



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

A FAITH THAT MULTIPLIES • Rick James

When I got married to my wife Katie, I would have to say that about the farthest thing from my mind was having children. But something strange begins to happen after you've been married for a year or two. Out of your love relationship with your husband or wife, you begin to think increasingly about how fun it would be to not only share a marriage together, but a child as well.

Things we enjoy are difficult to keep to ourselves. Have you ever had an amazing meal with a good friend, where you felt absolutely compelled to keep saying "this is amazing" or "you have to try this." Joy characteristically just seems to overflow. It just has to be shared.

This often is at the core of a desire to have children. As you grow in your love and commitment to one another, there is joy that seems to impregnate the desire to extend the recipients and beneficiaries of your love for one another. You find yourself proposing again to your spouse but this time the words are, "What do you think about having a baby?" The process usually leads to a chain reaction. The joy you experience with the first child seems to inspire the desire for more. As in my case it is not until you are completely sleep deprived and knee deep in medical and diaper expenses that you come back to your senses.

This experience of physical reproduction might very well give us a hint at God's reason for creating us. Within the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—there is perfect love. The joy that God has within Himself overflowed to a created order of beings—angels and human beings—who were created out of God's joy and love within Himself, for the purpose of participating, enjoying, and being the recipients of this love.

In light of this, it is interesting that the very first command given to man is to "be fruitful and multiply." This was also part of the great promise God made to Abraham. God took him outside and said, "Look up to the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be." God desired to create a holy Nation for Himself through Abraham, and the means was physical reproduction. God could have simply created such a Nation, but God wanted Abraham to have the opportunity and fun of reproducing it.

Spiritual Multiplication

Obviously, we have been talking within the context of physical reproduction. Yet, there is clearly a spiritual application of this same principal. God is in the process of producing His kingdom on this earth. A godly, but spiritual nation that comprises members from every "tongue and tribe" on the planet. Like Abraham, He wants us to participate, and we do this through spiritual reproduction: through sharing our faith with others and disciplining them to be followers of Christ.

The motivation for us to reproduce our faith in others is much the same as the motivation I described for having children. The joy we experience in our relationship with God naturally overflows its bounds; like enjoying a delicious meal, we find ourselves compelled to say to others, "You should try this, this is really good." This is exactly how the Apostle John describes it, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also might have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. "We write this to make our joy complete." The Apostle had so much joy in his relationship with the Lord he had to make it "complete" by saying, "You gotta try this!"



In our marriage, Katie and I made our joy complete by having our three children. In the same way, we make our love relationship with the Lord complete by sharing our faith with others, that we might have spiritual children who will enjoy and participate in the same love relationship we have with Christ.

Spiritual Reproduction Involves More Than Simply Having A Child

When Katie and I had our daughter Avery, we didn't say, "Okay, my joy's complete—let's go home" and then leave Avery at the hospital. We assumed the responsibility of raising her. That too is a joy. Likewise, there is great joy in sharing our faith and seeing another come to faith in Christ, but our responsibility doesn't stop there. We have a role to play in raising them into a mature follower of Christ.

It should be said that sometimes we don't have the opportunity of raising (discipling) the people we have led to Christ. Sometimes, God reserves that role for another. It is also true that God may have us disciple another person whom we did not lead to Christ. There is joy in both leading someone to Christ and discipling them.

Spiritual Multiplication and the Great Commission

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives the command and promise to His followers, "Go and make disciples of all nations... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." This is important to grasp. God had told Abraham that He would make him into a nation (Israel), of people who followed and worshipped God. This would be accomplished primarily through physical reproduction—Abraham would have children, and they would have children, and so on. This command Jesus gives in Matthew is extremely similar, only with two very important nuances.

First, we are to help create and expand Christ's kingdom in the world. It will not be a geographic kingdom like Israel, but a spiritual kingdom where Jesus is King, and comprised of loyal subjects from every nation.

Second, the reproduction is spiritual and not physical. We produce more Christ followers by sharing the gospel, which produces spiritual life. Then we are to instruct these young believers in how to "obey" everything Christ commanded.

