

## Called To Make Disciples

**April 12, 2015**

Good morning CrossWinds! It is great to be back after last week at the Sami Center. Like you, I love celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. I saw many of you had family in town. That's great! Some of you even took Easter photos and posted them on Facebook. I loved seeing your families.

One of the few concerned comments I heard was my wearing of a mini-skirt while preaching the sermon. I promise you I won't wear a mini-skirt in the pulpit against any time soon. For those of you who skipped Easter and are now wondering what happened, you will have to wait in suspense for the end of the service to ask a friend.

As you heard in the announcements, next week is a special day for our church family. Both campuses are heading to the Clay County Regional Event Center in Spencer for a combined Spirit Lake and Spencer birthday party where our Spencer campus will celebrate its first birthday. After the service everyone is heading to the activity center for food and cake. God has extended so much grace to CrossWinds in our multi-campus effort. Our Spencer campus is healthy and growing. Last week they had 170.

Next week I have a job for you. When you are in Spencer, meet the new folks in our Spencer campus and encourage them. It will be like a family reunion where you meet your long lost relatives.

This week is is a saddle Sunday. Last week being Easter and next week being the birthday party, we are between teaching series. I am using this Sunday for a mini refresher course on our core values.

CrossWinds is an Evangelical Free Church. That means we subscribe to a simple 10-point Statement of Faith that are 10 non-negotiable truths of the Bible to which we adhere. You can find that Statement of Faith on our website at [www.CrossWinds.tv](http://www.CrossWinds.tv).

Beyond our Statement of Faith, CrossWinds has core values that we call our CrossWinds Fingerprint. These are the core values that drive how we do church. In your bulletin I put a bookmark that has the core values listed on it.

I recommend you read through them. This morning I am not teaching through all of them. We are looking at just one. It is the fifth in the list. I ask you to take out your bookmark and read it with me.

#### 5. Discipleship: We believe God called us to be disciples and make disciples.

It is easy to read this and not understand the significance of the words. It is easy to miss why this makes CrossWinds church unique. We believe God has called us to both be disciples and make disciples. These are of equal importance. What does it mean to be a disciple? Why do we believe it is just as important to make disciples as it is to be one? This morning we will answer those questions. To begin we will look at making disciples.

#### **What do I need to know about making disciples?**

We will look at Matthew 28:16-20 and its parallel in Mark 16:15-16. Open your Bibles to Matthew 28:16-20 and keep your finger in Mark 16:15-16. These are slightly different versions of the Great Commission.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:16–20 (ESV)

Mark’s version is slightly different.

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:15–16 (ESV)

In the interest of time, I am going to keep things at a high level this morning and not dive into these verses in great depth. There are a few obvious observations that jump out at us.

### **1. Making disciples is a command not a suggestion.**

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

This is why it is called the Great Commission not the great suggestion. Jesus was not suggesting we carry the gospel to our community and the world if it is convenient. He commands us to carry the gospel. The Great Commission is not for us to wait for the world to come to us. It is for us to go to the world. If you are a Christian, these are Jesus’ words to you: *Go and make disciples*. This is part of what it means to be a Christian. It is a command, not a suggestion.

### **2. Making disciples is for all of us, not just some of us.**

These words were not just given to the apostles or to Christian professionals. They were given to all of us. These words were given to every follower of Jesus. It comes down to this. If I am a Christian, I am commanded by

Jesus to make disciples. It is not somebody else's job. It is my job by virtue of calling myself a Christian.

If I am living a personal faith where I never share my faith with others or I don't take time to build others up in Christ, I am not the kind of disciple Jesus wants me to be. If all I have is church friends and I do not have lost friends that I can tell about Jesus, I am living out of step with Jesus' commandment.

I ask you, how are you doing in obeying your part of Jesus' Great Commission? Are you going into your world sharing the gospel? For many of us, this is a sobering thought. Studies say 95 percent of Christians have never shared their faith with someone who doesn't know Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

**If I am not making disciples, I may be in sin.**

I know a number of you think that is overstepping. Maybe we should do more to share the gospel but is not sharing the gospel and building others up in Christ actually a matter of sin? We struggle calling this sin because we have a weak definition of sin. Look what James calls sin.

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. James 4:17 (ESV)

The Bible doesn't just describe sins of commission, which is actively choosing to do what is wrong, it also describes sin as omission, failing to do what is right.

