

Building a Disciple Making Culture-

Robert Frazier

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Hey there, friends. Thanks for joining us for this Ecclesia training. My name is Robert Frazier, and I live here in Boise, Idaho. I'm a pastor and help lead a network of microchurch called Redemption Hill. I'm also part of a team that plants churches here locally with a network called the City Network. And Bob Hyatt, who helps lead the Genesis training and trains pastors and cares for churches around the Ecclesia network.

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He's a part of our elder team here in Boise, and I was really excited to be able to help out with the Genesis training. I was able to be a part of a training a few years back, and I thought that, number one, the content was incredible, but also the relationships that were built and the training and coaching that were a part of it are awesome. So. I was happy to be a part, and hopefully today, when you walk away from this session, you have rethought. some of the ways that you think about why we do church planting and what it means to build.

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a culture of disciple making that's different than where we came from. Here's the thing. Church planting is fine. We talk about it a lot and we think that it's a valuable thing to do. It does some good things. It connects people in community. It gets them into Bible teaching that they wouldn't be a part of otherwise. They learn some things and there's a sense of shared purpose in creating a community that is helping them grow. I think that those are all noble and good.

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things. But I have a question for you. In three years, if you start a church, and I would say that there's kind of two different ways of doing church planting. There's church planting and then there's church starting. Church planting, is when you do all this work to see the kingdom. of God come to fruition through discipleship and evangelism, and you have church starting. And I think that when most people think about church planting, they think about starting an organization that has a Sunday gathering, that does a bunch of religious things for.

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people, even if they believe that it's not a religion, it's a relationship. It's all these religious things that come with it. They start a little non-profit, 501c3. But in three years after you start a Sunday service and have something happening, what do you have? The answer is, I think for most communities, you have a community of people who know a little bit more about the Bible, but have very little

transformation and formation in their inner lives. That's what most churches are built for.

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That is the system that they have designed for, is to have a Sunday gathering that creates unformed people who know some things about the Bible and are connected in relationship. I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but there's nowhere in the New Testament that tells us to plant churches. It doesn't use that language. There's no command. And when we think about Matthew 28, 19, and 20, this great commission that Jesus gives us,

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he doesn't say, go, therefore, and start some little non-profit organizations with big meetings and nice singing that Ted talk about Jesus. That's not what we're called to do. The commission that Jesus gives us is that we are to go and to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them everything that Jesus has commanded them.

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And he promises that his Holy Spirit is going to fill us up with everything we're going to need along the way. So when we talk about, Jesus says, make disciples. And I think that... we have knittered that language into, hey, hopefully in some nebulous way, people will learn how to follow Jesus by showing up and listening to sermons. That's what it means in most people's heads. I'm a disciple of Jesus, therefore I go to a church and I learn some things. But what does it really mean to make disciples?

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I don't think it's actually as complicated as we imagine, but it requires a reimagining of what it means to be the church, of doing the things that actually Jesus did. Because when he told his disciples to go and make disciples, he was saying, literally, do the things that I just did with you. Take the things that I just showed you and go do them with other people. All things you've heard me say, go tell those people. All things you've seen me do, go show those people.

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And I think that that's where we need to start, is instead of asking how do we contextualize and individualize, into the 21st century. I think we have to go back to the first century and say, what do we need to recover of the way that Jesus made disciples? And we're going to get to that in a second, but first I want to start with a few moments of some homework for you. I'd encourage you to just pause the video once I bring this question up on the screen. What I want you to ask is this question.

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Grab your journal, make sure you have something to write with. But I want you to think back into all your experiences and all the ways that you have been formed spiritually. And I want you to ask this question. Who had the biggest influence in your spiritual life? Who are the people that God brought along that were vital in

helping you go from, you know, whatever level of heathen you were before you died? You decided to follow Jesus. And once you started following Jesus, you obviously had something important happen because you said,

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Not only do I want to follow Jesus, but I have this calling to help lead others and to start churches. So there must be some people along the way to help you. I want you to think, who influenced you? Write down a list of names. And then secondly, how did they teach you the way of Jesus? What were their particular methods and what were the things that they did or said that were so vital to your journey? I want you to take 5 or 10, maybe even 15 minutes and walk through these two questions.

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And then we're going to come back and we're going to walk through them here in a few. All right. You're back with us. Welcome back. I'm betting that a lot of you have some different stories. We're going to talk about next week when we get together. during the cohort, but a few things I want to, I imagine some of you said, well, I was.

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born into a family that went to church, I came to a certain age, I started going to a youth group, started working through my own questions, and then I did some Bible studies with some people who taught me some things, and then eventually I took a ministry job, maybe after some training, maybe without some training, because somebody said, this is the right person, we're going to walk through this with them, we're going to train them internally. Some of you are like me, where when I was 22, somebody reached out and said, hey, would you help us start some college ministries as part of a parachurch missionary organization?

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And I had come back to my faith through them, I was disciplined by them, and then they challenged me to step into ministry, so I started with the parachurch ministry, I took an internship with them, and then I stepped into a full-time missionary role with them for almost 10 years. And then maybe some of you have had a very haphazard kind of journey where a few people, few key people have stepped in along the journey at the right times and have been key voices at helping you move past some impasses in your spiritual journey.