There is something that can be missed here, and that is the ingenious strategy Christ gave and modeled for actually reaching the entire world with the gospel.

Jesus brought to himself a handful of men, discipled them and then sent them out to preach the gospel and disciple others to do the same. At an initial glance this might seem like a slow process. One might think it would have been most efficient for Jesus to simply talk to a few thousand people each day, and over the course of a few years everyone would have heard the gospel. But let's do the math.

Let's say you shared your faith with 1,000 people a day over the course of 21 years. How many people would have heard about Christ? Roughly 7.6 million people. Not bad, you deserve a vacation. But let's say you led just 3 people to Christ this year, discipled them, taught them how to share their faith and then sent them out to do the same. The next year they each lead 3 people to Christ, disciple them, teach them to share their faith and send them out to do the same. Where are we with this process at the end of 21 years? 10.5 billion people. Congratulations you just fulfilled Christ's mandate to the church to proclaim the gospel to the world. Actually, you were somewhat of a workaholic because there are only about 7 billion people in the world.

I'm not saying you should share your faith less, if you can share with 1,000 people a day by all means keep doing it, but disciple more.

What Is Involved in Discipleship

To explore the topic of discipleship fully is beyond the scope of this article. Several things are important to note as it relates to spiritual multiplication.



Share Your Faith

In order to reproduce yourselves, you must be actively praying and seeking opportunities to share Christ with others. I always try to keep a copy or two of the Four Spiritual Laws with me wherever I go, so I am prepared. If I can't get into a discussion about Christ, I can always hand someone a booklet and kindly ask them to read it over.

Disciple Others in How to Share Their Faith

Critical to what Jesus modeled, and to the success of our math experiment, is that young Christians need to be shown how to communicate their faith to others. This keeps the reproduction going. To produce disciples who do not know how to share their faith is to end your spiritual family lineage.

Be Selective of Whom You Disciple

2 Timothy 2:2 says, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others." Paul is writing to his disciple Timothy and telling him to be a good steward of his life and Christ's teaching by investing in reliable people.

It seems to me that if you lead someone to Christ you have a responsibility to help them grow. This seems to be the principle that is in view here. In most ministries, there are a great deal of people who are in need of discipleship—most, or none, of which you actually led to Christ. Select people, says Paul, who are reliable. By reliable, he most likely means people who desire to grow, who are faithful to apply what they learn, and faithful to seek out a spiritual atmosphere that will encourage their growth. I think he also means by, "qualified to teach others," people who have a heart to minister and share their faith. This is the wisest investment of your limited time. These are the people who will pass on to others what you teach them.

When I was about 13, I went to a basketball camp run by a famous coach. I had dreams that we would be playing one-on-one together. The reality turned out to be far different. He spent all of his time with the best High School players. At the time I think I was frustrated, but I understand now he only had so much time and there were literally hundreds of us. As a wise steward, he invested what time he had in those who seemed like they had the best chance to do the most with his instruction. It was not elitist: simply an accurate appraisal of his limited time, and wise stewardship of it.

Teach the Basics

Whatever else you instruct and model to someone you disciple, make sure you teach the most basic and critical things: How to read the Bible or have a daily devotion. They must understand how to confess their sins and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. There's a lot of other "cool stuff" to talk about, as well as needed time simply to grow in your relationship, but make sure above all else that they are grounded in the basic elements of the faith.

Everyone Has Kids

In closing, I want to stress that spiritually multiplying yourself is for everyone and is part of the "normal" Christian life. When you are married for a while, having children just seems to be the natural course of things. When you see people married for many years without kids, often it is because there is a reason. They have either made a choice not to, or there is a physical problem. The same is true spiritually. We are made to reproduce. Our joy is made complete by sharing it with others. If we are not beginning to move in this direction in our spiritual growth, there might be a problem worth investigating. Perhaps an area of sin or some other hindrance to empowerment of the Holy Spirit in your life. Whatever it is, get to the bottom of it so you can move on and start experiencing the joy of parenthood.

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The Compass is the discipleship curriculum for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this lesson. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org