

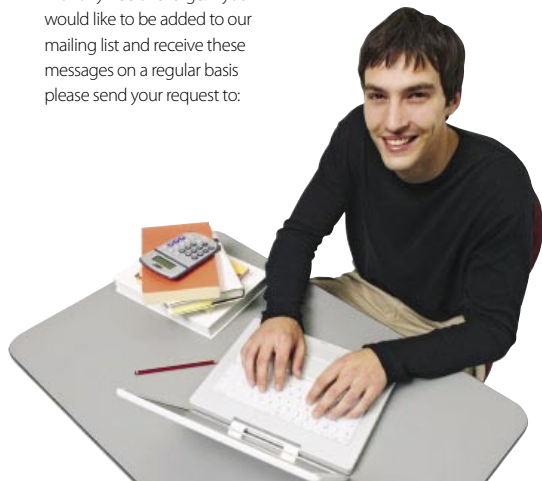
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## WHERE ARE THE DISCIPLES?

**Mario Dučić,**

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“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me

in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” *Matthew 28.18*

Jesus' last words were: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” Unfortunately, the church of today has completely given up this challenge and does not make disciples. If she does, the goal is only to have new members, not disciples; wishing to be nice and politically correct by carrying on with ecumenical meetings rather than evangelical ones. While here in Croatia we being preoccupied by battling with church policy or the

state of the world, the number of born-again believers grows by a small percentage or not at all.

Meanwhile, there is a great turbulence in Denmark and in the Middle East because of the cartoon mocking Mohamed. The Islamic religion is growing rapidly, and is the second-largest religion in the world, just behind Christianity.

Reza F. Safa, a former radical Moslem, wrote a book “Within Islam” painting an accurate picture of Islam. When describing the growth of Islam in the world, he says: “In the last forty years, millions of Moslems emigrated to the

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West; to the U.S.A., U.K. France, the Netherlands and many other Western European where they exceed other religious groups. In some areas there are more Moslems than Christian denomination groups.”

George Ottis in his book “The Last Giants” gives the following information:

Today in the U.S.A., the number of Moslems exceeds that of the leading Pentecostal Church “Assemblies of God” in ratio of 3:1. In the U.K., there are more followers of Islam than the Christian believers of both Methodist and Baptist Church together. In France, Moslems are the second largest religious group and have more followers than all believers together. Moslems believe that when London converts to Islam it will be easy for them to take possession of Europe. For example: in 1945 there was only one mosque in England. By 1950 there were 25; in 1960 the number increased to 80, in 1976 to 200 and in

1989 there were over 1000 mosques in England. Today, 300 buildings used as mosques were originally churches. Even the church that sent William Carey to India is now turned to a mosque.

According to ABC journalist Peter Jennings more than 5000 mosques were built in the former USSR within the first two years after it’s breakdown. There were so many mosques built in the East and West of Africa that the exact number is not known. In Kenya, for example, their goal is to build one mosque per ten kilometers regardless whether Moslems live there or not.

Countries such Iran, Saudi Arab, Libya and Turkey give millions of dollars to the southern republics of the former Soviet Union and in African countries in an effort to advance Islam. Either by the power of sword or by richness of oil, Islam grows each year by 50 million people and is the second fastest growing religion after Christianity.

★ **The church today kneels before the god of humanism, materialism, and political plots rather than reaching souls for the Kingdom of Heaven.**

What has happened to western church today? She is no longer capable of building churches or attracting believers. It seems we have either neglected the last words of Jesus and have retreated into our

own lives filled with worldly desires and cares, or we have forgotten what our first task is – to make disciples of all people.

The church today kneels before the god of humanism, materialism, and political plots rather than reaching souls for the Kingdom of Heaven. God's people no longer desire to give funds to the church or support missionaries. An interesting fact: in 1920 ten cents out of each dollar went for to missions yet today that figure has dropped to two cents.

What is the situation in Croatia? There are only a few churches in this country and we are unable to build anymore because of the lack of finances. Of 4.5 million people only 5,000 are believers, yet when we attempt to gather all believers together only 1,000 show up; moreover, if we were to divide these believers from true disciples the number would be very discouraging indeed.

