

The Call into the Discipling Ministry

By Joel C. Gerlach

[Symposium on the Lutheran Elementary School and Evangelism, Madison, WI, 1987]

Few things in my experience as a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod have given me more reason for satisfaction and cause for hope than this symposium sponsored by the Board for Parish Education and Dr. Martin Luther College. I see it as a step in a significant sequence of events in our history. I see it as a response to circumstances that call for serious consideration and for a new emphasis. And I see it as an indication that the Holy Spirit is steering us in the direction of a fuller understanding of the Great Commission in order that we might better fulfill our purpose and objectives as the people of God.

During the time I have been in the public ministry, exactly one fourth of our Synod's existence, I have witnessed several distinct phases of synodical development. When I entered the ministry we were in the throes of a long and difficult struggle to maintain our confessional integrity. That struggle consumed an inordinate amount of time and energy. The effort we expended on conserving the gospel left little energy for sharing the gospel. That struggle kept us preoccupied through the decade of the 50's. We had to reaffirm exactly what we intended to proclaim to the world before making a concerted effort to proclaim it.

Once that struggle was behind us it became apparent that the Lord of the church had a purpose in mind in preserving the Reformation's evangelical faith among us. The time had come for boldly proclaiming what we had struggled to preserve both on the world front and on the home front. God supplied the means and the manpower; we rolled up our sleeves and went to work. The effort was an extraordinary one for a Lutheran church body no larger than ours. Mission expansion kept us occupied for a score of years during the 60's and 70's. It has continued on into the 80's though at a considerably slower pace. During this 25 year period we were transformed from a church with rather narrow horizons to a national church body.

The slower pace of the 80's has called for a reassessment of things, especially on the home mission front. That reassessment is part of the reason we are here participating in this symposium. Are we equipping God's people for the work of evangelism? Are we utilizing the agencies of Christian education to help God's people witness effectively for the Savior? Is the Christian day school the agency for evangelism that it could or should be?

Here is the situation. In 1960 we had 829 congregations. The most recent statistical report (1985) lists 1189 congregations. That is an increase of 43.5%. During that same time span our communicant membership increased by 86,797, a 37.8% growth rate, or an annualized increase of just over 1%. A total of 3,647 adult confirmations were recorded in 1985, an average of 3 per congregation. Adult baptisms totaled 625, approximately 1 for every 2 congregations.

What those statistics indicate is that while the number of congregations has increased markedly if not dramatically, there has not been a corresponding increase in the number of communicant members. We might expect the wider base to produce a greater numerical growth. That has not happened. .

Pastor Paul Kelm, the synod's executive secretary of evangelism, has noted that it requires 103 WELS communicants to enlist one new adult confirmand per year. The corresponding figure for the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is 73 communicants for each new confirmand. The corresponding figure for the Assemblies of God (currently the fastest growing Protestant denomination in the USA) is 20 for each new member. Thereby hangs a tale.

Apparently WELS Lutherans are not as determined as members of other denominations to become involved personally in sharing their faith with others. In an era when conservative churches have been growing phenomenally, we have been growing minimally. I think there are a number of reasons for that. One of them is that our educational system, generally speaking, does not imbue an evangelistic spirit nor impart evangelistic skills requisite for reaching out more effectively than we are in our communities. One of the steps we need to

take to address that situation is to restudy our understanding of the call the Lord has given us into the discipling ministry. That is what this essay proposes to do.

The Call into the Discipling Ministry

The call into the discipling ministry is a call the Lord extends to every Christian in the words of the great commission. “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” (Mt 28:19-20). Those words are among the most familiar words in all of Scripture. The King James version of those words has probably been in my memory bank as long as the words of John 3:16. Ordinarily this would be the appropriate place for an exegetical review of what those words say and how they apply to the question posed by this symposium.

But before we do that, I propose to do something quite untypical. I am going to try to rethink my thinking about those words of Jesus from childhood on because my experience may well serve to point up one root of the problem we have been studying together here. I suspect that many of us have been influenced in our understanding of the great commission by the context in which we first learned them.

So let me invite you along on a personal odyssey which should help to reveal how I arrived at a less than adequate understanding of the discipling ministry. I think I represent a fairly typical product of our educational system. Perhaps many of you will be able to identify with some of the things in my experience. That in turn may help us to discover certain insights that will challenge us to rethink our understanding of the call into the discipling ministry.

