

 MPI PUBLISHING

DISCIPLESHIP BASED CHURCHES

HOW TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN
A CHURCH OF DISCIPLES

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*Discipleship Based Churches: How to Create and Maintain a Church
of Disciples*

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DEDICATION

“To Pastor Anthony Freeman, who has given his life to exemplify personal discipleship both in my life and with hundreds around the world.”

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PREFACE

How I Finally Saw the Light

When I started my first church at age 22, I, like most new pastors fresh out of Bible College, thought I knew everything and believed that I was God's answer to change the world. However, God had a much different plan for me then. He was going to teach me his character and methods through ministry hardships. That's not to say my first church did not bear any fruit or change lives, which it did. The success actually came mostly in spite of what we were doing rather than because of it.

The Bible College I attended was heavily focused on the inner city, street preaching, and church planting. Although we were taught many great things, because the school was very young, there was not much graduate success to look up to. Thus, we had to learn from our own trial and error. I was in the 3rd graduating class and we were definitely the guinea pigs!

As students, we were taught to build churches by doing big outreaches, getting people saved, and then we were to disciple the new believers. The only problem with that was that we spent more time planning the monster outreaches than we did on discipleship. By the time I was starting my first church, I was great at drawing crowds and giving effective altar calls but I was a novice when it came to making disciples.

After four years of doing successful outreaches, we as a church could boast in the Lord about the hundreds of people that were coming to our big events as well as our services. Even so, we did not have much to show in the way of discipleship. Sure, people were getting saved, but they would continually deal with the same problems week after week. Our Bible studies were meeting regularly, but we did not see the transformation in our people that I'd hoped for as a pastor. That is when I heard about discipleship based churches for the first time.

In my state, there was a group of pastors who were hosting another famous pastor from Colombia, whose discipleship church had over 400,000 members. I was instantly drawn to these meetings and, within months, was applying the information exactly how this group of pastors was teaching me.

At first it seemed like their strategies were the solution to my discipleship problem, but major issues began to surface before long; the first of which were in my church. The congregation could not handle the drastic changes I was making, and many left in shell shock. Literally, overnight we went from weekly giveaways and evangelistic events to having no major events, strong holiness preaching, and absolutely no giveaways. Needless to say, the people dropped out in large numbers, never to return.

Second, my relationship with this group of pastors quickly became strained. I soon began to realize that these pastors I was looking to had absolutely no flexibility in their strategies. Every pastor wanting to be in their group had to follow all the structures exactly the same way within their own churches, or else they could not use the groups' materials. Long story short, I burned myself out trying to please them and left the process disheartened more than anything. After leaving this discipleship group I went back to the little church I had remaining, shut the doors, and began to ask God, "What's next?"

As I write this story now, I am grateful for the lessons I learned in my first church. It was because of them that, when I started my second church in a new city, it was able to grow successfully. Starting my second church plant, I had the wisdom and a plan in place to create a unique vision, discipleship strategy, and structure for our church.

Today, after eight years of starting and maintaining a discipleship based church, we now have over 100 disciples (more than 70% of our overall church attendance), 11 Bible College trained ministers produced from the discipleship, and have helped hundreds of churches overseas in countries such as Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Nigeria, providing them with discipleship materials that I have written. More than numbers,

my greatest testimony in the Lord is that I have been consistent throughout, by God's grace, to make disciples that make disciples.

This book was written to help others avoid some of the pitfalls I faced. It is my heart's desire that, by sharing with you the lessons I learned the hard way, you can create and develop your own structure to make disciples successfully until Jesus comes back. I pray that my story will encourage you to build a discipleship based church, no matter what stage or state your church is in, for our God is able!

A Disciple Making Disciples,

Joe Wyrstek

Author of *"Discipleship Based Churches"*

INTRODUCTION

The Need for Discipleship Based Churches

The Alarm Has Long Been Sound... and Ignored

The world is changing, the tide is turning, the writing is on the wall, and it is clear that the people of our nation are in active rebellion towards God- they want to throw off His fetters. The past couple generations of Americans have bore witness to frontal assaults on the Church and the Bible, in order to silence the truths they present. Conversely and consequently, moral and social chaos has ensued. Here are but a few major progressions that serve as the signs of our times:

In 1962, in an unprecedented motion, the Supreme Court voted to remove prayer from schools (to be gradually replaced with birth control and metal detectors). This would not be the last attempt to erase the knowledge of God from the public square. Numerous court battles have been fought to effectively remove prayers, Bibles references, displays of the Ten Commandments, and even nativity scenes from schools, courthouses, national parks, and the like.

In another grievous development, this generation has witnessed the legalization of abortion on demand, resulting in a veritable genocide- over 50 million of our unborn children slaughtered since 1973.¹ What's more, this is touted as a woman's "right" and is championed by many celebrities, journalists, politicians, and even some pastors!

And even more recently, immorality has progressed further as several states have legalized the recreational use of marijuana, along with same sex "marriage," primetime

¹ See "Abortion Stats," found here http://www.abort73.com/abortion_facts/_abortion_statistics/, accessed December 5th, 2012.

pornography, and even prostitution.² But we are just scratching the surface of the deep moral wounds that occur when a people exchange their God for idols.

All the while, the mass media has distorted Christianity's fundamental values to appear as "hate speech" and "intolerance", and, in their stead, have presented the *wisdom of this age*—a sex-driven, self-centered pop psychology cocktail that is void of transcendent truth. This "wisdom", that is humanistic at its core, taught us that life's answers are found within ourselves and that ultimate fulfillment is found in personal enjoyment. This empty philosophy has created more depression, suicide, violence, and broken families than this country has ever known.

With the demonic onslaught that's taken place in the U.S., one question remains: Where has the American church been? In the words of Martin Luther King, are we not the conscience of the state? If so, then where is the prophetic voice? Have we placed our lamp under a bushel? Has our salt lost its savor? This depressing declension into darkness among Americans is a strong indicator that we as Christians have fallen terribly short in our obligations. Even more troubling, some among us have sadly fallen into the same traps as worldly people.

Read some of the headlines made by today's compromising preachers in just the last five years alone:

- "Pastor and national evangelical leader caught doing drugs and paying for sex with a homosexual prostitute."
- "Pastor found dead in hotel from suspected drug overdose."
- "Bishop's wife files for divorce after sex scandal involving three young men in the church are made public."

² As of December 2012 Colorado passed into law the recreational use of marijuana. Prostitution and brothels have been legal in certain counties in Nevada since 1971. Primetime shows such as "*Friends*" in 2001 have shown same-sex kissing, which used to be only viewed in X-rated movies.

- “Bible college president forced to resign after allegations of stealing money.”
- “Bishop comes out of the closet with the support of his wife and congregation.”
- “Church declares bankruptcy after federal investigations, causes lead pastors to divorce, and later the former pastor is arrested for DUI.”
- “Pastor resigns mega church after confessing to an affair with a 16 year old member.”

How can the people of America know the truth and live it if the ones responsible for preaching and setting the example are being overrun with sin themselves? They can't. One of America's founding fathers, John Adams, stated, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”³ In view of this, the answer must come from disciples; that is, trained followers of Jesus, active both in the church and in the community.

When Jesus faced similar types of cultural wickedness in Rome and spiritual apathy among His Jewish people, He responded by calling out twelve men to be His disciples. He spent three years teaching and training them; first, for them to know Him and second, to make Him known.⁴ When the time came for Jesus to ascend to heaven, He gave them their final marching orders known as *The Great Commission* found in Matthew 28:18-20:

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the

³ “Letter to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts,” John Adams, 1798.

⁴ Mark 3:13-14.

Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Every Christ follower from the pew to the pulpit needs to stop hitting the snooze button on the alarm, rise up, and be the change that America needs. The church must get back to the basics and make disciples that live out the teachings of Christ. Accordingly, the only hope for America and the nations are discipleship based churches. For Jesus said, *“I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!”*⁵

Discipleship is for Everyone- Including You!

The word “disciple” is translated from the Greek word, *mathetes*. In the New Testament this word means, “To be a follower or student of Jesus Christ.”⁶ With that said, disciples not only “believe” in Jesus, they “study to live like Jesus!” Many people in the church say they believe in Jesus, but studies show very few actually live like Jesus.⁷

The Bible even rebukes this shallow kind of belief by stating, *“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that –and shudder.”*⁸ Apparently, demons are wiser than some Christians, because they not only believe in God but they also “shudder!” Instead, today’s make-believers need to shudder in God’s presence and become God-fearing believers!

A simple word study can also show the importance of being a disciple. For example, the words “Christian” and “believer,” are only found roughly 30x combined in the New Testament, while the word “disciple” is found over 250x. Moreover, it can be clearly seen in the Scriptures how Jesus wants His followers to identify themselves; He has called all of His followers to be disciples.

⁵ Matthew 16:18, KJV.

⁶ *“The Complete Word Study Dictionary,”* mathetes.

⁷ See the stats from Barna listed in the section, *“The Numbers Don’t Lie.”*

⁸ James 2:19.

Technically speaking, all born again believers are considered disciples and should act accordingly based on Scripture. However, in places such as America and Europe, many people who do not follow the teachings of Christ call themselves “Christians” and “believers” in Christ yet are actually neither by the Biblical definitions.

From the very start of Jesus’ ministry, He set out to make twelve disciples who would live like Him and follow all of His teachings. After three years of intensive training He told them to do for others the very same thing that He did with them; Jesus taught His disciples to go out and make new disciples, Matthew 28:16-20. In turn, if Jesus- God in the flesh, perfect in knowledge and wisdom, obedient to the Father in everything, with the ability and freedom to use any method for building His Kingdom choose only one method- discipleship, how much more should today’s leaders make discipleship the central focus of their ministry?

The reformation today’s church needs is one of discipleship. Discipleship is the process by which disciples grow and are taught to live like Jesus. Think about it, if simply going to church were the solution, it would’ve already worked. Therefore, being a disciple that makes disciples must be everyone’s number one goal in the church.

Consumers vs. Disciples in the Church

Today, many in the church have become casual consumers of comfortable Christianity. Consumer Christians want the best deal at the best price. They try to pick churches that tickle their ears to suit their selfish desires best and leave when things get tough. Disciples, on the other hand, are in the Kingdom of God for the long haul. They are willing to do whatever it takes to see the Kingdom of heaven invade the kingdoms of this earth.

Here are some helpful comparisons that reveal the differences between being a consumer in the church to being a disciple of Christ.

- Consumers give their free time to sports and entertainment, while disciples give their days to ministry and nights to prayer.
- Consumers want the American dream, while disciples want the power of God to change the world.
- Consumers desire comfort in life, while disciples live in constant conflict and opposition.
- Consumers want to be taken in and accepted by the world, while disciples are put out and rejected by it.
- Consumers want to be thought of as reasonable and considerate with those who differ with them, while disciples are called “extremists,” “intolerant,” and “trouble-makers.”
- Consumers live for the praise of people, while disciples live only for the praise of God.
- Consumers will only give to Jesus when it is most convenient and stop when it hurts or brings any discomfort, but disciples give their whole life in sacrifice and selfless dedication.
- Consumers are only consumed with their wants, their needs, their families, their desires, and their dreams; while disciples are all-consumed with God’s wants, God desires, God’s family, and look to other’s hurts, other’s needs, and solve other’s problems.
- Consumers wish to save their lives, while disciples choose to lose their lives.

Is it any wonder that most churches fail to make the kind of difference that Jesus' first disciples made with a congregation full of consumers?⁹

The Numbers Don't Lie

George Barna, a well-known Christian researcher, has spent years studying the decay of the modern church. Some of his research was published in his book, *Think Like Jesus*. Here are just some of his findings:

- Only 2% of young adults in the church have a "Christian Worldview."¹⁰
- Only 14% of all Christians believe the Bible teaches absolute moral truth and is relevant to their everyday lives.
- Only 17% of all U.S. churchgoers are in a discipleship/accountability relationship.
- Only 23% of U.S. churchgoers attend small groups during the week.
- Only 29% of Christians volunteer one hour outside of the church service a week.

⁹ This comparison of "consumerism vs. discipleship" is inspired by the writings and preaching of Dr. Michael Brown from "Line of Fire Radio."

¹⁰ The "World View" study was based on six main Christian doctrines, "Jesus is God, the Trinity, and the like." To be considered a "Christian" by the "worldview" standard the young people had to believe every one of the six statements. The shocking truth is 98% didn't believe all six, thus only 2% passed. This goes directly against the idea that 70% of the nation is Christian. Meaning, the people of the US many be "Christian" in their religious choice compared to Islam, etc. but the youth of the US are not "Christian" in their worldview.

- Only 30% of church goers believe there is a major difference between the Quran, the Book of Mormon, and the Bible.
- Over 53% of all Christians do not believe homosexuality is a sin.
- Over 60% of all Christians believe as long as a person does good things in life they can go to heaven.
- Over 70% of young adults raised in church do not attend church every week.
- Over 78% of all Christians do not believe the devil is a real person; he is just a “force.”
- Over 31% divorce rate in the church compared to 33% outside of the church.

How could this happen to God’s people in the time of mega churches, rock star pastors, billboard topping Gospel artists, and best-selling Christian authors making their rounds to all the churches and talk shows? The head (leadership) is sick, which means the whole body (God’s people) is as well.¹¹

The statistics stated may be shocking in the pews, but its roots are in the fruit of the polluted pulpit. Ezekiel lived in a time in Israel’s history when the people suffered because of the leadership’s sins and neglect to hear what God spoke to him in Ezekiel 34:1-10:

1 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3 You eat the curds,

¹¹ Isaiah 1:5

clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.

4 You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. 6 My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 8 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, 9 therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 10 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

Today's shepherds must return to the commands and methods of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd. The leadership needs to bring discipleship back to the forefront of the church and teach God's people all the things Jesus taught so they can live the kind of lives Jesus commanded. For this very reason Jesus said in Matthew 7:24, *"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."*

Discipleship, the Only True Method

When Jesus walked the earth He did not give two different options to following Him; one easy and the other hard. For

instance, when kids play video games they can choose the level of difficulty. He only gave one way to follow Him and called it "the narrow road."¹²

Jesus did not tell the man who wanted to follow Him but first wanted to go and bury His Father, "Hey there fella, I have two doors for you to choose from if you want to follow me. There is door #1 for the Sunday morning follower and you can come whenever you want. For those who wish to be really committed and spiritual there is door #2 and that starts today. Now it is your turn to make the choice!" Never. Jesus wasn't some cheesy game show host. He was painfully clear that unless the man missed his father's funeral and followed Him that day, he could not come at all!¹³

Jesus did not come to barter with people like a person shopping in an outdoor market or at a pawnshop. The Bible does not record Jesus saying to the young rich man, "I'll let you follow me if you sell everything and give it to the poor." In the same way the rich man did not reply, "Wow, Jesus, that's more than I was willing to give- how about 25% of my riches." Jesus replies back, "Can't go that low, 75% would be better." Rich man responds, "Well, can you meet me half way at 50%?" Jesus finally says, "Yeah, I'll take it. It is lower than I first wanted, but you got yourself a deal." God forbid! There is no such interaction in the Bible with Jesus like that- it was all or nothing.¹⁴¹⁵

Today, everyone who claims Christ needs to stop making excuses, false comparisons with others, and start talking and walking like Jesus! For Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-26,

24 "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be

¹² Matthew 7:14

¹³ Luke 9:59-62

¹⁴ Mark 10:17-31

¹⁵ Example taken from the preaching of Banning Liebscher from "Jesus Culture."

for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Four Reasons for Discipleship Based Churches

1. **Command** | Jesus commands His church to be built on disciples: Matthew 28:18-20.
2. **Compassion** | The people of God are living below God's standard and suffering for it morally, "only 13 out of every 100 Christians in the U.S. are actually living a different moral life than unbelievers," Hebrews 3:13.
3. **Church** | 80% of church growth results from believers changing churches, not by winning the lost. Mega-churches generally sustain growth by being receptor churches for believers from smaller feeder churches.¹⁶ Therefore, the church is not storming the gates of hell as it should, Matthew 16:18.
4. **Culture** | The Christian church is losing ground in the culture war within the U.S. while secularism, Islam, and cults such as Mormonism, are growing in influence, 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

How to Use This Book

This book was written to be an instruction manual of sorts for church planters and pastors to create and maintain a discipleship based church. The following sections will hopefully make this book easy and exciting to work with.

