



The Lord Protects the Time Needed to Make Disciples

Acts 18:1-11

Main Idea: God protects the time that's needed to teach new believers to observe all that Jesus commanded.

Wherever they go and whatever they do, disciple makers are occupied with the Word: Testifying about Jesus to reason and persuade others to believe in him (1-5).

The pattern of persistence in proclaiming the gospel continued as Paul continued to move from place to place in following God's call in the mission. But in Corinth, we're told something new and important: Paul worked in order to support his work of the mission in places where the church was being planted and grown. Paul had the skills of a tentmaker, and joining together with other believers in the same trade, Paul worked in Corinth as a tentmaker. This work provided Paul the means to stay in Corinth, and it fueled the work of the mission, no doubt giving him access to non-believing customers and merchants on a day-to-day basis. While he worked, he reasoned with the Jews every Sabbath, trying to persuade them to believe in Jesus (Acts 18:4), and most importantly, even in the midst of his work as a tentmaker, Paul was occupied with the word (Acts 18:5). Paul used his job as a mission field and as a mission funding source. His focus – moment to moment each day – was on the mission of making disciples. To do this, Paul had to be a witness, testifying about Jesus to reason and persuade others to believe in Jesus. What a powerful lesson for us today. Believers who see their call in God's mission to make disciples should follow Paul's model by faith. Wherever we go and whatever we do, disciple makers should be occupied with the Word: Testifying about Jesus to reason and persuade others to believe in him!

1. When Paul arrived in Corinth, he immediately connected with some fellow believers who were working there in Corinth. They were tentmakers, which was also Paul's skill. The Lord provided two essential things: Christian fellowship and work for income. Why are these important in the life of a believer? How have you experienced God's provision of these things in your life? Are these things important for missionaries that we send overseas today? Why?
2. Every Sabbath, Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue, trying to persuade them to believe in Jesus. Do you have a weekly place/day where you intentionally put yourself around unbelievers for the specific purpose of trying to share, reason, and persuade them to believe that Jesus is the Christ? If not, what are some ways that you could do this?
3. We're told that even as a tentmaker, "Paul was occupied with the word." What does this mean? How can a disciple be occupied with the word even while being faithful to work hard in a secular occupation? What does this look like?
4. Are you occupied with the word? How are you testifying that Jesus is the Christ on a regular basis in your everyday life out in the world?

When time is needed to disciple new believers, God provides the protection needed to accomplish his work (5-11).

The mission of making disciples isn't just about proclaiming the gospel so that someone will hear the truth about Jesus and believe in Jesus. Making disciples also includes the hard work of



teaching believers to observe all that Jesus commanded. There's no shortcut to this work. It requires teaching God's Word, and it demands modeling God's Word. It takes time for believers to not only grow to know the Word of God but also learn to rightly apply the Word of God in their lives in the multitude of situations and circumstances that they are faced with each and every day. Paul needed time in Corinth to disciple the new believers in the church there, and although there was great opposition to Paul's work in Corinth, God was not going to allow that opposition to stop the work that he had called Paul to do there. The Lord knew exactly who his children were in Corinth, and in his sovereignty, he made sure Paul understood that he was going to protect Paul so that Paul could accomplish the work that God had for him to do. For a year and a half, Paul stayed there, and during that time he was "teaching the Word of God among them" (Acts 18:11). Today, the work of the mission is still empowered, directed, and protected by the Lord! When time is needed to disciple new believers, God still provides the protection needed to accomplish his work. There's no opposition to the gospel that can stop the work of the gospel when God himself is the power and protector of that work.

1. While sometimes Paul was forced to leave when opposition arose against the work of the gospel, that wasn't always the case. In Corinth, God wanted Paul to stay, and he made sure that Paul knew something important: He would protect Paul for the work he called Paul to do. Does the Lord still do this today? Have you ever seen or experienced God's protection as you served him in his mission? If so, how?
2. What does God use today to remind us of his call and his promises for us as we follow his call? How do you grow in listening to the Lord through his Word? How is the church important in this growth process?
3. Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching God's Word. What does this reveal about the process of making disciples that's important for us to remember and to practice today? Why is just sharing the gospel not all that God requires in his mission? If someone believes in Jesus, aren't they saved? So why do we need to do anything else?
4. How are we making disciples in our church? What can we learn from these lessons in Acts 18? What can we do to continue to be faithful to live on mission to always share the Lord?