

Creating a Disciple-Making Culture

Why We Make Disciples

Jesus' Plan:

Find twelve men, be with them, teach them, empower them, model life before them and minister to them. Then send them out to do the same with others. I don't think we can improve on this method. I believe it is divinely blessed. I believe it will succeed.

Looking through the book of Luke we see Jesus' work with his disciples:

He called them (Luke 5)

He trained them (Luke 6-8)

He sent them out (the twelve) (Luke 9)

He continued to teach them, live with them, reveal himself to them (Luke 9)

He sent them out again (the seventy two) (Luke 10)

He taught them further (Luke 10-11)

and on it goes...

A brief study of Matthew 28:18-19

Jesus compels us to make disciples by his example and by his command (Paul did the same). The final words recorded in Matthew 28 emphasize the Savior's priority. The disciples were shaken perplexed and worried, yet they went to the place Jesus had designated. When the living Lord the miracle worker who had lived with them for three years and had died before their eyes appeared before them in power, they did not know what to think. Some of them worshiped and some of them doubted.

Jesus comforted them and refocused them at the same time by his words. In essence, he said, "I have all authority - I am in control. Everything is going exactly as planned. And because I am in control, I have made you part of the plan. Now, your job is to go... be my ambassadors in this new kingdom that has come to earth, and as you are going, make disciples, excluding no one.

There were three differences to this sending. Jesus had sent them out before to announce the kingdom and to heal the sick. The sending was always with a message and always with power. But the first sending was only to the house of Israel, now they are sent to "all nations".

A second difference was that they were specifically told to make disciples, followers, apprentices of Jesus from those they were sent to. The disciples were specifically to teach their audience what Jesus had taught them. Jesus was saying in effect, "What I have done with you, you now do with others."

The third difference was that Jesus gave a further promise to his disciples as they were going. "And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age (NLT)." Authority, presence, power, signs/healing, teaching, baptizing... transformed lives. This was to be the fruit of the disciple who was obeying Christ and moving on to maturity. If I am to be like Christ, I must necessarily be reproducing myself in others. If I am to obey Jesus, I must teach others what I have learned from him.

This is why we make disciples. We cannot follow Jesus without doing so.

Creating a Disciple-Making Culture

Assessing the culture of our church

Our Culture is what people at your church do without thinking. Simply put, it is the “way things are”. When discipleship is our culture, people do it without thinking.

In trying to assess a true reading of how we are doing in the area of discipleship, we should think about four things:

- 1) whether or not discipleship is really happening in our church
- 2) who is doing it
- 3) across how broad of a sphere is it taking place
- 4) what is the long-term fruit from it

We cannot discount the “corporate discipleship” that happens in our Sunday Morning meetings and in house churches. But the pulpit and meeting-centered culture that has traditionally dominated church-life often means that we have very little intentional, church-wide discipleship happening. In my experience, a relatively small percentage of a church body is involved in intentional discipleship. They come to meetings and listen to the teaching of a few gifted people. There will be no real change in the practical reality of discipleship unless there is a change in culture.

How to change a culture:

Cultural change starts with what we value as leaders - the things that are most important to us. Life is a day-to-day series of value exchanges. Each day in our lives as a pastoral team, each day in the lives of our sheep, we decide to trade certain things for other things. What is more important in our minds wins. *The role of leadership is to clearly define what is valuable and relentlessly communicate those values in as many ways as possible.*

Possible values include money, time, comfort, convenience, material goods. But values can also include more kingdom-minded things like relationships with people, relationship with God, bringing people to Christ, helping them grow.

In obeying the teaching of Jesus, our values must center around

- 1) connecting people with God, and
- 2) connecting people with people in order to facilitate their growth in Jesus

In every tier of leadership and in every ministry area, “faithful men” need to be defined (2 Timothy 2:2). Then intentional steps to disciple those men/women need to be made. It is crucial for us to see that generations are in the heart of God. In fact, the very nature and person of God reflect generations, for the Godhead itself contains a Father and Son relationship. He has revealed himself to us as the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”. Generations are very important to God.