¹⁶ Points 2 & 3 are from Carl George's book, *"Prepare Your Church for the Future,"* and cited by Stephen Lim in his article for the Enrichment Journal found here, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200801/200801_048_WhyChDon%27t.cfm, accessed December 5, 2012.

1. **Creating** | The first section will give you the basic ideas and tools to create and make a unique discipleship plan for your specific church.
2. **Maintaining** | The second section will present you with the basic understandings of assessments and accountability, along with teachings on how to make necessary adjustments as time goes on.

From the Author

It's time to make a decision, a lifelong resolution. Decide right now to drop whatever agendas you had before, and yield your life and ministry towards being the disciple God wants you to be, and to building a discipleship church the way He said to. Begin to replace any false notions you once had about church and discipleship that came from American "Churchianity," and not from Jesus. Take away the idea that only a few will preach or only the super Christians will witness or just the first disciples could do miracles, while the rest are made to sit in pews and live in spiritual poverty. Instead, start believing what Jesus said – that you and the people in your church are made to be a Spirit-empowered, world changing force!

You have been chosen, just like the first disciples Jesus picked 2,000 years ago. They were not any different than you. They could not do it in their own ability. They needed to completely rely on the power of God and so will you. Sure you may make mistakes, so did Peter, James and John. In the same way, you will learn like they did, that Jesus has both the power of redemption and transformation.

Remember, you are saved by God's power, made a disciple by His power, and you will live your life with purpose by His power. It is all about trusting and believing that God knows what He is doing and will do what He said He would do.

I believe in God, who lives in you, and I know that when you pray and ask Him to use your life, He will. You will

experience the power of God in ways you never thought possible. Prepare to see your church and community changed by the same mighty power God is working in you. Get ready to launch out of your natural and into His supernatural!

Today, everyone who claims Christ and reads this book must stop making excuses, comparing themselves with others, and start talking and walking like Jesus. Now is the time to start a discipleship based church- *let's do it!*

CHAPTER 1

Jesus' Method to Build His Church

Peter and the Start of Jesus' Church

*"I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it!"*¹⁷ Can you imagine what it would have been like to be Peter and hear this coming from the mouth of Jesus? He boldly declared to Peter, a rugged fisherman, that He was going to use him to build the greatest organization on the planet, His church!

The Greek word for church, "*ekklesia*," was not a new or special word during Jesus' time. It simply meant, "an assembly or congregation of people,"¹⁸ and could refer to any political or religious gathering of that day. Furthermore, Jesus' use of the word was not to create a new concept, but rather to point to a new gathering of a specific kind of people. Jesus was declaring that His church was going to be a gathering of disciples, such as Peter.

Consequently, why was Peter then given special recognition apart from the rest of the disciples? Because when Jesus asked them all, "*Who do you say that I am?*"¹⁹ it was only Peter who answered, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"²⁰ Therefore, the reason Peter was chosen to be the first member of Jesus' new church was the direct result of his confession of faith. Peter was able to hear the voice of God the Father concerning Jesus' identity and, in turn, confess it clearly.

Around the 5th century, the Roman Catholic Church was under such leaders like Pope Leo the Great who attempted to use the previously mentioned verses concerning Peter to seize control of the Christian Church. His efforts established what would eventually be named in the 11th century, the "papal

¹⁷ Matthew 16:18.

¹⁸ "*The Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*," *ekklesia*.

¹⁹ Matthew 16:15.

²⁰ Matthew 16:16.

supremacy.”²¹ However, the book of Acts teaches Peter was not the boss of all the apostles; it was actually James (Jesus’ half brother).²² Secondly, during Peter’s life as an overseer to the churches he wrote, “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”²³

As a result, Peter’s confession, not his office as pope, was the building block for Jesus’ church. Like Peter, whenever someone confesses the identity of Jesus, they become a stone that is used to build the church of Jesus! Jesus has chosen to use ordinary men and women who believe in Him to build His house.

Re-Examining the Great Commission

Any good preacher knows exactly what Jesus said in the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20, yet many have missed what He actually meant. This is because the key to understanding verses 18-20 is found in the preceding verse, 16, “*Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.*” The key behind truly understanding the Great Commission is to understand who Jesus was giving the command to, which were His “eleven disciples.”

When one reads verse 19, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,*” it’s clear that Jesus meant to use His first disciples to make new disciples from every nation. The strategy Jesus set forth to build His church and to establish His Kingdom on earth was “disciples that make disciples.”

Unfortunately, when one looks at the majority of churches today, this direct command and strategy to make disciples that make disciples seems to have vanished. George Barna responds to this issue in his book “*Growing True Disciples,*” that “Almost every church in our country has some

²¹ “*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,*” papacy.

²² Acts 15:13-21.

²³ 1 Peter 2:5.

type of discipleship program or set of activities, but stunningly few churches have a church of disciples.”²⁴

Barna continues giving nine reasons why most churches do not have success in making biblical disciples, which are:

1. Few Churches or Christians Have a Clear, Measureable Definition of “Spiritual Success”
2. We Have Defined “Discipleship” as Head Knowledge Rather Than Complete Transformation
3. We Have Chosen to Teach People in Random Rather Than Systematic Ways
4. There is Virtually No Accountability for What We Say, Think, Do, or Believe
5. When it Comes to Discipleship, We Promote Programs Rather than People
6. Small Groups Typically Fail to Provide Comprehensive Spiritual Nurture
7. Church Leaders are Not Zealous About the Spiritual Development of People
8. We Invest Our Resources in Adults Rather Than in Children
9. We Divert Our Best Leadership to Ministries Other Than Discipleship²⁵

These points can be summarized in two main categories of sins committed by the church; first, the church has neglected the simple discipleship strategy of Jesus and second, the church,

²⁴ “*Growing True Disciples*,” George Barna. Back cover quote.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pgs. 88-97.

while neglecting discipleship, keeps doing things that do not result in spiritual growth- concerts, superfluous events, and the like.

The behavior of today's leadership is similar to the rebellious Israelites in the days of Jeremiah. Concerning the Jewish people in Jeremiah 2:13, God said, *"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."*

God's rebuke to the Israelites was that they had committed two sins; they forsook Him- the living water, and they tried to drink water from broken jars that could not hold water. When Israel left God's ways and turned to the idols of the surrounding nations, they could not find any spiritual refreshment. The same is true today in the modern church. As church leaders have forsaken God's way of reaching the nations and have turned to the latest and greatest fast growth fad, the people are not being refreshed; instead they are left holding broken jars with nothing of real value.

What is the solution for a wayward and misguided church? A return to biblical discipleship, where there is living water! If every church planter would start their church with discipleship as their focus, no new churches would need to be "fixed." If every existing church with this need would simply be honest with themselves and make discipleship a focus, then there would be no churches missing the key ingredient to Christ's church. In other words, every church and follower of Jesus needs to re-examine the "Great Commission" and make disciples like Jesus did.

Do What Jesus Did | DWJD

When one reads the gospels it becomes very clear and obvious how Jesus made disciples. There are not any tricks or secret formulas. And although many people over the years have

come up with catchy slogans, we must be sure that we are indeed truly learning from Jesus and replicating what He did.²⁶

Robert Coleman, in his famous book on the subject, *"The Master Plan of Evangelism"* gives a great detailed summary of Jesus' method of making disciples; (1) Selection, (2) Association, (3) Consecration, (4) Impartation, (5) Demonstration, (6) Delegation, (7) Supervision, and (8) Reproduction. Coleman also wrote in his book concerning Jesus' method that, "Every one of us then should be seeking some way to incorporate the wisdom of Jesus' strategy into our own preferred method of evangelism."²⁷

On the other hand, a more basic 1-2-3 summary of Jesus' method can be said in the following terms, Connect, Mentor, and Send. Meaning, Jesus first "Connected" to His followers by calling them to Himself, then He "Mentored" them with His life and teachings, and lastly, He "Sent" them out to do the very same things He had done with them (1-Connect, 2-Mentor, 3-Send.) This simple approach can be seen in the life of Peter and all the disciples.

1-CONNECT | Jesus connected to Peter and his brother Andrew on the shores of Galilee and said the famous words found in Matthew 4:19, *"Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men."* Jesus never did a "bait and switch" recruiting technique with those He connected with. He didn't say at first, "Hey guys, you want to find gold in a fish's mouth?" and then after they followed Him, add, "Oh yeah I forgot to mention it but you're going to have to help me preach if you want to get that gold!" God forbid.

Jesus made His full intentions known the moment He met Peter. He wanted Peter to follow Him first before He taught him how to fish for the souls of men. The moment Peter left His nets to follow Jesus; he knew in summary what his life was going to be about- following Jesus and preaching to others.

²⁶ Some examples of catchy slogans are, "Reach one, to teach one, to reach one," Jesus taught them to "Reach up, reach in, and reach out," Disciples are to "Know Jesus and make Him known," and "What God does to us, He wants to do through us."

²⁷ *"The Master Plan of Evangelism,"* Coleman, pg. 100.

Today, leaders in the church need to approach people with the same invitation and the same straightforwardness: “Do you want to follow Jesus and help make other followers?”

2-MENTOR | As Peter traveled with Jesus; every moment was a lesson in discipleship. Whether it was the Sermon of the Mount, the glorious revealing of Christ on the Mountain of Transfiguration, or boat rides across stormy lakes- Peter was always learning from Jesus. However, not all the lessons came easy. In fact, in the earlier mentioned passage found in Matthew 16, Peter went from giving the right answer to Jesus’ identity and being blessed to later being called, “Satan!”

However, Jesus’ mentoring of Peter, even during intense times like in Matthew 16, always came from a place of love and guidance, Proverbs 27:5. Over time Peter began to love Jesus very deeply and truly desired to never leave Him. Even after the crowds left Jesus in John 6:66, when Jesus asked if the other 12 wanted to leave with them, it was Peter who passionately replied in verses 68-69, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.*”

3-SEND | Lastly, at the end of His ministry on the earth, Jesus personally visited Peter to restore Him after his betrayal during the trials. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him in order to restore and forgive him for the three times he had betrayed Him. Then Jesus gave Peter a special command in John 21:17b, “*Feed my sheep.*”

Therefore, by the time Matthew 28:18-20 came with the great commission to go and make disciples of all the nations, Peter and the other disciples were well trained and ready to go. The fruit of Jesus’ work could be visibly seen on the Day of Pentecost when those newly anointed and appointed preachers began to turn the city right-side-up for Jesus in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2.

Five Marks of a True Disciple

Now consider the five passages below where Jesus teaches His disciples how to follow Him and be a part of His church.

(1) Luke 9:57-62, "Disciples Forsake All to Follow Jesus."

Jesus interacts with potential disciples that wish to follow Him. Instead of simply allowing them to join, He offers some kind of prerequisite in each instance; (a) "foxes have holes," following Him will cost the man his bed and comfort, (b) "bury my father," becoming a follower of Jesus changes one's priorities, even during life's tragedies, and (c) "say good bye," one cannot even wait a moment in deciding to follow Jesus when He calls.

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

MODERN APPLICATION: During "altar calls" and Gospel presentations, today's preachers should give similar conditions to expose the commitment level of the "potential" follower of Christ. As a result, disciples today will understand that following Jesus is to forsake everything and a call to reproduction.

(2) Luke 14:25-26, "Disciples Love God Above Everything Else."

In this passage Jesus teaches the crowd of "soon-to-be" followers that following Him will place them at odds with their own family, and thus, His followers must love Him more than

anyone. Moreover, if they don't hate everyone in comparison to their love for Jesus, they cannot be His disciples.

The "cannot" used here is most likely referring to a restriction of the disciples' ability rather than Jesus' willingness. Meaning, even if Jesus was willing to let them follow Him, they would not be able to place others above Jesus and still be His disciples. The best example of this kind of "restriction in ability" is to imagine a rock climber trying to ascend vertically while carrying his mother, father, and all of his friends on his back. He would not be able to climb because people have restricted him from doing so, and therefore, he does not have the ability to go forward with the extra weight upon his back.

The same is true in this passage. Jesus does not push away or deny anyone from following Him, but disciples cannot truly follow Jesus when, by their own inability, they are held back in their hearts and emotions.

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple."

MODERN APPLICATION: Today's church should teach all disciples to understand that love for God comes before all other affections and commitments.

(3) Luke 14:28-33, "Disciples Count the Cost Before They Follow Jesus." Jesus provides two detailed examples of the same principle, counting the cost. He does this to teach the "wannabe disciple" that they should not take lightly the decision to follow Him, because if they quit they will only embarrass and shame themselves. Both the tower and the battle examples presented by Jesus give the obvious conclusion to the "wannabe disciple" that they cannot make their decision half-heartedly. Instead, it shows them that before pledging their commitment they need to fully understand all of the consequences of not fulfilling their decision.

28 Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.

31 Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

MODERN APPLICATION: The modern church would do well to teach all of its members that following Jesus is not always easy or full of temporary rewards, but will sometimes be full of hardships and suffering. Thus, the “true disciple” should choose to follow Jesus in each and every situation in life.

(4) Matthew 28:18-20, “Disciples Obey All of Jesus’ Commands.” Jesus was very clear that disciples must be taught what He commanded and, in turn, obey everything He taught. James said that disciples could not just be “hearers” of God’s Word, they also had to be “doers,” James 1:22. Therefore, every disciple must learn to follow and obey everything Jesus taught.

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age

MODERN APPLICATION: Leaders must be faithful to teach all of Jesus’ commands and the disciples must be faithful to learn and obey them.

(5) John 13:34-35, “Disciples Love People.” Not only are the disciples to be radical and passionate for God and follow all His commands, they must also be radical in their love for people, especially each other. In the famous passage of love, 1 Corinthians 13, Paul reminds all disciples that without love, everything else counts for nothing!

34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

MODERN APPLICATION: Disciples need to love as much of the world as Jesus loves, which is all of it, John 3:16. They also need to love as much of the church as Jesus loves, which is also all of it, Ephesians 5:25.

Four Marks of a Discipleship Based Church

Discipleship Based Churches are churches that are built upon the foundation of making disciples that make disciples like Jesus did. Below are four qualities of a discipleship based church:

- 1. The Leadership is Made Up of Disciples |** Starting with those who are in charge, the leadership (like the first Eleven disciples who started new churches) is passionate about being genuine followers of Jesus and obeying all that He commanded, Matthew 28:19-20.
- 2. The Church Has an Organized and Successful Approach to Making Disciples that Make Disciples |** Regardless of the method, the bottom line is that discipleship based churches make discipleship their number one priority, Acts 14:21-22.
- 3. The Disciples in the Church Are Like the Disciples in the Bible |** The lifestyle, beliefs, and ministries of the early

church are replicated in the modern day church- no shortcuts or compromises, Acts 2:42-47.

- 4. Biblical Discipline, Accountability, and Sound Doctrine is Esteemed in the Church** | The church corrects and disciplines its members, holds leaders and members alike accountable to the Word of God, and does not allow for false teachings but stands on the truth of Scripture in all its major doctrines, 1 Corinthians 5:13 & 1 Timothy 3:16-4:5.

Five Pitfalls to Avoid in Discipleship

The following list includes some of the most common pitfalls leaders tend to fall into when they decide to follow Jesus' pattern of disciple making.

