

CHAPTER 3

Reaching the Lost and Making Disciples



KEY MEMORY VERSE

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and
I will make you fishers of men.”

Mark 1:17

True evangelism

God places a much higher priority on evangelism than we usually do. Why? Because God truly loves people. *“God so loved the world...” (John 3:16)*. As Christians, we often become ingrown and look within instead of trying to find ways to help people around us. God has called us to look outward. God’s heart is for the world—for people. Evangelism is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others.

Many times Christians have a warped understanding of what evangelism really is. Some think that evangelism means they must knock on doors and pass out gospel tracts. Although this can be an effective way to share your faith, the Lord may not call you to evangelize in that way. To others, evangelism means going to crusades. Praise God for crusades, but for most Christians, crusade evangelism is not the type of evangelism they are called to.

I believe evangelism for most people is being so filled with Jesus that wherever they go, they discover people who need a relationship with God. Our responsibility is to share with people what God has done in our lives and help to encourage them to receive the good news of Jesus Christ into their lives.

In the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-37), the Samaritan found a man lying in the gutter and helped him even though some of the religious folks of his day passed on by without lending a hand. The Samaritan practiced the principles of the kingdom of God by loving the person whom God brought into his path. Jesus made it very clear that we should *love the Lord... and love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27)*.

Loving God is a call to love others. Compassion for the lost and those in need is a sign that we really love God. After Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, he quizzed a nearby religious leader, *“Who was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37)*.

We must operate in mercy and love. In Luke 15, Jesus gave three more stories about loving those around us. The first story was the parable of the lost sheep. Out of 100 sheep, one got lost, and the

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*What does evangelism mean to you?
How did Jesus evangelize?*

shepherd searched until he found it. The second parable involved a lost coin. The owner of the coin looked all day for it, putting all his effort into finding it. The third story is that of a prodigal son who took half of his father's fortune and left home to do his own thing. The Bible tells us his father waited for him and then reached out lovingly when his son returned.

You see, God places a high priority on people who are hurting or lost. God has called us to reach out to those around us, even the "unlovely," so He can fulfill His purposes through us. Jesus has called us to be fishers of men. "*Come, follow me,*" Jesus said, "*and I will make you fishers of men*" (Mark 1:17).

Let's learn together how we can "catch men" and lead them to faith in Jesus Christ.

DAY 2

The *oikos* principle

How did Jesus and the early church lead people to faith? We sometimes call this the "*oikos* principle." The Greek word *oikos* means *household* or *family*. Our *oikos* includes those with whom we relate on a regular basis. *Oikos* refers to one's personal community or those with whom we are in relationship.

The scriptures tell us in Acts 10 that there was a man named Cornelius—a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave generously to the poor, and prayed to God regularly. One day Cornelius received a supernatural visitation from God through a vision. God told him to send messengers and call for Peter who would give him a message from God. Peter came to meet Cornelius who was...*expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends* (Acts 10:24). Cornelius invited his *oikos* (relatives and friends) to this meeting with Peter and many of those people came to know Jesus Christ.

Another story showing how God used someone's *oikos* to bring people to Jesus occurs in Acts 16. Paul and Silas were in prison when an earthquake opened all the doors. The jailer was going to kill himself because he thought the prisoners would escape and he would be held responsible. Paul told him to refrain from harming himself because all the prisoners were safe. When Paul shared the Word of God with the jailer, his entire *oikos* (household) came to know Jesus Christ. All of us have people in our lives who are placed

there by the Lord. They are the people with whom we can share the gospel most effectively and easily. No matter where we live in the world, the *oikos* strategy or building by relationship is the most natural way of fulfilling the Great Commission. People want the truth. They are waiting for Christians whom they can trust to give them the truth.

You may want to list your *oikos* members on a sheet of paper. Pray and ask God to show you two or three of the people whom you're most concerned about and begin to pray for these people and reach out to them. If they are unsaved, you will be involved in evangelism. If they are struggling in their Christian lives, God may call you to be involved in discipleship by becoming a spiritual father or mother to them.

The scriptures tell us in the book of Acts that new believers were *added* to the church daily as they were being saved (Acts 2:47). However, as we continue to read the book of Acts, we see the Lord taking the church another step. God's people began to grow in numbers. *Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied (Acts 9:31 NKJ).*

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What does "oikos" mean?
List people in your oikos.

God's will is for us to be *multiplying* ourselves. In order for us to multiply, we need to get our eyes off ourselves and reach out to those who need to experience the life and power of Jesus Christ. We will see God's kingdom expand and our own spiritual growth accelerate. Jesus spent His time here on this earth doing two things—talking to God about people and talking to people about God. He has called us to do the same.

DAY 3

Kinds of people in your *oikos*

There are several groups of people in our *oikos* or personal community. First of all, there are family members and relatives. Your uncle Jack and aunt Sally are all part of your *oikos*, even if they live far away. If you maintain regular contact with them, they are part of your *oikos*. Second, those who share common interests with you are part of your *oikos*. They may play sports with you or share an interest in computers, or sewing...the list goes on. Third, those

who live in your geographical location are part of your *oikos*—this, of course, includes your neighbors.