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All of those are very normal stories. Maybe you have some different stories that I'd love to hear one more together. I want to say this. The problem with most of our stories is that if we're trying to make disciples, but we look back at the way that our discipleship journey happened and we realize that the way we were taught is not something that can be easily replicated today in my life. It's not reproducible. It's not sustainable. Or maybe I wasn't trained well enough to remember how to do it.

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That's when you have to stop and ask the question. Is this the way that I'm going to make disciples? Because if you look at yourself and realize that you can't reproduce what you've been taught. Is that something that you want to do again? Do you want to take the results of the Western church that has not been reproducible and has not created spiritual movement of disciple-making in our times and actually continue on in that journey? Because our system is built to get the results that we're getting right now. And if you look across the church and the unveiling of COVID and post-COVID, what we've seen is the church does not look like Jesus.

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The church does not sound like Jesus. The church does not live like Jesus. And so if we want them to become Jesus followers, we're going to have to stop doing what we've been doing and start doing something different. Probably along the way, you were taught a little bit about how to follow Jesus, about how to do the things that he said, but not how to become a rabbi like Jesus. And that would have been really confusing to Jesus and his disciples, this idea that you could be a disciple without becoming like the rabbi.

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They believed that that was the reason why they existed as disciples, was to become just like the rabbi, in that the rabbi then would become someone who taught others, who brought along other disciples. They weren't disciples for their own personal benefit. They were disciples to gather and take care of the yoke of the teachings of that rabbi and produce them on generation after generation. They were being entrusted with something sacred from their rabbi. And we treat it like it's been entrusted to me so that I am enriched with a good life.

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And I'm just going to take what I've learned about Jesus and I'm going to put it in my pocket and keep it. But to Jesus, he would have said, you're not really my disciple if you're not becoming a disciple maker. The problem is that disciples always become disciple makers. So maybe we weren't really disciplined after all. Maybe we haven't learned the way. Maybe we haven't learned the way of Jesus if we haven't learned how to meet him. And this is important because it's tied to the mission of God and the redemptive story unfolding throughout history, okay?

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Like, we've made a mistake not just in discipleship, but also in how we talk about the story that's unfolding, that God has been doing from the beginning of time. So, I went to a funeral last week, and it was a nice service, and my wife's aunt passed away, and she was a generous, kind, Jesus-loving person who was an incredible evangelist and loved her community and invited all of her friends to church. And this old-school, independent Baptist pastor got up and gave this gospel message, and the basic gospel message was,

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you're a loser, and God saved you so that you could worship him forever. That was the basic thrust of the gospel message. And honestly, that's... It's thin, it's boring, and it's patently unbiblical. It actually maybe even threatens heresy. And it's a story that should be left forever in some weird 19th and 20th century evangelical Protestant history. It should be left behind. Because the story of God and the story of the kingdom of God is his project to create for himself a people who he would lavish on his love.

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and live forever in perfect relationship with them, but that sin had entered in and had kept us from that. And so in an effort to remake and renew all things back to the kingdom that he had planned and promised from the beginning, he sends his son to establish his eternal rule and reign through his sacrifice. By taking on the cost of sin and death on himself, by being shunned for our sake, by overcoming sin and death, we are ushered into, if we follow him,

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into the kingdom of God. We get to join him forever, starting right now. And we see the reign of God start in part but not in full at the resurrection and then more fully in the Pentecost and then in its fullness at the eschaton, that end of age when God will bring about a resurrection for all those who belong to his kingdom. It's a much better story than we've all imagined. And an important part of that story is that our response is not simply a mental ascension.

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to the belief that God has done all these things. Our response is to confess Jesus as our Lord, believe that he died for our sins, and then follow him to learn how to live as a part of his kingdom. All three of those things are in play when we're talking about, what it means to be a part of his kingdom. And when we leave out the formation of the way of the kingdom, what N.T. Wright says is that all of those things, the fruit of the spirit that will come as an evidence of formation in the kingdom, is actually, it's like the circumcision of the Old Testament where you know who belongs to the family because they have the family traits.

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They have the tribal traits of the Jews. Now, our tribal traits are those who have been formed and shaped and look like Jesus. And so, our work when we invite someone in to follow Jesus is not to come follow Jesus and learn, but to come follow Jesus, to join the kingdom through the work of Christ on the cross, and pledge our loyalty to him. To then become like him by learning the way of Jesus for the rest of his life. To proclaim to the world that the king has come and that he's made his rule and reign start now.

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people to join in the reality of his rule and reign that has started already, and then to teach them to live in the way of the kingdom so that when the kingdom comes, they will belong in his presence. It will come in its fullness when all sin is

eradicated and this world ceases to be, working alongside of our flesh and Satan to destroy our relationship with God. But the renewing and the remaking of all things will happen by the world being transformed.

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into the likeness of Christ so that people can live in harmony with God in creation. You see, God's plan to bring about the kingdom is through the transformation of people like you and me. That's how the world actually is renewed as we participate and we learn how to live in harmony with God. And so if we want to see God's kingdom come, it comes through helping people learn the way of Jesus. So the justice and passions that we have to see our cities flourish, that starts and ends with us teaching and inviting people to learn the way of Jesus.

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And we want to be like Jesus. We really want to. I think all of us do. But most of the time, we don't want to do the things that allow Jesus to be like Jesus. And we don't want to do the things that Jesus did to teach his disciples how to live like him. And so we really have to stop and go, what do we have to do? What do we need to do to step into this thing? So I think we've made a case for why we're talking about discipleship at a church planting training.

