

The Guy and the Tie
Reflections *continued*

[Reflections 5]

85. What kind of person can “make disciples?”

- An intentional person: You don’t “happen” to make a disciple. You plan, pray, and purpose to make them.
- A person of eternal values: The world does not recognize nor applaud a disciple maker. They are an elite group. A church will have only a handful if it has any at all. A disciple maker has said goodbye to temporal glory and gain. They covet only the glory of God. And they also have . . .
- A love of people: The most wonderful thing one can do for another person is helping to rightly orient them to God and His word. (Incidentally “orient” means “the east.” To “re-orient” someone is to have them look east, back to the Holy Land. What could be better?)
- One with a virile personal devotional life: Discipleship is not just imparting a prepared curriculum or study guide. It is the imparting of a life. You must *have*, therefore, a life to impart. Prophets stand before god. Parrots merely repeat prophets.
- They identify the right “students”: They must be “FAT” – Faithful, Available, Teachable. Never let a person think he is doing you a favor. They must be hungry to learn and grow. If they are not willing to obey, their knowledge will make them eccentric or “off centered.” Knowledge is rather to make excellent.
- They can impart basic ideas: A disciple-maker doesn’t have to be brilliant but they do have to be basically sound. Basic doctrine. Basic life skills. Basic ministry skills. A learner . . . a liver . . . a leader.
- They must have a life than can be imitated. People learn more by observing than auditing. Paul said, “Be imitators of me as I imitate Christ.” (I Cor. 11:1)
- They must be able to inspire and motivate: This comes from getting a person to believe in the ability of God to use *them*. Nothing is more inspiring than having another *believe* in you.
- They must be able to reprove: This is never easy but at some point one will notice something that needs to be dealt with. There is a way to do it. And a willingness. This is what separates discipleship from merely instruction.
- They must have perseverance or bulldog tenacity: A disciple maker is going to have times of discouragement. Jesus’ disciples said, “Are there just a few being saved?” They asked this because there were so few who were “all in.” One who folds under discouragement at some time will seek a less demanding passion.

86. So how do you make a disciple?

- Start slow then raise the bar: Don’t make an open ended commitment. Simply say to a seeking person (and thus *must be* a seeking person), “Let’s spend six weeks together and I’ll show you some basic things and we’ll see how you like it.” During the six weeks you show them.
 - a. The Gospel
 - b. How to deal with sin

- c. Quiet times
- d. Prayer
- e. Values
- f. The Church

A hungry man will want to continue.

- After the six weeks, if he's faithful, ask him to think about continuing but say that the bar will be raised. Now he will have a quiet time every day. He also will have to attend church every Sunday. Say that you will meet for another 12 weeks.
- Now you begin studying the book of (say) Philippians for 12 weeks.
- If he is faithful then he will want to continue.
If so, say you will continue, but . . . – and then raise the bar.
 - He will need to go on a short term mission trip
 - and he will need to begin disciplining another believer
 - You may want him to begin a 2:7 group and to ace it . . .
 - or “you and I are going to go to a NAV conference in Colorado Springs”
- Make an effort to spend time with the person in everyday things to rub off onto his life.
- Introduce him to others who are disciple-makers so that he can see that others are committed to making their lives count.
- Introduce him to the great Christian authors and great Christian books.
- Let him recognize what his spiritual gift might be and talents he possesses.
- Challenge the person to a lifetime of serving God. Let him know that you believe in the Holy Spirit in him. Nothing motivates like someone who believes in who you are.
- Let the discipleship relationship mature into a mutual and deepening friendship. In time become peers.

Disciple making is a skill that one develops over a lifetime. It's worth it. It's the deepest sense of satisfaction of a life of eternal significance. An eternal God and eternal souls reconciled over God's eternal word.

It's so lofty that few can or will do it. But Jesus did.

87. Most jobs will make between 30 to 100 thousand dollars, depending on the skill or the demand (just my observation). To make significantly more than 100k will take either a rare ability – a surgeon let's say – or a great deal of responsibility like an owner of a business or a higher office in an organization.

