

The Shepherd's Staff



Introduction

As pastor, I have struggled to find the best way within the ministry of our church to enhance fellowship, discipleship and outreach. I believe a good way to do this is what we will call, "The Shepherd's Staff".

Jesus said "Make Disciples"

The core idea of this is to have whoever in our church wants to be actively engaged in leading a small group or be involved in outreach meet regularly as a group with the pastor. This will be an active, working group focused on developing three things: fellowship, discipleship and outreach. The individuals in this group, working in consultation with the pastor will seek out others to form Bible study groups or an outreach. They can simply meet with one other person to share in Bible study or even develop a larger group. There can be more than one person in leading a group.

The Jesus Style of Ministry

As I have said before, Jesus ministered to the multitudes, but he built His church on a small committed group of disciples. Generally churches operate with programs, and function on a business model. The Shepherd's Staff style operates more in a relational way. The difference between a student and a disciple is that a disciple learns by being with and experiencing things together with the leader. By being together regularly the focus is on relationships and building the character of the members within the group for a common cause. I like this approach because it allows the individual to develop his own ideas as he is lead by the Holy Spirit. It give opportunity for the person to develop ministry skills and character. And, it functions beyond the walls confines of our church walls.

Tools and Training

Someone can be just told, go out and make disciples, but how? What can they know and what methods can they use? This group will be a core group within our church which will be learning how this can be done and what tools are available. Experiences and ideas will be taught and shared. There will be an emphasis on the character of Christ and His methods. This will not be complicated or hard but more simple and direct. Anyone can do it. This process will make it possible for anyone who has a heart to be used to believe that they can experience the joy of leading others to Christ and a deeper walk with Him.

Advantages I See:

- This is a biological, not a mechanical method which allows for natural growth. The church is to be an organism, not an organization. As each person is lead by the Spirit and connected, growth happens.
- This follows the good pattern set by Jesus in developing disciples. Ministry and fellowship happened as the disciples were sharing and "going house to house and meeting in the temple".
- It allows for the leading of a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led person with all unique creativity.
- It develops relationships, love and a working unity in the purposes of the kingdom of God.
- It calls for the emulation of good Biblical leaders, not based just on schooling requirements of learning knowledge but on true, faithful character and integrity. Knowledge puffs up but love builds up. There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. There is a difference between knowledge and love. There is a difference between knowledge and faithful integrity.

Qualifications

Anyone can be a part of this group who wants to be an active worker in enhancing ministry on their part and by being a part of a group who are developing a variety of groups and outreaches. They must also have the approval of the pastor. They must be committed to the church and working together with the leadership of the church. They must promise never to be divisive or start another group or church on their own but work together with the church. We are not opposed to starting other groups or churches but it must be by the coordination and approval of the leadership of our church.

There is no length of period in which one must be involved. This will be a living group, and as such, we know there can and will be changes, failures, successes and adjustments to people and ministry. But to fear problems is to do nothing. We are under the direction of the Lord to go and make disciples and we choose to be faithful. We will lovingly work together in unity for the cause of making disciples and enjoy the love, growth and accomplishment of everything gained.

I believe there is a beauty in simplicity of design. I love the organic feel of this rather than the mechanical feel of programs. It will be built on the character of our faith in our lives and our growing relationships and efforts to *"consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, and... not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."* Heb. 10:24.

*... the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped,
when each part is working properly,
makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
Ephesians 4:16 (ESV)*

A Story – You too can make disciples!

When we were in seminary Lana would go for a walk with our little girls around the block where she happened to run into another young mother with children. They got acquainted and started having coffee at their homes. In time their visiting came into the discussion of spiritual things. They decided to start including some bible study in their coffee times.

Through that, the day came where Linda accepted the Lord, started coming to our church and later was baptized. About a year later her husband also started coming to church and accepted the Lord.

Sometimes we make things seem too hard. We have some simple material for you to use that can be of real interest and spiritual growth. Simply ask your friend or friends if they would like to get together for some Bible study and coffee. You are so glad someone introduced you to the Lord. Be a friend to them also.

We will help give you the guidance, prayers, and materials to make it happen. Yeah!

Go Girl! Go Guy!

Next Sunday, July 12th, we will have a brief meeting after worship with all interested for the purpose of establishing the best time for everyone to meet.

