

One, Two, Three...Believe!

May 8, 2011

The Great Commission given by Jesus to His disciples says: "As you go, disciple people in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19, ISV). The word "nations" here is from a Greek root that means "forming a culture." In other words, wherever Christians go, we are to have an impact on the local culture by leading people to understand the Gospel and by establishing a "Biblical culture." But who influences who the most? Do we influence our culture more, or does our culture influence us more?

America has a disposable, "now" culture. We seek instant satisfaction. After we consume what we want, we throw away the leftovers. In relationships, we Facebook, instant message, hook up and divorce. Money consists of instant credit cards, lotteries and casinos -- and long lasting debt. Drugs and strong music provide instant happiness, and persistent oppression. In politics, an unknown can become president in eight short years, and a Facebook revolution can topple a dictator in eight short weeks. In media, iTunes, iPods, iTouch and other small devices connect us instantly with everything. To know it all, you simply have to Google it!

One result is "instant religion" available online, on TV and everywhere. Not surprisingly, one out of four Americans calls themselves a Christian but do not participate in the life of a local church, according to Barna Research. Is it possible many people now have a form of religion, fed by instant media, but lack something important having to do with walking out their faith with other people, which takes a much larger commitment of personal time?

Jesus singled out the importance of "faith" when He asked: "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8) Faith is the one thing that God can't do for himself, wrote Robert Stearns. God doesn't need faith to know what He's going to do, but we need it to know what He's going to do! We can only know God by faith because His being is invisible to our everyday lives! God needs our faith so that we can become overcomers in this world: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith!" (1 John 5:4).

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17), which is an incorruptible seed that "lives and remains forever" (1 Peter 1:23). But the Word must be mixed with our own faith to have power and effect (Hebrews 4:2). When we trust God's Word even a little, with faith the size of a mustard seed, we are restored to right standing in His sight (Romans 10:6-13), and we become able to move mountains by the power of God (Mt. 17:20). Those who don't believe are condemned because they love darkness rather than light and their deeds are "evil" (John 3:19). *Evil*, in the Greek, literally means "pain ridden." Surely, our world is indeed very pain ridden!

The promises of God are received by faith in God (Romans 4:16). By faith we receive the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:14). We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7-8). Our faith enables us to stand firm (2 Cor 1:24). We also rest in our faith (Heb 4:1, 3), which gives us strength for what lies ahead. Signs and wonders follow those who believe and walk in faith (Mark 16:17).

Bottom line: "Without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb 11:6). The Bible concludes: "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:6). But it takes time to seek God diligently and to learn to love other people. It takes time to find God and learn to obey Him so that we can express His love through our faith. It takes time to break off the influences of the pain-ridden instant culture around us.

Are you willing to take the time?! Are you willing to connect with a community of believers so you can learn what it takes to become a disciplined, loving follower of Jesus? If so, you'll learn to truly fulfill the Great Commission by connecting with people wherever you go and expressing your faith through God's love. Ready, set...one, two, three, believe!