

Back to the Basics Sermon Series

Introduction:

Years ago in my ministry I discovered through prayer and the reading of the Word of God that becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ was the most important thing in my life.

As your pastor this morning it is my goal to prove to you as a believer in Christ and a part of this church family that being and striving to become a true disciple should be the most important goal in your spiritual life.

Many serious followers of Christ are asking this all important question that George Barna through Barna Research has asked:

HOW IMPORTANT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Barna says, **“My study of discipleship in America has been eye-opening. Almost every church in our country has some type of discipleship program or set of activities. Stunningly few churches have a church of disciples.”**

“Maybe that’s because it’s not terribly important. If we can get people to attend

worship services, pay for the church’s buildings and salaries, and muster positive, loving attitudes toward each other and toward the world, perhaps that’s good enough. What does the Bible have to say about the significance of discipleship?

PLENTY!

Discipleship is not a program. It is not a ministry. Discipleship is a lifelong commitment to a lifestyle that reflects Jesus Christ in our lives.

That has to be the goal of this church!

If you have ever been on a sports team you probably heard your coach say to you as a team player, **“We’re going to go back to the basics!”**

If I were to have a one on one meeting with each of you in the next week and ask you one question it would be: **Do you want to make a difference?**

When you come down to the end of your life and you stand before God, what will you have to show God the difference you made while here on earth?

In my opinion that could be a very disturbing question.

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George Barna has researched hundreds of churches and wrote 29 books and says in his study,

“Most Christian churches try to have a positive impact upon society and individuals. The big question is whether what they are doing is working. If the conclusion is that their efforts are not producing the desired outcomes, then the big challenge is whether they are willing to change their strategies to maximize their potential.”

You see the problem with many dying and plateaued churches today is they have not been willing to change.

I sincerely believe that the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene wants to make a positive impact on our community and on individual lives.

My great friend and evangelist Dr. Richard Strickland once told me, “Dan, we owe our churches an apology for preaching and making them feel guilty for not succeeding and not showing them how to do it.”

The question that we all have to address this morning is – **“Is what we are doing effective?”**

Is it producing the desired outcomes?

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Are you willing as a member of this church, willing to change – **go to back to basics** and start over if necessary to follow the instructions given by Jesus Christ to each of us?

Honestly, our communities only hope of moral restoration and life changing effect is for the Church to fulfill it’s calling from God. Do you believe that?

This morning I want to begin with my first sermon in a series that we are taking all new people through before they become members of our church.

Intertwined in this teaching will be preaching that hopefully will help guide us to become more the church Jesus wants from PCN.

To many of you this would be new because you haven’t been through Class 101, but much of this is what we teach them. – So let me begin with this sermon titled:

LEARNING ABOUT MY CHURCH AND WHAT MY CHURCH SHOULD BE ABOUT

I. Our Mission

How many times have we heard and read the Great Commission?

A hundred times? 500 TIMES? A thousand times?

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

But how many people in the Church of Jesus Christ today can say that their life’s purpose is to fulfill that tremendous challenge?

Let’s read that again and block everything out of your mind and focus only on this and let’s really as if it were the first time you’ve read it, try to understand what this verse is saying to us.

Now the question is How close has any of us come to fulfilling this command?

Now – please before you get any negative emotions – let’s just let these questions arouse us to being completely honest this morning.

How many of us believers get out of bed every morning and pray and think about what we can do that day to show and tell people about Jesus?

How many of us think about what we can do that day to make those people disciples of the Lord Jesus?

And how many of us wake up every morning thinking and praying about being and acting like a true disciples ourselves?

At another time Jesus said recorded in Matthew 22:37-38

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all of your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

I think most of us would agree that some Christian believers have a real struggle with the last part of this verse.

Loving your neighbor as you love yourself!

The Simple Mission Statement of the Pataskala Church of the Nazarene is:

- To bring people to Jesus Christ,
- To incorporate them into His Family,
- To lead them into Christlike maturity and holy living, and
- To equip them for ministry, in order to glorify God.

We as a Church family base this upon the Great Commission and the Great Commandment that Jesus gave to His Church.

Folks, listen to me we have no option but to understand this and to obey it. Anything short of this is disobedience that results eventually in sin!

We have no other direction to go as a Church.

