

A Word Before

“And they devoted themselves to . . .” —Acts 2:42

The success of my latest book *Eats with Sinners* has been both humbling and exciting. *Eats with Sinners* (EWS) was named one of *Outreach Magazine*'s recommended evangelistic resources of the year in 2010.

Since the release of EWS, I've seen God do amazing things through a simple book and its simple approach to sharing our faith. As I write this, over 150 churches all around the country are using EWS to reach people like Jesus did. EWS is even being used in China to help Pastors train their house church members to share their faith with their neighbors.

In the church with which I serve we are seeing many people accept Christ. Just last year we baptized 102 people and had 185 additions, which created a really good problem for us: we have a lot of new Christians who need to be discipled. So, the leadership team of the church started looking around for a good discipleship plan that would help us raise up disciples who were passionately in love with Jesus.

There are some good plans out there but they were all essentially teaching new Christians the same things: read your Bible more, pray more, go to church every week, start tithing, tell lost people about Jesus, and don't sin, which are all really good things to do but we didn't want to give our new Christians a list of To Do items; we wanted to give our new Christians an opportunity to fall more in love with Jesus.

We wanted something more for our new Devotees.

Yes...”Devotees.”

In the New Testament, the word that is used more than any word to define followers of Christ is the word, “Disciple.”

I love that name!

I’m a humble but proud disciple of Jesus Christ and I wish to take nothing away from that biblical term. So, let me be very clear here: By referring to followers of Christ as “Devotees” in this book, I am not suggesting that the name “Disciple” be discarded. By no means!

That being said, the word “Disciple” may carry some baggage with both long-term followers of Christ and new believers. So throughout this book—and where appropriate—I will use the term “Devotee” because I believe it most clearly defines the kinds of Disciples of Christ I hope to raise up.

The standard definition of a “Disciple” is someone who is a student or follower of a teacher, leader, or philosopher.

The word “Student” takes my mind to a classroom where I find myself listening to lectures, taking a test for which I’m not prepared, and fighting to stay awake.

The word “Follower” puts my mind in a long line at Walt Disney World, in the hot sun, with a bunch of other people walking slowly and steadily towards a destination that may or may not be truly "magical."

A “Devotee” is someone who is a fanatical adherent to an individual or system of beliefs.

The word “Devotee” sets my heart on fire!

Yes, I am a student and follower Jesus Christ, but I want so much more than knowledge and proximity to Christ. I want passion for Christ! I want to be a fanatical devotee!

Do I have to say again that I’m not preaching against being a “Student” and “Follower” of Jesus? Absolutely not!

What I am doing is preaching...or better yet, writing to raise up a generation of disciples who are fanatically devoted to Christ.

I want you to reconsider both what it means to be fanatically devoted to Christ and what could happen if we honestly evaluated the process by which most churches currently “make disciples” through a new paradigm: love for Jesus.

Churches all over the country are reporting many new disciples as they implement the ingredients for evangelism as detailed in my book, *Eats with Sinners*. Regularly, I’m contacted by churches that have just finished using my book for a church-wide program and want to know, “What now? Do you have anything we can use to disciple all of these new believers?”

For several years I’ve had to say, “No, not yet.”

As I considered writing a sequel to *Eats with Sinners* and prayed about it, I became more and more convinced that it needed to be a book that helped new Christians to build an intentional relationship with God.

In *Eats with Sinners* I define evangelism as an intentional relationship through which someone is introduced to Jesus. In this book I define discipleship as an intentional relationship through which a Christian helps another Christian to fall more in love with Jesus.

So, here it is.

A book for disciples that does not contain a plan for being a better disciple, but a plea for all disciples to be better at loving Jesus.

A book for disciples who want to love Jesus more today than they did yesterday.

A book for disciples who prefer affection to obligation.

A book for disciples who aren’t content with a plan for becoming a better disciple of Jesus.

A book for disciples who want a deeper relationship with Jesus because they know that they know that they know true discipleship is not a set of rules to be lived, but a Savior to be loved.

A book by a disciple of Jesus who knows that disciples who love Jesus will serve Him, follow Him, give to Him, tell people about Him, and live for Him—not because they have too, but because they want to.

A book for disciples who want to be as devoted to Christ as He is to us.

A book for disciples who want to be fanatically devoted to Christ.

A book that presents a new paradigm for making disciples: love.

A book that raises up a generation of disciples who prefer to be called, "Devotees."