



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Deploying Disciples

The Target of Village Discipleship | Part 3

Steve Lombardo | September 20, 2015 | Romans 12:1–21



Today we'll finish our series "The Target of Village Discipleship." If you're a guest here this is what we want to happen for you as you become part of Village Bible Church. We want you to discover Jesus Christ. That's part of our discipleship model. As we begin to encounter people with the gospel of Jesus Christ we ask them to become Christians and that they would commit themselves to becoming disciples of Jesus Christ. They must see their sin, repent and turn from their sin, and live as followers of Jesus Christ.

As we look at our discipleship model as a church, the number one thing we start with is discovering disciples. So if you're a guest here we want you to discover Jesus Christ. Maybe you've been here a long time and you're not a believer in Jesus Christ. We want you to discover the Lord Jesus Christ as well. Come put your faith and trust in Him and be saved. Last week we talked about developing disciples. Once you come to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior we want you to grow in the faith, and we're here to help you become a mature follower of Christ.

We look back on pictures of our kids and realize time goes by so fast. It's kind of sad to see them go from so little to now being in school, growing up and changing. But if we're honest we don't want them to stay that little because if they're staying that little there's a problem. It's the same with a Christian. If someone calls himself a disciple of Jesus Christ, he is called to grow and develop in his faith walk with Christ. That's why we exist as a church.

The second part of our discipleship model is to develop disciples. That's why we have places where you can connect with other people like small groups and Equipping U classes on Sunday nights. We want to disciple and develop our young disciples, too, through AWANA, the children's ministry and student ministries. We are committed in our discipleship process to develop deeper disciples of Jesus Christ.

Lastly we want to deploy disciples. What does it mean to be deployed? What's one of the first things that comes to your mind when you hear the word deployed? You think of the military, and rightly so. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines deploy as, "to organize and send out (people or things) to be used for a particular purpose." So when you think of a deployment you think of a soldier being organized and sent out somewhere else for a purpose. When we talk about a disciple being deployed, we're talking about a follower of Jesus Christ who has been developed and now is being sent out for a purpose. We have scriptural mandates for this all over the place. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Himself at the end of His ministry, after the resurrection before He ascends into heaven, said this in Matthew 28:19–20:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So Jesus' final command to His disciples and us is to be deployed to go and make other disciples. To go can mean several different things. It can mean to go overseas. It can mean to go to your work place. Deployment is not necessarily about the place; it's about the activity. The activity is bringing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to people who are lost. That is a disciple's responsibility.

First John 4:13-14 says, "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world." We've seen it and now we testify that Jesus is the Savior of the

world. That's why Paul can write in 2 Corinthians 5:20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." So we're called to go out with this message of the gospel and proclaim Jesus Christ. The Kingdom grows through disciples who are deployed.

Throughout history we have many examples of those who have been deployed. Probably the most famous missionary is the Apostle Paul who, according to the New Testament, planted 14 churches. It's probably over the 20 mark but in the New Testament we have record of at least 14 churches that he planted. We read about some of the things that he faced during his time as a missionary and disciples who had been deployed.

Let's lay a foundation of why we are deployed and what to do when we are. In 2 Corinthians 11:23–28 Paul says:

²³Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

How was this past week for you? The Apostle Paul was deployed and while he was calling people to faith in Jesus Christ, he faced great hardships.

Hudson Taylor was a missionary a hundred years ago and is the most widely acclaimed missionary in China's history. During his 51 years of service with China Inland Mission he established 20 mission stations. CIM brought 850 missionaries to the field, trained some 700 Chinese workers, raised four million dollars—a lot of money back then—and developed a witnessing Chinese church of 125,000. It has been said that at least 35,000 Chinese were converts of his and that he baptized some 50,000. He demanded of the missionaries who came with him that they would take on the appearance, language and culture of the Chinese and that they would clearly deliver the gospel message, which is unchanging through Jesus Christ. Hudson Taylor said:

China is not to be won for Christ by quiet, ease-loving men and women... The stamp of men and women we need is such as will put Jesus, China and souls first and foremost in everything and at every time—even life itself must be secondary.

This proved true for Hudson Taylor. He had a grueling work pace. Despite poor health and bouts with depression he worked harder and harder to reach China for Jesus Christ. In 1900 it became too much. He had a complete physical and mental breakdown. The personal cost of Taylor's vision was high on his family as well. His wife Maria died at the age of 33 and four of his eight children didn't live to ten years of age. "Even life itself must be secondary." Hudson Taylor was a deployed disciple of Jesus Christ.

