

Introduction:

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (**Luke 6:40**, ESV). In context, Jesus is pointing out if we pick a bad teacher, we won’t be able to rise above it. When we follow the blind, we fall into the ditch with them. However, this principle also applies if we pick a good teacher. In fact, if we pick the Good Teacher, when we are fully trained, we will be just like Him. That is what discipleship is all about: being like Jesus. In fact, the term “Christian,” got started because it means “little Christ.” The fourth fundamental character trait we see in being little Christs is leading others to God. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one gets to the Father except through Him (**John 14:6**). In the main, that refers to the sacrifice He offered that opened the way for all of us into the Most Holy Place. At the same time, we see throughout Jesus’s life He was leading people to God. Perhaps one of the greatest examples of that is when Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well in **John 4**. Let’s examine that account and learn how Jesus and those who learn from Him will lead others to God.

Discussion:

I. Disciples make God’s work their food.

- A. I could, of course, just say leading others to God is really, really important to Jesus’s disciple. But the way Jesus words it in **John 4:31-34**, drives the point home with significant force. According to **John 4:1-6**, Jesus was traveling. He was weary and hungry. He decided to rest outside of the town by the well and send the apostles into the town to get some food. While He is waiting, a Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Jesus starts to talk to her. By the time this whole story is done, the woman is not only convinced Jesus is the coming Messiah, most of the Samaritan village is as well. Wow! Talk about leading others to God!
- B. Have you ever thought, though, how precarious this whole situation was from the beginning? Think of the contrast between Jesus and the apostles. The apostles actually walk into the town where all these prospective converts reside and don’t say a thing to anyone. Why? Because they were in town on a mission. Their minds were full of that mission. They were distracted by the desire, the need to eat. Not to mention, this was a village of Samaritans. Surely, these folks wouldn’t be prospects anyway. The apostles didn’t see potential disciples.
- C. Jesus, however, sitting by a well, tired and hungry, met one person, talked to her and an entire village is converted. What was the difference? In **John 4:31-34**, Jesus explains. His food is to accomplish the Father’s work. According to **Luke 19:10**, the Son of Man was sent into the world to seek and save the lost. Sure, Jesus needed actual, literal food to survive. But even more important than food to Jesus, was saving souls. Therefore, no matter what else was on Jesus’s mind, His main goal was to pass that gospel message along to one more person even if that person was a Samaritan woman living in immorality. Leading people to God was more than a fundamental desire for Jesus, it was a need even deeper than food.
- D. For most of us, our life’s mission is survival. We have jobs to pay bills and provide food. We’ve got events for our kids because we want them to grow up socialized and successful. We have plans for our future. Leading people to God is something we all want to do, if we have time, if the opportunity arises, but it is on the back-burner behind all these other distractions. Not for Jesus. His food was to do the will and work of the Father. My friend and fellow gospel preacher, Andy Cantrell, says there are four Cs surrounding disciple making: Care, Consciousness, Courage, and Craft. The latter three are important, but the most important, Cantrell says, and the one that seems to cause the biggest barrier is “Care.” If we get the “care” right, the others will almost assuredly follow. My brothers and sisters, our friends, co-workers, neighbors, even our family are lost and going to hell. Is that something to care about?
- E. But perhaps the most important thing for us to notice here is how being around Jesus impacted the woman. She came out to draw water. Having spent just a few moments with Jesus, she took off for the town to tell the villagers about this Man she met, but notice what she did with her water jar in **John 4:28**. She left it at the well. I don’t know how this Samaritan woman lived the rest of her life, but I know this: after spending just a few moments with the one whose food was to do the work of God, her drink became the exact same thing. For Jesus, food could wait. For the woman, water could wait. Jesus and the woman hungered and thirsted for the righteousness, the kingdom, the work of God, the salvation of lost and dying souls. May we grow in discipleship such that our greatest need is not to eat, but to lead others to God.

