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THE HERALD

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Pastor Joshua's Thoughts

Every since national conference this year in July, I have been thinking about the truth that Jesus communicated in Matthew 28:19-20 and the importance of making disciples. Making disciples is more than just witnessing to people. Making disciples is helping people to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) as they become more like Christ every day (Romans 8:29). This is exactly what Jesus said in verse 20 of Matthew 28: "teaching them to observe **all** that I commanded you." We are not to just teach the easy facts, or the basics of the gospel, but all that Jesus commanded. Based on other verses as well (2 Timothy 3:16-17 & 2 Peter 1:3), this means we are to teach everything in the entire Bible and carry out what applies to us.

Of course this doesn't happen overnight. It is a process. But we need to be intentional; because it doesn't just happen. It begins with our families. Even before our son Paul was born I had been praying and thinking about what it means to talk about God and His word all the time like God instructs His people to do in Deuteronomy

6:7: "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." This is a big assignment that I now have as a husband and a father. I don't think I have completely grasped this as much as I need to and I am a long way from mastering it. But I want to keep making steps forward and I want to encourage you to do the same.

Read the following article to start thinking in that direction.

Pursuing Discipleship in All of Life

By Allen Nelson IV

Discipleship is not a program. It's life. We've misunderstood discipleship too long as simply one part of our lives and we've strayed from the biblical teaching that to be a disciple means your identity is in Christ and that true disciples make disciples. I want to flesh that out practically.

The purpose of discipleship is maturity, or Christ-likeness. Therefore, Christian discipleship must be intentional and purposeful. However, intentional and purposeful doesn't always mean planned. Oftentimes, discipleship is spontaneous. This is a good place to point out that we are always discipling and that's part of the problem in many churches.

There is intentionality in discipleship, but this is more than just formally teaching a class on "5 steps to be a better mom." Our lives teach others daily. So, our pursuit of holiness (or lack thereof), teaches. Everything we do teaches. Our songs we sing, our Christianese sayings, the way we live, even how we drive. This is what I call informal discipleship.

Now, this does not take away from being intentional. It reinforces it. Informal discipleship is only one part of the discipleship process. I want to look at four ways to discipleship.

- Informal Discipleship—Model of good works (Titus 2:7), Character building, life on life, pursuing holiness together
- Formal Discipleship—Verbal instruction, Information transfer, biblical teaching, sound doctrine
- Spontaneous—No plan, just 'happens'
- Intentional—Deliberate, purposeful, plan, commitment

We now have a launching point to look at the ways that Christians are always discipling. I want to encourage us to carefully think through all four of these areas in an effort to make, mature, and multiply disciples in all of life.

1. INFORMAL SPONTANEOUS DISCIPLESHIP

This is Matthew 5:16 in action: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory

to your Father who is in heaven." You don't say at 2:37pm "I'm going to plan a confrontation with a rude cashier so my child can see how a Christian responds." It's naturally happening in mature believers' lives whether at work, home, or school. I don't plan arguments with my wife, but they do happen (and they are usually my fault!). Am I clear in my repentance to her? My children see this. What about when I'm cut off in traffic? What about the way I treat our waiter when we are eating out? Our children are watching us.

Here's another example. My oldest son has finally graduated from the type of "baseball" where everyone wins. This season he's playing with a pitching machine, umpires, and real competition. How do I respond when a bad call is made? When he wins? When he loses? When the coach makes a mistake? The other parents on the team know that I am a Christian and when these things come up it is my goal to let my light shine in a way that gives testimony to the change that has been wrought within me by the power of the gospel. This is informal spontaneous discipleship.

2. INFORMAL INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

This is being an intentional model of good works that often happens weekly. This is intentionally putting yourself around others to show them what a Christian looks like. Specifically, this works best in a discipleship relationship in which you are pouring into a small group of people (1-3) from your local church. This is loving them by showing them what a Christian looks like in daily life (Col. 3:12-15). This kind of discipleship occurs prayerfully, intentionally, and purposefully when we commit to invest in someone else's life. This is done in homes, in restaurants, taking someone along to shop for groceries with you, hunting, fishing, volunteering together, etc. This is a small group we invest our lives in. Think of Jesus, Paul, Barnabas—each had a few [men], that they built

close bonds with.

Here's what that looks like in my pastoral ministry. For my family, this is about letting people in our lives. In the last year, I became pastor of an older congregation in rural Arkansas. We continue to grow in being intentional in inviting people over for meals. We have given our congregation a copy of my son's baseball schedule. When people invite us somewhere we try to make ourselves available to go. The point is for us to actually be around people in real life situations so that they can see what the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts looks like "out there." And so that we can learn from them.

