

# The Key To World Evangelization

By Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

**IN CONSIDERING THE** task of world evangelization we must remember that we are not starting from scratch. One of every three persons in the world is at least a nominal Christian. There is a body of evangelical Christians in every major language group. We have tremendous resources to draw on.

But how many of these people are actively engaged in witnessing for Christ? Christian author Elton Trueblood estimated that not more than two of every one hundred American college students have any active identification with Christ. And how many church members have personally introduced someone to Christ? **In the United States it is probably less than one percent.**



It is not the mass of nominal Christians who will forward world evangelization, or even the millions of evangelical Christians. It is that certain kind of Christian that Jesus called a disciple.

**Only the true disciple has a *message*, a *motivation*, and a *method* in his evangelism.**

**He has a message** -“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard” (1 John 1:3). Only the person who takes time to look at Jesus Christ and listen to him can witness to what he has seen and heard.

**He has a motivation** - The disciple not only has something to say, but the desire to say it. **“For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).**

**He has a method** - As he follows Christ, the disciple learns how to catch men. **Come follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men’” (Matthew 4:19).**

**Jesus made disciples.** Making disciples was a central part of Jesus’ ministry. When it came to finding people to help him in his ministry, he knew he couldn’t depend on the half-hearted mass. He insisted on having dedicated disciples. “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘. . . **Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple**’” (Luke 14:25–27).

Making disciples is also how he told us to begin. **“Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).** He said we should teach these disciples **“everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20),** and **“everything”** includes how to make disciples. We are to train disciple makers-those who will in turn make more disciples, thus multiplying the number.

Today institutionalism has greatly obscured this emphasis. So in seeking world evangelization we must return to the emphasis on multiplying disciples. We must start with the

disciples we already have, and teach them to make disciples and to lead those disciples in evangelism and disciple-making.

**What is a disciple?** From the Scriptures we see that a disciple has three basic characteristics.

**First, a disciple is identified with the person of Christ.** He openly admits belonging to Christ-by his confession before men (**Romans 10:9–10**), by his baptism (**Matthew 28:19**), and by taking up his cross (**Luke 9:23**). Surely the first step in discipleship is the open, public identification of oneself with Jesus Christ, whether or not this is popular.

A number of years ago a friend told me about attending, with Billy Graham, a meeting of five hundred men in the Jewish Rotary Club of New York City. Mr. Graham was to speak to them, and my friend wondered what in the world he would talk about to a Jewish club. When the time came, he spoke on “Christ, the Fulfillment of the Old Testament Prophecies.” He identified himself unashamedly with Jesus Christ, and at the end of the speech they gave him a standing ovation.

Jesus once asked the disciples, **“Who do you say I am?”** (**Mark 8:29**). Simon Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” It seems that everything in Christ’s ministry to his disciples led up to this identification. Once this occurred, Jesus **“then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again”** (**Mark 8:31**).

I AM NOT ASHAMED  
OF THE GOSPEL FOR IT  
IS THE POWER OF  
GOD FOR  
SALVATION

Some years ago another friend of mine was with the Billy Graham team in a crusade, and a businessman came forward one night and received Christ as his Savior. The next Sunday he went to a church where he sometimes attended.

After the service, he walked up to one of the leading elders in this church and said, “I was at the Billy Graham meeting last week out at the ball park. I went forward and received Christ.”

“I heard about it,” the elder replied, “and I am delighted.”

Then the businessman said, “How long have you and I been associated in business?”

“About twenty-three years, I think,” the elder answered.

“Have you known Christ as your Savior all that time?” the businessman asked.

“Yes, I have,” he answered.

“Well, I don’t remember you ever speaking to me about Christ during those years,” the businessman said. The elder hung his head, and the businessman continued: “I have thought highly of you. In fact, I thought so highly of you that I felt if anyone could be as fine a man as you and not be a Christian, then I didn’t have to be a Christian either.”

The elder was a fine man, but he did not have this first mark of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

**A second mark of a disciple is that he is obedient to the word of Christ.** “Jesus said, **‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples’**” (John 8:31). The disciple seeks to obey the Scriptures as they apply to every area of his life.

Luke records what happened one-day when crowds of people were listening to the Lord Jesus preach. As one woman in the crowd was listening to him, something must have welled up within her. Perhaps she had a son who was wayward, and as she looked at Jesus she wished her son were like him. But whatever it was, she called out to Jesus, **“Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you”** (Luke 11:27).

Jesus’ answer to her was significant. He said, **“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”** True blessedness-true happiness-is to hear what God has to say and then to do it.

This obedience is also necessary for our stability. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus told about the wise man who was like one who built his house on rock, and the foolish man who was like one who built his house on sand, only one thing was different between them: One obeyed the words of Christ, and the other did not.

A disciple does more than attend meetings. He does more than take notes during messages. **He finds out what the Bible says, and does it.**

**You may think it doesn’t take courage to be obedient to God’s word. But we live in a Christ-rejecting world, and anyone who practices what he learns in the Bible will come in conflict with the world.**

**The third characteristic of a disciple is that he bears fruit in the work of Christ.**

This fruit is of two kinds. One is character—in particular, love. **“All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another”** (John 13:35). The other is the fruit of influencing other lives toward Christ. **“I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message”** (John 17:20). Thus the disciple forwards the cause of the gospel and glorifies God.

