

The Starfish Story, Hard Work, And A Simple Plan



To get us started

At your table, share a story about the hardest work you've ever done.

Answers will vary

2 Timothy 1:8-12

In 2 Timothy we hear Paul encouraging a young pastor to work hard, but to also keep it simple. This can only be done when we rely on the power of the gospel. In what ways might overly detailed ministry planning prevent us from relying on the power of the Gospel? (List at least 3 examples of what this could look like in a congregation like Mt. Olive)

A plan with too much detail easily leads to self-reliance, which will naturally hinder the preaching of the gospel (the gospel is the opposite of self-reliance!). A plan with too many details will often not be put into effect properly or you won't be able to find enough "volunteers" leading to a sense of failure/disappointment. This "sky is falling" mentality will easily prevent the preaching of the gospel. If your efforts appear successful, the temptation is to look to your "great plan" as the reason for the success instead of the hand of God.

2 Timothy 2:1-13

In this section Paul paints a picture of simple ministry. In your own words, according to Paul, what does simple ministry look like?

Answers will vary. Good answers will point to Christ being the one who has sent us with a plan. What is that plan? Preach/Teach the Gospel.

Digging Deeper - Matthew 22:34-40

Some sources suggest that the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day had summarized the laws of God into a nice concise list of 613 laws. Yup, you read that right, 613 rules! It's likely, the Jewish leaders confronting Jesus in this section are thinking they're putting Jesus in a tough spot by making him pick one.

Jesus doesn't take the bait. He takes their complex approach to God's law and makes it so much simpler. He takes 613 steps and makes them 2! He simplifies, without negating the 613 specific commands in any way. If the 2 are followed, all 613 will be followed as well.

Sometimes, we make things more complicated than they need to be. Think of 2 examples of church related systems or structures that could be simplified for the sake of accomplishing the goal of Gospel ministry.

For what reasons might we want to consider simplifying ministry structures and "rules."

One By One: The Starfish Story, Hard Work, A Simple Plan Pastor David Rosenau

Pastor David Rosenau is a second career WELS pastor with a very unique story. This week's video is about 5 minutes and features an encouragement to work hard and keep ministry simple.

[*watch video*](#)

Jot down the point of the starfish story in your own words. Share when you're done. **Answers will vary. In the end, you realize you can't save every starfish. Can you save one? Absolutely!**

You cannot save every soul. But think of one soul who is unchurched with whom you could share your faith. (Make sure every participant thinks of at least one soul God has placed into their life who does not attend a church regularly!)

It's really important to help everyone in the group think of at least one person in their life who is not actively in the Word of God on a regular basis.

Application = Use

Jesus' plan for our ministries is found in Matthew 28:18-20.

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The underlined portion of the passage is often referred to as the Great Commission. Here Jesus gives his Church her mission. The command is not to "Go!" Jesus literally says, "When you go..." He was dead and is now alive again! How could they not "Go" tell people!? The command is "Disciple the nations." Since we don't often use the word disciple as a command, most translations read "make disciples." How do we do that? "baptizing" and "teaching" them? Who is "them?" "Them" cannot refer to "disciples" because "disciple" is the verbal command. "Them" points back to "nations." We disciple others by baptizing the nations and by teaching the Word of God to the nations!

Discuss Jesus' plan for his Church in your group. Compare Mt. Olive's ministry, as you understand it, to Jesus' plan. Are we working Jesus' plan? (hint: ask yourself 'Who are the 'nations' to us?')

This discussion can go a number of ways. By participating in world missions as a part of a world-wide church body called a synod, are we discipling the 'nations?' Sure we are. Who are the nations around us, though? Really, it's everyone around us. Both those who already know Jesus as their Savior, and those who do not. How are we doing as we strive to carry out Jesus' mission to everyone around us?

What aspects of our ministry might we bring more in line with Jesus' plan?

The goal here is to foster conversations that ask how every aspect of our ministry contributes to the mission Jesus gave the church. How can making coffee for Bible class help with the mission? Well, if it makes people more comfortable—more at home—while they study, it's a part of the mission! How about decorating committee work? Financial oversight? Public Worship? Soul Sisters? Property? Shepherding? Education? Outreach? Lay ministry (volunteer coordination)? Other?

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Sandwiching Jesus' plan for his Church are two incredibly comforting statements. For what reasons are you glad Jesus sandwiches the plan for his Church with the two underlined statements above?

The power of Jesus is behind the work we do to carry out his mission. The presence of Jesus means we're never alone as we disciple the nations!