3. FORMAL SPONTANEOUS DISCIPLESHIP

This is 1 Peter 3:15 in action: "In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." I live in Arkansas where recently we experienced an EF4 tornado that wreaked havoc in several communities. None of us "planned" a tornado, but we can be intentional about using this experience to teach others things pertinent to the gospel. I was on a trip the other day with a church member to help clean up some of the recent destruction from the tornadoes that came through Arkansas on April 27th. As we talked about the power that winds can do, I shared the truth about God's power over even the strongest winds.

In his book *Follow Me* and in his most recent Secret Church simulcast, David Platt talked about weaving gospel themes into our everyday conversations. Opportunities are all around us, but we must look for them. All of us want to grow in communicating the gospel more frequently, myself included. This is one of the ways I've grown in that, although I need to grow more! How can we connect our everyday situations to God? What does daily life tell us about our fallenness? What about God's goodness

or love? Or his wrath?

Think of Deuteronomy 6:7 "as you walk by the way" as things come up in life you give a biblical perspective on them. I use the moon and the stars often with my children asking them "Who made that?" And then when they tell me God, I ask "Why did God make that?" The answer of course being "for His glory" (Ps.19:1). We have to be devoted to knowing Scripture to do this effectively. You can't "plan" the providential hand of God, but you can devote yourself to knowing and memorizing Scripture so that when things do come up, you can give a gospel-centered answer.

4. FORMAL INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

When people think "discipleship" now days, I think this is what they think. This is intentionally setting up time with others to teach them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us (Matt.28:20). This happens semi-regularly and is purposeful teaching, usually verbal instruction. Maybe you meet every Thursday morning for half an hour over coffee. Maybe you meet every Tuesday at lunch. Maybe you meet every other Monday night. You go through Scripture together, you have a plan, whether reading a book together, or going through books of the bible together.

Also, family worship would fall into this category. Our goal is to have family worship 3-4 times a week. Some weeks it's more, and some weeks it is less. For us, family worship is simply a time to sing a couple songs, memorize Scripture together, and catechize our children. Sometimes we use the *Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones. This whole process takes about 15 minutes on average (sometimes more, sometimes less). We start out by singing the "Doxology." We then move to the verses our children have memorized. Sometimes we stop on these verses and ask what they mean and tie them to the gospel.

On nights we don't do memory verses, we do catechism. Right now we use questions from Carine Mackenzie's *My 1st Book of Questions and Answers*. We also have recently been working in some questions from *The New City Catechism*. Then we read a passage of Scripture. It may be a Psalm, or where daddy is preaching from (currently, I am going through Genesis and Psalm 119), or something else that my wife or I have read in the bible that week. Our children are 6, 4, 2, and 4 months, so we don't have lengthy theological discussions, although it is a joy to be involved in some of the discussions we do have! Sometimes it feels like the whole time is spent telling our 2 year old to listen or sit down.

Finally, we close by singing a song or two (my kids love "The Gospel Song" by Sovereign Grace Music) and then prayer. This is a time to weekly share the gospel with our children. I must emphasize though that this doesn't "just happen." It has to be planned and worked in and labored at or you will find that weeks have gone by and you've failed to have a family worship (I speak from experience).

VITAL FOR DISCIPLESHIP

All four ways to disciple are biblical and vital to making mature disciples. The examples in this post highlight the personal aspect of discipleship—what you are doing to disciple others. There are plenty of examples for the corporate aspect of discipleship as well—how discipleship fits in with the regular gathering of the local church. You're still doing spontaneous-informal, spontaneous-formal, intentional-informal, and intentional-formal discipleship every Sunday. While Sunday is a major component of discipleship, it's not all discipleship consists of. Discipleship is multifaceted and should be intentionally worked into every aspect of your life. Christians are to be disciples who make disciples. My conviction is that you are always teaching. So maximize your

FUNNIES

I am 38 years old, and I have so many unanswered questions...

I still haven't found out who let the dogs out...where's the beef...how to get to Sesame Street...why Dora doesn't just use Google Maps...why do all flavors of fruit loops taste exactly the same...how many licks it takes to get to the center of a tootsie pop...why eggs are packaged in a flimsy paper carton, but batteries are secured in plastic that's tough as nails, yet light bulbs too are in flimsy carton...Ever buy scissors? You need scissors to cut into the packaging of scissors...

I still don't understand why there is Braille on drive-up ATM's or why 'abbreviated' is such a long word; or why is there a D in 'fridge' but not in refrigerator...

Why lemon juice is made with artificial flavor yet dishwashing liquid is made with real lemons...Why they sterilize the needle for lethal injections...And why do you have to 'put your two cent in' but it's only a penny for your thoughts' - where's that extra penny going...

Why do the Alphabet Song and Twinkle Twinkle Little star have the same tune...Why did you just try to sing those two previous songs...and what would you do for a Klondike bar - you know as soon as you bit into it, it falls apart...and why do we drive on parkways and park on driveways?