- 1. Replacing Jesus** | One must never forget that in discipleship relationships and even in the church world, Jesus always remains "Jesus." Well-intentioned leaders can sometimes forget this and try to become everyone's Savior. This usually results in personal burn out or the church turning cultish. Paul said it best in 1 Corinthians 11:1, *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."* Therefore, never try to "replace" Jesus.
- 2. My Way or the Highway** | Sometimes when overzealous leaders develop a few successful strategies in discipleship they try to force their ways upon everyone else in the church world. They tend to conveniently forget other important doctrines, like "the priesthood of the believer" and then desire to become the new "protestant pope."

Discipleship leaders need to give grace and room for other churches to grow without judgment or condemnation. Some of the disciples with Jesus wanted to stop other disciples that weren't in their inner circle in Mark 9:38-40 but Jesus said, *"don't stop them... for whoever is not against us is for*

us.” Therefore, always give time and grace for others to come to the same conclusions you did.

3. **More Christian Than Christ** | When discipleship programs are more exhaustive and legalistic than Jesus’ own rules, something is off! Remember to only forbid what Jesus forbade and to bless only what He blessed. Leave “grey areas” to people’s own consciences and the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul, in Romans 14, gives the balance when dealing with issues of the conscience: the weaker brother gets their way when the stronger is with them, but good teaching should eventually set weak consciences free.
4. **Us Four and No More** | Though Jesus had laser beam focus on His inner core of twelve disciples, He wasn’t hidden away on some mountain top taking celestial spiritual journeys to the third heavens and making everyone’s “spiritual fantasies” come true. He was always reaching out and interacting with the crowds. Discipleship must never become an excuse to stay small and only inward focused. *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost,”* Luke 19:10.
5. **Nothing Else Matters** | Discipleship is not the “end” in relationship to the Kingdom of God, but rather the “means” to the end. Meaning, the Kingdom of God is that which encompasses everything and will endure forever. Small groups, discipleship classes, and the like can’t replace the Kingdom of God. Leaders need to always remember to seek after God for other Kingdom principles such as Spirit-filled worship services, power evangelism, and charitable deeds.²⁸ For example, Matthew 25 relates a story of judgment, which contains acts of charity as the determining factor of being blessed with eternal rewards in the Kingdom of God.

²⁸ Most discipleship churches would agree with this and state that when discipleship is done correct everything else flows naturally. However, sometimes the day-to-day operations of discipleship can overshadow all the other good things disciples are commanded to do as disciples, see Matthew 25:31-46.

Therefore, the disciple must be faithful to serve in all the Kingdom work not just discipleship classes.

Pastor Discipleship vs. Pastor Evangelist

Imagine for the sake of this example, two Bible college students share a dorm room together in their final year of school. Both desire to go directly into ministry as church planters after graduation. However, they have two totally different models. The first student desires to make disciples like Jesus, thus his name is "Pastor Discipleship." The other is deeply influenced by the rock star image of pastors in the media and wants to do an "evangelistic model," thus his name is "Pastor Evangelist."

After graduation they both find great cities to start a church in and immediately get to work. When the first year passes they agree to meet up to share how things have gone. Pastor Evangelist comes to the meeting with a huge grin on his face because he just can't wait to share the good news with his friend. Pastor Discipleship can sense the excitement so he asks, "How's the church going?" Pastor Evangelist bursts out, "It's going so awesome! We set a goal to win one new person to Christ every day and join them to the church and by God's grace we did it. We now have over 365 people every Sunday!"

Pastor Discipleship responds, "Praise God, that's great!" Pastor Evangelist then asks, "How many do you have on Sundays?" Pastor Discipleship answers, "Two." "Two, how in the world do you only have two?" Pastor Evangelist retorts. Then Pastor Discipleship begins to explain his very different strategy to his friend. His strategy is to make one new disciple every year and after that year for the new disciple to make another disciple as he continues to make a new one as well.

The two pastors part ways and agree because of time and travel to wait until their fifth anniversary to meet again. After five years pass they set a time to meet and Pastor Evangelist comes to the meeting with some of his staff and eagerly waits for his time to share. When the two get to talking again the conversation goes much the same as it did last time they met.

Both young pastors have been faithful to their strategy and have seen success, but deep down Pastor Evangelist just cannot understand how he could have a congregation of 1,825 people while his friend only has 32.

Therefore, Pastor Evangelist tries to make the next meeting so far in advance that hopefully his old college friend will forget because he has now made tons of new pastor friends with churches his size and even bigger. So he suggests not to meet again until after their 20th anniversary in Pastor Discipleship's city and leaves it up to his friend to remember and make all the arrangements.

Time goes by and before they know it they have their 20th anniversaries. Pastor Discipleship values his friendship with Pastor Evangelist and makes arrangements for his friend to come to his city and catch up. As Pastor Evangelist arrives in the city he notices Christians everywhere with Bibles witnessing on street corners. Curious, he walks over to one group and asks, "Are you witnessing?" They respond, "Yes, we're out here making disciples!" "What church do you attend?" He asks back. Then they cheerfully mention the name of his friend's church.

Shocked and puzzled he continues to walk along the street and to his amazement he sees even more people with Bibles witnessing in the city. He curiously stops and talks with them and is told the same thing as before with the first group. He then thinks to himself, there must be another church in the city with the same name because there is no way his friend's church could have that many members since the last time they met he only had 32.

Finally, Pastor Evangelist arrives at the meeting place with excitement to share his growth with his friend because for the last 20 years his church has added a new believer to their congregation every day and now they have over 7,300 attendees on Sunday. As always he is the first to share and Pastor Disciple rejoices with him. Then he asks Pastor Discipleship, "How many do you have now in your church- a couple hundred? Because I think I ran into some of your members on streets."

Pastor Discipleship then answers back, “Brother, you’ve always been concerned with the numbers, while I was simply concerned with the disciples. However, making disciples does add numbers but not as you think. You have grown by way of addition but I grew by the way of multiplication. Though it didn’t seem big at first, we were actually doubling every year. We grew by the power and plan of Jesus, multiplying from 2 to 4, then to 8, 16, 32 and so forth. My old friend, we don’t have hundreds, we now have over one million disciples!”

Jesus Knows Best

Though the example of Pastor Disciple and Pastor Evangelist was a fictitious story and somewhat over exaggerated, the truth remains and can be seen today in such countries as South Korea, China, Brazil, India, and Columbia as churches grow into the hundreds of thousands because of discipleship models. Certainly, discipleship churches can likewise do outreaches and events- but their main concern is always making disciples.

We will also discuss in future chapters both “quality and quantity,” but for now I pray the simple example resounds in your heart- Jesus’ method is the best way to grow a church! In closing, take a moment to consider the chart of winning one soul a day verses making one disciple a year. I pray that you will go and do likewise!

**DISCIPLESHIP BASED
CHURCHES**

Evangelism

1yr		365	11yrs		4,015
2yrs		730	12yrs		4,380
3yrs		1,095	13yrs		4,745
4yrs		1,460	14yrs		5,110
5yrs		1,825	15yrs		5,475
6yrs		2,190	16yrs		5,840
7yrs		2,555	17yrs		6,205
8yrs		2,920	18yrs		6,570
9yrs		3,285	19yrs		6,935
10yrs		3,650	20yrs		7,300

Discipleship

1yr		2	11yrs		2,048
2yrs		4	12yrs		4,096
3yrs		8	13yrs		8,192
4yrs		16	14yrs		16,384
5yrs		32	15yrs		32,768
6yrs		64	16yrs		65,536
7yrs		128	17yrs		131,072
8yrs		256	18yrs		262,144
9yrs		512	19yrs		524,288
10yrs		1,024	20yrs		1,048,576

The Bottom Line: If you really want to make disciples like Jesus did it's going to cost you, but in the end you'll have the reward of your labor. Since discipleship was the way of the Master- make it your way today!

CHAPTER 2

Creating a Vision, Strategy, & Goal

The K.I.S.S. Principle

The K.I.S.S. Principle for me means, “Keep It Simple Saints.” When creating your own vision, strategy, and goal in a discipleship program, never forget that everything must be simple! Simple does not mean “easy,” because something simple can still require hard work, and the very act of making something simple actually takes more work. Rather, simple means “effective with the least amount of excess.”²⁹

Take your home for example. It is much easier to allow dirty clothes to be left in laundry baskets, dishes to be stacked up in the sink, and dust accumulated everywhere than to consistently have it cleaned and organized. Now think about how many things in your life take massive amounts of effort just to make simple. Most things in life are naturally complicated and out of order, however, when we can organize and simplify them (like making precise grocery lists, planning the fastest commute, setting daily patterns for our children, etc.), we can become the most successful and effective.

Simplicity is what makes complicated businesses successful as well. The places most people like to shop like Best Buy, Target, Radio Shack, etc. are the most successful because they have learned how to keep things simple. They have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and countless hours to make their brand and their stores the most effective with the least amount of excess.

For example, these businesses usually have a simple logo that is recognizable, and a consistent slogan and style in their commercials that, unlike their competitors’, does not change month to month. This is most likely why they are still around and their competitors are not. In addition, the stores have been

²⁹ This chapter is inspired by the book, “*Simple Church*,” by Thom Rainer.

designed with simplicity in mind to direct customers to the exact products they are searching for with employees in each section ready to assist.

Plus, all the locations look and operate the same. The employees have the same uniforms, the products are usually placed in the same departments, and the prices remain consistent. It is almost always based upon how well these basic actions are implemented that customers choose their favorite stores. This is exactly how you need to apply the K.I.S.S Principle when designing your discipleship program.

The Complicated & Confusing Church World

Jesus said it like this in Luke 16:8b, *“For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.”* Oh that the church world would learn this principle! We in church leadership are the best at making clutter. Our church signs have so much clutter; it’s hard to even know the times of the services because the sign contains verses, themes, quotes, random pictures, and everything else. Most church websites are so unorganized you can’t even find the service times without spending five minutes working through all the confusing links and wording.

Plus, some pastors change their church’s vision and theme every year, along with adding new things to their “core values” with every passing fad. And before anyone realizes it the average church has- (1) a yearly theme, (2) a vision statement, (3) a purpose statement, (4) a core values list, (5) a goals and objectives list, (6) a strategic plan for growth, (7) an outreach theme, (8) a small group theme, and (9) a motto! Not to mention all the individual ministry themes and visions- youth group, children’s church, etc.!

It’s no wonder why most people in the church world can’t remember what’s most important- we’ve made it way too confusing! And if you don’t think it applies to your church, put this book down right now and write out all the things you value and teach by way of vision for the church. Then, call up

any five members from your church and see if they can remember all of them. You will be shocked by how little they actually can remember. Most church members think their doing good if they can remember the church name, address, service times, and the pastor's name!

The Apple Effect

One of my favorite businesses to learn simplicity from is Apple. Steve Jobs was a creative genius and it shows by how simple and effective Apple's products are. Take for example the iPhone when it first came out I owned a smart phone by HP that had a slide out keyboard with a stylus pen (small plastic pen used to write with on the phone). When I saw the iPhone had only one button, I was shocked! I was so skeptical that for two years I wouldn't even consider buying one. I thought there was no way a "one button" phone with apps could be better than my "mini computer phone."

Then one day I held one and began to play with it and within moments I was hooked! I was amazed at how simple everything worked. There was no need for an actual keyboard or a stylus pen- the one button with the touch screen did everything better. Plus, the apps made everything simple- the iTunes app played my music, the Bible app was great for reading the Bible, and so on.

As I began to become an "apple fan" I couldn't stop buying their products- everything was so much better than what I owned before. I bought the laptop (MacBook) because it was lighter, cleaner, and easier to use. Then I bought the desktop (iMac) because it took up less space, worked faster, and was like a piece of art on my desk. Afterwards, the iPad and even the apple TV! Literally, there isn't one major apple device that I don't have. Apple should pay me just for talking and writing about them so much!

But their quality doesn't stop at their products; their Apple support center is the best in the business. The Apple Genius Bar makes Best Buy's Geek Squad look like first graders

playing with calculators (in my humble opinion). From their online support, to their website, to buying everything through iTunes, or setting appointments to attend free training seminars in the Apple store- they are “The Masters” of keeping things simple.

Apple’s success has changed the way others do business. Just take a look at all the other tech companies- they are literally running to catch up. However, the Apple effect is not only felt in the tech world, but all throughout the business world as well. It seems like everyone is trying to simplify to get ahead in their market.

Apple became number one in their business because they were shrewd in making great products that were simple. Churches need to do the same thing by simplifying their process and being shrewd in making great disciples!

WARNING!

At this point if you’re thinking to yourself that you’re just going to make a “simple streamlined discipleship program” to add to all the other “clutter” of your church- STOP RIGHT HERE. You cannot make a discipleship based church by simply adding a discipleship program to everything else you’re doing.

You have to be willing to make the discipleship process the very backbone and heart of your church. When pastors try to add discipleship programs to their church they tend to quit easily when things get tough and just go back to business as usual.

Barna in his book, *“Growing True Disciples”* shares two important truths from successful discipleship pastors that everyone wanting to do discipleship should note, (1) “Disciple making is a process, not a program” and, (2) “The church’s ministry focus must be streamlined to prioritize and support discipleship.”³⁰

³⁰ *“Growing True Disciples,”* pgs. 127-128.

Therefore, you need to be able to answer the following questions positively first before going any further in developing a discipleship based church:

1. Are you willing to lose people if they don't like it?
2. Are you committed to always making disciples?
3. Are you willing to build everything else around discipleship?
4. Are willing to stick with it no matter how long it takes to become successful?

The above questions are meant to expose the heart of any false motives or pretenses. Meaning, if you're just considering "kicking the tires" and taking discipleship out for a "test drive," you're most likely going to fail and have everyone look at your "half built tower" and scorn you, Luke 14:29.

Therefore, you need to place discipleship in the same category as the Sunday morning service and along the same lines as preaching and teaching. You, as a senior pastor would never show up on a Sunday morning and say, "Hey congregation we're thinking about shutting down the Sunday morning service and trying something else."

Or to appear before the church and say, "We're going to eliminate preaching and teaching on Sundays and try something new!" Likewise, you must commit yourself to building discipleship into the very heart and fabric of your church. You need to declare to your team, the local congregation, and every demon in hell, "For as long as I have a church under my care, we will have and make disciples, period."

Developing a Simple Vision Statement

The vision should be one statement that encompasses the whole purpose of both your church and discipleship process. I strongly recommend that the “motto,” “purpose statement,” and “vision” should all be the same thing. The differences between the definitions of a “purpose statement,” “motto,” or “vision statement” is not important. Different church leaders call it different things; the main point is that the church develops one key statement that is the focus and central statement of the church until Jesus comes back.

For example, “Loving God and Loving People” is a popular vision statement for many churches. It serves as the motto and is easy to remember. Whenever people see it on the website, on fliers, or in the announcements they can easily identify it and understand it.

Whether you’re starting a new church or re-structuring an existing one, the vision statement should be the overall goal and purpose of the church. Once it’s established remember to never change it unless the angel Gabriel comes riding in an angelic horse drawn chariot of fire and gives you a scroll inscribed with the new one!

Consistency is one of the most important keys to making disciples. If you keep changing the wording and meaning of your vision the people will not remember it anymore or take it seriously. The average Joe showing up on Sunday needs to hear it and see it so often that if he were asked to recite it he could do it without even hesitating.

Some churches are able to combine their vision statement with their discipleship strategy. Take for example the vision statement, “Loving God, People, and Life.” The leadership then could make each phrase into different steps in the discipleship process. In the “Loving God” step, people could be won to the Lord and baptized. Then in the “Loving People” phase, the new believers are placed into discipleship based small groups where they grow in community and friendship. And lastly, the “Loving Life” step is when the disciple begins to

take classes pertaining to their life and spiritual growth-
“parenting classes, marriage courses, etc.”

Here are some questions to ask when developing a vision statement:

1. Do we want to use a phrase from the Bible?
2. Does the vision statement have to be steps in our discipleship process?
3. Is the potential statement meaningful as well as easy to remember?
4. Does the potential statement need to be unique to us or do we feel comfortable using one we’ve already heard before?³¹

Here is a list of some popular vision statements to use as examples, “Loving God, Loving People,” “Knowing Jesus and Making Him Known,” “To Be Salt and Light,” “Helping People Navigate Through Life,” “Seeking First His Kingdom.” Combining the vision statement with the name during the announcements would go something like this, “Welcome to Fox River Church, where we are ‘Loving God and Loving People!’”

