

# Worldview Development and Discipling the Nations

*The command to disciple nations must be seen in light of what Jesus said regarding the greatest two commandments of all which are to love God (vertical) and to love our neighbor (horizontal) as we love ourselves.*

by Darrow L. Miller

Most Christians agree that Jesus called us to evangelize. In Matthew 28:19 we read, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations" (NIV). We call this passage the Great Commission.

But what does it mean to make disciples of all nations? Today's predominant reasoning about evangelism is that the Great Commission was a call for professional missionaries to cross the seas, speak a "spiritual message, save souls, and plant churches." Evangelism is good and necessary, yet frequently addresses only the soul, leaving out hearts, minds, and strength. And it doesn't teach people how to live for Christ. Yet that is what it means to disciple nations. Often we think that someone else can do that.

Another group of evangelical Christians make up the discipling paradigm. They teach individual believers how to live spiritually Christian lives through prayer, Bible study, worship, and fellowship with other Christians. Personal responsibility is limited to self.

However, a growing group of evangelical Christians now realizes that there is a third paradigm, because neither the evangelical nor the discipling paradigm enfolds nor addresses the fullness of the Great Commission.

## **Biblical Paradigm**

These often are referred to as the two Great Commandments. We are to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength (the whole person). The way we manifest our love of God is by loving our neighbor. The two Great Commandments provide a refreshing look

at the Great Commission. In explaining what I mean, I'm going to use the word order in three different ways:

- \* A command, as in a military sense of giving marching orders;

- \* A religious order of disciples, which is a band of men and women with like worldviews; and

- \* A culture brought into social order by the fundamental principles on which it was founded, all based on the predominant worldview.

First, Christ called His followers to make disciples of all nations. While this begins with evangelism of individuals, it must not end there. It must encompass discipling whole nations about every aspect of their culture. And not just one nation, but all nations. This is a reaffirmation of the covenant given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, where God said, "...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." But what does it mean to disciple a nation?

Jesus said to "teach them to obey all that I have commanded." The Greek word used for obey means to guard something precious. The word used for command is the same as used in a military context, of marching orders. Jesus did not say to teach individuals how to be spiritual or religious. He said teach nations to hold precious and obey all that He commanded. To accomplish these marching orders, people must begin with a biblical worldview, because only a biblical worldview gives us the full context for living our lives to the wholeness that God intended.

A person's worldview is based on the god that person worships. Our

worldviews are the prescription lenses of the mind through which we see the world. The predominant worldview within a culture establishes that culture's principles (the values or moral order) that will be used in forming institutions and social structures. A worldview shift brings a values shift, which ushers in a shift in our concept of everything: in areas of family, education, health, economics, governments, etc. All of this brings a corresponding shift in the way we live our lives.

## **The Task Before Us**

We are to extend the principles of the Kingdom into the social order of every nation, into every family and neighborhood. That means extending the social order of the Kingdom into business and economics, the public square, education, politics, science, and technology. We are called by God to disciple nations. We need to begin in our circle of influence, helping the people around us to bring the Good News of the Kingdom of God into every area of our lives. The Good News of God's Kingdom is to bring hope to people in their lives. How and where should we begin?

1. Pray and ask God to change the prescription lenses of your worldview, to help you leave secular lenses (or ideas) behind and get a Biblical prescription.

2. Be reminded to read the Scriptures from cover to cover for several years to gain the big-picture view of what God intended for the fullness of creation.

3. Grow where you are planted. Make disciples within your sphere of influence by sacrificially serving the whole

person (heart, mind, soul, and strength). The better you get at this, the more you can expect God to expand or change your sphere of influence around the world.

### Transforming Heart and Mind

As I looked out the chalet window, the winter snow was gently falling past the panes. My wife Marilyn and I were experiencing all the beauty of a Swiss mountain village. The English high tea, classical music, laughter and quiet conversation formed a memorable evening. In the midst of this delight, our host, a German lawyer, Udo Middellmann, turned to me and said, "Dar-row, you know that Christianity is true, even if you don't believe it."

