

Every Action Must Follow This One Thing

How can you help your church transition from passive worship-service attenders to active Jesus-serving disciples?

The failure to follow the Lord's command to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 stands as possibly the single most glaring act of negligence by the Church today.

This neglect has led to many well-intentioned families to think of themselves as an audience to be entertained at the church, rather than an army to be deployed from church.

Discipleship must function as the heartbeat of church ministry inside of every Sunday gathering and ministry program.

Solution #1: Seeing that actions always follow belief

THE QUICK SUMMARY - [The Great Omission](#), by Dallas Willard

The last command Jesus gave the church before he ascended to heaven was the Great Commission, the call for Christians to "make disciples of all the nations." But Christians have responded by making "Christians," not "disciples." This, according to brilliant scholar and renowned Christian thinker Dallas Willard, has been the church's Great Omission.

According to Willard, the word disciple occurs 269 times in the New Testament, but the word "Christian" is found three times. The disciple of Jesus stands on the pages of the New Testament as the first level of basic transportation in the Kingdom of God.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

A look across the church landscape today reveals an almost insidious assumption: that people can be "Christians" forever and never become disciples. People in many churches in Western culture look at the Great Commission as something to be carried out somewhere else, particularly other countries. The assumption is that we don't need "it" because we are basically right to begin with.

That assumption leads down a dead-end path of totally misunderstanding what it means to be a disciple of Christ, and how to become one.

However we may understand the details, there can be no doubt, on the biblical picture of human life, that we were meant to be inhabited by God and to live a power beyond ourselves.

First, there is absolutely nothing in what Jesus himself or his early followers taught that suggests you can decide to just to enjoy forgiveness at Jesus' expense and have nothing more to do with him. How could one actually trust him for forgiveness of sins

while not trusting him for much more than that?

Second, if we do not become His apprentices in Kingdom living, we remain locked in defeat so far as our moral intentions are concerned. That is where most professing Christians find themselves today. People, generally, choose to sin. But, even so, no one wants to be a sinner.

Third, only avid discipleship to Christ through the Spirit brings the inward transformation of thought, feeling, and character that “cleans the inside of the cup (Matthew 23:25) and “makes the tree good” (Matthew 12:33). As we study with Jesus we increasingly become on the inside exactly what we are on the outside, where actions and moods and attitudes visibly play over our body, alive in its social context. An amazing simplicity will take over our lives – a simplicity that is really just transparency.

Finally, for the one who makes sure to walk as close to Jesus as possible there comes the reliable exercise of a power that is beyond them in dealing with the problems and evils that afflict earthly existence. Jesus is actually looking for people he can trust with his power.

Dallas Willard, [*The Great Omission*](#)

A NEXT STEP

A mind obscured by excuses may see discipleship as a mystery, or even something to be dreaded. But becoming a disciple – desiring and intending to be like someone – is a very common thing. If we really intend to be like Christ, it should be obvious to everyone around us.

Evaluate the health and effectiveness of your church’s current discipleship ministry.

- What percentage of people who are active in your church are currently involved in discipleship ministry?
- What percentage of those are experiencing spiritual transformation?
- Is discipleship contained within the large group of our church or does it permeate into small groups?
- In what ways are people experiencing true relationships, a sense of community, because of your current discipleship ministry?
- In what ways are you and others in your church becoming more like Jesus because of your current discipleship ministry? Which areas are lacking?
- How effectively is your church’s discipleship ministry training believers to meet the needs of a hurting society?
- How are new leaders being raised up through your current discipleship ministry?

Discuss the implications of these questions with your leadership team. Outline 1-2 strategic actions to take in the next 4-6 weeks that increase health in areas of discipleship.

Excerpt taken from SUMS Remix 51-1, published October, 2016.

Part of a weekly series

[Regular daily reading of books](#) is an important part of my life. It even extends to my vocation, where as [Vision Room Curator](#) for [Auxano](#) I am responsible for publishing [SUMS Remix](#), a biweekly book “summary” for church leaders. Each Wednesday I will be taking a look back at previous issues of SUMS Remix and publishing an excerpt here.