

Evangelism, Discipleship, and Leadership Development: Is There Any Connection?

Evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development are foundational in most Christian ministries and churches. You have probably attended seminars, read books about them, and gone through programs that have been more or less helpful in each of these areas. It is good to learn from a specialist, but the danger is that we start looking at these areas separately. We compartmentalize them as if there is a little or no connection between them. What would our Master Teacher say about that? What are the inner relationships, how do they support each other, and what does a healthy balance look like, not just theoretically, but in real life ministry situations?

Josef Pavlíňák has been serving university students in the highly atheistic country of the Czech Republic for over 30 years with a ministry called Integrity Life, and he serves there as the director. His heart is to reach out to the students in Central Europe with the gospel, disciple those who become Christians, and develop leadership potential in those who are called to become leaders. Josef has a degree in civil engineering from Brno Technical University. He has lived in the Czech Republic all of his life and is married to his best friend and ministry partner Danka, and they have two adult children – Dominika and Daniel.

I. Specialisation is good but...

A. Human body analogy

1. Our body is a very complex organism
 - a. It has many parts, systems and subsystems, processes etc.
 - b. It is hard to know them all well
 - c. It is impossible for a doctor to be equally good in all areas
2. We need specialists
 - a. They know in detail their field
 - b. They get a special training and experience
 - c. They follow new research, equipment, medication in their area
 - d. They do the best job
3. However, the body systems are not independent
 - a. Do not function separately
 - b. Are interconnected, part of one organism
 - c. To ignore it will lead to serious consequences
Personal example – skin cancer

B. The church is the spiritual body, the body of Christ (Rom 12:5, 1Cor12)

1. What are the main functions of the church?
Discussion
2. We are looking at 3 of them – evangelism, discipleship and leadership development

- a. We can't reduce the whole body into one function or group of functions
 - b. To focus only on individual functions/systems/activities has consequences
 - We miss the big picture
 - We fail to see connections
 - We fail to understand the real causes
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 - c. Observation: The church in the West tends to have excellent specialist, but critical lack of general workers/laborers (Matt9:37-38)
3. Example – church members are not active in evangelism
4. Conclusion: It is good and beneficial to take a deep, specialized look at one of the functions of the Body, but we must relate it immediately to the whole organism

II. Evangelism, discipleship and leadership development as Jesus did it

A. Not only the message of Jesus, but also the method of Jesus is important

- 1. He was fully God and fully human
- 2. His mission was to save the people of the world to God (John 3:16)
 - a. He loved them
 - b. He died for them
 - c. He chose to spread the gospel into the whole world through his disciples who would make other disciples

B. Specific action steps of Jesus

- 1. Teaching and preaching the good news of the kingdom with authority and power Lk4:31, 36
 - a. Publicly (synagogues, outside places...) and privately (with individuals or small groups)
 - b. He was always personal – he knew everyone inside out
- 2. Right at the beginning of His public ministry He challenged some to follow him.

- a. They were with him and around him and He gave them a special attention
 - b. From those who followed Him he chose 12 as His “special project”
 - c. They entered his “discipleship training” and “leadership academy”
 - d. The goal was that they will be fully trained and become like him (Luke 65:40)
3. Proclaiming the gospel and making disciples (and training the future leaders of his movement) went parallel
 - a. He never stopped one or the other
 - b. The proportion between these two were changing in time. The closer the time of his departure, the more attention and time he gave the 12 and less to the crowds (Robert Coleman)
 - c. Different stages of growth and commitment (Dann Spader quote)
 4. Final marching order Mt 28:18-20
 - a. Make disciples is the main verb
 - b. Going, baptizing, teaching – describe different aspects of it
 - c. I am with you always – emphasizes the personal relationship with Jesus
 - d. Despite their slow learning curve, these few men changed the world after being filled with His Spirit

III. Evangelism, discipleship and leadership development connected and balanced

A. Evangelism Rom1:16; 2Tim1:12

1. Defining evangelism
 - a. Communication of the gospel – verbal or written
 - b. It is direct, not just influence or testimony of life
2. Evangelism in today’s context
 - a. The need of the people is the same, context is different
 - b. Post-Christian Europe today – the awareness of the need is very low, people are not filling the stadiums any more
 - c. Lots of preparatory work is needed
 - d. Most effective method: one-to-one personal evangelism (In-Life statistics)
3. Who is it for
 - a. Every believer is a priest and ambassador 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Cor 5:20

- b. Evangelism is not only for those who have a gift of evangelism
4. How it relates to discipleship and leadership development
 - a. Evangelism provides a classroom for discipleship and leadership development (steps of faith, love, skills)
 - b. Evangelism helps leaders and disciples stay in touch with the outside world
 - c. Gives opportunity to exercise love and service to the unbelievers
 - d. Gives opportunity to see God at work
 - e. Brings joy and encouragement,
 - f. Gives a sense of significance and purpose (individually and corporately)
 5. What happens if we stop doing it
 - a. We disobey the Lord, rob ourselves of His presence, power and blessing
 - b. It is the beginning of the end – we become like a Dead Sea

