

Dsc03 – Following Jesus With One Another – Acts 2:42

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Let's pray right up front today. *Lord Jesus, we need to hear your Word. We need the truths of your Word to be lit alive by your Spirit in our lives. Lord, we come today to be transformed, to be conformed even to your death. To be transformed into your image. To hear you speak, to sense your touch, and to become more like you, Lord. And so, we give you the right to point out, to convict, exhort, encourage and equip us today, that we would be more and more followers of you, Lord. We pray you would show it to us now for your glory and in your name, Jesus, amen.*

In our church culture (and for some time now) it's been important for a church to have a mission statement. A church's mission statement is meant to clearly define a church's vision and purpose (why they exist). I believe our mission statement is one of the simplest and purest mission statements I've ever seen. Here it is:

WORSHIP – PROCLAIM – DISCIPLE

We are MADE to WORSHIP God

That's what we are made for *INDIVIDUALLY*

That's what this *CHURCH* is made for

We are CALLED to PROCLAIM the Lord Jesus

Because the Power to *SAVE*

and the *power* to *eternally TRANSFORM* a life *is in* the **Name of Jesus Christ ALONE**

We are COMMISSIONED to Go and Make DISCIPLES

That was our **last** and **ongoing command** given by our **LORD** and *Commander in Chief* Jesus Christ

We are –

MADE to WORSHIP

CALLED to PROCLAIM His Name

COMMISSIONED to Make DISCIPLES

THAT is why we exist

To that end we have *two* mission statement scriptures.

Philippians 3:10 (NKJV)

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

We want to KNOW him – that’s *worship* and make him KNOWN – that’s *proclaiming* his name.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT)

18 So all of us who have had that veil (of unbelief) removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

We *BECOME* disciples and we *MAKE* disciples as we see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And we are *TRANSFORMED* as the Holy Spirit makes us more and more like Jesus.

To KNOW HIM and to BE TRANSFORMED by him. That’s what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

A DISCIPLE is someone who walks *so closely* with the Lord that they *see* and begin to *reflect* his glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). And as the Holy Spirit works in their life they become *more and more LIKE Jesus* – as they are changed into *his* image.

That is an expansion of the definition I gave in the first message which Grant also addressed last week.

So, when do we get to the *HOW*? The information alone is worthless. We have got to get to the point where we say, how do I make that happen in my life? How do I become a disciple like that where I am knowing him better, where I am being changed into his image more and more?

Well, we never “fully” get to the how because it is a journey. It is always going to be a process of *knowing Jesus more* and it’s always going to be a process of being more and more *transformed into his image*.

But today I want to begin to unfold what we believe to be the best environment for the *how* to actually happen in your life. I want to begin to make clear what we see in the Bible of *how* believers *become disciples* and *how* disciples *make disciples*. NOT what best-selling book did Paul buy to give to Timothy. NOT what coolest conference James and John went to where they learned how to dress and do their hair from a *polished motivational speaker*. I want to talk about the *foundational daily environment* that was the greenhouse for turning *regular believers* into *radical disciples*.

Are you ready for the environment that we clearly see in the Bible for *HOW God made disciples*? You have to be ready for it or you’ll miss it because it’s only two words. The

foundational environment that became the laboratory for turning *regular believers* into *radical disciples* was -INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Intentional relationships.

That is what God used to set the world on fire for the glory of his name.

Purposeful, intentional relationships!

That was God used to take the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth.

Purposeful – Intentional – Relationships!

Not the latest “program”

Not the hippest “conference”

Not the “3 Easy Steps to Disciple Making” book

Not any of that – but instead

something *you can get* right here in Nuevo, Ca and
something *you can start* to establish today.

The greenhouse where *true disciples* are grown, the laboratory that turns *regular believers* into *radical disciples* is: Purposeful – Intentional – Relationships.

Let’s turn over to Acts Chapter 2. Here’s the run up.

#1) Jesus delivers the *Great Commission* in Matthew 28:18-20 commanding us to *go and make disciples*.

#2) Then in Acts 1 Jesus tells his disciples to “do not do a thing” until the Holy Spirit comes upon them and then Jesus ascends back to heaven.

#3) Acts Chapter 2 – the believers are praying together and the Holy Spirit is poured out on them.

#4) And immediately Peter steps up and delivers a truly Spirit-filled sermon. And you’ve heard about the “tongues of fire” in Acts Chapter 2? Well, Peter’s tongue was definitely on fire as he delivered that sermon.

