

#### 4. Helping Our Children Work with the Holy Spirit by Making Disciples

In our last topic, we discussed helping our children learn to work with the Holy Spirit in evangelism. Evangelism is the first step in helping people become disciples. Matthew 28:19-20 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Evangelism happens as we are going. Then we complete the process of making disciples as we help them to identify with Christ and His body and then teach them to obey all that Christ commanded. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:6, we read, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” In this verse, we see that the Thessalonians became true disciples of Christ. We see that this process happened in their lives because Paul, Silvanus and Timothy were concerned to help them become mature Christians and not just make decisions for Christ. In Matthew 28:19-20, we have one command, “Make Disciples” and three action words that tell how to carry out that command: going; baptizing; and teaching them to obey all that Christ commanded. That is exactly what these men did to help the new Christians in Thessalonica grow spiritually.

First, we see that those three men provided an example for the new Christians to follow. New Christians do not know how to follow the Lord in many areas of their lives. Paul and the other New Testament Christians realized that they must provide an example for new Christians to follow, especially as they took the Gospel to areas where many of those becoming new Christians did not have a Jewish background where they were familiar with the Old Testament. In addition, whether the new Christians were Jews or Gentiles, none of them were familiar with the teachings of Christ.

As a result, they had to take these new Christians with them and show them how to live as well as teach them what Christ taught. Acts 17:3-4 tells about the ministry of Paul and the team in Thessalonica. In those verses, we read that Paul was, “Explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’ And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.” We will see in more detail in two later topics from 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 that Paul, Silas and Timothy provided the love of a nursing mother and the example of a godly father to help these new Christians grow.

Christ took the disciples through a five-stage process to help them grow, mature and become disciples. This five-stage process included, Four Calls and a Commission. We will give a summary of that process here since Christ told the disciples in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” This commandment was only given after Christ had spent more than three years showing them by His

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example how He loved them. We see that Christ prepared them for the time when He would return to heaven by giving the following calls and commission:

Call One – Come and See – John 1:39-46

Christ invited the men that would later become His disciples to just go places with Him and see how He lived and what He taught (this period lasted for almost one year). During this period, Christ just invited the future disciples to observe Him as He led them by love. Christ ministered in love as the disciples observed.

Call Two – Come and Grow – Mark 1:16-20

Christ invited the disciples to a new level of commitment as He invited them to go with Him so that He could show them how to become fishers of men (this period lasted for about nine months). During this period, Christ gave the disciples the opportunity to begin to participate in ministry with Him. Christ ministered in love as the disciples both observed and participated.

Call Three – Come and Serve – Mark 3:13-14

Christ invited the disciples to a new level of commitment as He invited them to come and be with Him and also sent them out to preach (this period lasted for the final twenty-one months before the death and resurrection of Christ). During this period, Christ sent out the twelve and later the seventy for tours of ministry. During this period, in addition to ministering in love as the disciples both observed and participated, Christ also gave the disciples the opportunity to do while He observed and encouraged.

Call Four – Come and Shepherd – John 21:15-17

Christ had already told the disciples that He was returning to heaven and had made them full partners in ministry with Him. Here, Christ told them that as full partners in ministry, they were to feed His sheep and shepherd His flock. Christ said that they would now provide an example to others, as He had done for them, and that He would continue to serve them from heaven.

The Commission – As you are going Make Disciples – John 20:21, Matthew 28:19-20

Christ sent them out to reproduce their lives in others in the same way that Christ had reproduced His life in them. They were now equipped to become the heads of spiritual households (definition of a disciple in Matthew 13:52) and reproduce other heads of spiritual households (definition of a reproducing disciple - 2 Timothy 2:2).

Paul, Silas and Timothy had followed this same process in Thessalonica. Even though they were forced to leave Thessalonica because of persecution, Paul and the team had done the same things that Christ had done in equipping the Thessalonian Christians to become disciples. They had shown these Christians by example how to live as Christ lived and love as Christ loved. In fact, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase

more and more.” These new disciples had learned to love as Christ loved them from example.

Second, we see that the new disciples in Thessalonica had become followers of the Lord. Just as Christ had helped the original disciples learn to follow Him, Paul and the team had helped these new disciples learn to follow Christ. Even though the team had been forced to leave because of persecution, the Thessalonian disciples knew how to follow the Lord. As we will see in our next topic, they were now helping others learn to follow the Lord as they became reproducing Christians.

Third, we see that the Thessalonians also suffered much affliction as they learned to follow and serve the Lord. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-6 says, “Which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you.” Because Paul knew that was true he prepared Christians in every place for persecution. Acts 14:22 says, “...strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’” The reason that Paul and those who traveled with him prepared every Christian for tribulation and persecution was due to the fact that they wanted them to see that the Lord would go with them through those times. This is an essential lesson that all Christians need to learn if they are going to be effective as they serve the Lord and not give up when opposition comes.

Fourth, we see that the Thessalonian Christians had also learned that the Lord had given them the privilege to minister to others and shepherd them. We see this ministry of shepherding other Christians in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 where we read, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.” Here, we see that the Thessalonian Christians had been taught by God to love others. As a result, they had learned to minister in love to other Christians throughout the region of Macedonia.

Fifth, we see in the verses just quoted that the Thessalonian Christians also realized that the Lord had commissioned them to make disciples in other areas. We see that they were already reaching out to others throughout the entire region of Macedonia. At the same time, we see that Paul and the team were encouraging them to reach out even more as they shared the love of Christ with others. In addition to loving those who had already placed their trust in Christ, they were also encouraged to continue to share their faith wherever they went. 1 Thessalonians 1:8 says, “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.” The Thessalonians were making a real impact for Christ wherever they went.

Just as Paul understood the process that Christ had used to make disciples and had followed that

same process with the Thessalonians and others, we also want to help our children learn to work with the Holy Spirit to make disciples. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to work with the Holy Spirit to “Make Disciples”.