But 30k to 100k or even higher gives you the same degree of comfort just with better toys and luxuries. But basically life is life.

For a person to make great amounts of money – millions – they are generally going to have a job with great responsibilities or a life of measured gambles – the stock market, and will demand a pretty good deal of pressures. If these are not present then one will have to use a different method for great wealth. They will

have to work 80 hours a week at something but then they will have to trade for a life of misplaced priorities and at this point the effect on marriages, children, and one's basic health and enjoyment of life are going to take their toll.

The best thing a person can do is to use their talent and try to do what they enjoy to make a living and be content with the hand they are dealt knowing that the differences between normal earnings and "enormous" earnings are really just going to be quantitative. To make more will always demand a price that seldom will be worth paying.

Make all you can with what you enjoy doing – knowing that *all* jobs bug you at some point, and don't complicate your lives by wanting what will not qualitatively change your life.

88. There are no more needful positions in the church than a funeral coordinator, a wedding coordinator, a minister of pastoral care, and one to schedule activities in the church – i.e. an events coordinator. You never see these people until you need them but without them your church will look like a Tijuana traffic jam and then the bloodletting will begin.

89. There has always been a tension within the Christian faith as to the nature of spirituality, or of the tension between the flesh and the spirit. There have always been systems of thought to deal with sin and temptation and promote the freedom of the Holy Spirit.

In the early church there seemed to be an innocent freedom from the Holy Spirit. As man turned from his lusts and followed the law of God written in his heart and mind – what the Puritans called unction – and confessed his sin and repented when sin won out. As this was progressively and continually followed, this "walking in the Spirit," this not letting "sin reign in your mortal bodies so as to obey its lusts," then a progressive sanctification would occur.

But as things progressed, different systems less morally demanding, began to evolve.

The "sacraments" became physical ceremonies that took on, supposedly, the imparting of spiritual blessing. Thus sanctification took on a mechanical aspect of going through the physical motions to achieve spiritual favor with God. From this came the caricature of the Roman Catholic who could drink, party down and the like but could also go to mass, confess to a priest, do penance then move on. After the Reformation – which rejected the sacraments – spirituality became academic doctrinal purity. Calvinists arguing with Lutherans who argued against Arminians who argued with Baptists who argued with Anglicans – alas, the end product of the faith is not simply being doctrinally correct but spiritually faithful to God in all things.

By the 1800s there was a movement called the “Holiness Movement” whereby spirituality was an emotional experience whose emphasis was not a continual walk but a singular experience whose emotional reverberations continued through the years. John Wesley felt you would no longer sin.

As the Charismatic and Pentecostal positions progressed and evolved, spirituality became more and more an emotional, non-content experience with a stress on a non-understandable prayer language and the unconsciousness from being “slain in the spirit.” Spirituality was now purely super-reasonable.

On the other end of the spectrum was Protestant fundamentalism where often spirituality tended to be attendance at church events and a series of “don’ts.” Now one was spiritual by affiliation and performance.

Point: Man would love to have a “system” whereby he can control spirituality. If I can just do this, attend that, learn these, or experience that – then I can be spiritual. Alas, God does not make it that neat and accessible. All of these “systems” have one thing in common – you get to short-cut around the heart. God will not let that happen. The spirituality that God requires is one that submits to the holy law of God as prompted by the New Covenant in our heart, empowered by the Holy Spirit who “wills and works for His own pleasure.” A leading that matures as the Christian is “renewed in the spirit of his mind” by the cleansing of the word of God. A leading that dominates as the Christian “fights the good fight” and “buffets” his body to make it his slave and does not let “sin reign” in his mortal body to obey its lusts. Spirituality is a progressive work of God in one’s yielded heart and mind but it is never a slick technique no matter how much the church has longed for such.

90. If I have been guilty of anything of a repetitive nature it has been “laying on hands too quickly.” Good men and tragically flawed men may both be “unreadable” at the outset. It takes time to find out who a person really is whether male or female. Sometimes good men don’t initially reveal who they are. Bad guys make certain they don’t show their hand. But Jesus said, “You shall know them by their fruits.” Vines do not produce figs. Thorns do not produce grapes. A person’s heart will always show itself. But it will show itself over time. “You can’t tell a book . . .”