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It's because, maybe you've heard others say this, but if you plant churches, you may get disciples. Just randomly, people may figure out how to follow Jesus because you started. A small nonprofit that gives TED Talks and has good music. But if you make disciples, you will plant churches. The natural outcome of you pouring your life into other people is that churches will emerge out of them. There will be communities of faith that will be born because you have taught people how to walk with Jesus.

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So how you conceive of your job and your identity as a church planter really matters. If you're a church starter church planter, that means one set of priorities. But if you're a discipler, it means another set of priorities. And the question is, which one Jesus wants you to do? Do you put the cart before the horse? Or do you put the horse before the cart? What we believe is that disciple making is the starting point of what we see as church planting. When we plant ourselves in a community, live out the gospel through evangelism and discipleship,

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we believe that a kingdom outpost, a community of faith emerges out of that space. Then I'm going to suggest that the real imperative for us is disciple making and church planting is just the result of doing the work, which may for some of you be a major paradigm shift, a metanoia, a repentance of a way of thinking. Because what happens in a lot of us is we think that we want to plant churches because we want to see this. We've been aching inside for a

community of faith that would look and live and believe the way that we think that the world should have a church that lives and believes and acts.

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But the problem is almost all of that is about us, and it's about seeing a reflection of ourselves in the world. For almost all of us, there's even, what I say, there's a little megachurch pastor. He's sitting like a little devil on your shoulder, and he's whispering in your ear how to do the right thing so that you can have a large enough church that you can live the lifestyle that you're hoping to become a customer of. But the command that Jesus left us, it looks more like the Great Commission.

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It's not sexy, and it's not a big organization with a huge budget and a large building and lots of staff at your beck and call. So let's jump in. Matthew chapter 28. He says, And the word here is, as you are going. It's a present participle. As you are going, so you have this job. You're going to be taking initiative. You're going to go out. You're going to take the first steps. You're not going to wait for people to come to you.

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The model Jesus left us was this one of stepping out and selecting disciples. So you're not going to wait for the disciples to come to you and beg you to teach them the way. You have to go to them, and that's what the Missio Dei, the missioning God does, is he steps out beyond himself and makes space for all of us by showing us the way. up in our place. There's a way for us to come to him. And you're going to invite your disciples in. You're going to say, I chose you. And just like Jesus, he told them, not.

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speaking theologically, but just reminding them of what actually happened. That we are way too hesitant to pursue people in discipleship because we don't want to be rejected by them saying no. And Jesus' model demands that we step out and we invite people in. And that starts with looking around and saying, who are the people of peace in my life? Who are the people who love me? Who are the people who serve me? And who are the people who listen to me? So love, serve, listen. Who are the people who love you? There's going to be some.

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people who actually like you. There are people who don't like you. I'm going to tell you this, the people who don't like you probably aren't the people of peace who are going to become a part of your community. So it's okay. Don't try to win the people who don't like you. Just bless them and send them on their way. Don't try to win the people who don't like you. Don't try to win them. over. You won't. So you have people who love you, like you, want to be with you, spend time with you, ones who are drawn to the way that God has shaped you. Take it. Run. Those are the people that God is bringing to you. There are also people who serve you. What we see with Jesus.

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is that he almost never starts with serving. He starts with being served, which is a weird reversal, but what that requires is for all of us to invite people into our needs and to be really vulnerable, because it's really hard to be vulnerable, and you can only create connections with people when you're vulnerable. So you start with finding people who are willing to serve you when you ask them to help. And so it's weird, but during church planting there's a million things that you're going to need. Don't do it by yourself. Don't.

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do it by yourself. Everything that you do, ask somebody to help and see who says yes, because that is going to be a key test to see who's a part of the disciple-making that God is doing in you and who he's bringing around you. The last thing is, do they listen to you? The way that I think about disciples is they're people who, when I talk, they don't treat it with contempt and they don't treat it with disgust. They actually listen and are curious about it. If that's not true, if they're obstinate or they like to fight,

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those are not the people who are ready for discipleship. They're probably not ever going to submit to the teaching that you're going to bring them through. So discipleship starts with, as you're going, inviting people along. And then so he says, go and make disciples and really make disciples in this way. That's the mode of the adverbial content there. So when he says, go and make disciples, then the rest is how you're going to make disciples. So make disciples by baptizing someone.

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This isn't just the process of just getting somebody wet. That's where it starts. That's a very public moment for that. But it is the process of conforming. Transforming someone's life and helping them shape their lives in the life, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. So teaching them that we're meant to be people who die to ourselves constantly and are raised anew in the life of Christ. So we die to the ways of this world, we die to the discipleship of this culture, and we come alive in Christ.

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So go make disciples, baptizing them, and then he says, teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you. So we're going to spend the rest of our time talking about this, but what does obey look like? But really teaching them to obey is saying, all the yoke, the teachings that I've handed down to you as my disciples, I want you to take those and you're going to hand those to other people. That is your work as a disciple maker, as a rabbi. That's the work you have. And he gave a bunch, not a ton, but a bunch of commands.

