

## DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

# “Making Disciples”

5/13/12

All verses from New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.



Matthew 28:18-20 “Jesus came and told his disciples, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

Today is Mother’s Day and I considered interrupting our new teaching series, to do a traditional Mother’s Day talk. But the more I thought about it, the more appropriate it seemed to use this occasion and what it represents to offer a contemporary analogy of Christ’s training of the twelve.

Today I’m talking about Making Disciples. Certainly Christians Moms have to be some of the best disciplers around. I hope you moms will forgive me, but I hope to honor you by showing how your role of motherhood is one of the best examples of New Testament discipleship that we have in our culture.

Moms nurture and train and teach and discipline, and in the end, send a mature healthy young adult out into the world. Today I want to show you how Jesus disciplined and then at the end, and I think you’ll see how methodology works for moms, too.

Discipleship like motherhood begins with a birth. A spiritual child is born into the world. Jesus used physical birth as an analogy because it beautifully represented what happens spiritually.

A good teacher, as Jesus was, often uses analogies, metaphors or illustrations from life that are familiar and easily understood, to teach concepts and truths that unknown or less familiar.

John 3:1-6 "After dark one evening, a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, a Pharisee came to speak with Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are proof enough that God is with you.'

Jesus replied, 'I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God.' 'What do you mean?' exclaimed Nicodemus. 'How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?'

Jesus replied, 'The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.'"

Do you see what Jesus is doing here? Just like I said, the Master Teacher is trying to help the religious leader grasp a concept he is totally unfamiliar with – spiritual life. This is something completely unheard of for 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews. Spiritual life is never mentioned in the Old Testament.

Discipleship is the process of taking newborn spiritual babes and helping them become healthy mature spiritual parents. Notice I didn't say "spiritual adults." Adults can give birth to children but that doesn't mean they can parent.

Jesus' intention was to train and equip each of his followers to become healthy effective spiritual parents. And that brings me to my first point. If we as a church are to be effective in making disciples we must first be

## 1<sup>ST</sup> Intentional

By the way, if you were not here last Sunday, if you missed the opening message of this series, you are behind and we need to catch you up. You can go to our web site, Camcc.net and listen to or download the message. Here, let me show you how.





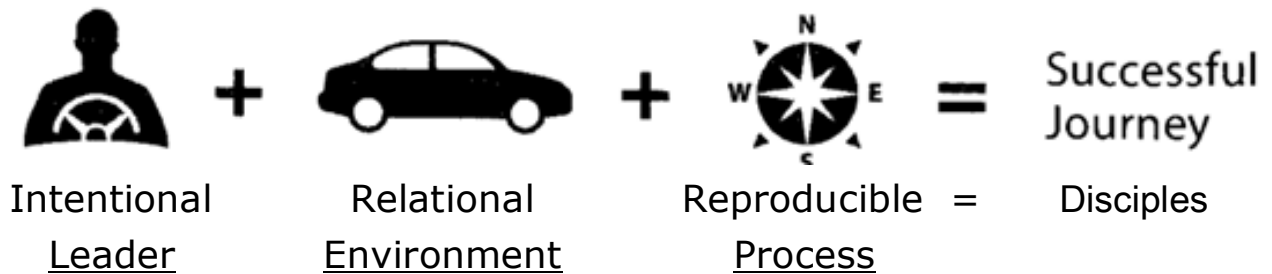
On your computer type in camcc.net. When the first page appears, go down to the bottom and click on the word "media". When the next page appears, click on "listen to sermons." Finally, click on the title, "Challenge to Discipleship."

Or, you can just go out to the lobby and pick up a printed copy of *Challenge to Discipleship*; the transcribed copy of last week's message; Then read it.

Last week in my talk, I introduced our car diagram. If you are going on a journey across country, you need a driver, a vehicle and a map.



That's a lot like our discipleship process – the driver is the intentional leader; the vehicle is a relational environment and the map is a reproducible process.



Every group needs an intentional leader – someone who takes the initiative to gather the group, synchronize schedules, get them together. The relational environment is the group itself: a gender specific group of 3 or 4 (triad or quad) meeting together regularly, preferably weekly.

The map or reproducible process is our curriculum, the Discipleship Essentials workbook. It's what keeps us on track, guides us through a training regimen that God can use to grow us into the likeness of Christ.

Jesus was thoroughly intentional about his discipleship process. One of the first things he did was to gather a small group around him that he could train and equip for the purpose of spreading his message around the world.

In Mark 1 Jesus begins by recruiting a group of fishermen. A short time later he added a tax collector from Capernaum and then others. In Mark 3:14 it says, "He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach."