We have no other choice.

We have no other alternative but to obey what Jesus told His church to do.

A. This is why our Church exists

I want to direct your attention to Acts 2:42-47 where it reads:

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

There are five things in this passage that Our Church exists for:

Now here is the Key: Because the early church did what Acts 2:42-47 says we find if we will act this way as believers – God will follow thru and bring people to be saved.

1) First, we are to bring people to Jesus Christ.

When Jesus told us to ***“Go and make disciples.”*** He was saying bring the unsaved to Me. Make disciples out of them for Me!

The end goal of every disciple of Jesus Christ is to reproduce themselves with another life coming to Christ.

I've often thought and said, if we could get every believer to pray and seek someone who is unchurched and get them into church and see them become a fully devoted Christian – if all of us would pray and find one person in the next 3 months – we would double the size of our church family.

Think what would happen if this happened 4 times every year! You do can do the math. But I don't want us to get caught up with arithmetic – I want us to get caught up with people who need Jesus.

But the thing I want you to see with me from Jesus is the Great Commission is not primarily about evangelism, it is about discipleship.

Jesus says, ***“Therefore GO and MAKE disciples of all nations ...”***

The Basic Thought here is that if the Church collectively is not doing this, then we are failing Jesus.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to fail Jesus!

I told a Pastor friend this past week that I am guilty of not fulfilling the Great Commission like Jesus wants me to.

You see – People of PCN I want to be honest with Jesus.

The Church must bring people to Jesus!

Evangelism is simply a friend of a friend who tells them about the Good News that Jesus Christ has done for them.

This is so basic, but Everyone can be saved.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:10 ***“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be known.”***

Therefore we have to get back to the Basics of understanding that every Christian Believer in the Church family must share their witness/testimony to others so that others will want to come to Christ.

Another truth that Jesus shared with His followers was that He wanted His house to be Full.

Where do I get this?

Turn your Bibles with me to Luke 14:23 where it reads, *“Go out to the roads and the country lanes and compel them to come in, so that My house will be full.”*

Now let me share with you some common excuses why some churches do not grow:

- 1) God isn't interested in numbers.
- 2) Quality is more important than quantity.
- 3) Large churches are too big and aren't friendly.

Folks, let's not get caught up in this kind of negative thinking.

Do you realize this morning there is someone just like you who needs Jesus and Jesus is telling us that we need to compel them to come to church and meet Him so He can change their hearts and lives.

So Friendship Evangelism is the **Growing Edge** of the true church of Jesus Christ.

2) Second, We need to lead them into Christ-like maturity.

There has been research that proves that most born again believers are limited in their ability to grow spiritually because they have failed to set any goals for their spiritual development.

Only 4 out of every 10 believers in any given church say they have set any spiritual goals for one year.

Look with me at the following statistics that are an average for most churches in America:

Only 1 out of 4 believers are involved in a Sunday School class or Small Group that motivates them to grow.

How does this relate to our church? If our average attendance is 350 we have 125 who are involved in a S.S. class or Small group.

The typical believer in America spends 2 to 3 hours per week in pursuit of spiritual development for their lives.

There is an old saying that goes like this, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there."

This is an indictment of contemporary Christian discipleship.

This is why we have intentionally set a systematic approach to teaching Classes 101 to 501.

Every new person who comes to PCN who wants to become a member must travel through these classes.

That's why we offer along with these classes:

- Sunday School classes
- Small Group Spiritual Growth
- Wednesday night Bible study
- A variety of ministry teams
- Prayer Groups
- And Fellowship Groups

3) Third, we are to incorporate these people into His family. We would call this Fellowship.

Let's go backwards a moment and I want to share with you what George Barna said in his book entitled: **Growing True Disciples**

All across America there are pastors, church staff, lay leaders who are working hard to increase church attendance figures to report in to their respective denominations.

There are all kinds of churches today who are working on all kinds of programs and try to have an all inclusive ministry to as people as possible.

But George Barna challenges us with this question:

What if we were to change our standards?

Just suppose we were to de-emphasize attendance statistics, that we no longer gauge the success of our churches by a Sunday attendance figure, that we de-emphasize income figures in favor of a commitment to depth and authenticity in discipleship?

How would we here at PCN redefine success in our church?

