

MAKING DISCIPLES OUT

By Erwin R. McManus

The most significant challenge for today's church is how to make whole disciples out of broken people. From my vantage point as pastor of an urban church, abuse, pain, and abandonment are the recurring themes of our contemporary society. Some people's brokenness is obvious. With others, beautiful exteriors have been carefully crafted to hide what no one really wants to see anyway. Sometimes only their eyes betray them. Except when the conversation begins. Then it's the unsteadiness in their voice, or the almost unnoticeable trembling of their hands.

That was Sarah's case. Who would ever guess this young wife with two children just had a lesbian affair? How could her husband Michael have known that his emotional inaccessibility and distance would result in this kind of alienation? Though he loved Sarah deeply, his own brokenness made the prospect of intimacy something he feared almost more than abandonment. For Sarah, her infidelity unveiled a deeper fragmentation of her personal identity. Their marriage was at best fragile--their future uncertain. How can you make disciples of such people?

The road to healing and recovery was difficult, but now, ten years later, Michael and Sarah have a strong marriage and a far-reaching ministry. The ingredient critical to this story is the role of the local church in the process of life change. The healing of fragmented people is a communal process. Restoring broken lives and relationships requires conviction, commitment and community. Even when the church wants to help those whose lives have been devastated and whose souls seem irreversibly fragmented, we find to our sorrow that the church has lost the power to heal. It seems that all too often Jesus gets the small stuff and we refer out the really big problems to Freud.

Discipleship is rapidly taking on new textures in today's post-modern context. The modern church saw discipleship as primarily doctrinal training. A mature Christian was someone who knew his Bible. Good citizenship was expected of everyone. This was not an unreasonable paradigm in its context, but it was a dangerous one.

The church was enjoying the positive influence of a culture shaped by the Christian faith. The general health in people's lives was mistaken as the level of actual impact the church still had on its constituents. Life change had become a lost art in local congregations. As the society around us declined, so did the health, relationships, morality, and overall well-being of those who are members of our churches. We have become functionally powerless to help those whose lives are crashing in around us. When new believers are won to faith, we seem unprepared to genuinely help those whose lives are devastated by the power of sin.

While we continue to call people to the higher virtues, it's harder to lead them there. While we still preach that Jesus changes lives, we tend to turn to psychotherapy to make it happen.

How do we begin to reclaim the power of making fully functioning disciples out of seriously flawed people?

THE POWER OF ETHOS

It begins with a culture of expectancy. When my son Aaron was three, he became a follower of Jesus Christ. This was new for me, since I came to Christ as an adult. Yet nothing shocked me more than his first bedtime prayer at the age of four. I

Having lived most of my life in fear of God & life itself, I chose to live in spiritual darkness. God really didn't have a part in my life but because of His love for me and His grace He kept me alive. Knowing Jesus has made all the difference in my life. Experiencing His love through his people has changed my attitude to how to live in peace and joy in this world.

Celeste
Resurrected Life Ministries
www.resurrectedlife.org

"Jesus, make me a leader of men. I know I'm too little now, but move me into leadership." Needless to say I was in shock! Moments later my wife Kim reminded me that this is what he is around all the time. Ethos, environment, culture, is the powerful fuel of a movement. I am convinced it is the missing ingredient to holistic life change. At Mosaic we are committed to unleashing an apostolic culture. We expect people to invest themselves in serving Jesus by serving people. A culture of servanthood is a culture that heals.

For the last twenty years those most committed to discipleship overwhelmingly moved toward intense "one on one" relationships. This was a response to the lack of transformation taking place in the local church. While this has been a great help to many people it has never effectively captured the most significant ingredient to comprehensive personal and systemic change--the power of ethos. Webster's defines ethos as the fundamental character or spirit of a culture; the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs, or practices of a group or society. It's the power of a group united in purpose and expectation. Remember when the seat belt law was first implemented? At first it was a law that many of us resented. We knew it was good for us, but it sure was a hassle. We never saw not buckling up as immoral. Illegal yes. But they took our freedom from us! Now, do you ever see people driving with their kids unbuckled? Do you immediately think of the

danger the parent is putting their child in and even think of them as negligent? We've come a long way from throwing eight kids into the back of a truck! The law can inform your actions but ethos informs your values. Real change, sustainable change, comes when your actions are a response to your values. Real change is inside out. We must not underestimate the significant role of the spirit of a culture and the distinguishing character of a community in shaping and developing the character of an individual.