It's estimated that Jesus spent approximately 90% of his time with that small group of men. I pointed out last week that he often abandoned the crowd, sent them home and went off to spend time teaching his disciples.

Now, not everyone he invited into his group responded. Some found the demands too high and opted out. I call this initial inertia. Sometimes it's hard to get the ball rolling; to get people started and moving.

And then the process of helping them grow requires patience. Seventeen times the phrase "little faith" shows up in the Gospels describing the spiritual condition of the disciples.

We had a tree in our front yard that was not working out so well. We took it out so we could replace it. I was told that walnut trees used to grow around here though I've never seen one. I called Green Thumb and they told me they would be getting some in after the first of the year.

I called back in January and went down to pick one up. It was a bare root tree, without a single limb or leaf. It looked more like an 8' javelin as I was carrying it out of the store.



I took it home and planted it in my front yard. I staked it and went out every day to check for any signs of life. Nothing; one week; two weeks; three weeks; a month, two months; nothing. (1/16/12)

Jackie began to chuckle at me. My walnut tree was nothing but an expensive stick. It wasn't growing.

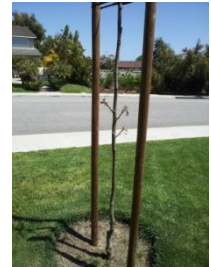


Then on April 6th (4/6/12) I go out and there are little buds popping out of my stick. I dragged Jackie out of the house to come and see my tree. I took pictures.

A week and a half later - here is another picture. This is April 15<sup>th</sup>.



This is April 24<sup>th</sup>. And this is May 4<sup>th</sup>.



Today -



The point of all this is that patience is required and just as Jesus had to be patient and persistent to see his disciples grow, just as moms have to be patient and persistent to see children mature, we have to be patient with each other, encouraging each other and allowing God in his time to produce spiritual growth.

The second requisite or requirement if we as a church are to be effective in making disciples, we must be

## 2<sup>ND</sup> Relational

In our Discipleship Initiative the triad or quad provides the relational environment. Remember Jesus appointed the twelve "to be with him."

Christianity is unique in its view that God has invited us into His family. He is our Father and we are his children. You won't find that idea of God as our Father in Islam or most other religions. God chose to use the family analogy to represent our relationship with him.

Jesus modeled this and if we are to make disciples like Jesus, then the process must also be relational, one life impacting another.

In most church settings in America we have substituted an informational model for the relational one. Even though it is important, teaching is not discipling. It's primarily the transfer of information.

Discipling happens in personal relationships where people are accepted, safe, and yet challenged. Now in our culture, many have never experienced long-term committed relationships. Even marriages are temporary.

But God made us of for relationships; long-term committed relationships. He knows that's where we function best and that's where we grow best. We don't grow well in isolation. We grow better in groups and in community.

The transparent environment of the quad or triad allows us to be honest and accountable. We teach each other and we share what God is teaching us. Maybe you've heard the phrase, "We're as sick as our secrets." The transparency of the relational environment promotes spiritual true health.

A retired Harvard professor gave reasons why some students get better grades than others. He noticed that the certain students weren't catching on to the material as fast as the other students did. He wasn't ready to accept that intelligence was the issue so he looked at their homework habits.

He found the first group of students usually studied alone and the second group worked in groups, helping one another understand what they didn't get.

So he conducted an experiment by setting up study groups for some and allowing others to work alone.

The conclusions were startling. Grades and comprehension of the material rose dramatically for those who studied together. Those who studied alone saw much slower growth.

Our new men's ministry chose Proverbs 27:17 as their theme verse. It says, "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend."

We utilize quads and triads because we help each other to grow – as iron sharpens iron.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:19-20, "I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them."

In Matthew 18 the disciples have been sitting under the teaching of Jesus for a long time. Now, near the end of their training, Jesus assures them that though he will soon be leaving they can still be confident of his presence.

This is true for us as well. As we grow in Him and in understanding of his Word and his will, our prayers become increasingly powerful.

And when two or three gather for his purposes we can expect a unique manifestation of his presence. What we experience in the triads and quads is a special energy, enlightenment, joy and power.

This is the reason for the accelerated spiritual growth and scriptural understanding. There is also strong personal connection experienced by the group members.

One other thing; moms are great disciplers because of their self-less love. This is what made Jesus so effective – his self

sacrificing love. Now I have to admit, I still have a long way to grow in this area.

I've experienced a number of quads already but I have yet to change a dirty diaper or spend all night pacing the floor like moms often do. Nor have I washed the dirty feet of the men in my group or shed blood for them.

But this is the kind of selflessness God expects and asks of us. But it is also something we grow into.