B. Discipleship

1. Defining discipleship
 - a. The goal is maturity in Christ, becoming like Him
 - b. Whatever the definition is, it should include
 - The Word
 - Relationship
 - Ministry
 - Accountability
 - Multiplication
2. Who is it for
 - a. John 15:8 every believer
3. How it relates to evangelism and leadership development
 - a. Discipleship includes training in evangelism
 - b. Every disciple naturally wants to share what he has with others
 - c. More people are given the opportunity to become Christians
 - d. Leaders are being developed from disciples
4. What happens if we stop doing it
 - a. The church will be full of immature, self-centered believers
 - b. We make it difficult for new believers - their growth will be much harder and much slower
 - c. Potential danger of a false teaching or accepting the values of surrounding culture
 - d. It will be hard to find servant leaders

C. Leadership Development

1. Defining leadership development
 - a. Jesus is definition of leadership (personification)
 - b. It is part of discipleship
2. Who is it for
 - a. Every Christian? Yes and no.
 - b. Every Christian can have influence for Christ (ambassador)
 - c. Some are called to leadership positions in His Church
 - d. Everyone is responsible for the minas he was given (Luke 19:11-27)
3. How it relates to discipleship and leadership development
 - a. Leaders are serving others, are eamples for them
 - b. Leaders provide vision and sense of direction
 - c. Leaders need to be involved in direct evangelism
 - d. Leaders have to be making disciple makers
 - e. Leaders are responsible for creating the best possible environment for spiritual growth and bringing new people to Christ
4. What happens if we do not develop leaders
 - a. There will be shortage of leaders and we would have to “fish outside”
 - b. "Everything rises and falls on leadership," says Dr. Maxwell
 - c. Without godly leadership there will be less and less evangelism and disciplemaking and the Kingdom will suffer enormously
 - d. The wrong kind of leaders will arise and take the church astray

D. Finding the right balance

1. Personal balance
2. Ministry balance

IV. Questions and discussion

Quotations:

Dann Spader:

Jesus balanced His efforts to win the lost, build believers, and equip a few workers. Jesus understood that His mandate was to “make disciples.” Disciple-making for Jesus meant meeting the needs of people where they were spiritually and then challenging them to the next level. His goal was multiplication, and with laser focus He trained His few disciples to multiply their lives in others. And in the Great Commission, which is a great summary of His life, He told His disciples to go and repeat the process with others.

Jesus's disciple-making strategy follows four challenges He posed to His followers: "come and see" (John 1:39), "follow me" (John 1:43), "follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19), and "go and bear fruit" (John 15:16). With this simple pattern, Jesus led His disciples through the natural growth process from children, to young men, and to spiritual fathers.

Definition of evangelism: Tony Miano @ carm.org

Evangelism is the announcement, proclamation, and/or preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), the good news of and about Jesus Christ. Therefore, the gospel is a communicated message—communicated in verbal (Luke 7:22; Romans 10:14-17) and/or written (Luke 1:1-4) form.

Evangelism, the communication of the gospel message, includes a warning, an explanation, and a call. Evangelism includes warning people about sin and the consequences of sin (John 16:8; Acts 24:25; Revelation 20:11-15). It includes an explanation of God's remedy for sin—the gospel (Acts 8:29-35; Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21). And it includes the clear call to repent (to turn from sin and to turn toward God) and believe the gospel, by faith (Mark 1:15; Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:29-31; Romans 1:17; Romans 10:9-13).

Definition of discipleship @ discipleshipdefined.org

Pouring into others, training them in Word, in Relationship, and in Ministry, so that they might develop as healthy believers who can walk by faith, share their faith and multiply their faith.

Definition of Christian Leadership by John Piper:

Christian leadership is acting and speaking to create a following toward a goal, all defined by the Bible.

"Spiritual leadership is using God's methods to get his people where he wants them in reliance on his power." Therefore, the goal of spiritual leadership is that people come to know God and to glorify him in all that they do. Spiritual leadership is aimed not so much at directing people as it is at changing people.

Suggested Readings:

Dann Spader: 4 Chair Discipling: Growing a Movement of Disciple-Makers

Robert Coleman: The Master Plan of Evangelism

Disciples Are Made – Not Born, Walter Henrichsen

Greg Ogden: Transforming Discipleship

Dwight Robertson: Plan A and there is no plan B

Oswald Sanders: Spiritual Leadership

Blabolova, Navratil, Pavlinak – Pre-forum seminar "The Challenges of University Student Ministry Today"

Carm.org

Discipleshipdefined.org

Desiringgod.org