

## **Pastor's Perspective: Emphasizing Discipleship (cont.)**

**August 2019**

Being a disciple of Jesus is not simple and discipling others adds even more complexity! Anyone committed to genuinely following the example and teachings of Jesus in her/his context will attest to this fact. This seems discouraging at first but why do we assume that if we do something 'the right way' that it will be simple and smooth or even turn out the way we expected? I am often accused of making things unnecessarily more complicated and much of the time I stand guilty as charged. However, I wonder if in our search for simplicity we've missed treasures that could be ours and even potentially misled others on the same search.

I recently watched an honest documentary in which a Christian author humbly engaged a despondent portion of his readership who felt negatively affected by his best-selling book written over 20 years ago. I recall using his material on dating to teach youth under my leadership at the time and realize now that his views likely shaped my own view of what Christian dating should look like. Through this process the author listened in order to understand and sought out the differing viewpoint of others who'd researched the same area; academically and/or experientially. His thinking was transformed as he began to recognize that by making simple something that was, in reality, much more complex he harmed some of the very people he intended to help. In the film, this well-intentioned author apologizes for the hurt his work caused. I tip my hat to his vulnerability.

What do dating and discipleship have in common? Maybe more than we think. I would have said a few years ago that dating is a dangerous way to be discipled and an even more dangerous way to make disciples. However, some have found their way to Jesus precisely via this path and I refuse to discredit their

journey. Discipleship of Jesus, like dating, is a pathway but it is not necessarily a singular, predictable, 'straight and narrow' path that many of us would like to think it is and Heaven knows that each is far from simple. Compared to the above-mentioned author, could the organized church be similarly guilty of oversimplification and operating from incorrect assumptions? Could well-intentioned followers of Jesus have unintentionally inflicted harm on the very ones they intended to help? Honest, humble, vulnerable and Spirit-guided engagement will likely provide some answers.

As we attempt to put into practice our expressed desires to be and make disciples of Jesus we will have to wade through some long-held assumptions, let go of our sense of control and very likely break free from some old habits. Ours is a mission of encouraging people further along this discipleship pathway and it requires us to walk together. This is our co-mission and our privilege! We will need to allow The Holy Spirit to guide the path of discipleship for each of us and be cautious not to get in the way of another's progress. Some paths may look quite different than we'd expect. Some paths will even make us quite uncomfortable. These might just be some of the high costs of discipleship.

In the next issue of *The Pastor's Perspective* I will address the final area of my leadership focus: Increasing our congregation's exercising of spiritual gifts...**DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR GIFTS ARE?**