

Making More Disciples

Ppt 1. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

Matthew 28: 19-20

That my friends is our calling, our commission our job description as friends and followers of Jesus. It is our personal calling and it is the calling of the Church. It has always been a particular calling of Methodist Christians.

We'll think about this a bit more in a moment but first to honour our ecumenical friends and partners it's important to say that in recent years Christians of all traditions have rediscovered or reemphasised the crucial call of discipleship.

Ppt 2. In his 2015 Lambeth lecture, Archbishop Justin Welby said this:-

I want to start by saying just two simple sentences about the church. First, the church exists to worship God in Jesus Christ.

Second, the Church exists to make new disciples of Jesus Christ. Everything else is decoration. Some of it may be very necessary, useful, or wonderful decoration – but its decoration.¹

Now Archbishop Justin did go on to point out there are many other things that it is important to be involved with including campaigning for social justice and working for reconciliation – and this evening we are going to focus on our calling to serve as part of the One Mission we share in. But rhetorically Justin was making a strong point about the primacy of worship and making disciples in the calling of the Church.

¹ archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5515/lambeth-lectures-archbishop-justin-on-evangelism-video

Ppt 3. In the URC Walking the Way explores what it means to actively follow, learn from be transformed by – Christ. The URC website explains that,

‘It’s for everyone at any stage of the Christian journey – whoever you are, whatever your existing relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church is, whatever your personal circumstances. It’s for you whether you have been following Jesus for five days or five decades.

While there’s nothing new about being a disciple of Christ, we’re confident that there is something new about Walking the Way in its accessible approach and in the wide range of supporting resources produced and planned’.

The URC have incorporated Holy Habits that we will come to later into Walking the Way as a prime way of Growing Followers of Jesus.

So the call to discipleship and the call to Grow Followers of Jesus is a call for *all* Christians.

In the context of British Methodist Christianity the crucial place of discipleship has been reaffirmed time and again over the past decade or so not least by a succession of Presidents of Conference.

- **Ppt 4.** Martyn Atkins (President in 2007/08) argued that Methodism is a Discipleship Movement Shaped for Mission and wrote Discipleship and the People called Methodists in 2014 whilst serving as General Secretary. In it he argues that Methodist Christian discipleship is
 - rooted in and focussed on Jesus Christ,
 - resourced by the Spirit of God,
 - is both life-long and whole-life,
 - communal rather than solitary,
 - committed to transforming and serving ‘the world’,
 - locally, nationally and globally
 - and so is lived out on a ‘big map’,

- all offered as worship to God as loving obedience – again all of these values of discipleship are integral to HH to which we will return.
- **Ppt 5** 2015/16 Steve Wild. Prevenient Grace. In his year as the President of the Methodist Conference, Steve experienced God’s prevenient grace again and again with different encounters he had with people, handing them a small wooden cross as he prayed with them.

And he’s still at it. On Monday this week he posted this on Facebook

I caught the train to Nottingham it was a squash - two carriages short, we were like sardines. The woman I got talking with was brought up in Texas and is studying at Nottingham University We had over an hour and half to talk. The Holy Spirit was at work prevenient grace – Hallelujah. And yes it happens to HER I led her to Christ she took the cross.... One issue she has was the way the Church treats women. I said that our head person is a woman and then as we came out of the station she met and shook hands with our President Loraine Mellor not bad work of the Lord.

- Be open to the God of surprises as you seek to Grow Followers of Jesus.
- **Ppt 6 2016/17** Roger Walton, Disciples Together. 4 Formative energies that nurture the growth of Followers of Jesus.
 1. Mission. (Mark) – do stuff. Walton’s major emphasis. Mark3.14 Croft. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out.
 2. Worship. Luke.
 3. Intentional Community. John.

4. Teaching/Learning Matthew. Supportive of the others. (Walton Christian Educator) mathetes one who learns *as* they follow. Loop back to Mark 3.14. Active Learning.

- **Ppt 7 2017/18** Loraine Mellor and Jill Baker – quote from One Mission magazine.
- Day by Day leaflets.