▶ **1. THE CHURCH SHOULD BE GIVING BIRTH TO BORN-AGAIN PEOPLE**

When talking about giving birth I don't mean literal children, though giving birth to literal children is not bad because it is another way of

making disciples (Moslems have good strategy) but I primarily mean spiritual reproduction.

If we are not giving birth to new believers then we must ask ourselves what we are doing for the Kingdom. What are we spending our time and finances on? If we don't give birth to new believers for the Kingdom this movement may disappear; moreover, whom shall we teach in the years to come – the same people we have been teaching all the time? How shall we have more money to spread the Kingdom of God, send missionaries, and build churches?

When was the last time when we brought someone to Christ? According to the last questionnaire of George Barna Christian research group, 49% of the born-again Christians shared their belief with the non-Christians in 2004. What about the remaining 51%?

According to some statistics, only one out of ten Christians leads another

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person to Christ. What would happen if the situation would be the opposite, what if nine out of ten persons would lead nine new souls to Jesus Christ? There would be an awakening!

Winkie Pratney once said: "We instruct ourselves how to occupy and rule the world" However, according to the book by Reza A. Safa "Within Islam" it seems that Islam took that statement more seriously than we did.

Our original task after becoming a born-again Christian is to know the Lord better and lead many people to Jesus Christ.

Finally, it is way Jesus told us be clothed with "power from on high". Not to hound one another with various Christian clichés or cheap theologies; pursuing evil spirits of fatness and laziness, but to witness "in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth." In other words, the Lord saved us in order to save our country! He has recruited us in His school of disciples.

★ **There is a great difference between believers and disciples.**

Unfortunately, many of Christians would be believers only, not disciples. They are fascinated with seminars and various Christian events, however they neither care for the lost souls nor give birth to the new ones for the Kingdom. The church has become lazy, having no interest in changing individuals and society, as we do not include testifying for Christ in our daily schedules. We are somehow occupied with church activities that, in and of themselves, do nothing to bring in new souls. Actually we show no excessive care for the lost. If we share something with somebody it is only to fill an evangelic quota and to ease our conscience.

We should take advantage of each opportunity "convenient or not". The time is coming when we will want to testify for Christ but it will be too late and their blood will be on our hands. How much noise and chaos did one cartoon of Mohamed make in the East? Where are Christians, priests, theologians and pastors to comment about the shame on Christ's name? Nobody comments; all keep silent because they are afraid for their lives. Is it possible that in the end we will organize ecumenical inter-religious prayer for peace with Moslems? Islam has seriously accepted its religion. What about us? We shy away from

the public but in the church we jump with courage. We are afraid to be radical. While Islam is radical in what they believe, the church is radically involved in worldly cares and gives itself up to mundane pleasures.

If we wish to make disciples in the world we must pay a high price!

▶ **2. IF WE WISH TO WIN NEW SOULS FOR THE KINGDOM WE MUST CHANGE OUR MENTALITY FROM BEING A BELIEVER TO BEING A DISCIPLE**

In Matthew 10:37 Jesus said: *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”*

Jesus did not say that we must pass our membership class, become loyal, and be good believers; rather He said to give up our lives and all our rights in order to become His disciples.

There is a great difference between believers and disciples. The believer believes in God, agrees with what is taught about Him, but is not active

in doing what he hears. He has not completely died to himself, rather he uses Jesus and Christianity for his own profit or pleasure. The church is filled with believers mainly because we don't call them to repent or expect them to completely change their lives. Today you have believers who after “being converted” sit in church slowly giving up their sins and old lifestyle little by little while simply adding Jesus as the one who will give them immediate success in life.

When Charles Finney called people to repent he used to say: “...when you come forward for a prayer, come ready to release all your rights and die.”

Nowadays people feel insulted if you ask them to leave their sin or change their way of thinking. When my generation converted to God it converted completely, people left their sinful behavior and accepted the new one, we were obedient to our pastor, and appreciated Christians who were older in the Lord. Today's Christians while present in body are distant in spirit and soul. They often ask for immediate relief and

★ **We need “fundamental Christians” in the full meaning of the word.**



emotional healing but don't fully give themselves to Jesus and will not follow His ways and principles.

