

## We Can and Must Do Better!

### CGGC eNews—Vol. 10, No. 12

March 18, 2016

**Warning:** This will probably come off as a bit of a rant. My intent is not to offend, but to create discussion and move us to more productive living and faith in action.

My oldest son participated in his first season of a “church sponsored” basketball program. It was a good, fun and memorable experience for our family. I love watching my kids develop as human beings and learn new skills through new experiences.

A couple of weeks ago, the program held the season-ending celebration. The teams were introduced with spotlights on the fog-filled tunnel, energetic music blaring and the crowd cheering along. The centerpiece of the program was a presentation by a Christian juggler. His skills as a juggler were impressive, his humor was refreshingly funny and I was impressed by how he wove scriptural lessons throughout his routine. At the end of the presentation a gospel presentation was made with an invitation to accept Jesus by repeating a prayer.

I was sitting with my son’s team that afternoon because the coaches were unable to be there (bonus: I got to run through the fog-filled tunnel with the team). After the program and invitation, I was given a packet of cards for the players to fill out indicating their relationship with Christ as a result of the presentation. One of the things that struck me during this time was the confusion some of them expressed: “what am I supposed to do?” and “which box am I supposed to check?” were a couple of the questions I fielded. I wondered if the parents and other adults in the crowd were asking similar questions (everyone got a card to fill out). I did my best to help the boys understand what it means to follow Jesus and determine whether or not they had ever made that decision before or had made the decision that afternoon.

I walked away from this experience frustrated and honestly approaching becoming angry. Is this what we’ve reduced the Christian faith to today?

Bait and switch techniques?

Entertaining gimmickry?

A sales presentation where people sign on the line before they really understand what they’re signing?

I came away feeling much like the experience you might have when you endure the timeshare’s sales pitch presentation to “receive” your tickets to Disneyland, a free lunch in the clubhouse or a free round a golf. I don’t really care about the pitch, I just want to get my free stuff and get on with having a fun vacation.

I know some will rightfully push back on my frustration. Aren’t they just doing what Paul said he did in 1 Corinthians 9:22 “...I have become all things to all people so that by all possible



means I might save some.”? I know some will retort “at least they’re making an attempt to reach the lost.” I also realize that God has brought people into genuine faith at these types of events or similar efforts, so who am I to judge? I certainly understand that God can and will use events like this and that my brothers and sisters are well intentioned and to be affirmed for putting their faith into action. I humbly offer this response: look around at our culture and ask “how’s this approach working for us?” Is this bearing the fruit we’d like to see? Maybe there’s a better way? Perhaps we can and must do better than this?

I walked away from the experience that afternoon frustrated that this is how we’ve come to bear witness to Christ in our world. Jesus came into our world offering abundant life (John 10:10) and He commissioned us to go into the world and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Disciples are different than decisions and making disciples requires an entirely different approach from just trying to get people to make “a decision” for Christ. There was something about Jesus and His way of life that drew others to Him. Can the same be said of His people today?

I wonder how many walked away from that afternoon with a feeling of relief after sitting through the sales pitch presentation unscathed. I wonder how many walked away inoculated from the Good News and the abundant life that only comes through Christ because they prayed some words and now understand that “they’ve taken care of their need for Christ”. I wonder if we keep resorting to these kind of approaches because it’s easier than actually getting involved in someone else’s life.

Interestingly enough, my son will follow Jesus into the waters of baptism on Easter Sunday. He’s come to this point in his spiritual journey because he’s been immersed in a community that has both demonstrated and proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ and allowed him to see and participate in the full and abundant life that only comes through Christ. His decision to follow Christ wasn’t based upon an emotional impulse, but rather the long, slow journey of watching a group of imperfect people intentionally live out the full and abundant life that only comes through Jesus. Through the demonstration and proclamation of the Gospel, he’s come to see his need for Jesus, received His grace and has committed to be a disciple of Christ.

This business of making disciples is messier, slower and a lot less predictable than a lot of the methods we’ve come to rely upon in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. It’s harder to invite someone into your life than to an event. Decisions aren’t a bad thing. I’d even offer that discipleship requires a lifetime of decisions; to over and over again choose to receive what Christ has done on our behalf and to follow Him in faith and obedience.

Let’s commit ourselves to Christ’s call to make disciples. What are you doing to demonstrate and proclaim the Good News of Jesus? Who are you inviting into your life (not just a church service or outreach event)? Who do you need to make a long term commitment to in order that they might come to know the full and abundant life that only comes through Jesus Christ?

Christ’s Peace,  
**Lance**