



Vantage Point

Pt. 2 - The Billy Madison Effect

A great show! The Apprentice hit reality TV and people flocked to watch as the show's base was built upon an opportunity to become a team member for the famous Donald Trump. Who wouldn't want that in this world? Mr. Trump is one of the wealthiest men and largest business tycoons of our time. The show evolved around people who were to lead and perform certain tasks to prove their ability and worth to the Trump organization. The show was about an opportunity to become an apprentice of Donald himself.



There was just a small problem. Many people proved to have the ability and resume to be considered for the role. Each week Mr. Trump had the opportunity to observe and then make a decision on whom to fire depending on how the task was completed in the infamous "board room" meeting. As the show continued into the season there was always a glaring moment that fascinated me. Everyone always approached each board meeting as if they had it all figured out. Almost everyone was an "expert" and the reason the task failed was because someone else did not do their job. Hardly ever did someone approach the task and board room humble. The show was called "apprentice" and instead of the obvious fact that these people were not where Mr. Trump was, it was as if they had no room to learn. It lead people to perceive the idea of "apprentice" as meaning, "I already have it all together". This was a chance to be mentored and learn from one of the smartest business men in the world, and people were blowing the opportunity over ego and pride, because they believed they already had what it takes.

Yet "apprentice" is a system of training a new generation of practitioners of a skill. Meaning you don't know it all and are willing to be trained to achieve that goal.



It is said of my generation and the one before it that we don't really appreciate mentorship. One online article recently stated for Generation-X (*born between 1965-1977*) that they don't like "authority". They were the most "independent" generation" and they "don't need someone looking over their shoulder". Any mentorship should be more of a "hands off" approach. As for Generation Millennial's (*born between 1978-1998*), although they desire more relationships than Generation X, they still need "authority" in their life. They act like they know it all but need a "structured" environment to be taught and guided.

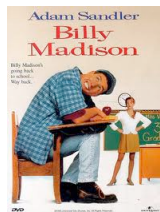
There is something to say about our day and time. For some reason or another, we don't like or accept opportunities to learn. We have been engulfed in a culture that progresses by the "self made" professional who has become an expert as quickly as possible on their own. Why? Because the dollar drives the process. Training, mentoring, learning, takes time and money and we don't have time for that. So instead of training up, and being willing to be trained we have expectations and assumptions that can't be maintained. I have personally never before seen nor observed so many people who have no plans on letting anyone help them in life. 20 year old men think they have figured out the design of the world and need no help from men who have life experiences to help them walk through it. 22 year old first time mother's have read enough books and online articles to know what it takes to raise a baby the "right way", needing no advice or mentoring from mother's who have raised children way before them. Young couples who get married, thinking they know what it takes and how to make it, with no desire to learn from those who have faced those same struggles and situations and have come out the

others side 10, 20, 30 years later. It's also why this generations has faced tougher times, seen more marriages fall apart, and watched people jump from job to job, because in the end most people are not willing to let anyone help them or guide them along the way. It's all arrogantly pushed aside under the excuse "it's just a different world than the one you grew up in". But here is the reality... in a USA Today article this past year it stated that this generation although more educated than any other before it's time has a lower marriage rate, parenting rate, employment rate, and religious rate than that of any other generation.

Why? Because we don't like to be helped. We shun opportunities to learn. We avoid any scenario where someone might be able to help guide us or correct us. We are ok if someone will tell us we are doing everything right, but we don't like to be told that we might be doing it wrong. Gone are the days when mom and dad's advice mattered. When you found a generation sitting at the feet of Grandparents to hear wisdom and life's experiences. To find people who seek out someone older for mentorship because they have already been where I am going. It's our assumption because we have seen someone mess up, we believe there is nothing to offer. It's a conundrum of sorts. We long for people to be real and transparent but if they mess up then we push aside anything we believe they have to offer, because we can figure it out on our own and we can do it better. Yet I observe many who are ignorantly fumbling through life because of an unwillingness to really learn from anyone who may have experienced it before them. **Often forgetting that there is always something to be learned and the best lessons are learned from peoples failed experiences.**



The role of student to teacher has almost vanished. (recap highlights from pt. 1 - Western vs. Eastern)



There is this movie... Billy Madison.

In the movie Billies Father is a wealthy Hotel owner and is ready to hand down the business. There is just one problem, Billy doesn't have the "qualifications". His Father's weasel of a partner does. Billy realizes that the only way to secure his Fathers trust and prove that he is capable of handling his fathers empire is to return to school and start everything over. He has to be willing to go back and learn it all over again to find what it takes to succeed.

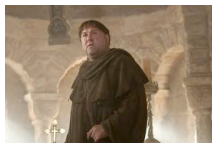
And that is foundation for where we begin today.

Jesus commands us to **"go make disciples"**.

There is just one issue... we don't know what "disciple" even means. How can we obey and act upon something if we don't really understand it. We remember that we live in a culture where we want fast results, because "time is ticking". In our culture **disciple** has been replaced with **convert**. It has become easier to just get people to make a decision and thus assume they can figure out the rest, than it is to actually play a part in the discipleship process.

The word disciple originates from the root word of discipline.

When we hear the word and think in our western world and culture we find pictures of rules, confined life, no joy, boring. We get visual pictures of a monk in some monastery who has separated themselves from the world to commit themselves to a different life and in that find a greater bliss eventually down the road.



Disciple in a biblical view is a student. An imitator. An apprentice.

Luke 6:40 ...all who are fully trained will be like their teacher.

But here is the issue for how we are to learn to become and make disciples. We have to want to be **"fully trained"**.