My spiritual odyssey began in a large congregation in a small town in Minnesota. (It wasn't Lake Wobegon, but there's a striking similarity between the two.) My father was the congregation's day school principal.

I have no recollection of ever seeing an adult baptized or confirmed in that church. I did not associate the words of the great commission with anything that was happening in my home town. I have vivid recollections of the annual mission festivals we observed. The services were held in Arlington Park. We sat on planks on concrete blocks. Kids got tickets we could exchange for ice cream and pop at the “stand.” In the school there were displays of baskets and beads made by Apache Indians, and pictures showing wickiups and E. Edgar Guenther. Another display offered pictures of Ibo tribesmen in Nigeria with the round white face of Missionary Wm. Schweppe sticking out among all those black faces. Selma, Alabama was another place with which I became familiar through those mission displays, and legendary Rosa Young. At one of those mission festivals I shook hands with a black man for the first time in my life. He was Rev. M. N. Carter, pastor of St. Philip's in Chicago. One passage in Scripture became fixed in my mind in association with all of this, Matthew 28:19. It is understandable, I think, that my perception of the meaning of Jesus' words was influenced by eisegesis rather than by exegesis. μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη meant simply: get the gospel message out to the heathen. The words of Jesus summoned a picture in my mind of a missionary instructing the unchurched in a foreign land.

In due time I matriculated at prep school in New Ulm. Nothing happened there to change my misperception. Northwestern College came next. Nothing happened there either to change my view of the ministry. On to the Sem. There I discovered that μαθητεύω and διδάσκω are two different but related words. Another dimension was added to my understanding. Instruction became a larger part of the picture. But even that did not completely clear up my misunderstanding. Perceptions imprinted on the mind in childhood days were not easy to erase. I graduated from the Sem still laboring under a view of the discipling ministry that was incomplete. I do not mean to suggest that my teachers did not teach me what I needed to be taught. Let's lay the blame at my feet rather than at theirs. But at least they apparently did not detect that I was about to become a member of the WELS ministerium with an inadequate understanding of my call into the discipling ministry. (Or

putting the best construction on everything, perhaps they did recognize it, and that is why the Committee on the Assignment of Calls assigned me to be an assistant pastor at Grace Church in Tucson.)

In summary, I understood the call to the discipling ministry chiefly in terms of being a pastor who promotes missions and in terms of being an instructor of biblical truth. I did not see myself clearly as the facilitator of a process which transforms a recruit to the faith into a seasoned disciple. I was more concerned about what my people knew about Christ than I was about what they were becoming in Christ.

That has changed. The Lord has put me into situations that have helped me to come to a clearer understanding of what he meant when he said, “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Let’s take time to reexamine his words. Jesus, own ministry presents to us an object lesson that illuminates what he said. First we will look at the words, and then we will look at the interpretation his own ministry gives to those words.

Making Disciples

“The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch” (Ac 22:26). First they were known as disciples, then as Christians. There is something significant about that. Don’t we tend to think of ourselves as Christians first, then as disciples? Christian was originally a pejorative term. The enemies of Christ tacked that name onto the followers of the Lord. It occurs only three times in the New Testament. Disciples and discipleship are the preferred terms of the sacred writers. The historical books in the New Testament are not so much books about Christians as they are books about disciples and discipleship.

All four Gospel accounts give prominence at the outset to Jesus’ activity in calling disciples to be his own. In all four accounts the evangelists interweave two strands as they unfold the storyline. One strand is the fierce and mounting opposition of unbelief to the Lord’s ministry. The other is the discipling of the disciples.

Martin Franzmann has helped us to appreciate that it is Matthew especially who is devoted to developing for us the concept of discipleship (cf. *Follow Me: Discipleship According To St. Matthew*, Concordia, 1961). Matthew’s grand story is as much a story of life in Christ as it is a story of the life of Christ. Its grand climax comes, not in the words “he has risen, just as he said,” but in the words, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.” In a word, the one all-consuming interest Jesus has in this world, then and now, is disciples. That as much as anything gives perspective to our call into the discipling ministry.

Matthew 28:19

A quick interpretive look at the words of Jesus is in order at this point. He prefaces the call he gives us with a prologue. Before he directs attention to our task, he directs attention to his authority. All authority was given to him according to his human nature. Not to establish his right to tell us what to do, but to assure us that he is in a position to turn an impossible task into an exciting possibility. Here is the basis for “possibility thinking” in its true and best sense. Here is the real “stuff” dreams are made of, dreams that in Christ become reality.