Developing a Simple Discipleship Strategy

After you have developed your vision statement now is the time to construct the discipleship strategy. The simple definition for a “discipleship strategy” is “the process through which disciples are made.” This strategy will be the backbone of all the activities included in the discipleship process. Most of your time and creative juices will be spent here. The

³¹ Though it is becoming more popular for churches to “trade mark” their name, no one but Jesus has the trade mark to vision statements like, “To seek and save the lost,” “Loving God and People,” “Knowing God and Making Him Known.”

discipleship strategy should be made with all age groups in mind. Though each age group might have their own materials, the process should remain the same.

At this time the most in-depth book on the subject for developing a simple discipleship program is, *“Simple Church,”* by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger. Much of what I will share in this section will be a condensed version of what their book contains.³² *“Simple Church”* gives an effective four-step process in making a discipleship strategy, which is the following:

1. **Clarity:** The process needs to be clearly communicated and understood.
2. **Movement:** The strategy must be able to easily move people through all of its phases and steps.
3. **Alignment:** All other ministries, activities, and functions in the church must be aligned to the strategy.
4. **Focus:** Everything that doesn't fit with the discipleship process must be eliminated.

1-CLARITY | You and your team need to be able to describe each and every part of the process in terms so clear that even a first time visitor from Kazakhstan could understand it. For starters, try to keep the process between 2-5 steps, anything more than that can become confusing and may require a manual for the manual. Here is where you want to remember the “one button” iPhone.

Leaders over the years have been very creative in coming up with memorable processes. Rick Warren uses “bases” on a baseball field ascribing a step to each base. Others as mentioned before use the vision to give steps to each phrase,

³² I have believed and practiced much of what they wrote about years before their book was ever written, however, I believe it is helpful to reference their book because of the research they did in over 400 churches. Their in-depth research gives great evidence and proof that the “simple” principles many have practiced are true and highly effective. This book is very helpful in framing strategies and should be read if this chapter leaves you wanting more.

“Loving God, People, and Life.” Others simply make catchy phrases like, “Reach UP, Reach IN, and Reach OUT.”

One of the most creative I’ve heard was made from going out to dinner, “The Appetizer, the Meal, and the Desert.” However, one must remember that the quality of the process is just as important as the clarity. Because if the process is shallow and lacking in substance it won’t matter who remembers it because it has no power of transformation. For example, you might be able to remember the strategy of Burger King to gain costumers, “You’re Way Right Away,” but that phrase has no life changing properties except to maybe add a few pounds!

For this section we will use the one mentioned in the first chapter pertaining to Jesus’ method, “Connect, Mentor, Send.” Now that you have clarified the process we can now move on to giving it movement.

2-MOVEMENT | It’s not good enough to simply say we “Connect, Mentor, and Send” because there is no substance or movement in it- it’s just a “catch phrase.” Therefore, think of the “clarity stage,” as making the skeleton and the “movement stage” is where we put on the muscles, flesh, and organs to move the body!

Here are just some of the questions that come to mind when working with our example strategy thus far, “Connect to who, where, and how? Mentor with who, where, with what, and for how long? Send who, where, and how?” Those questions might sound confusing to some, but those are the kind of questions one needs to answer in the “movement stage.” Your unanswered questions may not all be the same as the ones cited above, but if you take some time and think it through, you will be able to discover the questions in your strategy that need to be answered as well.

Now, let’s answer these questions with our example strategy to give you insight to answering your own.

1. **Connect:** (*Who?*) We will connect to both the lost and those looking for churches. (*Where?*) At our Sunday services and small groups. (*How?*) By inviting people wherever and whenever we can. Simplified, “We will connect people to Jesus and the church through Sunday services and life groups.”
2. **Mentor:** (*Who?*) Born again believers who join the classes. (*Where?*) At the church on Wednesdays. (*With What?*) The materials we write ourselves. (*For How Long?*) Seven weeks for the 101 class and 12 weeks for 201 class. Simplified, “We will mentor new Christians in our 101 and 201 classes on Wednesdays for a total 19 weeks.”
3. **Send:** (*Who?*) Those disciples we have trained in our classes. (*Where?*) We will send them to start new small groups in their communities. (*How?*) We will train them in the 101 and 201 classes and under the mentorship of their small group leader where they attend. Simplified, “We will send trained disciples out to start new small groups after they have been trained both in the classroom and under a small group leader.”

Now, let us pretend we are sharing our strategy during the announcements again, “Welcome to Fox River Church where we are “Loving God and Loving People! Our discipleship strategy is to “connect” you to our church through life groups, “mentor” you in our Wednesday classes, and “send” you out to start a small group in your community!”

3-ALIGNMENT | After clarifying your strategy and giving movement to it so it can direct people from start to finish effectively, everything in the church should now come in line with it. Meaning, whatever you do as a church should flow out of discipleship. Nothing should be able to get around discipleship or come against it.

Boldly set in your heart and those hearts around you, “as for you and your church you will serve the Lord.” Your

worship leader, children's pastor, first time visitor, choir members, maintenance workers- everyone, no matter what, must go through your discipleship strategy to be involved in your church.

When Jesus and Paul made disciples, they didn't give different options to their way of doing things. Both Rainer and Barna note in their books mentioned previously, that bringing the whole church into the same vision and strategy is not only good but also necessary to move forward effectively.³³ Paul spoke of unity continually in his letters and even said to make note of those who caused division, Romans 16:17.

On the other hand, if the sheep are wrongly lorded over and mistreated God will judge harshly those who treat His sheep harshly, Ezekiel 34. The Biblical balance is for church leadership to humbly set forth the order in love and gently by the Spirit of Christ align everyone into the process, 1 Peter 5:1-4.³⁴

4-FOCUS | Once the church is in order and everything is aligned to the same vision and discipleship strategy, the leadership must focus on keeping it that way and say "no" to anything that tries to get the church out of alignment. This kind of laser beam focus can be seen in all the great leaders of the Bible.

Jesus didn't let Peter deter Him from going to the cross- He stayed focused on His vision. Paul wasn't afraid to go to Jerusalem even though the other believers tried to get him to stay away because they feared for his safety. And the same is true for countless other examples in the Bible such as Abraham,

³³ For specifics and more details of "trimming the fat" and "staying focused" see both chapters 7 and 8 in *"Simple Church"* and chapter 6 in *"Growing True Disciples."*

³⁴ Now at this point one might remember one of the pitfalls of discipleship that I wrote about in the previous chapter, (My Way or the Highway) and ask the question, "Is it wrong to make everyone do the same process?" The answer is both, "yes and no." Yes, it is wrong if the pastor goes to other pastors and tries to make their people do "his specific form of discipleship" in their churches. But no, it's not wrong to develop a pattern in the church that all the members should go through. Biblically speaking there is nothing wrong with leadership giving strong direction to the people in their church, as a matter of fact, leaders are commanded to be the examples and set the order, Hebrews 13:7,17.

Joseph, David, Jeremiah, and many more. They knew how to say “no” to the distractions and stay focused on the task at hand.

You will have to do the same thing if you desire to stay “simple.” Remember, Apple hasn’t started making pizzas for a good reason, they choose to only do a few things, but they do them well enough to change the world. Therefore, before adding anything new to the church the leadership should always ask this question, “Does the new thing align with our strategy or does it take focus away from it?” And based upon that answer is the direction the church should take. Regardless of hurt feelings or offenses, the church must be true to its purpose to make disciples.

Take for example, if someone came to you and asked, “I would like to start a pet ministry at the church that will meet on Wednesdays. Can I have permission to use the building?” At that point you should ask yourself, “Does hanging out with pets on Wednesdays align with the strategy to make disciples or does it take away from it?” If the answer is “take away.” Then you, along with the leadership, should gently inform the pet loving person that they can do the pet ministry on their own time, but the church will not be available for their ministry because it doesn’t align with the strategy.

Developing a Simple Goal

Lastly, after the vision statement and discipleship strategy has been developed the church should set a goal to aim their faith towards. No athlete, business, or great leader accidentally achieves success- they set out for it. The athlete trains night and day motivated by the hopes of being the best. Winners in life, think and act like winners before they win. And the same is true in making disciples.

Before Jesus ever saw one person healed, set free, or delivered He spoke the Word of God from Isaiah 61 because He knew by faith who He was before His ministry even started, Luke 4:18. God had people call Abram, “Abraham,” which

means, “Father of Multitudes” 25 years before he had one child! Jesus told His disciples to look at the people and see them as wheat ripe for the harvest before they even heard the Gospel, Matthew 9:37.

Therefore, take some time in prayer and ask God to show you His plan for your church. Ask Him to give you a goal that is worth living and dying for- something that is absolutely impossible without His miracle working power. If what you sense in your heart, as the goal doesn't scare the living daylights out of you, go back and pray again because He hasn't spoken yet!

When God actually gives you a clear vision, write it down and let everyone in the church know. Then unless Jesus comes back or you die to go be with Him in heaven don't ever stop praying, working, seeking, and speaking it until the vision comes to pass.

An example of a simple goal would be for God to give your church a goal of making 100,000 disciples with 50 churches (or campuses) in your city and planting 500 discipleship based churches around the world. Remember, to keep it simple and repeatable so others may come in unity to work and pray for its fulfillment.

Putting it All Together

Take a few moments now to imagine you coming before your church during announcements for the biggest Sunday of the year and sharing your vision statement, discipleship strategy, and goal. It should go something like this,

“Welcome to Fox River Church where we are ‘Loving God and Loving People!’ Our discipleship strategy is to ‘connect’ you to our church through our life groups, ‘mentor’ you in our Wednesday discipleship classes, and ‘send’ you out to start a small group in your community! We have a great big goal for our church to make 100,000 disciples with 50 churches in this city and to plant 500 around world- would you prayerfully consider joining with us as we impact the world for

Jesus?!” Doesn’t that motivate you? I get excited just reading it!

Here is an example of how it might look on an announcement slide,

Fox River Church

OUR VISION

Loving God and Loving People

OUR DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY

Connect | Mentor | Send

OUR GOAL

100,000 disciples in Chicago, with 50 churches
and 500 around the world!

The Bottom Line: To do what Jesus did, you’ll need to get organized and make things simple. Without a simple plan you will never achieve your overall goal of having a discipleship based church, but with it God can use you to change the world.

CHAPTER 3

Creating Discipleship Small Groups

We All Do Them, Just Not That Good All the Time

A pastor was speaking to fellow pastors at a conference for church growth when he asked how many of the churches present had small groups. About one-third of the pastors raised their hands. He then clarified his question by asking how many had churches where small groups of people worked together on tasks, got together and talked about issues, or meet and fellowshiped. This time everyone raised their hands.

The truth is every church has small groups, however not all of them are successful. Some are nothing more than “clichés” or “bless me clubs.” For this reason every church needs to learn how to lead small groups successfully. Whether it is a prayer gathering, evangelism team, staff meeting, or a fellowship group; small groups can be great for the health of the church if done correctly.

The “small group movement” has its roots both in the early church of Acts and in today’s fastest growing churches around the world. Some of the key figures in the last 250 years have been John Wesley and the Methodist movement in the late 1700’s and today’s Pastor Yonggi Cho, in South Korea, who pastors the largest church in the world with over 750,000 members. Plus, there has been an explosion of discipleship small groups in the last 25 years. Such countries as El Salvador, Columbia, Brazil, and China have discipleship groups numbered in the thousands and church attendance in the tens of thousands.

As a result, this chapter was written to (1) help you distinguish the different types of small groups, (2) see the need for discipleship based small groups, (3) learn the Biblical basis for discipleship small groups, (4) know the fourteen qualities of a discipleship small group, (5) avoid the seven sins of small

groups, and lastly (6) how to create your own discipleship small groups.

Different Types of Small Groups

Jeff Arnold in his book, *"The Big Book on Small Groups,"* gives the following list of small group types, (1) special needs groups, (2) affinity groups, (3) ministry groups, and (4) discipleship groups. Here is a brief description of each one:

(1) *Special Needs Groups*: Special needs groups are formed by the church to focus on meeting the special needs of the church and community whenever and wherever they can. Examples of special needs groups are married couples small groups, single parent groups, recovering addicts groups, or troubled teen groups.

(2) *Affinity Groups*: These groups focus on the spiritual development of those involved with such things as worship and study of God's Word. Examples of affinity groups would be a small group that studies the book of Revelation, a group devoted to prayer and worship, or a small group training other people to be small group leaders.

(3) *Ministry Groups*: Groups that are focused on reaching out through evangelism and servanthood projects. Examples of ministry groups are street witnessing teams, adopt-a-block ministry, or nursing home visitation.

(4) *Discipleship Groups*: These groups are based on the model of Jesus and are formed to involve worship, Word, ministry, fellowship, mentoring, and multiplication. Examples of these groups are cell groups and small groups with a specific pattern to follow. Their intention is to multiply through evangelism and discipleship.

It's clear that every group can have its own strength and weakness. For example special needs groups are great for focusing on people's specific needs and helping them with their unique problems. At the same time, they can become a "bless me group" where the focus is always on them and they avoid growth and new experiences because the group has become a hindrance to their social and spiritual growth.

Affinity groups are perfect for people to get closer to God through prayer meetings and Bible studies. However, the group can get so focused on their own spiritual growth that they are always on a personal "spiritual treasure chest hunt" to find the next "buried treasure" for their own benefit.

Ministry groups are a great expression of Jesus' love and can challenge people to get out of their comfort zone. On the other hand, these street preachers and "Mother Teresa" servants can easily become so outward focused that they become disconnected from the larger body and neglect the other inward needs of the church.

Discipleship groups are great for holistic ministry, which brings both inward and outward growth. But at times these groups can become controlling and cult like when the leadership becomes dominating and forces an unbiblical form of submission upon their followers. However, because of their simplicity and examples found in the Bible, I believe discipleship small groups are the best and can be done without incurring the potential pitfalls. Plus, they can incorporate all the good from the other groups.

The Need for Discipleship Small Groups

Discipleship based small groups are the best all-around group to have in every church because they're the only kind of group that can combine all the strengths of the rest, without their weaknesses. Not to mention they are the best model of small groups to summarize what Jesus did with His twelve while upon the earth.

For example, discipleship groups can be the foundation for special needs groups, thus the person going through their issues will not only be helped through their troubles, but also taught to overcome them. Also, the ministry and affinity groups can be based out of the discipleship groups, because according to the Bible simply “doing good works” and learning “true things” is not enough, a person must be spiritually transformed and personally live out what they believe.³⁵ Therefore, every discipleship based church should consider having discipleship small groups to fulfill their goal.

Four Reasons for Discipleship Small Groups

1-Jesus and the Twelve | Mark 3:13-15, *“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”*

Here one can see that Jesus used the discipleship method for small groups. Evidence of this can be further seen in His calling of His followers “disciples,” the time He spent teaching them to do ministry, and how His focus was to multiply them to win the world.

2-Jesus Sending out the Disciples | Matthew 28:18-20, *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

The greatest example of the multiplication of a discipleship small group comes from Jesus Himself. Therefore, leading a small group as Jesus did will lead to new small groups- true disciples make disciples that make new disciples!

³⁵ Good works without character, Matthew 7:22-23. Being a hearer of the Word and not being a doer, James 1:22.

3-The Jerusalem Church | Acts 2:46-47, *“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

It is clear that the first church in Jerusalem, under the leadership of the apostles was a discipleship based church because they were both inward and outward focused. They were involved in public meetings, small home groups, and outreaching to win new souls.