#5) And at the end of the very first sermon of the New Testament church we read the following in Acts 2:41.

Acts 2:41 (NLT)

41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

#6) Then in the very next verse, immediately after the first 3,000 believers were added to the church we read this:

Acts 2:42 (NLT)

42 All the believers devoted themselves (purposeful and intentional) ***to the apostles' teaching*** (for us, the Bible), ***and to fellowship*** (Koinonia), ***and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper)*** (relationship building), ***and to prayer*** (sharing each other's burdens)

Immediately the first 3,000 believers in the New Testament church developed Purposeful – Intentional – Relationships.

They immediately devoted themselves to
Studying God's Word
Fellowship (sharing everyday life together)
Eating meals together (relationship building)
Prayer (with and for each other)

They immediately entered Purposeful – Intentional – Relationships – *with one another.*

And it was *in* these intentional relationships that the new believers came to *know God* and *be transformed* by the Holy Spirit.

And what was the immediate result of this relationship community of new believers?
Let's just read on.

Acts 2:43–47 (NLT)

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.

44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had.

45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.

46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—

47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

WOW!!!

You want to know how God started the Church? I'll tell you... It just so happened that there was this super hip church planting conference in Jerusalem that weekend. They had all the best speakers and worship teams and they were selling the NEWEST Church-

Planting Program – and you get a big discount on it if attending the conference and so Jesus had Pre-Bought tickets for 3,000, before the price went up – (plus he got the group discount) and so all 3,000 new believers attended the conference together and their lives were changed forever – THE END!

NO!!! That is NOT how the Church started! Instead, the first 3,000 new believers in the Church immediately began purposeful – intentional – relationships with other new believers. The greenhouse that caused these new believers to grow and the greenhouse that caused the New Testament church to explode was every believer being devoted to Purposeful – Intentional – Relationships *with* other believers.

And guys, that plan (the one that God used to start the New Testament church) has *never* changed.

Grant addressed this week when he told the story of Steven and the spread of the believers in Acts 6 (and following). Let me make this connection from Acts 2 to Acts 6. In Acts Chapter 6 Steven is martyred and everyone is saying, “Yikes! We’ve got to split before we die too!” That was all God’s plan. And so, the persecution, especially under Saul, caused many of these 3,000 believers to spread.

Well, what had happened from Acts 2 to Acts 6? They had been placed in purposeful – intentional – relationships with other believers. And so, when God dropped the persecution bomb to spread the church what did these new believers do when they went to Antioch (for instance)? What did they do? They formed purposeful – intentional – relationships with the other believers that also went to Antioch and those relationships became the church. Right? That’s it. That’s how it really, really happens.

Regular believers who by Acts Chapter 6 were being *sent out to go and make disciples!* And as they did, the New Testament church took off! *That’s how it happened.*

Okay, listen please. I’m going to be very transparent with you. In 1992, 26 years ago, we started our first church with this exact approach (using Acts 2:42). But then, as a church, we drifted away from it (running church). And then in 2001, 17 years ago, we started *this* church with this exact approach (using Acts 2:42) and as a church we have *drifted away from it* more than once.

And the sad thing is – it’s not hard to define why or how we’ve drifted away. I stated it clearly in the first message of this series. But I wasn’t talking about *those other churches*. I was talking about *this here church*.

Here's the quote (from me) from that first message (which Grant referred to again last week). There is a classic "rut" that churches in our culture almost *always* fall into and that is being consumed with *running the church* but thinking we are *making disciples*.

But the question can never be "Are we *running the church*?" The question must always be "Are we *making disciples*?"

And not just making disciples but making disciples who make disciples! Which is why Grant's title last week was so long – "Every Disciple Making Disciples Who Make Disciples".

Now, since I am being transparent, let me continue in that vein. I've got 26 hard years into starting and running churches and I don't know how many years I have left. My family and I have faced the attacks of hell for the sake of heaven and we are all still standing strong (and I thank God for that – every day).

But here is the one thing I know for certain, when my season is over, I want to be found making *sold out, all-in, fully committed followers of Jesus Christ*. Because that is the only thing that my Lord and my Commander-in-Chief has commissioned me to do – *go and make disciples!*

And so, here at Calvary Chapel Nuevo, we are going to continue to make *fully committed followers of Jesus Christ WHO MAKE fully committed followers of Jesus Christ* – disciples!