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It's a short list. They need to be contextualized for them, but they need to know what God has called them to. They need to be really clear on what it means to

follow Jesus, so you need to make sure that they know. So here, I want to step in and say, okay, we've talked about it a lot, but the Great Commission demands that we make disciples in the way that Jesus made disciples, not in some haphazard way. We need to get really clear about what it looks like. For many of you, I'm going to be looking at this picture.

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This is the character and competency matrix. It's used in a lot of places, but 3DM uses it quite a bit. And what you see here in this character and competency matrix is there's up in the upper right-hand corner, that is somebody who has high character and high competency, and they're going to have fruitful ministry. It's an important place, and that's where we're all trying to get to, up and to the right. High character and high competency. Some of you have low character. You haven't been formed in the way.

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You don't always tell the truth. You don't always care about doing what's right. You haven't yet submitted your body and your mind to the way of Jesus. Now, some of you also don't have any competency yet. You haven't learned some of the ways that you are going to lead, some of the ways that you're going to serve, some of the ways that you've been called to use your hands and your feet to be the gospel. And to, you know, even, you know, some of you have low competency in terms of, you know, having a job and making your way in the world. And our work as followers of Jesus is to grow in character and competency.

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And so what we're going to do. Is not just teach people things, but as we are going, we're going to be bringing people along with us so they can see our character, experience our character, and then also learn competency in an apprenticeship with us. Okay, rethink discipleship as the word apprenticeship. It's how we do teaching the way of Jesus. Now, apprenticeship isn't something that probably a lot of us have gone through because apprenticeship is intensive, it's long-term,

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and it's very specific to a set of skills or an industry. So I like to think about my friend Jared. He's an electrician. I have him come in for different jobs that I do. And he spent four years as a journeyman underneath somebody else learning to be a full journeyman, which is someone who can then join the union and have their license as an electrician. It takes four years, and basically that's about 10,000 hours of work over four years that they have to do, and then they have classroom work on top of that.

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Apprenticeship is a deep, deep thing. And when you think about it, Jesus probably spent somewhere between three and a half and maybe even up to seven years, depending on how your history works out. We really don't. We don't

know, but Jesus spent a long time and gave completely. access to 12 teenagers, young adult men, so that they could learn how to not just do the things of God, but also become like Jesus, and so I want to take a second right now, and we're going to do a second section of homework here, so take out your journal, and.

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I want you to look at all the people who have influenced you spiritually over the years, people you have, actually, sorry, let's take a look at that again, this is the second set of homework with your journal, I want you to take a look at all the people that you have influenced, not have influenced you, but that you have influenced spiritually over the years, now let me say this, if there's nobody on that list, it's not time to plant a church yet, if there's nobody who has learned from you in a spiritual sense yet, you have.

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some work to do to prepare to plant a church, and it means that you need to slow down your process and prepare by learning, understanding, and learning from the people that you have, or someone else, how to make an impact on someone's spirit. But I want you to look back over the last 5, 10, 15 years, however long you've been following Jesus, and I want you to think about the people that you have influenced spiritually. People that you've trained, people that you've preached to, people that you've worked alongside. And I want you to ask Dallas Willard's famous two diagnostic questions for church leaders.

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The first one is, what was your plan for making disciples? And the second one was, did it work? When you look at the fruit of your labor and the people that you taught, what was the outcome? Did they become people who taught other people how to walk with Jesus? So take 5, 10 minutes, and I just want you to write out as many names as you can think of. Think about where they are currently, and think about the sort of fruit that has come about in their life.

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All right, hopefully that wasn't too depressing for you. Hopefully that was something that you could handle, but that's a tough pill to swallow, when we look at the results of our ministry and realize that we're really not good at doing the thing that we're supposed to do. There's two things I want you to get out of this training. And when we're done with today and done with this week, I want you to get, like, let's say three things out of it.

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First is, I want you to understand that disciple-making is your primary calling as a leader. This is what you're called to do, and if that is overwhelming, that's good. But don't stay there. This is your primary calling. Second is, I want you to know that disciple-making means building a culture, not doing an activity. It means creating a culture. It means creating a culture of learning and growing in the way of Jesus. And last thing I want you to do before we go is I want you to promise that you're going to learn how to make disciples.

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And then I want you to commit to yourself and covenant with God that you're going to do it for the rest of your life, no matter what your ministry role is, no matter what leadership role you have in the church. This is the calling of every follower of Jesus is to make disciples. When I was 35 years old, I had been pastoring for six years at that point, and we were preparing to plant what has become Redemption Hill. And I don't know what you do.

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On my birthdays, I love to have some time by myself and reflect morbidly on my life and how many years I have left and what I've done with them. That's what I do. I sit down and I journal and I think about how my life is. How my life is going and what sort of impact I'm making. And on my 35th birthday, I was sitting there, and I was reading through the Great Commission, and really, it just hit me like a ton of bricks. When I looked back on all the people that I had influenced, almost none of them had figured out how to teach somebody else how to follow Jesus.

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So I had not cracked the code. I had not figured out how to do... This is the one thing that I'm told to do by Jesus, and I'm not good at it, and I'm 35, and I have two graduate degrees, and I've spent 12 years in full-time ministry, and I wasn't good at my one job. And you can do two things with that. You can either get depressed and go, I'm not good at this, or... And that's a bad way to go, because it really had nothing to do with my ability. It had everything to do with my training.

