

“We train disciplemakers...”



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Update from Kansas Communities Ministry

*Making Disciples
Naturally* Podcast
&
Richard Spann's
blogs are found at
KansasNavs.org

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What is “evangelism”?
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*Update on Kansas State Fair:
After 15 years of successful
outreach, we have decided to
focus more on individual
discipleship opportunities.
We will not have a Kansas
Navigators presence this year
at the Fair. Thanks to all who
have helped over the years!*

On faithfulness: Be a “Silas”

Silas (or Silvanus) is frequently mentioned in connection with the ministry of the Apostle Paul. He is first introduced as one of the “leading men” in the early church (Acts 15:22, 32). He is described as an *encourager* and a *faithful brother* who accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey. He, along with Paul, was arrested in Philippi, beaten and put in prison. What do we find Silas doing? He was praying and singing hymns in the middle of the night.

Despite adversity and threat, he was faithful to the end and stayed on to minister in Berea and Corinth after Paul left (Acts 17:14).

I have no room to complain. Any adversity I experience is nothing compared to the adversity Silas experienced. He kept at it. I'm sure he became discouraged at times and wondered if what he was doing made any difference at all. Do you wonder that at times? Perhaps you've prayed for someone, maybe a family member, for years and years and seemingly do not see any results.

Here's a little story about the early years in the life of Dr. Norman Geisler, who went on to become a theologian and great apologist of the faith:

“Norman Geisler, as a child, went to a daily VBS because he was invited by some neighbor children. He went back to the same church for Sunday School classes for 400 Sundays. Each week he was faithfully picked up by a bus driver. Week after week he attended church, but never made a commitment to Christ. Finally, during his senior year in High School, after being picked up for church over 400 times, he did commit his life to Christ. What if that bus driver had given up on Geisler at 395? What if the bus driver had said, ‘This kid is going nowhere spiritually, why waste any more time on him?’” from Max Lucado, *God Came Near*, Multnomah Press, 1987, p. 133.

Let's be like that faithful bus driver, and like faithful Silas, both of whom just kept on serving Jesus no matter what results they saw or didn't see. Faithfulness is noticed by our Lord and will be rewarded some day (1 Cor. 3:10-15). “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” - 1 Cor 4:2 NKJV

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“First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people, even for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Such prayer for all is good and welcomed before God our Savior, since he wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

—1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NET Bible)

Rethinking Discipleship: The Quest

by Ron Bennett © 2020

The first book of a trilogy, *The Quest* is a collection of 31 “reflections” on authentic discipleship.

Ron shares practical stories and illustrations in each of these little essays as he helps us think through what discipleship is all about. He starts with helping to define what a “disciple” is as he describes what we see in our mind when we think of the word “disciple.” He notes that even that word lacks a common meaning when discussed among evangelicals.

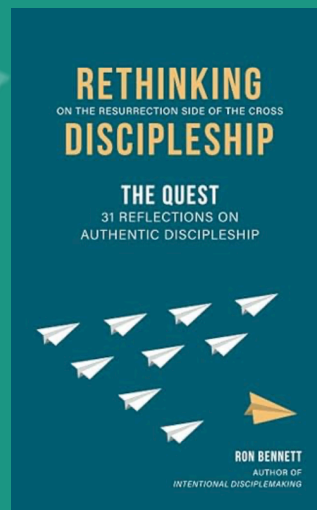
Is a disciple merely one who absorbs new knowledge? Is a disciple one who obeys all the rules? Sometimes in our minds we think of a disciple more

as a student who sits in a classroom and receives information. Ron points out that “a disciple is not just a student or learner, but a follower, one who applies what he has learned. Thus a true disciple will ask, ‘What would Jesus do?’ ” (p. 13)

I particularly found helpful the many practical illustrations the author uses to convey his points. For example, in the chart on “Highway hazards,” Ron notes that as we progress in our spiritual life, we may encounter speed bumps, potholes and detours. Speed bumps are events or people who help us slow down and consider life more deeply. For example, Abigail was a “speed bump” for David as she helped to moderate David’s desire for revenge. Potholes are often unexpected events that may damage us. Moral temptations are examples of a pothole in life.

Finally, detours may come along to really slow us down and take our lives in different directions, ways we had not anticipated. They initially may seem pointless, but often in retrospect we can see God’s hand at work.

This is a great resource for personal study, one-on-one mentoring or small groups. Discussion questions are included in each chapter.



Goads and Nails (excerpt)

By Richard Spann

“Live a fruitful life”

(Excerpt from Vol. 3 pages 113-116)

“The worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for other things.”

The above are referenced in a parable that our Lord taught by the Sea of Galilee. The reference is found in Mark 4:18-19. “Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.” The Lord used the illustration of thorns choking the seed to show how worries, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things choke the seed in our lives. As thorns compete for the necessary soil nutrients, water and sunlight that are crucial for the development of grain, likewise, the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things compete for that which is necessary in our lives for fruitfulness to occur. All of these decrease the margin we need in our lives in order to be fruitful...

The worries of this life are inevitable. Some are daily, while others are periodic. They include the predictable as well as the unpredictable. The worries are for ourselves, as well as for others. They include physical needs as well as spiritual concerns for ourselves and others. It is all too easy to allow these matters to dominate our thinking and deplete our emotional margin...

