

Multiply



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

**Watch the video for this lesson @
WWW.GODSAIDSO.COM/DGW359**

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Written by Eric Krieg

Copyright © 2022 GodSaidSo Press. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Multiply

Introduction

A. One of the first things the Bible records God telling mankind is to be fruitful and multiply physically to fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28).

B. Later, the last recorded thing Jesus said on this earth concerned His followers multiplying spiritually (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

1. Of all the ways Jesus could have chosen to spread the gospel throughout this world, He chose for His followers to pass it on to others, who would pass it on to others, etc.

2. The apostles and early disciples accomplished this work, multiplying wherever they took the gospel (Acts 6:1, 7; Acts 9:31; Acts 12:24). Soon, the gospel had been spread throughout the known world (Colossians 1:23).

C. This work, though, was not done forever. Instead, every generation of disciples has the continued responsibility of multiplying (as there is a new generation of lost people)! This responsibility has now come to each disciple today (2 Timothy 2:2).

D. Purpose: To learn the Biblical principle of multiplying, including when multiplication does and does not happen.

1. Subtracting, Dividing, Adding, And Multiplying

A. What to make of numbers

1. Anytime you study the subject of teaching the gospel and making disciples for Jesus, you must be careful *not* to put the focus on numbers. God will simply judge you based on how you use what you have in His service – planting and watering the seed of the gospel in as many hearts as possible and letting God give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-8).

2. Do efforts guarantee numeric results (i.e. more disciples, more churches, larger churches, etc.)? Not necessarily.

- Remember that Jesus said few would be saved (Matthew 7:13-14). There are times and places when and where the gospel of Christ is more readily accepted than others.

3. Throughout this lesson, the focus is on the *efforts*, not the *results*. But, while we are *not* promised numeric results, the only way to give the seed of God's word a chance to be as fruitful as possible is to plant and water it in as many hearts as possible (Luke 8:4-15)!

B. Subtracting

1. Some disciples and churches have efforts in line with the concept of subtraction. That is, by their lack of efforts, the number of disciples of Jesus may slowly decline.

2. One of the main ways this happens is when disciples and churches fail to take the work of making disciples seriously. Perhaps they completely ignore the work and get caught up in other things. Perhaps they talk about the work of making disciples but do not devote many effective efforts to it.

- Although there will always be some amount of subtractions (i.e. death and apostasy), we must first look at ourselves and honestly evaluate the cause of the subtraction and how diligent we are being in making disciples!

C. Dividing

1. Some disciples and churches have efforts in line with the concept of division. That is, unnecessary obstacles are driven between people who want to live for Christ.

2. Some push to get their own ways about things. Some refuse to compromise in matters of individual liberty. Some simply cannot get along with others.

- Although some divisions are necessary to preserving faithfulness to Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:19), we must carefully evaluate whether division is truly necessary. For, many divisions have happened unnecessarily!

C. Adding

1. Some disciples and churches have efforts in line with the concept of addition. That is, they occasionally reach someone with the gospel and help someone be a disciple of Christ.

2. Perhaps the pace of these periodic additions keep up with or slightly outpace the decline that happens over time. Perhaps there are a few who are actively doing what they can to help people be disciples, while many are not and there is much being left undone.

- Although it is true that some will only ever experience periodic addition despite the best efforts made, we must honestly consider if we are truly doing our best in God's work.

D. Multiplying

1. Some disciples and churches have efforts in line with the concept of multiplication. That is, they are doing much of what they can do to make disciples of as many as possible.

2. These constantly evaluate themselves, their abilities, and their opportunities and determine to do the best they can to help others follow Jesus. Everywhere they go, they take the gospel with them. Local churches equip their members to be disciple making disciples and send out preachers any opportunity they get.

- Although it is true that some expend a tremendous amount of effort in the Lord's service with minimal numeric results, we must honestly assess our efforts to see whether a lack of multiplication is connected with a failure in our efforts!