Those with whom you share a common vocation—your fellow employees—would fit into a fourth category. The fifth area of persons that are part of your *oikos* would be others with whom you have regular contact, including your dentist, family doctor, auto mechanic, sales people, school officials, classmates, and so on. People in your *oikos* group will be much more receptive to the gospel because they trust you—you have built a relationship with them.

When Levi invited Jesus for dinner, he invited his *oikos* members or business associates. Luke 5:29 tells us of this occasion, *Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.*

Because Levi already had a relationship with them, these tax collectors gladly came to listen to what Jesus had to say. Jesus had the opportunity to share with members of Levi's *oikos*, and they were presented with the hope Jesus offered. When we invite our *oikos* to meet Jesus, they have the opportunity to be presented with the truth that will set them free.

Nathanael was Philip's *oikos* member; they lived in the same town. Through their friendship, Philip led Nathanael to faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us in John 1:45 that...*Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth..."*

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Explain how you have released your faith in the past week.

The scriptures are filled with examples of people who came to know Jesus through someone with whom they had a relationship. Sometime back, a small group leader in our church received a phone call from a woman in his small group. "Do you have any holy water?" he was asked. The group leader did not grow up in a Roman Catholic tradition and was not expecting this type of request. When he asked her for further details, she shared her concern for her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend. Strange things were happening in their home. An object had jumped off the stove and other unexplainable supernatural things were happening in their house. "May I come over to your daughter and her boyfriend's home to pray?" he asked.

“Oh yes,” she explained, “and I want to be there when you come.” The small group leader and his wife went over to the young couple’s home to pray. After a time of sharing the Word of God, the young man received Jesus Christ as Lord. His girlfriend also expressed a desire to follow the Lord, and they were married a short time later. The demonic occurrences in their home stopped when the couple was set free spiritually. It all happened through a small group *oikos* relationship that expanded to include family *oikos* relationships. *Oikos* evangelism has a way of multiplying outward!

DAY 4

Spend time mentoring others

Jesus Christ called us to make disciples. The key to making disciples can be found in Mark 3:14-15a. *He appointed twelve... that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority...*

Jesus was looking for twelve men with whom He could spend time so that He could show them the principles of the kingdom of God. He wanted His disciples to experience God’s principles as He modeled these truths for them through His own life. Discipleship often involves this kind of training through mentoring or modeling.

Jesus reached out to the disciples for companionship and training, so that they might, in turn, go out to minister themselves. Discipling others is caring for them as friends and training them to grow in their Christian lives. Making disciples is not telling other people what to do. Making disciples is literally laying down our lives for others and taking the time needed to see them grow spiritually. We can pray, encourage and help others focus on the Word of God which gives clear instructions how we should live our lives in Christ.

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List some practical ways we can make ourselves available to train disciples.

Biblical discipleship reminds me of serving as a coach for a sports team. The coach’s responsibility is to help his players to be the best they can possibly be. Unless we are reaching out and helping others, we become stagnant and ingrown. Like an ingrown toenail, pain will eventually occur. God has called us to reach out to others and train them at the same time.

The Dead Sea is world-renowned “stagnant” sea. Waters run into it, but nothing runs out. There is life in a river, but a sense of

death remains in a stagnant pool. When we give out to others, the power and life of God will flow freely through our lives.

Learn and teach by example

I love to play the guitar. I have had the privilege of teaching many others to play the guitar during the past 25 years. In fact, many of my students now play the guitar much better than I. If I taught you how to play the guitar, I would sit down with you and a guitar. I'd show you how to play by teaching you exactly where to hold your fingers on the frets and how to hold the pick as you began to strum.

The same principle applies to the kingdom of God. We are called to train, love and show others how to become disciples of Jesus Christ. You may say, "Larry, I have only been a Christian for less than a year." Great! You can begin to show others what you have learned in the past year. God wants us to immediately reach out to those around us and help them come into the kingdom. The good news is that we don't have to know all the answers. God is the One who has the answers. We can freely share with others that we don't have all the answers, but our God does. In fact, the Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 29:29, *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever; that we may follow all the words of this law.*

The Bible makes it clear that we are responsible to act on those things that have been revealed to us by the Lord. Even when we don't have the answers to some of life's problems, the Lord will bring into our lives spiritual fathers or mothers who will be used by the Holy Spirit to help and guide us. Then the Lord will help us to do the same—to serve others and be a spiritual father or mother to them. As we work together, we can see God's kingdom built as dozens and hundreds of lives in our communities are changed through the power of Jesus Christ.

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What are we responsible for, according to Deuteronomy 29:29?

How can we pass on what we have learned to others?

Imagine, for a moment, every Christian you know, training two or three others in the basic truths and experiences of walking with Jesus. These "disciples" would be encouraged to do the

same. The results would be astounding. In fact, if you and I each disciplined another believer every six months and encouraged each person we disciple to do the same, and the pattern was repeated every six months, in less than 30 years the entire population of the world could be won to Christ!