Discipleship is intentional, it is relational and it is transformational.

### 3<sup>RD</sup> Transformational

Yes, we have a curriculum, but discipleship is not about information, it's about transformation. Are we really becoming more like Christ? One of the stories from our curriculum, *Discipleship Essentials* is about Elvis Presley, once considered the King of Rock and Roll.



Of course Elvis was King when I was a teenager and he's been dead for 35 years, now. Even so he sold over a billion records and starred in 33 films and had an amazing career. But the end was not good.

Sexual affairs, divorce, persistent drug addiction finally brought his life to a premature end at age 42. Approximately 80,000 people lined the processional route to Forest Hill Cemetery, where Presley was buried next to his mother.

His life began in Tupelo, Mississippi where he grew up in a Christian home attending church with his family. During his childhood he attended church camp each summer for five consecutive years. Each summer he went for free because he memorized 350 Bible verses; that's 1,750 verses. Yet this intellectual knowledge of Scripture didn't seem to have much

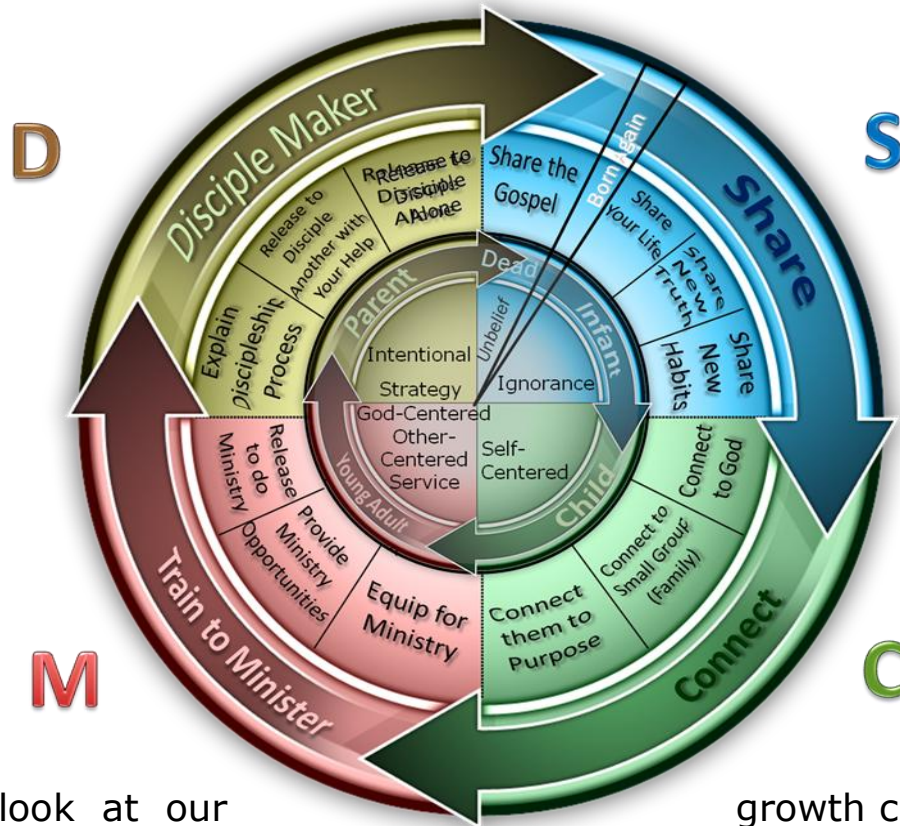


effect of his adult life. Information is not the same as transformation.

Authentic transformation involves our mind, our character, our relationships and our habits. It's one thing to believe in Jesus. It's quite another to believe what Jesus believed and do what Jesus did. Transformation is seeing life the way Jesus saw it. Valuing what he valued and disdaining what he distained. Paul told the church at Rome that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2)

Jesus pointed out that the Pharisees were experts in the law but it never impacted their lives. They had memorized much of the Old Testament but not allowed it to transform them.

How does discipleship transform us?



Take a look at our growth circle.

The first quadrant is about sharing.

We begin spiritually dead. Yes, we're alive physically, but we do not have spiritual life until we are born of the Spirit. John 3:6

says, "Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life."

Someone shares with us about Jesus and the life he offers. We turn from our sin and accept his forgiveness and are born spiritually. We become a child of God; and infant spiritually. We don't know much. We're characterized by ignorance. So the sharing must continue.

Other Christians begin to share their lives with us. They share basic things like what kind of Bible I should buy. How you dress to go to church. How you pray – basic stuff but important stuff.

