

Session 12

Doing God's Work Together

Key Scriptures:

2 Timothy 2:2	Entrust to reliable men
Matthew 28:18-20	Great Commission
Mat. 16:24-25; Lk. 14:26-27	Self-denial
Philippians 3:10-11	Suffering
Matthew 10:24-25	Persecution
Matthew 24:9	Martyrdom
John 15:8; Mat. 20:25-28;	Servants and friends
John 15:15-16	
2 Corinthians 5:20	Emissaries of Christ
John 14:15	Obey His commands
1 Timothy 1:5-7	The problem of apostasy
1 Timothy 5:22	The problem of unqualified leaders
Hebrews 5:11-14	Spiritual maturity
Ephesians 4:11-16	
Romans 12:4-13	Gifts—unity in diversity
1 Corinthians 12:7, 12-20	Gifts—for the common good
1 Corinthians 3:5-9	One plants another waters
1 Cor. 1:10-13; 1 Cor.	Division and disunity prevent God's work
12:25-27; Romans 16:17-18;	through us
Titus 3:10-11	
Ephesians 4:2-3	Maintaining unity
Ephesians 4:15	Speaking truth in love we grow up
Philippians 2:14-16;	Grumbling and fighting
Galatians 5:15	

Objective: • To understand that together as a believing community we do God's work of making self-replicating disciples

The Big Picture

Our task as a believing community is to make disciples—followers of Christ who produce other followers of Christ. Our spiritual gifts work together in harmony as we participate in the Father's kingdom work. Our ever-deepening relationship with the Lord brings fundamental changes to us, which allow us to carry out our Father's work.

This session is the last in our series. We have learned that to grow as a disciple we: 1) Agree with God concerning who we were apart from Christ, who we are in Christ, and who we are together as the believing community; 2) Be in a deepening relationship with Christ and each other; 3) Change to be more and more like Christ; 4) Do works of service the God prepared beforehand for us to do.

In this larger unit, "Doing Works of Service for God," we have discussed how we are to advance God's kingdom purposes as "salt and light"—kingdom influencers and advancers. It remains in this session to talk about how we work together to accomplish God's works of service.

In order to be kingdom influencers and advancers throughout the world—to all peoples—we work together to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). Our mission is to make disciples of all the nations by leading people to Christ and then teaching them what it means to be a Christian, live as a Christian, and obey the Lord's teaching. We are disciple makers—and in fact, we are makers of disciples who in turn also make disciples in a work that continues till Christ returns.

So, we are working together to make self-replicating disciples. We don't just deliver a message, we model a lifestyle with all the changes that should come by being a Christian. In order to make these disciples, our spiritual gifts must work together in harmony. No one person is designed to stand alone and do all the works of God. We work together as we expand God's kingdom by making disciples.

Teaching Points:

I. We are to make disciples. (Matthew 28:18-20)

A. What is a "disciple?"

1. Definition: A disciple is one who trusts solely in Christ, grows deeper in intimacy with Him and His people, becomes more like Him, and participates in the Father's kingdom work.

2. Characteristics of a disciple:

a) Self-Denial: A disciple of Jesus, has to practice self-denial in taking up his/her cross to follow Him. (Mat. 16:24-25)

(1) Disciples who do not understand the cost will not remain.

(2) Part of the cost of being a disciple is realigned relationships. (Luke 14:26-27)

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

(Matthew 16:24-25)

²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

(Luke 14:26-27)

b) Suffering: A disciple may suffer or even die. (Phil. 3:10-11; Mat. 10:24-25; Mat. 24:9)

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

(Philippians 3:10-11)

¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

(Matthew 24:10-11)

⁹ "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.

(Matthew 24:9)

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c) Servants: A disciple is more than a servant with the appointed task of producing fruit—a disciple is also Jesus' "friend" who He takes into His inner confidence. (John 15:8; Mat. 20:25-28; John 15:15-16)

⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

(John 15:8)

²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(Matthew 20:25-28)

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

(John 15:15-16)

d) Sent: Disciples are sent by Jesus as His emissaries. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

(2 Corinthians 5:20)

B. Our task is to make disciples who make other disciples.

1. Our task is to make disciples. (Matthew 28:18-20)

a) Go: Up to this point Jesus called His disciple to Himself; now He sends them to others

b) Make disciples: not simply converts—by walking with them

c) Baptize them:

(1) in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

(2) identify them with God through faith in Christ

d) Teach them to obey everything—by walking and working together

(1) Jesus said that if we love Him we will obey His commands (John 14:15)

(2) Not “tell them,” but “teach them,” which requires us to walk together.