I remember years ago, I really threw a curve ball to the church one morning. We were talking about Jesus sending out the twelve apostles two by two. He gave them authority over unclean spirits, and they went out and preached repentance, cast out demons, and healed the sick. I asked the class, “Do you think Judas did this? Did Judas preach repentance and cast out demons and heal the sick?” There was no indication that he did not.

Then I had the class look at Jesus’ words in **Matthew 7:22–23**—**“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”**

My point was that we can get carried away with doing spectacular works, and think that these are the supreme evidence of being true Spirit-filled disciples. **But the real evidence is shown in Christ-like character-love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control-the fruit of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22–23).

Take this world in which we live, and strip away all of the glitter and the tinsel and the veneer, and what is left? Broken heartedness, captivity, anxiety, sadness, and depression. A disciple is one who gets involved in that kind of world, and shows the fruit of the Spirit in Christ-like character. How we need that in this world in which we live!

**How can we make disciples?** How do we make these disciples? One of the most effective ways to begin is to take the initiative in bringing together a few potential disciples into a small group fellowship, like a New Testament *koinonia*. The late **Samuel Shoemaker, rector of Calvary Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh**, said, **“Every congregation needs two things—the formal service for worship and the informal gatherings for fellowship.”** It is the small gatherings we are speaking of here—groups of two or three, or at most ten or twelve. God is causing such groups to spring up all around the world. We should recognize them as the work of God, and encourage their growth.

This small group approach is at the heart of disciple-making. But the groups can degenerate into social get-togethers without disciple-making dynamics if they do not center around three essential components: **testimony, scripture, and prayer.**

**Testimony:** The disciple further identifies himself with Christ by sharing in the group how he came to know Christ and what Christ is doing in his life. This testimony also becomes an offensive weapon in spiritual warfare (**see Rev. 12:11**).

**Scripture:** To be obedient to the word of Christ, the disciple must know that word. **“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me” (John 14:21).** Author Stephen Neill said, “The major task is to get the Bible back into the consciousness of the ordinary man and woman; for, more than any other single instrument, the Bible rightly used is able to recreate the climate of faith. . . . Competent knowledge of the Bible is the only basis for effective Christian witness.”

**Prayer:** No one will bear fruit in the work of Christ without prayer. **“Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:7–8).**

**The disciple-maker leads.** Within this group, the disciple-maker acts as a leader, not a lecturer. He or she leads the group in such a way that each member has opportunity to express himself. The group member learns to share his or her faith to a sympathetic audience in preparation for expressing it later in a less friendly environment. He or she also learns to share with the others the results of his or her own study and meditation in the Scriptures, as together they **“teach and admonish one another with all wisdom” (Col. 3:16).** Finally, he or she learns to pray with others, agreeing together in prayer (**Matthew 18:19**).

The group situation has prepared each member for evangelism by teaching him to articulate his testimony, by giving him a working knowledge of the Scriptures, and by preparing the way in prayer. **But he must still be trained to do evangelism.**

**To train means to help acquire a skill. To acquire a skill, one must practice. Practice means getting out and doing it.**

Jesus took his twelve disciples out into active service. They watched him in action as he did evangelism. Then he said, “I have sent you to reap,” and he sent them out on their own. He trained them through experience, but it was guided experience.

A disciple can get this experience in various ways. First, he should see it demonstrated. He needs to be shown how, and then helped to do it on his own. This is the responsibility of the disciple-maker, who is himself a veteran of the battles for which he is training new recruits. The disciple-maker must help the disciple break out of the shell of his inhibitions and come into the liberty of witnessing for Christ on his own.

A tool or method for sharing the gospel can help him overcome these inhibitions. Methods can sometimes be stifling and cold—but they can also be liberating. Any pastor knows that a good outline and careful preparation can give him freedom in the pulpit. By using “The Four Spiritual Laws,” “The Bridge to Life,” or any other written outline, which incorporates the basic gospel message, the disciple can develop this same freedom.

The disciple can get experience in many kinds of evangelism. One type is formally structured, such as a crusade or church meeting where he can help with counseling. Another is an informal activity, such as a luncheon or dessert time, where the gospel is presented and the disciple can follow it up with a personal conversation.

Probably the most common situation is everyday, unstructured evangelism-everywhere, all the time—at the office, in the neighborhood, or among family and friends. This kind of evangelism gives the disciple the greatest opportunity for creative sharing. Now he really begins to learn.

He learns he *can* talk with people about Christ, that friendship is the first step, that he is powerless apart from the Holy Spirit, that he has questions, and that he needs tools. So he goes back to the group or to his church or to a book to find answers and encouragement. Now he is no longer theorizing. He is practicing.

**Forward in battle. Thus his life becomes one of “coming in” for fellowship and “going out” for evangelism-coming in for instruction, going out to put it into practice.** He has a base where he prepares for battle.

In due time he will reap if he endures. Then *he* must make disciples, taking the new converts to church, getting them into a *koinonia* discipling fellowship, and starting them in evangelism. He will not only have become a disciple; he will be making disciples, and soon his disciples will be making disciples. He will be doing what Paul spoke of in **2 Tim. 2:2**—“**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.**”