E. What about you and your church?

1. These points are not always clear cut. For, one church could exhibit multiple characteristics (i.e. there may be different members contributing to each of these in the same church). Yet, we need to encourage the congregation to be united in efforts of multiplication!

2. Using God's word as a standard, each person and church must evaluate themselves and their disciple making efforts (2 Corinthians 13:5). Although any increase ultimately comes from God and not from us, God does give the increase in connection with the efforts we make (1 Corinthians 3:5-7)! So, if you or your church are not really putting forth the efforts required for multiplication, you should repent and change today!

2. When Multiplication Happens

A. When there is love for God and thankfulness

1. Multiplication of disciples and churches will never happen in a way that pleases God without there being fervent love for God that is wrapped with thankfulness for all He has done to save us (1 John 4:19)!

2. Because God has shown selfless and sacrificial love for us, we should give ourselves to God in this same selfless and sacrificial way (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). So, when we truly recognize and appreciate how much God has done for us through Jesus Christ, we really will do everything we can to serve and glorify Him by making disciples – and this will not be considered a burdensome obligation (1 John 5:3)!

3. Although none of these passages say anything directly about making disciples, they show the fundamental requirement for multiplication. If you do not love God and want to show how thankful you are for all He has done for you, you will not commit to this work – at least not when it requires great sacrifice!

B. When there is love and compassion for others

1. Multiplication of disciples and churches will never happen in a way that pleases God without there being true love and compassion for others that has genuine concern for the spiritual wellbeing of everyone!

2. After Jesus taught that loving God with your entire being is the greatest command, He followed that by teaching love for others as the second greatest command (Matthew 22:39). So, to be effective in multiplication, you must never forget what it was like to be lost and in need of someone to help you follow Jesus! In fact, all your efforts should consider what you would want others to do for you (Matthew 7:12) – not only in whether you teach them, but also in how you teach them.

3. Jesus had this kind of loving concern for others (Matthew 9:36-38). Today, there are many who need to have the true message of the gospel shared with them, but there are few workers to accomplish it. So, if you truly love others, you will do two things: You will pray that God will send laborers into His harvest to reach these people *and* you will roll up your own sleeves in selfless sacrifice to do what you can to bring in the harvest of this generation!

C. When each disciple and church are opportunistic with the gospel

1. Multiplication of disciples and churches will never happen to its greatest potential without every disciple and church doing all they can in helping people follow Jesus Christ.

2. God desires for every disciple and church to embrace this work and make the best use of the opportunities presented to them. This includes teaching the gospel to the lost (2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 Peter 3:15) and helping other Christians serve God (Hebrews 3:12-13; Hebrews 10:24; Galatians 6:1). Furthermore, local churches need to be diligent in equipping every member of the church to do these works (Ephesians 4:11-16).

3. Recognizing these responsibilities exist is not enough. Doing these works *sometimes* is not enough. Instead, every disciple and church must be aggressive in the work, constantly watching for doors of opportunity to be opened for the word of God (Colossians 4:3-5).

D. When the truth is taught boldly and with love

1. Multiplication of disciples and churches will never happen as it should unless the truth is taught boldly and with love, recognizing that only the truth of God's word will make a person a true disciple of Jesus (John 8:31-32).

2. The truth, though, must be taught boldly. Boldness means you must say and do whatever the truth requires you to say and do, no matter what anyone will say about or do to you! Disciples and churches must be prepared to be rejected and persecuted to speak God's word of truth (Matthew 10:37).

3. Then, the truth must also be taught in love. God teaches that it does matter how His word is presented to others (Colossians 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Ephesians 4:15). For, it is possible to preach what is true, but to say it in a way that does not help people obey.

3. When Multiplication Doesn't Happen

A. When there is a predominant inward focus

1. Some disciples are only focused on their own spiritual needs. Then, local churches can also be guilty of focusing on themselves.