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:18-20)

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will obey what I command.

(John 14:15)

2. Our task is to make disciples who make other disciples.

a) “Making disciples” is a process of “Catch, Equip, and Release.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

(1) A “catch and release” discipleship strategy that ignores equipping will lead to problems.

² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

(2 Timothy 2:2)

(2) One problem with “catch and release” without properly equipping the disciples can be apostasy. (1 Timothy 1:5-7)

(3) Another problem with this “catch and release” strategy without equipping is that we tend to produce unqualified leaders. (1 Timothy 5:22)

⁵ The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. ⁷ They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

(1 Timothy 1:5-7)

²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

(1 Timothy 5:22)

b) We are to make disciples who make other disciples by a process of “Catch, Equip, and Release.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

c) The goal of equipping is spiritual growth to maturity. (Hebrews 5:11-14)

d) Equipping requires:

(1) Teaching

(2) Modeling/mentoring

(3) Relationship building

(4) Accountability

(5) Dealing with issues of sin or past wounding

(6) Time

(7) Discernment

¹¹ We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. ¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

(Hebrews 5:11-14)

II. To produce healthy self-replicating disciples, we must use our spiritual gifts in harmony as a believing community. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

(Ephesians 4:11-16)

A. We are given spiritual gifts that are to work together.

1. In the unity of the believing community we have a diversity of spiritual gifts working together. (Romans 12:4-13)

⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. ⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

(Romans 12:4-13)

2. The functioning of our spiritual gifts is for the common good of the believing community. (1 Corinthians 12:7, 12-20)

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

(1 Corinthians 12:7)

¹² The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

(1 Corinthians 12:12-20)

3. In making disciples through the process of evangelism, “one plants while another waters” —we all work together in advancing God’s kingdom. (1 Corinthians 3:5-9)—
“Kick the ball to the Italians.”

⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe-- as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.
(1 Corinthians 3:5-9)

- B. Not using our spiritual gifts in harmony will prevent us from doing God’s work and advancing His kingdom.

1. Division and disunity prevent us from doing God’s work. (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 1 Cor. 12:25-27; Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11)

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹ My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?

(1 Corinthians 1:10-13)

²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

(1 Corinthians 12:25-27)

¹⁷ I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. ¹⁸ For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

(Romans 16:17-18)

¹⁰ Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. ¹¹ You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

(Titus 3:10-11)

2. Growing disciples need peaceful green pastures—if not we cannot work together and cannot grow.

a) We must maintain the unity of the Spirit through peace. (Eph. 4:2-3)

² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
(Ephesians 4:2-3)

b) We must love one another to have such an environment. (Ephesians 4:15)

¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.
(Ephesians 4:15)

3. We must not grumble and fight. (Phil. 2:14-16; Gal. 5:15)

a) We must live at peace.

b) We must forgive one another.

c) We must be reconciled to one another.

d) We must deal with sin by confession and repentance.

e) We must bear with

one another and carry one another's burdens.

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ¹⁶ as you hold out the word of life-- in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.
(Philippians 2:14-16)

¹⁵ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

(Galatians 5:15)

Group Discussion:

Warm-up Question: Do you normally like to work alone or in a team? What are the advantages of teamwork?

Discussion #1: How do you become a disciple maker? What do you do to disciple someone else? How do you “walk” with someone else in the spiritual journey? Can you share an experience you have had in discipleship?

Discussion #2: How has God equipped you? Do you feel well equipped for service? How can you become better equipped?

Discussion #3: We are to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). What causes us to divide. What are the implications of “maintaining” the unity? Why is it an “effort?” What is the role of the Holy Spirit” Why the bond of “peace?”

The Bottom Line: Our task as a believing community is to make disciples—followers of Christ who produce other followers of Christ. Our spiritual gifts work together in harmony as we participate in the Father’s kingdom work. Our ever-deepening relationship with the Lord brings fundamental changes to us, which allow us to carry out our Father’s work.