I have set myself up for disappointment a hundred times, but I’m learning.

91. If a church does not recognize the need for medical help for clinical depression and clinical anxiety it will find itself where it will only be able to care for limited problems – marriage problems, kid problems, in-law problems, anger and lust problems, money problems, etc. But on the issues of extreme chronic depression and anxiety it will have to admit defeat because it can’t deal with the physical medical symptoms. The patient will give up and then be forced to go to a psychiatrist. As a result the church will only be able to deal with Class B misdemeanors and the more difficult issues it will pass over.

Each church needs a volunteer in the church that has been through depression that they can send people to as well as biblical counseling. The Church also needs a volunteer doctor who is acquainted with depression and knows the ins and outs of medications. If needed the church may also need a reliable psychiatrist to refer people to. Psychiatrists don't primarily counsel but prescribe medications if needed. This way, the symptoms of depression can be dealt with, then the things that may have contributed to the cause.

Every church, I will assure you, has people struggling with depression but they don't feel like there is any help. Christians can be the last to seek help because they feel they will be morally judged for a non-moral area. A sympathetic ear is considered a Godsend.

92. No one – but no one – will live a tumult free life. A life free of unexpected disasters and catastrophes. “In pain you shall bring forth children.” (Gen. 3) “As sparks fly upward so man is born for trouble.” (Job) There is no human being who has ever lived who can dodge the fallenness of life. Even Jesus. Even Job. Peter. James. Mary. Joseph. Moses.

It's how you navigate the white water.
Not how you miss it.

93. The emperor Diocletian demanded that all Christians turn over their scriptures. Many pastors were willing to die before doing so. Many pastors, however, turned them over. The term “to hand over” is “traditore.” From it we get the term “traitor.” It came from a Christian leader willing to hand over his bible to the pagan.

Much the same thing has happened since, whenever this godless world has demanded we hand over our bibles for its amending to the world's ideas. Faithful pastors have said “no.” But some have turned traitor. It has produced . . .

Limited inerrancy
Theistic evolution
Neo-orthodoxy
Liberalism
Etcetera. Through the years, “hand it over”

Today the same traitorous act is happening in a much more subtle but more sinister way of concession.

- The same sex issue and
- The question of women pastors and women teaching men, or the egalitarian issue

Those who say “yes” to either say it on the basis that what the bible said when written cannot mean that now. But sexuality and gender roles are declared by creation. Neither are dispensational issues of the law to Israel.

So why do Christian leaders “traditore?” Because of the pressure of the world. Same as in Diocletian’s day.

The conclusions and repercussions of such reasoning’s produce doctrinal and theological and moral tidal waves. They treacherously remove inerrancy from the fabric of Holy Scripture and smuggle in the theological liberalism.

“It is written” becomes “it was written.”

Not me. Not us. Not ever.

94. Every Christian at some point will “fly by the panel.” Meaning that life will have them “socked in.” There will be no external bearings to guide by. Emotion will not be there. Common sense and reason will not guide you. Other people will not be able to counsel you. All you will resort to is correct theology and simple, naked trust in the sovereignty and providence of God. That Christian who has been neglectful of his or her bible will thrash until they retreat therein.
95. How does a pastor or a layman begin a discipleship program in a church that does not have one?
- Don’t start a new program with a bang from the pulpit. Christians are generally weary of new organizational programs. The church is program heavy but quality light.
 - Begin with one or two couples that hand pick their small groups with people they consider reasonably certain will go on to reproduce. Let the program begin quietly, low-key, underground. Try to begin it in those the church would consider leadership.
 - But if church leadership is not initially involved – which sadly enough can be the case – don’t start the small groups without pastoral OK. Otherwise the groups will be seen as a threat and divisive, almost subversive.
 - It is essential to choose a curriculum or study guide that will keep the groups on track and cohesive. It also puts the stress on the people’s involvement and faithfulness not on the leader’s teaching expertise. Remember that discipleship groups are not merely bible study groups. A discipleship group has a standard of faithfulness. Everyone must do the work. Memorize the verses. Be faithful in attendance and there is a time limit to the group with the expectation of reproducing and faithfulness. The coin of the realm is faithfulness not merely knowledge. The curriculum that we have used at Denton bible is the Navigator 2:7 program.
 - If you start with a couple of groups of handpicked people, the person or couple leading it needs to keep instilling in the group members the vision of reproducing. As the group approaches the nine-month graduation date the people in the group need to begin leading the group and they all need to start looking and recruiting their group of couples or singles they think will reproduce.

