

Date : 14th December 2025
Theme : Servanthood in Mark's Gospel
Topic : Jesus' disciple-making relationship with His disciples
Key passage : Mark 1 - 16
Key verse : *Then He appointed 12 that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach Mark 3:14 nkjv*

Introduction

Jesus had a vision.

From the beginning of Mark when Jesus called His disciples...

Come, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men Mark 1:17

to the end when He commissioned them...

Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation Mark 16:15

Go and make disciples of all nations... Matthew 28:19

Jesus' vision was that His disciples would be disciple-makers. He envisioned their impact to ripple beyond the walls of the Upper Room, influencing families (in Jerusalem), neighbourhoods (in Judea and Samaria) and nations (to the ends of the world Acts 1:8).

The question is how did Jesus motivate ordinary men (to leave their natural pursuits of the day-to-day occupation) to come under His discipline and into the impact of His calling? The disciples Jesus made would become a force for spiritual awakening and change, entrusted with the future of His Kingdom movement.

What are the core elements of Jesus' modelling culture in the book of Mark?

1. The With-him principle

Life-change and authenticity happen in relational proximity (beyond attendance and rote learning).

...He appointed 12 that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach...

Mark 3:14 nkjv

2. The Reproduction and sending out

A healthy church / cell culture begins with the end in mind. Beyond attendance, the leader's mindset of reproduction and sending aligns with what Jesus did with His disciples.

Calling the 12 to Him, He sent them out 2 by 2 and gave them authority over evil spirits. Mark 6:7

3. The Impact and transformation

The Holy Spirit and the Word of God have been given for individual life change leading to family, group and then cultural transformation. We cannot sit in church each Sunday waiting for something to happen. We need to shift gear urgently and pursue relationships intentionally and return to our Lord's original model — making disciples for impact, life and mindset change.

- Jesus expects mindset change for His time with His disciples. *Mark 8:17-21*

"Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand?

Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?

And don't you remember?

When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"

"Twelve," they replied.

- In this instance, when the Lord told His disciples to feed the 5,000, their answer was...

How can? The Lord's reply...How many do you have?

"And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"

They answered, "Seven."

- In this case, the Lord again asked them to feed the 4000. Their reply was...Where can?

Again the Lord told them to find out what they had.

He said to them, "Do you still not understand?" Mark 8:17-21

- They were slow to learn that God could supply or multiply what they had.

1. Jesus modelled the With-him principle.

- a) Jesus modelled the spirit of care, a heart of compassion and value for people above social norms. *Mark 1:40-42*

In a world where it's every man for himself, it is hard to believe that anyone really cares.

- Jesus modelled this value one day when a leper approached Him. Few understand how a leper feels. Firstly, his body, joints and skin racked with pain. His face had lesions and a foul smell emitted from the discharge of his sores.
 - According to Jewish law, he must wear shabby clothes, leave his hair unkempt and must not approach anyone without first warning *unclean, unclean*. His was a lonely existence indeed. He must have heard about Jesus but his questions were many: *Will He help me? Can I get close enough to Him to even ask? Would He come near — someone like me with such a contagious disease?*
But he was desperate. It took faith for him to try to approach Jesus.
 - This leper had no doubt about the Lord's power but was He willing?
Reaching the Lord, he said *...If you are willing, you can make me clean* *Mark 1:40*.
Not if you can, but if you are willing.
- At this, Jesus' replied...*I am willing*. *Mark 1:41* gives the emotional state of Jesus then... *Filled with compassion*. *Compassion* means *to open up the insides* = bowels yearning, indicating a profound, internal response to suffering, not just superficial pity.

He saw the suffering, the need.

He touched the untouchable.

He reached down with God's love.

- In touching him, the Lord violated the traditional Jewish custom of disgust and social stigma, reaching out to the outcast to offer wholeness. Through this loving touch, the Lord imparted the spirit of care. *I am willing* are the sweetest words anyone in need would like to hear from God. (The Lord told him to show himself to a priest for physical healing, spiritual cleansing and social reintegration.)

Can we represent God in speaking these words to the needy? Through compassionate touch and kind words to restore the marginalised to God and community.
- Why is the spirit of care important?
When warmth is felt in the body, the message is heard. Compassion is the motivational basis for meaningful ministry. The needy needs to receive it, the servant of God needs to give it.
 - The difficulties we encounter in our ministry very often blur our vision to do good. When hard pressed, the disciple maker must care enough to stay on course.
 - If we truly care for people, they will beat a path to our doors. The Master's ministry can be summed up in one word, *compassion*. It is seeing and meeting needs.
The vital link to a caring spirit is communion with the heavenly Father who cares for us.
He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6

- b) Jesus modelled discernment whether there is active faith or not.

Faith is the basic essential to please God; without it, it is impossible to please Him.

Jesus recognised faith in action in community.

- The steadfast faith of 4 friends *Mark 2:1-12*
Jesus saw their faith *Mark 2:5*
 - How did their faith look like?
They were undaunted by obstacles.
Firstly, they had to carry their paralytic friend from his home to Jesus.
Then, when they arrived where Jesus was, they saw a full house. *Mark 2:2*

Faith looked for ways when there seemed to be no way
— they carried the paralytic to the roof (theirs was not a token effort).
— opened up the roof (indicating they were willing to pay for repairs).
— lowered their friend (taking the risk of dropping him from height).