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And what I realized was no one had taught me how to teach. I didn't know how, and no one had showed me. And so I started to get really serious about looking around to see who had figured it out, who was doing it well, and how could I grab hold of what they were doing. And what I realized was that I couldn't teach myself how to do it. I had to experience it. I had to see it. I had to see the work of God in other people's lives. And what happened was my little sister, who's three and a half years younger than me, a woman at her church had reached out to her and said, hey, you're going to join my discipleship group.

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And my sister was like, okay. And she was a pretty worldly Christian at that point. What happened over the next two years was this transformation where she not only became someone who followed Jesus, but had gathered a half dozen women around them and were teaching them how to follow Jesus and how to make disciples. And I said, Jesse, what the heck is going on? And she goes, well, there's this woman and she's been teaching me this stuff. And I think it's called 3DM. And these guys really know what they're doing. And I go. I. Actually believe you.

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Because what I see in your life is transformation. What I see in your life is you're multiplying out what you've been learning. And so I went on a journey and I

submitted myself to a training program that required me to die to myself over and over again. To learn to train others. I'm a self-starter and I'm an intuitive and so training others is really difficult for me to do. So I had to learn and I had to submit myself and I had to submit myself not just to the process but to a person who had access to my life.

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And who could train me and speak into my dysfunction and speak into the ways I wasn't following Jesus yet. Because only in my submission to someone else could I be transformed. This is what it means to learn the way of Jesus is to submit ourselves to one another. Tonight. I was I was reminded I was there's I don't know if you've been paying attention. This is you know. And there's this amazing thing happening at Asbury University. It's a Wesleyan University in Kentucky. And on Thursday, they had chapel and something happened and the students just never left. At this point, while I'm taping, it's been over 100 hours of constant prayer, confession, repentance, and worship together in this little chapel in the hills of central Kentucky.

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And I was talking with a friend, I was texting with a friend who lives across the street there, a buddy that I went to seminary with and done a bunch of ministry together. And he was telling me that Robert Coleman, who wrote this little book almost 70 years ago, called The Master Plan of Evangelism. It's this amazing little book. It's been printed 3.5 million times. If you don't have a copy, go out and get it. But there's this little book, and I had been given it in college. And I was like, okay, I'm going to go out and get it. And I was like, okay, I'm going to go out and get it. And I, The Master Plan of Evangelism, which sounds like either a Nazi war film or it sounds like some radical evangelistic strategy.

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But what you'll find is that that book is all about watching Jesus in the way that he had this master plan of overcoming the entire world by devoting three and a half to five years or seven years of his life to training 12 teenage young men. And it's all about the way that he made disciples and that he had this vision. Jesus had this vision to follow the Father and do what he told him to, which was to focus on these 12 guys. And a movement of immeasurable proportion has been birthed out of the life of these 12 men.

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And Cleb Coleman, Robert Coleman, he's 94 years old. He's living there on campus at Asbury Seminary. And he went. He went over to pray for these young men and women. And they invited him up. to preach in front of this chapel, this revival that's breaking out. He's 94. I heard that he's probably on his last legs, literally his last legs. And he got up and preached this message, to this group of young people committing to follow Jesus for their lives.

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I think that this message is the most important thing that you're going to do. I

want to make sure you don't miss it. Go and read the Master Plan Evangelism. It's phenomenal. But here's the reality. If you haven't seen this done, you aren't going to be able to invent discipleship on your own. Maybe one out of a thousand people can do it and they can create a reproducible experience. But that's probably not you. You have to learn from someone else. So what you need is you need someone to show you how to do it,

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a coach, a guide to walk through it with you. And your work in this cohort is to develop a plan to do that. And I'm happy to help. I'm happy to help you going through your Genesis training. help you build a plan and to coach you. I know that Bob has lived and done a great job at this. And there are cohorts with 3DM. There's cohorts with Discipleshift and Disciples Made, three organizations that do a great job at taking the way of Jesus and creating reproducible ways of teaching others how to do it. But just make sure to look at what they're doing,

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and at the very least, buy a copy of The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman and Building a Discipleship Culture by Mike Brain, and just start memorizing those books so that you have the tools that you need. But you really need somebody to show you. So make sure you find somebody who's actually made disciples in your life and have them teach you how to do it. It might be somebody with InterVarsity or with Crew, or maybe it's a pastor who's had success at training and sending. Find somebody who can teach you how to do it.

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We don't want you just to start a church. It's too thin. It's just an organization. We don't just want ministry to a sick and dying world, like a hospital. We want transformation, and we think that that only happens through discipleship. So what does it look like to build a church that doesn't just do discipleship, but rather has a culture of disciple-making? Well, let's look at the basics. So what is culture? What's it comprised of? Why is it so important? So culture, like in gardening, cultura, cultivating the ground or the soil.

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Like creating an environment that is rich and able to feed the thing. We are soul gardeners. That's our work. And leaders, they're cultural cultivators. So what we do is we create the spaces, we cultivate the spaces where spiritual formation happens. And we do that through predictable patterns, through habits, through practices. Through priorities.

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And it often reveals, it's revealed in what we celebrate, what we ignore, what we create taboos around, and the unwritten rules of how we live life, the traditions, the rituals, what we hold as sacred. So I want you to think about creating a culture is about transforming the way that people celebrate and the way that people run away from things. What are you scared of and what do you celebrate? That's your culture, primarily.

