

Week 3: A Purpose We Must Pursue – The Church Multiplied

Day 16: Make or Build?

The Passage: Matthew 16:13–20

The Focus: “Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ . . . ‘And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’” (Matthew 16:16, 18, ESV)

The Meditation: “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Empowering Truths: Perhaps our lack of power is partly because we are often trying to “build” instead of “make.” Our American church and personal scoreboards are broken. They are programmed to tally points around “bigger is better.” Numbers mean notoriety, “followers” mean fame, “likes” mean love. We are trying to “build” a platform, a following, a church . . . when Jesus has called us to “make” disciples.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus tells his disciples, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). He tells them what he will make them into. He keeps his promise. Then at the end of his ministry, he directs them what to go and do: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

But in between he makes them a promise about what he will do: “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). Jesus seems to say, “If you make disciples, I will build my church.” We tend to say, “I will build my church and hopefully Jesus will make some disciples.”

In a very unscientific manner, I have asked pastors across the nation, “How much time do you think you spend in personal disciple making?” The answer is almost always under 10 percent. If I ask how much time they spend managing church programs, staff, or finances and preparing sermons, the answer is almost always over 80 percent. Are we following Jesus’ method of ministry? Are we focusing on addition when Jesus calls us to multiplication?

In Acts 6:7 we read: “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.” In Acts 9:31 we read, “The church . . . multiplied.” It is interesting that the disciples multiplied, and then the church multiplied. The order is important: disciples being made, disciples being mobilized, and then churches being started.

If we multiply churches without making disciples, we will have churches that entertain but don’t train. If we multiply disciples without making churches, we will have disciples who are disconnected from the body and, therefore, deformed. But if we make disciples who make disciples who love the church, we will have churches who multiply disciples and churches.

Empowerment is primarily given to make disciples who will believe Jesus to build his church and will partner with him to do so.

We praise God for the empowerment to defeat temptation, preach powerfully, heal the sick, cast out demons, and draw crowds. However, the Spirit longs to empower you to be a Barnabas, who empowers a Paul, who empowers a Timothy, who empowers others. This is the most fruitful and effective kingdom empowerment.

Power Truth: The empowerment of the Spirit is focused on the commission of Jesus: make disciples.

Our Prayer: Lord, forgive me for neglecting what you focused on, for not prioritizing what was paramount to you. Forgive me for wanting your empowerment for many things but not the main thing. Fill me, Spirit, to follow Jesus in multiplying disciples. Jesus, as we make disciples, build your church all for your glory.

