

DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

“Disciple’s Training Manual”

6/3/12

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Verses from New Living Translation unless noted.

Imagine with me if you will, that you get a **call** from the US **Olympic committee**. Now I know this will be a **stretch** for some of you but just work with me.



Suppose the **voice** on the other end of the line said the National Olympic **committee** had **selected** you to represent the United States at the **London** Olympic Games this **summer** and they wanted you to run the **marathon**.

This would be a **great honor**; hundreds of millions of people around the world **watching** as you **compete** against the **best** runners in the world in a **twenty-six** mile race for the **gold**.

But most of us would **not** be **ready**. My idea of a **race** is from the **recliner** to the **fridge** during the commercial. And the thought of **wearing** those skimpy running shorts....**not** a pretty picture.

But, what if they had called **last summer** and you had a year to **train**. And, they **promised** to assign to you the **world’s best** trainer to give you **instructions** and help you **prepare**.

If you are **serious** about competing, you’d have to enter into a **life** of training. You **cannot** run a marathon **simply** by going out and **trying**—not even by trying **very hard**.

Instead, you must **rearrange** your **schedule**, **reprioritize** your activities. Your **life** would have to change to **enable** you to

eventually do what you cannot do **now**. Even great **willpower** would **not** be enough.

This **analogy** of running is the **same** one used by the Apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** to describe **discipleship**.

“Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, (it will tarnish and corrode) but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. (this isn’t just practice anymore, so) I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should.”

Our **problem** is that most of **us** when we **talk** about being a **spiritual** person or an **authentic disciple**, we think we simply have to **try harder** to be like **Jesus** Christ. So we **try hard** to be **patient**, to be **kind**, to be **loving**. But it **works** no better than trying to win a **marathon** without any **training**.

Today we’re talking about God’s Training **Manual** for **Discipleship**; it is **not** about **trying**; it’s about **training**. We have been **called** to a **life** of spiritual training.

Now don’t **misunderstand**. God is **not** trying to **load** some heavy **burden** that on you.

In fact, **straining**, **overexertion** does not **help** at all. To **train** spiritually means to **allow** the **Holy Spirit** to use the **experiences** and **relationships** of life to bring about the spiritual **changes** that he desires.

Those **3½** years Jesus spent with his disciples was **Bible bootcamp**. There **are** certain spiritual training **disciplines** that Jesus gives us, but they are **not** the joyless, **rigorous**, and even **painful** activities we might **expect**. And, the **payoff** is **enormously satisfying**.

With the **Bible** as our training **manual** here are

1ST TEN BIBLICAL DISCRIPTIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP:

1. DISCIPLESHIP IS ESSENTIAL, NOT OPTIONAL FOR CHRIST-FOLLOWERS.

Luke 9:23-24 **"Then he said to the crowd 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.'"**

I think that was **Judas' problem**; remember him; the one who **betrayed** Christ? I **don't** think Judas ever **gave up** on his personal **ambition**.

When he **figured out** that Jesus was headed for a **dead end** (literally), he **bailed**; he **took** what he could get; he **tried** to make the **best** of a **bad** situation and **traded** on his knowledge of where Jesus was to fill his **pockets**.

2. DISCIPLESHIP IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION.

It's **not** a destination that we arrive at. It's a **journey** that we are on. Mine started over **50 years** ago. Some of yours are just **beginning**.

It's an **adventure** with God. **Remember** how Jesus **invited** his disciples to come and **"be with him."** Discipleship is going on a **spiritual journey** with Jesus. But when Jesus left, the journey **didn't** stop

3. DISCIPLESHIP IS GOD'S WORK, BUT IT REQUIRES OUR PARTICIPATION.

God is at **work** in us, but we have to **yield** to what he wants to do. **Do you** know why some people **hold** their

hands up in church? This is the **universal sign** of what? **SURRENDER!**

Romans 6:13(GNT) says, **"Give yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes."**

4. DISCIPLESHIP IS INVOLVES DISCIPLINES, EXPERIENCES, AND RELATIONSHIPS.

God uses these to help us **grow** into authentic **Christ-likeness**. **Disciplines**, these are like spiritual **calisthenics**, daily **exercises** that strengthen our spiritual **muscles**.