Our commission is not a command to go, (πορευθέντες is an aorist participle, not an imperative). The command Jesus gives is to make disciples (μαθητεύσατε an aorist imperative). That is the main verb. The going is only incidental to the discipling. But “going” does suggest that the Lord’s strategy for his New Testament church has changed. He envisions his people going out to others, taking the initiative to establish contacts that make discipling possible. Jesus does not offer the prospect of insulation or isolation from the world. Hibernation in little WELS ghettos is not compatible with a call into the discipling ministry.

Our key word as noted is an aorist imperative. An aorist tense in Greek is suggestive of action, not time (*Aktionsart*). To capture the meaning of Jesus’ word in English calls for a paraphrase: “Be about the business of making disciples.” The word Matthew used tells us what, not how. It is suggestive of action and of results, not of means and of methods. That comes later.

The object of our activity is “all nations,” not the nations themselves, of course, but the people who inhabit them. Jesus adds two participles to explain how to make disciples, baptizing, teaching (διδάσκοντες). Baptizing recruits disciples. Teaching equips the recruits for authentic discipleship. What baptizing initiates teaching perfects. Baptizing restores the lost image. Teaching continually refurbishes that image. Baptizing makes us look like Christ in God’s eyes. Teaching helps us act like him. Teaching enables us “to be conformed to the image of (God’s) Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rm 8:29). Teaching transforms us “into his likeness, with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18). Teaching makes disciples.

Jesus as Disciple Maker

Jesus did not send his disciples out to make disciples without first making them disciples. He gave them a course in disciple making by making them disciples. He knew that you have to be a disciple yourself before you can help someone else to become a disciple.

H. James Boldt makes that point in an arresting way in his booklet “35 Witness Ideas for Teachers” (a LC-MS Board for Evangelism Services publication). “A veteran witness once said, ‘You can’t give away what you haven’t got anymore than you can come back from where you haven’t been.’ What did he mean? Well, if you don’t pray, you can’t teach someone else to do so.” He cites several more examples, and then continues, “The point, dear teacher, is that teaching witnessing can’t be done by a person who doesn’t know or do it himself.” He concludes, “It is for you and me to make disciples as we already are.” That’s the methodology we learn from Jesus.

First Jesus recruited his students; then he proceeded to equip them for discipleship and for disciple making. (Perhaps that distinction between discipleship and disciple making is uncalled for. For if you cannot be a disciple maker without being a disciple, neither can you be a disciple without being a disciple maker.) The Lord’s recruitment practices are both interesting and instructive. He certainly did not limit his recruitment efforts to people who were “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” At least one of the 12, Matthew, apparently did not fit the Peter, James and John mold at the time that Jesus recruited him.

The word recruitment suggests that Jesus took the initiative. He reached out to those he wanted to disciplize meeting them at their point of need. After he had recruited them, he proceeded to equip them for a life of discipleship. Equipping them was a three-part process. He instructed them in Christian doctrine, he modeled the truth for them, and he sent them his Spirit to work in and through them. He still assumes the responsibility for the third of those three elements. He entrusts us with the responsibility for the other two.

What Is A Disciple?

Before we review how Jesus employed instruction and modeling in the disciple making process, we ought to let the Scriptures define for us exactly what the end product of the process is to be. I ought to know what it is that I’m trying to make before I attempt to make it. So just what is a disciple? What are the marks of discipleship?

Jesus called his disciples to be followers. “Come, follow me,” he told Peter and Andrew. “At once they left their nets and followed him.” A short time later James and John did the same. “Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him” (Mt 4:19f). They made a commitment to follow Jesus. Discipleship always involves a personal commitment to Jesus as Lord. That commitment recognizes that Jesus’ claim on our lives is total. It does not allow us to say “First let me go and bury my father” (Mt 8:22). Commitment means to “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Php 2:5 KJV). It means that a disciple is ready and willing to “deny himself and take up his cross,” ready to “lose” his life in order to “find” it.

A disciple is devoted to Jesus because of his sacrifice on behalf of the world. “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” (1 Jn 3:16). When love bonds us to Jesus in genuine

devotion to him, we are ready and eager to walk in obedience to him. “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 Jn 2:6). A disciple’s devotion to his Savior is so all-encompassing that he will willingly sacrifice his own self interests for those of his Lord (Mt. 16:24-25).

