

GOOD TO GREAT 5

“A CULTURE OF DISCIPLINE”

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7

Over the past 4 weeks we’ve been studying some interesting principles from Jim Collin’s book: Good To Great. We have repeatedly noticed Mr. Collins, not only explaining new and unusual concepts, but actually ‘creating’ new concepts, then defining them, often through a story. Listen to another, today.

In his chapter on a “Culture of Discipline,” Collins introduces us to “a disciplined world-class athlete named Dave Scott, who won the Hawaii Ironman Triathlon 6 times. In training Scott would ride his bike 75 miles, swim 20,000 meters, and run 17 miles – on average, every single day. Needless to say, Dave Scott did not have a weight problem! Yet he believed that a low-fat, high carbohydrate diet would give him an extra edge. So, Dave Scott – a man who burned at least 5,000 calories a day in training – would literally rinse his cottage cheese to get the extra fat off. Now, there is no evidence that he needed to rinse his cottage cheese to win the Ironman; that’s not the point of the story. The point is that rinsing his cottage cheese was simply one more small step that he believed would make him just that much better, one more small step added to all the other small steps to create a consistent program (or culture) of super discipline.”

In a sense, the good to great companies became like Dave Scott. Most of the answers to the question of ‘good to great’ lie in the discipline to do whatever it takes to become the best within carefully selected arenas and then to seek continual improvement from there. It’s really that simple, and it’s really that difficult.

Again, Collins suggests that everyone would like to be the best, but most organizations lack the discipline to figure out with egoless clarity what they can be the best at and the will to do whatever it takes to turn that potential into reality. He states it matter – of – factly; they lack the discipline to rinse their cottage cheese.

Our text today comes from the lips of Paul, encouraging his young understudy, Timothy, to buck up against the opposition that was causing him much suffering, and even to hold fast to another of his 'brutal facts' that God is behind this business, that God is Thee CEO, that God has not begun this enterprise we call the church, then abandoned us to our own wishes and whim's. NO, God has given us the Spirit of Power to do the right things, the Spirit of Love to embrace each other and the world at large, and the Spirit of Self-Discipline to accomplish our CEO's ultimate purpose.

This encouragement was modeled for Paul by Jesus, and I want you to think about the culture of Discipline Jesus created with/for his disciples, (note the unintended play on words there). Jesus called together a ragamuffin bunch of social outcasts and losers, transformed their lives by his grace, inspired them to greatness, and sent them to change the world. The culture of discipline he created had some constrictions, namely, their purpose: To 'preach the good news to the poor, to set the captives free; or, to make disciples! His culture included opportunities to do many things, but also the freedom Not to Do All things. They never engaged in fundraising per se, but they were given freedom within their culture to heal the sick, cast out demons, confront the Pharisees, feed the hungry, cloth the naked, minister to prisoners, widows, and other losers like themselves; all under the 'system', and within the culture of Making Disciples. Without question Jesus and Paul understood 'washing cottage cheese' as part of a culture of discipline, doing the little things, that taken together, make you great; but I want to explore further what this means for us, by trying to answer two questions this morning.

1. WHAT IT TAKES TO PRODUCE A CULTURE OF DISCIPLINE?

We might even want to think about the answer to this question, as our own little triathlon, it takes at least 3 things to produce a culture of discipline.

A- It takes A Single Minded **Focus** on the Cause.

The discovery and acceptance of our Hedgehog Concept will at some point require from each one of us an agreement, an acknowledgement, and adherence to the brutal fact that God's purpose for this church supercedes any of our own. Lot's of different people get lots of different things from church, and that's ok, as long as those things remain lodged somewhere within the three circles of our existence: What are we Passionate about? (Making Disciples) What is our Economic Engine? (Mature Stewards) And what can we be the best in the world at? (Winsome Friendliness) We're exploring how God would have us make Disciples, and a single-minded focus on that one purpose is all together essential to create a culture of discipline

B- A Consistent **Commitment** to the System

This may sound redundant, but I think it's different. Acknowledging our purpose is one thing, committing our lives and resources to it is quite another. We do not exist as autonomous individuals in the body of Christ. We are collectively part of the System. The fingers and toes, though separated by a great distance in the body, are uniquely alike, though having different functions. The System is the key.

Our system is radically different than most businesses or corporations. We have a few paid staff members, and a huge number of unpaid servants, both necessary to the success of our operation. We are a not for profit organization, but we currently have budgeted over \$400,000 to help us make disciples. Our target market includes newborns for the nursery, and Senior Saints for Slice of Love. We have at least 5 generations active in our church at anyone time, and NONE of those things mentioned even considers ANY personal preferences or desires! You can see how important our individual commitments to the System of FUMC are to creating a corporate culture of discipline. We can be individuals, but we are part of the whole.