And without a doubt the number one way God designed for that to happen is in purposeful – intentional – relationships *with one another!*

Focusing on "following Jesus with one another" let me re-read **Greg Ogden's** definition of discipling with slight adjustments as we begin to make it our own.

Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside each other in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another, in love, to grow toward transformation in Christ - and prepare to make other disciples.

So – what does it look like for *you* to be in: *an intentional relationship* preferably two other Christians – in order to *encourage, equip and challenge ONE ANOTHER, in love, to grow toward transformation in Christ* – and prepare to make other disciples.

Well, first, it's *intentional*, meaning it is *on purpose* – it has a specific intention.

Next, it is *relational* – meaning it occurs *as* we get to *know* one another and *as* we get to *trust* one another *as* we are *learning* to follow Jesus *WITH* one another.

Finally, IN this intentional relationship with one another, we ***encourage, equip and CHALLENGE one another, in love, to grow toward transformation in Christ***

And believe me, right there – at that phrase – CHALLENGE one another in love, right there is where I’ve seen these discipling relationships collapse so many times! Because we’re all great friends with each other right up until that person dares to challenge me, *even in love, to grow toward transformation in Christ.*

How could they? They didn’t support my fleshy (or sinful) feelings or actions so I’m out of here! – Bunch of jerks!

And so, it’s critically important in this intentional discipling relationship that we have a covenant agreement – a mutual covenant agreement where we EXPECT to be *encouraged, equipped and challenged, in love, to grow toward transformation in Christ.*

We show up expecting to get some encouragement from one another, get some equipping from one another and be challenged in love by one another to grow in transformation in Christ.

In this way we learn to “follow Jesus – with one another”.

So, in these intentional discipling relationships we like groups of three. And in these groups of three people there are three necessary ingredients. Drawing again from **Greg Ogden** in his book “Transforming Discipleship”.

The three necessary ingredients are:

God’s Word

Transparent Trust

Mutual Accountability.

#1) We center this intentional relationship on God’s Word ONLY – NOT our own opinions and NOT the world’s opinions.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NLT)

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. – God’s Word is Supernaturally POWERFUL

A discipleship group must be centered on *applying God's Word* in a way that will *actually transform* our lives. And the second and third ingredients are designed to *allow God's Word* to DO its transforming work on our lives.

#2) We grow in our transparent trust of one another which takes time and a serious commitment to *confidentiality*. Discipleship must be done in *trusting relationships* where we grow in our *transparent trust* of one another. This takes a huge commitment, especially to *confidentiality*.

#3) We commit to *mutual accountability*, in love in order to be *transformed* by the Holy Spirit. We go in with the commitment that centered on God's Word and growing in trust of one another we will allow our fellow disciples to point out, in love, the places we may need to focus our transformation in order to become more like Christ. And we commit to not throw a fit when we are lovingly held accountable to actually applying God's Word to our lives.

So, as we move toward re-laying the foundation of *actually making disciples* in this church, I just want to ask you today, *are you in?* Do you have a desire to KNOW Jesus Christ? To know the POWER of his resurrection? And the FELLOWSHIP of his suffering? And do you desire to be transformed into his image by the power of *his Holy Spirit*? If you do, I want to ask you to make a commitment today to become a disciple (a follower) of Jesus Christ.

It begins with a prayer of repentance and faith and continues with a commitment to follow Jesus as your Lord and if you'd like to make that commitment today, I want to pray with you.

Let's pray. *Lord, this is so critical. But Lord the commitment can't be flippant. Can't be in the moment. It's for life. Lord, I had no idea on April 29th 1979 when I gave you my life, I had no idea what it might mean. When my family sat around a table, Lord, and said "we're all in, all of us, no matter what" we had no idea. But Lord, you have enabled us, by your grace, to follow you every day. And's that's what I am asking for this church to do. To follow you every day.*

Would you make that commitment today? Would you say, *Okay, Lord, this is it. I'm about to commit to you to follow you every day, to grow in my relationship, to know you better and to be transformed by you.*

And would you right now if you would commit to that, would you just raise your hand for me? Not for my eyes, but for your own heart. That there would be some physical

response that you would say, yes Lord, see my hand. I will follow you. I will learn to know you better. I will commit to relationships that will help me follow you and I will cling tight to you no matter what the days ahead hold. Lord Jesus, make us disciples. Fill us, Lord. Provide a way, a plan, a place for us to follow you together with one another. Thank you for it, Lord. Be glorified in our lives. In your name, Jesus, we pray, amen.