

BINDING THE STRONGMAN

Covid-19 & Disciple-Making

David Kornfield, 2020

Miracles happen!

Think of your pastor. Or if you are a pastor, think of yourself. What would you have said were the chances of God truly and deeply pruning you, God reworking you from the inside out, God stopping you from being a workaholic, overworked and always having too much to do? Many Christian workers have made some kind of uneasy peace with their workaholism, live in some level of burnout or think that no longer being over-extended is some kind of dream or fantasy.

Is God doing a miracle in your life?

Now imagine God intervening in this way with all the pastors in your whole city at once!

Your whole country. Your whole continent. The whole world! Miracles happen!



THE STRONGMAN: WORKAHOLISM

Paul tells us there are spiritual principalities and powers. One of them may very well be the spirit of workaholism, performance, production or drivenness, we may call this a strongman. Jesus makes it clear that most of Satan's greatest strategies are not outright blatant attacks of sinfulness. They are distorting or twisting something godly just enough that it will rob, kill and destroy rather than bring life, indeed abundant life (John 10:10).

We have a window where the Strongman of Workaholism or Performance may be bound. It's the quarantine window. For many of us, it looks like it may last two to four months. What does God want to do in that window? What does he want to do IN us during this strange time? Could it be possible to put the Strongman to death? So that he is not let loose again in a few months?

When the quarantine lifts, we pastors and Christian leaders, just like most other leaders, will be tempted to rush to make up for everything we couldn't do in these months. We will be in danger of falling even harder into the grips of the Strongman of Workaholism.

Did Jesus rush? Did he hurry? Did he have an endless to-do list? Was he pressured to finish something so he could get on to the next thing? Did he have 49 priorities?

We say we want to be like Jesus. Most of us, as Christian leaders, even believe that. But do we really? Do simplicity and purpose mark us as they marked him?

Jesus had two missions to accomplish, one through his life and one through his death. And in his last hours he was able to declare both missions finished. Were all the people healed? No. Did everyone in Israel hear, understand, and believe his message? No. Were all the demons cast out? No. Were all relationships restored? No.

Jesus' mission through his death was redemption. His words on the cross? "It is *finished!*"

Jesus' mission through his life was disciple-making. On his last night he declared "I have *finished* the work you have given me to do" (John 17:4). What work? Commentators vary in their perspectives. But the context is explicit – the rest of his prayer Jesus is reporting to the Father on his lifework – disciple-making.

The circumstances surrounding the coronavirus open for us the possibility of transformation. God can work deeply in our souls. He can free us from the Strongman. During this time he can call us more clearly than ever before to do what Jesus did: make disciples. Nurture believers into passionate lovers of Jesus, willing to let him change them from the inside out and embrace the challenge of pursuing his mission, his way.

One of the biggest arguments against disciple-making has always been "I don't have time". Even for those of us who don't say that, we live that way. Disciple-making is fit in around the edges of our overly full and frantically busy lives.



PRIDE

God invites us to let him change us. In the spirit of the letters to the churches in Revelation, he's doing more than inviting. He's calling for repentance. We have failed him, and we have failed the church through doing almost everything possible except make disciples. We have relegated disciple-making to new Christians and youth. Most of us have refused to *be* disciplined in the sense of having a discipler or mentor. Another Strongman that has devastated us is that of Pride.

The problem with that Strongman, Principality or Power is that he has an extra advantage. His work is usually unconscious. The proud person is the last person to realize he has a problem. Many Christian leaders don't take seriously being disciplined or mentored. Like two-year-olds or adolescents, our unconscious battle cry is "I can do it myself!"

The problem is bigger than it looks. The only one who can make disciples is a disciple. The Great Commission of Matthew 28 doesn't begin in verse 19 with "Go and make disciples". It doesn't even begin in verse 18 with all the authority on heaven and earth. The paragraph begins in verse 16 with four simple words "Then the eleven disciples".

This is the hidden foundation of the Great Commission. **It takes disciples to make disciples.** Seminary professors can produce students of the Word and even teachers. Many pastors hope to produce believers. But only disciples can make other disciples.

THE CALLING

In this unique moment in history, Jesus is calling us back to himself and back to his mission. If we can gain a new vision of Jesus (like Isaiah in chapter six) and a new vision of his mission and calling, we may change history.



If we don't seek him as never before, if we focus on our survival more than anything else in this desert, we will die. The desert purges, refines, purifies. The people of Israel taught us this. If we resist the desert, look out for number one, cling to how we've always done things, we'll die. Embrace the desert and the painful changes it demands, and we'll be transformed.

If we embrace God's pruning, we will refocus from activities and meetings to people. A few people. "Those you have given me" (John 17:6). Every leader has a calling. And those collective callings are the most varied imaginable. But permeating every calling is Jesus' singular call: make disciples. Disciple-making is not a gift given to some; it's the Commission given to all who love him and have laid their lives on his altar.

**This is not just a refocus. It's a new paradigm. It's a game changer.
For you. For your church. For your denomination. For your country. For the Kingdom.
For Christ.**

And **you can't do it alone.** No one changes significantly alone. We need each other. Share this article with those closest to you and pray about it together. We desperately need to hear from God. A genuine prophetic word. Acts 2:17-18 may perhaps never have been more important in human history since Pentecost.

God is speaking to us.

Take time to listen.

Stay tuned to him.

To your discipler/mentor.

To your disciples/mentees.





QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION



- Individually or in a Small Group -

1. What most catches your attention?
2. Which "strongman" is more problematic for you?
3. What steps could you take to move forward?

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