Experiences, everyday is **filled** with them and each one is **orchestrated** by the Great **Composer** of the universe to bring his **music** into our lives.

Have you ever seen an **orchestral score**? Believe it or not, my **undergraduate** degree was in **music**. And one of my most **enjoyable** musical memories was conducting an **orchestra**. I actually got to do that on numerous occasions.



The **amazing** thing about an orchestral **score** is that **every note** on the page has to **sync** with every other note. There are **woodwinds** and **strings** and **brass** and **rhythm** instruments and each has a **part** to play.

And much like **us** in **life**, they **PLAY BY FAITH**. They play their designated **part** trusting that the **arranger** who **notated** the **orchestration** knew what he was **doing**; that he put the **right notes** in the right place on the page.

In other words, each **instrument**, and there could be a **hundred or more**, must play the **notes written** and the

notes **written** must be in **sync** with all the **others** written in order to produce the **musical** sounds **intended**.

God is in charge of the **orchestration** of our lives. **If** we each **go off** on our **own**; do our own thing, **disharmony** and **dissonance** results. But living according to **HIS leading**, insures the **harmonies** he intends and the **enjoyment** only he can **compose**.

“God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.” Roman 8:28

5. **DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT COMPARTMENTALIZED**. **God** is not interested in my **spiritual life**; he interested in my **life—all** of it.

I’ve heard people make an **erroneous differentiation** between the **sacred** and the secular; sacred **music**/secular music; **religious activities** and non-religious; even **words**.

To **God**, everything is **sacred**; everything is **important**. Jesus said, **“I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak.”** Matthew 12:36

6. **DISCIPLESHIP SHOULD BE HAPPENING EVERY MOMENT**. It is **not** restricted to certain **times** or special **activities**. It’s 24/7, from **cradle** to casket. He has a plan for **this life** as well as the one to **come**.

From the **moment** you open your **eyes** in the morning till the moment you **go to sleep** at night, God wants to be **involved** in your life.

Jesus said I came to **give you life** and life **abundantly**. Some of **you** may be **asking**, then why am I **not**

experiencing the abundant life he **promised**? It's because we **keep messing** it up. We keep **leaving him** out.

7. **DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT FOR LONERS.** Rather, it takes place in **community** and finds **expression** in relating to **others**. There are no **Lone Ranger** disciples. (I think I just **dated** myself.) God said it's not good for man to be alone. **Serial killers** are loners – it's **unhealthy**.

I believe **babies** are supposed to be born into **families**. That's the way **nature works**; that's the way God **designed** it. **People** around us help us **grow** healthy.

8. **DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT LIMITED.** It is not **impeded** by a person's **background**, temperament, life **situation**, or **season** of life.

It is available **right now** to all who desire it; no child left **behind**. There is **not one** who doesn't **qualify**. Everyone gets to **play**. Nobody sits it out on the **bench**.

9. **DISCIPLESHIP DOES VARY.** Disciples don't all look alike. Authentic disciples are **handcrafted**, not **mass-produced**. The **Bible** says we are a **body**, intended to **work together** but **each** one of us is a different part; has a **different role**.
10. **DISCIPLESHIP IS ULTIMATELY MEASURED BY OUR CAPACITY TO LOVE.** An increased **capacity** to love **God** and **people** is the sign of **real transformation**. **Other** superficial or external **checklists** cannot measure it.

Remember the **Grinch** that stole Christmas?

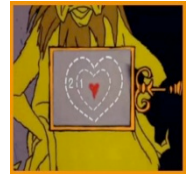
Every Who down in Whoville liked Christmas a lot, But the Grinch, who lived just' north of Whoville, did not.