Let's say you lived in the apartment building on Hill Avenue that recently burned down. Pretend the fire started through no fault of your own in your

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<sup>1</sup> [https://books.google.com/books?id=GN4ACkdHhDoC&pg=PA150&lpg=PA150&dq=95+percent+have+never+shared+their+faith&source=bl&ots=wI8e\\_6BY0H&sig=BUxEu3a0trAY2EAKUufhewJrFAI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=8hQsVc30Es-zogSi6oDABw&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=95%20percent%20have%20never%20shared%20their%20faith&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=GN4ACkdHhDoC&pg=PA150&lpg=PA150&dq=95+percent+have+never+shared+their+faith&source=bl&ots=wI8e_6BY0H&sig=BUxEu3a0trAY2EAKUufhewJrFAI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=8hQsVc30Es-zogSi6oDABw&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=95%20percent%20have%20never%20shared%20their%20faith&f=false)

apartment. To save yourself you ran out of the building but didn't bother knocking on other apartment doors to warn your neighbors that the building was burning. You saved yourself but a bunch of people died because you didn't warn them. Would that be sin? Yes! It is called criminal negligence!

Pretend you are a doctor. You run tests on your patient and discover he has life-threatening cancer. It is in the early stages and if you prescribed chemo you could cure him. In the appointment where you planned on telling your patient about his cancer, before you can talk, your patient starts sharing about the vacation he is leaving on the next day. You don't want to ruin his vacation. You don't like telling people bad news, so you keep quiet and don't let him know he has cancer. You plan to tell him about it some day in the future. Is that sin? Yes! It is knowing the right thing to do but not doing it.

In the same way, we know people are dying. They are not just dying an earthly death but an eternal death from sin. We have the cure for sin. It is Jesus. For us to directly disobey Jesus' commandments and withhold from dying people the only cure that can save their life is sin. Making disciples is for all of us. Every Christian is a doctor commanded by Jesus to go into the world and share the cure.

### **3. Making disciples involves words, not just a lifestyle.**

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:15–16 (ESV)

It does not say "Go into all the world and be a good example." I am not suggesting we go into the world and be a bad example. Sometimes we hear people say, "Preach the gospel and if necessary use words." The idea is that we

preach the gospel with our lifestyle. We preach the gospel by being good citizens. Of course we should be good citizens. Our lifestyle should make Jesus attractive. The Bible doesn't tell us to preach the gospel with our lifestyle because a lifestyle cannot preach the gospel. Our lifestyle can adorn the gospel but it can't preach it.

Mark 16 told us to proclaim the gospel to the whole of creation. That involves words! Preaching the gospel without words is like having a news broadcast where the anchors don't have anything to say. The entire news broadcast is simply watching your favorite news anchors drink coffee. When you try to find out why they aren't sharing the news they tell you they are sharing the news with their lifestyle. Trust me. It doesn't work. You can't share a news message with a lifestyle. You need words.

In the same way, to make disciples of Christ we must share about Christ with words. The primary way God has chosen to reach people is through the verbal proclamation of the gospel.

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 1 Corinthians 1:21 (ESV)

This means the world cannot discover the good news of Jesus by wisdom. It doesn't matter how smart someone is. They cannot discover Jesus. They only way they can discover the gospel is if we tell them.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? Romans 10:14 (ESV)

We need to share the gospel with words. If we don't, there is no way people can believe.

#### 4. Making disciples means sharing the gospel as a bad news/good news story.

The gospel message is first and foremost a news story about our problem and what God has done to solve it because we can't solve it ourselves. The word gospel simply means good news. Let me share this news story in a simple form so you know what to share with your friends. It is a bad news/good news story.

**The bad news.** Every one of us is a sinner. We have broken God's commands. Our consciences condemn us of our sin. When we read the Bible, we learn more about sin and discover we are more sinful than we realized. In desperation to fix our sin we try to pay for it. We try good deeds, hoping our good deeds cover our bad deeds. That doesn't work. It is like a police officer pulling over a motorist for driving 70 mph in a 25 mph zone. When the police officer gives the driver his ticket, the driver says he helped three old ladies across the road earlier in the week. Will his good deeds cover his ticket? Of course not! Our good deeds cannot erase our sin.

