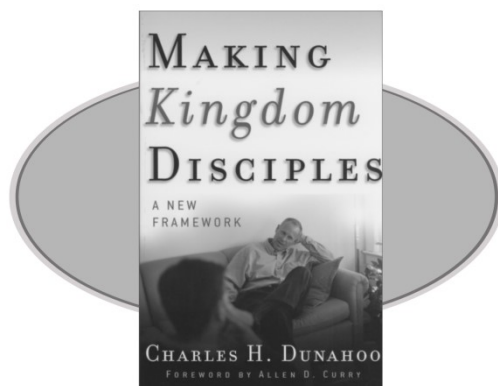


A Didactic Review of Dunahoo's *Making Kingdom Disciples*

Occasionally in the Haddington House Journal we include a didactic review. The following is such a review, which may be used for teaching purposes if the book under review is not available for all to read. This book by Charles Dunahoo joins discipleship together with a Christian worldview emphasis with the goal of encouraging a deeper understanding of the second aspect of the great commission; namely, bringing converts to maturity.

Editor



***Making Kingdom Disciples: A New Framework.* Charles H. Dunahoo. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005, 249 pp. ISBN 0-87552-640-3**

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:19-20). The command of making disciples is clear and it is one that must be undertaken by the Church with all seriousness. William Hendriksen comments on this passage by saying, “The term ‘make disciples’ places somewhat more stress on the fact that the mind, as

well as the heart and the will, must be won to God.”¹ This premise is in total agreement with what Charles Dunahoo is promoting in his book *Making Kingdom Disciples*. This book explores the discipling process by bringing forth a biblical model of a disciple who has the Lordship of Jesus Christ impacting every aspect of his or her life. To impact the world we must know the world, and to know the world we must be in the world, but to be in the world we must not become the world. This may seem to be an impossible task, and yet Mr. Dunahoo simplifies this process without taking away from it. He also exposes many of the dangers and roadblocks that face God’s children in the process of making disciples. The examples of people such as Paul are also brought forward to show us the proper method of how to reach those around us without altering the foundation or the message that God has given us.

Kingdom Disciple

A kingdom disciple is someone who thinks God’s thoughts after him and applies them to all of life.² This may seem self-explanatory but it seems that many are not living a lifestyle that is guided by our Lord Jesus Christ seven days a week. Without the Lord, though, man is fragmented in his religious walk and is not capable of completing his main objective of a Christian’s existence. This main objective is to live a life that knows, understands and applies God’s Word to all of life.³ This is crucial in order to become a Christian who is transformed into the likeness of Christ by living in continual service in the Kingdom of God. Christ is the key and the centre of such a worldview, and it is based completely on God’s truth.

1 Peter 1:14 states, “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” Mr. Dunahoo’s belief that one must be a disciple who surrenders all areas of his life to God is in complete agreement with this scripture. For as Abraham Kuyper stated, “There is not a square inch within the domain of our human life of which the Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not say ‘Mine’”.⁴ We must not separate faith and life. In order to avoid

¹ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973), 999.

² Charles H. Dunahoo, *Making Kingdom Disciples, A New Framework* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2005), 5.

³ Dunahoo, 11.

⁴ Abraham Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring. Rede ter Inwijding van de Vrije Universiteit* (Kampen: Kok, 1930), 32.

this, we must have a Christian worldview that starts and finishes with God and we must use His inspired text as our guide.

The Kingdom of God

All disciples must realize that they are members of the Kingdom of God as well as the church. No one denomination is in charge of this kingdom, for Christ is King and Ruler; therefore all professing Christians, regardless of denomination, are allowed access through Christ into the kingdom. The Great Commission gives clear direction in this process of making a kingdom for our Lord. Charles Dunahoo rightly points out that, "The people of God were not in isolation from, but in the world's midst to serve and represent their King, subduing and bringing it under obedience of his rule."⁵ This commission is for laypeople as well as church officers, for it requires a wide range of vocations to affect all areas of a nation and culture. This gives all of Christ's people importance and place in his kingdom, and it shows that all disciples' lives must include the following: theology, mission and ministry.⁶

A Christian Worldview and Life View

A disciple's goal is to link Christian belief with Christian living. The Reformed faith offers a good base, for it is an easily understood and logically ordered system that teaches the whole counsel of God.⁷ If we are to instruct others on the whole counsel of God, we must first know sound doctrine, and here the Bible becomes our rule and guide to knowing what must be believed. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Mr. Dunahoo spends ample time on the need for Scripture reading and on the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures in the life of a kingdom disciple.