The Grinch hated Christmas – the whole Christmas season. Oh, please don't ask why--no one quite knows the reason.

It could be, perhaps, that his shoes were too tight. It could be his head--wasn't screwed on just right. But I think that the most' likely reason of all May have been that his heart' was two sizes too small.

In the **movie** they had a **machine** that x-rayed his **chest** and measured his **heart**, and obviously, it is **two sizes** too small. In the story the Grinch **steals** all the **presents** in the middle of the **night**.



Then from his **perch** atop the **mountain** north of **Whoville** he waits **expectantly** for all the **sad sounds** from Whoville when they **discover** that there will be no Christmas. But **instead** of sad sounds he **hears** singing, **joyful** singing.

**He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming! IT CAME!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!
And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow,
stood puzzling and puzzling: How could it be so?
It came without ribbons! It came without tags!
It came without packages, boxes, or bags!
And he puzzled and puzzled, till his puzzler was sore.
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!
"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store.
Maybe Christmas... perhaps... means a little bit more."**

Eventually, the Grinch **figures** it out and his **heart** grows, **three** sizes in one day. But see that **machine** – WE **DON'T** HAVE ONE OF THOSE. We have **no way** to measure **your heart**.



1 John 4:17 **"As we live in God, our love grows more perfect."** We can't see your heart grow, but we **can** look for the **results**; the **fruit**.

Those are **ten** Biblical **descriptions** of Discipleship. Now

2ND HERE ARE FIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR DISCIPLESHIP:

1. **YOU NEED A GOAL.** God is **not** interested in **training** for training **sake**. Training has **no value** by itself. **If** we're going **deep** just for **depth** sake; just so we can **brag** about how spiritual we are – that's **pride**, the **king** of sins.

That's like **body builders**, who **commit** to a **strenuous** physical program of **exercise** and **diet** just to **look** good. **Some** even enter bodybuilding **competitions**, where they **strut** about on a **stage** and display their **well-oiled** and **sculptured** physiques.

There is a **goal** for **our** training and it's **not** just to **show off** how **spiritual** we are. We are **training** is to make us more **like Christ** and to equip us for making more **disciples**; expanding his **Kingdom**.

Our goal is **clear**. **After 3½** years of training, Jesus **turned** to his disciples and said now it's **your turn**. **“Go into all the world and make disciples of all 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 will be with you always, even to the end of the age.”**
Matthew 28:19-20

We're training to be **disciple makers**. Jesus said **“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching...²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”** John 14:23-24

His **last command** was to go and make disciples. If we **love** him we **obey**.

1st we need a **goal**, then we need a **coach**.

2. YOU NEED A COACH

Now coaches for us, are what we've called **intentional leaders**. They are the ones who **call** the group **together**. They don't have to be **pastors** or seminary **grads**. They just have to be **willing** to take the **lead**.

After all, they are **not** making disciples for **themselves**. They are **facilitating** people becoming disciples **of Christ**.

Have you ever seen a **mother duck** leading her ducklings? Momma duck is in the **lead**, but **only one** duck is actually following momma. **All** the other ducks are following **another baby** duck.



What's **required** to be a **leader** is to be **one step** ahead of those following you. You just **keep** your eyes on **momma**. Our **Quad leaders** are those leading our **gender specific** groups through our discipleship **curriculum**. Each one of them has a "**line of support**". They have **someone** who is a little more **experienced**, maybe just one step ahead, checking in with them.

We also have monthly **discipleship dinners**. We **enjoy** a delicious dinner together and then **share** with each other what we are **learning** and experiencing in our groups.

These dinners are **crucial** to group **leaders** and a great **motivation** to all group **members**. Dinner plus the meeting is only **1½ hours**. **Child care** is provided.

Discipleship requires a **goal**, and coach and

3. YOU NEED A TEAM

Don't go it **alone**. God **designed** us to **grow** in groups. You help me; I help you. **"A person standing alone can**

be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:12

Because discipline **doesn't** come naturally to **most** of us, we need to seek a **small group** of people who help **nurture** for our souls.

