse. By all means, life was harder in Jesus' day and they had the same number of hours in a year.
  - Our iPhones and TVs and internet browsers will stand against us in judgment when we give an account for every hour and keystroke
  - God deserves far more than 15 minutes a day, but imagine what he could do with our measly offerings.
- God works through us, willing disciples, to make disciples, but this requires relationship, and relationship requires time.
  - Time for you to be fed
  - Time for you to pass on what God is giving you
  - Time for you to model to other people with whom you have relationship
  - Time for you to encourage them along the journey
  - If you make the time, and give even a smidgen of effort, God will use you