One thing is for sure; today's Christians are farther from dedication to God than believers of other religions. For example, the word Islam means, "to subordinate to Allah".

The true Moslem is the one who is subordinated to Islam, a god who is absolute in everything. To become a Moslem means to become Allah's slave or Abd-Allah.

Jesus Christ asks nothing different from us. It is true that He gave us a free will, but He also commands us to do His will not ours: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."* (Matthew 7.21) We can do either His or our will. Middle ground does not exist though many wish it were there.

This country is desperately looking for people of faith, full of spirit and courage who will, at the cost of their lives, preach and boldly make disciples.

★ **To become a true disciple means to be disciplined in every part of life.**

We need "fundamental Christians" in the full meaning of the word. Such Christians stand firmly on the Word of God and *"are not afraid to die."* (Rev. 12.11). Unfortunately, there is the other side, such Christians believe and act according to the current trend in religious and worldly circles.

To become a true disciple means to be disciplined in every part of life. Discipline means to wake up early in the morning and pray, read the Bible, have a plan to evangelize, and work. We will not win souls for the Kingdom if we wake up at 10 a.m, get moving at 2.p.m., and fall asleep in front of the TV at midnight; yet in the church we proclaim and shout loudly that Jesus is our Lord. If we wish to be true disciples we must "take up his cross and follow the Him" (Matthew 10.38)

▶ **3. WINNING SOULS FOR THE KINGDOM WILL SAVE US FROM GOD'S JUDGMENT**

In *Ezekiel 3.17-18* we read about Good's warning to him as the watchman of the Israelites: *"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way,*

*to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand."*

Jesus Christ said that we are the "salt and the light of the earth". We are the ones who, according to Apostle Paul *"For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor 2.15-16)*

God didn't save us so we could fulfill our own dreams but to become fishers of men by bringing souls to Christ. This is the difference between believers and disciples. Disciples are the ones who seriously understand Jesus' words that we should "make disciples of all nations" knowing that His return is close. But believers, like those 10 virgins, sleep while failing to wait for their bridegroom.

In these last days the Lord has placed you and me as spiritual watchmen and requests from us to boldly announce His gospel and His soon arrival.

Our God is a dreadful God. The Book of Revelation discloses how dreadful His arrival will be. In the last days and in the events that follow His arrival John told us

in the revelation received from God saying that *"In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them..." (Rev. 9.6).*

People who will not belong to Him *"shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." (Rev 14.10)*

God is love; God is a righteous God. Knowing this and knowing that His arrival is close we should be serious and start making disciples in America.

We are responsible for those around us, as Ezekiel was the spiritual watchman over the Israelites. Today we are watchmen over our friends, acquaintances, colleagues at work, at the faculty, and our relatives and as such we must spread the gospel to them.

We must be frightened, we must not stop sharing the gospel with people: *"I have set watchmen on your walls, O*

★ **God didn't save us so we could fulfill our own dreams but to become fishers of men by bringing souls to Christ.**



*Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent.” (Isaiah 62.6)*

If we do not warn people of the coming judgment, we shall be responsible for them before the Lord. The Lord will require their blood from our hands.

This is one more reason why mere believers will not enter the Kingdom; only disciples who do His will. For the mere believer faith was only a personal matter or used for personal gain; they did not care to proclaim the Good News. Yet, for disciple it was public; they cared nothing for personal gain, caring only for the salvation of the unsaved.

*“Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.” (Ezekiel 3.19)*

Where are the disciples? Where is His church? Where are those, as Apostle Paul says, who *“Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.” (2 Cor 5.11)*

The Lords wants to have His watchmen in this town and in this country who will make many disciples. Let’s make our choice and become true disciples and pay the cost up to the end! In this way and only this way will Jesus be with us: *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28.20)*, and we shall avoid God’s judgment.

★ **If we do not warn people of the coming judgment, we shall be responsible for them before the Lord.**

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