

From the June 4, 2009 Issue

An Inspiring Disciple Making Story

Our goal at The Adopted Life is to write the kind of articles we would like to read. I love satire but I don't see much of it in Christian publications, so I wrote this.

There are lot of pastors out there that aren't doing a good job of making disciples. That's why I'm giving this testimony about my skills at disciple making – to inspire all you lazy pastors to get to work. You may say, “Well, how many disciples have you made?” I've made 153 disciples. That's right, *153*, you slackers.

Like all good disciple making pastors (who deserve to be called pastors), I keep a careful record of how many disciples I've made. I have a big ol' cane pole out behind my barn, and every time I make a disciple I cut me a notch in that cane pole with a bowie knife. So 153 is nothing to sneeze at, and that's why I'm qualified to give this awesome testimony you're about to read, and tell all you gospel hicks what the score is. The score is me: awesome; you: not.

I know some of you might be saying right now, “What a liar! He's not made 153 disciples. Maybe 53 but not 153.” Well if you're calling me a liar then I'm calling you a hypocrite – physician make thyself a disciple, that's what I say. That's in the Bible, Jesus said it, you can look it up.

So all you children gather 'round and listen to me as I tell you how it's done.

I want to tell you about the very first of those 153. You never forget your first. It's like taking a scalp or shooting down a MiG fighter – the thrill of it stays with you forever. I was with my brother, a Presbyterian deacon and an excellent shot, when it happened. I guess you could say my brother got an assist on this one but I was the one that ran the ball to the end zone so the notch went on my cane pole, not his.

We were on the third day of a five-day hike through the Roaring Stink Creek Gap of the high Smoky Mountains. We crested a steep ridge in a valley in time to see the rosy-fingered dawn above the legendary Chimney Top Mountain. Just then I heard the telltale crack of a single twig. The sound was a few yards to my right and I knew in a heartbeat that we had a live one. That's right, my skills are so bodacious that I can tell the sound of a hell-bound, un-churched, non-discipled, non-spiritual, lost human being just from the way his foot snaps a twig.

Now, there's a school of thought in disciple making that says you don't need a program to make a disciple. That school of thought is bull-hockey. Not having a program is like fishing without dynamite, hunting deer without a spotlight, or scamming city slickers without a freak show. It's just not to be done.

There's a lot of good programs out there, from Evangelism Explosion to Un-churched Implosion, so I'll allow that there's more than one way to skin a cat. But it must be a cat and you must be skinning it, if you take my meaning. In other words, it must be a disciple and you must be making him, whatever your program is.

My program of choice is called *Help Evangelize Losers*, or *H.E.L.* for short. I just pure love *H.E.L.*, it's the best darn disciple making program I've ever used and I never leave home without it in my back pocket – metaphorically speaking of course, all those hundreds of pages wouldn't fit in my

pocket.

H.E.L. recommends befriending the un-churched person. That's right – being friendly instead of telling him he's going to hell and trying to get him to handle snakes. I know it sounds crazy if you've never used the program. I mean, we all know the guy is going to hell because he's not done what he needs to do to get himself saved and he never will without you there to make it happen. But *H.E.L.* says you can win more flies with honey than vinegar, so to speak, and so you ought to set out the honey and then blast 'em with the vinegar when they're all good and stuck in that gooey honey. It works, believe me, 'cause I've made 153 disciples this way.

Now please note that *H.E.L.* is not some namby-pamby, liberal, bleeding heart, anti-Bible, hippie-fest. They don't say you should be friends with the un-churched person just to be friends with them. They say be friends with the ulterior motive of making that guy into a disciple. So don't worry, it's still disciple making; it's just wrapped in the cloak of friendship. Kind of the way a cheap hot dog gets wrapped in a biscuit when you make pigs-in-a-blanket.

So that's exactly what I did. When that other hiker emerged from the woods into the clearing where we were standing, I sidled right up to him, real friendly-like, and laid on the honey. Oh, you should've seen me! I smiled and talked about the weather and the trails; I even gave him an old pig-in-a-blanket I had in my pack, just in case he was hungry. I was a regular johnny-make-a-friend, I don't mind saying.

And then when I got him good and sticky in the honey, I laid the vinegar on him. "Friend," I said, "do you know Jesus? 'Cause Jesus is in heaven right now waiting for you to get to him. Oh, how he loves you. But he's weak, you see? He can't save you unless you do your part. He can't raise you up in his resurrection and take you to heaven unless you get yourself into him."

We've got to follow Jesus. We've got to follow his example and do things just like he did them. That means telling people that Jesus loves them and they need to follow his example if they ever want to get to him. They need to really follow Jesus, and not just say they're going to. They need to follow Jesus' example by resurrecting themselves and ascending up to heaven where God is – just the way Jesus did it. And that is also in the Bible.

Anyway, you probably know how this story ends. That guy got right down on his knees with me and prayed, and his prayer transported Jesus right out of heaven and into that guy's heart. I don't know what Jesus was doing right then but he sure got a surprise when that hiker's prayer yanked him out of heaven.

But it's not enough to make a disciple – you have to also lead that disciple to a good church. Otherwise they won't learn all the rules to follow so they can resurrect themselves and ascend up to heaven. I wanted my newly made disciple to come to my church; it's only 364 miles from where he lives, but I couldn't convince him to make the drive twice on Sundays, every Wednesday, and again on Thursday for choir practice. So I had to settle for dropping him off at a nearby church in the mountains.

I could tell it was a good church by the sign out front. First of all, the church was named "Grace and Love Church," so I knew they understood grace. Secondly, their motto underneath their name was "A Bible Believing Church," so I knew they believed in the Bible. And finally, they had their message of the week up in temporary letters: "Stop, drop, and roll doesn't work in hell," so I knew

they believed in hell.

What else do you need? Grace, love, the bible, and hell. That's what makes Christianity. I knew we had dropped our little foundling disciple on the doorstep of a home that would really take care of him and teach him all about the Bible and hell. I hope he sticks with it so I can see him in heaven some day.

Well, that's about it. The first notch in my cane pole is now a story of hope, love, and disciple making that belongs to the ages – and to me, so don't infringe on my copyright by quoting from this without my permission.

I know some of you don't like this kind of thing: articles to make you feel guilty so that you'll make disciples. But you need to realize that we're never going to stop pressuring you. We'll keep lecturing you until Kingdom come, so you better get used to it. It's not worked yet, so that's how we know we need to redouble our efforts and promote our programs even harder.

I worry about what might happen if some people (you know who you are) took some of what we say in *The Adopted Life* the wrong way and went too far with it. I mean, it's all well and good to say that the Father has adopted humanity into his life through Jesus, and raised humanity up in Jesus' ascension, but if people go overboard with that, it might mean the end of programs and notching cane poles – and the beginning of being friends with people for no good reason.

I don't think any of us want to live in a world like that.

~ Rt. Rev. Pstr. Jonathan Stepp, M.Div., O.C., G.Q.