



2017 Arizona Mission Offering

MULTIPLY

September 10-17, 2017

1 Cor. 3:6-7 (NKJV)

MULTIPLY! (2 Timothy 2:2) 2017 Arizona Mission Offering Sermon

INTRODUCTION:

The mission of Arizona Southern Baptists is “working together to make disciples of all peoples in Arizona and around the world.” The Centennial Vision calls for us to have 1,000 churches averaging 12 baptisms per year with 2/3 of their average attendance involved in discipleship and giving an average of 10% to the Cooperative Program by 2028. Unfortunately in the last four years, we have made little progress toward these goals. Something is going to have to change if we are going to reach our state for Christ!

In the meantime, our state has been growing in population. Phoenix is now the 5th largest city in the country and Maricopa County is the fastest growing in the nation with an average of 222 people per day moving in. In a one-year period from 2015 to 2016, 81,000 relocated to the largest county in our state. As our population has grown, so has the number of lost people. It is estimated that 80% of the people in our state are unchurched or never churched. With a current population of 6.8 million in Arizona, that means as many as 5.2 million people in Arizona do not have a relationship with Christ and are facing eternity separated from God in hell.

We believe the church is God’s primary instrument for reaching people with the gospel and making disciples. The Great Commission was given to the church to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). As the gospel went out from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth, disciples were made, churches were planted, leaders

were developed, and missionaries were sent out. Jesus established the church and gave us the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven so that others could hear the message of the gospel and spend eternity with God (Matthew 16:18-19). To reach our state, we need more churches and more people sharing this good news!

We have been working on planting more churches in our state for many years. Some years have been better than others, but the progress has been slow. That has been due in part to the number of churches that close their doors each year. It is not enough just to add churches. We need to multiply them! If each of the 460 Arizona Southern Baptist churches in our state could multiply themselves just once in the next 10 years, we would be much closer to reaching the goal of 1,000 churches by 2028! But to multiply churches, we must multiply leaders. And to multiply leaders, we must multiply disciples. That is the process that Paul describes in 2 Timothy 2:2. Listen to what he says...

What you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (Christian Standard Bible).

Timothy was serving as the pastor of the church in Ephesus when Paul wrote these words to him. Paul gave him instructions about a variety of issues relating to pastoral leadership including sound doctrine, qualifications of leaders, and ministry responsibilities. In this verse, Paul describes a process of multiplication which would produce more disciples, leaders, and churches. 2 Timothy has been described as Paul’s last written word to the church. In that light, these words take on even greater significance that still ring true today.

MULTIPLY DISCIPLES

Paul describes three stages of discipleship. First, Paul taught Timothy what it meant to follow Jesus Christ. He taught him the truth of God’s word and the message of the gospel. Paul acknowledges that Timothy had learned about Jesus from his mother and grandmother (1:5) and that he had known the Scriptures since he was a child



(3:15), but Timothy still needed someone to help him understand the truth about Jesus and how to live it out. Paul chose Timothy to go with him on his second mission journey in Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). No doubt, much of what Paul taught Timothy took place on those long road trips and not just when Paul was preaching and teaching! Discipleship is often more about sharing life and ministry together than a formalized process. Either way, the first stage was Paul with Timothy.

A good example of this kind of ministry is what takes place in our Christian Challenge Ministry on college campuses across Arizona. This ministry is not only aimed at reaching college students with the gospel, but helping them become fully devoted followers of Christ. Most of the staff of Christian Challenge began as students who were discipled and developed to serve as leaders. They help begin Christian Challenge Ministries on campuses that do not have any kind of Christian organization or influence. Part of the Arizona Mission Offering goes to support this ministry of multiplying disciples among college students in our state. With over 50 campuses of various types and 500,000 students, that is a big challenge!

How can you and your church multiply disciples? What is the outcome of the ministries of your church? If they do not result in multiplying disciples who know what it means to follow Jesus, it may be time to re-evaluate them. If we are going to multiply, it begins with multiplying disciples.

MULTIPLY LEADERS

The second stage Paul refers to in this verse is Timothy teaching others what he learned from Paul. Timothy was given opportunities to serve in a variety of places along the way — Berea, Macedonia, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, and now Ephesus. It is important to begin sharing what you are learning all along and not to wait to reach some real or imagined level of competence. Sharing what you have learned is part of the process! Now, Timothy has the primary role of teaching and leading at Ephesus, but the responsibility was the same — commit what you have learned to others! As you do, they will learn

what it means to follow Christ with you and like you. It is interesting to note that the company of disciples with Paul in Acts 20:4 includes people from Berea and Thessalonica where Timothy had spent time sharing what he had learned!

