

The Bright and Morning Star

"All the Good News That's Fit to Print"

How Can We Make Disciples?

by Pastor Nathan J. Norman

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The Great Commission has always intimidated me. Jesus told the disciples, "Go, therefore, 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 observe everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20a)

Over the years I've had conversations with ministry colleagues who tell me the Great Commission was only for the original Apostles and is not for believers today!

The text itself is obviously for all followers of Jesus. He tells his current disciples to train other disciples to observe everything he told the first disciples to do! But I understand the impulse to explain away the Great Commission. It is hard! Sharing the gospel is hard. Teaching people to follow Jesus is hard!

Actually, making disciples isn't just hard – it's impossible! You and I cannot argue someone into the Kingdom of God. We can't change people's hearts, and we can't empower them to repent of their sins. Discipleship can only happen when Jesus himself goes with us.

That's why the last part of the great commission reads, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b)

So, we need to have the boldness to say, "yes, Lord I will go," and trust that he will empower us.

But the question remains: how?

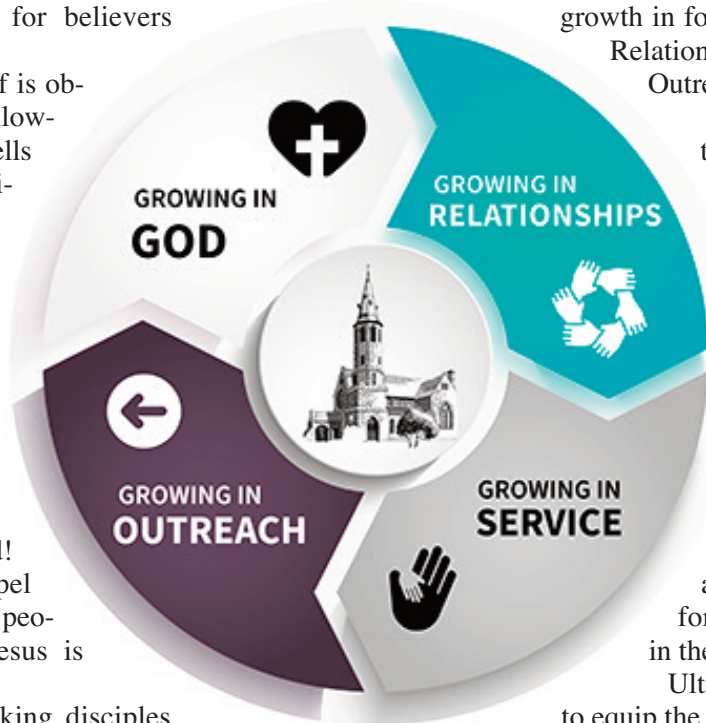
Part of the job of the local church is to equip believers. Over the past few months, us elders have wrestled with the Great Commission. First, we wanted to be able to define what a disciple of Jesus looks like. We believe that discipleship is a journey of continuous growth in four key areas: God, Relationships, Service, and Outreach.

This definition will also become our strategy in the months and years ahead. We will align our ministries toward this shared goal of making disciples. And we will be seeking to add programs, events, and opportunities for all of us to grow in these areas.

Ultimately, the goal is to equip the church community so they can equip others, whether here at the church or wherever the Lord leads. I want to see our entire church making disciples.

This last part is scary.

Which is why I'm glad for that last part of the Great Commission, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b)★



VBS 2023 Food Truck Party: Serving the Lord, Making Many Connections

By Regina Mignona

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread” Matthew 6:11

“The children are the church,” explains Miss Mindi, our Christian Education Director. “The Christian Education program needn’t been seen as a separate part of the church; it is an integral part. My vision is to see the entire congregation participate and use their skills and talents to encourage the children to grow in their relationship with Jesus.”

Mindi’s vision was evident as she reshaped VBS this year. She wanted the congregation to not only see and be a part of it, but to also make connections to the children, their families, and the larger community.

To encourage more church-wide participation, VBS was held in the evening. This enabled adults who hold full-time jobs to come out and volunteer, and volunteer they did. We had 43 adults and older

teens on our church campus throughout the week. They had a ball with the 42 kids who attended! You could see it in their faces and the faces of the kids. They made connections; they felt the love of the Lord.

The children were able to make the connection that like this experiment, with God all things are possible if they too have the right ingredients such as prayer, Bible study, VBS, and service.

“Food Truck Party” was the theme of VBS 2023. A typical evening was action packed. Each night after a dynamic opening of singing, dancing, and Bible theatre, led by Miss Becky, Miss Kristy, and Pastor Norman, the children would rotate through four distinct stations: Snack, Recreation, Arts and Science, and Bible Reflection Time. Each station helped the children connect to the

Bible story in a hands on, personal way.

