

MAKING PIE By Eli Bernard

It's called the Great Commission with reason. It's not just a good commission. And it's not a great suggestion.

It is the final instructions from Christ to His followers. All of His work up to this point was to accomplish our salvation and to prepare the messengers for the never-ending task of telling the story.

He said...

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." - Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

If your small group Bible Study needs a purpose beyond "being a small group", how about the Great Commission as a starting place?

Making Disciples is Like Making Pie

PIE: You take some things that are not a pie, and you make them pie. If you follow the instructions (plan of baking), then some pretty bland things become some pretty sweet stuff. DISCIPLES: You take people that are not disciples and you make them disciples. If you follow the instructions (plan of salvation), some pretty bad things become pretty sweet spiritual stuff.

Contrary to popular opinion, making disciples is not making believers into stronger disciples. Jesus did not make a distinction between believers and disciples. In the New Testament era, they were the same thing. So, the "making of disciples" is actually evangelism – making those that are not disciples to be disciples. It is not telling believers how to be better. It is telling unbelievers how to believe.

The word them, refers to the disciples that are being made. Baptizing "them", therefore, means that baptism is something that is done to those who have been evangelized.

Discipleship, as we call it in our culture, was important to Jesus as well. Once "them" have believed and been baptized, we should teach them to obey Jesus' teachings. This certainly doesn't mean that we shouldn't be teaching unbelievers as well. It simply means that the process is not complete at the point of salvation.

Many small group Bible studies don't make disciples, don't see new believers baptized, and the teaching very often boils down to believers discussing things they already believe, as espoused by the newest author or literature as assigned by their church.

Jesus wasn't giving us a check list as he left for home. He was telling us to be in the life changing business: lost lives saved, saved lives grown, grown lives multiplied. Are the lives of people in your Bible study group changing? Lost lives saved, saved lives grown, grown lives multiplied?

Who Should Go?

In most churches, the Bible Study ministry is the single largest ministry organization in the church. It encompasses more people, and includes such organization, that if this ministry is not part of the "going", there very likely is no going at all.

Certainly pastors should go. But even here, Jesus did not make a distinction between clergy and laity. Of the very ones who received the original commission, most were "unschooled, ordinary men" (Acts 4:13). If we were to draw parallels, would these have been the seminary trained?

Perhaps the Choir should go? Perhaps the Building and Grounds Committee or the Flower Committee should go? But then, aren't the people in these ministries also in the Bible Study ministry? Does it really matter what church label they wear in order to go?

Articles of **DISCOVERY**

Who is Them?

Let's start with who they are not. They are not members of other churches. While this generalization certainly does not refer to those that are not yet disciples, the overwhelming number of "non-disciples" is not in any church. They are in the world.

Facts about Them:

- They don't attend church
- Them strangers are easier to go to than Them neighbors
- There are thousands more of Them strangers than there are of Them neighbors
- Them will go to hell unless believers go well

How many families visit your church, move into your church field, have kids who attend your VBS and other children's activities, and have youth that attend your youth functions?

What Does GO Mean?

GO does not mean wait for Them to come in. It means going to get Them, wherever They are, and bringing Them along with you. Bringing Them in happens during the 6.5 days a week that we are not at church. On Sunday morning, by default, the church is waiting for Them to come in.

Let's Be Chicken

The Bible Study group should see itself as an incubator: warm, secure, nurturing, safe, etc. Within the incubator are the "unhatched" and "newly hatched". It is the environment that facilitates healthy birth and the beginning of a new life. Newborns are nurtured and fed until they can take care of themselves. But - and I encourage you to get a mental picture here - how old are the chickens in YOUR incubator? Seems silly doesn't it, to invest in the resources to facilitate new and healthy births, and then let the newborns live, age and die as if they are, and will always be, babies. Are you still nurturing and feeding the fully grown?

When Christians discover God's plan and will for their lives - notice I said discover, not "are told" - the Holy Spirit is free to walk through this newly opened doorway to move them - change them - into what He desires. They will then be empowered to step out of the incubator and participate in the full life and fellowship of the "farm family." Maturing believers run incubators, they don't live in them.

This kind of life change - spiritual transformation - cannot be taught. It cannot be caught. It can only be facilitated.

So, perhaps Jesus meant this....

Therefore go get **THEM**, and make **THEM** disciples [from] all nations, baptizing **THEM** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching **THEM** to obey everything I have commanded you.

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." It's hard to imagine that Jesus meant that He would be with us as we do our ministry without Going, or study His Word without **THEM** new disciples and disciples-to-be.

Small group Bible study is a marvelous tool for accomplishing that to which all of us are called. God's Word and relationships are the stuff of life change, and those are the key elements of any small group.

The Great Commission is a great purpose to consider for your small group. If you accept the commission, it may very well change what you do in your small group, but it will be a change for the better!

Try this exercise. Dialogue with those in your Bible study about why Christians do or don't go. Write the reasons down. Spend enough time at this so that all agree that the list is fairly comprehensive. Then mark out all of the reasons that are not about THEM.

Perhaps that part about "everything He commanded" needs a little more attention.