What kind of words are these? "What did you say?" Udo profoundly repeated, "Christianity is true, even if you don't believe it." My insides recoiled. As a young Christian I had been taught that Christianity was true precisely "because I believed it."

Have you ever had a crisis of faith? For two nights I tossed and turned. What could this mean? As the sun rose over the Swiss Alps on the second morning, the answer dawned in my mind. Christianity is true EVEN if no one believes. Christianity is true because God exists. It is true because it fits reality whether or not we see it or believe it.

With this wonderful realization that Christianity is objectively true, I was stunned to realize that I had a circumcised heart, but an uncircumcised mind. As a young man going through the public school system at a major university, reading newspapers and watching television, I had graduated from college with a secular mind.

The Lord Jesus was beginning to work in my life in a new way, to help me to understand that God was God of every area of life, not just the spiritual and the religious, and that He wanted me to bring every thought captive to Christ.

Thinking that Christianity was

true "because I believed it" was a purely secular concept. Modernism says that there is no God; therefore, there is no objective truth; therefore, whatever you believe is true. If you believe in Buddha, that's what's true for you. If you believe there is no God, that's what's true for you. If you believe in Christ, that's what's true for you.

My own vocational calling has been to work to alleviate hunger and poverty in the world. The realization that Christianity was objectively true caused me to see that God wanted to speak into the area of poverty and hunger. Not only was God's heart broken over poverty and hunger, the solution to the problems of hunger must come from an inward transformation of heart and mind that touches and changes one's worldview.

The experience on that snowy February at L'Abri fellowship in Switzerland led me to realize that ideas (thought systems) have consequences. What a people or culture believes, impacts what they value, and that in turn determines their behavior and the kind of institutions and societies that they build.

Satan is the "father of lies" (John 8:44). He imprisons entire nations in poverty by his lies (Rev. 20:3). Allow me some practical examples.

In India, Hinduism teaches that ignorance is a virtue. In this situation, if you want to help Hindus learn to read and write so they could access knowledge, what would you be asking them to do? In effect, you would be calling them to sin. In contrast, in Christianity, truth is a virtue. It has been this virtue that has prompted men and women to pursue science, to discover the truths of the universe, to pursue education and to grow in wisdom.

In the United States in the last 25 years, we have found a shift from one critical phase to another which has profoundly impacted our day to day existence. What do you think that shift might

be? We have moved from the concept of the "sanctity" of life to the "quality" of life, from an understanding that the smallest, oldest, most broken life is sacred, to the concept that only a productive life is worth living. This shift in values was unimaginable 30 years ago, yet it is commonplace today.

Dr. Kevorkian—"Dr. Death"—has been actively assisting in suicides. Even though this violates state law, juries in Michigan have failed to convict him. In hospitals throughout the United States, doctors will write on the orders of babies born with severe handicap, "No feeder." These children are left to die alone and without comfort, without nurture and succor.

In another area, the whole definition of family is being challenged. What has historically been acknowledged in culture after culture, i.e., the marriage of one man and one woman, the court in Hawaii is seeking to redefine to make marriage as two homosexuals or two lesbians who are committed to each other just as valid and honorable.

Another example of the power of ideas comes from the president of Food for the Hungry, Dr. Tetsunao Yamamori. In a recent visit to Ethiopia, visiting a refugee camp, he heard a baby struggling for air, the sound of a child abandoned by his mother. He picked up the baby and hurriedly searched for the mother. Upon finding her, the young mother looked at Dr. Yamamori and said, "Put the baby back; it was meant to die." Dr. Yamamori looked at the mother and said, "No! This baby was meant to live!" In that brief interchange of two sentences, we see the clash of two worldviews with totally different outcomes for the little child. Ideas have enormous consequences.

