

Transforming Discipleship

*Making Disciples a
Few at a Time*

with

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The Missional Mandate: Matthew 28:18-20

The Mission of Every Church: Make Disciples of Jesus

I. Our Given Mission: "Therefore go and **Make Disciples** of all nations"

II. Our Theological Challenge: Can You Be A Christian Without Being a Disciple?

A. The Authority Behind the Mandate (Matthew 28:18)

B. The Mandate: Make Disciples (Matthew 28:19)

1. Is discipleship optional?

Michael Wilkins asks two questions:

"How many of you can say, in the humble confidence of your heart, that you are convinced you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ? Please raise your hand."

"How many of you can say, in the humble confidence of your heart, that you are convinced that you are a true Christian? Please raise your hand."

2. Can you be a Christian without being a disciple?

3. The gospel we have been proclaiming: Non-discipleship gospel

- God loves you
- You messed up
- Jesus died for you
- Accept Jesus into your heart

Discussion: *Have we reduced the gospel to the minimum entrance requirements to get into heaven? Have we allowed for a false distinction between being a Christian and being a disciple? Yes or No. Explain.*

4. The Gospel Jesus Proclaimed (Mark 1:14-15)

- The time has come
- The Kingdom of God is at hand
- Repent
- Believe the good news

[John Ortberg video: Are We Making Better Christians or More Disciples?]

C. The Language of Making Disciples

1. Disciple: "A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call of Jesus. Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in us." (Greg Ogden)

2. Discipleship: Simply the process of growth into Christ-like maturity and reproduction.

3. Discipling: Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.

The Biblical Model: Luke 6:12-13

When In Doubt Follow the Directions

Session 2

The Paradigm Shift Question: How can we grow self-initiating, reproducing disciples of Christ in our ministries? Follow the Biblical pattern.

I. A Personal Journey:

A. Negative Example:

B. Positive Example:

II. Why did Jesus focus on a few? (Luke 6:12-13)

A. **Internalization:** It was the only way to transfer his message and mission.

"This careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured the teacher's influence on this world should be permanent; that His kingdom should be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of a few, not on the shifting sands of *superficial* impressions in the minds of the many." -- A. B. Bruce, The Training of the Twelve

B. **Multiplication:** Jesus had enough vision to think small

"Jesus it must be remembered, restricted 9/10 of His ministry to 12 Jews because it was the only way to reach all Americans." --Eugene Peterson

"Perhaps today's pastor should imagine that they are going to have three more years in their parish as pastor--and that there will be no replacement for them when they leave. If they acted as if this were going to happen, they would then put the highest priority on selecting, motivating, and training lay leaders that could carry on the mission.

The results of three sustained years of such an approach would be quite significant. Even revolutionary.” --George Martin

Discussion:

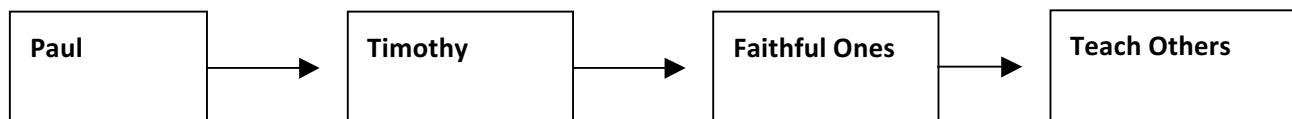
If you as a pastor or ministry leader knew you had only 3 years remaining in your ministry and there was no one to replace you, what would be your priorities for the next 3 years?

