

## Born to Reproduce

*Activity is no substitute for production, and production is no substitute for re-production.*

Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, once wrote a little pamphlet entitled, *Born to Reproduce*. I first read it in about 1960. In it Dawson Trotman stresses the concept that we are saved to be disciples and then commissioned of Christ to “go and make disciples.” (**Matthew 28:19, 20**) It is an enormous folly to think that when Jesus gave this challenge to take the message of salvation, “to all the nations,” that He did so without a plan. Indeed, how was it possible that this little group of followers could hope to make disciples of all the nations of the world?

There are those of us who think the great commission is in itself the plan. It contains Christ’s strategy for world conquest. Look at the instructions carefully:

- **Go** = the call to witness & evangelize.
- **Make Disciples** = the call to equip believers
- **Training them** = the call to reproduce ourselves in those we equip
- **I am with you always** = the promise of His power

Actually, all of Jesus’ time on earth with His disciples was spent preparing them to go forth in His name to tell the world the good news. He was enrolling them in the school of discipleship.

Robert Coleman’s classic work, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, shows us vividly that Christ had a plan & purpose in all that He did with the twelve. Coleman’s book outlines Jesus’ method as follows:

- Selection
- Association
- Consecration
- Multiplication

### Selection

Christ’s first method was to select the right men. Have you noticed that Jesus was very selective in the men He chose to be His “twelve?” He didn’t call everybody, or just anybody. He only called a select few. They were not much to look at from the world’s perspective, but they were men who would follow Him. They were “fat” guys- faithful, available, and teachable. There was a plan in Christ’s choosing of those twelve men. They were not perfect or even supermen as the world values talent, but Jesus saw their potential and built His purpose into them.

Even so we are to “go” and witness to all who will listen. We are to then baptize that new convert. The next step is to make a disciple out of him. Here is where we can learn from Christ. Even Jesus could not make a faithful follower out of Judas. Being selective is important to the plan. Find the person who will follow you and learn from you. A Pastor can lead a congregation, but he cannot disciple a whole congregation. What he can do is what Jesus did. He can prayerfully select two or three.

### **Association**

His second method was the “with Him” principle. Coleman in his book makes much of this strategy. He says it was Christ’s plan to keep the Twelve near Him those first three years. Long after they might forget where they went, or whom they met, they would always remember Him! This being associated with Christ would forever change these men. The command to “follow me” was a deliberate plan and purposes to mentor the Twelve. They “caught” as much as they were taught. Just being with Christ intimately day in and day out, won their hearts. They would eventually die for Him. Christ understood the “with Him” principle of leadership.

We too, must adopt the “with me” strategy. You cannot reproduce your life and lifestyle in another person without spending much quality time with him. This is true in raising children and it’s true in rising up spiritual disciples. Parents who spend long hours with their child will forever imprint themselves in the soul of the child. Discipleship is “caught” as much as it is “taught.” It was said of the early disciples, “they took notice of them that they had been with Jesus.” He who would lead others must be as available to his disciples as Christ was to His. Spiritual reproduction is a birthing process, and takes time and painful labor.

### **Consecration**

Jesus’ plan included getting those men He called to “*seek first the kingdom*” Priorities are primary to the disciple. In Luke 14, Jesus parables are all about counting the cost. Three times in Luke 14, our Lord says, “*you cannot be my disciple,*” unless you love me more than people, places and things. His plan calls men to a holy, disciplined walk with Him. Over and over again during those three years they traveled together, Jesus let the disciples see His commitment to God’s Kingdom and He challenged them to be as He was.

We too, must live consecrated lives in order to lead others. It is a spiritual principle of leadership, that you cannot lead others where you’ve never been. You cannot lead others out into the deep, when you yourself cannot swim. You cannot lead another man to live any closer to God, than you yourself live. Why? Because he spends much time with you and he will “find you out.” If you tell him to pray, but he does not see and hear you pray often, then he will not believe he should make prayer a priority. Do you think the twelve ever forgot their hours in prayer with Jesus? Never! When Jesus prayed to His Father,

those men hungered to know God like that! Leading others to be disciples is about “being” a disciple first, then telling others about it.

