



Mobilizing Every Believer to Make Disciples

A Call for a New Paradigm

By CYNTHIA ANDERSON

I met her last week as I was speaking at a conference. “How are you doing at making disciples?” I asked. Her response surprised and delighted my heart. “Well,” she said, “I just led my boss to the Lord, as well as her eleven-year-old daughter. Now I am discipling them.” Why did it surprise me? Because she was an ordinary church member, not someone on staff at the church that was hosting me. She was making disciples in an active way. This should be the norm, not the exception. And yet, so often it is!

Churches are filled with good Christians who love Jesus but never share Him with others. They are neither equipped nor sent out to share the Good News of Christ with those around them. This must change.

There is an urgent need for pastors and leaders across the globe to inspire, train, and send out every disciple to make more disciples. Every Christian can (and must) learn to be a disciple-maker. How will this shift take place? Only as we are willing to radically adjust both our mindsets and behaviors.

Does Behavior Match Belief?

Is it possible to say we love Jesus and believe He is the answer to the world's needs yet not actively share His message with others? Hmm. I don't think so.

Recently, I came across a convicting statement made by an atheist. Penn Jillette, a comedian, was doing a show

in Las Vegas. After the show, he was handed a Bible by someone in the crowd. Was his response scorn or anger? No. He said he respected him for it.

Jillette wanted to know, “*How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? If I believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming at you and you didn't believe it, and that truck was bearing down on you, there's a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that.*”¹

Could it be that failure to share our faith with genuine passion convinces people that the Gospel has no real value? That we don't authentically believe it?

Evangelism in the USA Is in Steep Decline

In recent years, evangelism has been in steep decline in the United States. It is no longer common nor popular, to challenge or train church-goers to share their faith with others. This has resulted in a growing lack of understanding in America about the basics of

¹ www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/atheism-penn-jillette-urges-evangelism/

the Gospel. According to Lifeway's research, only 3 in 10 unchurched Americans say a Christian has ever shared with them one-on-one how a person becomes a Christian.²

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My life's work has been focused on reaching unreached people. Though our children are grown and we have grandchildren here in the United States, we have chosen to continue to work abroad. Our commitment is to live among the least reached people of the world who have little or no access to the Gospel message. Having said this, I have never been so concerned for my passport nation, America, as I am today. Unless the trajectory changes, we may one day be a nation of unreached people as well. It is time for Christians *everywhere* to become disciple-makers, in America, and around the world. It's not an option. We are at a critical stage where without a change of mindset about who can and must make disciples, we are headed toward serious trouble.

Why in a mission magazine focused on Frontier Peoples would I choose to write about this? What happens in America affects other nations. We have been a major exporter of missions and evangelism strategy. Our version of the church gets adopted by other countries through media, music, and other means.

God has given the global Church insight and wisdom about how to make and multiply disciples. Those who are seeing movements abroad now need to be willing to share what we are learning, not only in the least reached areas of the world but everywhere He has given us influence.

Disciples must learn to make disciples and primary models of the church must change globally. The time is now, before it is too late.

Change Isn't Easy

I love routines. Most of us dislike change. We are comfortable with things the way they are. My husband is the main driver in our family. Sometimes, he likes to take new routes to common destinations. It drives

me crazy! "Why are you going *this way*?" I ask, feeling unsettled and confused. I like the *normal way*. It feels right to me. He likes to try new pathways to get to the same destination.

As humans, we are conditioned to want regularity. This is not all bad. Habits can help us in important ways. They also can get us stuck in unfruitful behaviors. Our loyalty can be attached to past methods and systems that previously served us well but no longer do so.

I recently released a book called *The Multiplier's Mindset: Thinking Differently About Discipleship*. It's been well received by most people. For this I am grateful. There are some, however, who are not as sure about it. There can be a loyalty to old paradigms and ways of thinking when it comes to reaching the lost and planting churches.

We must continually evaluate our tools, methods, and strategies in light of fruitfulness. What worked yesterday may not be God's wineskin for today. His will remains the same. *He does not desire than any would perish, but that all would come to repentance* (2 Pet. 3:9). This will never change until His glorious return! New *times*, however, demand new *means* of reaching new people.