4-Paul’s Ministry | 2 Timothy 2:2-3, *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”*

In Titus 2, Paul devotes this chapter to outlining how each people group- man, woman, young people, etc., should be taught and teach each other. Also, Priscilla and Aquila, who were disciples of Paul, are seen opening their home to Apollos and continuing the pattern of making disciples in small groups, Acts 18:24-26.

Fourteen Qualities of a Discipleship Small Group

Here are the fourteen qualities of a discipleship small group:³⁶

(1) *Trained Leadership*: The person leading the group must himself or herself be trained and be a disciple. This training should be no longer than 12-18 months. The trained leader should still be accountable and in a growing relationship with church leadership and God.

(2) *Sound Doctrine/Materials*: What the leader teaches must be grounded in sound Christian doctrine. Also, the teacher should

³⁶ Every church should design their own groups with their specific church in mind. Sometimes all of these attributes are needed, while other times its best to focus on certain ones. Therefore, this list is simply meant to serve as a “general guide.”

have some kind of materials or structure that brings an even flow and direction to the group. Thus, each week's lessons are not a disconnected series of teachings, but rather a series of connected and interwoven subjects leading to specific points.

(3) *Worship*: The meeting should have a time of worship and adoration to God. This can be seen with Jesus and the twelve at the last supper, He led them in a hymn, Matthew 26:30. Worship opens the heart, brings people closer to God, and helps people to be more ready to receive instruction.

(4) *Word*: The leader must be able to pray, seek God, receive a fresh Word, organize the lesson, and present it with power and clarity. The lesson should teach Biblical principles in a life changing way.

(5) *Prayer*: Making requests known to God and giving Him praises for what He has already done is always present in a true discipleship small group. It was during these times that Jesus was asked how to pray, mostly likely because the disciples saw His powerful and effective prayer life, Matthew 6:5-15.

(6) *Fellowship*: The group should be open to sharing life together in a family-like environment. Talking, hanging out, eating, and expressing true emotions must be possible before and after the group meetings.

(7) *Accountability*: Coaching in sports involves keeping track of the athlete's diet, sleep pattern, and at-home priorities. It is much the same in a discipleship small group because how the disciple's life is lived outside of the group reflects the growth gained from within the group. Therefore, the leader must have a way of imitating Jesus' "24-hour approach" to accountability.

(8) *Evangelism*: Preaching the gospel to the lost is Jesus' way of keeping the group focused on the "big picture" and growing in size and spiritual maturity. There are several ways to go about incorporating evangelism into a small group: coming together

to go out and share the message in the neighborhood the group meets in, holding special events, teaching members to invite friends and family to the group, and having intentional friendships that lead to preaching the gospel.

(9) *Follow-Up*: Staying in touch with members throughout the week is very important to the strength of the group. Also, making multiple contacts with the visitors and newcomers can make them feel more comfortable and apt to come back.

(10) *Leadership Training*: Every discipleship small group should have leadership training happening within the group. The leader should always have an “apprentice” that he is training to multiply the group into two groups. Also, one-on-one discipleship should be going on throughout the month where the leader meets with the individual members to train them to be effective leaders.

(11) *Multiplication*: The group’s goal should be that of Jesus first group, the twelve- to win the nations! A strategy should be in place to make a pattern to guide people from being a visitor to a leader. For example, “Connect, Mentor, and Send.”

(12) *Big Vision and Goals*: The leader should present every time they meet the vision of the church and the goal for the small group. The vision should be something simple like, “Love God, and Love People,” and the goal can be, “Multiply a new group every year!”

(13) *Meeting Time and Place*: Most discipleship groups meet once a week in a person’s home. Thus, the meeting time should be easy for people to attend and on a day that is convenient for the majority of the members.

(14) *Unity*: The group should be unified with the church, promoting the same vision, and supporting the church’s ministries and services. Rebellion is easy to occur in a small group because of the leader’s power and influence over the

people, but they must always remember that they are a part of the bigger vision of the church and under the leadership of the church, Philippians 2.

Seven Deadly Sins of Small Groups

Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson- authors of the Willow Creek based book, *"The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry"* note the most common mistakes that can "kill" the effectiveness of a small group. These sins are common in all types of small groups and certainly apply to discipleship small groups. Therefore, to have an effective discipleship small group the following mistakes must be avoided.

(1) *Unclear Ministry Objectives*: Small group leadership cannot go blindly into having discipleship small groups because "without vision (revelation) people perish," Proverbs 29:18. The group must have a clear vision, strategy, and goals from the very beginning. Also, the goals and strategies must be able to be measured and adjusted as time passes to grow successfully a multiplying small group ministry.

(2) *Lack of Point Leadership*: God uses called and anointed men and women of God to lead His tasks. The small group cannot be any different. The leader must be called and given the proper authority to operate the group with respect from their members and fellow leaders. Also, small group leaders should be able to focus on the small group without distractions.

(3) *Poor Coaching Structures*: Coaching is the art of teaching others how to do what they could not do by themselves. If small group leaders are not properly trained then their "on-hands-learning" experience can be devastating. Thus, training and coaching should be used before sending out small group leaders to start groups.

(4) *Neglect of Ongoing Leadership Development*: If the trained leader is not held accountable, then they may get off track over time. Therefore, every leader should be accountable to another leader at all times and all small group leaders should be making new leaders. "Everything rises and falls on leadership."

(5) *Closed Group Minds-Set*: The discipleship group must always be open to new members to remain a healthy and growing group. The leadership can teach the older more mature members to be welcoming, humble, kind, and understanding to the newer less mature members.

(6) *Narrow Definition of a Small Group*: "One size fit all" does not work well in the long run for discipleship based groups because it limits the creativity of God. The leadership should allow for changes and varieties within the small groups so each leader and team can express their passions and given abilities. There should be creativity in format, location, outreach ideas, and teaching styles.

(7) *Neglect of Assimilation Process*: Visitors are the greatest assets to the group, after God, because they are the source for new disciples. Remember, Jesus said the "Good Shepherd" left the ninety-nine sheep in the fold for the one that was lost, Luke 15:4. Assimilation is making sure all visitors are properly pursued and given attention after they visit the group. Such things as calls, emails, and home visits give the visitor more of an expression of the group's love for them

Creating Your Own Discipleship Small Groups

Discipleship small groups are effective and powerful when done properly in the church. By just multiplying a new small group every year for 10 years, thousands of small groups with countless disciples can be formed. Now is the time to consider starting discipleship based small groups.

Here are some things to consider before starting, (1) Pray about God's timing, (2) Find the right people to train as leaders, (3) Design groups that meet the needs of your church- "one size doesn't fit all," (4) Purchase or make great materials, and (4) Implement them for the whole church- staff included, and (5) Remember that your small group ministry should play a key role in your overall discipleship strategy.

Take for example the strategy mentioned in the previous chapter, "Connect, Mentor, Send." Discipleship based small groups are used both in the connect and send phases. In the "connect" phase the new believer should be connected to God and the church through the group. Then in the send phase the newly trained disciples are sent out to start their own small group.³⁷

The Bottom Line: Every church has small groups; they just don't always do them well. Therefore, prayerfully create and maintain successful discipleship small groups to be the backbone of your discipleship based church. They provide a great place for encouragement, accountability, and spiritual growth.

³⁷ Some churches have considered their discipleship small groups the actual discipleship program. This is a good option to consider if the people in your church are short on time. Another good option is to use all the different kinds of small groups listed in the lesson and rotate people through the discipleship groups at different times.

For example, if your church does small groups on a quarterly basis. One quarter you could offer all the different kinds of small groups and the next quarter just do discipleship groups. The rotation may provide variety and give a rest to the teachers.

CHAPTER 4

Creating & Using Discipleship Materials

The Need for Good Materials

Have you ever heard of a successful company that didn't train their employees with an "employee handbook?" Certainly not. Why? Because every successful business knows that they need a systematic way to train all their employees so they can work together in unity by the same set of standards and general information.

Someone now might say with spiritual sarcasm, "Well, Jesus didn't use materials to make His disciples; He shared all His information relationally. Therefore, I don't need them either." My simple response is, "If you're God in the flesh living in the first century and are going to live with your disciples for three years without the interruptions of jobs and families, I will grant your premise and say, 'Go for it!'"

For everyone else, we would do well to learn from the church fathers of the past and imitate what worked best for them. The early church was able to protect, preserve, and promote the Bible and make disciples with their written materials. Take for example early church leaders like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Augustine who wrote and developed materials that made disciples in their day. Their extra-biblical writings were great aids to the Bible and the church.³⁸

Then during the Great Reformation in the 1500's with powerful leaders like Luther and Calvin, the Reformers and Puritans made disciples through their written catechisms and confirmation classes. As a matter of fact, the heart and mind

³⁸ To read the church father's writings online visit, <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>

were so joined together in the early American churches that first schools of higher learning like Harvard, Princeton, and Yale were all established as Bible Colleges with the highest standards of discipleship placed on all the students.

Plus, John Wesley and the Methodists in the 1700's were so purposeful, methodical, and united in their teachings, practices, and materials that they gained the name, "Methodists." These examples clearly demonstrate that after the time of Jesus leaders used written materials to make disciples.³⁹

Four Reasons Why Materials Are Important

1. **EXCELLENCE** | They insure the same information is passed on in the best possible way.
2. **EFFICIENCY** | Teachers can make the most of the student's time and stay focused on specific subjects and outcomes.
3. **ENERGY** | Good materials save time and energy for both the teachers and students because the class and learning expectations are already laid out.
4. **EXCITEMENT** | Materials with a definite start and finish give a goal for people to achieve and aim to accomplish.

Making Your Own vs. Using Someone Else's

Now that you've designed your own vision, strategy, goal, and discipleship small groups for your specific church, the next thing to do is develop materials to go along with them. You

³⁹ Though in each time and with every different denomination or "school," the materials and methods were different they all had one thing in common, they had written materials along side the Bible to make disciples; i.e., "learners of Christ." Whether it was letters, creeds, doctrinal statements, or codes of conduct- they all believed that writing out their beliefs made the process of discipleship more effective.

have two options, (a) Make your own materials, or (b) Use someone else's. Below is a comparison chart of both to help you decide the best direction for your church.

Comparison Chart	Make Your Own Materials	Use Someone Else's
TIME	More Time to Make	Less Time to Make
COST	Less Expensive	More Expensive
ENERGY	Takes more energy to make, but less to maintain.	Takes less energy to make, but more to maintain because of the needed personalized adjustments.
EFFECTIVE	More effective because they are made specifically for the church and its current needs.	Less effective because the materials were made by a specific author geared towards specific churches, i.e., "Baptist," "Pentecostal," etc.
REPRODUCE	Easy and inexpensive to reproduce because the church owns the materials.	More difficult and expensive to reproduce because the church doesn't own the copyrights to the materials.

The only time I would strongly recommend a church to use someone else's materials is when the church neither has the qualified staff or the time to make their own. And even then I would suggest bringing in an outside leader to help in making your own. But if there is no other way- using someone else's materials is better than having none!

However, for all the Holy Ghost filled church planters with launch teams and existing churches with qualified staff I can't stress enough how important I believe creating your own materials are. There is nothing that will compare to making disciples with the materials that you and your team have created. They will feel like a well-tailored suit or a perfect fitting pair of running shoes- you'll be happy you took the extra time and effort.

Developing the Materials

Whether you'll be making your own materials or using someone else's you will have to develop them to fit properly within your own discipleship strategy. Let us now use the strategy given in the previous chapters as an example for developing the discipleship materials- CONNECT, MENTOR, & SEND.

1-CONNECT | The kind of materials that could be used in this stage are, (1) Membership Class Materials, (2) Volunteer Class Materials, and (3) Small Group info cards and sign up sheets.

2-MENTOR | The mentor stage will be the main step of development thus the most amount of work will be done here. I would suggest at this point to ask the question, "What kind of disciple does Jesus want us as a church to make?" How you answer this question will determine the kind of lessons and steps you make.

For example, in the mentor stage let us make two-steps, a 101 and 201. This structure imitates the format used in the academic world for increasing in knowledge for a particular subject, "English 101 & English 201."

In our 101 stage the desire is to introduce someone to the Christian life after they've received Jesus as their Lord and Savior. So, let's name our 101 class and book, "*Welcome to Your New Life.*" Now we can begin to prayerfully consider the 5-12 things that every new Christian should know.

Here is a basic list of seven steps to spiritual growth that can be lessons in the 101 stage:

- 1) Great Decision: *How to Pray, Read Your Bible, and Join a Church*
- 2) The Power of the Cross: *Learning What Jesus Did for You*
- 3) Overcoming the World: *Winning the Battle Against Sin*
- 4) Living by Faith: *How to Live by Faith in Every Situation*

- 5) Baptism & Communion: *Receiving the Two Ordinances of the Church*
- 6) Filled With the Spirit: *Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*
- 7) Sharing Your Faith: *How to Witness to Your Friends & Family*⁴⁰

To add effectiveness to the class the church could do this 101 class one-on-one. Meaning, it may be best for the new disciple to be under the care of a same gender mature believer to walk them through this process so that the 101 lessons are not just about learning information, but receiving life-transformation.

Next in the 201 stage we should now prayerfully consider 7-15 things that every established disciple should know to continue to grow and be a fruitful disciple in the church. Let's call this class and book, "*Disciples That Make Disciples.*"

Below is an example list of twelve lessons that can be used in the 201 stage:

SECTION 1: Disciples Are... Four Lessons on the Character of Disciples.

- 1) Disciples are Free: *Receiving Freedom from All Sin and Bad Habits*
- 2) Disciples are Holy: *Understanding Sanctification and the New Self*
- 3) Disciples are Humble: *Learning to Be a Servant Like Jesus*
- 4) Disciples are Anointed: *Understanding and Operating in the Anointing of the Holy Spirit*

⁴⁰ This is the actual book that the author uses, to read it visit, <http://mpichurch.net/our-books/>, accessed Nov. 9, 2013.

SECTION 2: Disciples Possess... Four Lessons on the Attributes of Disciples.

- 1) Disciples Possess a Blessed Home: *Teaching the Biblical Principles for a Blessed Family*
- 2) Disciples Possess a Balanced Life: *Understanding the Balance in All the Different Aspects of Life*
- 3) Disciples Possess a Great Devotional Life: *Instructing on How to Be Consistent in Prayer and Study of God's Word*
- 4) Disciples Possess a Lifestyle of Giving: *Teaching on Tithes and Offerings*

SECTION 3: Disciples Do... Four Lessons on the Works of Disciples.

- 1) Disciples Do Build the Local Church: *Teaching the Inner Workings of the Church and How to Serve*
- 2) Disciples Do Operate in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: *Understanding the Operation of the Nine Gifts of the Spirit*
- 3) Disciples Do Defend the Faith: *Teaching the Core Doctrines of the Christian Faith with Scriptural Proof and Defense*
- 4) Disciples Do Make Other Disciples: *Imparting the Tools and Skills Necessary to Make New Disciples*⁴¹

Since the 101 stage will be done one-on-one the 201 stage can be in a classroom with a teacher and other materials such as: (1) Accountability Sheets, (2) Prayer Journals, (3) Bible Reading Plans, and (4) Scripture Memorization Charts.

3-SEND | The last and final stage is when the trained disciple is sent out to make new disciples. The kind of materials that can be used are: (1) Leadership Training Materials for Pastors/Elders/Deacons, (2) Small Group Leadership Training,

⁴¹ This is the actual the book that the author uses, to read it visit, <http://mpichurch.net/our-books/>, accessed Nov. 9, 2013.

and (3) Specific Ministry Materials, like a “Youth Leaders Handbook.”

Putting it All Together

Here is a brief summary of the discipleship materials made for the example discipleship strategy:

1-CONNECT | (1) Membership Class Materials, (2) Volunteer Class Materials, and (3) Small Group info cards and sign up sheets.

2-MENTOR | (1) 101 book, *“Welcome to Your New Life: Seven Steps to Spiritual Growth”* and (2) 201 book, *“Disciples that Make Disciples: 12 Lessons in Christian Leadership.”*

3-SEND | (1) Leadership Training Materials for Pastors/Elders/Deacons, (2) Small Group Leadership Training Materials, and (3) Specific Ministry Materials.