Jesus summons disciples to follow him, not because he needs them for companionship or for assistance in accomplishing his objectives for this world, but because disciples need Jesus for companionship, and because they find meaning and purpose in life only as they let the Lord use them for the purpose for which he reclaimed them for himself (Php 3:7-11).

The Marks of a Disciple

The Scriptures present a number of characteristic marks which identify believers as disciples. Foremost among those marks is the attitude of a servant. Disciples are all servants of Christ. They are like their Lord, “who came not to be served, but to serve” (Mt 20:28). The “mind of Christ” which is to be in us is typified by the fact that Jesus took upon himself “the very nature of a servant” (Php 2:7). Prof. J. P. Meyer entitled his commentary on 2 Corinthians “Ministers of Christ.” That title captures the truth that from the beginning to the end of that epistle, Paul treats servanthood as the foremost mark of a disciple of the Lord. The life of a disciple exemplifies a spirit of faithful service.

Growth is another mark of a disciple. Paul speaks of a disciple’s growth as a growing in Christ. “We will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Eph 4:15). That growth is multi-faceted. It is a growing “in all things.” A disciple grows in faith. Paul tells the Thessalonians that he thanks God for them “because your faith is growing more and more.” He adds, “And the love every one of you has for each other is increasing” (2 Th 1:3). A disciple is known for his love. Enemies of Christ’s church in the post-apostolic era were impressed by the love Christians displayed for one another, even for their enemies. They were sensitive to “the new command” Jesus gave his disciples in the upper room. “All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another” (Jn 13:35).

A disciple is also expected to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” according to Peter (2 Pt 3:18). The author of the letter to the Hebrews chides disciples who are content with “milk” when they ought to be digesting “solid food.” A disciple is eager to “leave the elementary teachings about Christ and to go on to maturity” (Hb 6:1).

A disciple is also expected to be a witness. After three years of discipling his disciples, Jesus gave direction to their discipling ministry by saying to them “You will be my witnesses” (Ac 1:8). All of the other marks of a disciple are the indispensable requisites for being an effective witness for the Savior. A witness is not only one whose words testify to the fact that he is a disciple of Jesus. His character and his actions are also a telling testimony to that fact. When Peter and John testified before the members of the Sanhedrin, the elders and the priests were as impressed by what they saw as they were by what they heard. “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Ac 4:13). Something of Jesus had obviously rubbed off on them. The pupils had become like their teacher.

The Transforming Process

Now how did Jesus transform these “unschooled and ordinary men” into clones of himself? Let’s examine the elements of his three-part process.

Processing Propositional Truth

In his high priestly prayer, Jesus notes that new life involves knowing who the true God is together with the Savior whom he sent. We call that cognition. There are truths to be learned and stored in the mind. Jesus provided that opportunity for his disciples. Episode after episode in the four Gospels presents Jesus as an

instructor. He used homes and hillsides, synagogues and temple courts as his classrooms. The Old Testament Scriptures were at the heart of his teaching. Law and gospel were the basic elements of his teaching.

His teaching ministry began after his baptism when “leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum ... From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near’” (Mt 4:17). Matthew makes a noteworthy comment about his teaching. “He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Mt 7:28-29).

That’s already more than we needed to say about the instruction part of the disciple making process. That part is familiar to all of us. But there is another piece in that process that is not as familiar, though it is an absolutely essential part of the disciple making process. To try to equip disciples to make disciples without it would be like trying to teach spelling without teaching the alphabet.

Modeling the Truth

This second element of the Master Teacher’s strategy for disciple making was part of his plan from the beginning. Mark says, “He appointed twelve (designating them apostles) that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach” (Mk 3:14). That is a highly significant statement. Before Jesus could send them out, they had to be “with him.” An old aphorism says, “Like father, like son.” A son does not become like his father without being with his father. The father is the model for the child. So also the making of a disciple is a process that requires being a model. Jesus was that model for his disciples. For three years they not only heard what he said, they saw what he was. He embodied his teachings in his actions. They learned to know their teacher experientially. Jesus understood that the character of a good disciple is caught more than it is taught. That is why it was necessary for them to be “with him.”

As a disciple maker Jesus effected a perfect integration of teaching and doing, of information processing and modeling. He provided something to hear and something to see. Luke alludes to that in the opening words of Acts. “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven.” John reflects that too in the opening words of his first epistle. “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.” I wonder if there is any special pedagogical significance that attaches to the fact that “do” precedes “teach” and “see” precedes “hear.” Paul seemed to think so. In his exhortations to Timothy, he includes this counsel, “Watch your life and doctrine closely” (1 Tm 4:16). That would seem to confirm the maxim that actions speak louder than words, or that modeling is an essential part of disciple making.

