

Recalibration©

Wes Mills

ACOP 101 • May 17, 2022

Introduction:

What happens when you make a photocopy of a photocopy? You lose clarity and sharpness

What if you were to make a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy? You lose more clarity and sharpness,

With each successive generation – something is lost.

What if you were to do it 101 times?

I would submit to you that from time to time, it is essential for churches and denominations to be recalibrated back to the original.

In our Solemn Assembly this morning we read about the recalibration that was necessary for the churches in Revelation 2 & 3.

In fact the church in Ephesus was exhorted to:

“Repent and do the things that you first did” (Rev 2:5)

In other words – recalibrate yourself back to the original.

I would submit to you that there are three important recalibrations that ACOP needs to make as we begin our second century:

1. We need to recalibrate of our understanding of the gospel
2. We need to recalibrate of our understanding of disciple making
3. We need to recalibrate of our understanding of the church

I. We need to Recalibrate our Understanding of the Gospel:

The church in the western world has preached a gospel of salvation rather than the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Its not that a gospel of salvation is a false gospel, but rather it is an incomplete gospel.

- The Gospel of Salvation produces believers
- The Gospel of the Kingdom produces followers of King Jesus

With a gospel of salvation you get believers who escape hell, and inherit heaven.

But with the gospel of the kingdom, you get followers who seek to obey everything the Jesus has commanded them.

In the book of Acts in the original language, (you don't get this in the modern translations) the followers of Jesus are referred to once as believers, but 26 times as disciples. (More on that later.)

Its not that a gospel of salvation is wrong, but it is deficient.

Because of the traveling I do I frequently rent cars I have "gold" status with several rental car companies, an as a result I often get free upgrades – I pay for the Toyota and I get the Tesla.

In the western world, the church has sometimes preached the gospel of salvation like free upgrade. In essence we say – life is good in the western world - why not take out a little fire insurance – and secure your eternal destiny.

But Jesus said *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. (Luke 9:23-24)*

The Gospel of the Kingdom is not a free upgrade – it is a costly call to take up our cross daily.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said *“Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”*

When we preach a gospel of salvation – people sign up for love, joy and peace – and then we tell people that we want them to *“seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”* – they think we are running some kind of a “bait & switch” scam.

The moniker of modern Christianity is “Jesus Saves” and so if He does – but the rally cry of the early church was “Jesus is Lord”

Saying that “Jesus is Lord” is a mental construct for us. But in the first century world, Roman citizens were compelled to demonstrate their allegiance to the Roman empire by declaring “Caesar is Lord.”

In Thessalonica Paul & Silas were charged with *“treason against Caesar, for they profess allegiance to another king named Jesus.”* (Acts 17:7)

In his latest book – **Not In It to Win It** – Andy Stanley says:

*First century followers of Jesus weren’t branded Christians to differentiate them from followers of Zeus or Jupiter. The term Christian was coined based in Latin political terminology. **Christian** was analogous to the other political associations such as Caesarians – the followers of Caesar; Herodians – the followers of Herod or later Nerodians – the followers of Nero.*

*Followers of Jesus were branded **Christians** because it was evident from their behaviour that they were following another king.*

I think this speaks volumes into the political maelstrom that the church finds itself in today – we should not be co-opted by any political ideology – but may it be said of us that we were Christians – because we are following another king.

Brian Zahnd – the pastor of Word of Life Church in St. Joseph Missouri – said “a first-time visitor to the Word of Life church asked him why they didn’t display an American flag – and this was his answer:

*“We are not an American church; we are a church belonging to the universal body of Christ that just happens to be in America. Instead of a flag – we display a cross - **that is where our allegiance lies.**”*

A gospel of salvation has produced a crop of preachers – who say one thing on Sunday and do something else the rest of the week. How else do we explain the apostasies and the moral failures among of so many high-profile leaders in the church.

“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

The lifestyle of the preacher, must reflect the Gospel of the kingdom.

