

Kingdom Builders: A Plan for Ordinary Disciples

Words like *radical* and *extreme* show up a lot today. It seems if you are not doing something radical or extreme, then you are wasting time. Everyone should be changing the world all the time in amazing ways – and getting it done by next week!

I understand that words like radical and extreme have a motivational component. They can inspire us to get moving. However, when overused they work against motivation. The reason is that most of us are not amazing. We are pretty ordinary. So the constant drumbeat of radical-and-extreme is discouraging. It tells us that ordinary is bad and, since we are ordinary, our lives will not count for much.

I fear the radical-and-extreme message is infiltrating the church. I am not against inspiration; I am against appeals to pride that tell us how super-capable and world-changing we are as disciples of Jesus. I am against messages that denigrate ordinary discipleship in favor of inflated views of our individual potential.

Here is the plain truth: *The Lord uses ordinary disciples to build his kingdom*. Christians of ordinary ability, through lives of quiet devotion and service, are used by God to increase his rule and reign in a sin-broken world. That should come as very good news to us ordinary folks.

So, if you are tired of the pressure to be radical and extreme; if you are tired of trying to come up with ever more amazing feats of discipleship to impress other uber-disciples on Facebook; if you are ready to embrace the ordinary life of a follower of Jesus, I have a plan for you. We will call this a *kingdom-building plan for ordinary disciples*.

1. *Commit to your local church*. Think of what happens through your local church each week. Think of the worship that is expressed to God. Think of the children who learn about Jesus's love. Think of the young people in whom a biblical worldview is shaped. Think of the people in your community who are helped. Think of the reading and teaching of God's word. Think of the missionaries supported, the friendships fostered, and the lost who are found. The local church is the institution through which the Lord does his work in the world. It is the corporate body through which ordinary disciples are built up and deployed for service. Be an active, committed member of your local church. That is the first order of business for an ordinary disciple.

2. *Speak well of disciples in other churches*. Churches come in all shapes and sizes and ministry styles. Churches also differ on matters of important, but secondary, doctrine. Though we have differences, disciples in orthodox Christian congregations should speak well of one another. Those who hold to the historic Christian faith have much more in common than we have in conflict. Let's speak well of one another to a watching – and skeptical – world. All corners of God's kingdom do not have to look just like your corner.

3. *Develop the devotional habits of Scripture and prayer*. A disciple listens to God through Scripture and communicates with God through prayer. These are foundational, life-long practices for

disciples. Through Scripture and prayer, the Lord builds his kingdom in us and through us. These spiritual disciplines are the gateway to other discipleship habits. Through them God shapes us for his glory and service.

4. *Model financial stewardship in your family.* Honor the Lord with the tithe given through your local church, remembering all the kingdom work it supports (see 1 above). Give your freewill offerings to God-honoring endeavors as he gives you opportunity and conviction. Help people who are in need. Let the spirit of joyful generosity reign in your household. Let your kids catch it and learn to participate in it. Financial stewardship is a concrete way that ordinary disciples build the kingdom every day.

5. *Do your work well (paid or not).* Whatever you do, do it for the Lord. Make the quality of your work, and the attitude with which you do it, an offering to the One who saves you by his grace. Let it be a testimony to those around you. God builds his kingdom through ordinary disciples who are bankers, salespeople, homemakers, library volunteers, emergency responders, soldiers, caregivers, students, cooks, maintenance workers, and a million other vocations. Ordinary disciples view their daily work as something done for the Lord.

6. *Share your life with a younger disciple.* “Younger” might mean age or experience as a disciple. Be a disciple who invests in making other disciples. Help train someone in the habits of Scripture and prayer. Walk alongside a brother or sister who is going through a rough patch. Teach Sunday School or VBS or AWANA. Ordinary disciples help other ordinary disciples grow and become kingdom-builders.

7. *Prioritize relationships with non-disciples.* Look for persons of peace who, though not disciples themselves, are open to friendship with you. Be a friend to them, seek their good, and share your faith in Christ as God opens the door. Pray that the Father would draw them to his Son. God saves the lost through the influence of ordinary disciples. Make such relationships a priority in your life.

8. *Support a cause that promotes biblical justice.* Biblical justice is feeding the hungry, welcoming the refugee, advocating for the mistreated, helping the poor and disadvantaged, and extending mercy to the hurting. Find a cause or two that does these things in the name of Jesus Christ and get on board with them. If you need a place to get started, try <https://www.worldrelief.org/>.

9. *Have an estate plan that prioritizes kingdom giving.* Extend your practice of financial stewardship to what will happen with your assets after your earthly life. Make sure the ministries that mattered most to you in this life – especially the local ones through your church and other partners - are strengthened when you enter the next life. Ordinary disciples can leave a legacy.

10. *Trust in the Lord.* Finally, have faith that the Lord who saved you and turned you into his disciple will use all the above to further his purposes. The faithful life of an ordinary disciple, surrendered to Christ over the long haul, will yield a remarkable amount of fruit (see John 12:24). You do not have to be amazing, just faithful. The One who lives in you and works through you is plenty amazing all by himself.

May his kingdom come and his will be done through us, his ordinary disciples.