III. What was Jesus approach?

- A. The “with me” principle
- B. How Jesus approach differed from the rabbis of his day
- C. Jesus’ stages of development: Situational Leadership

	PRE-DISCIPLE	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4
Jesus' role	The inviter	The living example	The provocative teacher	The supportive coach	The ultimate delegator
The disciples' role	Seekers	Observers and imitators	Students and questioners	Short-term missionaries	Apostles
Readiness level	Hungry to know whether Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah	Ready to observe who Jesus is and the nature of his ministry and mission	Ready to interact with Jesus and publicly identify with him	Ready to test the authority of Jesus to work through them	Ready to assume full responsibility for making reproducing disciples
Key questions	Is Jesus the Messiah?	Who is Jesus, and what is his ministry and mission?	What is the cost of following Jesus?	Will the power of Jesus work through us when we take on his ministry?	Will I give my life entirely to the mission of making reproducing disciples?

IV. Paul's Intergenerational Reproduction (II Timothy 2:2)



Closing Discussion:

If you were to adopt Jesus' model of investing in a few, how would this impact the way you make disciples in your church?

What might be some of the obstacles you would have to overcome in your church to adopt Jesus' model of disciple-making?

The Tested Method:
Necessary Ingredients For Making Disciples
Session 3

INTRODUCTION:

Core Elements Necessary for a Disciple-Making Ministry:

- Relationship Based
- Multiplication Strategy
- Transformative Environment
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MINISTRY BASED STRATEGY OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

The Program Approach



The Relational Approach



I. The Primacy of a Relational Context for Making Disciples

A. Program vs. Relational Approach

1. Discipling relationships are marked by intimacy, whereas programs tend to be focused on information.
2. Discipling relationships involve full, mutual responsibility of the participants, whereas programs have one or a few who do on behalf of the many.
3. Discipling relationships are customized to the unique growth process of the individuals, whereas programs emphasize synchronization and regimentation.
4. Discipling relationships focus accountability around life-change, where as programs focus accountability around content.

B. A working definition of discipling: *Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.*

C. Jane's letter says it all:

"Dear Greg,

My name is (Jane Smith, not real name). I was just starting to get involved in the church fellowship when you were called to California. I was so impressed with the few times I heard you teach, but more than anything else I was drawn into the love that the fellowship had for you and each other. To an outsider at the time, like myself, one saw such a deep love that I know was prayerfully developed. The term 'discipleship' was living.

Long after you left, your leadership materials were being used—I was trained by...who were a part of the 'inner circle' that I admired and the Lord used in my life.

After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh with degrees in Child Development/Child Care, my husband and I were led to start a Christian Center (in Pennsylvania). The Lord has done miracles step after step in this ministry and we're so excited about it! We started with a pre-school program and now have started a Christian school, adding a grade each year.

We feel that by applying Biblical principles and models that we can minister to families in the area. In any case, because of the model I experienced at Pitt, the Center is focusing on small, quality, long-term relationships with families.

Now, the reason I'm writing—I realize now the commitment you had at Pitt and how much time and effort you so selflessly poured into those guys. I appreciate you and your gifts because ***I feel like I am the fruit of your fruit! And praise the Lord more fruit is being produced!*** I appreciate your model (Christ's model) because of our ministry, and how easy it is to give yourself out and spread too thin and not accomplish much.

If you ever question the Lord about your work at Pitt—please think of me and know how much the Lord used you there. So...I just wanted to say thanks!

P.S. I guess you will understand this letter—I just pray that someday someone will write to me expressing their faith in our Lord, and that perhaps my obedience was somehow related to their growth.

II. Multiplication: Empowering Disciples to disciple others

A. Frustration over multiplication: I was stuck

B. The characteristics of one—on—one method of discipling.

1. In the one-on-one the discipler carries **the full weight of responsibility** for the spiritual welfare of another.
2. The one-on-one relationship sets up a **hierarchy** that tends to result in **dependency**.
3. The one-on-one limits the **interchange or dialogue**.
4. The one-on-one also creates a **single model approach**.
5. Finally, the one-on-one model **does not generally reproduce**.

C. The characteristics of triads/quads

1. There is a shift from **unnatural pressure to the natural participation** of the discipler.
2. There is a shift from **hierarchy to peer relationship**.
3. There is a shift from **dialogue to dynamic interchange**.
4. There is shift from **limited input to wisdom in numbers**.
5. There is a shift from **addition to multiplication**.