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Erwin McNess has this quote, don't change what people believe, change what people care about. Because if you change what people care about, you will change what you believe. I've got a couple of friends who have some pretty serious addiction issues around alcohol and around sex. And what happened was they all hit their mid-30s and had a couple of kids. And what's happening is as their kids are growing up, they're being transformed because what they care about has changed. changed. All of a sudden, they really want to make sure that they are becoming and being people.

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that their kids can follow. And so they're dealing with their nonsense. They're dealing with their addiction because it's so, what they care about has changed. But what questions we ask will reveal our culture. So what do we celebrate? What do we mourn? Do we celebrate our full room or do we celebrate transformation? Do we mourn when people leave or do we mourn when people aren't transformed? What are the accepted practices that we engage in regularly? I love the work of James K. Smith and Charles Taylor talking about how our cultural liturgies,

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the practices shape how we think more than we realize. It's not how we think shapes how we act, it's actually how we act shapes how we think. What are the things, what language do we use to describe the world that we live in? This is what culture is. Within churches, Like, what would make your church just stand on its feet and go nuts in celebration? What would you have to say in church to make that happen? What would make your church cry and mourn? What language do we use to describe God and his world, us, others, his mission?

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What stories do we tell regularly and with pride? Helping your church care about the most important things that Jesus cares about, that's the sort of culture that we want to create, and that happens by us valuing the right things. Okay, and we have that. We know what it is. It is discipleship. But what is discipleship? We've talked a little bit about it, but here's what Alan Hirsch says, that the irreplaceable and lifelong task of becoming like Jesus by embodying his message.

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Okay, so it's the one thing that only we do. And it's the task of becoming. not being, but becoming like Jesus by embodying his message, like literally becoming and our whole being looking like his message. I love that. I think that's probably a perfect way to talk about discipleship. Eugene Peterson says, A group of people who are attempting to pay attention to God and responding appropriately. This is a key part. We've got to listen, and then we've got to do what he says.

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And I love this Neil Cole quote. Ultimately, each church will be evaluated by only

one thing. It's disciples. Your church is only as good as its disciples. It doesn't matter how good your praise, preaching programs, or property are. If your disciples are passive, needy, consumerist, and not moving in the direction of radical obedience, your church is not good. Wow. It just pulls back the curtain and says, Okay, who are we really? What's really going on here? And what we want to do is we want to get people out of this endless cycle,

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of religious enslavement. where we have guilt, we confess, we feel close to God, then we have guilt, we sin. It's like this endless cycle of brokenness in our lives. And instead, what we want to invite people into is this radical call of discipleship. Come and follow me, and then we're going to come and die to ourselves, and then we're going to go and make disciples. So come and follow me. Join in and figure this thing out. And while you're there, you're going to find that if you want to follow me,

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you're going to have to follow Jesus into the death and resurrection of the cross, this Christ-shaped, cruciform life. And then if you're going to follow me, you're also going to then go and make disciples. So follow me, come and die, go and make. We also see this really important passage in the third and fourth generation of disciples. In 2 Timothy 2.2, you've probably heard this said before. But Paul is trying to give Timothy this vision for a passage.

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They're all work, and he's reminding him what he told him. He says, So you've got four generations there. You've got Paul, you've got Timothy, you've got the faithful men and women who will be able to teach others also. And presumably you also have then Barnabas and Jesus who formed Paul in the way of Jesus. So you've got five generations of followers of Jesus there.

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And that's the vision. It's not just me, and it's not just you. It's me and you, the people who hear from you and hear from them. And when we start thinking that way, we start to train differently. We start to do discipleship differently. Dallas Willis says, Imagine if every church had a sign out front saying, We teach people to do and to say what Jesus taught. That would be beautiful if it were true. If we really taught people to do and to say what Jesus taught, it would be beautiful if we really taught people to do and to say what Jesus taught. It'd be amazing. Okay, so, once again, as you're working to prepare to see a church emerge,

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you have to ask the two questions that Dallas Willard says. What is your process for making disciples? And does it work? Okay, what is your process for making disciples? And does it work? You kind of have, you have three options here. The first is the great omission. You just don't do what Jesus told you to do. And you build an organization that doesn't actually make disciples, and maybe you have a nice, successful TED Talk career as a preacher. That's something.

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You have that. You have the great commotion, doing what Jesus said in a way that's manipulative or awkward, pushing or intimidating. These are the guys who use authority and power to get weak people to join them in their work. That's not what we're talking about. That's not the way that Jesus made disciples. Or you have the great commission, which is faith. faithfully doing what Jesus asked us to do in the way that he told us to do it. Willard would say, great or not, it is the commission for us to join in the work that.

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Jesus is doing and teach others to do the same. What we see here is there's this relationship between mission and discipleship, which is this bicycle diagram. And what you see here is that discipleship is the engine. Discipleship is the thing that's going to help you get where you want to go. Okay, so in this bicycle diagram, you have the relationship between mission and discipleship. The mission is the traction. It's what's going to help you get.

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going on the back wheel, all of the derailleur and the gears and the pedals. They're going to move you forward. But discipleship and community is where it's going to be directed. So mission is we're going to do the work to get in front of people. We're going to help them connect with God. But discipleship is going to determine what direction you're going to take them once they decide to join in. And when they're working together, there's rhythm and there's harmony. Both wheels are turning for balance. The wheels are not swappable. You need both.