Ethos is more powerful than rules, methods, strategies, or even laws. Discipleship that brings life change begins here. Mosaic disciples in community. We are convinced that people get better when they are in a culture that emanates health. We insist that isolation and individualism are a part of the problem, not part of the solution. Relationships are essential to all personal development and discipleship.

This conviction is so strong that we actually changed the name of our church to accentuate this. A mosaic is an art form made up of broken and fragmented pieces of glass, tile, or other material. Through the mastery of an artist it is formed together into something beautiful and meaningful--especially when light strikes it. Calling our church "Mosaic" is our declaration that we are a community of broken and fragmented people formed together by the master artist to reflect his beauty--especially when his light strike us! Here in Los Angeles, effective ministry is impossible if you cannot make whole disciples out of broken people. Our recurring theme is that this is exactly what our church is about.

REVERSE DISINTEGRATION As a child living in El Salvador, I never learned the Spanish word for snow. Later I would learn the word for ice cream would do just fine. My years growing up in Miami keep my snow vocabulary to one. Once I moved to North Carolina I began to gain a rapidly increasing vocabulary about the subject. Snow, sleet, flurries, hail, ice, slush--with experience came language. In Alaska there are nearly 100 words for snow. I hope I never need to know them!

Remember when the word dysfunctional was not common usage? Neither was neurotic, psychotic, manic, bi-polar, phobia, stress, addiction, breakdown, therapy, 12-step, recovery, burn-out, mid-life crisis, hyperactive, repressed, depression, disorder, A.D.D., A.D.H.D....

Our language reveals what we wish we could hide.

The growing fragmentation of the human spirit is impossible to ignore. At the same time, there has been an obvious demise of personal character in our culture. Yet rarely are they understood as inseparable facets of the human condition. Integrity and wholeness come together like two eggs

in the same omelet. They emerge from a life experiencing the power of integration. Integration comes from the root integer--meaning a complete entity, a whole number, undivided. To integrate something is to bring it together. Interestingly enough this is the same essence of the words integrity and wholeness. They are different textures to the same cloth. An integrated person has both integrity and wholeness. Out of this integration virtue and nobility emerge. Discipleship that brings genuine life change and produces godly character must guide us through this journey into integration. How do we move would-be disciples to integration, wholeness?

WE FOUND THE SELF, AND FRACTURED IT There was a time when people did not think of "myself." People had an assimilated view of self--a person's only sense of "self" was as part of the tribe. People thought of "we" before "me." It did not occur to people that you could be understood as an isolated individual.

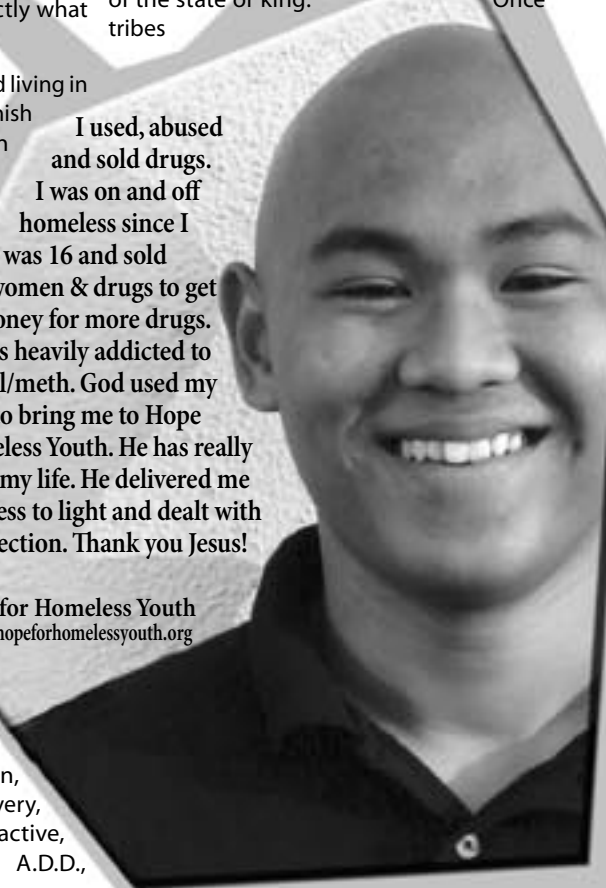
Then we developed a conscious self. Though the concept developed long before Descartes, the supremacy of self was solidified with his "I think, therefore I am." The study of human personality and personal identity is a fairly recent phenomenon. This sense of self is in many ways the gift and curse of modernity. Ever since we have been trying to figure out who we are!

