

Make Disciples 6

We spent the first four weeks of this series studying the particular ways that Jesus approached and dealt with individuals in one on one situations which led ultimately to a conversation regarding the kingdom of God and salvation. We also in week five looked at one of Jesus first generation students, Peter, and how he dealt one on one with someone who needed salvation.

There is much we have already learned to help us more confidently and effectively share the gospel as we go through our day.

*Passing through *Earthly to spiritual conversation

*No cookie cutter *Meet needs before presenting the gospel

*Be creative *Had a partner

*Moved with compassion *Gained an audience

Today we're going to look at what could accurately be called a second generation follower of Christ- Paul. Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus but did not have the advantage of following Jesus from town to town like the original disciples did. But Paul was obviously led by the Holy Spirit. The One promised by Jesus who said....

25 "I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. **26** But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and

remind you of everything I have told you. John 14:25-26
(HCSB)

Paul, led by the Spirit, went from town to town on his church planting journeys creatively presenting the gospel to groups and individuals resulting in many coming to Christ and churches being started. He had gone to Thessalonica where he was accused of “turning the world upside down” because he preached the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Some turned to Christ but the Jews became jealous and stirred up a mob against them. Paul and Silas escaped in the dark of night and went to Beroea. There people were more open to them and their message and many became true followers of Christ. Things were going well until the Jews in Thessalonica heard about it and sent a mob to Beroea and stirred things up there also. Once again they fled for their lives. The team was split up. Silas and Timothy stayed awhile longer but Paul went to Athens.

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was troubled within him when he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with those who worshiped God, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Then also, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers argued with him. Some said, “What is this pseudo-intellectual trying to say?” Others replied, “He

seems to be a preacher of foreign deities”—because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, and said, “May we learn about this new teaching you’re speaking of? ²⁰ For what you say sounds strange to us, and we want to know what these ideas mean.” ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners residing there spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new.

²² Then Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect. ²³ For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it—He is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in shrines made by hands. ²⁵ Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one

man He has made every nation of men to live all over the earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live, ²⁷ so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' ²⁹ Being God's offspring, then, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination. ³⁰ "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because He has set a day on which He is going to judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead." ³² When they heard about resurrection of the dead, some began to ridicule him. But others said, "We will hear you about this again." ³³ So Paul went out from their presence. ³⁴

However, some men joined him and believed, among

whom were Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them. Acts 17:16-34 (HCSB)

Lessons from Paul:

Observant/troubled- city was full of idols

Paul had originally gone to Athens to escape his own trouble. People wanted to kill him. His team was split up. The brand new believers in Thessalonica and Berea were without a shepherd. And Paul was alone..... But, instead of hiding, cowering in fear, and whining to God about how horrible the ministry was going, he, on his own, began to circulate among the people, looking, listening, observing the sights, the sounds, and the culture. His conclusion- This was a spiritually hungry city, but they were lost, confused and misguided. They were so desperate for the truth that they even made an idol for the “unknown God.”

Application- We need to go through life maybe a little, or a lot, less concerned about our own schedule, trouble, needs, and priorities and be more observant of the needs of people around us. We miss so much!

³ Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. ⁴

Everyone should look out not [only] for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil 2:3-4 (HCSB)

When was the last time you were “troubled” or “moved with compassion” about something or someone you saw while you were out doing your thing?

Made connection- Paul “reasoned” with Jews, worshippers, and those in the marketplace. Some opposed him but some at least became curious and eventually invited him to the Areopagus where Athenian intellectuals and truth seekers gathered to hear something new.

In Athens, Paul performed no miracle nor did he meet any particular human need that we know of. In Athens his unique witnessing tool of choice was reason. He reasoned with the Jews, worshippers, and those in the marketplace. Why? Because that’s what Athenians did. Paul was accused of being a pseudo-intellect because he was trying to meet the very lost people of Athens where they were. Reasoning, saying and hearing new things, was their thing.

Application: One of the most important things we need to do individually and as a church, whether trying to reach Cape Coral with the gospel or Atlanta, Antigua, Quiebra

Hacha or anywhere else, is to find out where the people are, spiritually and culturally, and then determine what type of ministry, activity or conversation would most likely open up the door for us to enter discussion about spiritual things.

Whether it's one on one conversations, sports, picnics, paying bills, medical/dental clinics, home or car repairs, "line dancing," bible studies, meals, checkers or reasoning..... these things help tear down the barriers between us and those who desperately need what we have...Jesus. Consider Paul's self-sacrificial attitude for the sake of the gospel.....

19 For although I am free from all people, I have made myself a slave to all, in order to win more people. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win those under the law. ²¹ To those who are outside the law, like one outside the law—not being outside God's law, but under the law of Christ—to win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all

people, so that I may by all means save some. ²³ Now I do all this because of the gospel, that I may become a partner in its benefits. **1** Cor 9:19-23 (HCSB)

This, in Paul's case, was not, and in our case, should not be a deceptive put-on to deceive people into thinking we are something that we are not. Instead, it should be a sincere attempt to walk in the shoes of the people whom we sincerely, lovingly, compassionately, care about for the kingdom of God's sake. It may be studying the language, observing and adapting to customs, coming along side in work, helping, serving or even playing. These things help us to connect to the people we are trying to reach. If we don't connect, if we don't gain their trust and respect, the message, no matter how urgent and true, will fall on deaf ears.

Attracted a crowd/presented Christ- It seems Paul had for the most part gone around Athens just trying to start up creative, spiritual conversations with individuals, one on one, with an added intellectual, philosophical flare with them knowing that this would help people to open up to him and his message. Though Paul certainly would most accurately be classified as an evangelist preacher, he wasn't so egotistical that he would only speak of Christ if

he had a certain sized crowd assembled. Speaking one on one with people about Christ seems to have been quite satisfactory to Paul. If it led to a crowd, that was fine but not a prerequisite. In this case, it led to a crowd.

Application- I believe that one on one, person to person, face to face, evangelism is the most effective and appropriate means of presenting the gospel and building the kingdom of God, not fancy buildings, glorious worship, and dynamic preaching. It is God's people, as they go through their daily lives, frequently and passionately sharing the Good News of Jesus with their family, neighbors, friends, coworkers, and strangers. Of the well over 200 people we have baptized since our inception no more than a handful have made their decision to follow Christ in a "regular" worship gathering. Most all the rest were saved in one on one or smaller group settings. And even in group settings, like VBS, the first thing we do when someone responds to the gospel message is assign them to a one on one counselor.

We must find the courage and creativity to look out and speak up for the kingdom of God as we go through our daily activities. Being observant and moved with compassion, using creative language and activities, pivoting conversation to spiritual things, meeting human needs, and meeting people where they are we will be fruitful if we are faithful. And some day, if we remain faithful, we may find ourselves attracting a crowd because we are so full of love and light and truth that people are drawn to us.

My experience quite a few years ago on Venezuela will forever be stamped on my memory as we were just out knocking on doors, sharing the gospel, when one house we came had a yard full of people. They heard we were coming and invited all their neighbors to hear what the American had to say. I did not expect to do any more than try to witness to one person or at most a family, but because we were faithful, God gave us a much larger audience and a much greater harvest. But, had we not been willing to go to where the people were, their homes, several dozen people would have missed hearing the gospel, possibly for eternity.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. **Matt** 5:14-16 (HCSB)