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Your commitment has been instrumental in making a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities we serve.

Thank you for being the heart and soul of our ministry. Your kindness has sown seeds of faith that will continue to bear fruit for years to come.

May God bless you and your local congregation in 2024.

In gratitude and in Christ,



Jon Jenks
PRESIDENT

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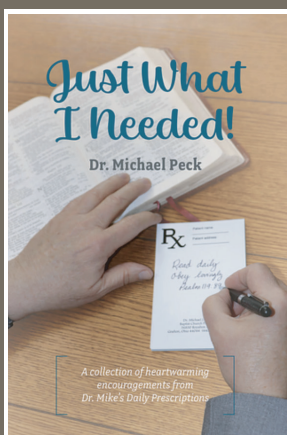


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Intentional Discipleship in the Local Church:

A REAL LIFE APPLICATION

A healthy disciple-making church is the goal of our ministry efforts at Baptist Church Planters. We love to see churches intentionally dig in, doing the labor-intensive work of building disciples up and seeing the fruit God produces through the work. It is a daunting task, though, as many pastors seem unable to see or spur on real discipleship.

We regularly receive calls from pastors seeking help; they know change is needed but are unsure of the next steps. God is at work in those churches whose leadership humbly calls on the Lord to direct their thoughts, give unity in their collaboration, and courageously take the necessary steps, albeit challenging, to change.

Good News Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, MI, has begun this hard work of change. God is blessing their efforts as they renew their responsibility for, and take direct leadership in, making and growing disciples who are committed to multiplying the process! Follow their hard work step by step as Pastor Brian Cederquist reflects on their journey of introspection:

Deliberate Disciple Making in the Church: A Journey of Transformation

Disciple making, as commanded by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20, stands at the core of the church's mission. While many churches emphasize this in their mission or vision statements, the critical question remains—are disciples truly being made? This blog post explores the necessity of deliberate and intentional disciple making within the church, a journey inspired by the realization and transformative experience at Good News Baptist Church.

The Wrestling

In the ninth year of ministry at Good News Baptist Church, a crucial question loomed large. Despite the influx of people and an air of excitement, the pastoral team grappled with the depth of discipleship. Were believers truly maturing? Should the process be left to happen organically, or was a deliberate approach necessary? The decision was clear: Good News Baptist Church would be intentional and deliberate in making disciples.

Identifying the Problems:

The first step involved an extensive exploration of disciple making within the church, drawing insights from groups successfully practicing deliberate disciple making. This introspective journey uncovered several internal issues that demanded attention for the church to become truly intentional in making disciples.

Misplaced Focus of Pastoral Team: The preaching and teaching ministry was viewed as the primary mechanism for disciple making, overshadowing any other methods.

Leadership Team Prioritization: Stewardship of relationships and resources took precedence over the primary responsibility of making disciples who, in turn, make disciples.

Teachers' Perspective: Teachers perceived their role primarily as content delivery (curriculum, scope and sequence, or content selection), overlooking the importance of helping students live out their faith week by week.

Volunteers' Perception: Volunteers considered their role burdensome rather than viewing it as a meaningful outworking of their walk with God.

Congregational Perception: The congregation identified "spiritual" individuals based on elected positions rather than wholehearted love for God and others.

The Response: REPENTANCE

Acknowledging these issues required a humble acknowledgment of the need for repentance. I felt like I was the servant that was given one talent and buried it in the ground, fearful of his master! (Matthew 25:14-20) Repentance became the necessary next step—for ignorance, poor planning, and a lack of personal investment in others.

The Next Steps:

Recognizing the need for change, the leadership team at Good News Baptist Church took deliberate steps to transform their approach to disciple making.

Collective Commitment: The team committed to initiate change collectively, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility. Regular prayer sessions strengthened their resolve.

Learning and Teaching: A comprehensive list of necessary changes led to a preaching series exploring everything God spoke to the church in Ephesus (Acts 18-20, Ephesians, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, Revelation 2). Education became a cornerstone of intentional disciple making.

Seeking External Perspectives: Recognizing the need for external insights, the church sought help from various organizations to provide accountability and fresh perspectives.

Yearly Evaluation and Addressing Gaps: Regular evaluations were instituted to identify gaps in the deliberate disciple making process. Public acknowledgment and prompt action were taken to address these gaps, fostering transparency and accountability.

Intentional Discipleship Track: A deliberate discipleship track was introduced, challenging individuals to go beyond the confines of small groups or Sunday School classes, pushing them to deepen their walk with God.

The Transformation:

Over the last five years, the deliberate approach to disciple making at Good News Baptist Church has borne fruit. Reflecting on this transformative journey, I adore God and express gratitude for God's blessings and emphasize the impossibility of returning to a non-deliberate approach.

Conclusion:

To church leaders contemplating disciple making in obedience to Matthew 28:19-20, the challenge is clear—consider the transformative power of deliberate and purposeful pursuit.

The call to action is extended: reach out, engage in a conversation, and explore how intentional disciple making can reshape the fabric of your church community. If you have any questions please reach out!

If you are seeking a renewal of discipleship in your congregation, we would encourage you to get a partner in the effort. We have found time and time again that there is much to be gained from a fresh, outside perspective for churches who long to be more effective in their disciple-making. Our team here at Baptist Church Planters is ready to walk alongside you on this journey—for the good of your local church and the advance of the Gospel.

Article used with permission of Brian Cederquist, Lead Pastor at Good News Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, MI.

Baptist Church Planters exists to help church leaders build healthy disciple-making churches. If you or your church need support or resources to love God and love others, please reach out to us today. We'd love to help.

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