Hospitality in homes

Do you know that one of the most powerful ways we can be involved in discipleship and evangelism is through hospitality? Hospitality is a biblical principle that simply means *cheerfully sharing food and shelter and spiritual refreshment with those that God brings into our lives*. 1 Peter 4:9 tells us, *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling*.

I believe the Lord wants to use our homes to build His church. Our homes are to be used as places where people can be encouraged, filled with the Holy Spirit and come to know Jesus Christ. The presence of God is in your home because Jesus Christ lives in you.

Because Christ lives in you, you can be assured that every place you go, the presence of God will be there—in your home, at school, at the local restaurant, or at the store. God’s kingdom can be built as we eat breakfast with another person, laugh together, cry together, or just have fun sharing life together. The principle of hospitality can be a tremendous blessing as we make disciples and fulfill the Great Commission.

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What does hospitality mean to you?

How should we offer hospitality, according to 1 Peter 4:9?

The book of Acts opens and closes in a home. Homes are so important to the work of the kingdom of God. Dr. Cho, the pastor of the largest church in the world located in Seoul, Korea, was asked the question, “Where is God’s address?” His answer was that God’s address is *our* address. In other words, God lives inside you and me. Wherever you live, wherever you are, that is where God is. There are many people who would not feel free to go to a church meeting, but they would talk to you while sitting in your house eating a meal or playing a game in your living-room.

Romans 12:13 tells us that we should “practice hospitality.” You may think, “My home is not nice enough to invite people in.”

Be assured, when people come into your home, they will sense the presence of God because He lives in you—they won't care about your house. When my wife, LaVerne, and I were first married, much of our hospitality was in a tiny mobile home. We had people coming in and staying overnight, eating with us and praying with us, and they did not care that it was small. Expect the Lord to use your home, no matter what size, to build His kingdom.

Sowing spiritual seeds in others' lives

Praying, reaching the lost and making disciples is a bit like sowing seeds in a garden. When we sow spiritual seeds into people's lives through prayer, encouragement and discipleship, we expect to get a crop eventually. We sow that seed in faith.

If I go out to my garden and dig up the seed every day and say, "I don't think it's growing," I will never get a crop. In the same way, we sow the truth of God's Word into people's lives in faith, knowing that regardless of what we see today, we will get a crop in due time. We know, because we sowed our seeds in faith.

The scriptures tell us in Mark 4, that when we sow the seed of the Word of God into people's lives, several things can happen. For one, individuals may hear God's Word but fail to respond to it because Satan immediately steals it away (v. 15). It is at these times that we should bind demonic bondages in seekers' lives, so they can be free to hear and accept God's Word.

The scriptures also tell us that some people will hear the Word of God and immediately receive it with gladness. However, their roots are shallow, and they only endure for a time. When they go through hard times, they immediately stumble (v. 16).

Others may hear the Word but allow the things of this world to get in the way of their commitment to Christ. *Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful (Mark 4:18-19).* Because of the worries of this life, these people may find the Word of God being choked from their lives. If we sow seeds of encouragement into their lives and pray for them, we can keep the spiritual thorns from choking the Word of God out of their lives. They need some extra assistance during this time. Do you know that some varieties

of trees, when first planted, need to have a stake driven into the ground next to the tree? A rope then is tied around the tree and stake until the tree can grow tall and strong enough to hold itself. God has called you and me to be “stakes” for people, helping to stabilize their lives until they can make it on their own.

Finally there are those who hear God’s Word and believe and persevere. They will bear fruit according to Mark 4:20. *Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.*

As the Spirit of God, through us, pours His Word into people’s lives, we are going to see a mighty harvest of people coming to know Jesus Christ. Someday we are going to stand before the Lord accompanied by multitudes of others—they are the result of the seeds that were sown—multiplying in numbers by the grace of God.

Have you ever heard of Mordecai Ham? Very few people have heard of him, and yet he has had a profound effect on the nations of the world. While Mordecai was preaching at a revival meeting in a tent, a young man came one evening and gave his life to Jesus. That man’s name was Billy Graham. Every person who has come to know Jesus Christ through Billy Graham’s ministry is a product of the obedience of a man named Mordecai Ham.

D. L. Moody, a hundred years ago, was responsible for leading more than a million people to Jesus Christ. Yet the man who shared the gospel with Mr. Moody was a common, ordinary man who made a decision to share Christ with the young boys in his Sunday School class. The Bible says the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, but grows to be a majestic tree (Matthew 13:31-32). As we are obedient to God in the “little areas,” the Lord promises there will be a great spiritual harvest.

The Great Commission is simply sowing seed. Good spiritual seed is sown through prayer, encouragement, and by sharing the Word of God with others. As we continue to sow in obedience, the seed will grow. The multiplication process will continue on and on. Healthy Christians are those who pray and reach out to those whom God brings into their lives. Let’s rise up in faith together and labor with Jesus to fulfill the Great Commission.

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*How do you sow spiritual seeds?
What does faith have to do with planting seeds in others’ lives?*