Jim Elliot was a missionary to the Auca Indians in the jungles of Ecuador. It was a pioneering work done with four others. They were starting to witness to a totally unreached people group. Something went wrong, and on a beach where their plane had landed, these five were killed with spears. Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Being deployed is serious business. This is the business that we're in at Village Bible Church. We want to discover and develop disciples but we don't stop there. We don't stop in the pews, but send out missionaries to our backyards and around the world. Peter Gunderson was my high school youth pastor who invested in my life and showed me what it was to follow Jesus Christ. He was deployed as a disciple and made a difference in my life and in the lives of many other young people.

Ask yourself this question: is God calling you to go? The answer is yes. Have you answered the call?

Our text today is Romans 12:1–21. We will see what is being taught here and apply it to this idea of being deployed.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1. Disciples are deployed to be different

Do not be conformed

We see this right away: *"present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world..."* Disciples are deployed to be different from the world. Do you remember what deployment means? You're sent out with a purpose and an activity. Part of that activity is to be different from the rest of the world. *"Do not be conformed to this world..."*

One of my favorite examples of this is Daniel. In Daniel 1 we see the story of Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and what happens to them when the nation of Israel, whom they are a part of, gets taken over by the Babylonians. King Nebuchadnezzar comes to Jerusalem, destroying and conquering the city. Historically the Babylonians were some of the most fierce, gruesome, smart and conquering peoples on the planet. Here's why they were so good at what they did: they would go in and lay waste a city or a country. They would put the heads of the people who opposed them all around the city gates, and then they would take the best and brightest of who was left, taking them to Babylon to be trained up as Babylonian servants.

After Israel was taken over, Daniel 1:3–7 says:

Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

So the king has Daniel and his three friends—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—brought into his palace. They're some of the best and brightest from the nation of Israel. So what's he going to do with the best and brightest of these people whom he conquered? He's going to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.

The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

These three smart, tough, strong, handsome teenagers are brought in to the king's palace and here's how they're asked to conform:

1. They were called to conform to the **ideology** of the Babylonians. They were to study the literature—so they learned the history of Babylon. They were going to learn the Babylonian perspective about the nation of Israel (which wasn't a very good perspective). They were going to learn the language of the Babylonians and hopefully forget their native tongue.
2. Not only ideology was forced upon them but **idolatry**. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table—some of the best food but it was sacrificed to idols which was against Jewish law. This was idolatry for Daniel and his three friends.
3. They were being asked to conform to the culture in ideology (how they see the world), then having them commit idolatry by going against their God and what they knew to be right, and then they were given a new **identity**. We know Daniel by his Hebrew name but we know his three friends by their Babylonian names. They were being conformed to the Babylonians. They'd have them commit idolatry and forget their God—the God of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They changed their names to have them forget their Jewish identity and then when they were fully trained and conformed, they would send them back to their home country to pass on the Babylonian way of life and culture.

This is how the Babylonians ruled the known world and they were good at it. Even though we don't face the Babylonians today, we do face just as strong an enemy who wants to conform us to the pattern of this world. It's the culture in which we live. We might stay behind closed doors; we might have homeschools or our own Christian schools, but there is nothing we can do to isolate ourselves from the pressure of the world and the culture in which we live.

Let me see if you can finish this song for me: "Call United Auto Insurance 773-202-5000..." Good—you're not very worldly. "...we've got you covered Chicago." Let me try one more: "588-2300..." [Empire.] There's the worldliness right there. We hear jingles and they get in our heads, but there are much more diabolical ways the culture is conforming us to its image, and it's not into the image of Jesus Christ. It's sin.

1. Sin is **selfish**. "What do you want? What do you desire? What do you want to pursue? What don't you like?" It's all about you.
2. Sin is **satanic**. It's from the enemy himself. Isn't it interesting that the Devil doesn't come as a nasty-looking creature. The Bible says he comes as an angel of light and he looks good (2 Corinthians 11:14). There's so much stuff that looks good in our culture, but it's from the pit of hell. We get used to it and our kids get used to it.
3. Sin has **saturated** our culture. It has saturated our land. If you think your kids aren't impacted by our society, ask them about the MTV Video Music Awards. "We don't let them watch that!" That's good but I bet they know a lot more about it than you do.

