

Make Disciples 3

We have been looking at the extraordinary diversity by which Jesus dealt with people regarding the kingdom of God, salvation, and eternal life. One strong conclusion that we can already make from this series of messages is that cookie-cutter, neatly packaged approaches to making disciples may be a good place to start but will not work with every person. In fact, each lost person is so uniquely lost, that often it takes a diversely prepared, Spirit-led, creative, compassionate, articulate person with a full arsenal of bible knowledge and memorized verses to be effective in all situations. It should be each of our goal to be such a person.

If you are truly born again, don't let the demands and complexities of effective disciple making scare you away from attempting to share your faith. The key quality the Lord is looking for is availability. If you're willing, He can and will use you even if you are still wet behind the ears baptismally speaking. He will guide your words and bring up His Word in your heart that you may not even know you know.

Today's study in John 9 certainly adds more fuel to the fire of the immense diversity of ways Jesus dealt with people and their unique needs.

1 As He was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. **2** His disciples questioned Him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" **3** "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "[This came about] so that God's works might be displayed in him. **4** We must do the works of Him who sent Me while it is day. Night is coming when no

one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶ After He said these things He spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes. ⁷ “Go,” He told him, “wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means “Sent”). So he left, washed, and came back seeing. ⁸ His neighbors and those who formerly had seen him as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the man who sat begging?” ⁹ Some said, “He’s the one.” “No,” others were saying, “but he looks like him.” He kept saying, “I’m the one!” ¹⁰ Therefore they asked him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So when I went and washed I received my sight.” ¹² “Where is He?” they asked. “I don’t know,” he said.

¹³ They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. ¹⁴ The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ So again the Pharisees asked him how he received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” he told them. “I washed and I can see.” ¹⁶ Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for He doesn’t keep the Sabbath!” But others were saying, “How can a sinful man perform such signs?” And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ Again they asked the blind man, “What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?” “He’s a prophet,” he said. ¹⁸ The Jews did not believe this about him—that he was blind and received sight—until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight. ¹⁹ They asked them, “Is this your son, [the one] you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰ “We know this is our son and that he was born blind,” his parents answered. ²¹ “But we don’t know how he now sees, and we don’t know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he’s of age. He will speak for himself.” ²² His

parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him as Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue.²³ This is why his parents said, “He’s of age; ask him.”²⁴ So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner!”²⁵ He answered, “Whether or not He’s a sinner, I don’t know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!”²⁶ Then they asked him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”²⁷ “I already told you,” he said, “and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don’t want to become His disciples too, do you?”²⁸ They ridiculed him: “You’re that man’s disciple, but we’re Moses’ disciples.²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man—we don’t know where He’s from!”³⁰ “This is an amazing thing,” the man told them. “You don’t know where He is from, yet He opened my eyes!³¹ We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He listens to him.³² Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind.³³ If this man were not from God, He wouldn’t be able to do anything.”³⁴ “You were born entirely in sin,” they replied, “and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out.

³⁵ When Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, He found him and asked, **“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**³⁶ “Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?” he asked.³⁷ Jesus answered, **“You have seen Him; in fact, He is the One speaking with you.”**³⁸ “I believe, Lord!” he said, and he worshiped Him. **John 9:1-38 (HCSB)**

Learn from the Master

1. Passing by- Jesus had just left the temple complex in Jerusalem after an angry mob of Jews had attempted to stone Him. As they were passing by this beggar who had been blind his entire life, the only thought on the minds of the disciples was judgment. “Whose sin caused this man to be blind, his parents’ or his own?” Don’t be too hard on the disciples. This condemnation was typical then and pretty common now among religious people. If things are not going right in your life, you must not be right with God.

But Jesus, as He was passing by this blind man, saw a man with a need and a great potential for saving faith. It is pretty obvious that Jesus was very observant of His surroundings, particularly the people, and He was looking for opportunities to serve, help, minister, heal, teach, preach and most of all lead someone to saving faith.