- If you began with two groups of four, the next generation will hypothetically be eight groups of four. That's 32 couples, 64 people. The next generation? You see now why multiplication is more strategic than addition.
- By the 2nd year a holy scuttlebutt will have begun in your church. People will be talking about the devotional life that is beginning in people's lives. At this point someone will need to be appointed (or hired) for the role of recruiting, publicizing, holding the standard, encouragement – someone with a passion for discipleship.
- For things to succeed like they should, the pastor and church leadership need to be onboard. People will seldom go where leadership does not. Discipleship must take on for the church what it was for Jesus, Peter, and Paul – everything.
- It will help at this point to bring in someone to preach on fruitfulness and reproducing so the congregation can see that discipleship is not a personal nuance but the too-often neglected “main thing” of Christianity. Something that others are aware of.
- Once you get into the 3rd generation of discipleship you should be able to begin “advertising” and asking for sign ups. The ideal scenario is for the pastor to cast the vision from the pulpit and for the leadership to be the foundational men in the discipleship groups.

96. Why don't most pastors not commit themselves to a foundational ecclesiology of disciple making? Some simply have no training or previous training. Those who do don't seem to do it for these reasons.

- Discipleship takes time to flourish. Churches don't want to wait. They want growth NOW to stay up with the competition.
- Discipleship creates a standard that exposes people.
- It also creates a new “coin of the realm” for leaders.
- A discipleship program may have to defy the pastor's elders or deacons.
- It doesn't generate quickly the increase of money.
- Discipleship is not the way to vertical denominational advancement.
- Discipleship makes a pastor surrender a degree of control.

97. Very few Christians understand the philosophic, theological, scientific, psychological dominoes that fell during the 20th century that brought about the present moral breakdown in American and all Western civilization. Christians understand why they don't have philosophic or theological problems. Not why the culture does.

- They need to understand the nature of a world view.
- Why it determines culture.
- What America's worldview was through the mid to late 1800s and how and why it changed.
- Theism to Deism to Naturalism to existentialism.
- One can merely teach through The Universe Next Door by James Sires to get a foundation. But since the 60s there have been written a multitude of books on this subject.

- The new generations are being born into this culture. They above all must be made to think critically.
- A modern pastor must be able to understand and communicate the sequence of history's worldviews.

98. There are times that one philosopher calls "weightless." Nietzsche would call them "eternal nows." Things and times that have no sense of time, no cause-effect, no purpose, but are simply pristine moments of perfect delight. They slip up on you and take you unawares and you don't realize them until they are passed. They are moments that you would keep forever if possible – "eternal nows." They are soap bubbles. Shining prisms. Here. Gone.

For me it is a Christmas Eve or an evening prior. Dark nights. Cold. A fire. Quiet. An open bible and a text come alive, after a few hours of boys and grandkids and unfettered laughter and unashamed spoiling.

And now it is quiet. The TV is on a music channel that plays "Sounds of the Seasons," Christmas carols. Christmas Eve services are past, full of praise and delight and robust fellowship. Pumpkin pie. Cool Whip. Dark roast coffee. Bible intermingles with a good, anticipated chapter of an anticipated book. Nothing of tomorrow to distract or trouble.

Weightless gleaning of truth that whispers to you and chuckles within you with the notion that you have no concept of the eternal tomorrow that awaits.

Someone winks beneath the page and smiles. The lap on which you sit whispers "ABIDE."

