

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

How did we get here?

Over the last three weeks Teresa and I have spent our evenings studying the book of Acts together and it has been an emotional rollercoaster for me. When I first got saved my friend recommended that I start in the book of John, Teresa on the other hand started in the book of Genesis. While I was trying to understand how the Word can become flesh, she got a real revelation of what it meant to be fruitful and multiply and we had 3 kids in 4 years. Well the next book after John is Acts and I can't tell you how excited I got reading about the early church. It was like watching an epic super hero movie. Ordinary people being sent out to do extraordinary things to reveal the power and love of God and to destroy the works of the devil and restore God's original plan for man.

God was doing such extraordinary things through the early church that they had to convince the people that they were not God.

Acts 14:8-13 And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. 11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.

Somehow we went from using our faith in God to demonstrate his supernatural nature to using our logic and reason to try to prove his existence.

The early church was sent out.

Acts 8:4-8 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city.

Acts 19:11-20 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and

wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Jesus spent his time and resources equipping his followers to go make disciples, now we spend our time and resources trying to attract the culture to come to us.

How did Jesus equip his disciples?

As you look at the ministry of Jesus you see this natural progression as he prepared his disciples to continue his ministry.

Step one: Observation.

Matthew 4:18-25 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. 23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

God called his disciples and at first all they did was watch with great excitement. They watched how he lived in communion with the Father, hearing from the Father, doing what he said and trusting Him with the results. Jesus was showing them the will and nature of the Father and how they were to live by faith.

Step 2: Participation.

Matthew 14:14-21 And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. 15 When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." 16 But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." 17 And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." 18 He said, "Bring them here to Me." 19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the

disciples gave to the multitudes. 20 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. 21 Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

How did participation work?

- 1) They had to hear Jesus.
- 2) They had to do what he said.
- 3) They had to trust the Father with the results.

Now they were experiencing the joy of living by faith.

Step 3: Incarnation

We humans are the only living beings that were created to both receive and reveal the nature of God.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

The image was our ability to receive God's nature.

Likeness was our ability to reveal his nature to the world and bring glory to God.

Through the redemptive work of Jesus, God's original plan for man was restored.

First, he put you in Christ so that you can receive everything he has.

Colossians 2:9-10 AMPC For in Him the whole fullness of Deity (the Godhead) continues to dwell in bodily form [giving complete expression of the divine nature]. 10 And you are in Him, made full and having come to fullness of life [in Christ you too are filled with the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and reach full spiritual stature]. And He is the Head of all rule and authority [of every angelic principality and power].

Secondly, he put Christ in you so that you can reveal everything he has and bring him glory.

Colossians 1:27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

John 14:12-14 I tell you this timeless truth: The person who follows me in faith, believing in me, will do the same mighty miracles that I do—even greater miracles than these because I go to be with my Father! 13For I will do whatever you ask me to do when you ask me in my name. And that is how the Son will show what the Father is really like and bring glory to him. 14Ask me anything in my name, and I will do it for you!"

Do you see how this comes full circle? The same way that God worked through Jesus, now Jesus is working through us, all for one ultimate purpose **TO BRING GLORY TO THE FATHER.**

So do you want to know how we got here?

1) We did not learn from the mistakes of our fore fathers.

Psalm 78:8-11 **They refused to love him with all their hearts.** 9 Take, for example, the sons of Ephraim. Though they were all equipped warriors, each with weapons, when the battle began they retreated and ran away in fear. **10 They didn't really believe the promises of God; they refused to trust him and move forward in faith.** **11 They forgot his wonderful works and the miracles of the past.**

2) We didn't heed the warning of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 2:8 AMPC See to it that no one carries you off as spoil or makes you yourselves captive by his so-called philosophy and intellectualism and vain deceit (idle fancies and plain nonsense), following human tradition (men's ideas of the material rather than the spiritual world), just crude notions following the rudimentary and elemental teachings of the universe and disregarding [the teachings of] Christ (the Messiah).

3) We value our experiences more than we do the word of God.

Jesus in Nazareth.

Luke 4:22 NLT Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips. "How can this be?" they asked. "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

Week after week they would go to the synagogue and hear the stories of the coming Messiah, hearing all of these details that no man could know. Then Jesus comes and declares himself as the Messiah, an anointing comes into the room to bring faith for them to believe and receive him and someone says isn't that Joseph's son. They had the written word declaring him as Messiah, yet they wouldn't believe.

I am convinced that many of our doctrines were created to justify our experiences. There are people that have never experienced a miracle, so they work backwards from their experience and create a doctrine that says that miracles ceased with the Apostles. The problem is they are calling God a liar. They are saying that God's nature has changed. He used to be the healer, the provider, the deliverer and restorer but those days have past. Yet the Bible says that....

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.