

How did Jesus make disciples? He used Mission as the catalyst (and still does)...

I love a good story! The stories I most enjoy are those in which there are moments of discovery for the lead characters; discoveries that enable them to be better people and 'save the day.' Those moments of discovery enable the characters to see something that they had not understood before and their frame of reference shifts. What was impossible becomes possible.

As missional disciples (people who want to follow Jesus, and the model He sets for us), our walk with Jesus calls us to a road along which we experience events that continually reframe our understanding of what it means to love, worship, obey and serve Him. One such moment is when we begin to see mission and discipleship as Jesus does.

Jesus takes us on a journey from thinking we can't do anything for him (that we are not special enough or that we don't know enough) to one in which we can be used powerfully by Him just as we are. How does Jesus do this? He uses mission to catalyze our discipleship.

In Luke 7-10 we see Jesus' strategy for producing missional disciples:

- In Luke 7, Jesus engages with all kinds of people, from the centurion to the widow, to the disciples of John, to Simon the Pharisee. He preaches and he heals and the disciples watch him doing it.
- In Luke 8, we're told that Jesus specifically brings the 12 along with him. He continues preaching and healing, but spends more time nurturing the disciples into a greater understanding.
- In Luke 9 he does something astonishing. He calls the twelve together and sends them out – on their own – in mission. Bearing in mind, at this point the disciples don't know or understand much at all that we do now: about who Jesus is, the Cross, Resurrection... anything! But he sends them out anyway and, in the doing, they encounter the transforming power of God. They come back full of excitement. They are growing.

- Then in Luke 10 he sends them out as a group of 70. The original 12 have become missional disciples who engage, nurture and help others encounter and grow as missional disciples. Jesus uses mission to catalyze their discipleship. Their perspective is 're-framed.'

It takes a lot of time and energy to keep a church going with all the work that needs doing: to keep the building maintained, costs covered and activities running. No wonder we don't have much energy left. But seeing what Jesus does in these four chapters shows us a different way that can re-frame our approach to church life.

Mission isn't an extra to discipleship. It is at its very core. When we set the work of making Jesus known in word and action as the central priority of our discipleship, Jesus works through us. When we do that, he helps us grow and our discipleship becomes a very exciting story.