They believed that the Lord would be willing to be interrupted and heal their friend. Faith in Christ attracts God's attention.

- Building faith in disciple making
This takes time and effort. Causing life change is a process that stretches over several months. It involves seeing the invisible outcome, thinking the unthinkable breakthrough, believing the impossible result. That's when our faith is stretched for with God all things are possible.
- The shaking faith of a distraught father *Mark 9:17-24*
The distraught father appealed to Jesus *...If you can do anything, have compassion and help us Mark 9:22*
Jesus answered *...all things are possible if you believe Mark 9:23*
The father was not sure of his faith.
So he uttered *...Lord, I believe, help my unbelief! Mark 9:24*
- The despondent faith of a fearful father *Mark 5:21-23, 35-43*
Jairus, a religious leader, came to request the Lord to heal his sick daughter.
However, along the way, his servants informed him that his daughter had died.
Jesus' coming was too late.
The Lord told him *...Don't be afraid. Keep on believing. Mark 5:36*

Our Lord is never too late, nor is any situation beyond His help. But we must have the faith to keep going. Jairus' daughter was raised from death; she stood up and walked around. *Mark 5:42*

2. Jesus modelled reproduction and sending out.

Very early in His relationship with His few disciples, Jesus modelled how to reproduce followers.
... for there were many who followed Him Mark 2:15

a) Jesus worked with His disciples

After Jesus called Levi to follow Him, Levi invited his colleagues for dinner with Jesus and His disciples. That Jesus ate with such individuals shocked the Jewish religious leaders. His sharing a meal was an act of acceptance in that culture.

Here, Jesus modelled inclusiveness. His social circle and dining companions included tax collectors (=corrupt and despised Jewish individuals, working under Roman masters, who extorted excess money for personal profit) and sinners (=prostitutes, the ritually unclean and socially marginalized).

- In mixing with this motley, varied social group before His disciples, Jesus' action reinforced His message *...The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news. Mark 1:15*
 - His message? God rejoices in the repentance of a sinner
 - His mission? To the spiritually sick who need a Savior and not to the righteous. *Mark 1:17*
 - His purpose at the dinner? To offer God's grace and forgiveness. His compassion and love is the bridge over social avoidance and separation caused by pride and religion.

b) Jesus sent His disciples out *Mark 6:7 P.H.D.*

- They went out and preached the message of repentance *Mark 6:12*
- They healed the sick *Mark 6:13*
- They drove out many demons.

3. Jesus modelled impact and transformation.

From Jesus' style of practising the with-him principle and sending out, we see that Jesus' disciple-making is both relational and intentional.

To achieve impact so that His disciples would ultimately spend time making disciples just as He did, Jesus' style was formational by modelling, teaching, coaching and challenging.

- a) Modelling — modelling love and compassion, purposefulness and focus *Mark 1:38*, truth and courage etc *Mark 6:1-4, 11:28*
- b) Teaching — Faith in God *Mark 2 Paralytic and 4 friends*
 — The Sabbath and Son of Man *Mark 2:27*
 — Jesus' Kingdom and Satan's kingdom *Mark 3:23-29*
 — Hearers of God's Word *Mark 4 The 4 Soils*
 — Clean and Unclean *Mark 7:15*
 — His death and resurrection *Mark 8:31; 9:30; 10-33*
- c) Coaching — The disciples taught and did what Jesus had modelled for them. When they returned, they reported and Jesus critiqued their activity *Mark 6:30*
- d) Challenging — Delivering Legion
 — Healing woman from 12 years of bleeding
 — Raising the dead girl
 — Feeding 5,000, 4,000 *Mark 6:44; 8:9*
Disciples asked... But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them? Mark 8:14
 — Braving the storm *Mark 6:48*
 — Challenging traditions and rituals to surface spiritual truth *Mark 7:1-23*
 etc, etc

Application

What is BC's non-negotiable task?

- The mandate ☐
 Jesus' Great Commission is a command not just to evangelise but to make disciple makers. This requires more than a sinner's prayer followed by Sunday church / cell attendance.
- The glue is relationship ☐
 Every part of Jesus' disciple-making design is held together by the glue of relationships. This calls for intentional relationships, values formation and multiplication.
- Imitation is key ☐
 Jesus modelled it and the early church carried on this disciple-making mandate in the face of heavy persecutions in the first 300 years of the church existence.
 What does this disciple-making mandate involve?
 Here the disciples took a personal responsibility to know and obey Christ and helping others do the same. The disciples, after Jesus' death, reproduced a life-style of imitating Jesus' style of disciple-making. Their region of the world was changed by Jesus' original design of disciple-making which would be the culture of the early church when they went forth and impacted the world.
- The DNA is example-setting ☐
 That the disciples imitated Christ and passed on the DNA is recorded in black and white 50 years after Christ' death.
 In 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 (written around AD 50-51)
 Paul records ... *you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.*

What happened 50 years into church life?

Paul and his disciples imitated Christ, the Thessalonian believers imitated them and from there, the region of the world was changed by this culture of disciple-making.

- Write the vision for your cell group / Net.

- Write the names of 2 cell members your envision to be disciple-makers.