So by watching and listening to their model-teacher, the disciples of Jesus were transformed into functioning disciple makers themselves. They were able to make disciples too, not just because they know Jesus, but because they had become like him. They learned to model for others what others were to become in Christ. Nowhere in the Bible is this point made any more pointedly than it is in these words of Jesus: “A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained (κατηρτισμένος) will be like his teacher” (Lk 6:40 NASB). Your call into the disciple making ministry is a call first of all to become like your teacher, and then to facilitate the process whereby your pupils become like you, Jesus says, “I have set you an example (ὑπόδειγμα) that you should do as I have done for you,” (Jn 13:15).

Providing Assistance

The third part of the Lord’s three-part equipping process involves the sending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke at length to his disciples about the Spirit’s role in their ministry. He promised to send the Spirit to them in a special way, and on Pentecost day he did. He does not provide us with the same kind of Pentecostal experience, but he does still provide assistance for our ministry by sending us his Spirit to work in and through us. We have already noted that while Jesus entrusts us with the responsibility for the other two parts of the process, he still assumes for himself the responsibility for the Spirit’s role.

So then disciple making is a cooperative effort. It requires that we do our part while we confidently expect the Holy Spirit to do his part. And if we don’t always achieve our objectives, we know that the place to

look for the cause of the problem is in the part of the process for which we are responsible, not in the part for which the Spirit is responsible. That is why we are here. It is time to do some looking.

A Look at the Teaching Ministry

One of the purposes of this symposium is to explore the use of the Lutheran elementary school as a means of equipping children to be evangelists. If we expect to use elementary schools for that purpose, one question we need to ask is this: how well are we equipping teachers to equip children to be evangelists?

I think our track record as a church body helps to answer that question. I referred to that in my introductory comments. We have many strengths as a church; we have also exhibited some weaknesses. One of the acknowledged weaknesses is in the area of evangelism. We have recognized that and we have taken some positive steps to deal with it. The calling of a seminary professor with special responsibilities in this area is one. The calling of an executive secretary for evangelism is another. This symposium is another. It assumes that there are ways and means for equipping teachers better to equip children to be better evangelists. That assumption necessitates an appraisal of the teaching ministry.

Such an appraisal probably should reckon with the fact that in the past there have been pockets of resistance to an emphasis on evangelism in our church. I have witnessed evidence of a mind-set that reveals an evident bias against organized evangelism efforts. When I was a member of the Seminary faculty, evangelism was covered in evangelism seminars conducted by members of the Synod's evangelism commission. A significant percentage of the students expressed themselves negatively about the need and the value for the evangelism seminars. In the early 70's I was a participant on several occasions in evangelism workshops sponsored by the Lutheran Collegians on the Sem campus during the Christmas break. I know of Seminary students who expressed themselves pejoratively about those workshops.

Recently a special task force was appointed by the Board for Home Missions to make a thorough analysis of the board's budgeting system as well as its philosophy, policies and procedures. The task force sought input from persons who had knowledge and experience in the field of home missions. An acquaintance of mine with considerable experience in home missions provided me with a copy of the letter he addressed to the task force. I would like to share one paragraph from that letter.

I would like to insert a concern here. Vicars almost uniformly conceded that at NWC "soul-winning" is regarded as *schwaermerisch*, something not in character with a spiritually macho self-image. I wonder if this turn-off has a carry-over effect, i.e. as though soul-winning is something you have to get concerned about in June if you happen to get a mission call. Furthermore I know of professors who have demeaned their sons' calls into missions as something they have to endure until they get a call into the real ministry.

In a discussion at a pastoral conference I attended a few years ago in northern California, the Chairman of the Mission Board asked the question: "In your experience in our system, when did you first become imbued with a desire to personally share the gospel with people who were lost?" One pastor replied, "That's easy—after I was ordained and installed as the pastor of a mission congregation." Granted, there may have been a bit of intentional hyperbole in that response, but my recollection is that what he meant was understood and seconded by several other mission pastors.

My experience with graduates of Dr. Martin Luther College has been minimal, and because of that I am not in a position to offer a similar appraisal of their attitudes. But because our track record as a church body is not suggestive of evangelistic strengths, my guess is that because DMLC graduates are products of a similar system, many of them enter their classrooms without a strong evangelism consciousness.