Zona Youth Camp has been known for reaching youth with the gospel for many years. This year, however, we had more students than ever before surrender to full-time ministry or missions. Many of those students are part of the “missions track” that goes out to participate in mission projects in the area where the camp is held. One of the leaders in that track this year was Tiffany Ford. She recently graduated from college after serving on a short-term mission with the International Mission Board. Not long ago, she attended Zona Camp as a student. Now she is leading others to be on mission. She is a great example of the ultimate goal of Zona Camp — multiplying disciples who can share with others what they have learned. Part of the Arizona Mission Offering goes to support this multiplying ministry.

Does your church encourage people to begin sharing what they have learned as soon as possible? Sometimes the path to leadership is blocked by limited opportunities or unnecessary barriers. It is great when churches give young people a chance to teach, preach, or lead out in a church. It is one of the best ways to multiply leaders. Some churches complain that they do not have enough leaders. The best solution is to begin developing new ones from within!

MULTIPLY CHURCHES

The third stage of discipleship Paul refers to in 2 Timothy 2:2 is those who have been taught carrying the message to others. This is how the gospel spreads. This is how the number of disciples multiplies. That is what happened in the early church when the believers were persecuted (Acts 8:1). Paul describes those who are able to do this as “faithful” or “trustworthy.” On the other hand, if those who are taught do not share the message with others, they would be unfaithful. The end result is the process is short circuited and multiplication stops. The gospel moves forward when those who have been taught



share with others who can then reach even more. As this happens, the number of disciples, leaders, and churches can multiply!

Think about how this happened from Antioch. After Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, Barnabas encouraged him as he started his journey of following Jesus. When the gospel spread to Antioch, Barnabas took Paul there to teach the new believers. Some of those disciples became teachers and leaders themselves. Then the Lord spoke to the church about sending out Paul and Barnabas to take the gospel further to places where it was not known. As the message was proclaimed, people became believers and started following Jesus. One of those places was Lystra, where two ladies became believers and shared it with their son and grandson named Timothy. Then Paul took him on a mission trip and the rest is history! Now Paul tells Timothy to keep it going by doing the same thing himself.

A good example of how that is happening in Arizona is in the Valley Life network of churches. Brian Bowman came to Arizona to plant the first Valley Life Church in Tramonto north of Phoenix. But the intent from the beginning was to make church planting a part of the DNA of the church. They planted another Valley Life Church in Surprise and then Valley Life Arrowhead. Their latest work is Valley Life Camelback, which meets at First Southern Baptist in Phoenix and is designed to reach students at Grand Canyon University. This is what it looks like to multiply disciples, leaders, and churches! Part of the Arizona Mission Offering goes to help church plants like those in the Valley Life network to multiply!

Every church can't be like Valley Life, but every church can be a part of helping plant a new church. They can partner with others. They can send out people from their own congregation. They can partner to pray for a new church plant. What if every Arizona Southern Baptist church planted just one church over the next 10 years? No matter how many churches resulted from it, it would multiply the number of churches reaching people with the gospel in Arizona. And God would give the increase (1 Cor. 3:9)!

CONCLUSION:

Multiplication is powerful! For instance, if every church in the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention planted one church in the next 10 years, we would have over 900 churches. However, if just a single church reproduced itself in a year and then those two duplicated themselves the next year and that pattern continued for 10 years, we would have over 1,000 churches. When the churches all reproduced the following year — in 2028 — we would have over 2,000 churches! In order for that to happen, we would have to multiply disciples and leaders first. That is what Paul was trying to tell Timothy. Share what you have heard and learned with others who can pass it on even more. That is how to multiply!

When you give to the Arizona Mission Offering, you are helping ministries that are multiplying disciples, leaders, and churches. And your gift is multiplied six ways! The goal of this year's offering is \$160,000. If each church gave just \$350.00, we would exceed the goal like we did last year. But not every church gave. Think about what could happen if every church gave generously and sacrificially to this offering. It would make it possible to multiply disciples, leaders, and churches even more! Please pray about what the Lord would have you give this year to the Arizona Mission Offering and even more about what He wants us to do as Arizona Southern Baptists to multiply!

About the Author

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