I just returned from a week-long conference in Korea jointly sponsored by Korea Food for the Hungry International, Youth with a Mission, and L'Abri Fellowship. In a small discussion group one night, a young Korean woman

stood up and said, "I hate being a woman in Korea." I asked her why, and she began to weep and share how women are second-class citizens in Korean society. There's such a preference for boys, that young mothers are aborting their female babies in record numbers. As this young woman, (I'll call her Esther) shared, the other women in the group were quietly crying. Men at first squirmed uncomfortably, but later began to publicly confess how their behavior had hurt their sisters in Christ.

Korea has been successfully evangelized. There are churches in every neighborhood, and 30% of the population are evangelical Christians. Yet the Confucian and Buddhist story of the relationship between men and women, still dominates Korean life, including the life of the church. Though Korea has been evangelized, it has not been disciplined at the deep level of culture. Minds have not been transformed to the biblical concept of men and marriage, and millions of Korean Christian women and their daughters suffer as a consequence. Men, too, fail to experience the supreme joy of celebrating life with an image-bearer and daughter of Eve, created in society together in the image of God. I pray for these brothers and sisters that God would raise up Esthers who would have the courage to share publicly the brokenness they feel and of Mor-decais to stand with them and celebrate the wonder and joy of having mothers, sisters, and daughters who are made in and celebrate the image of God.

In the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe the political and economic system has crumbled, but underlying that, the materialistic ideas and the political and economic systems the society was founded on have crumbled. Nation after nation in the post-Communist era are looking for a new foundation. As Christians we have a powerful story to tell, we have a major work to do to

the disciple those nations.

In America we see the moral decline of our nation. Even within the church, secularism is creeping in putting man at the center of the universe. It says, "I want to have fun, excitement, thrills. I want to be entertained. Even when I become a Christian, I believe that God exists for me. The church is a place to go to be entertained." The moral and spiritual decline in America is not at fault for pervasive secularism. Rather it is a symptom of secularism. The fault lies with us in that the church has failed to be the church. We have failed to love God with all our minds. There is little place for truth, in the objective sense, nor is there room for absolute moral standard, even in the church.

The nation is on the verge of moral and spiritual collapse. Into this vacuum is rushing the New Age mentality—a Western repackaging of Hindu and Animistic philosophy. We see this in popular movies like the Hindu track Star Wars. Many of our children, even Christian children, are being indoctrinated as Disney's studio video cartoons which act as baby-sitters for our children hour after hour.

What can we do to stem the tide? First, we must begin to practice the Great Commandment and live out the Great Commission. We need to begin to love God again "with all our minds." We need to consciously analyze our own worldview and the worldview shaping stories that we see on television, in magazines, videos and music shops. Second, we are to begin to realize that the Great Commission is not merely about evangelizing souls for eternity, but rather has to do with discipling whole nations, about effecting worldview changes. We as Christians need to have a renewed sense that we have the ability to build and rebuild whole nations and then act as responsible citizens of God's Kingdom towards that end.

We should covenant to read and

carefully study the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in order to gain a concept of the biblical worldview, seeing the larger unfolding story of Scripture. During our devotional time, let us ask God to reveal to us the principals in Scripture that relate to our vocational calling. It is not enough to be a Christian when we are inside the church walls, in our comfortable religious compartment. We are to be Christians in the workplace, in the marketplace and in the halls and classrooms of our universities.

When listening to the news, we need to begin to ask, "Is it true?" When our professors in our universities tell us something, we need to ask "Is it true?" When Dan Rather makes a pronouncement on the nightly news, ask "Is it true?" Even when our pastors speak, we might have to ask ourselves whether what he is saying really true and right.

We live in an exciting moment in history. Nations are longing to hear the full counsel of God and get foundations for their people. As Christians we are able to bring them the full counsel of God when we come to love God and His Word with all our minds. It can only happen when we come to the realization that God's Word is true and so is Christianity. It is true whether anyone believes it or not.

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