

The Five Faces of Jesus: Evangelists 2

Luke 10:1-11

Sunday September 11th, 2016

Last week I introduced you to the concept of “People of Peace” from Luke 10:1-11. These verses show how Jesus formed the early church community by looking for ‘persons of peace’ to draw them into the Kingdom. Luke 10:5-6 says, “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a PERSON OF PEACE is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.”

A person of peace is a man or woman whom the Spirit of God has prepared their heart to be open to the Good News of Jesus Christ. They will be open to your invitation to respond on the most elemental level to a social invitation into spiritual space. And eventually, if you know how to disciple someone, you can invite them to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Remember spiritual space is wherever two or more Christians are gathered together.

A person of peace: Likes you,
Welcomes you
Serves you
Receives you

And for evangelism’s sake eventually opens up to you a network of relationships to you that you can also invite in, which we see in the story of the woman at the well.

This is a highly relational way of making disciples and it will work in today’s world where many, especially younger people, will not go into ‘religious space,’ like sanctuaries and Bible Studies, but will accept an invitation to ‘spiritual space’. Many younger people when you invite them to worship or church you often hear, “I am spiritual, but not religious.” So invite them into “spiritual space”... like a game night.

When we invite people into our spiritual space they will see the love of God in action between us and that eventually is the door that they will open to find Jesus.

Now will this work in a world where the Generation Y has abandoned the church and labels the church as ‘judgmental, homophobic and hypocritical’? Yes! Because they will see the church through you and your loving relationships!!! It is what Jesus did with the 12 and the 70 others.

Remember from the front we look like sheep, soft, fuzzy, happy, and inviting,



and from the back we all look like shepherds, guides and leaders.



There is not a one of us that doesn't have another person observing us and our lifestyle, seeing us as shepherds. There is not a one of us that is not called and gifted in some way to care. It is through that love and caring, our gift as pastors that we can earn the right to be heard as evangelists.

The early church built itself up in the very same manner. In the first 250 years most churches were, what I am talking about, and many call today “House Churches”. Philemon 2 reads, **“To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker....and to the church that meets in your HOME...”** They were small groups, teams where the love of God was seen and experienced. They met in homes and were extended families. Not by blood, but by commitment to Jesus Christ and each other. In that sense they were a family church, something we try to recapture here.

Think about this in the Early Church experience Christians were labeled “**arsonists**” for supposedly burning down Rome, which Nero actually did. They were labeled “**treasonous traitors**” because they had Jesus as Lord and not the Emperor. They were accused of being “**atheists**” because they wouldn’t worship the Emperor as a god.

They were accused of being “**cannibals**” because of the Lord’s Supper. They were accused of being “**incestuous,**” because they spoke of brothers and sisters in Christ loving one another. And finally they were brutally suppressed by the Government and yet in 250 years they grew to the point they took over the Roman Empire. Their love shut the lies of the world up and brought it into the Kingdom of God!

The loving relationships built in small family church communities is what caused the church to grow by just 3% a year for 250 years and the church took over the world. The early church acted as a team, a small group; but more importantly as a community of loving relationships, a family, and that experience overcame all the lies of the world.

Now is this important? We live in a spiritual age with many searching for God. 90%+ in America say they believe in God. 80% say they would respond to an invitation of a friend to attend church. It is up to us to introduce them to God. There is much fear, anxiety, uncertainty and loneliness in this world despite the Internet, Facebook, Pinterest, Tweeter, email, websites and more. **Cyber space is cold, empty and lonely, for indeed it is space.**

Many look for God with skin on. They are persons of peace. And the Spirit of God, the very Holy Spirit is within you empowering you to find them, speak to them, and to love them.

For 5 months I have been training a group of people (a Huddle group) in how to make disciples of Jesus Christ, in a highly relational manner, team/community manner. Their training began with learning how to listen to God, in how to listen to the voice of God directing them

to persons of peace in order to bring them into the Kingdom of God, the fellowship of believers, the church. These are Kairos moments.

This is a way of making disciples by building relationships with Persons of Peace and then knowing how to walk them through steps into an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is not just bringing people to commitment. It is so much more than just praying a sinner's prayer. It is bringing people into a full blown walk, discipling relationship with Jesus Christ. It is helping people discover they are beloved children of God by loving them and then walking with them as they try to make their lives like Jesus. Making your life like Jesus is what disciples do.

Do we need to learn how to do this here? Most of the churches in the western world struggle with how to make disciples of Jesus Christ. The unspoken question that keeps most pastors up at night is, "How do you make disciples of Jesus Christ?" The mission statement of the United Methodist Church is "To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." But sadly, again most don't know how to do this anymore.