Wealth may be deceitful. It deceives us when we place our trust in wealth, and consequently we give our lives in exchange for its accumulation. Psalm 62:10 tells us “though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.” It is the margin in our lives which gives us the emotional energy, the time and the finances with which to make an impact in the lives of others. This margin is challenged daily by the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things... As we maintain fellowship with our Lord, we can depend upon Him to guard our lives from these “thorns” which threaten to choke our fruitfulness and that our lives will be like those described in Mark 4:20. “Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what was sown.”

In Christ, Richard Spann

Simple conversations can reflect God's love by David Dennis

Karla and I recently had the incredible privilege of taking a Viking River Cruise along the Danube River—an unforgettable journey shared with three other couples who have been close friends for many years. Among them were Sam and Barbara Claassen, faithful leaders in the Kansas Communities Ministry. This article is the second in a short series of reflections. In this one, I want to share a simple yet powerful truth we experienced firsthand: *Sharing our faith doesn't require a stage or a sermon—it often happens through everyday conversations.* Wherever we go, we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

Karla has a remarkable gift for striking up meaningful conversations with just about anyone. Whether on a plane, in a restaurant, or walking through a museum, she engages people with warmth, curiosity, and genuine care. During the trip, she had multiple such interactions that reminded me: you don't need a microphone to be a witness—you just need a willing heart.

Here are three important reminders that helped frame these interactions:

1. *It's not always about the "harvest."*

We sometimes assume that sharing our faith means delivering a full presentation of the gospel and seeing someone make a life-changing decision on the spot. And while that can happen—and we praise God when it does—more often, our role is to prepare the soil, plant a seed, or water what others have planted. See Dr. Spann's blog: The Harvest: <https://kansasnavs.org/the-harvest/>

2. *God is already at work.*

As Heather Holleman says in her book *Sent*, God is constantly drawing people to Himself (John 6:44; John 12:32). Our job is not to initiate that work, but to step into it—obediently and faithfully—when the opportunity arises. A correlation is that everyone has a spiritual component to their lives—and many want to talk about it.

3. *We are sent ones.*

Evangelism isn't just something we *do*—it's part of who we are. As believers, our identity is wrapped up in being people who reflect Jesus wherever we go (John 1:6). That mindset transforms even the most ordinary moment into a divine opportunity.

With that in mind, let me share two encounters that illustrate this beautifully.

Story 1: A Listening Ear at 30,000 Feet

On our international flight to Frankfurt, we were seated next to a woman from Minnesota, of Asian descent. As the hours passed, Karla gently opened up a conversation, learning that this woman felt isolated. Her husband, from Germany, traveled frequently for work and was seated elsewhere on the same plane with colleagues. She spoke of feeling solely responsible for raising their children and shared her struggles with loneliness and finding deep friendships. She said that her husband invited her at the last moment to join him for this trip, something he had never done before. They typically had not travelled together. She shared that her relationship with her husband was strained and cold. At one point she shared that she often asked herself, "Who is this guy I am married to?"

(Continued on next page)



"God in His love always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and in His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about." — Jerry Bridges, Author, Speaker, Navigator. Quote found at "Trusting God", p.234, 2016, NavPress

Simple conversations (continued)

Karla didn't preach. She simply listened—offering compassion, repeating back the woman's concerns to show she'd truly heard her, and sharing about a Christian radio program that had been meaningful to us: Family Life.

The woman responded warmly, going so far as to tell Karla that the conversation had felt different. She felt seen, heard—and cared for.

Story 2: A Book Recommendation with Eternal Potential

Later in the trip, we toured the haunting remains of Mauthausen, a Nazi concentration camp in Austria. The experience was sobering, heavy with the weight of history. At the end of the tour, Karla turned to our guide and asked if she had ever heard of *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom.

She hadn't.

Karla briefly told her about the Ten Boom family's bravery and faith in the midst of horror, and how Corrie had extended forgiveness even to her captors. The guide's interest was piqued—she wrote down the title and said she planned to look it up.

So... were these “evangelistic” conversations?

Absolutely.

They may not have ended in a conversion, but they were acts of planting and watering. Acts of faith. We believe those women were already being drawn to the Lord (John 6:44, 1 Timothy 2:3–4), and we simply had the joy of playing a small part in that journey.

We didn't bring a program, a pamphlet, or a pulpit. We simply showed up—open-hearted and available. We did nothing extraordinary; **we** are not the point. This is not about us and what we did. He uses even our smallest efforts for His glory. It is all about Jesus and His love.

Whether you're sailing on a river in Europe or walking your neighborhood sidewalk, you carry the light of Christ. Don't underestimate the power of a kind word, a listening ear, or a thoughtful question. You are planting seeds in the hearts of everyone you meet—seeds of either the Gospel of love or seeds of doubt that Christians actually care about others.

You are sent. You are the message.



“From the world’s perspective, there are many places you can go to find comfort. But there is only one place you will find a hand to catch your tears and a heart to listen to your every longing. True peace comes only from God.” ~ Charles Stanley, Pastor, Author. Quote found at “Into His Presence: An In Touch Devotional”, p.69, Thomas Nelson Inc, (2005).