2. Although both disciples and churches should be concerned about their own spiritual health, many have developed such an inward

focus they have largely neglected the mission of seeking the lost and helping disciples become stronger – in their own community and beyond!

B. When the status quo is good enough

1. Some disciples and churches are guilty of not evaluating the methods they use to spread the gospel of Christ (only using the same methods they have always used). However, while we must always stay within the authority given in Scripture, we must be willing to adapt our methods to be the most effective as possible.

2. Some are so content with the way things currently are, they are unwilling to make any changes. And, while disciples and churches should certainly be wise in what they do, they should always try to do as much as they are Scripturally authorized to do!

C. When only a few are doing the work

1. Many disciples and churches have developed a false concept that distinguishes some as “spiritual professionals” (“clergy”) and others as “ordinary Christians” (“laity”). Although many would reject this doctrine, their actions demonstrate otherwise and the spiritual work is largely left to others (i.e. preachers, elders).

2. The point is not that there cannot be evangelists and elders who do the work, but that it is the responsibility of every disciple and church to do as much as possible to make disciples for Jesus! In fact, evangelists, elders (pastors), and teachers have the responsibility of equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12)!

D. When there is indifference

1. Although many disciples and churches talk about the work of making disciples, their actions often do not match their words. Some disciples and churches are like those in the church at Ephesus and do some good things, though not possessing the needed love (Revelation 2:1-7). Some are like the church in Sardis that had a reputation for being alive, when it was actually dead (Revelation 3:1-6). And, some are like the church in Laodicea that was neither all the way against Christ nor fervently devoted in His service (Revelation 3:14-22).

2. Whenever there is a lack of zeal for the Lord and the work of making disciples, multiplication will always be hindered!

E. When the seed stays in the barn

1. Jesus compared God's word to a seed God wants sowed in every heart (mind) in this world (Luke 8:4-15). Of course, one of the most basic principles of agriculture is that the seed must be planted for it to produce a crop (Haggai 2:19).

2. Although many disciples and churches speak of making disciples for Jesus, they often leave the seed in the barn! Actions get delayed for various reasons and people are not properly taught. But, the only way for God's word to have its intended effect is when it gets planted in the hearts of others!

F. When other things become more important

1. While there are many responsibilities we all have (i.e. provide for our families, household responsibilities, etc.), we must never think that the work of making disciples is less important than these! But, many disciples will often neglect this work because of other things and do not utilize the opportunities that are presented throughout the day.

2. Churches can also be guilty of the same thing. Although there are things that must be taken care of and looked after (i.e. the meeting place, yardwork, parking lot, etc.), these less important things can easily consume the attention, energy, and resources of the church so that the work of making disciples gets neglected or greatly hindered.

Conclusion

A. Will you and your church be committed to efforts that multiply the seed of God's word throughout this world?

B. Although you have no control over the numbers and results, you do control your efforts! So, you must carefully and honestly evaluate yourself to see if you are doing the best you can in this crucial, God-given work!

Study Questions

Do Christians and churches have the responsibility to multiply?

1. Subtracting, Dividing, Adding, And Multiplying

What should you make of numbers in disciple-making efforts?

How do some disciples and churches have efforts that result in subtraction?

How do some disciples and churches have efforts that result in dividing?

How do some disciples and churches have efforts that result in adding?

How do some disciples and churches have efforts that result in multiplying?

What best describes you and your church?

2. When Multiplication Happens

How is love for God and thankfulness necessary to multiplication?

How is love and compassion for others necessary to multiplication?

How is each disciple and church being opportunistic with the gospel necessary to multiplication?

How is the truth being boldly taught with love necessary to multiplication?

3. When Multiplication Doesn't Happen

How does a predominant inward focus prevent multiplication?

How does thinking the status quo is good enough prevent multiplication?

How does only a few doing the work prevent multiplication?

How does indifference prevent multiplication?

How does keeping the seed in the barn prevent multiplication?

How do misplaced priorities prevent multiplication?