II. Disciples make personal connections.

- A. Jesus is tired and hungry. He is resting and waiting on lunch. Along comes one of the Samaritans to get some water from the well. Jesus's first step in this process is almost so simple we might miss it. Jesus simply starts a conversation with the woman (**John 4:7**). "Give me something to drink," He says. He makes a personal connection. It was nothing fancy, just starting a conversation. Can you do that? Of course, you can.
- B. The fact is you will never teach the gospel to someone or help someone grow as a disciple with whom you don't first make some kind of connection. I don't mean you have to wait until there is some really deep, personal connection to start leading people to God. I mean very simply before you can talk to someone about Jesus, you must first talk to them. The whole process starts by making an actual, personal connection.
- C. A disciple makes personal connections with anyone they can without prejudging where the connection will lead. Jesus knew this woman was a Samaritan. He knew she was living in immorality. He knew she was wrong about how and where to worship Yahweh. He still made the connection. In fact, while Jesus was not on a missionary trip to Samaria, He didn't do what most Jews would do. Most of them would bypass Samaria, crossing the Jordan in the south in Judea, traveling up on the east side of the Jordan and crossing back up in Galilee. But Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He didn't avoid the lost. We can't make personal connections with the lost if we avoid them.
- D. Of course, Jesus was on a missionary journey. All of His life was a missionary journey, if you will. However, I hope the point we see here is not so much that we need to go on missionary journeys to where people are who need to be led to God. Rather, we are surrounded by people who need to be led to God. Even here, in this room. Being led to God and being made a disciple is not just about conversion, it is about all of discipleship growth. We need to be led to God. Everyone around us needs to be led to God. Our part in that will begin by making personal connections. Smile at people. Talk to people. Listen to people. Invite people into your home. Have meals with them. Play games with them. Go places with them. Make personal connections.

III. Disciples start spiritual conversations.

- A. Jesus made the personal connection, but He didn't stop there. In **John 4:10**, Jesus took the connection to the next level by starting a spiritual conversation. I know this is the part we struggle with. I do, anyway. We think we have to wait for some fantastic right moment. But notice how Jesus handles this. He and this woman haven't become best friends. He didn't wait around for her to know how much He loves her or how much He cares. Further, He isn't an outstanding conversationalist here. Do you notice she asked Him a question and He pretty much ignored it? If an expert in small talk and relationship growth were to examine this conversation, I think she would probably declare Jesus a failure at this point. I'm not saying this to encourage you to steamroll your way into spiritual conversations with people. Nor am I suggesting you ignore polite, conversational etiquette. I just want you to see there is nothing "expert" about how Jesus handles this. He made a connection and when He saw even the remotest opening to start a spiritual conversation, He took it.
- B. How can you start spiritual conversations? How about on Fridays, when someone asks you if you have plans on the weekend you say, "Oh man, yeah. I get to worship with my church family this Sunday. Super excited about that." Or on Monday if they ask if you did anything exciting over the weekend, "Absolutely! I worshiped my God with my church family. It was great." If someone lets you know about some struggle they are having, let them know you'll pray for them. Better yet, ask if you can pray with them right then. In conversations, instead of dropping your favorite movie quote or song lyric, why not let the person know how that reminds you about something you read in the Bible or heard in a sermon or were taught in a Bible class. Develop a couple of questions you just carry around with you to directly start a spiritual conversation. "Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?" Then whatever the answer, "Tell me about that." Then just listen and see where it goes. "Do you believe in heaven and hell?" "Do you believe in God?" "Tell me about the god you believe in."
- C. Don't miss something important in **John 4:31-32**. The apostles get back and are urging Jesus to eat the meal they have brought. Catch how Jesus responds. "I have food to eat that you do not know about." Do you see what He is doing here? He is doing the same thing with the apostles that He did with the Samaritan woman. He is starting a spiritual conversation. Remember, disciple-making is not just about conversion. Leading others to God is not just about leading someone to baptism. No doubt, when we meet folks who have not yet given their allegiance to Jesus, we need to lead them there. But disciple-making and leading others to God is a lifelong process. Those who are already in Christ need to grow in Him. We need to develop the habit of starting spiritual conversations with one another. In fact, it seems to me the training ground for having spiritual conversations with folks still in the world is having spiritual conversations with one another. There is nothing wrong with talking about sports, politics, the weather, our health, our families. But we, of all people, should be consistently in spiritual conversations with one another, leading one another closer to God.