Application We need to be more aware of people and more intentional in seeing their needs as we pass by on our daily routines and make conscious efforts to serve, help, give and witness.

....a common phrase through the gospels..... **36** When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd. **Matt 9:36** (HCSB)

When you see crowds or individuals, what do you see? How do you feel? Are you more often led to condemnation or to compassion? Are you more likely to pass judgment as you walk

by on the other side of the road or are you more likely to offer a kind word or reach out a helping hand?

2. Met his need first. When Jesus approached and healed the man, there was no discussion about sin, repentance, faith, living water, or being born again. Jesus made the mud, put it on the blind man's eyes and told him to go wash it off in the pool of Siloam. Apparently, Jesus left the area before the man returned. He had not even told the man who He was or where He was from. No mention was even made of the kingdom of God.

Application The old saying "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach" has some validity to it, especially if he's hungry. Esau sold his birthright because he was hungry and a man will not have much appetite for spiritual things if his belly is empty.

Meeting a person's need first will do much to break down their personal barriers to the gospel.

"Preach the gospel at all times -- If necessary, use words."

-- **Saint Francis of Assisi**

3. (Followed up) **Offered salvation** (later) With the woman at the well Jesus used normal conversation about thirst and water to introduce

the living water of the gospel and eternal life. With Nicodemus Jesus used the creative, symbolic language of being born again to introduce the clear, concise presentation of the gospel centered around John 3:16. To the man born blind, Jesus first met the man's earthly need before ever even introducing Himself or talking about eternal life. By the time Jesus returned and identified Himself and began to talk about the kingdom, probably several hours later, the man was ready to believe and become a true follower of Christ. This time it wasn't Jesus carefully chosen words or creative language that led this man to salvation. It was His love, caring and ministering to his earthly need.

Application The reason the man was so receptive to Jesus and quick to become His devoted follower was simple: Jesus first took the time meet a great need in his life. This met need flung the door wide open for a simple invitation to join the eternal, heavenly family.

This same practice is a main reason that cults are so successful in wooing people, even those from Christian backgrounds, into their web of lies and perversion. They meet human needs and

one of the greatest human needs is to be accepted and loved and that is often is what they first offer. Isn't it a shame that so many people over the years who were brought up under Christian teaching and influence strayed away and found their felt need better met by a cult?

We, the true church, must do better. Sure some people just need to hear a clear, concise presentation of the gospel and they will come to Christ for salvation. But, there are many, if not most, others whose felt or actual physical needs are so great that the only way we will win the right to be heard by them is to first meet at least some of those needs as Jesus did that of the blind man.

Mission trips, especially where there is obvious time, expense, work and sacrifice to get to and accomplish the planned work are a great example of the tremendous eternal impact that can be made on people's lives. People easily understand the sacrifices made to come to their country or community and they are often and sometimes immediately more open to the gospel because of it.

When we finish building the house we are going to build in Guatemala and I share the "house blessing" with the family which will include a simple presentation of the gospel, I am confident that they will, if they are not already followers of Christ, at the very least, be very open to what I have to say. I've experienced this over and over again on mission trips in and out of the country. People are more receptive to us because they understand the sacrifices we made and they appreciate their needs being met.

But what about in Cape Coral? Sure, there are people in Cape Coral that all we have to do is knock on their door or strike up a casual conversation and they will be receptive to spiritual conversation. But, there are many others who are hurting physically, financially, emotionally and/or spiritually. And until we make some kind of effort to meet those needs, our words, no matter how true and sincere they are, will fall on deaf ears.

15 If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you don’t give them what the body needs, what good is it? **17** In the same way faith, if it doesn’t have works, is dead by itself. **J**ames 2:15-17 (HCSB)

What can we do? What will you do? I pray this question will haunt you in the next few days and will compel you to use all the creative genius you can muster up to figure how best to meet the meet the needs of your neighbors and win the right to be heard.