Now we no longer see our identity as assimilated; we attempt to rid ourselves of all external influence so we can know who we really are. Our view of ownership exhibits this shift. Once men were the property of the state or king. Once tribes

I used, abused and sold drugs. I was on and off homeless since I was 16 and sold women & drugs to get money for more drugs. I was heavily addicted to crystal/meth. God used my auntie to bring me to Hope for Homeless Youth. He has really worked in my life. He delivered me from darkness to light and dealt with a lot of rejection. Thank you Jesus!

- Paul
Hope for Homeless Youth
www.hopeforhomelessyouth.org

belonged to the land and not the land to any man. Once most people did not think in terms of their personal rights or choices. Anything we possessed was a gift of the gods. The conscious self quickly developed into the idolized self. We not only began to think of ourselves as the reference point for everything around us, we understood our world, and even reality as an extension of ourselves. We've advanced so far that we



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OUT OF BROKEN PEOPLE

own not only possessions, like cars and houses, but also our own styles and brands. Sometimes it goes to absurd extremes, as seen in statements such as "get out of my space," "you're breathing my air," and "I



After my life had been ravaged by molestation and drug abuse, the Lord Jesus Christ gloriously saved me and instantly set me free from drug addiction and depression at the age of 25. Then I met my husband and we have been married for 16 years.

We have been in full time ministry ever since and we have seen the power of God restore many others as well.

**Victoria
The Original God Ministries
www.theoriginalgod.com**

have my own personal truth."

It seems the more aware we have become of ourselves the more we have lost our self-awareness. One of the great mysteries of our times is how to discover who we are. The more we look inside the more confusion sets in. The idolized self quickly becomes the fragmented self.

While we seem to be losing touch with what it looks like to be whole, we are more than clear on the many faceted expressions of brokenness. The entire science of psychiatry is the outgrowth of the study of dysfunction. Yet one thing is clear--there is a growing fragmentation of the human spirit in our society. The question then becomes how do you help a person move from brokenness to wholeness.

WHAT WHOLENESS LOOKS LIKE?

Don't confuse wholeness with perfection. For me a functional definition of wholeness is simply "a person who can give more than they receive."

A person who is emotionally broken tends to see others only for the support they can receive. The greater the brokenness, the less they contribute to the relationships and the more they take. Major evidence of emotional health and wholeness is that you can contribute to the lives and welfare of others. Spiritually whole individuals consider others as more important than themselves.

Selfishness and greed pull at all of us, but they find justification in our pain. This is why the journey to emotional health seems at first glance counterintuitive. Our natural inclination is to continuously attempt to meet the needs of hurting people. Our Christian faith certainly commends us to be a people of compassion. The danger comes when we find ourselves feeding an ungrateful spirit.

The first step on the pathway to wholeness is through the development of gratitude.

For years I felt obligated to meet needs on demand. I wanted to help people get better. Spending nearly ten years working among the urban poor, I was constantly faced with unending crisis and expectations.

While we did a great deal to serve people it became clear we were not helping them. Not only were we unable to provide for everyone in need, but the same people would return

with the same issues again and again.

I will never forget the insight a homeless man gave me one day. He approached our car asking for money or food. Kim offered him my lunch, consisting of a sandwich and chips. Without hesitation he looked into our car, pointed to my soup, and demanded that also. Not one ounce of gratitude.

He helped me begin to see the relationship between gratitude and wholeness. Jesus gives us insight into this when he explains to Simon the Pharisee, who is incensed that Jesus would allow an immoral woman to anoint his feet, that where there is more forgiveness there is more love. He was speaking to the miracle of gratitude. Gratitude expands both our capacity to love and to experience love.

Helping someone to grow in gratitude is relational art. Beauty results from a firm but gentle stoke of the brush. This is not a work for those who prefer to use hammers and nails. If a person is a believer, a good place to begin is the cross. Considering His sacrifice for us, how much more does Jesus need to do for us to be eternally grateful? It is critical to help a person to come to grip with the fact that what we deserve is nothing. Every year we have interns who come out to California. For several weeks every assignment that is given them feels thankless and beneath them. They are often educated, bright, the cream of the crop, and are used to being lavished with public praise and even adoration. No public ministry is made available to them. Then we begin to promote the ones who respond with continued gratitude and not on the basis of superior talent.

Usually about mid summer we have a crisis! When a person is ungrateful as a pattern, we focus on three areas.

- 1. Listen to your life stories and note how many negative memories you have.** Find something in your history to thank God for.
- 2. Even when life is tough there is something of beauty to see if you look hard enough.** Do

not let pessimism create a pervasive sense of despair. Thank God for the flowers, the sunrise, the air you breathe, or something.

3. Sacrifice for and serve someone more needy than you feel or even really are. I know when my little girl Mariah wept over the poverty in Indonesia, she had an entirely different perspective of how rich we were.

Brokenness can be the result of many things such as abuse, neglect, abandonment, trauma, or sin. Emotional fragmentation can be the consequence of our own actions or the actions of others. We could be either victim or victimizer. Most often we have a dual role. Hurt people hurt people. When brokenness is dominantly the result of being victimized, it makes the road to recovery more difficult to embrace. Why? Bitterness. Bitterness that is well deserved is difficult to release. Bitterness is a guarantee for depression and despair. Bitterness forces you to live in the past. Hope requires you to focus on the future. Only forgiveness sets you free. Forgiveness is an act of love. It is the response of a heart full of gratitude. Bitterness is the ugly stepsister of brokenness.

Bitterness breed's ungratefulness and gratitude is the key to healing & wholeness.

When a person is emotionally fragmented, alienation becomes their theme. Pessimism becomes pervasive. Often they are convinced no one loves them or even cares. Even when the tears of those who love them are free-flowing, they still feel they are alone. They seem incapable of experiencing or even perceiving love.

Perspective is a fascinating thing. It impacts everything. Perspective is not formed in a vacuum. It is the expression of our measure of gratitude. Grateful people are thankful for what they have and enter with minimal expectations of others. They see the glass half full since they expected nothing and are thankful for what is given to them. A person who is ungrateful wonders who took the other half of their drink. All of us struggle with selfishness but brokenness justifies it. Ungratefulness creates unreasonable expectations. Whatever is done is expected. It is never enough. An ungrateful person cannot be made grateful by meeting their demands. Until a person is willing to appreciate life, serve others, and even sacrifice of their own possessions they will never find the healing they so long for and need. The pathway to wholeness is the development of gratitude. Gratitude is the beginning of the ethos from

which wholeness emerges.

INTEGRITY COMES THROUGH HUMILITY After we see hints of a grateful spirit, the next step on the pathway to integrity is through the development of humility. Humility is one of those elusive ingredients that we are always striving for. How do we know we are humble? Doesn't that observation immediately make us proud? How do we walk in humility? It is important to note that God does not call us not to pray for humility but commands us to humble ourselves. When we leave it to Him, it's called humiliation. Jesus humbled himself and became a servant. I think it's this simple. Humility looks just like servant-hood. Eric Bryant is our pastor to students. He came as a graduate of Baylor University and with a Master's degree from Seminary. He had church planting experience in cutting edge Seattle and moved to L.A. to join Mosaic. None of this brought him on staff. Eric came to become a member, to learn and to serve. He got a job at a car rental place and began volunteering as a security guard on Sunday morning. I kept seeing this young man serving everywhere. He was always there in the lot or street helping people find parking. One day I asked him why he was always there so early and he explained that it was a great way to meet people!

God's transforming love and power brought me out of the gay lifestyle and restored my true identity as a heterosexual male. Furthermore, though already infected with HIV, the AIDS virus, He has sustained me in wonderful health for 23 years. Surely nothing is impossible for God.

**Jonathan
Desert Stream Ministries
www.desertstream.org**



He expressed his appreciation to be allowed to serve on the security team. A short time later, at our church wide beach party, I asked Eric to become our youth pastor. I told him and his wife Debbie that I was a sucker for servant-hood. You can trust the heart of a person who isn't too good for any job.

Servant-hood, over time, reveals integrity.

Again we are not talking about perfection. We are looking for something absolutely tangible. Can this person be trusted with followers? The ultimate statement of trust is entrusting your child to someone. To know their leadership will lead others closer to Christ. Selfish ambition and pride are the greatest enemies of integrity. It is not enough to be gifted. To lead you must have

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