God is a God of Generations

Psalm 127 - It is interesting that this Psalm links together two concepts that do not seem to go together at first glance. But here we see that there is a vital connection between “building” (verse 1) and “generations” (verses 3-5) are connected. The puzzle is solved when we see that it was Solomon who penned the psalm. You see, Solomon knew from personal experience that God’s purposes may be in the heart of one generation, but it takes multiple generations bring it to pass.

In 1 Chronicles chapters 28 and 29 we see that David’s greatest desire on earth was to build a dwelling place for the Lord. But he knew that, in the end, he would not be the one to build it, so he prepared all the materials and plans that were necessary for the temple to be built. He gave from his personal treasury toward it publicly. He charged Solomon to build it and the people to support the project. But it never would have been built without the next generation. Solomon knew that building the kingdom and generations go together.

We also see the theme of generation in the book of 2 Timothy:

1:3 - Paul, “as did my ancestors”

1:5 - Timothy, Lois, Eunice, Timothy

2:2 - Paul --> Timothy --> faithful men --> others also

(Note also Paul’s instructions to Timothy and Titus about generations of church leaders)

Like Jesus, Paul knew that passing this message along was the key to expanding the kingdom of God. Perhaps this theme of generations is part of what Paul meant when he spoke about running to win, not being disqualified, finishing the race (2 Tim 4:6). *We only win when we successfully **pass that baton** of godly faithfulness to the next generation.*

The anatomy of a baton exchange:

The Sender:

Required: a sender who is willing to give it away - my time is over, your time is beginning

- * The sender has to call to the receiver (“hand” or “stick”)
- * The sender has the eyes; look for the target
- * The sender has the responsibility to put it in the hands of another
- * The sender has to let it go

The Receiver

Required: a receiver who is ready to enter the race, carry it on to the next person and hand it off to them.

- * The receiver has to be aware of the sender’s position
- * The receiver has to listen for the call
- * The receiver has to present a - arm back as far as possible (I want it - good ambition, bad ambition)
- * palm wide open

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The exchange zone

- * There is a moment in time when both hands are touching the baton (both generations are touching the work)
- * The crucial point is the letting go and the taking up of the baton
- * If you do not do in the allotted window, you are disqualified

Every part of this process is intentional - exchange was always a part of the plan; there is a snap of the baton; there is a process that was planned and practiced hundreds of times; this does not happen by fate or accident.

Of course, we are applying the metaphor to a the kingdom in our own context (church, family, work)

Some reasons this doesn't happen include:

- * unwillingness for current leaders to let go
- * lack of relationship (wall between generations)
- * lack of a discipleship culture
- * young generation that does not appreciate what the older generation has done and is not mindful of the things of Jesus Christ

Biblical baton passing

Elijah --> Elisha -- Result: Twice the miracles, twice the impact. Other than the school of prophets, we have no record of Elisha passing the baton to anyone. His anointing literally went to the grave with him.

** Where are the guardians of the legacy? Where are those who will pass it on? Where are those who will receive the baton and take ownership of the future?

The growth that God is looking for is growth in people. This people-growth happens only through the power of God's Spirit as he applies the Word to people's hearts. This requires taking people from where they are to the next level of maturity in Christ.

(Babes --> Little Children --> Young Men --> Fathers) We are especially talking about training up leaders for the next generation. This happens only by the power of the Spirit and in the context of real relationships.