99. So many fundamentalists can have a burr in their saddle over the celebration of Christmas, Easter and Trick or Treating. But in 40 plus years we have not seen one single person, incident, or church situation because of the evil influence of Santa, the Easter Bunny, or Halloweenishness. I have had problems, however, in counseling children of said "non fun" fundys who abandoned the spoil sport faith of their harsh parents for a bitter and defiant life of immorality, drugs, alcohol and violence. Just an observation.
100. Not "quenching the Spirit" means that you can't always organize or control or predict what God will do. Any church program or church leadership must hold onto their hopes with a loose hand. Sometimes God will go beyond your box. A pastor must say with Peter, "Who am I to stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17)
101. This present generation, I fear, has lost the sense of the local church. Of belonging. Of having expectations and responsibilities that will curtail the passion for total freedom to do what I want. But a "person" demands to be in relationships. Deep ones. The younger generation loves to be independent and free. But such will know no greatness. Only the vapidness of self-gratification.

102. When a congregant comes to me or the elders with an “I’ve got a bone to pick with you” attitude, I will resist him, oppose him and best him because he has disrespected my position. No matter how just his cause I must oppose him because to accede means to agree with a possible bad guy. If someone is congenial I almost have to yield because to oppose would be to thwart a good man.

“By forbearance is a ruler persuaded.” (Proverbs)

103. I have become through the years a firm believer in the doctrine of the “loser.” This is a person who finds his meaning in failure. He knows that if he has to observe the same excellence as the rest of mankind that he will fail because he has no character, discipline nor courage. What he can do, however, is to run the opposite way. As a matter of fact he will make an effort to corrupt his way because his ineptness is seen as his own unique personality trait. To fail is to be.

The Guy in the Tie Epilogue

Paul Bear Bryant’s wife said that there were two times that she cried after Bear Bryant took the A&M job. One was when she came to College Station and one when she left. So it is with me and Denton. You can get strangely attached to a place.

When I first heard of Denton it was about parties, drugs, jazz and basketball. And North Texas State University.

I cried when I came here. For three years all I could think about was leaving. How little I understood what God would do. “How unfathomable are His ways.” I would cry if I left.

Sometimes I drive by and look at the three churches built from ’81 to 2006. I marvel at how it began from a prayer meeting, a little girl’s death, and the aftermath of liberalism in three other churches.

God simply had something he wanted done.

My brother is buried here. My wife will be. I will be also. The essence of my life has been spent here. My heart has been poured out in this city that first broke my heart then gave it back. Denton Bible got my best. Years 26 to 65.

I had no idea.

And I’ve learned something. The reason old men and old women get crabby and cynical is because when you get old you have begun to see through the illusion of life. The life that the system markets. The life that the world says, “this is life.” The Super Bowl or World Series is the biggest game ever only to be played again starting in 8 months.

The country will throw a party every four years as candidates promise a new era.

The red carpet will roll out for the botoxed and implanted, sucked and lifted, who pose for the thousand supermarket rags that young girls and old men dream over.

All will compete for their 15 minutes. New Arabs will kill new Jews. New Irish will hate new Brits.

For the old guys “the thrill is gone.” They’ve seen behind the curtain. The strong inspire the young who are scorned by the old because they’ve seen the wheel turn 50 times.

I’m now part of the cynics.

“The glory of young men is their strength.
The glory of old men is their wisdom.” Proverbs 20:29

Getting old is freeing. You find yourself saying more often, “Again?!” “Move on!” “Get on with it!” “Here we go.”

Money, luxury, beauty, brains, strength, status all begin to find their proper level. And character, fidelity, loyalty, duty, truth, love, kindness, diligence, and wisdom burn brighter and brighter in a world that begins to flicker.

The **worst** thing is to too late exclaim, “Damn. I played the fool.”

The deepest satisfaction is to realize “I picked the winner.” A life spent for the right cause – “the truths of God set forth in His word fulfilled in His Son enabled by Grace.”

So that’s me, beginning till now.

“My God, Woodrow. It has been quite a party, ain't it?”

~ Tommy Nelson