Five Things to Remember

1. **NO CONDO-BONDO** | Do the best you can with what you have available; there is no “condemnation or bondage” for those in Christ Jesus, Romans 8:1.
2. **REMEMBER CLARITY & MOVEMENT** | Try to keep the materials simple, to the point, and easy to work through.
3. **AVOID SHORT CUTS** | It would be better to take a year to develop the best materials you can rather than bringing something before the people that is insufficient.
4. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP** | Existing discipleship based churches with their own discipleship materials can relate to the journey and would love to help

others develop their own. An hour call can save you hours of unneeded frustration at creative dead ends.

5. **BE SENSITIVE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT** | He is the Spirit of Truth and will guide you and your church into all truth and empower the disciples to live it out, John 14:26.

Developing Small Group Materials

Making and developing small group materials should be rather easy after you've developed the discipleship materials. Most discipleship based churches do one or more of the following for their materials: (1) The lead pastors make the Sunday sermon into the lessons for the coming week. In this instance, the small group serves as a more personalized version of the Sunday service. (2) Books and series are used such as Rick Warren's, "Forty Days of Purpose," or Focus on the Family's "Truth Project." (3) Or each small group leader can make a basic lesson in an approved format that speaks directly to the needs of his or her group each week.

The most important things to remember in making small group materials are: (1) Keep them short and simple, (2) Always have them lead to discussion and group participation, and (3) Remember to personalize the information so the prayer times at the end can bring life-transformation!

The Bottom Line: Making your own materials or using someone else's is going to take large amounts of time and energy, but all the hard work will be worth it.

CHAPTER 5

Creating & Doing Discipleship Evangelism

The Harvest is Great, but the Workers Are Few

I would like to start this chapter by giving you the reader a "wake up call" with some hard-hitting facts concerning the state of our churches in the U.S. concerning soul winning and evangelism:

- 95% of all Christians have never won someone to the Lord.
- 80% of Christians never even share their faith.
- 2% of all Christians are active in evangelism ministries at their church.
- 63% of all church leadership hasn't led one stranger to Jesus in the last two years through the method of "Go Ye" into all the world.
- 49% of all church leadership spends zero time in an average week ministering outside of the church.
- 89% of all church leadership has zero time reserved on their list of weekly priorities for going out to evangelize.
- 99% of all church leadership believes that every Christian, including them, has been commanded to preach the gospel to a lost world.⁴²

⁴² Notice the hypocrisy, "they know and teach, but don't do and obey."

- 97% of all Christians believe that if the church leadership had a greater conviction and involvement in evangelism, that it would be an example for them to follow.
- 96% of church leadership believes their churches would grow faster if every Christian would be more involved in evangelism.⁴³

Definitions

1. Witness | To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to an unsaved person, Acts 1:8.

2. Street Witness | To preach the Gospel on the streets, "in public with strangers," Luke 10:1-3.

3. Discipleship Evangelism | To go publicly on the streets to witness and make disciples like Jesus did and taught, Matthew 28:18-20.

The Differences Between "Message & Method"

Some well intentioned Christians have said throughout the years that though all disciples are to preach the "message" of Jesus, not everyone is commanded to follow His "method" of public witness. Meaning, Jesus preached on the streets more than any one place- more than in the temple, homes, or in the market place, but some Christians believe they can choose those places over the streets. God forbid! For Jesus, the street and outdoor countryside, was His pulpit and the public was his congregation.

⁴³ "Street Level Evangelism, Where is the Space for the Local Evangelist," by Michael Parrott, Spokane, WA, 1993, pp. 9-11.

Believe it or not, many in today's church believe they can avoid following Jesus' method altogether and simply choose whatever ways are most comfortable for them. For example, "church outreach evangelism," "community service evangelism," "concert and church party evangelism," and "friendship evangelism" are all great ways to share one's faith but they were not the "bread and butter" of the Master's witnessing diet. Jesus ate, slept, and drank in street ministry.

Certainly I believe that all followers of Christ are free to witness and have liberty to choose whatever methods that work best for them- on the job, at lunch meetings, in the church, etc., however, the overwhelming example of Jesus' method on the streets must be followed and obeyed as the first priority.

Notice in the following verse how Jesus describes where the Gospel will go, "to the roads and country lanes," i.e., "to the main streets and alleys/back roads!" Luke 14:23, *"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.'"*

Therefore, the biblical way for disciples to go out and make disciples is to do discipleship evangelism on the streets in the public places. Of course, disciples are to make disciples everywhere they go, but they also must make a specific effort to be in public and call others to follow Jesus. This may be a hard pill for some to swallow but the Bible couldn't be any clearer by way of example or command. All one has to do to remove any doubt is read the Gospels and the book of Acts to see how often the preaching and witnessing was done on the streets and in public places, Matthew 22:9 & Acts 3:1-10.

The Command & Example of Jesus to Street Witness

Jesus' Command | It was very clear from the beginning with Jesus and His disciples that they were going to be fishers of men, Matthew 4:19. It was also equally clear that they were going to go out and preach "on the streets" to get their "fish." Some have tried to argue and say the "going out to preach" can simply mean to share one's testimony on the job or

in the church, however, by the clear command of Jesus with His disciples it is obvious He meant in public places and on the streets with strangers, Mark 3:14.

Matthew 22:9-10, *"9 Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find. 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find..."*

Jesus' Example | Jesus sent out His disciples in groups of two ahead of Him before He went to new cities and their job was to go in public and proclaim His coming on the streets, Luke 10:1-24. Also, from the first sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost, to his miracle services in Jerusalem, the streets were always where you could find him and the other disciples. The example is clear, "Jesus and the early disciples preached on the streets!"

Acts 5:15-16, *"15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed."*

Top Five Excuses Not to Street Witness

As an overseeing elder in the church for many years I will now countdown the top five excuses I have heard people make to not street witness. Plus, I will give a simple Biblical response to each one.

5. I feel if I street witness I will be like the Jehovah Witnesses.

I have actually heard this! Just because a "cult" has been more obedient to a biblical truth, doesn't mean we should neglect it altogether. Would you consider not praying because Hindus pray? Certainly not. We as disciples should do all that Jesus did and taught no matter what anyone else does or doesn't do.

Biblical Response: Matthew 4:18-22, *"18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and*

his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 20 At once they left their nets and followed him. 21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

Jesus showed that though it was popular for Jewish teachers and philosophers to travel and have people follow their teachings, this didn't stop Him from doing the same thing, but for His message.

4. I witness on my job and other places I feel more comfortable in. Street witnessing is just one way that I don't like to do. Jesus would be okay with my method of witnessing as long as I share my faith wherever I go.

Certainly Jesus wants you to witness on your job, with your family, and everywhere you go. However, that doesn't exempt you from doing what Jesus commanded you to do. Plus, those who witness regularly on the streets are the best kind of disciples to witness on their jobs because they are trained and experienced dealing with all kinds of people.

Biblical Response: Luke 4:43-44, *"43 But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." 44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea."*

Notice Jesus preached in the villages publicly and in the synagogues. Meaning, Jesus loved to preach everywhere, but He never neglected the streets.

3. My church and pastor don't street witness and they are good examples for me to follow.

The Word of God is not true because we as leaders believe it or obey it. The Word of God is true because God said it, period. There are many godly preachers that do street witness, thus, the issue isn't up for vote, but rather is determined by what Jesus said. You will be held responsible to what the Word of God teaches, no matter what anyone else says or does. Therefore, do what Jesus did.

Biblical Response: Luke 10:1-3, *"1 After this the Lord appointed seventy- two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves."*

Imagine if you were with Jesus that day when He sent out the seventy-two disciples on the streets, would you obey and follow His command or disobey? Would you say something like, "Jesus, my other rabbi says I don't have to do this- I can just preach on my job." Absolutely not! It's really that simple, everyone must choose to obey Jesus over man.

2. I'm too scared- I want to wait till I'm ready.

Imagine being with Peter on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, the whole city is filled with the same people who demanded Jesus to be crucified. Then all of a sudden, after a powerful upper room experience Peter boldly calls out to everyone, "Let's head out to the streets and publicly preach Jesus to the crowds as loud as we can!" Would you dare say back to him, "Umm, I'm not ready yet, I'll stay here and keep praying..."

How did those first disciples have the power to overcome their fear and publicly preach Jesus to thousands? By the power of the Holy Spirit! The same is true today. God's Holy Ghost

power will overcome your fear to street witness. Therefore, be filled with the explosive fear-annihilating power of the Holy Spirit and be Jesus' public witness like the first disciples!

Biblical Response: Acts 1:8, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

It is obvious by this passage that the power of the Holy Spirit empowers and compels all believers to be public witnesses for Christ! God didn't give us His power to sit on our "holy backsides," He gave us power to share His message with the whole world.

1. I'm too young or I'm too old.

Can you please show me an age requirement or retirement age for keeping God's commands? Until then, I suggest you obey all of God's commands no matter your age. Also, consider the story of Timothy. When Timothy was young in the time of Paul God command him, "do the work of an evangelist," 2 Timothy 4:5. However, did you know how Timothy died as an old man long after the time of Paul? Please read this story of Timothy passed down by the church fathers concerning his death while "doing the work of an evangelist,"

"... Timothy (at the age of 80) tried to halt a pagan procession of idols, ceremonies, and songs. In response to his preaching of the gospel, the angry pagans beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death."⁴⁴

Wow, Timothy being both young and old kept Jesus' commands to be a public witness on the streets. Not only did he preach in sin-filled public pagan places like Mardi Gras, but

⁴⁴ "Foxes Book of Martyrs," found here, <http://www.ccel.org/f/foxe/martyrs/fox102.htm> accessed Dec. 11, 2012.

he also gave his very life as a martyr. May we all be like Timothy and preach the gospel with boldness!

Biblical Response: 2 Timothy 4:5, *“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”*

From his adolescence through adulthood Timothy sets the perfect example for each of us in his preaching of the gospel on the streets.⁴⁵

How to Start & Do Discipleship Evangelism

Pick a day and time, gather some other disciples, pray, and go to a public place like a street corner, parking lot, or a park and begin to preach the gospel. Do this regularly and your people will never know any other way- it will become the new normal.

There are many ways to stop and get people’s attention, for example the following “opening liners” are great conversation starters:

1. “Excuse me; do you have a moment to talk about Jesus?”
2. “Hello my name is Mike and this is my friend Jim. We are from Fox River Church do you have any prayer requests that we could pray about?”
3. “Hi there, my name is Bob, do you know where you would go if you were to die today?”
4. “What’s up? Can I ask you the ‘question of the day’ Have you been born again?”

⁴⁵ Stephen is another example in Acts 7:1-60 of a street preacher giving his life for Jesus.

After the introduction then simply share the salvation message of Jesus. Most people in the US still believe in Jesus, however, they haven't been born again. Therefore, a great way to preach to the American people is to help them realize their sinfulness and need for a Savior. Ray Comfort in his famous book, *"Hell's Best Kept Secret,"* and popular website, *"wayofthemaster.com,"* suggests that religious people first take the, "Good Person Test."

It basically goes as follows, "Do you think you're a good person? Can I give you the 'Good Person Test?' Have you ever told a lie? What does that make you? A liar. Have you ever taken something that didn't belong to you? What does that make you? A thief. Have you ever lusted after someone you weren't married to? What does that make you? An adulterer. Therefore, by your own confession you are a lying lusting thief. What does that make you? A sinner. Having reached this conclusion, are you willing to confess your sins and make Jesus the Lord of your life?"⁴⁶

Also, Billy Graham and the Campus Crusade for Christ evangelists made famous the "ABC's" of salvation. (A) Admit you are a sinner; (B) Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and (C) Confess your sins and Jesus as Lord. For more ideas on effectively sharing the Gospel consider reading the book of Acts and writing an outline of all the sermons the first disciples preached then go and do likewise!

Lastly, when someone accepts Jesus on the streets because you believe in discipleship you should give them the same invitation that Jesus gave His disciples, "come follow me and I will make you a fisher of men." One should invite the new disciple to church and begin to plug them into the small groups and your discipleship strategy.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ In our church the pastor in charge of evangelism was actually won to the Lord by street evangelism! Talk about the "proof is in the pudding!"

Eight Easy Ways to Go Witnessing

Consider the following steps in making a successful plan to publicly preach the gospel:

1. Set a time and place to go street witnessing.
2. Have a time of prayer and intercession beforehand.
3. Also, have a 5-10min training before going out to get everyone on the same page. Pick a method that the group will be doing like one-on-one, from a sound system, with fliers, etc.
4. Once out there, find people and introduce yourself.
5. Preach the simple message of Jesus and salvation to anyone who will stop to listen.⁴⁸
6. Whoever receives the gospel plug them into the discipleship strategy of the church.
7. Pray and ask God to develop the new disciples into leaders.
8. Repeat; go out again with the new disciples!

Four Things that Will Try to Stop Evangelism

1-DOUBT | Sometimes people bring up the excuse that street ministry is not as effective as other forms of ministry. This never stopped Jesus from doing it and making disciples. Remember, you're not going out to "build a crowd" or to "win friends and influence people." You're going out to make

⁴⁸ Though the method of "open air preaching" is biblical too, it is not required to be effective. Simply asking people to stop and have "one-on-one" conversations is very effective.

disciples. If Jesus and the first disciples could do it even at the price of their own lives- you can do it no matter where you live!

Plus, if over the time of one year you are able to win and make just one new disciple you've succeeded in fulfilling the Great Commission to "make disciples." Thus, to remind yourself of the importance take another look at the "Discipleship Chart" at the end of Chapter 1 and see again how disciples multiple greatly over time.

2-FANATICISM | From time to time street ministries get painted with the broad brush of "fanaticism" because of Westboro Baptist type people preaching hate instead of grace and truth or because the Mormons and JW's peddle around door-to-door with their false gospels and annoy people. However, that should give us all the more reasons to go out and show the world the true Gospel of Jesus. So don't let hate mongers, Jehovah Witnesses, or Mormons out do you and your church on the streets; bring your city the real message of Jesus!

3-EXCUSES | "I'm tired," "It's too cold," "Nobody listens," "It's too hot," "It's just the three of us," "That may work in other places, but not here with my community," etc... Stop making excuses and become obedient to Christ's commands to do discipleship evangelism no matter what. Read the book of Acts again and ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit to endue you with power so signs and wonders may follow the preaching!

Find a corner and share your faith publicly. Pick a festival or fair like Timothy and preach your heart out to the crowds, whether by life or by death. Make some church fliers with the gospel message on them and head out an hour before your small group or church service and bid the whole neighborhood to come out just like the seventy-two disciples did before Jesus came to town. Don't let excuses stand in your way of doing what Jesus did.

4-LEGALISM | Remember to avoid all forms of legalism and man-centered works because the Bible doesn't command a

certain amount of time to witness per day, week, or year. So put away your time cards, legalistic attitude, and just be willing to do, "all the good you can, to as many people as you can, for as long as you can."

Teach your people to do the same and they will know how many days a month they can go out. For most working, family orientated people it will be around 1-2x a month or 8-14x a year on average. Thus, consider challenging them to go out a minimum of 1x a month.

Go, Means "GO!"

Consider the following passage in prayer and let God use you to reach a dying world with His life-giving message. Mark 16:15-20,

15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

The Bottom Line: Discipleship evangelism on the streets is a must to be a discipleship based church. Therefore, do whatever it takes to do it consistently. Jesus did it and so should everyone in your church. Literally, eternal souls are in the balance.

CHAPTER 6

Creating a Leadership Structure with Elders & Deacons

Leadership Made Simple

As the ole' saying goes, "there's more than one way to skin a cat," the same is true with leadership teams and church government models. Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal, or the five-fold ministries models all have their pro's and con's.⁴⁹ However, I do believe there is one model that is simple and biblically based, mainly the "Elders and Deacons Model." In this chapter I would like to summarize this model and present it as the best way to develop a discipleship based leadership team. I will show its strengths both from a biblical stance and a strategic point of view.