Babes --> **Little Children** --> **Young Men** --> **Fathers**
(Born again --> Acceptance --> Achievement --> Perspective (Authenticity))

One way of implementing discipleship in our churches is "the four E's":

- 1) **Engage** people with the intent of making them followers of Jesus
- 2) **Establish** them in the foundations of Christ
- 3) **Equip** them to become competent ministers
- 4) **Empowered** as the Holy Spirit works in them everyday to make disciples

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Engage our culture (a culture of mission)

- 1) **Be Aware** (“*Lift up your eyes... the harvest is plentiful*” John 4:35)
 - a. of God’s desire to touch those around you
 - b. of the needs of those around you
 - c. of the spiritual battle

- 2) **Be Prepared** (“...*always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...*” 1 Peter 3:15)
 - a. simple definition of the gospel (p. 26)
 - b. apologetics: understanding how to communicate and defend the faith
 - c. live a transformed life that speaks louder than your words

- 3) **Show You Care** (“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people...” Galatians 6:10)
 - a. Let your love be genuine and clear for all to see

Establish people on the foundation of Christ (a culture of building mature disciples)

- 1) Teach them the importance of intimacy with Jesus - Get them disciplined to the Word and prayer - teach the to abide in Christ daily) (John 15:1-2)
- 2) Finding their Identity and Freedom in Christ - breaking the power of sin and living daily in grace (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- 3) Living, growing and giving in the context of community (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
- 4) Recognizing Spiritual Gifts and Strengths (Romans 12:6-8)
- 5) Sharing the Good News with the Lost (Mark 16:15)

Equip people to become competent ministers (A culture of Leader Development)

The job of the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16) is to equip the saints for ministry, then get out of the way and let God use them. We have to allow for less-than-perfect, average members to minister in order the equip them. A key question to ask ourselves is, “Do I spend more time ministering than I do equipping others for ministry” How are we equipping people?

- 1) **Identification** - leaders help people identify their calling by helping them to realize and develop their God-given gifts and strengths
- 2) **Instruction** - Paul’s letters were filled with doctrinal, practical, relational instruction. Give them opportunities to grow in knowledge, ministry skills and Christ-like character (Know, Be, Do).
- 3) **Impartation** - Paul also spoke of “coming to the Romans”, in order to impart to them - when we are spending time, face-to-face with potential leaders, who we are rubs off on them. This requires us to reorganize our schedules in order to spend time with them.
- 4) **Internship** - Paul took some on mission with him. This is on the job training, and can be formal or informal.

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Empower people, as the Holy Spirit works in them everyday, to make disciples
(A culture of life-on-life missional discipleship)

At the beginning, we need to define what the end-product should look like.

We need to think about the definition of a mature follower of Jesus:

- * Someone living constantly under the control of the Holy Spirit
- * Someone whose life is governed by the Word of God
- * Someone who demonstrates the love of Christ
- * Someone who has discovered, developed and is using his spiritual gifts
- * Someone who has learned to share his faith
- * Someone who experiences freedom over sin and lives his life by God's grace

Journey Groups

We are on a road to maturity in Christ. We will never fully arrive, but as we mature, we are able to give ourselves away and help others to mature. We are not mature in Christ unless we are helping others mature in Christ!

Journey groups are groups that are intentionally investing in the lives of a few, mentoring the younger in the faith, holding them accountable, praying for them, challenging them to be missional. They are taking people to the next step in maturity in the three areas we discussed above: Knowing, Being and Doing. They can vary in size (House Churches, Groups of Three, or one-to-one), but usually the smaller the group, the more effective.

Discipleship Tools

We have to look for solid, biblical materials to help our people grow in the gospel and in their gifts. This may look differently in different cultural contexts, since the materials available in a local language may differ. But the materials should be gospel-focussed and encourage the person being discipled to continue the process with others.

Possible venues for discipleship

- * House Churches (go through *The Gospel for Real Life*)
- * Parenting support groups
- * Ministry apprentice groups
- * One-to One
- * Triads (groups of three)
- * Teaching/training classes
- * Foundations of the Faith classes
- * Intern programs (e.g. children's ministry, worship, etc.)
- * Sunday Service
- * Website
- * Social Media
- * Pastor blogs
- * Seminars/conferences
- * Weekend retreats/encounters

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Outlets for Leaders (funneling leaders into ministry venues)

- * Preaching and Teaching
- * Music and worship arts
- * One-to-One discipleship
- * Leading House Churches
- * Parenting discipleship groups
- * Ministry apprentices
- * Evangelism

Other thoughts:

Our #1 greatest resource that we have to steward: our *people*

Our #2 greatest resource we have to steward: our *time*

- * We have to intentionally change our personal schedules for discipling
- * We have to release our people from meetings so they can spend time discipling others. What meetings are we willing to cut out to facilitate discipleship?