The gospel of salvation is about profession of faith, the gospel of the Kingdom about radical obedience to live by the words of Jesus

In our Fellowship we have been proponents of the Full Gospel – many of our churches have even adopted that name.

I know that in Pentecostal history – that Full Gospel is a nod to our belief in the fullness of the spirit.

I want to challenge us tonight – to recalibrate our selves back to the Full Gospel – the Gospel of the Kingdom of God – the gospel that was preached and practiced by the early church, that turned the world upside down or more accurately right side up in just 300 years.

Its not that the gospel of salvation is wrong – its just not the Full Gospel.

II. Recalibrate our Understanding of Disciple Making:

Matthew 28:18-20

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."

Making disciples is the mission of the church.

In much of the church in the western world we have substituted the phrase "disciple making" with the word discipleship. (A word that doesn't appear in the bible.)

What we mean by discipleship is in reality spiritual formation – "read your bible, pray everyday and you'll grow, grow, grow"

Shouldn't we teach people to read their bible and pray? – of course we should?

But let me cut to the chase....

We must evaluate the effectiveness of our "discipleship" when only 9% of evangelicals in North America practice tithing.

The mission that Jesus gave his followers is to - make disciples.

As ACOP enters its second century, I believe that we need to recalibrate our understanding of disciple making in keeping with Jesus model of disciple making.

Five things about Jesus Disciple making model:

1. Jesus Choose Twelve Disciples To Be With Him:

Mark 3:14 "He appointed twelve, that they might be with him"

Jesus invited 12 disciples to do life with him.

It wasn't a program that they enrolled in – he invited them into His life.

He invited them to be with him wherever he went.

i.e. - weddings, in people's homes, traveling, eating together, in the synagogue, healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the multitudes – where ever he went they went with him

I don't think that we can make fully developed disciples if we don't spend time with those we are discipling - you can't phone it in, you can't do it on line – it has to happen face to face and life on life.

I think we need to recalibrate our disciple making to be more like Jesus disciple making practice.

2. Jesus Disciples Were Apprentices:

Mt 5:2 "Those who were apprenticed to him..." MSG

Disciple making is more akin to apprenticeship than classroom learning.

My oldest son Tyler is a Master Electrician, but he began as an apprentice – working with a master electrician – learning skills of the trade, and eventually became a Journeyman Electrician

And now he is a master electrician – he has apprentices working with him.

As most journeymen will tell you – they learn theory in the classroom, but they learn their craft in the field.

I also want you to note – that there is a multiplicative component build into an apprenticeship program. i.e. apprentices become journeyman who become masters, who in turn apprentice others.

A cursory reading to the gospels will reveal that Jesus used an apprentice model to train and reproduce his disciples.

Paul advocated for the same principle:

II Tim 2:2 "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

We need to recalibrate our thinking about making disciples, and follow an apprenticeship model, like Jesus, and the early church followed.

3. Jesus Disciples Were Engaged In His Mission:

Mark 3:14 "He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons."

Jesus disciples were engaged in His mission

It's not clear how long the disciples were with Jesus before he began to send them out, but my sense is – it was long before they thought they were ready.

i.e. Mk 6:37 – you give them something to eat

The point is – Jesus began to engage his disciples in His ministry – early in the disciple making process

Jesus didn't wait until they were fully trained to have them engage in the mission.

As we are making disciples, we need to engage people in the mission sooner rather than later

4. Jesus Empowered His Disciples:

Matthew 10:1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Disciple making is about empowering people for ministry.

Part of that is just giving them permission and the authority to do ministry.

The other part is we need to lay hands on those who we are discipling and expect an impartation of the Holy Spirit that will empower them in the mission.

And then look forward to hearing their testimonies of their exploits for the Kingdom of God.

5. Jesus calls everyone to be a disciple and everyone to be a disciple maker.

Luke 10:1 "The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit."

In the church in the Western world, we have created a false dichotomy – you can be a believer or if you really want to get serious you can be a disciple.

Our professional clergy model reinforces this false dichotomy.

