

KIRBSTONES

ALONG THE NARROW WAY

curb-stone (kürb'stön') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served ⁽¹⁾to hold the material in the roadbed, ⁽²⁾to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and ⁽³⁾to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT.
¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT." - MATTHEW 7:13-14 - NIV

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Evangelist and preacher, Billy Sunday, once said that sitting in the pew of a local church on Sunday will not make you a Christian any more than sitting in your garage will make you an automobile. Garrison Keillor and others have propelled this statement upward and onward to the level of many other absurd, yet legendary, teachings.

Take this incongruous comparison in another direction, and consider how this might play out in our spiritual development. We could establish that all persons, who consider themselves to be Christian, are not disciples.

We (1) claim Christ, (2) attend worship for decades, and (3) celebrate Santa Claus at Christmas and look forward with great anticipation to that *solid* chocolate bunny on Easter. God knows our individual hearts, and we are not discipling others! In other words: CHRISTIANS ≠ DISCIPLES

Whether we are sitting in a garage or sitting in the pew on Sunday morning, we know that some level of activity is necessary for our intended outcomes to be realized. Unfortunately, we will never achieve automobile status. For some people that revelation is a big disappointment.

All kidding aside, this lighthearted beginning is about to turn serious, as we learn what Jesus meant at the end of Matthew's gospel. The action words *go* and *make* indicate more than pew-sitting and celebrating the secular side of Christian holidays. The words we read in Matthew 28:19 illustrate our mission in the world, to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*.

How are we doing with that? Have we asked ourselves recently how we are doing with our *twelve*? And, if we were to dig a little deeper, (1) how are we identifying them, (2) what is our message to each of them, and (3) how are we measuring our success or failure in this designated area of our Christian development, which we recognize as *discipleship*?

19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

Matthew 28:19 — NIV

The process of what we call *discipleship* can be identified, practiced, and guided by the following stages. We (1) *engage*, (2) *invest*, and (3) *invite* others to enter into a relationship with us and Jesus.

(1) We meet others, (2) we get to know them, and (3) we share our passion for Jesus with them. This is such a simple process, yet we shy away from it, and, often, we completely avoid contact on that level.

The question becomes: *If we really care about our obedience to Jesus' teaching, as well as our roles in the salvation and eternity of others, will we engage in the twin outreach practices of mission and witness?*

We will learn and practice a natural way of engaging others, so they will notice that we are different, and with respect to that difference, they will want what we have!

While we cannot view people, who may not know Christ, as special projects, we are to be aware of persons around us as (1) we engage them, (2) invest in them, and (3) invite them in, so they can hear the message of the good news.

It is in this engagement, investment, and invitation that we grow in our own faithful obedience to God. And, I will ask you once more how you are doing with your *twelve*?

Scripture records Jesus with the twelve original followers, and later sending out the seventy-two—*two by two*—to take his message out into the known world of the first century.

There are no recorded sightings of any of these faithful people sitting in their respective garages, and I have found no records of them simply sitting in the pews for one hour on Sunday morning. Therefore, *go* and *make* disciples...

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