Please be opened minded to the following sections in which I will try to distinguish biblically between the "gifts and offices" in the church and show the best example of how to develop a strategic team of disciples with Elders and Deacons that will effectively make new disciples.

The Basics, Elders & Deacons

1 Timothy 3:1 & 10 (KJV), *"1 This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless."*

The above passage gives the two main leadership positions in the church, "bishop" and "deacon." The first position mentioned is, "bishop." The Greek word for bishop is,

⁴⁹ For more detail and examples of church government visit, http://www.theopedia.com/Church_government, accessed Dec. 14, 2012.

“episcopos,” and means, *“overseer.”*⁵⁰ The word bishop and elder (Greek, *“presbuteros”*) are used interchangeably in Titus 1:6-7 & 1 Peter 5:1-2, and are generally referring to the same position in the church.⁵¹ Also, the book of Acts in places like 14:23, 15:2-16:4, 20:13-17, 21:18 all use the word *“elder”* to describe the leadership role in the church. Therefore, I feel it is best and clearer to use the term *“Elder”* as the main title for the preaching and teaching leader in the church.

The second office mentioned is, *“deacon.”* Deacon comes from the Greek word, *“diakoneo,”* which means, *“to serve or wait on tables.”* The position deacon was first developed in Acts 6 as a response to the widows needing the church to give them food and wait on their tables. The term became popular in the New Testament to describe the role of those who served alongside the Elders as their helpers in the church.

Understanding the Offices & Ministry Gifts

The five ministry gifts (or five-fold) mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-13 are: (1) Apostles, (2) Prophets, (3) Evangelists, (4) Pastors, and (5) Teachers. However, over time the ministry gift of *“pastor”* has been used to be the main title for the leadership of modern churches, for example, *“senior pastor,” “youth pastor,”* etc.

Here are five points to better understand the biblical way of viewing leadership as Elders and Deacons verses the all-encompassing title *“pastor,”* which I believe simply refers to a *“ministry gift.”*

1-None of the leaders in the church used their office or gift before their name. One will never find the phrase *“Apostle Paul”* in the Bible; it is always, *“Paul, the Apostle”* (Gal. 1:1,

⁵⁰ All word studies done from *Strong’s Concordance*- bishop, elder, deacon. For more depth see *“Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.”*

⁵¹ The literal translation of *“presbuteros”* is *“presbyter,”* but most modern translations like the NIV translate it as *“elder.”*

Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:1, & 1 Tim. 1:1). Additionally, the idea to call everyone in the church "Pastor" is a modern invention that is not found anywhere in the Bible or the early church.

2-The Greek word "poimen" is only translated 1x as "pastor" in the New Testament and that is when it is listed in the five-fold ministry, Ephesians 4:11. However, it is translated 17x as, "shepherd."⁵² Therefore, if the title were to be used properly it should be "Shepherd Bob" not "Pastor Bob."

*3-Everyone in the book of Acts after the original apostles (Paul included) were known as Elders or Deacons first and then operated in their ministerial gifts second, Acts 14:23.*⁵³ We also know that Jesus called Peter to be an Apostle and that was his ministry gift from God out of the five-fold ministry. However, as the church model of Elders and Deacons developed further, even Peter began to refer to his official office over the church as an Elder.

Then from his office of Elder, he commanded all the other Elders to be good shepherds (or pastors). Therefore, it is clear that Elders pastored (shepherded) the local church. As a result, the offices of Elder and Deacon can be seen as the "positions" for the leaders in the church. Where as the gifts, such as pastor, evangelists, prophet, etc. can be seen as the "works" or the "actions" the Elders and Deacons do in the church.

Read Peter describe how he thought of himself as a fellow Elder in regards to his office in 1 Peter 5:1-4,

⁵² For the Strong's word study visit, <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G4166&t=KJV>, accessed Dec. 14, 2012.

⁵³ Most believe, including myself, the first Apostles- which Paul was included in, were considered a unique "one time office" that cannot be repeated again. Thus, technically speaking there would have been three main offices functioning in the New Testament. Apostles (being just the twelve including Paul), Elders, and then Deacons. However, this doesn't mean that there cannot be modern Elders with the gift of being an apostle (one sent to start new churches or be a missionary); however, they cannot have the same office of the original Apostles because of the criteria. Thus, most suspect this "one time office" of Apostle was for the purpose of writing the Holy Scriptures.

1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

4-Biblically speaking Elders are those who operate in the five-fold ministry gifts, 1 Peter 5:1-2. For example, Elders who are gifted as teachers, teach. Elders, who are gifted as evangelists, evangelize and win the lost. Elders, who are gifted as prophets, prophesy and give prophetic direction to the church. Elders, who are gifted as apostles, are sent out to start new churches and those who are gifted as pastors, shepherd and care for the sheep.

5-Not only do we see in the Bible that Elders are used in the five-fold ministry gifts, but so are Deacons, Acts 21:8. Take for example, Philip who was appointed by the twelve apostles to be the first of seven Deacons. Then note that later on he is referred to as an “evangelist.” Therefore, he was in the office of a Deacon and had the ministry gifting of an evangelist. See Acts 6:2-6 & 21:8,

2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables (*This is the first time the Greek word for Deacon is used, "diakoneo"*).

3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

Acts 21:8, "Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven."

Therefore, I believe that discipleship based churches should use the simple model of "Elders and Deacons" for their church government and team development.

For further study and evidence on the matter I would recommend the following, (1) Reading Acts 14:23, 15:2-16:4, 20:13-17, 21:18, 1 Timothy 3:1-16, & Titus 1:5-16;⁵⁴ (2) Study the church father Ignatius and his letter to the Ephesians as a practical understanding of leadership in the first century church.⁵⁵ Ignatius was a disciple of John, a powerful leader, and a martyr for the cause of Christ in the first century. All his letters, especially the one to the Ephesians, give great insight to how the early church was led and governed by Elders and Deacons;⁵⁶ and lastly, (3) Consider reading David W. Bercot's book, "*A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*," under the section, "Church Government."

⁵⁴ Also, it would be good to note the use of "elder" in John's second and third epistles. This would also give validity to the point that the first apostles began to change their official title to "Elder" as the church grew in "Elders and Deacons Model."

⁵⁵ The epistle can be read at, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.ii.iii.i.html>, accessed Dec. 14, 2012.

⁵⁶ Ignatius used the words "bishop/επισκοπη," and "presbytery/πρεσβυτερος" which are found in 1 Timothy 3:1 and 1 Peter 5:1. Thus, it can be said it was the early church's practice to have a main Elder (Bishop) oversee the other group of Elders called the Presbytery. And then the Deacons served both the Bishop (Main Elder) and Presbytery. However, the main point remains.

Anointing & Appointing

Now that we have clearly learned from the Word of God that Elders and Deacons are the two main offices in the church that God uses to rule and govern, we now must answer the two following questions, (1) Who can become an Elder or Deacon? And, (2) How does someone get placed into leadership?

First, Paul teaches that anyone can desire or set their heart on being an Elder or Deacon in 1 Timothy 3:1, but they have to fulfill the standards listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 to be eligible. Thus, the “who” is “anyone who so desires and lives up to the standard” given by God.

Second, the Bible teaches that new Elders and Deacons are “appointed” by already existing leaders, Titus 1:5. Therefore, when one looks to the book of Acts it can be clearly seen that the already existing leaders appointed the qualified new Elders and Deacons into their ministry, Acts 14:23.

Though the Bible records that other leaders did the “appointing” or “placing into ministry,” it was God that did the “anointing” with the ministry gifts. Paul notes in Ephesians 4:11, “*it was he gave some to be apostles*” so it can be said, “Man appoints what God anoints!” Therefore, every believer should live up to the standards of the office of Elder and Deacon and seek God for their own personal calling and gifting. Then, at the right time, God will give each person an anointing and an appointing into ministry. As a result, discipleship based churches should be founded upon appointed Elders and Deacons that are anointed in the five-fold ministry gifts!

Requirements for Elders & Deacons

Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 gives the requirements for the disciple to be an Elder or Deacon.

1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but

one wife, temperate, self- controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of Gods church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devils trap.

8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. 11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. 12 A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. 13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

I believe the qualifications of the Elder and the Deacon are one in the same and each existing church leadership should determine, with the leading of the Holy Ghost, what each trained disciple should be appointed and ordained as. Below is the complete list of requirements with definitions and examples so that you may have a clear and sound understanding of how you ought to appoint future Elders and Deacons.

1. *Above reproach:* Elders and Deacons must always be in good standing with the church and community obeying both the laws of God and man. Nothing in the Bible or elsewhere should be able to prove them of sin or wickedness.

2. *Husband of One Wife*: Elders and Deacons cannot be polygamists or in sexual perversion, for example, “adultery, homosexuality, or sexual impurity,” Galatians 5:19.

3. *Temperate*: Elders and Deacons must have their emotions under control, they cannot be easily angered, depressed or full of pride, they must have a balanced emotional life.

4. *Self-Controlled*: Elders and Deacons cannot be addicted to anything in this world, like “sports, entertainment, dress, food, drink, etc.”

5. *Respectable*: Elders and Deacons must live their lives worthy of respect in the areas of finances, integrity, speech, time management and overall lifestyle in the community, church, and home.

6. *Hospitable*: Elders and Deacons must have a home and heart that is always open to fellowship, discipleship, and comfort for the people they minister to.

7. *Able to Teach*: Elders and Deacons must be able to teach the sound doctrine of the Apostles, including, “passionate love and worship for God,” “the true Gospel of faith and repentance,” “self-sacrificing love for people,” and “instructions for spiritual growth and discipleship.”

8. *Not Given To Drunkenness*: Elders and Deacons must not be addicted to alcohol or the like, for example, “illicit drugs or substance abuse.”

9. *Not Violent, But Gentle*: Elders and Deacons must be kind and loving to the world that opposes them and patient with those they are leading.

10. *Not Quarrelsome*: Elders and Deacons must be able to learn under submission of the other Elders and they must teach with humility, not with an attitude of pride or division.

11. *Not a Lover of Money:* Elders and Deacons must be tithers, generous givers, and not indebted to the lusts of their eyes; they must be an example of a wise steward of God's financial blessings and not pursue dishonest gain in any way.

12. *Manage Their Home Well:* Elders and Deacons must keep their home in order. The children should serve God and be submitted to their parents. This also includes the marriage order as seen in Ephesians 5:22-33, thus the husband should love his wife as Christ does the church and the wife should submit unto her husband as the church submits to Christ. Plus, the wives are given a special command in 1 Timothy 3:11 to be, *"worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything."*

13. *Not a Recent Convert:* Elders and Deacons must be thoroughly trained and proved faithful before they are given their appointment. Therefore, they must be tested and approved before they are appointed, "a graduate from the discipleship process."

14. *Must Have a Good Reputation:* Elders and Deacons must have a good name in their community, on their job, and with their extended family. There can be no evil thing said about them, as seen in the Bible, whether in their character or conduct by non-Christians or Christians alike.

The Role of Women in the Ministry

Our church doesn't withhold the office of Elder or Deacon from women because we believe that women are able to lead in the church according to Scripture. We see that women in the New Testament were given the same baptism of the Holy Spirit, the five-fold ministry gifts, and were used in the offices. In light of this I would suggest all discipleship based churches to

recognize this biblical truth and appoint women into the offices of Elders and Deacons.

Here are some verses that show the equality of men and women in the ministry.

Acts 2:17-18, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

Acts 18:24-26, "Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately."

Romans 16:1 (NLT), "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea."

Acts 16:7, "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Because some scholars have contested whether Junia was actually a woman or if the phrase "*outstanding among the apostles*" means she was actually an apostle I recommend the scholarly book, "*Junia The First Woman Apostle*," by Eldon Jay Epp. In the book Epp relies heavily upon the unprecedented work of Richard Bauckham, renowned Greek grammar historian and linguist.

Four Reasons Why Women Can be Elders & Deacons

Since I know that the women in ministry issue is debated in many churches and denominations, I will now present my best case for their right to the offices and let you the reader make the final decision.⁵⁸

Here are the basic premises and conclusion summarized:

1. Women have the same salvation as men according to Galatians 3:28.
2. Women have the same Holy Spirit baptism as men according to Acts 2:18.
3. Women have the same spiritual gifts as men according to 1 Corinthians 12:28.
4. Therefore, women must have the same offices as men according to Romans 16:1,7.

Now note the premises with their detailed explanations and conclusion:

1. Women have the same salvation as men according to Galatians 3:28.

- (a) The verse states, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*"
- (b) Thus, it is clear that women have the same salvation as men.

⁵⁸ I have also debated this issue with a Christian apologist on his radio show; visit the link for the full debate, http://mpichurch.net/th_gallery/carm-can-women-by-elderspators/ accessed June 24, 2013.

2. Women have the same Holy Spirit baptism as men according to Acts 2:18.

- (a) The verse states, "*Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.*"
- (b) Thus, it is clear that women have the same Spirit baptism and the same gift to "prophesy."

3. Women have the same spiritual gifts as men according to 1 Corinthians 12:28.

- (a) The verse states, "*And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.*"
- (b) Since the "gifts of administration" (a role that all women are allowed to serve in within the church) are given without gender restriction the "ministry gifts" of apostles, prophets, and teachers should likewise be given to all women without gender restriction.
- (c) Therefore, with both Acts 2:18b ("*...they shall prophesy*") and 1 Cor. 12:28, it is clear there is no gender distinction in spiritual gifts.

4. Therefore, women should have the same offices as men according to Romans 16:1,7.

- (a) Romans 16:1,7 prove that Paul appointed women in leadership roles. The verses states, v. 1 "*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant (deacon) of the church in Cenchrea...*" & v. 7, "*Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are*

outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."

- (b) This is the debated issue. However, if the above premises are correct, then the conclusion is true regardless of how one feels about it.
- (c) The main issues brought by the opposing side come from the gender restrictions found elsewhere in the Bible, mainly 1 Timothy 2:11-12 & 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.
- (d) However, in these restrictions the opposing side is not consistent, for other issues are brought up as well that are not taken literally in most of the opposing side's churches like the following: (i) No braided hair, 1 Tim. 2:9; (ii) Women are not allowed to talk at all in church, 1 Tim. 2:11; and lastly, (iii) Women are said to be saved specifically by the good work of childbearing, 1 Tim. 2:15.
- (e) Therefore, both sides have to draw practical applications and conclusions within the biblical culture and other passages to justify and comply with the very awkward commands of Paul to Timothy and the Corinthians in determining how these relate to the modern woman. For those of us who have determined that women are in fact intended by God to hold an equal role with men in the ministry, the above restrictions are viewed as pertaining to a specific culture, people, and time rather than being enduring universal teachings. This conclusion is validated by the Bible's documentation of godly women speaking and leading men at various times and locations.
- (f) In conclusion, Douglas Moo, in his commentary on Romans, conceded that Phoebe according to the Greek and the context is most assuredly a Deacon, an official

position of leadership in the church.⁵⁹ Plus, Eldon Epp in his book, "*Junia the First Women Apostle*," sites that both he and the renowned scholar Richard Bauckham can prove vigorously from the Greek and the context that Junia was a female apostle while Daniel Wallace and other dissenters have "serious defects" in their methodology to prove otherwise.⁶⁰

Appointing Elders & Deacons

The final step to the discipleship process should be to appoint the disciples as either Elders or Deacons. Looking back to the example strategy we have used before, "CONNECT, MENTOR, & SEND," we will now SEND out trained Elders and Deacons to make new disciples.

I would suggest making a "flow chart" that is based on the "Elders and Deacons Model" with the following example positions.

