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Disciple Into Maturity

My daughter, Ava, has always loved turtles. She's done a great job of raising a baby turtle up from the size of a large coin to full grown. She calls him Hercules, and he is now as big as a tennis ball. Together we began to research sea turtles. We watched documentaries and looked through reports of this beautiful creature of the ocean. One amazing story shared a turtle that was found in China and lived close to four hundred years. That's quite a bit of the world's history it must have lived through in all of those many years.

Sea turtles can grow up to five feet in length, and adult sea turtles can weigh up to 1500 pounds! The female sea turtle lays eggs about five times a year. She goes onto the beach and digs a hole to leave one hundred to one hundred and fifty eggs. She buries them and leaves them to hatch on their own in about six weeks. These tiny hatchlings all start to hatch about the same time, dig themselves out of the sand and make a mad dash for the ocean. Since they are only two inches in length, they are an appealing snack for crabs, birds, lizards, and many kinds of fish. If you've ever seen a video of this, it can be quite the scene of murder and death as these little babies in mass head to the ocean seeking survival as the predators lie in wait, devouring as many as they can.

It is quite the dangerous gauntlet that each hatching of these little turtles faces with the hope of surviving. Some estimate that only one out of one thousand survive to adulthood. That means that with ten females laying an average amount of eggs, only one sea turtle will survive to maturity. Some say the actual number of survivors is upward of one in ten thousand hatchlings. That means that less than one percent of born babies live their life to fullness. That is the survival of the amazing sea turtle in the wild wilderness of the ocean.

Unfortunately, the survival rate of many people who ask the Lord into their hearts isn't much better. Statistically, I have heard that the number of people who continue in church after asking Jesus in their heart from street ministry, door to door evangelism, or from large crusades is only around four to six percent. The numbers are significantly higher when the individual is personally connected to someone who leads them to Jesus.

I know the desire of the church has been correct to bring as many people to Christ as possible. We know that God's heart is that every person finds salvation before they leave this earth. 1 Timothy 2: 3-4 *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

From this truth, we have encouraged many believers to step out and share the Gospel in every way possible. Overall it's been successful in spreading the Good news to many people all around the world. The sad statistic is that the majority of those who accept Christ in these forms of outreaches end up stopping somewhere along their path. Like the little baby turtles, they are devoured by the many enemies that are out there in the wild wilderness of this world. They are children who never grow into maturity, and it's the church's fault.

Our focus to go and save the world is only half of the Gospel's message for us. It says in Matthew 28:18-20, "*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*" Amen.

Jesus said to go and make disciples by teaching them to observe all things. His method to winning the world over was not only birthing new children into the kingdom but caring and protecting them by teaching them and continuing to walk with them until they know who they are in Christ. I feel that this is lost in much of our church world today. When our focus is only getting as many people as possible to get saved, we have ended up losing the majority of them back into the world. My prayer is as many as possible would still make it to heaven. As much as the Father desires heaven for everyone, the devourer desires the opposite.

I was impressed when one minister I know bragged about personally seeing over twenty thousand salvations in his ministry as a street evangelist. I was equally shocked as he shared that he did not even take the time to share the complete message of salvation. He would get people to simply say a prayer as they repeated the words he said, and he counted that as a salvation. I said to myself, "don't they need to believe in their heart as well as speak the word?"

The landscape has been littered with many broken people, savaged by the enemy because they were left out on their own and not protected by discipleship and teaching. These won't get to mature into their calling and their place in the Body of Christ. Let's pray for them and believe for a revival of life and truth in their hearts. I'm believing that many new people will be born again and for many of these abandoned babies to be rescued and hope placed back into their hearts.

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