Culture is seeking to conform us to the pattern of this world. Disciples are deployed to be different in it. Daniel was different. Daniel 1:8 says, "*But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank.*" Daniel made a decision to make a difference. He went along with the ideology. "I'll learn your language and literature. I'll read the books you want me to read. I'll even go along with the new name. You want to call me that name? That's fine. But I'm not going along with idolatry. I'm not going along with eating that food and drinking that wine that has been sacrificed to idols. It's against God Almighty and I will not do it."

Be transformed

We're deployed not to be conformed but to be transformed. How does the Scripture talk about being transformed? "*Be transformed by the renewal of your mind*" (Romans 12:2). That comes through applying God's Word. I'd like to think that's why you're here today. It's not just to sing songs and have fellowship with others—even though it's great to have those—but you come to renew your mind through the Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life, mind and heart, ultimately changing you to be more like Jesus. That's why you're here. You're being renewed.

That's why you're in a small group—so you can do life with other disciples. You're struggling with the same issues and you're under the same pressure to conform to culture, but we're in this together so we're battling together and encouraging one another. Renew your mind. Don't be conformed.

Then you will know the Will of God

What's the result of not conforming but being transformed by the renewal of your mind? The end of Romans 12:2 says, "*that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*" I used to think the will of God was something way out there. "What is God's will for me? Does He want me to go through this store? Does He want me to pursue this way of life? Does he want me to marry this girl? What does He want me to do?" There's no mystery with God's will in this text. When you are not conforming to the world you are being transformed by the renewing of your mind, then you're going to know what God's will is and you will walk in it. God's will is not some mysterious path that you have to work hard to discover. As you're growing as a disciple and being deployed to make a difference in the world, God's going to lead you down the path of His will. So disciples are deployed to be different.

2. Disciples are Deployed with Diversity

Paul goes into this section and starts talking about different parts of the body of Christ. Just like different parts of the members of your physical body each have different jobs, so we all have different roles.

We are to be the same in our attitude – humble

We are called to be the same in one way though. Verse three says, “*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*” Even though we’re deployed with our diversity, we’re to have the same type of attitude. We’re to be humble.

This reflects a great passage about Jesus Christ in Philippians 2:6–8. Your attitude should reflect that of Jesus:

[W]ho, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Have that attitude, disciple.

So we’re the same in our attitude but we’re deployed with diversity and different gifts. When God saves you He gives you one or more spiritual gifts to use in His Kingdom work in the church. He has given you specific gifts to use. Do you know what they are? Do you know how God has gifted you? Has God gifted you with hospitality? If He has then be hospitable. Has God gifted you with mercy? Then show mercy. The list goes on and on.

One of the things we have here at Village Bible Church is PLACE Ministry and Patricia Butts leads that for us. PLACE Ministry helps you discover how God has gifted you. PLACE stands for a number of different things:

- Personality discovery
- Learning spiritual gifts
- Abilities awareness
- Connecting passion with ministry
- Experiences of life

I encourage you to do the PLACE assessment which can be done online and will give you an assessment of your personality and spiritual gifts. You’ll have to see if it’s accurate, and the only way that you can do that is get involved in the ministry of the church and see if God blesses the ministry into which you enter. If you feel like you have the gift of evangelism, go out and start sharing your faith and see what happens. If you feel like you have the gift of mercy, go to a nursing home and see what God does. So disciples are deployed with diversity.

3. Disciples are Deployed to Make a Difference

In the rest of the chapter we have over 20 short, bullet-point commands for disciples concerning how we are to be different from the world in order to make a difference in this world.

So we are called to be different and we are different with diverse gifts, but all of that is so we can make a difference where we are and possibly somewhere else.

First, we see that disciples are deployed to make a difference in the lives of other disciples (verses 9–13). Love must be sincere. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Have devotion to one another. You make a difference in this world when you get involved in other Christians’ lives and you minister to them according to your gifts. That begins with genuine love.

We have a lot of people in our church involved in this kind of ministry of loving one another with brotherly love and giving to those in need. Verse 13 says, “*Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*” There are lots of people here who are making a difference in other believers’ lives.

There are two families in our church who have been in need and we have been praying for and giving to them. Next year there will be more families. Many of you have stepped up with brotherly love and have given of your time, your prayers, your finances, gift cards, plants and encouragement to support these families. I want to say God bless you for that. You are making a difference in their lives. You are being deployed to make a difference as a disciple.

But there are many others here who have not taken that step yet and committed to being deployed. You haven’t come forth to even show love to other believers. You’re hanging back. Maybe you’ve been through a season of hurt—and I understand that—but you’re still hanging back. You’re receiving a lot of knowledge, Bible teaching and love from other people but you have yet to

step out yourself. God is calling you today to go and make a difference even in other Christians' lives. Would you do that? Would you commit to the lives of those who are sitting around you?

