

Letton Hall - The D Factor - Talk 4 - 'Go & Make Disciples'

Imagine you've just won the X-Factor.

The months of hard work have paid off!

It's been a long journey from that moment when you were stood outside the O2 Arena with 10,000 others.

Being picked by the production team and getting to perform in front of Simon Cowell seems like a lifetime ago.

You made it through to boot camp...were mentored, challenged, criticised and voted for by the public.

You know you made mistakes along the way, times when the notes you sung were slightly off, times when the song you picked probably wasn't quite right and times when the media pressure made you want to give up.

But you stuck with it and here you are in the studio recording your first single...you're almost guaranteed a Christmas number 1 and you know exciting times are ahead.

The X-Factor is over but the journey isn't...the journey is just beginning.

[PAUSE]

A little bit like the X-Factor analogy we've been following this week our journey together is nearly over....but that's not the end...our journey of discipleship continues.

An X-Factor winner's journey is actually only just beginning when they win.

They now have to prove themselves as a credible musician in the long run.

If you read any interview with a musician when they're talking about new music they nearly always say that their new material is the 'best they've ever written'.

And cliché as that phrase might sound when they use it you really hope it's true.

If an X-Factor winner wants to succeed as a musician they have to put in the work, continue on that journey, better themselves as a singer, take ownership of their career, surround themselves with the right people to support them and press on.

Eventually they may even get to the point where they mentor other musicians...and spot talent themselves...a little bit like some of the judges do on the X-Factor & The Voice.

[PAUSE]

Our journey exploring discipleship this week may be nearly over but as we thought about last night becoming disciples isn't something that happens once but it's something that continues throughout our entire lives.

But there's one more part of discipleship we haven't looked at.

In Matthew 28 the bible says;

'The eleven followers went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. On the mountain they saw Jesus and worshipped him, but some of them did not believe it was really Jesus. Then Jesus came to them and said,

'All power in heaven and on earth is give to me. So go and make disciples of all people in the world. Baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age.'

Jesus has spent three years with these disciples. He has taught them all sorts on the journey. They've seen people healed & people rise from the dead.

They've heard Jesus say things that have challenged the way they think and the way they act.

Jesus has sent them out to have a go at preaching and healing and they've seen, first hand what God can do through them.

They've watched with sadness as their leader was arrested, beaten and crucified.

They've celebrated (and some of them doubted) Jesus rising from the dead.

And then Jesus leaves them with these final words - "Go & make disciples of all men".

It's not over for the disciples...it's just beginning.

[PAUSE]

It's the same for us. Our sole mission as disciples isn't to become like Christ, it is to continue becoming more like Christ and be imitators of Christ in our world.

It is our job to show people what it looks like to follow Jesus.

When a Jewish disciple had followed his rabbi for a while he would become a rabbi (which just means teacher) and he would then choose his own followers.

True discipleship involves us making other disciples.

Making other disciples who we, in turn can point to Christ.

When a musician mentors a newer musician their aim isn't to create a musician who sounds like them, it's to create a musician who is an independent musician not a cover-artist!

Illustration

Late last week I printed out a picture of Jesus.

It's the depiction of Jesus known as 'Buddy Christ' from the film dogma.

I then took it and photocopied it.

My photocopy was ok but not as good as the original.

I then photocopied the photocopy.

The quality was ok but not as good as the 1st copy and no-where near as good as the original.

I repeated this another 4 times and these are the results.

Copy number 6 is barely recognisable.

[PAUSE]

You see when we photocopy something it works better to photocopy it each time from the original. A photocopy of a photocopy loses quality.

Even more so with a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy and so on and so forth.

And it's like that when we go off and make disciples.

We are not a perfect copy of Jesus. We have imperfections...a bit like our 1st photocopy.

There's parts that need tweaking and so if we base a new disciple on us they won't be as good as the original.

The copy comes out best when it comes from the original.

Likewise people are better disciples when they model themselves on Christ because the aim of a Christian isn't to become a copy of the person who brought you to Christ whether that's Mike Pilavachi at Soul Survivor or Matt Wild at the point the aim of a Christian is to become like Christ.

Video - Welcome Home - T-Mobile Flash Mob - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NB3NPNM4xgo>

Later today you will go back home, perhaps back to some of your mates who aren't Christian, perhaps to families who aren't Christian.