Discipleship Plan Discussion:

1. Assess your current approach to making disciples. Strengths and weaknesses? Where are you seeing the most fruit? What are your disappointments?
2. What is the difference between a relational vs. program approach? Why is this difference important?
3. What are the obstacles to growing reproducing disciples?

III. The Environment for Transformation: Creating the Hot House Effect

*When we (1) open our hearts in **transparent trust** to each other (2) around the **truth** of God's word (3) in the spirit of **mutual accountability** (4), while engaged in our **God-given mission**, we are in the Holy Spirit's hothouse of transformation.*

The need for Self-awareness and trust relationship for transformation.

Climatic Condition #1—Transparent Trust

The extent to which we are willing to reveal to others those areas of our life that need God's transforming touch is the extent to which we are inviting the Holy Spirit to make us new.

Stages of Trust Building:

1. Affirmation
2. Walking together in difficult times
3. Prayerful Listening
4. Mutual Confession

Climatic Condition #2—Truth in Faith Community

II Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Need for Truth:

1. We have lost the memory of Christianity
2. We need systematic instruction
3. Mosaic Image

Climatic Condition #3—Life Change Accountability

Covenantal Accountability: *A covenant is written, mutual agreement between 2 or more parties that clearly states the expectations and commitments in the relationship.*

1. The Challenge of Radical Individualism
2. Disciples are under authority

Climatic Condition #4: God-Given Mission

1. Heart for Desperate
2. Finding the Need You Care About

Discussion:

Why does the size of the group matter? How would this approach contrast to the one-on-one approach?

What kind of impact can you see that this might have on your ministry?

Pastor Ogden mentions 4 conditions necessary for transformation: Relational transparency, truth in community, and life-change accountability. How might these be received in your church? What resistance might you expect? What actual steps can you take to move forward?

IV. Necessary Elements for Making Reproducing Disciples

1. A commitment to a biblical vision of multiplication: Do the Lord's Work in the Lord's Way
2. A clear covenant of disciple-making: setting expectations
3. An environment of Holy Spirit inspired transformation: 3-5
4. A transferable tool such as *Discipleship Essentials* or simply *The Bible*
5. A means to keep the vision alive as generational reproduction occurs.

V. Practical Steps to creating a small, reproducible discipleship group

Step 1: Pray

Ask the Lord to lay on your heart hungry people to whom he is drawing you. Take your time. Let the conviction settle in. Only then go to the next step.

Step 2: Make a personal invitation

Approach a person in the following way: "The Lord has been placing you on my heart, and I sense that I am to ask you if you would be willing to join me and one or two others on a weekly journey together toward becoming better disciples of Jesus?"

Step 3: Tell them what is involved

If you are using a curriculum such as *Discipleship Essentials*, give them an overview of the content and the means you will cover it.

Step 4: Review the Covenant (p. 14, *Discipleship Essentials*)

Disciples need to have a very clear sense of what is expected of them. Walk through the covenant line by line and have them restate the requirements in their own words. Mention that you will be meeting weekly for approximately a year.

Step 5: Ask the disciple to prayerfully consider the invitation.

Specifically, ask them not to give you an answer on the spot, but to examine whether that have the time and the heart for what lies ahead.

Step 6: Inform them that there will be at least one other person joining you.

If this is your first invitation, this person may even have a suggestion who the third or fourth person might be.

Step 7: Set the first regular meeting and get started

Find quiet space where you will be able to grow into intimate transparency. At the first session ask each person to share their process of making a commitment to the group.

Step 8: Guide the participants through the sessions

Go only at a pace that is comfortable. Encourage questions. Address personal matters. The curriculum is only a tool, not something to be enslaved.

Step 9: Model transparency

The group will go as deep as the willingness of the convener to be vulnerable.

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