Now let's return to the subject of equipping teachers to equip children to be evangelists. If we were to categorize what we have said about Jesus as a disciple maker, most of it would fall into the area of

sanctification. Doing “the work of an evangelist” (2 Tm 4:5) is a part of living a life of Christian sanctification. Perhaps that provides a hint as to why evangelism has not been one of our strengths. Teaching sanctification is not one of our strengths either. The problem as I see it is that we do not achieve a good balance between teaching justification and sanctification. That has consequences which we need to be aware of and it also points us in the direction of steps we need to take to make the Lutheran elementary school a more effective means of equipping children to be evangelists.

Justification / Sanctification

The observation that we sometimes overstress justification at the expense of sanctification is one that has been made and debated in our circles for as long as I can remember. At this point I’d like to share a viewpoint on that subject other than my own, but one to which I heartily subscribe. The comments are excerpts from a letter I received more than ten years ago. I think it expedient not to identify the author so his comments can be weighed objectively. I will only say that the author is a life-long WELS member, a leader in our Synod whom all of you know and probably respect. Some specific references are edited out so the author may remain anonymous.

I have a copy of the paper you delivered ... last month. It treats areas which have been of great concern to me particularly during the more than twenty-five years I have been directly associated with synodical education. In fact it treats a subject which one of your colleagues and I have discussed frequently in years past in our work together.

The ministerial training in our Synod emphasizes as it should the preaching of justification by faith. Obviously I have no quarrel with that. My quarrel begins when and if that is emphasized to the virtual exclusion of other matters to which God’s Word addresses itself copiously. Both from my theological education and from pastoral conferences over the years I have gained the distinct feeling that far too many are of the opinion that it is almost a sin to preach very much sanctification. I have heard pastors say of another pastor: “He preaches sanctification a lot,” as though it were a dirty word. Many years ago when the Michigan District exercised considerable leadership in raising the level of synodical giving, several pastors in another district explained it away by saying that raising a synodical quota is easy if you preach sanctification or use legalistic methods. Perhaps there is a connection, but it escapes me.

The tendency in our circles, I think, has been to equate the preaching of sanctification with moralizing. I’ve heard the two terms used in almost the same breath. I don’t remember how many times I’ve argued against this kind of equating. I have never been able to understand how anyone can shrug off the pastor’s responsibility to devote sermons to the subject of sanctification by saying that it involves too much of a temptation to moralize. The Bible I read, particularly the epistles, expounds sanctification on a considerable number of pages.

I have a feeling too that we over-emphasize one responsibility, that of remaining ‘kosher’, while, perhaps, the preaching of the whole counsel of God suffers. As a result, we may be inclined to over-compensate when we get into the areas of sanctification or good works out of fear of saying anything which could be construed as social gospel or which could conceivably savor of promoting salvation by works.

All of this contributes to an almost disproportionate emphasis on intellectual knowledge of the Bible at the expense of heart knowledge. I would guess that our historic love-affair with dogmatics contributes to this.

A page and a half later, this paragraph:

By way of conclusion, then, I will simply state that until quite recently our synodical schools were staffed overwhelmingly by pastors. Even yet this is to a large extent true. Thus over the years those with a pastoral background have had much to do with the molding of full-time workers in both the preaching and teaching ministries and have called most of the educational shots. What type of molding they may do in this capacity in the years ahead will depend quite a little on the kind of training they currently receive at Watertown and Mequon.

Furthermore, it is the pastor who has much to say about the kind of impact the Christian day school of his congregation is to have. If he is receptive to ideas his principal and faculty may have in employing more effective methodology - if he is receptive to innovation, then worthwhile changes can be effected. Otherwise changes cannot be effected or, at best, only with the greatest of difficulty. Certainly nothing much will result if any number of our pastors take a jaundiced view of emotion, heart knowledge, the preaching of sanctification, and related areas, and are devotees of that kind of compartmentalized theology which is rooted in intellect and which is characterized by a proliferation of 'avoids'."

Consequences

One of the conclusions the author of those words draws is that "all of this contributes to an almost disproportionate emphasis on intellectual knowledge of the Bible at the expense of heart knowledge." Another way to say that is that we do well at achieving cognitive goals. We do less well at achieving affective goals. The reason for that is chiefly because affective outcomes are more difficult to achieve.