Someone said "we pay pastors to be good, and you want the rest of us to be good for nothing?"

Jessie Cruickshank – of 5Q Network says that only 11% of pastors have been trained to make disciples.

Lets remember that the purpose of the fivefold ministry is to equip the saints to make disciples.

JD Greer says the day I became a pastor – I left the ministry, because now it is my job to equip ministers for the work of the ministry.

Pastor, if no one has trained you to make disciples – seek out a mentor or a coach who can train you to make disciples – and then begin to equip your church to make disciples.

Tomorrow morning – Sean Stevenson-Douglas is going to be talking about becoming a disciple making movement. He will envision you about what ACOP can be our second century.

So:

- We need to recalibrate of our understanding of the gospel
- We need to recalibrate of our understanding of disciple making

III. Recalibrate Our Understanding of the Church:

When the pandemic hit, in March of 2020 and churches around the globe were not allowed to meet face to face, the first priority was “How do we get our Sunday service online?”

If the mission of the church is to make disciples, shouldn't the first priority have been – “How do we go about making disciples in this new reality of a global pandemic?”

I get that Sunday's are part of the disciple making process.

Ask you the Dr. Phil question “How's that working for you?”

Are you happy with the results? More importantly, is Jesus happy with the results?

Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it is currently getting. If we don't like the results, we need to change the system.

I submit to you that we need to recalibrate our understanding of the Church.

I want to show you a picture that will serve as a metaphor about why I believe that recalibration is necessary.

(Apparently, this picture is what happens when a hurricane passes through an orchard.)

I submit to you that most pastors see themselves as collectors of apples.

Every Sunday we collect as many apples as we can and we count them – and as long as there are more apples than last week, or last year, or more apples than the church down the street – we consider ourselves successful.

It takes a particular skill to gather apples together, and some pastors excel at apples gathering.

In fact they are so effective that they find it necessary to hire additional apple collectors to help them gather more and more apples.

Some apple collectors are so successful that they have to establish another campus so that they can accommodate all the apples they are collecting.

Some churches use most of their time, energy and resources on the weekly gathering of the apples.

But there is also a need to care for the apples during the week – you see if you don't provide just the right climate-controlled environment to pamper the apples, they will begin to spoil. The apples must be pampered at all costs.

You see, if you are not providing just what the apples need or what they **prefer**, some other apple collector is likely to start gathering some of your apples.

Here is another key - If you look after the little apples just right – you'll keep the big apples really happy. And if the big apples are really happy, they might encourage their friends to join your apple gathering.

Some apples have been bruised by their interaction with apples in other apple gatherings, and if you want to keep those apples in your gathering, you are going to need to give special care and attention to those apples.

The other thing you have to watch out for is rotten apples – one rotten apple can begin to spoil the whole bunch – so you need to isolate and eliminate all the bad apples.

The apples you are collecting need to be washed – by full emersion – with the right formula.

In order to keep the system going, you need to squeeze a little juice from the apples every week. Not too much or they might not come back to your apple gathering, but enough to pay the bills and keep the apple warehouse in good shape.

Some apple gatherers have a vision send out a few apples so that new apple gathering location can begin in another part of town.

Some gatherers even have a vision to see apple gatherings established in other countries – so they send a few apples overseas.

If you are good apple gatherer you may get invited to pastor a larger gathering of apples.

If you are a really good apple gatherer – you can anticipate that you will get invited to speak at apple gatherers conferences – where you can wax eloquent about your apple gathering ways.

Here is an alternative picture:

What if Jesus had a much more organic approach in mind?

What if Jesus hasn't called us to gather apples, but to tend an orchard?

What if Jesus wants us to nurture apple trees, and reap a harvest of 30, 60 or 100 fold?

Depending on the species of apple, a mature apple tree can produce approximately 300 apples per year.

Within the core of each apple there are between 5 and 8 seeds – so at the low end that means that every apple tree has the potential to become 1500 apple trees.

Not every apple tree becomes an orchard – but it could.

The point is not to see how many apples you can collect, but how many seeds can we sow.