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You need mission and discipleship. Discipleship can't drive. It actually won't get you where you need to go. And mission won't steer you where you need to go. You need both. Both mission powers discipleship, but discipleship gives mission its telos, its end, where you're going. So mission gets you out in the field and connected with people, but it's discipleship that will actually turn them into Jesus followers and see the kingdom of God emerge. And if you lose one of those two wheels, the wheels, your whole thing falls apart.

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The bike will not function the way that it was meant to. In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, you have this passage. And all of this is a gift from God who brought us back to himself through Christ. God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors. God is making his appeal through us.

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We speak for Christ when we plead, come back to God. For God made Christ who never sinned to be the offering for our sins so that we could be made right with God through Christ. You see, they're intimately intertwined. God has called

us to reconcile the world to himself as his ambassadors. He's making his appeal through us. And then God made him who had no sin to be the sin offering so that we could be made right with God through Christ. The world is transformed by us becoming what we're meant to be.

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What we see is the local church is at its best when it is calling you to radical abandonment to Jesus and his kingdom. The church is at its best when it's calling you to become what you're meant to be and to participate in the eternal work of the world being transformed into the image of Christ. You see, the church is this beachhead of kingdom activity. It's an outpost of the kingdom of God living in exile in a world that's hostile to the kingdom.

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And the biblical fact is that there are no truly successful churches. There are instead communities of sinners who are gathered before God week after week in towns and villages all over the world. And the Holy Spirit gathers them and does this work in them. In these communities of sinners, one of the sinners is called a pastor and he's given a designated responsibility in the community. And the pastor's responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God. It is this responsibility that is being abandoned in spades.

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This is a quote from... From Eugene Peterson from Working the Angles. Our work as pastors is to pay attention to God and respond to him appropriately. And this is not just theoretical to me. What's happened in my life is I have gotten really serious about making disciples. And right now I have four guys that I meet with every other Tuesday night. And we spend two to three hours diving into their lives and helping them shape their lives in the way of Jesus. There's four of them.

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One of them is named Ernie. He's an older guy in his late 50s who has humbly submitted to allowing me, somebody in my 40s, to help shape him. You've got my brother-in-law, Sam, who has wanted to figure out what happened with his wife and has delved into disciple-making. You've got my friend, Mike, who has been walking with God for a long time and is finally stepping into his God-given purpose. And you have Brian, who is just stepping into a discipleship relationship.

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It's going to propel him into a life of ministry. Older men, humble men, people who are different than me, people who have very different interests and very different hobbies. Some of them are deeply into hunting and fishing and guns, and that's not me. I'm a book and sports kind of guy. But this is what it looks like. You live as a disciple maker by giving access to your life to other people. And what we're trying to do is we're trying to teach our people to be missionaries who are cleverly disguised as good neighbors.

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So 2 Corinthians chapter 5 says we are Christ's ambassadors. God is making his appeal through us. What we're plotting is seeing the kingdom of God come through our people. And we're trying to make that happen week in and week out. And so what we want to see happen is a few things. We want to change the way we live. We want to change the way we think about our metrics, which is instead of asking how big is the room and how many people are in it, Our question is our sending capacity over our seating capacity.

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So the church is like an airport. It's preparing people to take off and go where they're meant to be. And the question you need to ask is, if I were hit by a beer truck on the way home tonight and I died, is the organization strong enough because I've poured into enough people that they wouldn't miss a beat? They'd be able to continue on in the work without me because I've been training other people. If you're indispensable, it's not an organization that can last beyond you. It really can't be about you and it really can't be about your ministry.

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It has to be about the people that you're called to. We've learned that healthy community is not the absence of conflict but the presence of Jesus in the midst of it. And what we really want to see is that the kingdom of God comes when we live out our purpose together. Have you ever been in a... in a community that loved the idea of community more? than the reason why it existed. I had a group where we just loved talking about theology and drinking beer.

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when I was in Boston, and so we'd gather up a handful of people about once a month, and we'd hang out at this pub in Waltham and drink beer and talk until late in the morning. And what I can tell you is we had a lot of fun, but I can tell you it wasn't very formative in people's lives. It didn't have the sort of intentional disciple-making environment that we're hoping to see emerge. What Dietrich Bonhoeffer says is that those who love their dream of a Christian community more than they love that actual Christian community itself.

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becomes destroyers of that Christian community, even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest, and sacrificial. So it can't be about the idea of the community. It has to be the actual thing that you're building and making sure that it's focused on the mission that it's called to. And the church is going to bet, we are going to bet the farm on this thing called the Church of the Church of the Church. discipleship, because the spiritual journey doesn't look how we think it's going to look. We imagine that the spiritual journey is going to be this up and to the right sort of thing,

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but it's going to be this twisty, curvy sort of line of transformation over time. And the church only overcomes by people being transformed over time. And so what

we want to see is the church doing its fundamental job, which is to teach the way of Jesus. So what are some practical next steps for you as we wrap up? First, I want you to look for people who are hungry to grow, these people of peace who love you, who listen to you, who serve you. Second, I want you to think about how are people going to be ready for ministry?