We begin to learn new truths. We start reading all these stories in the Bible and it's all new to us. We learn new habits like trying to read the Bible every day; like praying when we get up in the morning and then again at night.

We begin the habit of going to church and we might even start of give a little bit.

The next quadrant is about connecting.

Whoever is helping us grow now tries to help us connect. We need to learn to connect with God. He created us for relationships; first a relationship to him. Someone has to teach us how to connect with God.

Maybe we learn from watching – watching them read their Bible; listening to them pray; watching them worship. If you are training a child, you need to take them with you and let them watch.

You need to help them connect with the people of God. Take them to church; introduce them. Take them to a small group; help them find others they can connect with.

I have people come up to me almost every week in the lobby, introducing friends that they have brought with them. They're connecting them.

Finally, we have to start connecting these young believers to their purpose. God had a purpose for each of us. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

We tend to stop with verses 8 & 9 and forget about 10. We love verses 8 and 9 where it says, "It's by grace that we're saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves; it is a gift of God; not of works lest anyone should boast." But we must go on to verse twelve. It's clear here; we don't work *to* salvation but we work *from* salvation. Salvation comes first, but if it is authentic, works follow.

The third quadrant is about training to minister.

By this time the believer has grown to the point that they are not so self-centered, but they are becoming more God centered and others centered. The young adult believer begins to realize that they have something to offer; they can contribute, and they want to.

This is where you might want to encourage them to go online at our website and take the spiritual gift inventory; you help them discover their spiritual gift and then you help them find ways to use it.

Eventually, as a believer continues to grow and mature, they begin to take on the characteristics of a spiritual parent.

The fourth quadrant is about disciple making.

They naturally become concerned about friends who need Christ or are spiritual babes. They want to help. They want to nurture them. If you have been leading a triad or a quad, they have been watching you demonstrate discipling.

You probably have given them opportunities to lead the discussions in your group. Toward the end of the curriculum we're

using, you've encouraged them to begin praying about individuals God may want them to help disciple.

Now what I have just shown you is another road map. It is a representation of the intention that Jesus has for each one of us. He wants us all to grow from spiritual infancy to spiritual parenthood. He wants us to embrace the mission he had on earth.

At the end of John's Gospel, Jesus had been taken prisoner, tried before Pilot, and brutally crucified. He was taken down from the cross and then laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

But then the totally unexpected happened – God raised him from the dead. A few women had gone to the tomb early Sunday morning and came back with report of having seen Christ alive. Some men walking to Emmaus also came back with a report of having met him on the road.

That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them!

"Peace be with you," he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side and the place erupted with joy. Then he said again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (John 20:21) They were to be the next generation of disciplers.

This then is the final point about making disciples; not only is discipleship intentional, relational, and transformational. It is also generational.

#### 4<sup>TH</sup> Generational

At the end of the Apostle Paul's ministry he wrote a letter to one of his disciples. Timothy was a young man that Paul is thought to have led to Christ during his first missionary visit to Lystra (Acts 16).

Timothy already had solid Jewish training in the Scriptures from his mother and grandmother. Timothy did not hesitate to join Paul and Silas on their journey and is given extensive ministry training.

Eventually he is left to give leadership to one of the pre- eminent churches of the first century, the church at Ephesus. Paul writes two letters to his young protégé giving him critical instructions for the task of church leadership.

The second letter that Paul writes to Timothy is thought to have been written in 66 or 67AD, shortly before Paul is executed by the Emperor Nero. It's Paul's last letter.

In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul writes, "You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others."

How many generations do you see in this verse?

First there is Paul; then there is Paul's "son" in the faith, Timothy. Third, there are the trustworthy people Timothy will teach, and then there are others to whom these truths will be passed on.

Four generations. Paul near the end of his ministry, like Jesus in Matthew 28, is emphasizing the necessity of multiplication. Paul has invested much time and energy in discipling young Timothy.

Now he is clarifying the ultimate objective of discipleship – insuring continued transmission of the essential truths to others. Paul gives Timothy criteria for selecting his disciples – 1<sup>st</sup> they must be trustworthy.

You cannot know a person is trustworthy until you know them well, until you've had adequate time to observe. 2<sup>nd</sup> they need to have the ability to pass these essential truths on to others. This requires certain people skills.

Making disciples is helping people grow to maturity, like a mother with a child, and helping them grow to the point that they can parent others.

Have you seen the tree on our front window? It looks like this. That tree is you! That's you as you begin to take the things that you have been taught and teach them to trustworthy people who will pass them on to others.



We're not saying that we work our way to heaven. Rather, authentic faith, true believers who yield to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives will eventually begin to make disciples like Jesus.