Several years ago I was at a church and they had gathered the entire leadership of this church for lunch and a talk by me. There were about 60 people there. I asked them how many could walk a person through a process over a year or two to make them into a disciple of Jesus Christ, which is our mission as a church. Only 2 people in that leadership group raised their hands. So if you feel you don't know how to do this you have plenty of good company.

But I have been working with a group of people to relearn this ancient model of making disciples that will work in this world. It is not completely a team model or a small group model, but a community model of making disciples. It is a missional model.

It works like this. Here is a story from one of our Huddlers. Linda was at lunch with a friend at the Preserve. Linda observed a person

sitting by herself looking very sad. Linda's pastor heart went out to her the Holy Spirit was calling her to speak to this woman. Linda had been lead to a Person of Peace. Linda spoke to this woman and found out she was a widow who was having a very hard time of it. Linda shared she had lost her husband too and they bonded. Linda then spoke about Jerry and the grief group she ran and asked this woman (I will call Pearl) if Jerry could call her and invite her to the group. Jerry did call and Pearl showed up.

Later Linda followed up with a lunch invite that turned out to be the anniversary of her husband's death. Linda found out both of them had been married and widowed twice and both times their second marriage lasted 32 years.

Remember a Person of Peace likes you, welcomes you and serves you. So they went to church together at this woman's church that she hadn't attended in a while and arranged a meeting with this woman's pastor. Pearl already was a believer but was greatly encouraged in her faith through the love she received through Linda and our grief group.

Now this is modern evangelism/disciple making in action. It begins with being open to the direction of the Holy Spirit to reach out and invite someone in. It becomes real in the loving relationships of a "Missional Community" like our grief group.

A **Missional Community** is a small group that has:

1. A **Christ like mission** in terms of outreach, or service, or ministry.
2. Members of the "Missional Community" **invite people outside the faith or fellowship to come alongside them and help in the mission**. In other words the members of the missional community look for people of peace and invite them in.

3. Members of the “Missional Community” **maintain an attitude to eventually invite people to become disciples of Jesus Christ** when they’ve earned the right to be heard.

If evangelism or being and evangelist scares you, think of evangelism more as making disciples, people who live and look like Jesus and it will help you relax. It is also very helpful to know if you step forward in your mind to do this the Holy Spirit is right there to guide you and empower you and will send all sorts of people to help. Remember this happens in groups.

Now how does this, or can this work here at Vista Church? Well here are all the small groups that are in existence now with specific missions that if you add invitation and an attitude of making disciples they become missional communities just like the early church.

Chancel Choir	Bell Choir	Vocal Seniority
Sun. Bible Study	Mon. Woman’s Bible Study	
Children’s Sun. School	Youth Sunday School	
United Methodist Men	United Methodist Women	
Upper Room Devotional Men’s Group		
Mission Teams:	Family First	
	Impact Food Bank	
	Agua Prieta School Supplies	
	Snak Pak	
	Creative Hands	
	Coronado Mentoring	
Huddle Group	Prayer Shawl Ministry	
Game Night	Dinner for 6	
Landscape Crew	Grief Group	

Now these are not all our small groups, but if the members of our small groups are open to inviting the People of Peace the Spirit moves them to invite, the Kingdom of God will grow. Increasing small groups is one of the goals of the Evangelism committee in the coming year.

If you scored high as a teacher or pastor or evangelist, I want you to get on your knees and pray fervently about being trained by me in working with people in the third area of a Missional Community. That is knowing when and how to invite a person into a living relationship with Jesus Christ, how to invite a Person of Peace to be a disciple. This is achieved by learning to listen to God to fulfill your purpose on earth as a disciple maker, an evangelist. I do this in “Huddle Groups” and this Spring we will be open to accepting more people for training.

You will learn how to listen to the Spirit, identify “persons of peace” and walk them into an eternal relationship with Jesus. I am asking no small thing. I want a commitment for about 18 months...9 months of training and 9 months of training others.

Now if you can't wait to be “officially trained” you can start practicing this right now. Invite a Person of Peace that you know to join you in a small group within the church where they can get to know other Christians and experience the love of God in action.

Now, if you can't do that, look around. Look for the stranger in our midst. Sit with them. Invite them to coffee fellowship or lunch or one of the four Fs: fun, food, fellowship or faith. Invite someone in.

Take the risk and invite to worship. Yes, today more are likely, if they don't know you as a friend, to say “no” than “yes.” But if a person is a friend you have an 80% chance of a positive response. And most importantly God is with you. God is preparing even now as I speak the heart of the Person of Peace you will invite.

Indeed I can train you. The people I have trained can train you to identify the Persons of Peace and invite them in as naturally and as easily as you inviting a friend for lunch. If you are ready to say yes to God write your name down and give it to me and I will contact you as to when our new groups start in the Spring.

What is God saying?!!! Will you say yes!!? Amen