For instance, to reinforce the Bible point that *God is Great* from Exodus 16, our top chefs, Miss Barbara and Miss



Jennifer, prepared a snack called, “Worms in the Manna”. The snack was chocolate pudding, crushed graham crackers, and a gummy worm sticking straight out of the middle. This tasty treat not only brought home the idea of how God provided food for the Israelites for forty years in the desert, but also the importance of following His instruction of taking just enough manna each day or else their food would rot and yield worms. They got the point! Trust God to do great things. He provides!

During Recreation, the children played team games where they learned to appreciate the benefits of working together to accomplish a common goal. They cheered each other on to reach the finish line. Mr. Rob, the kids most playful teacher, lead the station and feels that the children grew closer to each other and the group leaders as a result of this team work focus.

In the Arts and Science station with Miss Sue and Miss Pam, the kids decorated aprons, created food truck posters, and experimented with food. How fun! In one experiment, the children deduced that it was impossible to make a corn kernel float in water. However, with the right ingredients: vinegar, baking soda and water, they were able to make it float. The children were able to make the connection that like

this experiment, with God all things are possible if they too have the right ingredients such as prayer, Bible study, VBS, and service. What a cool way to learn how great our God is.

Bible Reflection is the most precious time during VBS. This is the station where the leaders get to look into the eyes of four or five children and hear and respond to their questions. According to Miss Debbie, one of our most seasoned Bible teachers, “There was a lot of connecting the dots during this reflection time. You see what the kids are curious about and what comes from them and then take them to a place where they can understand and connect how the stories fit into Christianity, Jesus and themselves.”

Pastor Nathan feels that VBS was a success and a great opportunity for him to get to know the congregation. “I really loved seeing and hearing our congregation serve and make connections with one another. Service is hard and difficult and when you do it, you form a sisterhood or brotherhood to the difficult work of serving.” And as Miss Mindi said, “Jesus was preached, so of course the week was a success!”

One last note, I am still trying to figure out who the puppeteer was who presented Bernard and DJ Cupcake. Does anyone know? Don't tell if you do!★



Women's Ministry: Exciting Plans Ahead

There's been a lot happening with the Women's Ministry this past year including a retreat and an 8-week summer Right Now Media study on God's Unbreakable Promises. The women also enjoyed a summer evening fellowship at Marcella's home and shared by her backyard fire pit savory snacks and testimonies of God's goodness in their lives. Next came a Friendsgiving at Pam's home and all brought something for their Thanksgiving meal to share. More is planned for Women's Ministry, so stay tuned!★



The Sole Truth About the Rainbow

By Olga Seda

Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet
Seven are the splendid colors of the rainbow
Which God set in the cloud after the great flood
So He will always remember His covenant of long ago

God promised to never again flood the earth
Destroying with rainwater the whole humankind
Every time the colorful rainbow appears in the sky
God's everlasting pact with Noah comes to His mind

Some challenge the sole truth about the rainbow
Trying to usurp God's supreme purpose to deceive
We must alert the children at a very young age
Or they can be misled by the enemy as he did to Eve

The rainbow symbolizes that God keeps His promises
Something of great importance for generations to know
We should have a clear picture of God's true intent
As we see in the sky the vivid brightness of the bow

The lucid arch imitates God's glorious presence
Reminding us of His everlasting mercy and grace
His end is to preserve those who remain faithful to Him
Until the day of rewards when we see Christ face to face

No Place for Partiality

By Olga Seda

James 2: 8-9 NKJV

*If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture,
"You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;
but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are
convicted by the law as transgressors."*

To show partiality is to show favoritism or preference towards some people over others. In a way this is a form of discrimination. Though this had become the norm in the world where we live, there is no place for this kind of behavior in the hearts of God's people. Showing partiality toward some people over others makes us guilty of discrimination and prejudice. James condemns partiality, and calls it sin.

As the people of God we must avoid personal inclinations of any kind of prejudice. We are commanded to treat others as we would want them to treat us.

Jesus reinforced this principle in NKJV Matt. 22:37-40 quoting from (Deut. 6:5) to teach that when we love God and our neighbor, we follow all the commandments. When we are partial toward some people over others we show lack of wisdom. James 3:17 says, *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."*

Faith in Christ makes all Christians one in Him.

The act of partiality is an impediment for us to serve in the commission of Christ. Jesus said, (Matt. 28:19), *"Go and make disciples of all nations..."* He never said, *"Go and make disciples of those you favor."* Christ paid a big price with His blood to end all kinds of prejudice. Galatians 3:28 says, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; you are all one in Christ Jesus!"*

Faith in Christ makes all Christians one in Him. When we allow any kind of unfair treatment in the body of Christ we give a cold shoulder to biblical teaching. All believers are inheritors of God with Christ, therefore there is no one, no matter who we are, that is more privileged or superior than anyone else.

