

GOOD TO GREAT 4

“THE HEDGEHOG CONCEPT”

“But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don’t be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at bringing others to Christ. Complete the ministry God has given you.” 2 Timothy 4:5

Isaiah Berlin has written a somewhat famous essay (I’d never heard of it till I read Collins book; Good – To – Great) titled: “The Hedgehog and the Fox”, which is apparently based on an ancient Greek Parable. The story describes the fox as a cunning creature, able to devise myriad complex strategies for sneak attacks upon one of his favorite edible delicacies; the lowly hedgehog. Day in and day out, the fox circles around the hedgehog’s den, waiting for the perfect moment to pounce. Fast, sleek, beautiful, fleet of foot, and crafty – the fox looks like the sure winner.

The hedgehog, on the other hand, is a dowdier creature, often weighing less than two pounds, looking like a genetic mix-up between a porcupine and an armadillo. He waddles through life in an almost oblivious manner, mindlessly searching for lunch, and carefully caring for his humble home, a hole in the ground.

The fox waits in cunning silence at the juncture in the trail. The hedgehog, minding his own business, wanders right into the path of the fox. “Aha, I’ve got you now!” thinks the fox. He leaps out, bounding across the ground, lightning fast. The little hedgehog, sensing danger, looks up and thinks, “Here we go again. Will he ever learn?” Rolling up into a perfect little ball, the hedgehog becomes a sphere of sharp spikes, pointing outward in all directions. The fox, bounding toward his prey, sees the hedgehog defense and quickly calls off the attack. Retreating back to the forest, the fox begins to calculate a new line of attack. Each day, some version of this battle between the hedgehog and the fox takes place, and despite the greater cunning of the fox, the hedgehog always wins.

To be clear, hedgehogs are not stupid. Quite the contrary. They understand the essence of profound insight is simplicity. Hedgehogs see what is necessary, do what is essential, do it extremely well, and ignore the rest. Hedgehogs have come to understand the power of simply discovering what they do better than anyone else in the world, and then doing it well. What is it they do? Being a hedgehog!

Collins and his researchers of the 11 GTG companies discovered within them a principle of single-minded focus and direction they came to name, the “Hedgehog Concept.” The Hedgehog concept is more than a strategy, more than a vision, more than a goal, it is a way of life that focuses on discovering the one thing you can do that has the potential to make you great, then doing that one thing, and ignoring many others, until you become the best in the world at that one thing.

Our text this morning makes it fairly clear, what our one thing is. As followers of Jesus Christ, as a church of Jesus Christ, our one thing is becoming and making disciples, working hard to make disciples, suffering losses and setbacks to make disciples, completing the ministry God has given us, which is...making disciples. Again, how we make those disciples takes on different window dressing depending on denomination, demographics, and other factors, but our one thing, is...making disciples.

Collins and his crew developed a graph or chart that includes three questions, that when answered prayerfully, thoughtfully, and after much discussion, debate, and decisiveness; will unveil what each organizations Hedgehog Concept is. Today, I'd like to consider those questions, and search for some answers to help us as a church and individuals thereof, determine how God wants us to make disciples. You see that little overlapping space in the middle of the three circles? That's what will become known as our Hedgehog Concept. Here are the circles/questions.

- 1. WHAT ARE WE DEEPLY PASSIONATE ABOUT?**

In an organization or business, they get to choose what they want to do; we don't. Our calling is to make disciples, and we are either passionate about that, or we are on the wrong bus. I'm not trying to be a rude crude, dude, I'm just stating the fact, that being a Christian, and being a Christian church is about helping people become mature disciples of Jesus. I know that some people have other agenda's in choosing to be part of a church, but sooner or later inevitable conflict will arise when otherwise agenda's collide with what God has positioned us to be passionate about.

There is room for discussion, even respectful disagreement about how we get to our destination, but not with our destination. There is room for different passions within the body of Christ, and different giftedness, but there is no room for disagreement with our said purpose.

So let me ask each of us today? What are you passionate about? What got you out of your warm bed this cold morning? What couldn't you wait to do or experience this Lord's Day? Did you wake up with a "Good Morning Lord", or a "Good Lord, Morning", attitude?

I'm grateful to serve with a group of committed people; paid staff and unpaid servants, who are passionate about helping people, become disciples. From peeling vegetables for supper on Wed. to refileing music after services are over on Sunday. From rocking toddlers in the nursery, to reading stories at your kids school. From pulling weeds in the flowerbeds to providing rides to Slice of Love, it's all about making disciples. I'm not trying to make you become passionate about making disciples, you either are or you're not, I'm trying to help us all see what is our passion. I love empowering people to authentically know God. It's my life purpose, and I am passionate about it.

2. WHAT DRIVES OUR ECONOMIC ENGINE?

Hold on, you might be saying, 'oh there he goes again, talking about money,' but wait. In business language it's all about the bottom line; that is not true in the church. Or at least our bottom line is different. The television industry is all about one thing, and it's not education, it's not inspiration, it's not even entertainment, it's about making money! The church is different, partially at least. Let's be honest though, it takes money to make disciples, so our fiscal responsibility is at least part of our bottom line. We are not in business to make money, or waste it, but to use it as a tool to what...Make disciples!