One **TV report** recently noted that **70%** of Americans don't **exercise**. Of the **30%** who do exercise, only **10%** exercise alone.

The remaining **90%** who exercise, do so because of **accountability** or encouragement from **friends**. When it come to **spiritual exercise**, it's absolutely **essential** to **attach** ourselves to a group. **Jesus** gave us this **example** himself with his group.

I've never known **anyone** to make **significant** spiritual gains without the help of friends. I've heard **many** people say, "I **really want** to grow spiritually."

But **unless** they submit themselves to the **help** of others, they're **not likely** to grow,... **apart** from suffering. Now **suffering** is the one **tool** God uses to **cause** us to grow, but usually when we've been **stubborn** and **resistant** to his preferred method.

Suffering is **not** the **path** I recommend. The help of others is a more **enjoyable** way of becoming disciplined and growing spiritually. A **goal**, a **coach** and a **team**; now you need a **regimen**.

4. YOU NEED A REGIMEN

Most of us think of discipline as **negative**. We discipline our **children** when they **misbehave**. **Soldiers** might face disciplinary action when they **don't follow** orders.

A **boss** might put an **employee** through a **probationary** period, as a **disciplinary** measure for not meeting certain goals.

But practicing **spiritual** disciplines has much more of a **preemptive** and **positive** quality. Spiritual disciplines develop **habits** of the **heart** that make us more **capable** of carrying out **assignments** God has for us.

Jesus asked **Peter**, James and John to **wait** and **pray** nearby, while **he went** to wrestle with his **Father** about the **difficulty** of the crucifixion that lay ahead. **Three** times he came back and found these disciples **asleep**.

Then Jesus spoke those most **memorable** words: **“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** Matthew 26:41. He was **right**. The disciples **loved** Jesus but they **failed** him. They didn’t **just** fall **asleep**, the eventually **deserted** him. We need a spiritual **regimen** to build spiritual **strength**.

1 Timothy 4:7 says, **“Train yourself to be godly.”**

Here’s a **brief** list of disciplines, **spiritual calisthenics** that will help us **begin**.

- **Discipline of God’s Word**

The **Bible** is like **manna** for us. God **provided** manna in the **wilderness** to feed his people on their **journey** to the Promised Land. **Every morning** they were to get up and **collect** the manna they needed.

If they collected **too much** it would **spoil** and be full of **maggots** the next day. This was a **discipline** of **dependence** that taught the Israelites to **come** to him each **morning** for the daily **nourishment** they needed.

Most of you know what I mean when I say “**knees before feet**” don’t you? This is a **discipline** that the **men** that meet at **Denny’s** on Friday morning **hold** each other accountable for.

We hit our **knees** before we hit our **feet** each morning. We **start** our day in **prayer**, recognizing that **God** has given us **another** day to **enjoy** and **serve** him. After **I finish** my **prayer** time each morning, I go down the **hall** to have my time in the **Word**.

I call this “**bread before breakfast**”. Jesus said, “**Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.**” Matthew 4:4

I typically **spend** time each morning **reading** from God’s Word and **journaling** on what I read. I need the **nourishment**.

You don’t **have time** to study the **Bible**? Bible study is an **investment**. You **don’t** have enough time **not** to study the Bible. The Bible **helps** us **get it right** the first time.

Could you **build** a building with **no** blueprints? Have you ever tried to put a **1000** piece **puzzle** together without looking at the **picture**? Life is like a **million** piece puzzle.

Make it a daily **habit**. The **best time** is when you are at your best.

- **The discipline of prayer**

Not only do I hit **my knees** before I hit **my feet** but I try to spend time **every day**, praying for my **family** – my **wife, children, grandchildren**; my **brother**, two **sisters** and their families; my **wife’s** extended family. Then I pray for **people** of this church **mentioning** many of you by name.