To make matters worse we are hopelessly addicted to our sin. We promise God we will stop sinning in certain areas of our lives and we go right back to sinning in the same way only hours or days later.

We have no way to pay for our sin and we cannot break free from our sin because we are addicted to sin. We are in a hopeless state. That is the bad news.

**The good news.** God loves us. He didn't leave us in that hopeless state. Jesus, God's own son, took on flesh. He lived the perfect life I couldn't live. He

died on the cross in my place for my sins. He rose from the dead, conquering Satan, sin and death — all the enemies lined up against me. If I repent of my sin and ask Jesus to save me and direct me, I am forgiven and brought into a relationship with God.

We need to tell that to people. The Holy Spirit takes that simple gospel story and uses it to birth spiritual life.

#### **5. Making disciples starts with my world. It is not just sending money to the other side of the world.**

Matthew 28:19 is usually the key verse for a message on foreign missions. It reminds us we need to take the gospel to the nations. Sometimes a desire to take the gospel to the other side of the world is used as an excuse for not taking the gospel to people in our world. The Bible tells us sharing the gospel starts in our community, then spreads around the world. Look how the gospel was to spread in the book of Acts.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (ESV)

It was to begin at home in Jerusalem. It was to move to Judea, which is the surrounding countryside. Then it was to move to the Samaritans and finally to the end of the earth. Don't let foreign missions become an excuse for neglecting the home mission, our own neighbors. God planted each of us in our community for a reason. God sends missionaries to the other side of the world so they can make friends on the other side of the globe and share the bad news/good news story with them. God has us in northwest Iowa so we can make friends with people that don't know Jesus in our community and share the bad



news/good news story with them. We are missionaries, and Christians on the other side of the globe are missionaries. It is just where we have friends to share the story. You know people I don't know. I know people you don't know. Our relational network is our mission field. Those are the people God brought into my life to share the gospel story.

**6. Making disciples is more than calling people to repent and trust in Christ. It is also helping baby Christians grow in Christ.**

Making a disciple, in simplest terms, is that to the best of our ability, with the Holy Spirit's power and following his direction, we invite people to repent of their sin and trust in Christ for salvation of their sin. When they trust in Christ, we are to help them get on their feet spiritually. Somewhere along the line we separated evangelism from discipleship. Sometimes people think their job is to lead some in a prayer of decision to receive Christ then smack them on the butt and say, "God bless you. I hope you make it in life."

That isn't the way we treat our newborn children. Imagine bringing a baby home from the hospital, standing her at the front door and smacking her on the butt as we tell her we hope she makes it as we close the door behind her. That is child abuse!

In the same way we are not just called to share the good news with people but we have a responsibility to be spiritual parents that help people grow and mature in Christ. Just like newborn babies, newborn Christians need lots of help if they are going to survive.

### **New believers need protection.**

You can't turn a baby loose in a house without him getting in trouble. He will stick his wet finger in wall outlets. He will fall down stairs. He will roll off the bed. It is the same for new believers. As soon as they make a commitment to Christ they are vulnerable. Their old friends call them up to party. Old girlfriends invite them to stay over their apartments. The temptations are real.

What they need is an older mature believer who cares about them like a good parent. They need older adults who care for them just like an older adult protects and cares for a baby. If you are Christian that has been around for a while, this is part of your job description from Jesus. It is part of making disciples. We are not just to lead people to Christ but when they come to Christ we care for them and protect them when they are taking baby steps. If we see new Christians in the foyer, we take them under our arms and protect them.

### **New believers need friendship.**

After Saul's conversion, Christians wouldn't talk to him. Nobody trusted the man. God led a man named Ananias to Saul to pray for him and help him in those critical first steps of his Christian life. Later God brought a man named Barnabbas into Saul's life to introduce Saul to other believers and continue helping him get on his feet. All this was part of God's plan to transform Saul — the hater of Christians — into Paul — the great Christian preacher and missionary.

In the same way, new believers need seasoned believers to care about them, become their friends and help them take their baby steps. Imagine you were new at CrossWinds. What it would be like for you? People stand up and sit

down. They sing. They drink coffee. What is familiar for us is strange to them. They need friends to help them, to introduce them to others in the church family like Ananias and Barnabbas did for Paul. If you are a seasoned Christian. That is your job. You are to disciple younger Christians.

