

On Being More Deliberate

Years ago I had an encounter with some people that said that our work for the church had to have intentionality. This word, I learned later, was a buzz word used in certain Christian circles that espouse the ideas of the Church Growth Movement. One of their claims is that to reach people where they are, you must become more like them; hence, the intentionality. You choose to make a deliberate effort – you force yourself - to show yourself like them to have something in common. In this way they feel comfortable being around you and they join your church because they seem to like you, not because they love Jesus. When they stop liking you they leave to where they like other people. This style is a backlash of our former style of telling people seemingly irrelevant information about prophecy, theology, or Bible history. Many left our churches with this system, also.

Being more deliberate will not help your witnessing (or discipleship). Only submitting more to the Holy Spirit will. Consider the disciples. It was not until the disciples submitted to the Holy Spirit that they became effective in their ministry. They became bold after receiving the “early rain” (Acts 2). Just before this they confessed their sin and repented, they prayed and studied. If anything they became more deliberate in their submission to Christ.

Before the early rain fell on them the disciples were not quite effective workers. Even when Jesus gave the disciples power they could not free the one demon possessed. Let’s read the story in Matthew 17: 14 – 21,

Mat17:14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

Mat17:15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

Mat17:16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

Mat17:17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

Mat17:18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

Mat17:19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

Mat17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Mat17:21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Contrast this with the man healed of demon possession at Gadarene. Let’s read in mark 5:18 – 20,

Mark5:18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

Mark5:19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

Mark5:20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

Christ never said to the man “be more deliberate.” He said to him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” We also have the story of the woman by the well. Let us read in John 4:28 – 29

John4:28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,
John4:29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

He never told her to be more deliberate, in fact she went on her own, to share about Christ. She just went. Her witness was very effective, the whole town converted. The other thing Christ told people was to “Show yourself to the Priests,” as we read in Luke 17:14.

Luke17:14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests.

They were to witness to the priests about their miraculous healing. This would have been a great witness to the priests who were bent on rejecting Christ. Christ knew this, so he sent the people where He would not be effective. Christ instead would go where the Spirit sent Him. Christ was deliberate on following what the Spirit prompted Him to do. And, He wants us to follow His example.