As church leaders, we have to adopt new measurements for success.

Our new measurements:

- 1) How many disciples have I made?
- 2) Who can make disciples without me?

What if our goal was not to be the “biggest” church in the region; what if our goal was to be *the most effective disciple-making church in the region*? If this were the case, I believe we could see greater and more lasting impact for God’s kingdom in our city, region country and world!

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How do we make this practical?

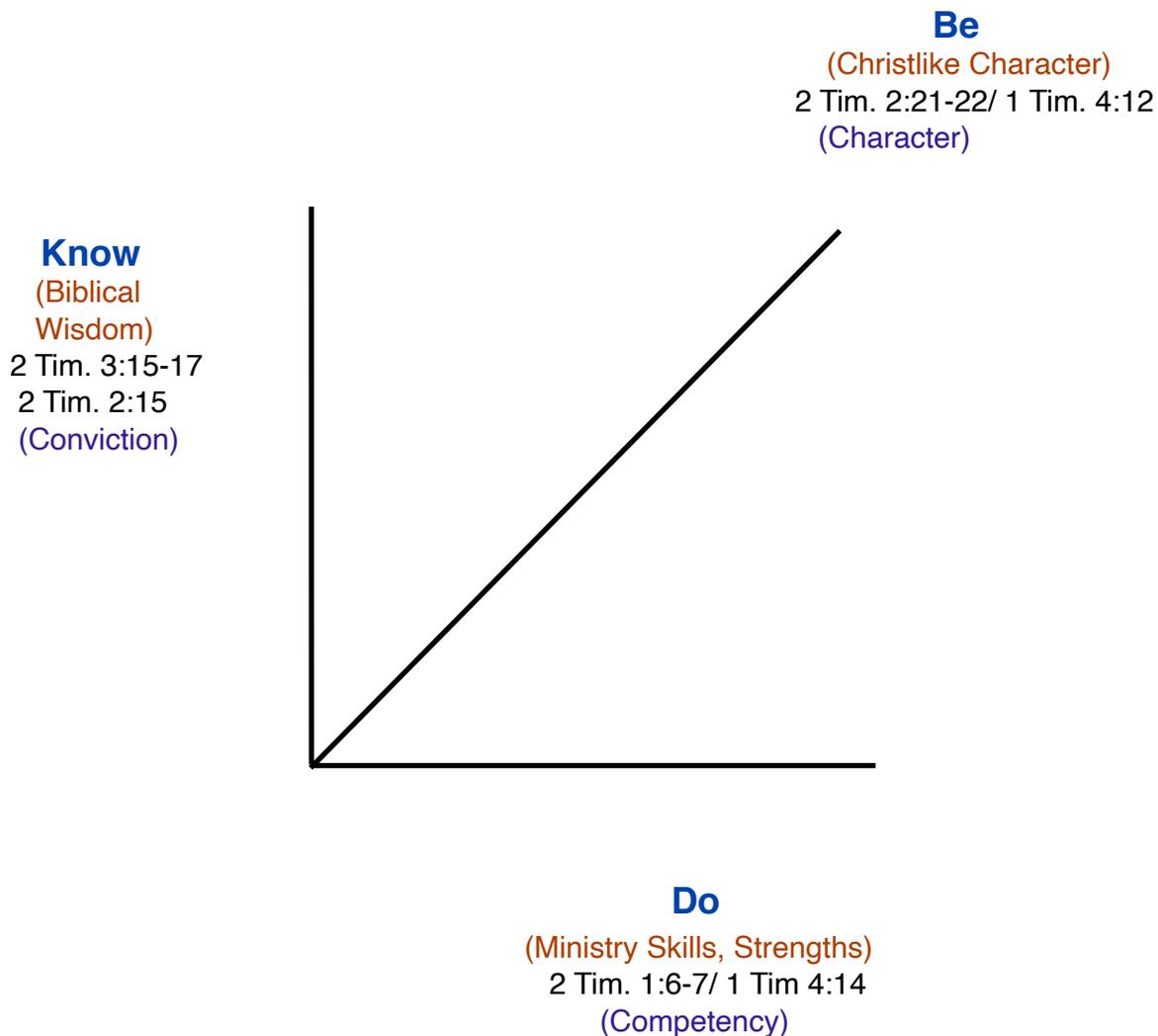
There seem to be three different ways that we learn, but we learn best when there is a dynamic interplay between all three at one time:

- 1) **Classroom/Lecture** - experience based on passing on facts, thoughts, and information.
- 2) **Apprenticeship** - Someone invests their time, energy, skills and life into ours, teaching us to do what they do (give people access into your life)
- 3) **Immersion** - Like the toddler learning to talk or the student who travels to Spain to learn Spanish, the key to immersion is having access to the culture you are hoping to shape you.

There are three areas we must help people grow:

Knowledge, Ministry Skills, Character

Spirit-Led Living



Types of discipleship groups:

- 1) One-to-one
- 2) Triads
- 3) Small Groups (House Churches/D-groups)
- 4) Larger Groups

Venues for discipleship			
	Home	Congregation	Community
One to One/ triads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Spouse * Children * Daily Conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Follow up new believer * Mentoring relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Personal witness * Inviting to event * Books/tracts * Friendship
Small Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Family Devotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * House Churches - study/prayer * Youth/ Children * D-groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Small group evangelism/Bible study * Ministry in schools/prisons, etc.
Large Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sharing at family gatherings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Teaching/testimony * Prophetic encouragement * Song 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Evangelistic talk at a gathering * Business mtgs.

What are our first steps?

- 1) Pray - Jesus prayed before he chose his disciples (Luke 6:12-13).
 - a. I will ask God to give me his heart for discipling others
 - b. I will commit to ask God who he has for me to pour into
- 2) Pay attention to what God is doing in the lives of people around me

Questions for prayer:

- 1) Do I have a passion to serve the purpose of God in my generation? If so, what does that look like?
- 2) Do I currently have a Paul in my life? a Timothy? a Barnabas
- 3) Who are the “faithful men/women” in my life whom I can pour into?

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Stages of Spiritual Growth

Stage One: Babes/Little Children (Living as Accepted Children)

* The New Life

Stage Two: Young Men (Living to Learn and Achieve)

* The Learner

* The Warrior

* Brokenness

Stage Three: Fathers (Living to Give)

* Surrender

* Spiritual Authenticity

Moving from: -->	Non-believer -->		Babes/Little Children (acceptance) -->	Young Men (achievement) -->		Fathers (perspective; giving out) ←-	
	Making Friends	Present Gospel	Word Exposure/ Teaching the Fundamentals	Discover Gifts (growing)	Active/ serving (solid)	General mentoring	Specific Ministry Skills
Bob	*						
Jack					*		
Sue				*			
Josh			*				
Sarah						*	
Bill		*					
Lauren							*
Tools	Word in you/tracts		Foundations material	Gifts/Strengths evaluation		Measure of a Man Specific Material	

Stage One: Babes/Little Children (Living as Accepted Children)

The New Life (Celebrate Grace!)

Strengths:

- 1) Secure in the love of the Father ([1 John 1:9](#))
- 2) Freedom and forgiveness ([Eph. 1:7](#))
- 3) Awe and wonder at God's goodness ([Ps. 23:6](#))
- 4) Purpose and meaning ([1 Pet. 1:18-21](#))

Weakness:

- 1) Sense of unworthiness
- 2) Over dependence on feelings
- 3) Ignorance of God's Word and ways
- 4) Not fully leaving our old life

Moving on:

- 1) Build supporting relationships ([Heb. 10:24-25](#))
- 2) Take in the Word of God and fellowship ([1 Tim. 3:16ff](#))
- 3) Break patterns of your old life ([Eph. 4:22-24](#))

Stage Two: Young Men (Living to Learn and Achieve)

The Learner (Learn all you can!)