Some things are more caught than taught. New believers don't know what to do about movies and television. They don't know what a Christian marriage looks like. Many of them haven't seen a healthy marriage much less a Christian marriage. They don't know how Christian singles live. They need mature Christian friends that take an interest in them to help them with baby steps. That is us! We are commanded to make disciples. We are commanded to befriend baby Christians and help them grow and walk.

#### **New believers need food.**

New babies do three things. They eat, poop and sleep. The reason they only do three things is because they are growing. It is the same with new believers. They are hungry and want to grow. They need to get into the Word of God. They don't need a heavy Bible study. They need simple food appropriate for their age. They need us to sit down with them and work through the Bible with them on simple stuff. If you have been a Christian for a few years, that is your job. I know life is busy but this is part of being a Christian. It is a command from Jesus to make disciples. Simply get the Bible out and read it with them.

There is a great benefit for older Christians when they do this with baby Christians. When baby Christians ask basic questions on subjects like forgiveness and hope, God blesses mature Christians by allowing them to rediscover the joy of these simple truths as they teach them.

As Christians we must be disciples because that is what Jesus commands us. It is not optional. It involves telling people the message of the gospel, not just living a good life. It involves telling the people in our world about Jesus, not just sending money to the other side of the world. It is more than challenging people to make a commitment to Christ, it involves nurturing and caring for young Christians because they are babies in Christ. Disciples of Christ must be making more disciples of Christ.

There is a deeper question we need to wrestle with. What is a disciple? Am I a disciple?

### **What do I need to know about being a disciple?**

Discipleship is not just about a transfer of information or intellectual agreement on information about Jesus. Discipleship by definition is the formation of one's life to be like one's teacher. Discipleship by definition involves all of one's being, not just the mind. All of the biblical terms used to convey the concept of discipleship involve more than just academic engagement. Discipleship involves all the actions of our lives. Christ's call for us to make him No. 1 in our lives because that is the place he deserves in our lives.

True Christians are always disciples of Christ because the Holy Spirit forms in them a love for Christ that is above everything. Is anyone perfect in that love? Of course not. Just as Peter denied Christ before the crucifixion, we fail, repent and run to Jesus. False Christians simply have intellectual assent to the

truth of Christ but they don't have a desire for Christ to rule their hearts and change their actions.

I ask you, "Are you a disciple of Christ?" All true Christians will be disciples.

Jesus defines what it means to be his disciples in Luke 14.

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:25–33 (ESV)

These are some of the hardest words from the lips of Jesus. Three times he said that if we do not do certain things we cannot be his disciple.

### **1. A disciple is called to love Jesus more than anyone.**

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26 (ESV)

I know this is shocking for some of you. Is Jesus asking us to hate members of our own families? Some of you may like this command because you didn't like your relatives in the first place. Jesus was not telling us to hate our families in the traditional sense. The Bible tells us to honor our fathers and mothers. You can't honor your father and mother and hate them at the same time. The Bible also tells husbands to love their wives and give their lives up for

them like Christ gave his life up for the church. You cannot love your wife and hate your wife at the same time. What was Jesus saying?

Jesus said our love for him is to be so strong that our love for everyone else, even those closest to us, should be like hatred in comparison. True Christians are disciples of Christ. That means their love for Christ is the greatest love in their lives. They love Christ more than their career. They love Christ more than their possessions. They even love Christ more than their families. Some of us think marriage should be No. 1. Some of us think children should be No. 1. Jesus said "My disciples love me as No. 1." Incidentally, the best thing you can do for your marriage and your children is to love Jesus more than you love them.

I ask you, "Are you a disciple of Christ?" Do you love him more than your family?

## **2. A disciple counts the cost of commitment.**

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. Luke 14:27-32 (ESV)

Carrying a cross doesn't sound fun, especially after we learned about crucifixion on Easter. In that day the phrase, "carrying your cross" meant you were willing to suffer for something. This means a disciple of Christ is willing to suffer the pain of persecution for following Christ. It means we need to be willing to die to follow Jesus.

