FROM THE DESK OF

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Are We Fooling Ourselves?

Are we making disciples—or simply educating believers?

I've been thinking about something lately that I believe deserves an honest conversation, particularly among those of us developing the next generation of Kingdom leaders.

Are we really making disciples?

We invest tremendous amounts of time and resources teaching people what to believe, how to behave, and what is expected of them. We develop programs, classes, small groups, and ministry opportunities, all intended to help people grow in their faith.

And those things are important. I'm not suggesting we abandon them.

But here's the question I keep coming back to.

If someone spends years in church, attends classes, learns expectations, and becomes a faithful participant, but never discovers how God has uniquely gifted them or what He's called them to accomplish, have we really made disciples?

Or have we simply taught them how to participate?

God never intended for His people to simply become better informed. He's given each of us unique gifts and assignments, designed to bring His life, wisdom, and goodness into the places He's entrusted to us.

And no two expressions are exactly alike.

Think about Paul's description of the Body of Christ. Every member has a place, a function, and something unique to contribute.

Yet how often do our ministry models emphasize helping people fit into what's already happening rather than discovering what God intends to accomplish through them?

We teach conformity to expectations, but do we develop confidence in identity?

We provide opportunities to attend, but do we create opportunities to discover?

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We measure participation, but are we developing people who can carry Kingdom responsibility beyond our programs?

Perhaps we need a more intentional approach.

Discover. Develop. Deploy.

Discover.

Help people recognize who God has created them to be and how He's uniquely equipped them to make a difference.

This goes beyond learning expectations. It's helping someone recognize how the Holy Spirit works through them, where their gifts bring life to others, and what God may be inviting them to accomplish.

Sometimes the greatest discovery is realizing that what God has placed within you isn't simply for your benefit. Someone needs what you carry.

Develop.

Discovery is only the beginning.

Gifts mature through use. Confidence develops through experience. Spiritual authority grows as we learn to recognize God's leading and respond to it.

That means giving people opportunities to stretch, experiment, and learn. Not simply teach them about faith, but helping them exercise it.

And walking alongside them as they grow.

Not every attempt will succeed. But those experiences can become some of the most valuable opportunities for growth when someone is there to help them learn.

Deploy.

At some point, we have to release people into the assignments God has prepared for them.

And I think this may be where traditional ministry models face one of their greatest challenges.

It's comfortable to keep people within familiar structures. But discipleship isn't intended to produce people who remain dependent upon us.

It's to prepare people who can recognize God's leading, exercise their gifts, and carry His purposes into places we may never go.

Deployment isn't graduation from discipleship. It's where discipleship becomes visible.

We give people opportunities to exercise responsibility while we're still there to encourage them, help them recognize what God is doing, and learn from their experiences.

Their greatest growth comes after they begin exercising their gifts. They discover impact they didn't know they could have, encounter challenges they weren't prepared for, and learn to depend upon the Holy Spirit in ways no classroom could ever teach them.

And yes, sometimes they'll get it wrong.

That's why we need to give them room to make mistakes while we're still available to help them learn. Not to shield them from every difficulty, but to help them grow through it.

Deployment isn't the end of development. It's where much of the most important development takes place.

And imagine what happens when those we've developed begin developing others.

That's empowerment that multiplies.

Instead of measuring success primarily by attendance, perhaps we should be asking how many people are discovering their calling, growing in their gifts, and making a difference in the assignments God has entrusted to them - in their workplaces, families, communities, and spheres of influence?

How many are now empowering others?

Because ultimately, the goal isn't simply to produce people who know what we know or do what we do.

We should expect them to grow beyond us, reach further than we will, and accomplish what we've never imagined.

So perhaps the question isn't whether we're reaching people enough.

It's whether we're empowering them to become everything God created them to be.

Because the measure of discipleship isn't what people have learned from us. It's what God is now accomplishing through them.

Until next month,
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