

## Video Script

### *We Make Disciples*

The mission of the Asia Pacific Region, Church of the Nazarene is *to make Christlike disciples in the nations*. We make disciples.

This mission was first given to us by Jesus Christ who said: *go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*.

But every generation of disciples, in every new and changing context, in every age and every place, wrestles with the question of *how? How do we make disciples in this time, in this place, in this generation, in this culture, in this context?*

250 years ago, an Anglican pastor named John Wesley wrestled with these same questions in his context. Wesley began with a clear picture of what a disciple was, and he then developed practices and strategies to help accomplish that end.

For Wesley, the goal of discipleship is the restoration of people to the image of God so that all of our relationships are characterized by love. As the image of God is restored in us, we become “co-workers” with God, joining God’s redemptive mission in the world.

The problem is that we are not now the way God created us to be. We do not love as God loves. We tend to look only after the interest of ourselves, *our* people, *our* nation, and rarely after the interests of others. We’ve neglected love of God and neighbor, and we’ve neglected being good stewards of God’s creation.

What can be done? Wesley was optimistic that this tendency toward self-centeredness in our personal and social lives could be changed through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. He held out the Biblical promise that God can renew our hearts through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace that God has given us.

By ‘means of grace’, Wesley meant those “outward signs, words, or actions, ordained by God, (as the) ordinary channels (or ordinary means or ways) whereby God might convey to us God’s prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace.”

These ‘means of grace’ would include such practices such: prayer; searching the Scriptures; worship; fasting; keeping the commandments; visiting the sick; sharing financially with those in need; and Christian fellowship. These ‘means of grace’ are to be practiced personally; but more importantly, they are to be practiced socially, with others. And these are not merely human activities; it is the Holy Spirit who is at work among the people of God, renewing us together, into the image of the Triune God.

It was the social dynamic of Wesley’s movement that was most effective for making disciples. You see, in a very real sense, John Wesley imagined the gatherings of Christians together in various sized groups as the *context* for discipleship where persons attend to the means of grace together, and are held accountable for their spiritual growth while apart from the community.

Practically, this meant that Wesley provided opportunities for a large number of diverse people to gather together in various sized, interlocking groups throughout the week.

The largest gathering, or “society”, looked much like an ordinary worship service or large prayer meeting today. The means of grace practiced in society meetings included: preaching; prayer; singing; testimonies; Scripture reading; financial sharing; and table fellowship.

Society members were encouraged to participate in smaller “class meetings” which brought diverse people together to talk about the current state of their spiritual life and to work together for the common good. During the week a leader might visit members for personal discipleship, for encouragement and exhortation, as well as to collect offerings for the poor. This might be similar to a Sunday School class or small group today.

An even smaller subdivision of the group was called a “band.” The purpose of these groups was “close conversation” where members sought to improve

their attitudes, emotions, intentions and affections in a safe, non-judgmental environment. This might be similar to a cell group or spiritual formation group today. It could simply be two or three who gather with the desire to become mature followers of Jesus.

In addition, Wesley formed “select societies” as a place for training leaders; and “penitent bands” for people struggling to overcome difficulties such as alcoholism. He was always looking for ways to connect people with people so they could pursue Christ-likeness together and join God’s redemptive mission in the world.

It was through participation in these “interlocking groups” or, what we might call today, “social networks” that disciples were made in the Wesleyan movement. As a pastor in the United States and Canada, and now serving in the Philippines on the Asia Pacific Region, I find Wesley’s method of making disciples incredibly practical and relevant for the Church of the Nazarene today.

Show me a church that is intentional about connecting people into vibrant worship services; a church where people participate in engaging Sunday School classes or supportive small groups during the week; a church where people go on mission together to serve the poor, visit the prisoner, help the widow, or welcome the immigrant; a church where children and youth are connecting both with their peers and inter-generationally for fun and spiritual formation; a church where emerging leaders are trained and then released for service; a church where recovery groups restore the broken; and where people set aside time for summer camps and spiritual retreats.

Show me a church that is intentional about connecting people into social networks, all for the purpose of renewing people in the image of God, in order to join God’s redemptive mission in the world and I will show you a church that is making Christlike disciples among the nations.

The structures and programs will change depending on the culture and context. It might include an SDMI, NYI, NCM or NMI program. Other structures might be developed more appropriate to the context. But the vision of a church

that is intentional about creating social networks where people can participate in the means of grace both corporately and personally in order to better participate in the mission of God in the world, this vision for making disciples is as relevant today as it was 250 years ago.

Of course Wesley didn't invent this process. In fact, as I read the book of Acts and study church history, this has always been the most faithful and fruitful way of making disciples. Discipleship is person to person, in the context of loving, supportive, vibrant, accountable Christian communities. Together, we make disciples.

As discipleship coordinator I want to encourage the churches on the Asia Pacific Region to find contextually appropriate ways to connect the people in their churches and communities with one another, in order to build each other up in love, until we all reach maturity in the faith, until we are renewed in the image of God, and empowered by the Spirit to joyfully participate in the mission of God for the life of the world.

Together, we make disciples.



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