The Apostle Paul said we should **“pray without ceasing.”** (1 Thessalonians 5:17) What I think he **meant** was that we are to be in **constant conversation** with our heavenly Father.

It’s **keeping** the line of **communication** open **all day** long; **realizing** that He is **listening** in on everything I say, and I can **access** his **input** whenever I need it.

- **The discipline of Scripture Memory**

One of the great **components** of our Discipleship **curriculum** is the requirement to **memorize** scripture every week. **Some** of you don’t think you can do that, but you **can**.

Joshua 1:8 says **“Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.”**

For **me**, being able to **quote** a verse or two from **memory** at my **quad** meeting **requires** that I go **over** and over it in my head all **week long** – that’s **meditation**. It can’t help but **impact** the way **I think** and the way I **act**. It’s God’s Word **echoing** around in my head **all week**—it’s great.

- **The discipline of worship**

“Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker.” Psalm 95:6

Worship is the way God has **designed** to **free** us from **ourselves**. We come into this world very **selfish** and self-centered. It’s **all** about **us**, our **wants**, our **needs**, our **appetites**.

When we come into worship, **suddenly** there's something **more important** than me. It's **God**. I'm suddenly aware that I am in the **presence** of God.

Now this is **difficult** for some – to **get out** of the way; take **ourselves** out of the **center** of attention; to **realize** that worship is **not** about **me** and meeting **my needs** or **pleasing** me; but **rather** it's about **God**.

But **if** we **don't**, it's **not** worship—it's **idolatry**. As two **women** left a worship **service**, one **complained**, "I didn't really **care** for that." Her friend **reprovingly** responded, "**Good**, because we **weren't worshipping** you."

The **only** thing that **matters** about our worship is that God **cares** for it; he's pleased with it.

I come to **acknowledge** his **rule** in my life; to give him **thanks** for the myriad of **blessings** I enjoy; to **ask** him for strength and **wisdom** for the challenges I face.

Again, we lift up our **hands** in surrender, acknowledging that He is our **Lord**. He is **God** and I am his **creation**. He has the **right** to ask **anything** of me that he wants.

- **The discipline of giving**

Giving is God's way of **freeing** me from **greed** and **worry**. It's **typical** for us human beings to **worry** about money. **Though** we're one of the **wealthiest** nations on earth, we're **always** worrying if we're going to **have enough**.

The **Training Manual** encourages us to **learn** to give. There is an **amazing miracle** that happens when we **practice** this **discipline** – we become less and **less materialistic** and more and more **contented** with what we have.

There are **numerous** other disciplines that help us **grow**, like **witnessing** which is a source of great **joy** for our lives. There is

service where we use our special strengths to **help** other. This adds a great sense of purpose and **satisfaction**.

The discipline of **obedience** insures **humility**, and the discipline of **love** results in great **emotional health**.

We've talked about **four requirements** of discipleship – a **goal**, a **coach**, a **team** and a **regimen**. The final requirement for discipleship is **time**.

5. YOU NEED TIME

“When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, ‘If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.’ So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness toward the Red Sea.” Exodus 13:17-18

The **Israelites** left Egypt, and were **headed** to a place that God had **promised** them, that was about **2 weeks** away.

The **problem** was, that **instead** of heading due **East** and then a little **North**, like they **expected**, he led them **south**. To the Israelites, God was leading them in the **wrong direction**. Was God directionally challenged? Instead of **two weeks**, it took Israel **40 years** to get to the Promised Land.

Someone **observed** that it didn't take **40 years** to get **Israel** out of Egypt, but it took **40 years** to get **Egypt** out of Israel. **God's path** is not always the **quickest** route, but it is the **BEST** route for us in our situation.

God is **rarely** in a hurry. Our **training** takes a **lifetime**. But Jesus said, I will be **with you** always, even till the **end** of the age. But he **guarantees** the **journey** will be a great **adventure**.