The author also stresses that if our knowledge of God is wrong, so is everything else that follows.⁸ He also believes the reason that most do not understand the Bible properly is because they do not understand the workings and implications of the covenants that God has made with

⁵ Dunahoo, 48.

⁶ Dunahoo, 39.

⁷ Dunahoo, 78.

⁸ Dunahoo, 86.

His children. God has communicated to us through covenants, the two main ones being the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Under the covenant of works, man did not keep his side of the bargain, and therefore man was brought into a state of spiritual death and darkness. Our Lord Jesus Christ rescued us from this spiritual death by meeting all the requirements of the covenant of works, therefore restoring man's relationship with God. There are still the following two requirements of man under the new covenant: the covenant must be accepted by faith and we must be reborn and consecrate ourselves to God.⁹

As mentioned before, faith and obedience are conditions of the covenant of grace. The underlying principle of a covenant is that both parties are in a relationship requiring a loving commitment on both sides. If one breaks this covenant, the other is not obligated to fulfill his commitment any longer. This is why a disciple must be taught the implications of what it means to be included in a covenant and what would be required of him. The Calvinist position has always maintained that both grace and law are included in the gospel of Christ.¹⁰ A proper knowledge of the law is essential here, for it was not established to start a relationship with God but rather as a template to maintain a relationship with God.

The church is a major part of a believer's life, and a proper view of the church is essential. Acts 2:47 states, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." The church is the training ground for future soldiers of Christ. This is where their sword is sharpened, as we read in Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The Church is the Mother¹¹ of the believer, the place in which we hear the Word, where the sacraments are administered and where discipline is practiced to help us to grow. This is why all Christians should attend a church that is Bible believing and one which has trustworthy instructors (Heb 10: 24-26). Mr. Dunahoo points the believer to the church for the critical role that it plays in disciple making. He believes it is crucial, for it guides Christians to understand the truth and how then to apply it.¹²

⁹ Dunahoo, 93.

¹⁰ Dunahoo, 102.

¹¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.1.1.

¹² Dunahoo, 98.

Knowing the World

Charles Dunahoo believes that the following three things must be emphasized in a disciple worldview: we must understand the Word of God, we must be philosophically aware of our particular culture and we must apply the truth to our specific circumstance.¹³ This is an area where we may discover why Christianity does not have an impact on the nation and culture. The area of modernity offers many obstacles for the Christian worldview to move forward and have an impact on this society. With some understanding of the culture and with a thoughtful starting point, we may remove these obstacles and have an impact on those around us.

Not all is safe or beneficial for a Christian, but it is God who appoints the time, place and culture in which we are born and live (Acts 17:26). So Christians must, to the best of their abilities, without sin, learn and study the culture by which they are surrounded. Then they must find a way to deliver the gospel in a way that is palatable and understandable to those to whom they witness (I Corinthians 9:22). As Mr. Dunahoo states, "Know your world! Know your audience!"¹⁴

Generations

One way in which to learn about the culture and how to impact it is to learn about the generations contained in a certain society. In North America there are currently four major generations: the Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. This means the delivery of the message of Christ is to be brought forward in diverse ways so that it is appealing to all target audiences. In order to deal with this, the author took time to discuss the differences between these groups and also to list the distinctives of each. A proper understanding is vital, for all generations see and act differently in the way that their "personal grids and filters"¹⁵ process the information that is laid before them.¹⁶ To not pay attention to this is very dangerous, for as it states in the book, "We need all generations coming together to produce the kind of covenant family that will survive the pressures, dangers, and consequences of today's often degenerate and demoralizing world."¹⁷ It

¹³ Dunahoo, 117.

¹⁴ Dunahoo, 158.

¹⁵ Dunahoo, 21.

¹⁶ Dunahoo, 156.

¹⁷ Dunahoo, 168.

seems that this is what John was intending to do by listing fathers, young men and little children in his first epistle. (I John 2:13)

Postmodernism

Os Guinness stated in one of his lectures that “modernity is both our greatest threat and our greatest opportunity today.”¹⁸ What he meant by this is that Christians may get caught up in this worldview and lose themselves in the process; but if it is understood properly, it could be used as an effective tool in the disciple making process. Modernism has spawned a whole generation that has disdain for anything conservative or old. The newer the better seems to be the mantra of this group, and it makes the discipleship process all the more difficult, but not impossible. Mr. Dunahoo states, “As Christians we cannot simply evangelize people with the good news of the gospel. We have to disciple new Christians with a biblical world-and-life-view.”¹⁹ We must meet this culture on its ground and teach without wavering. However, there are five dangers of this culture which must be avoided by Christians: pluralism, privatism, individualism, relativism and technism.²⁰ Christians are confronted with these daily, and we must endeavor to handle these false perspectives without becoming immersed in them.