Back to school next week...perhaps back to the different clubs and activities you were involved in.

Back into the world and that's a good thing...Jesus tells us to go into the world.

But he also tells us to 'make disciples of all people'.

In the flash mob video people clearly stood out. They were in Heathrow but not 'of' Heathrow.

They had a purpose behind being there that was different to the rest of the people.

Most people were there with the hope of getting out of there as quick as possible...there just to make it through...to survive.

But those in the flash mob had something awesome to share with the people there.

We have something awesome to share with our world.

On my office pinboard I have this piece of card. It reads

'Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without thinking. Instead fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out'

It's taken from Romans 12 verse 2 in 'The Message' and I was given that piece of card by one of my youth leaders I think when I was about 15 or 16 and it stayed in my bible for a while and has then been on every pinboard I've had in my offices and I'm not one for having bible verses stuck up everywhere but something about that verse really resonates with me.

In the wider context of Romans 12 Paul is writing this letter to the church in Rome and in chapter 12 he writes

'So brothers and sisters, since God has shown us great mercy, I beg you to offer your lives as living sacrifices to him. Your offering must be only for God and pleasing to him, which is the spiritual way for you to worship.

Do not be shaped by this world; instead be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you; you will know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.' (Romans 12:1-2 NCV)

We are called to follow Jesus.

To not be shaped by the things our world tells us we should follow whether that's Bieber fever or of obsessing over stuff but to focus on God.

Our call is to be imitators of Christ.

You guys are God's representatives in your schools.

People will base their view of Christians on the Christians that they know...that's you!

And Paul knows that when he writes this letter as do many of the other letters in the New Testament.

In Ephesians 5 Paul writes

'You are God's children whom he loves, so try and be like him. Live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a sweet smelling offering and sacrifice to God' (Ephesians 5:1 NCV)

In 1 Peter, Peter writes

'Dear friends, you are like foreigners and strangers in this world. I beg you to avoid the evil things your bodies want to do that fight against your soul.

People who do not believe are living all around you and might say that you are doing wrong.

Live such good lives that they will see the good things you do and will give glory to God on the day when Christ comes again' (1 Peter 2:11-12 NCV)

People in our world want to be famous because they see the attention that the celebrities get and they want that.

What if people could see Jesus in your lives and want that?

What if we 'lived such good lives that people saw the good things we do and give glory to God' for them?

We looked in soul stretch as Jesus calling us to be salt and light. Salt isn't any use in a shaker, its got to be with something to make a difference.

A few years ago Jo (my wife) and I went to Italy. In the region of Italy we were staying in there had been a salt tax a long time ago but even though the tax no longer existed they still made their bread without salt.

You might not realise there is salt in bread and actually there isn't much but missing it out makes a huge difference to the taste (as we discovered). It doesn't take a lot of salt to make a big impact but it has to be in something to have that impact.

Like the salt we're no use sat in churches or just in Christian bubbles...we need to be in the world!

[PAUSE]

That is our call as we leave Letton.

To be part of our world.

To continue on our journey of discipleship...seeking to become more like Christ.

Sharing that journey with other Christians.

Having genuine, authentic, honest, open relationships with other Christians.

Encouraging & challenging each other in our faith and in our actions.

Doing all of this with hearts focused on Christ.

And through doing that we need to encourage others to Christ.

We need to show them what it's like to be a Christian.

Jesus invited his followers onto an exciting journey. A journey of discovery, friendship and adventure...complete with its challenges and risks.

The disciples, filled with the holy spirit took on board Jesus' final words to 'go into the world and make disciples of all people' and because of that people came to know Christ.

Because those 11 men took on Jesus' challenge, his call for their lives as disciples and continued with their journeys of discipleship Christianity is the largest faith in the world.

In 2010 there were 2.18 billion Christians in the world.

And that's through the Holy Spirit working in us and in the lives of others through us.

Each of those journeys with Jesus will have started with a disciple of Jesus whether that was Peter in the New Testament or (for me) my parents who took me to church and my youth leaders who showed me what it meant to follow Jesus.

We are the starting point for someone's relationship with Christ...we're in our world, journeying with those who don't yet know Jesus.

So I hope as you prepare to leave Letton today you will go and make disciples. That you will fix your eyes on God and continue to seek Him.