Lessons from the Third World

In my search to understand why the Church is growing in many third-world countries and in places where there is rampant persecution of followers of Jesus, I read two books this summer: *Killing Christians* by Tom Doyle and *Miraculous Movements* by Jerry Trousdale. I highly recommend both. My two take-away’s were (1) the need for more strategic prayer and (2) disciple-making that focuses on obedience not just teaching.

Strategic prayer is a way of life among Christians in these parts of the world. They spend hours in prayer: weekly all-night prayer, regular times of prayer during the week, and times of fasting and praying each month. These followers of Jesus are dependent on God for everything and their prayer life shows it. They understand the spiritual warfare that is going on and know that only God can be victorious.

As we know, making disciples is the last command that Jesus gave us as his disciples. And in these books, disciple-making seemed to be the main focus of Christ-followers. The goal was Christ-likeness and they discipled others through the Bible with the main focus on obedience. In their study of the Word, they understood Christ to be calling them to teach one another to obey the Word of God. The result of their study of the Word was to learn what truth they needed to apply to their lives in the coming week and return next week sharing how they were obedient. The focus was not on learning the truth only, but obeying the truth. Since the goal of disciple-making is obedience, then learning the truth is not enough. It is just the start of the disciple-making process. As I pondered this, I looked back across my ministry and realized that much of what I had called disciple-making was just helping the individual learn the truth. I did little to follow up on their obedience. Therefore, many time obedience became an option. But God has called us to “teach them to obey all that I commanded you.”

So how do I refine our disciple-making process? I am convinced that strategic prayer and disciple-making focused on obedience are very important for spiritual health and growth in our churches. What steps do we need to take, as leaders, to make sure we are actively practicing these spiritual disciplines?

- How are we as leaders modeling strategic prayer and obedience-focused disciple-making?
- What is the prayer life of our church? How do we measure it?
- Does our prayer life show our great dependence on our God and our great need for Him?
- What is your definition of disciple-making? Is the focus obedience or knowledge?
- How many people are you personally discipling?
- Knowing that our sermons set the environment for disciple-making, what do we need to do to ensure the focus on obedience?
- What metrics in our churches do we have to clearly give us a good picture of our church’s prayer life and our disciple-making focus?

I believe that our strategic prayer life and disciple-making that is focused on obedience will have a great effect on our ministries. Please ponder these questions with me and let’s see how God will advance His Kingdom through us.

--Dan Moose
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