Disciples are deployed to make a difference in the lives of other disciples. Disciples are also deployed to make a difference in the lives of people who are not yet disciples. So we're deployed within the Christian community and then we're deployed outside to those who aren't disciples. Our passage says:

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them... ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil... "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Trust in the Lord to take care of justice. You don't know how many times I've prayed that God would let me be the instrument of His vengeance. But that's not the way it works. We're called to make a difference in the lives of people who aren't believers.

We are called to make a difference by overcoming evil with good. Verse 21 says, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*" This really is the gospel: overcoming evil with good through Jesus conquering sin, death and the devil on the cross. All of your sin—past, present, future—was on the cross with Jesus. The power of darkness was put under the authority of the cross of Calvary. Revelation 12:11 says we defeat the enemies of darkness on the ground by the blood of the Lamb. Death has been defeated and swallowed up in the victory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54–56). It is overcoming evil with good.

Come to faith in Jesus Christ and be forgiven of all your sin, not because you're good in your own righteousness but because of Christ and His righteousness and goodness. He paid it all for you. By God's grace and mercy, He calls you to be a disciple who is being developed and ultimately who's being deployed to do the same thing. You are deployed to overcome evil with good. You're deployed with the gospel of Jesus Christ. You are now therefore Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). You implore other people to come to Christ. "Be reconciled to God!" (2 Corinthians 5:20). This is the way the church grows: through His people.

Jesus died and was buried 2,000 years ago, but He rose from the dead. When He rose from the dead He appeared to over 500 of His followers. These followers who were His disciples were weak and scared at the arrest and prosecution of Jesus Christ. These disciples who were running for their lives when the authorities came to get Jesus are now emboldened by the risen Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit to go and proclaim the name of Jesus, even under threat of death. All of the original disciples went to imprisonment or to their death for the name of Jesus Christ the risen Savior. Their faith and actions started the spread of the gospel.

Tradition tells us Thomas took the gospel from Jerusalem east into India where he gave his life for Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul took the gospel west and soon Christianity was being practiced in most of the city centers of the Roman Empire. Paul gave his life for Jesus, probably in Rome, and Christianity began to spread so quickly that by the fourth century Constantine had to recognize Christianity as a legitimate religion in the Roman Empire. Then in the sixth century Christians weren't only in the cities, but churches were also popping up in the country. People started to declare the truth and the good news that Jesus saves. The whole earth began to hear of Jesus Christ.

Fast forwarding, the gospel began to spread further. Three hundred years later St. Patrick took the gospel to Ireland. [We pathetically celebrate that by dyeing the Chicago River green and drinking lots of beer.] Two years later St. Boniface took the gospel to Germany and then the gospel spread throughout the rest of Europe. By the 11th century the gospel had penetrated north into Scandinavia and was met by strong, pagan opposition. Missionaries, monks and priests made disciples of Jesus Christ even under the threat of death and the gospel spread north.

The 1500's saw the rise of the reformers such as Martin Luther, Zwingli and John Calvin. Their writings were widely publicized, because 50 years earlier Guttenberg had invented the printing press. The good news of the salvation of Jesus Christ came to the Americas with the explorers and then with the pilgrims. Then in the 18th century The Great Awakening occurred in this country and across the pond. Men like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, John and Charles Wesley were preaching to thousands upon thousands out in the open that they can have hope in Jesus Christ and be saved; though their sins be as scarlet, they can be made as wool (Isaiah 1:18).

The gospel spread even through the ministry of Plano Bible Church when it started a Bible study back in 1971 at the home of Omar and Rose Sutherland which led to the formation of Village Bible Church in Sugar Grove. Our present site here was purchased in 1974. A metal building (which later became the gymnasium) was turned into a fellowship center in 1975. About 30 years later the complete building that we find ourselves in today was finished. Then two campuses were added to proclaim the gospel out west in Shabbona and to continue the gospel work that was started in Aurora. Two years ago Campus Español was

started with the hopes of reaching thousands upon thousands of native Spanish speakers in Aurora with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Directly and indirectly we support 17 missionaries around the world as they are deployed with the good news. This is what Jesus says to us: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”* (Matthew 28:18b-19a). Will you go? Will you go to your backyard, your neighbor, another state, another country? Will you be a disciple deployed right here from our church?

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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