Day school children memorize several hundred Bible passages, the chief parts of the catechism and hymns. They learn Bible stories enough to make their Sunday school and secular school counterparts seem like biblical illiterates. But for some reason they are unskilled at communicating what they know to others. They are taught what to know, but not what to do with what they know. Or if they are taught what, they are not taught how.

Our letter writer speaks about intellectual knowledge versus heart knowledge. Some educators would identify that distinction with the terms operative beliefs and isolated beliefs. Operative beliefs are the things we know which continuously affect our behavior. Isolated beliefs are things we know which do not influence our behavior, or if they do, it is only minimally or spasmodically. They do not result in a pattern of behavior. They are not an integrated part of our personality.

In a paper I once presented to a Synodical Professors' Conference at NWC, I stated,

When we think of personality, we surely include more in the term than just a person's beliefs. Attitudes, emotions, the way a person understands and relates to other people, his behavior, his values, his conception of himself—all are part of his personality. The point of significance for us, is the fact that in our culture we have picked out one element and have attached special priority to it, namely belief. Our educational emphases seem to derive from the notion that if we change belief, we change the entire personality. We appear to operate with the notion that all that is required to change belief is new information. That idea is, of course, at the heart of Plato's ethics. "If a man knows the good, he will unfailingly choose the good."

Recent research by behavioral scientists in the area of learning theory discredits the age-old theory which connects doing with knowing and attitude with belief. Current theory holds that *use* of a concept is more significant in the development of an attitude than a *formally learned idea*. In other words, when an idea about an object has been informally learned through situations in which the concept has been applied, that idea has a more direct impact on attitude. That's another way of expressing the old idea that truth is caught rather than taught.

If the Lutheran elementary school is going to equip students effectively to be evangelists, then our teaching has to emphasize imparting values as well as imparting facts. Our children are growing up in a world in which values are relative and shifting. Our task is not only to help a child to know Jesus, but also to help that child to build godly values. We want to help that child to believe. We also want to help him internalize his beliefs so they are operative, not just isolated. That calls for teaching both justification and sanctification. It's not a matter of our teaching justification and then expecting the Holy Spirit to produce the sanctification.

The Holy Spirit does indeed produce the sanctification, but he also uses us, as part of the production process, the child needs help from the Holy Spirit *and* from his fellow Christians. That is what Jesus was demonstrating when he appointed the twelve to be "with him." That is part of the "full training" which results in pupils who become like their teacher. Without that we run the risk of thinking we are teaching only to discover that our trainees are not living what we think we are teaching.

Steps (Theoretical)

Lutheran schools intent on equipping children to be evangelists need to reckon with the fact that certain environmental factors are a vital part of the equipping process. In every dayschool classroom there is a formal curriculum, and there is a hidden curriculum. We teach with books and with words. We also teach with "body language" and with attitudes. By pointing "the twelve to be with him," Jesus was arranging for the opportunity to demonstrating the integration of the two curricula.

His plan for making disciples included more than lesson plans. It included a role relationship. In fact the quality of that relationship with his disciples had to be one of the primary factors in transforming them into disciples. We need teachers like that too, who are warm and caring, teachers who take a close personal interest in each student. Disciple making teachers know that while course content is important, what they teach in connection with the hidden curriculum is just as important. You don't learn to be warm and caring, and to take a close personal interest in others from textbooks. You learn that from experiencing it yourself. And those traits, by the way, are part of the equipment needed to "do the work of an evangelist." Reduced to its essence, disciple making is communicating love.

We have noted that our goals as teachers are affective as well as cognitive. We want the Word to be a dynamic factor in the lives of our youth. We cannot add thing to the dynamic factor of the Word. It is that in and of itself. But the Word can become more of an influence in the lives of those we teach if we help them develop the skill of discovery for themselves rather than just telling the them the truths of Scripture. We call that inductive learning. If I understand Jesus correctly, he is telling us to go and make learners, not merely to go and give answers. To the extent we succeed in do doing that, we will also succeed in graduating better disciple makers from our classrooms.

Steps (Practical)

To be able to develop right values in their Christian character and to exhibit those values in sanctified living, students must come to experience reality. Reality is viewing life as God views it. There are no delusions. There are no false appearances. That calls for schools and for teaching which provide students with opportunities to be involved in practical activities, The practical activities of interest to us here are those which can help the day school to be an effective evangelism arm of the congregation.