Multiplication is a principle that God has build into our natural world – and I would suggest to you that is what he had in mind for the church.

1 Corinthians 3:6-8 “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.

The problem is most of us have honed our skills as the gathers of apples -- it takes a whole different skill set to tend an orchard.

If you are going to tend an orchard – you need to understand what variety of apples will grow in the soil of your orchard. Can we grow Delicious Apples, or is this a Crab Apple community?

You will need to make sure that the soil is fertilized and the trees are sufficiently watered – so that you can maximize your apple harvest.

It takes 3-5 years for an apple tree to come to maturity – during this season there is very little fruit.

Some of us are called to Restricted Access Nations - where there are no apple orchards yet. Establishing and tending an apple orchard there will be more difficult, and the orchard you establish there might look a little different than the orchards in Canada.

Others of us are called to places where the environment is more conducive to growing apples – and establishing orchards.

Ed Stetzer says:

“Just as the true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple, but another tree; the true fruit of a small group is not a new Christian, but another group; the true fruit of a church is not a new group, but a new church; the true fruit of a leader is not a follower, but a new leader; the true fruit of an evangelist is not a convert, but new evangelists. Whenever this principle is understood and applied, the results are dramatic.”

Conclusion:

In any organization, something is lost with each successive generation.

Every organization is perfectly designed to get the result it is currently getting.

From time to time all organizations need to be recalibrated back to the original.

We must preach the Full Gospel where Jesus is proclaimed as saviour, sanctifier, baptizer in the Holy Spirit, healer and king.

Paul reminded us this morning that *“The Gospel for it is still the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes....” (Romans 1:16)*

A few weeks ago Lois and I had lunch with a couple who had recently come to faith in Christ. They had been deeply involved with the new age movement, they had written books about it, and owned a store dedicated to the movement. But a praying aunt shared the gospel with them, and they were radically saved.

Jesus is still *“able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him” Hebrews 7:25*

Secondly, discipleship programs are not enough – we must be committed to making disciples who make disciples.

We struggle to find pastors and church planters in our Fellowship, and I am convinced that at the root of this problem, is a disciple making problem.

If we were truly making disciples, we would be seeing a multiplication of pastors and church planters.

We must take up the **Luke 10:2** challenge - where Jesus said *“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

Finally, we need to recalibrate our thinking about the church.

We need to change the scorecard as to how we measure success.

If we continue to see it about gathering, rather than multiplying disciples – we can expect to get the same results that we are currently getting.

The church is the vehicle not the destination.

The church is the primary vehicle for disciple making but **the destination is multiplication**

Our scorecard needs to reflect that measure of success.

Application:

I remember being at a conference years ago – where the Holy Spirit took something the speaker said and drove it like an arrow into my heart, and I new I needed to respond in that moment, and I did, and God recalibrated something in my heart.

Tonight – I sense the Holy Spirit may be recalibrating something in your heart:

- Preaching the Gospel
- Disciple making
- Scorecard for the Church

When God says go – don't say no

I felt that the Holy Spirit saying remind them of Phillip.

Acts 8

Phillip is in the middle of a full-blown revival in Samaria – people are being saved, healed, delivered, baptized in the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit said to Philip, I have a new assignment for you.

I want you to head out of town and start hitch hiking

We know that he connects with the Ethiopian eunuch.

And as a result the gospel goes to Africa

Phillip could have said:

Lord there is good things happening here

We know he had a young family (Acts 21 - Phillip had 4 unmarried daughters who prophesied)

What about my family – the girls are all in good schools, they have lots of friends I'm not sure if I should up root them.

I am pretty comfortable here in Samaria - I have this nice house and I almost have the mortgage paid off.

You must love Jesus more than your comfort zone

Nothing must be stronger than your willingness to follow God wherever he calls you.

When God says go – don't say no

Some of you who have pastoral staff that you need to release from being apple collectors – you need to send them out into their own orchard

I want to invite you to come and let God recalibrate your heart.