IV. Disciples tell the truth.

- A. Let's get down to the brass tacks of leading people to God and making disciples. The reality is no one really has a problem with the previous suggestions. Oh, sure, some introverts struggle to reach out and make personal connections. Some private individuals may struggle to start conversations with other people. But neither of these are pushback against disciple-making or leading others to God itself. These are just personality traits that can be worked with. Where we struggle is with this principle. We know if we make a connection and start a spiritual conversation, we are eventually going to have to get around to sharing truth. And the truth is often hard to hear. It was hard for me to hear, how about you? We know eventually we are going to hit a point of truth with which the person with whom we are talking may disagree. We are worried about what telling that truth will do to the relationship and connection we are developing.
- B. However, look at Jesus with this woman. He told the truth. In fact, He told two very hard truths. First, He drew out of the woman her sexual immorality. Second, He just told the woman that the Samaritans didn't actually know what they were talking about when it came to worship. Yes, He used that as a springboard to discuss how things were going to change in their near future, but He didn't pull punches. "You worship what you do not know." Wow! Why would Jesus do this? Didn't He know this Samaritan woman hadn't been brought up in Jerusalem? Didn't He know she wasn't prepared to hear that truth bomb quite yet? I mean, really, should He have made that His starting salvo, His first impression, His Sunday morning sermon? Doesn't He know telling her that she is worshipping what she doesn't know might turn her off so that she doesn't listen to anything He said? Yet, Jesus told the truth. He didn't sugarcoat it. He didn't hide back the more difficult bits until she had accepted the easier bits. He didn't just talk about the places where He and the woman already agreed. He told the truth, the unvarnished, stark truth.
- C. Jesus wasn't a jerk. He told the truth in love. But He told the truth. Why? Because only the truth will set us free (**John 8:32**). Because only the truth will sanctify us (**John 17:17**). The question we must ask is whether or not we believe Jesus. Too many Christians think hiding the truth is what will set people free, softening the truth, covering up the truth. But that isn't how it works. Jesus says the truth will set people free. No doubt, not everyone will respond to the truth. Some will hear the truth and never talk to you again. But the only way anyone will be set free is by the truth. No, this doesn't mean we have to attack every error someone we are talking with mentions. No, this doesn't mean our mission is to set everyone straight on every possible issue. But it does mean we tell the truth. We tell the truth about sin, about our Savior, about worship, about the church, about discipleship. Disciples don't use tricks or techniques. The disciple's only tactic is truth.

V. Disciples work with other disciples.

- A. In **John 4:28ff**, the woman left her water jar at the well and headed back into town. There she told anyone who would listen about this Man she had met out at the well. The people listened and went out to meet Him for themselves. As this was going on, the apostles were trying to get Jesus to eat, but He decided to give them a lesson on cooperation. And it is one I think we often miss. Nobody leads others to God all on their own. It takes teamwork. Do you notice even Jesus did not work alone to get the message to everyone in that village? He didn't go into the town and start preaching. The woman invited the folks to come out and listen. Of course, the woman didn't work alone. She just invited folks to come listen to the Teacher. Together, though, they converted nearly an entire Samaritan village. The apostles watched this teamwork.
- B. Jesus drew special attention to it. He spoke of sowers and reapers in the fields of harvest. They do different jobs and fill different roles, however, they work together to gather in the fruit for eternal life. It may be that as Jesus said this, He was able to point to the villagers walking on their way out to hear Him teach. Jesus hadn't done the work that brought those people out, but He was going to reap fruit. The apostles definitely hadn't done any of this work, but they were going to enter into another's labor. The villagers highlight this teamwork. It was the word of the woman that brought them out, but the teaching of Jesus convinced them.
- C. I get it. Not everyone is ready to hold a Bible study with someone. But everybody can do something. Can you pray for souls? Can you pray with folks? Can you invite folks to classes, assemblies, group meetings? Can you teach a Bible class here? Can you watch someone's kids while they conduct a Bible study? Can you help teach new converts? Can you go along with someone as moral support during a Bible study? What are you doing to work together with the disciples around you to lead others to God? Do something. Then do it again.

Conclusion:

Jesus led others to God. He taught His apostles to lead others to God. In fact, His final commission to the apostles was to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded.