

## Making Disciples

By Joe Ryan

For my twelfth birthday, my grandfather took me deep sea fishing off the coast of Northern California near where I grew up as a boy. I could barely control the excitement I had for this adventure weeks and days leading up to our offshore excursion. I wanted to hook a 100-year-old sturgeon like the six-foot mammoth Uncle Mike caught when he was a youngster. I wish that I could share with you a tale like you would read in *Moby Dick* or *The Old Man and the Sea*, but all I can remember from that adventure was puking my guts out over the side of the boat for the entirety of our trip out to sea. The skipper of the boat kept telling me that I needed to find a pair of "sea-legs," and then I'd be all better, but they must have kept the "sea-legs" hidden, because I never found them.

In high school as a relatively new Christian, I heard many messages about living as a disciple of Christ: one who was committed to learning and following the way and teaching of Jesus. This new life as a disciple was interesting and exciting. I felt a sense of belonging and place with my new community of faith. I resonated with the identity of being a disciple.

The one thing I wasn't prepared for, nor did I understand was part of the deal of being a disciple, was Jesus' final words of instruction he shared with his remaining disciples prior to ascending into Heaven:

*16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

The Great Commission – Matthew 28:16-20

*Go and make disciples of all nations.* That sounds like a huge responsibility, and it most certainly is, but that is part-in-parcel what we commit to when we ultimately give our lives over to Christ. Part of being a disciple is finding ways to encourage others to embrace the love and grace of God through embracing a relationship with Jesus.

It has been over 30 years since I went deep sea fishing with my grandfather (I still haven't found my sea-legs!), but that doesn't mean I haven't been able to do any fishing, I've just changed what I'm fishing for. When my life is in tune with God and I'm actively pursuing my relationship with Christ as his disciple, I have a desire to share Jesus with others. Jesus gave this invitation to a couple battle tested, sea-worthy fisherman:

*<sup>18</sup> As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." <sup>20</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.*

Matthew 4:18-20

*Come, follow me, and we will go fishing for people.* This is a worthy adventure Jesus has invited us to participate in. You don't need a boat, fishing poll, net or even water. All you need is the courage to follow Jesus and see where he leads and who he brings into your life to share this *Good News* with.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Do you remember when you became a disciple of Christ? What was happening in your life at the time? What compelled you to want to follow Jesus?
2. Was there a specific person or people who were instrumental in your decision to follow Jesus? If yes, what was it about these people that helped you open your heart to God?
3. When you read the Great Commission (Mt. 28:16-20), what feelings came to mind?

4. Why do you think some refer to the Great Commission as the Great Omission?
5. Which of your relationships come to mind when you consider these two passages of scripture (Mt. 28:16-20 and 4:18-20)?
6. What would it look like for you to embrace Jesus' invitation (command) to "fish for people" as you seek to follow him?