

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (LESSON 15)

Jesus' ministry to His disciples began with the end in mind. If the end is not clear, then the process will be flawed. The end was to be like Jesus. For Jesus discipleship was more than evangelism. It was a life that was radically different than anyone had ever seen or imagined. That is the reason people don't understand the Sermon on the Mount, which is the most complete teaching of Jesus on discipleship. It is not that what Jesus said in this sermon is difficult to understand. In fact it is easy. The problem is we do understand, and we can't believe He would expect us to do what He said. The Sermon on the Mount is not about evangelism, but discipleship. Evangelism is what disciples do; not what disciples are. The Sermon on the Mount calls for a radical change in what we are. A. B. Bruce expressed Jesus' idea of discipleship well. "The twelve were to be Christ's witness in the world after He Himself had left it; it was to be their peculiar duty to give the world a faithful account of the Master's words and deeds, a just image of His character, a true reflection of His spirit." Discipleship has become the forgotten work of the church. To forget what Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18-20), is to forget Jesus. To ignore discipleship is to ignore Jesus. The church seems to be involved in everything except discipleship. The reason the church is not impacting the world is because the more the church becomes like the world, the less it is able to influence it. For the most part the church and the world are in collusion. That will not change and cannot change until the mission of the church is to make disciples. Radical disciples cannot be like the world. After evaluating the state of discipleship in his own church David Platt admitted, "We are settling for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves." Understanding Jesus' discipleship paradigm is vital to understanding what the church should be today. Jesus focused on the man before the mission. What a disciple is determines what he does. That order never changes. When the mission is more important than the man, it is no longer Jesus' paradigm. It is a tradition of men. For Jesus, building a person precedes building a program.