As we said in part 1, **"discipleship is not a program but a process"**. Our culture wants to define something that is almost foreign to us. We don't understand "apprentice" let alone "discipleship". Remember "disciple" is a something we find biblically in the Bible. Jewish people, in Jewish culture. What we do is try to abstract them out and then put our own definition on what it actually means or looks like to be one.

The goal of a disciple was found in **Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.**

This passage is called the **Shema** in Hebrew. Jews today and in biblical times do/would say this passage 3 times a day or more. Jesus would have done this very same thing. Why? Because this passage was vital to the foundation for what they believed.

For a Jewish person, this was their purpose. First that I would take on the **"yoke"** of the King. **"Yoke" symbolizes that I will submit to a certain way and surrender my life to follow it.** *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is one"*, stated that you believe and follow the one true God. That was a very important statement. There is just one God, one True God who has created it all. This set them apart from others who might believe in other gods, or many gods. This is the "yoke" I take upon myself.

The second part of that passage, *"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"*, was the way in which you were willing to approach it. Simply put, it meant everything you have. It was as if you were stating that, "I am willing to do whatever possible to figure this out". There is nothing I won't learn, can't learn, and am not willing to learn. All of me, all that I have, everything I got wants to do this. I want to achieve and do the best I possibly can and I want to be trained to do so. This is ALL of me. My time, my family, my career, my marriage, my money!

The question would arise that if we quote this and say it, then do we mean it? If not, then it's hypocrisy. If you want to start quoting this passage today in your own routine, I would ask you the same. Why? Do you mean it? Do you believe it? If so, what does that mean for your way of living? See, we have a hard time with this in our culture. It sounds good. It's what we want to be able to say. In my short life and experiences I have seen this on many levels.

[*personal story of internships, apprenticeships, mentoring, training]



Let's go back to "Angle 2" for just a moment. (look back at last week for "Angle 2" understanding)

There is man named Nicodemus. He is a **Pharisee**. Pharisee would take the scriptures and interpret them to the people. Look at this passage in the Bible we find in John chapter 3.

¹ Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again." ⁴ "How can anyone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

⁹ "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. ¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"

Now... what do you see? When typically read through our "press box" camera angle, we have read this to be a passage of scripture about being "born again". Meaning "conversion". Is that true? Yes.

What if there was a little more clarity that could be brought to this passage? What if you took what we have said about being a disciple and put that vantage point into play within this passage? What new pictures might come to life? What might be gained?

Nicodemus comes to Jesus after watching him teach and perform miracles and is NOT trying to trap him or against him. He is actually inquiring to learn more. He even validates that Jesus is teacher/rabbi sent from God. Nicodemus is wanting to know more! But there is a problem, he is "Israel's teacher" and he still doesn't understand? He has been reading, learning, and teaching others and still has missed something. Jesus tells him that he must be "born again". A great phrase the Church has loved to use over the past centuries. But what did that mean for Nicodemus? He asks, "must I enter the womb a second time"? A phrase meaning, must I be reborn into this world?

Jesus is talking to one of the religious teachers of his day and teaching within the context of his own culture. For Nicodemus, he thought he knew it all. He had been "trained" and now was the teacher. What more did he need to learn? What more did he need to be told? He was now the teller. But Jesus explains to him that he must start over. Almost as if he was born all over again. Needing to relearn how to walk and how to talk. How to speak and how to act. He needed to return to the heart of a student so that God could shape him and guide him to become what He originally intended for him. Jesus tells him that **"no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born again"**. For those who think they have it all figured out... they don't! For those who think there is nothing else to learn... guess what? There is a lot more. For those who think I need no help, I don't need guidance, I don't welcome correction... you do. It's why Jesus constantly says we must become "like a child" to enter his kingdom. Children learn, they grow, they ask questions, they are innocent, and most of all have the imagination and ability to believe what the bible actually says is true! God did part the red sea, God did make a whale swallow a man, God did raise his son from the dead!

Becoming a student is key to being a disciple. Arrogance has no place. Pride has no place. It welcomes guidance and correction. It says, I want to be **"fully trained"** so that I might live the life that God originally designed for me. What we believe is the **"best life possible"**. For that to truly happen, then many of us have to **repent**. Repent (**teshuva**) in biblical times simply meant to return. Return to God. But you didn't just return to God, you returned to His way. You repented from living life in **your own way** and design, returning to **His design**. The life He created you to live. For Nicodemus he was to repent. Return. Relearn. Start over. Be "born again", even as old as he was and thought he had learned it all.



In the bible the highest form of worship was not song. That's a response. Study was considered the highest form, the heart of worship you might say. Romans 12 says "offer your bodies", all of you. It's the **"shema"**. Everything you got and it starts with a humble approach to learning.

The heart of a disciple starts here! If I am to be one and I am to help make them then I approach all aspects of life knowing...

Key Vantage Point: You can't be a disciple if you're not willing to learn.

"A student is not above his teacher, but when fully trained can be like His teacher in every way".

Today is about returning to the heart of a student. If we are going to become disciples and make them then it's time to go back to school. Time to learn all over again. Time to return.

We call this "The Billy Madison Effect".

Question is: are you willing to try it?

***Resources for part 1 & 2:**

Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus - David Bivens
http://www.amazon.com/Understanding-Difficult-Words-Jesus-Perspective/dp/156043550X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1296098239&sr=8-1

Follow the Rabbi - Ray Vanderlann
<http://www.followtherabbi.com/Brix?pageID=1458>

Center for Judaic Christian Studies
<http://www.jcstudies.com/> (audio / Jewish roots 101 & Discipleship)

Generation X & Millennial Online Article
<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/mgt08044.html>

USA Today Article
http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2010-02-24-millennials24_ST_N.htm