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What do they need in this next season? And build a training program that's going to help them get what they need. Do they have high character and have no idea how to lead? Anything? You have to focus on confidence. If they have great competence but no character, you're going to have to focus on character. And with everybody, you're going to have to focus over time at transforming them and challenging them to step out into their calling. I want you to look and try to figure out some communal rhythms, these predictable patterns and practices that you're going to do together. So you've got Michael Frost has this little book called *Surprise the World* where he walks through bells,

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which is this idea that every week you're going to bless three people, you're going to eat three meals with people, outside of your family, you're going to listen to God's voice, you're going to learn the way of Jesus, and then you're going to live sent, bells, that's the acronym. So go take a look at that. Create some patterns that help people know what they're supposed to do week in and week out. Yeah, you are going to do some work of, like, when you're listening, this is the key piece of discipleship.

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Discipleship is actually not about learning content. asking this question. What am I hearing from Jesus in His Word and through His Spirit and from His people? What am I hearing from Jesus in the world as I walk through it? And then as I hear from God, am I going to integrate what I've learned? So most of the time we ask, what does the Bible say, instead of asking, what does God want us to do because of what the Bible says? So we start with, what does the Bible say? And then we just leave it there. That's not discipleship. If we ask, what does the Bible say? And then, what does that.

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demand of me? How do I need to be changed by it? That's discipleship, what we call our Kairos Circle. The idea of this, go do some reading on this, but the idea of the Kairos Circle is that every step along the way, God is inviting us into His kingdom. When He says in Mark chapter 1, verse 15, He says, this is what Jesus was preaching. Repent, the kingdom is yours. The kingdom of God is at hand. The time has come.

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When he says that word time there, it's not chronos, that chronological time. We're walking through chronological time, but constantly kairos, that moment of the kingdom breaking into this world is coming and coming and coming. And the

invitation is, are you going to dive in and you're going to be transformed by the spiritual work of repentance and belief, so that you can be set on a kingdom trajectory away from where you've been going?

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That's the invitation. So all along the way, God is inviting you to be transformed. You're listening for his voice. You're doing what he says. And you need a community of people who are going to help you do that. That is what discipleship is, is listening to God's voice and doing what he says. And then you need to figure out a way to pour into people. What is going to be that environment that's going to give people access to your life so that you can pour into them for the next two or three years? It can't happen in six months. It can't happen in nine months. It really takes some time for people to get a sense of how to make disciples.

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You're going to have to commit long-term to people and ask them to commit long-term to you. But that's where you start to see those movemental things happen where people's lives are transformed. They have enough experience to take it and do it themselves. And then they go and do it, and you're alongside of them in that journey. What we say is that we need to lean into the rhythms of the kingdom, which are up, in, and out. Up is deep relationship with the Father. In is the work of discipleship and being transformed in community.

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And out is the mission of God. And you're malformed in your church or in your huddle if all three of those things aren't a part of the rhythms of what you do. Jesus was doing all three of those things. He'd get away with the Father. Father, in the hills at night, he would pull away from the disciples so he could be with the Father. He would listen to the Father as he walked throughout the day. And then he had the... 12 guys, these 3 in particular that he gave all of the access to his life to them. And then he had this out where he would go and he would.

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bring healing and give a taste of the kingdom of God everywhere he went because that's what it meant to be the God who goes, the mission in God sent out. So make sure that we have those rhythms of up, in, and out. And I want you to make sure to get a book like Building a Discipleship Culture by Mike Brain. It's a classic that's going to give you a ton of tools. Make sure you have a coach that's walking through it. Bob or I would love to help you and coach you as disciple makers. I'm sure others in the movement would as well. And then lastly.

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is this, right before we go. Do not start, do not start, do not start a weekly gathering of worship, until you've seen spiritual fruit through evangelism and discipleship. Because if, If you do that, you will have started an organization, but not seen the church emerge out of the work God has called us to. So maybe you may even need to stop doing your Sunday gatherings.

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But until we figure out how to make disciples, Sunday gathering is a weird way to do mission. It's not going to get you what you're hoping for. And so what we want you to do is to really wait until you see the fruit of discipleship already happening in people's lives, and then allow for a larger gathering for the up and the in. And that's what Sunday's is. It's a space for you to train people, and it's a space for you to have transcendent connection with the Father through the communion of the saints.

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But it's not going to create disciples long term. That only happens in smaller environments. The five to twelve. And if you only have five to twelve, don't do a Sunday big gathering with preaching. That's weird, man. Just hang out. out in your living room and teach them how to walk with Jesus. If it's small, enjoy those days. Don't despise the days of small beginnings because those are sweet times that you're going to look back and wish that you could get back. There's so much more I want to tell you, but I really want to tell you, like,

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I know that this feels like a lot, but, God is really in this. He wants you to learn the fundamental work of his kingdom, which is teaching the way. And you have it in you. God is giving you this desire to see his kingdom come, and he's going to give you what you need. So start reaching out and seeing where God has already brought some people in your lives, who want to teach you how to make disciples. Humble yourselves before them and say,

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I don't know how to do the thing that I'm supposed to know how to do. Most of our seminaries and Bible colleges and preparation programs did not actually teach us how to do those things. They taught us how to run service. And it taught us how to lead worship, and it taught us how to preach sermons, but it didn't actually teach us how to make disciples. So you've got to find somebody who's going to walk through that with you. Love you, friends. Looking forward to some time together, and feel free to reach out to me, robert at redemptionvoicy.org, and any of the social platforms, Bobby C. Frazier. I would love to connect. Take care.