Ppt 8 CONVERSATION. Four perspectives on discipleship and Growing Followers of Jesus. Which Resonates with you?

Ppt 9 A fifth perspective that contains many elements of the other four perspectives that we have been looking at. And the fifth perspective is that offered by Holy Habits.

Ppt 10 Holy Habits comes from Luke's portrait of the early Church in Acts 2.42-47 the passage from which the holy habits vision has emerged. A vision that is all about forming disciples.

Ppt 11. Read Acts 2.42-47.

In developing what has become known as Holy Habits I was struck by the comments on this passage of two eminent Methodist Biblical scholars. The first....

Ppt 12. James Dunn. **Read quote.**

Reading this quote got me thinking. If James is right then what if we were to deliberately seek to live as those first disciples lived, personally, in community and in engagement with the world? And in particular to shape our lives personally and collectively by the practices or habits we see in Acts 2. Could we

see enthusiastic spiritual renewal in our day? Could we see fruitful growth in the number of followers of Jesus and in the discipleship of those followers?

Take a little time to reflect on that phrase - enthusiastic spiritual renewal. Note how our word enthusiasm has its roots in the Greek words *en theos*. This is about a Godly, Spirit filled way of life not a collection of worthy but short lived activities.

Ppt 13. CK Barrett

The Great Methodist Biblical scholar CK Barrett argues that in Acts 2 Luke is offering us a model for Christian living for Christian discipleship. Yes it is an idealistic model in the first four chapters of Acts. Then the arguments and issues begin to appear but they do not deny the ideal.

➤ **Note this is a way of living to be lived in all aspects of life.....**

If Barrett is right, and if his friend and colleague James Dunn is right in saying that whenever we see the Spirit renewing the life of the Church we see the Acts 2 picture re-emerging, then maybe it shouldn't surprise us that when people reengage with Acts 2.42-47 we find renewed enthusiasm for and fruitfulness in Growing Followers of Jesus.

So what are the holy habits that are so crucial and effective for the formation of Christian disciples?

Ppt 14-23

Ppt 24

Notice how Luke ends the passage and the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Many biblical commentators, who note that the kind of Christian community Luke presents in Acts 2 is in itself highly conducive to Making More Disciples. As David Watson puts it, 'it is not surprising with such a

community of disciples bound together in love that God added to their number, day by day those who were being saved'²

After all who wouldn't want to be part of a community that is:

- noted for having glad and generous hearts
- that gives to any who has need
- That eats together, breaks bread together
- is full of praise and prayer

Years ago people thought the journey of someone becoming a follower of Jesus required a pattern of believing and behaving before one could be fully part of the community of disciples we call church.

Today this thinking has been reversed in the light of research that the pathway is much more likely to begin with blessing, then belonging as people are welcomed with their questions and doubts. As people begin to share with others so they adopt the behaviours of the community before coming to place of believing or commitment. Bless, belong, behave, believe.

And the more the community is like the portrait that Luke presents in Acts 2 the more effective that community will be in making more disciples. The Greek word for disciple - mathetes - literally means one who learns as they follow. And people learn best how to be a disciple by following Jesus with others who are on the same journey – others who will bless them and encourage them.

Ppt 25 Telford Carousel.

² (*Discipleship*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1981, p. 37).

Ppt 26. A moment to reflect on the Habits. To do this play a short video..... In this you will see many of the themes we thought of from our review of the various Presidential Perspectives and many of the holy habits in action. Watch and notice which of the habits you see.

Ppt 27 Video.

Ppt 28 Discussion.

Ppt 29. Why all of this matters. It matters because it is helping to Grow Followers of Jesus. Jane.

Ppt 30. Welsh Story

Ppt 31. Why might this be happening?

Ppt 32. Two Resources to help you. Other good resources are available! And at the end of the day the Resources can help but it is the openness to the love of God, the call of Jesus and the power of the Spirit that really matters.

Ppt 33. Conclusion

Go and Make Disciples says Jesus. Growing Followers of Jesus is what we are about says the Sheffield Methodist Circuit. May God bless you, envision you and enable you as you seek to do that in these days.