As I write these lines, I am not aware of what practical suggestions will have been presented in the essay and the two panel discussion on Friday's agenda for this symposium, or what practical issues in evangelism and the Lutheran elementary school will have been discussed in this morning's break-out sessions. But I have some practical suggestions which I think are apropos to the thrust of this paper. Two have to do with equipping teachers to be disciple makers. The other has to do with equipping students to be disciple makers.

After I received this assignment to serve as an essayist, I contacted the office of Dr. H. James Boldt, the Secretary of Schools for the Board for Parish Services of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Among the things that Dr. Boldt shared with me was information concerning Teacher Witness Workshops which are being conducted in the districts of that synod. The workshops are a joint effort of the Board for Evangelism Services and the Board for Parish Services. The workshops began in the fall of 1983. Their purpose is to equip leaders to conduct Teacher Witness Workshops for day school faculties throughout the synod. The stated objectives of the workshops include:

- Grow in an understanding of the Biblical basis for witnessing
- Experience ways to adapt existing curriculum to teach witnessing skills
- See witnessing as an integral part of our lifestyles.

The two boards prepared extensive “Guidelines on How to Conduct A Teacher Witness Workshop.” Dr. Boldt sent me a copy of an inter-office memorandum in which he reported the results of workshops conducted for the faculties of 17 of the schools in the North Wisconsin District. The responses of the teachers to the workshop were enthusiastic. “I gained many ideas that I can use to get my kids on fire for Christ and for sharing him,” one teacher said. “I came to realize the changing role of the teacher in parochial schools and the opportunity, privilege and responsibility I have to be a witness and evangelist, not only a spiritual caretaker,” another teacher observed.

My suggestion is that similar workshops for our day school teachers would be a worthy effort. Such workshops would benefit teachers who have already graduated and who are currently serving in our classrooms. We also need to find ways to equip prospective teachers to be able to accomplish their call into the discipling ministry more effectively. That calls for an analysis of the teacher training curriculum. It calls for revisions and additions to the curriculum which will help to develop a greater concern for the lost, as well as greater familiarity with Scripturally sound evangelism strategies.

There are ways to generate a more intense passion for those who do not know Christ as Savior and Lord. We need to find those ways and to incorporate them into the teacher training curriculum. There are ways to involve students in formal and informal evangelism experiences. We need to find those ways and to incorporate them also into our teacher training program. No teacher who has never personally experienced an evangelism encounter is going to be very effective in training pupils to tell others about the Savior. It is difficult to communicate enthusiasm for anything you have never experienced yourself.

A third suggestion has to do with the day school as an equipping agency. What can the day school do to teach children to be evangelists? I put that question to Mr. Joel Nelson, the principal of Our Redeemer Lutheran School. His answer, slightly revised, follows: “How does the school teach children to be evangelists?”

With...

- special units on the subject.
- bringing the idea of evangelism into as many religion lessons as possible.
- making evangelism a personal thing by having children concentrate on actual people they know to witness to rather than discussing how God wants us to “tell others;” giving the “others” names makes it more meaningful and real.
- having children take an active part in “Bring a Friend Sundays” or “Bring a Friend to School Days.”
- having certain class periods where children share their evangelism encounter stories with the class telling about how it went, what was said, letting others make suggestions, etc.
- have children share in certain outreach projects for the congregation like passing out flyers door to door announcing an Easter or Christmas service, doing it during school time classes on evangelism.

- stressing to children how important their singing in church at Easter, Christmas Eve, and other times is from an evangelism standpoint.
- arranging for students to sing at nursing homes, etc. where children have practice sharing the good news in front of others.
- a unified emphasis in all grades and pastor's classes on the importance of telling others about Christ.
- inviting other leaders of the congregation to speak to classes about evangelism.
- using PTO meeting time to talk about evangelism to parents.
- being an adult example of someone whom children can see is not afraid to talk to others about church, school, Jesus.
- play acting situations where children speak to others they know about Jesus
- having students develop their own evangelism brochures, flyers, posters, invitations, etc.
- assigning essays and reports on the subject for class discussion.
- conducting a debate for and against evangelism.

Concluding Observation

If I were asked: What is the key thing in the disciple making process that demands our special attention in our effort to become better disciple makers, without hesitation I'd say it's the role of modeling. We need more disciple maker models in our classrooms. It isn't enough just to tell others to go and make disciples. We need to show and tell them. Modeling is an essential, integral part of showing and telling.

Models are the Lord's "letters of recommendation known and read by everybody written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:2-3). Let's pray that the Lord will use this symposium to produce more models for his church in our schools.