Make Disciples Wherever You Go (Guest Author, Chris Easley)

Fo1-Kris Castro, Community Manager ⭐

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Each month as part of our growth in being "On Mission" with Jesus in every area of our lives, we will be featuring an article on the monthly and weekly theme written by someone in our community.

This month's article is written by Chris Easley, a spiritual director in training and Team Leader at Mission Central (a ministry based in Aurora, Illinois dedicated to forming Christians for mission in everyday life). When he's not leading a workshop on faith in the workplace, you'll find him trying to practice what he preaches as a Development Officer at Northern Illinois Food Bank. He loves time travel novels and cooking with his wife Katie, a hospice nurse practitioner.



- **Chris' Website**: https://missioncentral.church
- **Chris' Podcast**: Finding God at Work https://open.spotify.com/show/6t4SN8nASu7BACtPtaoEvs

PS - If you are interested in writing one of the 12 articles we have planned for this year, let Kris Castro know and she'll share more about those details.

Make Disciples Wherever You Go

I work in a classic cubicle office, the kind where standing up brings your head and shoulders into view like a prairie dog poking its head out of its burrow. Yesterday, when I needed a stretch, I stood up at the exact same time as my coworker Eli. "We're prairie-dogging at the same time!" I joked.

The happenstance made us laugh, and it also reminded me to invite Eli to grab lunch again. “I’ll shoot you a Teams message,” I said, and we booked another outing for later this month.

Every couple of months for the past year or so, Eli and I have been meeting up at Dave’s Burritos to talk about life, faith, and the Bible. We’re both busy, so these meetings are less frequent than I wish they were, but we’ve had a rich discussion every time. Eli is still figuring out what he believes, but he’s already read the Gospel of Mark two times over. I’m excited to see where this journey takes him.

It is such an honor to come alongside another human being when they’re really asking questions about life. My burrito-and-Bible outings with Eli fill me with joy and strengthen my own faith. When I read the words of Jesus that “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8 NIV),” I can now add “and at Dave’s Burritos”.

But if you’re like me, there are stretches when it feels like such conversations are few and far between. Right now, my friendship with Eli offers easy opportunities for sharing about Jesus. But what can we do to share our faith when there isn’t such an obvious opportunity?

When we read the words of Scripture, it’s instructive how often they speak to **readiness**. God doesn’t judge us based on the frequency of our sharing about Jesus—sometimes the frequency of opportunity is beyond our control! But he invites us to be **ready** to speak about our faith as opportunity arises. Because the Holy Spirit is always with us, we can nurture an inner disposition of readiness and willingness regardless of our circumstances. I’ve also found that when I’m focused on “being ready,” I find more opportunities to have faith conversations than I had seen before!

Here are a few different ways we see the Scriptures encouraging us to be **ready**:

Ready to Join What God Is Doing

When we encounter another human being, we can trust that God has already been at work in their life. God has “set eternity in the human heart (Ecc. 3:11 NIV);” all people have a deep need for God—a thirst, even if they don’t recognize it, for the waters of “eternal life (John 4:14).” Our job is not to start something, but to recognize how God is already stoking spiritual hunger and thirst in our friends and coworkers.

One of the first faith conversations Eli and I had followed this pattern. He asked how my weekend was, and I mentioned I had gone on a prayer retreat. “What’s a prayer retreat?” he asked, with clear eagerness and curiosity. I could sense that the Holy Spirit was already moving him with a sense of longing for the holy.

Ready to Listen

Two New Testament passages that describe spiritual conversations don’t tell us to “speak” to others, but rather to “answer” them when they are asking questions. Peter instructs, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15 NIV).”

Likewise, Paul encourages us, “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Col. 4:5-6 NIV).”

I find it fascinating that “answering” is the focus of these verses. This guidance implies that we will first be listening to other people, in such a way that they ask us questions about our faith. When we build authentic relationships with others, we create a context in which it’s safe for them to open up and ask the questions they really have.

Ready to Speak

The counterpart to listening is, when appropriate, speaking! These same passages teach that when people are asking spiritual questions, we have an opportunity to speak with gentleness, respect, and grace. Even in the context of a friendship, this kind of speaking takes courage. We never need to be brash, but we do need to be brave. We can take heart that, “the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline (2 Tim. 1:7 NIV).” Take a moment and consider: How would you articulate the Good News about Jesus in your own words, if someone asked you with genuine curiosity?

Ready to Love

Finally, we can practice love at all times - for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and for those who do not yet know Jesus. Although speaking about Jesus may require an appropriate opportunity that we discern in the Spirit, every moment is an opportunity to practice love in the character of Jesus. The New Testament passages on love emphasize the community of faith; Paul calls us to have “same love, being one in spirit and of one mind (Phil. 2:2 NIV).” Jesus linked this kind of love to the experience of outsiders: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35 NIV).” People get a glimpse of the kingdom of God in the love of Christian community—a glimpse that can stoke their hunger to enter into that love.

These passages remind us that God is drawing people to himself through us, even when we don’t see the whole picture. We don’t need to try and control the outcomes of our efforts to love the people around us. We usually only play one small part in someone’s life and journey with God. It’s God who holds their whole story from beginning to end, not us. As Paul wrote, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow (1 Cor. 3:6 NIV).” We play our part in that

story by simply loving those around us as God gives us opportunity, every day.

#GuestAuthor