### **Principle of Multiplication**

It is amazing to think that Jesus could look at that odd collection of men; fishermen, tax collectors, Zealots, and common men, and see the Kingdom of God in them. He saw what no one else could see; he saw the world being saved through their witness. Not one of those men had ever traveled a hundred miles from home, yet Jesus commanded them to tell “all the nations” about Him! He must have had a plan. He did. His vision was for each man to win one other man, and train that man to win another. The plan is spiritual reproduction. It is the principle of multiplication.

How does this work, and does it work? It is so simple that few have really tried it. It works like this. If a disciple wins one person to Christ and spends the 1<sup>st</sup> year training that person to win another; meanwhile the disciple is also winning his second person. The convert that he has trained now wins his 1<sup>st</sup> person to Christ. So, at the end of a year there will only be four of them.

This doesn't sound like a very successful plan to win the world. Few pastors could build a church this slowly. You might think this will never win the world.

Think again. Now the **second year**, there will be eight disciples, because each disciple is winning and training one each year. In **ten years** there will be 1,024 disciples doing the same strategy. In **twenty years** the world will have 1,048,576 followers of Jesus. This isn't so bad is it? Then if just each one will win and train one, in **thirty years** there will be 1,073,741,824! In one generation, **forty years**, over 1 trillion will come to Christ in salvation! Think about the Master's plan for a second. This figure of 1 trillion people is such a staggering number the church has had enough time since Jesus gave us this plan to win the world a 100 times over! The church could have fulfilled the Great Commission in the first generation through those twelve men. It's not a bad plan; it's just not been tried very faithfully.

Now, we all know there are flaws in this idea of spiritual multiplication. Not every person you train will be faithful to win one each year. However, they should. It isn't too much to ask, is it? Is it Unreasonable? Certainly not! The Apostle Paul multiplied his life in Timothy, Luke, Silas, Titus, and Trophimus. He by himself was an evangelist, and won many. However, through those he trained he won multitudes. He says of the Thessalonian believers, *“you became imitators of us. And of the Lord...and so you became a model to all the believers... in that the Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia- your faith in God has become known everywhere.”* (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:6-8)

It is critical that we understand the Master's plan for bringing in the Kingdom. We are not called to make converts, whom we baptize, put on our church roles and then forget them. We are not to be about getting numbers of converts, but we are to be about growing disciples. Dawson Trotman said it well, *"Activity is no substitute for production, and production is no substitute for reproduction."* Christ calls us to "make disciples, and train them." We are born to reproduce ourselves in others. Jesus did it with His chosen men and we are to follow his example.

### **What are you doing?**

Are you committed to the Master's plan? If not, you've misdirected your energies. One day you will look back on your life and look for some lasting difference you made in this world. Jesus told us to pray, *"that you bear fruit and that it would remain"* (John 15) He himself prayed for His disciples "fruit" when He prayed for those who would believe through their witness. (See John 17:20) In effect Jesus was praying His followers would become disciple makers!

When I was a young man, a spiritually mature leader challenged me. When I saw him at a conference, I greeted him, "how are you doing?" He responded, "I'll not ask you how you are doing, but how are others doing, because of what you've been doing?" I was stunned! His words penetrated my heart. That question has stayed with me all through the years I've served the Master. This is the lifestyle we as followers of Christ are to live. What are others doing, because of what you've been doing?" That is our Lord's question to every true disciple. Are you reproducing fruit that will remain? Can you point to your "Timothy" and say, "There is my effort to help fulfill the great commission in my lifetime? These men and women are my life's work.

### **I am with you always**

Finally, we go forth in His name, filled with His spirit, and anointed by His power. Jesus gets excited when we try to fulfill His plan. He will go before us, get behind us and speak through us. You have his promise of that blessing. *"Go and make disciples, teaching them to do what I've commanded you to do, and I myself will be with you"*