

## Discipleship series

### Passing the baton

A baton is used in a relay race where there are normally 4 members per team. The first runner runs, hold the baton, until he reaches the second runner and passes the baton to him. As soon as the second runner receives the baton he starts running and the first runner stops. The same happens with the third and fourth runners. The fourth runner has to be holding the baton to finish the race. When Jesus was on earth, He passed the baton of life and ministry on to His disciples to pass it on to others. We have all received the life of Christ that we may pass it on to others.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

#### 1) Preparing to pass the baton

- When writing to Timothy Paul looks at some characteristics of those who will be receiving the baton
  - Strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus
  - Faithful
  - Able to teach others
- Jesus taught and fed the multitudes, but He invested His time in His disciples, whom He had called
  - Mark 3:13-15 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.
- We need to be intentional about preparing someone to take over from us.
  - Jesus purposely called and spent time with His disciples
  - Paul called Timothy
    - Acts 16:1,3 Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived ... Paul wanted to take him along on the journey.
- Preparing to pass the baton isn't a momentary thing. It takes time
  - Jesus took three and a half years preparing His disciples to take over from where He left off
- We need to prepare disciples holistically to know, to be, and to do
  - To know Jesus, their calling, the cost, the purpose, their identity, their limits, their treasures in grief and loss
  - To be children of God, free from the bondages and baggage of the past, to be filled with the character of Christ, especially love
  - To do the works of service, and practice the spiritual disciplines
- Focusing only on doing and not on being can lead to hypocritical pharisaism that passes on the baton of legalism rather than the life of Christ
  - Matthew 23:15 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.
  - John Wesley wasn't saved when he was ordained as an Anglican priest and went as a missionary to America. He only got saved 12 years after his ordination.
- Making, or preparing, disciples is relational and not mechanical
  - Jesus loved His disciples
    - John 13:34 As I have loved you, so you must love one another.
  - Paul refers to Timothy as "my child" indicating a father – son type relationship
    - 1 Corinthians 4:14-17 I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

## 2) Passing the baton at the right time

- When athletes run the relay race, they have to pass the baton to the next runner to be effective
  - Likewise, if we pass the baton to someone who isn't ready to run with it yet could end up a disaster due to spiritual immaturity or lack of skills
  - If we wait too long the person could get despondent and give up thinking they aren't trusted
- Don't wait until the person has it all together before releasing them to do what they have been disciplined to do
- At the end of Jesus' life and ministry His disciples still didn't understand a lot of things, were full of doubts, and far from perfect, yet Jesus saw them as ready
  - Jesus knew that they weren't going to do the work themselves, but that their reliance was going to be on the Holy Spirit
  - Acts 1:6-8 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"  
He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- As disciple makers our reliance should never be on our own teachings, model, or methods, but on the Holy Spirit

## 3) Entrusting the baton to their care

- Jesus started by entrusting the Gospel to 72 disciples and sending them proclaim the kingdom of God
  - Luke 10:1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.
  - He sent them ahead of Himself. This was probably to prepare the people of those towns of His imminent coming, but also for Him to follow up on what they had done.
- When we first start entrusting people with tasks there needs to be follow-up for the sake of correction and guidance.
  - Many people seem to understand what needs to be done, but when given the task to do find it harder to implement that they thought it would be
  - However, we should not micro-manage people after we've entrusted them with a task. There's a fine line between overseeing them and micromanaging them
- Finally, the person needs to be released to fulfill the task at hand with full trust
- Jesus entrusted the Gospel into the hands of the 12 to go and pass that baton onto others
  - Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
- Some people want to obey the command of the Lord to go and make disciples of all nations, but they haven't even started making disciples where they are
- Who are you discipling and passing the baton of your life, the life of Jesus, and the Gospel onto?