I have yet to see a pancreas doing much good all by itself! We are in this disciple making operation together, and we must be committed to it.

C- An Entrepreneurial **Freedom** within that System

This excites me. Yes, we exist and conduct ministry within a system; FUMC, part of the United Methodists in the Bismarck and Mandan area ministry team, part of the Dakotas Annual Conference, part of the General UMC of the USA, and part of the World wide Methodist Family that numbers well over 20 Million people. And yes, we are part of the Capital “C” Church of Jesus Christ, and even more, the Kingdom of God. This is our system. Within that system, and constrained by our individual disciplines, we are free, in fact should be encouraged to be even more free to be creative in responding to the needs of people on their journey to Jesus.

I am thrilled that this church has been so willing to risk failure and even embarrassment as we try to carve out a unique, even experimental ministry, that God might use to reach people with the Good News. Don't be shocked; more will likely be required the further we press into this new century.

The second important question for us to answer today:

2. WHAT DOES A CULTURE OF DISCIPLINE PRODUCE?

While exploring this principle that emerged in the 11 G2G companies, Collins and his researchers came to realize that the following three products of a culture of discipline were in fact sequential. The first had to come first and so on; here's number one.

A- Disciplined **People**

We've talked about this in two different sermons already in this series: One, getting the right people on the bus, and the wrong ones off is the underlying principle of Who first, then What. The right people are invaluable to becoming great. We also noted

it in another place, that hiring people with Character is every bit as important as hiring people with skills.

In the church context, having people (paid and unpaid) who are personally disciplined is helpful, but having people (paid and unpaid) who are willing to be disciplined and live within the disciplines of the System is essential!

Many times bureaucracy becomes necessary to compensate for incompetence or a lack of discipline; which occurs from having the wrong people on the bus, or in the wrong seats. And please don't confuse a culture of healthy discipline with a stifling bureaucracy bent on control, they are radically different, and produce different results.

B- Disciplined **Thought**

I've told you before, this may be the most helpful thing we get out of this series, the ability / desire / willingness to begin to think differently about God's Church. Don't be fooled, it's not easy for any of us to do this, because it doesn't happen naturally. We are by nature creatures of habit, and we tend to be suspicious of anything new, or anything that might make us think a new thought, or perish the thought, incorporate a new truth into our life! But, being part of, or helping to create a Culture of Disciplined people, willing to do disciplined thinking, will help us better follow God!

You know, the talk shows on Radio and TV have unfortunately replaced the old "Town Hall Meetings" which at one time dominated our culture, and helped us discuss and think our way around important issues. The danger of even "fair and balanced" talk shows is that they are one way. How many of you have ever attempted to engage Rush in a 'dialogue' in the middle of one of his 'monologue' tirades? Me neither. That's why I think the church is still one of the last bastions of civility, (or at least should be) where intelligent people can think and discuss important things, together. They discovered it in these companies, I wonder if they'd discover it here...or anywhere in church?

C- Disciplined **Action**

The result of Disciplined People engaging in Disciplined Thinking is Disciplined Action. Too often churches and other organizations, rush headlong into uncharted waters because some 'one' thinks it's a good idea, or some 'one' reads about a new program, or because we're still chasing our self-serving tail, or oiling only the squeakiest wheels!

We have to be more disciplined. Rinsing cottage cheese sounds...stupid, but if we wish to be the best God wants us to be, we must be willing to be disciplined people, engaged in disciplined thinking, and conducting disciplined action while we live in a culture of discipline that is determined by our Hedgehog Concept and is defined by our purpose.

Discipline by itself will not produce great results. We find plenty of organizations in history that had tremendous discipline and that marched right into disaster, with precision and in nicely formed lines. Have we forgotten Nazism or Jim Jones? No, the point is to first get self-disciplined people willing to engage in very rigorous thinking, who then take disciplined action within the framework of a consistent system, designed by God, around a unifying Hedgehog Concept.

All companies (churches) have a culture, some companies (churches) have discipline, but few companies (churches) have a culture of discipline. I believe this is the next step on our pathway from being a good church to becoming a great church. Each one of us committing ourselves to live the most disciplined lives we can, and collectively, adhering to the rigorous disciplines that will create a culture where we can more effectively make more disciples. When you have disciplined people, you don't need much hierarchy. When you have disciplined thought, you don't need much bureaucracy. When you have disciplined action, you don't need excessive controls. When you

combine a culture of discipline (people, thought, action) with an ethic of entrepreneurship, you get the magical mixture of great performance.

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1. WHAT IT TAKES TO _____ A CULTURE OF DISCIPLINE?

A- It takes A Single Minded _____ on the Cause.

B- Consistent _____ to the System

C- An Entrepreneurial _____ within that System

2. WHAT DOES A CULTURE OF DISCIPLINE _____ ?

A- Disciplined _____

B- Disciplined _____

C- Disciplined _____