Biblical Models

The author then takes us to the story of Paul’s ministry in Athens, recorded in Acts 17. Here we see a biblical model of what he has discussed previously. As mentioned before, God places us in a location in order to perform His will and purpose. Paul shows those of us who are in the twenty-first century how to proclaim the gospel to a people who may not have heard it before. He starts by finding a reference point with the Greeks. This was possible because Paul had knowledge of the situation into which he had entered. Charles Dunahoo states,

To zoom in on Paul’s ministry: he believed that he was in Athens on a mission to preach the gospel. He prudently realized that how he did that in Athens had to be different from how he did it in other places such as Antioch, where the

¹⁸ Dunahoo, 121.

¹⁹ Dunahoo, 125.

²⁰ Dunahoo, 126.

people knew the Old Testament Scriptures, or in Corinth, where there was a mixture of Hebrew and Greek culture.²¹

It must be made clear at this point that Paul did not change the truths of his message, only the delivery of the message. There are two important facts that must be understood in order to have a proper delivery: (1) We must be certain about the basics of our Christian faith without wavering, faltering or capitulating to the enemy. We must not compromise the truth. (2) We must be students of our culture in order to frame our message in the most meaningful way for our audience.²² This was the way that Paul handled himself while preaching the gospel in the Bible, and it will still work if properly applied in this day and age.

Dunahoo also draws the reader's attention to the book of Ecclesiastes, which shows clearly the difference between those of the world and kingdom disciples. We are confronted with only two choices of living – above the sun (as believers) and under the sun (as unbelievers). The author defends his view of a kingdom disciple by showing how the unbeliever chases the wind, while the believer chases God.²³ Solomon shows that without a Christian worldview, where all thoughts and actions are under subjection, there is only hopelessness and despair. Dunahoo states, "God's model and method for making disciples is all-inclusive. It requires developing a Christian mind and heart for the things of God with an ability to operate on a day-to-day basis from a Christian world-and-life-view perspective."²⁴ This shows the proper understanding from a biblical foundation.

In the final section the author spends time looking at the life of Abraham. The reason for this is to show the necessity of reading the Bible as a book of the covenant, seeing that it is essential for kingdom disciples.²⁵ Dunahoo suggests that to understand the covenant is to realize that this life is unified and will eventually come to an end. He states, "Our religion, our faith in God, touches every area of our lives and therefore the lives of others as well."²⁶ This is biblical and is foundational to a proper understanding of the way we live and the purpose of our lives. As the author suggests, such understanding will

²¹ Dunahoo, 178.

²² Dunahoo, 183.

²³ Dunahoo, 191.

²⁴ Dunahoo, 204.

²⁵ Dunahoo, 207.

²⁶ Dunahoo, 208.

keep us away from a moralist or legalist interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, two thought processes that have plagued Christians since the beginning.

Abraham's life gives us a glimpse of the covenant of grace in action, and it also gives us a glimpse of the coming Messiah. The promises from God kept Abraham safe and away from harm. This was evident from the encounters with Pharaoh. Abraham's story shows us God's sovereignty in all areas of our life; He will not be thwarted in His purpose. The key point as Dunahoo states it is, "it was not about Abraham; it was really about God",²⁷ and "life takes on a new meaning when we realize that life is not about us."²⁸ This is simple and foundational and yet so easy to misunderstand or forget.

Charles Dunahoo has challenged modern Christians with a biblical worldview which, if heeded properly, should produce effective "kingdom disciples" who in turn should impact the world around them. Christians must not lose sight of their purpose in this life, which is to promote and develop the Kingdom of God. This goes so much further than just a fellowship of believers in a community and nation; for the kingdom is not confined. It includes all believers in all nations, belonging to all denominations. Christians must allow their light to shine in all areas of their lives in order to have an impact on the nations in which they live. They must state the message of the gospel in a way that will be understood by all if they want to be effective in reaching all segments of the population. The dangers and stumbling blocks should also be studied, for this will allow Christians to explore solutions which may prevent their brothers and sisters from unknowingly becoming prey to the philosophical thoughts of the day. Examples of living a lifestyle that has every thought and action in subjection to God should be taken from heroes of the faith that are found in the Holy Scriptures. They are still showing believers, just as effectively as in times past, the way to walk that is pleasing to God. The Christian community as a whole owes Charles Dunahoo a thank-you for the work that he has done in producing such a clear exposition of a biblical Christian worldview.

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²⁷ Dunahoo, 217.

²⁸ Dunahoo, 218.