Jesus illustrated the importance of counting this cost two ways. The first is building a building. Only a fool starts building a building he doesn't have enough money to complete. A half-built building is just a monument to someone's stupidity. In the same way Jesus said we need to carefully think about what it means to follow him before we claim to be a Christian. We will suffer for following Jesus. That may mean we lose our lives for Jesus if we are in the Middle East. It may mean we suffer the mocking of our friends in high school because our lifestyle is striving to be pure. It may mean we spend lonely Friday and Saturday nights because we don't get drunk with our friends at parties. Understand there is a cost that comes with following Jesus. It may be high. It may be moderate. Know this before you become a Christian. I ask you, "Are you a disciple of Christ? Are you willing to suffer?"

It is also like a king going to war against another king. A king makes sure he knows the odds he faces before he commits to a fight. In the same way, count the cost of commitment of being a Christian.

A more authentic gospel call to Jesus involves telling people to repent of their sin, trust in Christ for forgiveness of sin and make sure they understand they are signing up to let Christ be number one in their lives. Know you will suffer for it in some way at some time. It may be severe.

Now let's be clear about something. Salvation is a work of God by the Holy Spirit in our lives. We don't save ourselves. It is God who saves us. When we trusted Christ, it was us responding to what God was doing in our lives. The Holy Spirit in us is the one who began to save us. In the same way it is the Holy

Spirit that gives us the desire to love Christ above all things. Don't think loving Christ above all things in life is a desire we generate. It is a desire the Holy Spirit generates in the life of every Christian.

### **3. A disciples loves Jesus more than their stuff.**

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33 (ESV)

This doesn't mean we can't have anything. It means we must be careful about what we have because what we have can have us. Our love for Christ needs to be above our materialistic attachments. Judas' love for Christ was bought out at 30 pieces of silver. What would your price be for betrayal? A million dollars? A billion dollars? Jesus says "I come before any amount of money."

This was the point Jesus made to the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-23. He was not willing to give up everything he had to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus had to come before his stuff. Jesus may not be calling us to give up everything, but he is telling us his disciples that following him comes before everything we possess.

### **Is there a difference between a disciple and a Christian?**

A disciple and a Christian are similar but they are not the same. A disciple is someone who adheres to the teachings of Christ not just intellectually but in his or her life and conduct. Jesus was explicit. A disciple of Christ makes a total commitment to Jesus above his or her family, pain and stuff. In the gospels, many people left Jesus because they didn't want to make that commitment (John 6:66).



A Christian is someone that places his or her faith in Jesus. They belong to Christ and are being transformed to be like Christ. The term Christian was originally used as a pejorative term against Christians. It meant you were acting like a little Christ. Every true Christian will be a disciple. That means every true Christian will count the cost of following Jesus and have the desire to make a total commitment to him above all things.

That being stated we must remember that true Christians are not perfect disciples. Peter is a great illustration. He denied Jesus three times on the night he was betrayed. Just like Peter, true Christians repent of their sin and are restored by Jesus. I ask you, “Are you a disciple?” If you are a Christian that doesn’t want to place Christ first, you aren’t a Christian. It is not just intellectual information about Jesus. Jesus calls for a commitment above everything.

### **How do I respond?**

How do we apply this? We need to ask ourselves two questions.

1. **Have I separated being a Christian from being a disciple?** At CrossWinds we believe God called us to be disciples. That means it is not just truth we know in our head about Christ but all of our life is about following Christ. The Christian life is not just head knowledge. The Bible says we must want to become like Jesus, our teacher. We believe the Holy Spirit cultivates in all Christians a love for Christ that is above our family. We believe the Holy Spirit cultivates in us a love for Christ that is even willing to suffer for Christ and lose our stuff if that is what Christ calls us to do. I ask you. Have you separated Christianity from following Christ? If you have, Jesus calls you to repent and

give him everything. That is the only place Jesus can be because that is the only place Jesus deserves to be.

2. **What am I doing to make disciples?** Part of being a disciple is making other disciples. That means starting with the mission field of our friends and neighbors, we need to speak of Jesus. We tell people the bad news/good news story. Making disciples is not just living as a good citizen but it is speaking words. It also means finding baby Christians, being their friends and helping them take their baby steps. Caring for newborn Christians is like caring for newborn babies. It is something we must do.

If you are a seasoned Christian, find young Christians at CrossWinds and take them under your wing. Protect them, befriend them and feed them from the word of God.

This week share the gospel with words to someone in the mission field of your relational world.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at [www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com) ([www.c2rc.com](http://www.c2rc.com))

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