Through the years I've been in ministry I've learned many lessons, and just recently I've made, what I think is a major discovery. To increase a church's fiscal bottom line, doesn't just take more 'disciples', it takes more mature disciples. Here's what I'm learning. The deeper a person goes with God, the more they want to give to assist God's causes, the more passionate they become about giving. New disciples or young Christians must learn through practicing, the joy and internal spiritual blessing of giving to God, God's work and God's kingdom. It's the mature disciple who looks at tithing as a privilege not a tax; a minimum starting point, not the end all goal. It's mature disciples who get frustrated because they can't give more.

The implications if this is true, are that any church wishing to increase its ability to make more disciples, must also be intentionally engaged in helping those disciples mature. A church with all evangelism, and no discipleship, may become large, but likely won't become deep, and it's not either or, it's both and! DO you see it? Our economic indicator then is to make the disciples we have more mature, not so we can pad our bankroll, but so those mature stewards can more effectively make more disciples. Now...

3. WHAT CAN WE BE THE BEST IN THE WORLD AT?

I must confess; I've had a hard time with answering this one. I'm not sure any church wouldn't. We'll never be the largest church in the world, heck even in Bismarck. We'll never have the best children's ministry in the world...but we might in Bismarck. We may never have a choir that rivals the Mormon Tabernacle, we'll never have a Bismarck Crystal Cathedral, you'll probably never get to hear Billy Graham preach from this music stand, we'll never have James Dobson teaching our Sunday School classes. So what in the world can we be the best at?

I'm not sure I have an answer, but I an idea. And before you dismiss it out of hand, I want you to prayerfully consider and think about it, I want you to see if it fits us, and more than all that, I want you to help me figure out how, if its true, this one thing, might help us understand our Hedgehog Concept.

I believe we can be the friendliest church in the world, and that is no knock or judgment on any other church, and it's not being friendly for friendliness sake, but being friendly to make disciples. Friendliness is a tool God can use to win people to His Son Jesus! You know the statistics; 2% of people who come to Christ do so because of a Sermon they heard, man is that depressing. But over 70% of people who come to know Jesus do so because a friend, shared their life with them, and led them to a relationship with Jesus. I know we think we are friendly, but if we come to understand this concept is our Hedgehog, watch out, because we haven't yet begun to scratch the itch!

Please let me try to "think out loud" with you today. How does all this fit together? How do the answers to the questions fit in Collins little chart, and square with our text:

"But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at bringing others to Christ. Complete the ministry God has given you."
2 Timothy 4:5

This is what I'm thinking today. Our passion is not of our choosing, it is God appointed, and it is simply making disciples. Those disciples must be taught, and must learn, often through practice, what it means to become mature. With that maturity will come, rather naturally, I believe, more faithful stewardship. Because of that increased stewardship, we'll be able to continue, and even increase our effectiveness in the disciple making business, by being and becoming even more intentionally friendly. It's our own little FUMC circle.

We might think about it like this:

FRIENDLINESS is a tool God uses to CREATE DISCIPLES,

As DISCIPLES mature and grow they BECOME faithful STEWARDS,

And STEWARDS who are passionate BECOME APOSTLES who share

the Good News through their FRIENDLINESS to make more DISCIPLES.

FRIENDLINESS creates **DISCIPLES**,

DISCIPLES become **STEWARDS**,

STEWARDS become **APOSTLES!**

Do you see it? I'm not sure what our hedgehog concept is, but I've tried out a couple; we have to GO make disciples – GROW deeper in our maturity – GLOW with the winsome friendliness that is contagious. We have to LOVE people into the fold – we have to LEARN what it means to be mature – and then we can LEAD others into this experience. Or how about: DISCIPLE - DEEPEN – DEPLOY. I don't know, I'm just thinking out loud. How about: ENTER – ENLIST – ENGAGE. Make up your own phrase, lets share some thoughts together.

All I can say for sure is that the scripture is clear, we are to be in the disciple making business, and we are to complete that ministry, half-heartedness won't cut it, and there is likely some suffering that will accompany it, but this is our passion. I think the concept is true, and valid.

I know it would be a lot more glamorous to be a fox than a hedgehog, but it's not about being glamorous. I also know we have been wrestling with many of these principles and issues for many years, and maybe, just maybe, God is trying to simplify our future for us, instead of us trying to figure it out and confusing ourselves further and unnecessarily.

I didn't near do justice to the contents of this chapter in Collins book, but I think I'm done...for today. AMEN

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The Hedgehog Concept is a way of life that focuses on discovering the one thing you can do that has the potential to make you great, then doing that one thing, and ignoring many others, until you become the best in the world at that one thing.

The Hedgehog Concept is understood at the intersection of 3 questions:

1. **WHAT ARE WE DEEPLY _____ ABOUT?**
2. **WHAT DRIVES OUR _____ ENGINE?**
3. **WHAT CAN WE BE THE _____ IN THE WORLD AT?**

Friendliness is a tool God uses to create disciples,

As disciples mature and grow they become faithful stewards,

And mature stewards who are passionate become apostles who share

the Good News through their winsome friendliness to make more disciples.

_____ creates _____,

_____ become _____,

_____ become _____!

