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The Christian Discipleship Black Hole

by Freddy Davis

Let me just say up front, I understand the dynamic at play. But for the life of me I don't understand why it is happening to the degree it is. I know so many people who assert that they are Christians, but who simply don't live a life which corresponds with the teachings of the Bible.

In Matthew 28:18-20, in the Great Commission, Jesus charged believers to make disciples. And, to make a disciple, it is necessary that one must first be a disciple. And there is no doubt about what Master we are to attach ourselves to. Jesus is the master. We are to be his disciples. Simply calling oneself a Christian and getting baptized does not make a person a disciple.

A disciple is one who puts him or herself under the authority of a master. And the end goal is not simply to learn to do what the master teaches. It is to actually become like the master. For Christians, that means that our goal is to become like Jesus. That applies not only to our efforts to take on his character, but to also actually go out into the world and do his work – that is, to make disciples.

Most Christians have the idea that active involvement in the faith is primarily for the professionals. The corollary to that is that the "non-professionals" are only responsible for supporting the professionals. That is not a Christian concept. The apostle Paul was very clear on this point in Ephesians 4:11-13. He said: It was he (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works

of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. NIV

Do you see what he did there? He lists the leaders of the church (the professionals) and gives their job description. Their job is to "prepare God's people for works of service." So what, then, is the job of the "people?" It is to go out into the world and do the work of ministry.

When most Christians think of the word "calling" in reference to Christian service, they generally think of a person being called by God into vocational Christian ministry. But, in fact, there are three ways the concept of "call" is used in the Bible.

The first call God issues to human beings is the call to come to Christ. This is the first and most basic call and reflects God's very reason for creating humanity in the first place. He created mankind for fellowship with himself. So this call to salvation is, essentially, a call to enter into fellowship with him. This call was not issued to a select few, but to every human being. So, you are called by God to enter into a relationship with Christ.

The second use of the word call is the call to ministry. This one is issued to everyone who answers the first call. This, though, is not the call to vocational Christian ministry. This is a call for the general population of the people of God to become "prepared for service." And the preparation is for the purpose of going out into the world to make disciples. In other words, all believers are called by God to be disciple makers out in the world.

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The third and final call is the one that most people think of when they hear this word. This one is the call to vocational ministry leadership. Among the many who answer God's second call, certain ones are called out whose job is to "prepare God's people for works of service." It is the job of these people to train disciples to make disciples.

Frankly, every believer should have the same feeling of call into ministry as any vocational minister. The only thing that is different is the job description. Along with that, every believer should feel a powerful compulsion to become equipped to minister to the highest degree possible.

Churches are places of worship, places of recovery, and places of equipping. They are not spiritual fortresses within which Christians shelter to be protected from the onslaughts of the world. The ministry within the walls of the church is primarily the ministry of preparation. It is where the professionals serve to equip all the other believers for ministry out in the world. And, without any doubt whatsoever, it is very important work.

But the vast majority of ministry is supposed to be done out in the world, not in the church. And it is to be done by the people who have been prepared by the leaders. Sadly, in the vast majority of situations, Christian ministry is confined to the church building. That is totally backwards.

At this point you may be wondering, "What do I need to do, then?" Well there are three things.

First, you need to hear your call. Many Christians don't hear the call because they are not listening for it. They think Christian calling is not

for them, so they simply never pay attention to God's call on their lives.

Once you hear your call, the next thing you need to do is equip yourself for ministry. There are certain things every believer needs to master because they are the basics of the Christian faith. Then there are the things which are special to the specific place God wants you to minister. The people in the world who need Christ are in every part of the culture. They are in the family, arts and entertainment, education, media, government, business, and even in the church. Find your place and equip yourself to serve in that place.

Finally, you need to actually go out to minister. No calling has any meaning if it is not fulfilled.

There is simply more Kingdom work than can possibly be accomplished by a hand full of Christian professionals. It simply can't be done by that group. That is why God set things up the way he did – so that every believer can experience the fulfillment of living out their calling. Now that you know the issues involved, what are you going to do about it?

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Contact Information

If you wish to contact us directly, you may do so by the following methods:

321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312

E-mail:

info@marketfaith.org

Phone: 850-383-9756 (Tallahassee, Florida)

Fax: 850-514-4571

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