Strengths:

- 1) Discovery of your identity in Christ ([Eph. 1](#))
- 2) Hunger for the Word of God ([1 Thess. 2:13](#))
- 3) Deep love for the family of God ([Acts 2:42-47](#))

Weaknesses:

- 1) Judgmental of others
- 2) "us verses them" mentality
- 3) Knowledge without wisdom

Moving on:

- 1) Identify your unique gifts in God ([Rom. 12:6-8](#))
- 2) Seek responsibility in serving ([Gal. 5:13](#))
- 3) Begin to exercise spiritual authority ([Matt. 28:18-20](#))

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The Warrior (Go for it!)

Strengths:

- 1) Achieving goals in God ([1 John 2:14](#))
- 2) Zeal and vision in abundance ([Dan. 11:32](#))
- 3) Resilient in spirit and faith ([Eph. 6:10-18](#))

Weaknesses:

- 1) Spiritual pride and self-strength
- 2) Addicted to fruit bearing
- 3) Insensitive to the hurt/need
- 4) Judgmental toward those who do not share their “burden”

Moving on:

- 1) Re-evaluating our purpose/meaning in life ([1 Kings 19:9](#))
- 2) Blood loss from fighting helps us to choose our battles more carefully ([Psalm 90](#))
- 3) Loss of bearings and grieving over a sense of powerlessness ([Psalm 90](#))

Brokenness (Hang on - Don't give up!)

Strengths:

- 1) Learning to embrace weakness ([2 Cor. 12:7-10](#))
- 2) A new understanding of humility ([Phil 3:12](#))
- 3) The “exchanged life” - “No longer I, but Christ” ([Gal. 2:20](#))
- 4) Gaining compassion for others ([Col. 3:12](#))

Weaknesses:

- 1) Giving up on God and others; isolation
- 2) Becoming spiritually cynical
- 3) Categorizing your past as a waste

Moving on:

- 1) Resist the retreat - trust in the sovereignty of God ([Phil. 3:13-16](#))
- 2) Submit to God's discipline ([Heb. 12:7-9](#))
- 3) Relate to those who have suffered ([2 Cor. 1:3-5](#))

Stage Three: Fathers (Living to Give)

Surrender

Strengths:

- 1) God gives grace to surrender our wills ([Luke 22:42](#))
- 2) Entering into the sufferings of Christ ([1 Pet:4:13](#))
- 3) Being weak so that Christ is strong ([2 Cor. 12:10](#))

Weaknesses:

- 1) Wanting to fast-forward the process
- 2) Anger, resistance and bargaining
- 3) Impatience and losing heart

Moving on:

- 1) "Father forgive them" ([Heb. 12:2-3](#); [Luke 23:34](#))
- 2) "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" ([Mark 15:34](#))
- 3) "Into Your hands I commit my Spirit" ([Luke 23:46](#))

Spiritual Authenticity

Strengths:

- 1) Richness of Christ-like character ([Psalm 92:12-15](#))
- 2) Others-oriented and compassionate ([Phil 2:3-4](#))
- 3) New perspective of God's eternal purpose ([Acts 13:36](#))

Weaknesses:

- 1) Going into spiritual retirement
- 2) Use your new freedom selfishly
- 3) Live in your past, not in other's futures

Moving on:

- 1) Live to give out God's investment in you ([Acts 20:22-24](#))
- 2) Model spiritual authenticity ([Psalm 31:7-8](#))
- 3) Love Christ and others deeply ([Mark 12:29-31](#))

* Only submitting to God's dealings while walking through life's stages will produce the character and soul formation that makes it possible to enjoy this new "spacious place"