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Pentecost 14 –September 11, 2022 Everyday Disciples

“Follow Me”

Read: Luke 9: 18 - 27 / Memorize: Luke 9: 23

Over the last few weeks you may have caught the term “everyday disciples.” We believe that is a very important idea to understand. We’re going to be talking about discipleship for four weeks. If you believe in Jesus, you’re a disciple, which means one who follows Jesus.

What does it take to be an everyday disciple of Jesus? First, you have to have a call. All the disciples in the Bible met Jesus and heard Him say something to this effect: “Follow me.” He gave them a choice. The twelve disciples all responded to that call by following Him.

The disciples went with Jesus everywhere He went. They walked with Him, talked with Him, lived with Him, watched Him do miracles, ate with Him, and followed Him. They didn’t choose where they were going to go. Disciples go where there master leads them.

Why had He chosen them? How come none of them had a theological education? What was the quality that led Jesus to call them? There seem to be a lot of questions about these disciples.

In some instances, we know they sought Him out, like the two disciples of John the Baptizer. At other times, he sought them out. Some knew each other. Isn’t that interesting? They didn’t go looking for strangers. They went to their friends. It is much more effective to invite those you know, who don’t know Jesus to follow Him, than to try to invite strangers. It is all about relationships, remember?

Jesus uses those who know Him to call others to faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works through Word and the Sacraments to accomplish this. Just like the disciples, each person has the choice to follow.

In God's plan, when you follow Jesus you also become part of God's family. That local family is called a congregation. We believe that God creates congregations to help His people Gather, Grow and Give. Congregations sometimes join together into groups of congregations to carry out work they can't do individually, such as training pastors.

Over 15 years ago we wanted to express how we seek to fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples. We had a mission statement, but it was rather long. We wanted it to be more concise. God led us to "Sharing Christ, Changing Lives!" It was something easy to remember; we hoped easy to understand. It recognizes a reality. When we share Jesus, lives get changed.

Unfortunately, just as it happened to Jesus and His disciples, there are times when we share Jesus, hoping to have the invitation accepted, but they say they're too busy. They have other priorities and they don't have time for Jesus. What do we do then? First, we pray for them and keep on praying. Even when people don't choose to follow Jesus, He still loves them and wants us to love them.

Sometimes, one of the reasons for declining the invitation to follow Jesus is that their lives are so messed up, they don't think they are worthy of His calling. A lot of people think being a Christian means you have to be perfect. They're not, so they think Jesus won't want them. They're incorrect.

At times, some think that to follow Jesus, they have to give up having fun. I find that really astounding. The very first miracle Jesus did was change water into wine. He created 180 gallons of wine. That's a lot of partying!

The reality is that following Jesus actually makes life better. As we follow, we get to live our lives in ways that bring us joy, hope and many other blessings. It's not that we have to give up laughing or having good times with friends and family. When those friends and family are also everyday disciples, the good times even continue in heaven.

Remember, I said, we came up with that four word phrase "Sharing Christ, Changing Lives!" We thought it would be easy for people to remember, and understand. Like all things, when you assume, there are likely to be misunderstandings. Beyond sharing Christ, changing lives, there has to be a how we do it. We make disciples by developing relationships and helping them to grow, so we get the opportunity to share Jesus.

It is easier to help somebody we know get to know Jesus because we already have a relationship. We make disciples by living as a disciple. We want to let Jesus influence everything we do in life. We also want to watch for the doors that God opens for us to share about Jesus.

I had an interesting experience a few weeks ago. I always try to talk with people who are working in our building. I was smoozing with one of the painters. The next day he was painting my doorway and we got into a longer conversation. He said he was a Christian, so I asked him, “Where do you go to church?” Remember, if you are a follower of Jesus you want to be part of His family. He said he had gone at one time, but wasn’t going now.

Then, he said to me, “Everybody knows John 3: 16. What’s a favorite verse of yours?” I replied, “I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me though he die, yet shall he live” (John 11: 25). We talked about that verse for a bit and then he said, “I like to ask people that question. Sometimes, they don’t know any verses.”

Then the door opened a little wider. He told me he had a son and he wanted him to learn more about Jesus. Now the door was wide open. We could help him with his need. I said that we’d love to have him come to Good Shepherd. We have a Sunday School for his little boy and adult classes where he could learn more about Jesus, also. I gave him a bulletin, so that he would know more about Good Shepherd. I’m praying that God is working in him right now. We had a short relationship, but God can work even in that way.

At other times, it’s taken me years to get to that point. You want to listen to the Spirit’s guidance, but you also want to be intentional. I have a list of people I pray for each day that I hope God will open a door for me to invite them to know Jesus or know Him better. I watch for those opportunities, but also seek to create them by being in contact with these people. That’s what disciples do.

Everyday disciples gather. We come together to worship God and share in fellowship. That’s really vital in the life of a Christian. It prevents us from being isolated. We’ll talk more about that next week.

Everyday disciples grow. This happens both personally and within groups. God’s intention is for things to grow. Just think about the garden out back. It’s been

bountiful. We've fed ourselves and others. We carry out a ministry of education to help us grow individually and together. Our theme for this year is Grow in Faith. We want to be focused on becoming everyday disciples of Jesus.

Everyday disciples give of themselves through ministry. Ministry is how a Christian serves other Christians. We care for one another because we care about one another. Everyday Disciples are called to gather, grow and give of themselves to serve one another. That's really important to God and that makes it important to Good Shepherd.

Everyday disciples give of themselves through mission. Mission is the work Christians do with and for people, who are not Christians. Everyday Disciples are called to gather, grow and give of themselves to serve others. That's really important to God and it needs to be to Good Shepherd. It can be activities like OCC, support for CCIA or preparing food baskets. It can also be offering a gift to help supply the needs of people far away.

Mission is partnering with community organizations, which share our values, which focus on helping people have a better life. When you're worried about where you're next meal is or you're going to sleep each night, it's hard to focus on God. Mission is reaching beyond ourselves to those who don't know Jesus.

We're going to talk more about those areas in the next three weeks but I wanted to give you a taste, so that you can see how God is leading us intentionally to become everyday disciples of Jesus Christ. We each get to make choices about how we will live out our faith. If you have felt God calling you to a relationship with Him through Jesus, and your response is yes, you want to do that. When you follow Jesus, things are going to change in your life.

And it's not just a one-time change. You'll continually change as you grow in wisdom, understanding, love and service for Jesus. He calls you into a relationship that changes your life and will help change the lives of those you touch with His love!

Here's your question: As an Everyday Disciple, what one thing can you do differently for Jesus?