Pain and Passion

There are two primary causes of change: pain and passion. Meet someone who has lost 30 pounds in the past few months and ask them about it. They'll often share of a doctor's diagnosis or a crisis that caused them to be willing to change. Pain is never pleasant, but it is one way God motivates us to shift gears. The other cause of change is passion. We can be inspired to change as godly zeal grips our hearts.

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Let's ask God to use our pain and increase our passion for those who have yet to hear His message of love. The urgency of lostness must beat strongly in our hearts, as it did our Lord's. He wept over Jerusalem's lostness. When was the last time the condition of those apart from Christ drove us to tears? May God break our hearts afresh with what breaks His.

² research.lifeway.com/2021/09/09/christians-dont-share-faith-with-unchurched-friends/

Mobilizing Every Believer to Become a Disciple-Maker

The clergy-laity divide causes many to think that the role of the pastor or Christian leader is to do the work of ministry. Some believe their job as a church member is to attend faithfully, tithe, pray, and support their pastor as he works to reach people in the community. This model may once have had a place, but it is not the future of the church. We must embrace new ways of thinking about the role of every believer as a minister of God. Intellectual assent to this is common, but the practical implementation is severely lacking.

A mindset of ALL is needed. All are appointed to accomplish all activities. (See chapter 11 of my new book—*The Multiplier's Mindset*). Every Jesus follower is a royal priest. We have been commissioned by the Lord to go and make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey His commands.

Recently, I've spoken with pastors about this topic. Some will say, "I try to encourage church members to invite more people to church, but only a handful do it." As I listen politely and nod my head, in my heart I experience deep frustration. Why is the bar so very low, that the most we ask of the people God has called us to lead and shepherd is that they would be willing to invite people to church? Do they know who they are? Chosen by God? Royal priests? Ambassadors of the kingdom? We need to call people to a higher place of anointing and faith—to believe that they can be salt and light in their communities; to know that they can be used by Him to communicate His transformational message and set their neighborhoods ablaze with a Holy Spirit fire! They must be released into their gifts and calling as those who bear His name.

Why are we so timid to challenge and call disciples to be disciples who radiantly display the glory of their Master?

Titles Get in the Way

I'm guessing that many who read this magazine are trained ministry professionals. My education at both North Central University and Fuller Seminary was excellent. Maybe it's because we work hard for our titles and pay money for the education involved, that we so like to use them. We enjoy being called Pastor this or

Doctor that. It sets us apart and shows we are special. People respect us because of our titles and sometimes are more open to receiving from us. But could those same titles also hinder, elevate us above those who do not have them, or make us somehow "above" ordinary believers?



In the "Getting Started in Disciple Making Movements" course (www.dmmsfrontiermissions.com/online-training/) and the community that goes with it, we strongly discourage trainees from using their titles when they interact with one another. We intentionally de-emphasize titles in order to demonstrate that we are all equally called, chosen, anointed, and empowered as royal priests of God. This is difficult for some whose cultural norms of respect for ministers is strong. For others, they feel disrespected when we call them only by their first name rather than Apostle _____ or Pastor _____. It's healthy to return to a more biblical model of how we address one another. Words have power and communicate a worldview. What if we moved back to calling one another brother and sister or disciple-makers rather than by titles?

As I wrap up this article, let's return to the point. Disciples must learn to make disciples and primary models of the church must change globally. Everything we do must be aiming toward the multiplication of His kingdom here on earth. Our own lives need to reflect this as we personally engage in disciple-making and reaching the lost around us. Let's share stories with those we disciple of our own efforts to reach lost people and testify of both our successes and our failures on the journey to increase engagement with the lost. Too many leaders teach others to do things they are not actively doing themselves.

Instead, let's Model, Assist, Watch and Launch (MAWL). Don't be afraid to vulnerably share that it's hard for you to break out of the "churchy" mode and engage with unbelievers; or that you are more comfortable preaching a sermon than praying for a sick person in the grocery store. Let's stretch ourselves and grow. Those we lead will follow us as we follow Jesus. They will go out to become fishers of men. ▣