When Jesus went to the cross, He did away with all kinds of discrimination, so we can't impose something that He had already settled at the cross. When we engage in acts of partiality we must remember that we will be accountable to God. This must animate us to commit our hearts and minds to Christ who considers all people as equals, and who never plays favorites. He is impartial. We must ask Him for wisdom to keep ourselves free from any form of partiality. Let's imitate Him!★

Sources used: *The NKJV Life Application Study Bible; The Bible Exposition Commentary, Warren W. Wiersbe Bible Dictionary, George W. Knight and Rayburn W. Ray*

A Note About The Message of Partiality

By Olga Seda

I write messages about any topic that the Lord puts upon my heart for I love writing, and I share them with family and friends. Writing is the way that I can communicate best though I'm not professional at it. Writing these messages helps me with my spiritual walk, and it also helps those who I share them with.

When I feel a strong desire to write but I don't have a clue of what to write about, sometimes I ask the people who I share them with if they have a subject that they would like for me to write about. I share these messages by way of text mostly on a weekly basis, and the readers occasionally share them with their family and friends also.

One of my friends asked me to write about "Partiality" because she wanted to share it with her friends on Facebook.

We at First Baptist Church of Tarrytown are blessed not to have experienced the problem of partiality, but it is sad to say that not all churches are as fortunate.

More writings were needed to complete this issue of the newsletter, and I was asked if I had something else to share, so I decided to share the message of "Partiality."

This newsletter serves as a tool for us to be able to contribute to spread the word. You and me are needed to continue to accomplish the goal as a whole.

The best part about writing for this newsletter is that we don't have to be professional writers. All we need is the desire to share, and God provides the courage and the wisdom to do it if we ask Him. All to His glory!★

What's All The Hoopla About?

By Christina

Hoopla is a service available with your library card that offers half a million e-books, e-audiobooks, movies, music, comics and more, which can be used on your computer or mobile devices.



Perhaps your family wants to do a Bible study from RightNowMedia together, but it's one that requires the purchase of a separate book and discussion guide, which can be expensive or takes time to ship. Maybe you're looking to recommend some Christian titles to someone in your life but wish you could look before you purchase. Or maybe, you're craving to do some reading yourself.

The good news is that a wide array of Christian books (including Bible studies, workbooks, Christian living titles, devotionals, fiction, etc.) are available for free with a library card in Westchester County. Some libraries carry these titles physically and can be placed on hold, but what I would like to share today is something even more convenient: an online service called "Hoopla." Hoopla is a service available with your library card that offers half a million e-books, e-audiobooks, movies, music, comics and more, which can be used on your computer or mobile devices.

Though not all Christian, it boasts an incredibly large selection of Christian titles from publishers like Zondervan, Harvest House, Baker, Thomas Nelson, Crossway, and HarperChristian, among others. This means you can read e-copies or listen to e-audiobooks of recent bestselling titles. There are also thousands of academic biblical studies and commentaries, and more "classic" titles. Before you buy, give Hoopla a try!

Hoopla is available on your computer at hoopladigital.com, or as a mobile app; search your appstore for "Hoopla." You will be asked for your library card number and PIN when you first create your account and can borrow

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You're Going to Make It, Lysa TerKeust's new devotional

One Day at a Time, Kyle Idleman

The Power of the Holy Spirit's Names, Tony Evans

Don't Waste Your Life, John Piper

Find Your People, Jennie Allen and its supplementary Conversation Cards, leader guides, and participant workbooks

Classics:

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*

C.S Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Neil T. Anderson, *Bondage Breaker*

★



Christmas Caroling at Cedar Manor

Journey to Bethlehem

By Nicole Alicea

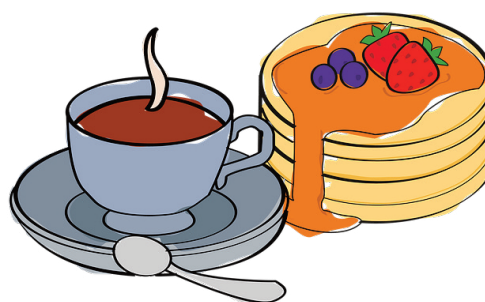
Recently, several FBC members got together for a night out at the movies to see the live-action Christmas musical, retelling of the biblical story of the birth of Jesus.

The movie directed by Adam Anders, had a star studded line up that included Antonio Banderas, Milo Manheim, Fiona Palomo, and Laclea. The film had classic Christmas melodies, humor and faith sprinkled throughout; a little something for everyone. There were even some moments that sparked emotion and maybe a few tears.

Movie-goers enjoyed the film and highly recommend it as we head into the Holiday season. What a wonderful way to fellowship on a Friday evening!★

Men's Breakfast

On Saturday, November 4, a Men's Breakfast took place in the FBC Fellowship Hall. This was the first men's event in several years. The men enjoyed a hearty breakfast. The event was organized by Jason Blakey and attracted approximately 30 men. It was inspirational and encouraging.★



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Nathan J. Norman, Pastor

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Worship Service: Sunday 10:30 am

Weekly Prayer Wednesdays @ 6:00 pm • Young Adults Ages 18-28 Wednesdays @ 8:30 pm Mezzanine

The Bright and Morning Star is seeking contributions for the next issue on any topics of interest which glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please send articles to: *The Bright and Morning Star* newsletter at the address above.

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