Could we get out of the traditional mindset to say that someone could worship God any time of the week instead of just on Sunday morning?

Could we have a new approach – NO! – The old approach from the Word of God that would help all of us discover new insights into our faith and to take this information and apply it to our lives?

Would it be possible that we could submit totally to the Holy Spirit in true Holiness that would change our decision making, our behavior and our code of conduct?

If we did this, would it be possible that God would make our hearts sensitive to sin and wounded every time we did something that offended God and others? Would we love one another more and forbear with one another in genuine Christian love?

If we were to come under True discipleship, would it be possible that every believer here this morning would joyfully give their tithes and offerings to His work. I am still convinced that if every believe would do this, we would never have to face financial difficulties, just obeying as true and authentic disciples of Jesus.

In His research George Barna gave the statistic that on the average a family attending American churches gave \$500 in 1999, and he said, “this represents a small fraction of the income of believers.”

This is not all that far off from the financial giving of our Church for some believers.

We would not only give our tithes and offerings joyfully, we would give our time. Would it be possible that areas of ministry that needs help would have people standing in line to do help serve and do ministry instead of Department heads and staff having to beg for help?

Friends - what I am talking about this morning is the True Church that Jesus wants!

What I’m talking about is making true disciples of Jesus.

I’m talking about people who develop friends outside of the church and begin to tell them about what Jesus has done in their lives.

We would have people who really have a genuine experience with Jesus from this church who live differently than the norm because of their life changing faith.

We would have a Church body that would be known in our community who projects and lives up to an image of being loved, loving others, forbearing with one another in love, caring, focused and clear-minded in its pursuit of the ways of God.

Folks, hear me when I say this – our community needs to stop hearing the negative that is being said about His Church here.

Every believer in this church family needs to pray and ask God to help stop people out there who are speaking negative about His church.

It's time for this to come to a close and to a stop!

And it's time for you as a Church family to tell those people they are sinning when they are talking against the Body of Christ!

We would have Individual believers who are continually linked with God through prayer and meditation, as if they were online 24/7 with ultimate spiritual power.

We would have Believers who take the initiative to use their spiritual gifts, their skills and their training for His Church, without having to be begged to serve.

Wouldn't you agree with me that this would be truly an Authentic Church serving and being the Church of Jesus Christ?

You see – this is what Jesus meant when He talked about us making disciples and being disciples in His Church.

When this happens we will as a Church experience True Fellowship in Christ as brothers and sisters.

4) Four, we are to lead them into finding their ministry – I will preach a sermon in the future weeks about this.

5) Five – we are to glorify God collectively and individually. We call this Worship.

I want to use Barna again to show us a disturbing statistic.

He said, **“When born again adults conveyed the most important outcome they want to achieve in this life, less than 1% mentioned praising and worshiping God. Few individuals deny the importance of worship; but relatively few**

understand what that means and have a passion to engage God through worship.”

Conclusion:

What does this all mean?

Why am I trying to convey this message to you?

Why is it important to teach this to all our new comers to this church?

When we take the biblical knowledge to the believer we build a strong discipleship base here at Pataskala Church of the Nazarene.

When we allow biblical knowledge and worldly wisdom to blend together we get a distasteful theological mash.

The staff and I feel strongly that we need to Get Back To The Basics of being in the Word of God only.

We need to learn what it means to have a heart that gives tithes and offerings joyfully.

We need to learn again what it means to lovingly and joyfully step forward to help serve in the ministries of this church instead of there being a feeling that nobody has any commitment anymore.

We need to learn again what it means to help each other grow and mature in Christ. We need to have accountability people in our lives that we answer to about where we are in our walk with Christ.

We need again to come back to the Basics of sharing our faith with the unchurched and inviting them to come to church. And most importantly that we invite them to Jesus Christ.

We need to surround ourselves with people who will challenge us to live the life of Holiness unto the Lord.

We need to get back to the Basics of praying in intercessory prayer against the enemy and pulling down strong holds that would come against this church and your pastor.

What does this mean?

When we get back to the Basics of Life – We will sense the our lifestyles coming into form of what Jesus lived and died for.

I ask you this morning: Is there room for improvement in this area of discipleship at Pataskala Church of the Nazarene?

You be the judge!