1. *Pastoral Elders*: The Elders that have a fulltime call and Bible College training. They are responsible for leading the ministries (Sunday service, youth group, children's ministry, worship team, etc.) and for creating and maintaining the direction of the church. Within this group should be appointed the "Senior or Lead Elder," that is the equivalent to the "Senior Pastor."
2. *Governing Elders*: The Elders that have finished the discipleship courses and are gifted to lead the small groups and help in the areas of finances and structure. They are submitted to the Pastoral Elders and over the Deacons.
3. *Deacons*: The disciples who have graduated the discipleship process and serve in the various ministries of the church,

⁵⁹ "Encountering the Book of Romans," Douglas Moo, p. 209.

⁶⁰ "*Junia the First Women Apostle*," Eldon Jay Epp, Kindle 953.

“ushers,” greeters,” “youth leaders,” “prayer workers,” “worship team,” etc. They are submitted to both the Pastoral and Governing Elders but are leaders in the church according to where the Elders appoint them (like Philip). They can aspire to be Elders, but first they must serve and be found faithful as Deacons.

Based on the above sample leadership structure with Elders and Deacons you should now be able to see the “start and finish” to your discipleship process. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing when He developed the process of making disciples to grow His church. By the time of Paul, Elders and Deacons were being made from the new converts and they were reaching their cities with the Gospel, Titus 1:5. And within 300 years, the church reached the entire Roman Empire with the gospel of Jesus Christ and converted the Emperor. Just as the saying goes, “Reach one, to teach one, to reach one!”

Putting it All Together

At this point in the book we have covered the following: (1) Jesus’ Method of Discipleship, (2) How to Create a Vision, Discipleship Strategy, and Goal, (3) How to Create Discipleship Small Groups, (4) How to Create and Use Discipleship Materials, (5) How to Create and Do Discipleship Evangelism, and finally, (6) How to Create a Leadership Structure with Elders and Deacons.

Therefore, now is the time to build a leadership team of Elders and Deacons to accomplish the task! I would suggest putting all that you’ve learned together in the following simple steps:

1. **PRAY** | Take some time to pray and mediate on all that has been presented in this book and ask God to show you what He wants you to do. Seek God to bring the right people into your ministry to implement the vision.

2. **POSITION** | Ask God to bring the best people into the positions of Elders and Deacons to make and develop all that God has shown you. If you are a church planter, search for those who have already been appointed as Elders and Deacons to prayerfully join with you. If you are the leader in an existing church, gather together the leaders and position everyone for a re-launch of the church.
3. **PLAN** | Whether you are an existing church or a church planter, begin to make your plans to be a discipleship based church as the Lord has given you in prayer. Write out the (a) Vision, (b) Discipleship Strategy, and (c) Goal. Also, plan when you are going to launch the discipleship process and the small groups.
4. **PREPARE** | Begin to write your materials for the strategy and for your small groups. Then decide how the existing church or new church plant will merge into all you and your team has created.
5. **PROMOTE** | After you have prayed, brought people into the right position, planned your strategy, and prepared your church for the new discipleship process and small groups-then begin to promote it to everyone in the existing church and community for the “church (re)launch.” It’s time to make disciples that make disciples!
6. **PROTECT** | As you move into the second section of this book, “How to Maintain a Discipleship Based Church,” you will learn the basic things needed to protect your church from running into a ditch. For Jesus has much work for your church to do so that “all the nations can be made disciples!”

The Bottom Line: Elders and Deacons are the way to go when making leaders- it is both biblical and practical. Make every believer a leader and set the goal before them to become Elders and Deacons through the discipleship process.

CHAPTER 7

Record Keeping & Assessments

Counting People Because People Count

To be successful in making disciples with your newly formed discipleship strategy you must strongly consider how you're going to keep track of your movement. As stated before, "movement," is the process in which people move from a-z in your strategy. Thus, your record keeping should reflect that movement precisely and accurately.

I would suggest keeping records in a horizontal structure, rather than simply counting people the standard vertical way. Take a moment to view each of the two examples of record keeping.

Example A: *Horizontal*

Connect		Mentor		Send
Sunday	Small Groups	101	201	Elders/Deacons
Crowd	Community	Congregation	Committed	Core
175	115	65	25	30
%	65	37	14	17

Example B: *Vertical*

Sunday	175
Small Groups	115
101 Class	65
201 Class	25
Elders/Deacons	30

As you can see, the horizontal path is clearer in understanding your movement as you see people by percentages go from start to finish in your discipleship strategy.

Therefore, I would recommend doing the following to give your church the best record keeping possible:

1. Put your strategy at the top and have it move from left to right, "Connect, Mentor, & Send."
2. Then under your strategy place the steps in each process. For example, we "connect" through our (i) Sunday services and (ii) small groups.
3. *(Optional)* Give a description for each of the steps. For example, when people come to our service on Sundays, they are like the "crowd" that followed Jesus. Then when they come to our small groups they become a part of our "community," etc.
4. Next, track your attendance for each step by an accurate count- no guessing.
5. Then with the Sunday attendance calculate the percentage of people in each phase of the strategy. For example, we had 175 people in our Sunday service and 115 went to small groups this week, so 65% of our church is in small groups.
6. Lastly, set individual goals for each step by percentages and total numbers. Meaning, we desire 100 graduated Elders and Deacons by next year at a rate of 15% of our total congregation. Keeping percentages in mind while setting goals helps insure you have both, "quality and quantity."

Quality & Quantity

According to Jesus in John 15:1-5, He wants us to be of good quality and produce fruit in quantity. The *qualitative nature* of discipleship takes place in the pruning. And the *quantitative results* come from the healthy vine that remains in Jesus. As you read the passage consider how Jesus desires both from His disciples- not one over the other.

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.
2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Therefore, good record keeping should be used to insure that the quality of the discipleship strategy is being monitored by the individual percentages. At the same time, the total numbers in the process should evaluate the quantity of disciples. For discipleship churches should always be growing both inward and outward, Acts 2:42,47.

Seven Ways to Maintain Quality & Quantity

1. **OUTREACH** | Never neglect outreach- keep reaching lost souls for Jesus.
2. **MORE THAN HALF** | Always aim to have more than 50% of your church in both small groups and discipleship.

3. **HEALTHY GROWTH** | Set a goal to grow in total numbers 5-15% each year, without losing your desired percentages.
4. **ACCURACY** | Some pastors do guess work with their numbers and never really face the facts. Don't be afraid to be painfully accurate, the truth will set you free!
5. **CONSISTENCY** | Do weekly, monthly, and yearly reviews of the numbers. However, try not to stress out over ups and downs- simply be consistent and God will bless your efforts.
6. **MINOR CHANGES** | Make minor changes prayerfully to help increase growth as needed. New times, meeting places, etc. can make a difference over time.
7. **MAJOR CHANGES** | Try not to make any major changes for three years. For example, changing steps in the strategy should not come often and only be done in extreme cases. I always encourage new church planters and pastors to give their strategy 3 years "as is" before making major changes to allow for a more accurate assessment of its effectiveness.

Ready-Made Discipleship Assessments

Assessments are written evaluations for your discipleship program to determine its outcomes. Outcomes are the scores you earn in the evaluation, usually 1-4, 1-10, etc. The importance of assessments is to give an honest look at your program to determine its strengths and weaknesses. Then having that knowledge a church can make appropriate changes to insure greater success.

At this point I will simply share the assessments that I have made to help insure your discipleship process is running well and determine what changes may be needed. Assessments are not very hard to use but usually require a proven leader in the field with 5-10 years' experience to make. Therefore, I will provide you the reader the best assessments I have made from

the last 8 years of pastoring a discipleship based church. However, if you wish to make your own I would still suggest having another pastor with 5+ years of experience to look over them to insure they work properly.

Our Assessments

For the best quality, please visit the webpage associated with this book to download the free PDF.⁶¹ The entire assessment contains ten individual assessments with each individual assessment evaluating four key areas of discipleship. As a result, it contains a total of forty key evaluations. The scoring is done between 1 and 4, 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest. Each score has a written description to assist you in honestly scoring yourself, thus there are 160 descriptions given in total to determine the proper score. At the end, the outcomes result in an overall grade and then recommendations are given according to the grade.

To save time and space in this chapter, I will simply show the overall outline and the first assessment with its descriptions for an example.

⁶¹ Found at <http://mpichurch.net/2013/11/09/discipleship-assessments/>

“Discipleship Assessments for Churches”

by, Joe Wyrostek

1. Key Elements of a Discipleship Program, Pt. 1
2. Key Elements of a Discipleship Program, Pt. 2
3. Characteristics of a Disciple
4. Spiritual Disciplines of Discipleship
5. Practical Disciplines of Discipleship
6. Evangelism Practices in Discipleship
7. Charitable Deeds of Discipleship
8. Foreign Mission Work in Discipleship
9. Discipleship Small Groups
10. Overall Discipleship Stats

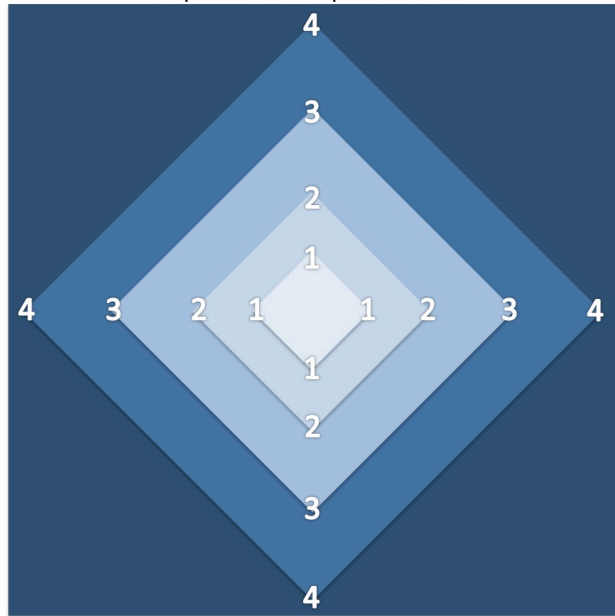
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Key Elements of a Discipleship Program – Pt. 1

Impartation of Spiritual Gifts

1

Class Work



Individualized Mentoring

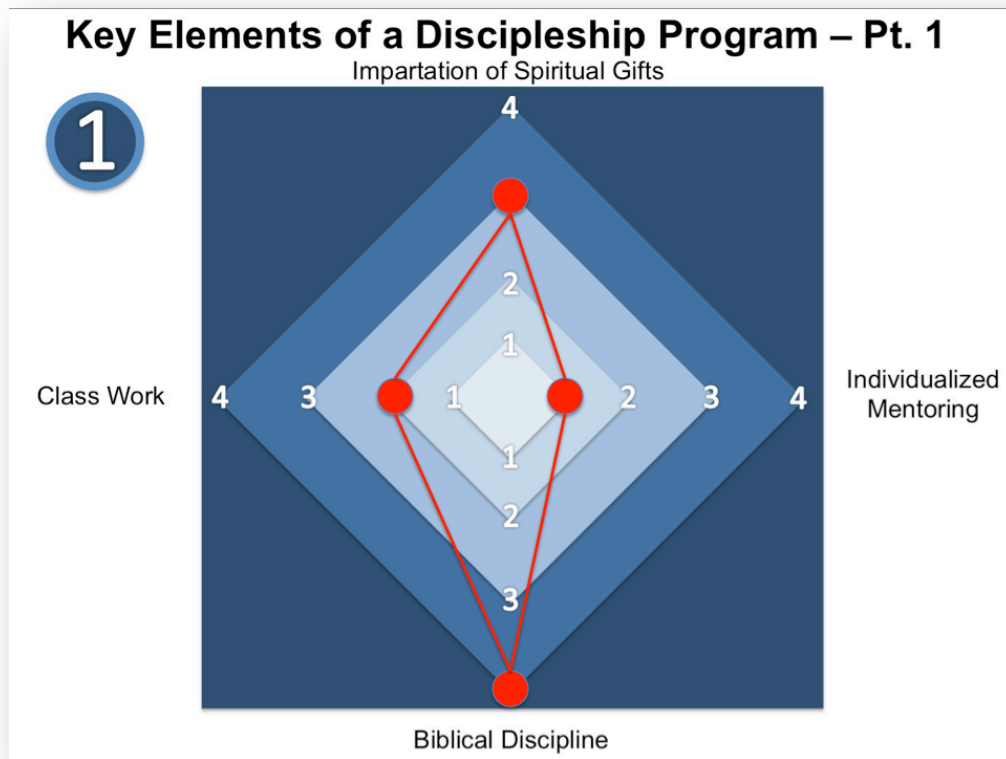
Biblical Discipline

Key Elements of a Discipleship Program – Pt. 1

Elements (1)	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4
Impartation of Spiritual Gifts	The nine spiritual gifts are not believed to be for today in every disciple's life.	The nine gifts are believed to be for today, but are not given a place in discipleship.	The nine gifts are generally taught but are not practically imparted and given specific instruction.	The nine gifts are taught, imparted by prayer, and given specific instruction on how to use them.
Biblical Discipline	Biblical discipline is not practiced according to 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 or Matthew 18:15-17.	Discipline is only implemented for "big problems," i.e., "affairs, heresy, abuse, etc..."	Discipline is used in every believer's life when needed. Personal correction, rebuke, and ultimatums are common. However, without guided plans of restoration.	Discipline is used in every believer's life when needed. Personal correction, rebuke, and ultimatums are common. Restoration is a key component of the discipline.
Class Work	There is no formal instruction, thus all discipleship is "organic."	Formal instruction is given, however, the materials are not organized and are inconsistent from class to class.	Formal instruction is given with structured and well organized material that remains consistent from class to class.	Formal instruction is given with structured and well organized material in a consistent manner. Plus, tests and homework is given to evaluate the disciple.
Individualized Mentoring	There is no individualized mentoring- all the learning is in a group setting.	Individual mentoring only occurs in a reaction sense to the problems in the disciple's lives.	One-on-one mentoring is only a part of one phase of the program, but is not present in all the phases.	One-on-one mentoring is involved in all aspects and parts of the discipleship program and continues even after the disciple graduates the program.

How to Score Your Assessments & Make Changes

One of the great benefits of our assessments are they can be drawn out to give visuals along with giving numerical scores. For this reason I would recommend printing them out and filling in the circles where you would rate yourself. Then afterwards, I would draw the shape to give an illustration to where the most work is needed. See the example below to view the scores in the form of a shape.



Therefore, in our example we can see we scored high in “biblical discipline” and “impartation of spiritual gifts.” However, we need improvement in both “individualized mentoring” and “class work.” Now we can go back to the values and see what we can do to receive a higher score. Take for example, “individualized mentoring,” it only scored a “1.”

Thus, according to the values for us to become a “2” we should find ways to respond to people’s problems individually. However, if we want to go immediately for a score of “4” we need to incorporate individual discipleship and mentoring into all of our stages of discipleship.

Making Assessments Work for Your Church

I would suggest first making the discipleship strategy and operating with it for 3-6 months before doing your first

assessment. Then after the first assessment, I would do them annually as a team with all your church leadership. However, it would be highly beneficial in the early stages of your development to look over the assessments to give a “standard” of what to aim for. But always remember that what we plan for and what actually happens are sometimes two different things. Thus, we should view the assessments as “realities” to our “ideologies.”

Seven Things to Remember When Using Assessments

1. **HONESTY** | There is no reason to gloss over facts or ignore them, when you are the most honest you can make the best changes.
2. **TEAM WORK** | Gather together as many of your trusted leaders as possible to go through them so that the scoring is not one-sided but rather the best overall score for the church.
3. **BE SPIRITUAL** | Assessments are not the Holy Ghost inspired Word of God, thus be led by the Spirit to make the changes God says.
4. **BE CREATIVE** | No one knows everything and the same is true with assessments. Be creative and go outside the lines to find what works best for your church.
5. **PRIORITIZE** | The assessments may reveal 10 weaknesses, however, don't get overwhelmed and try to fix them all at once. Rather prioritize the ones that are most important and move accordingly.
6. **RELAX** | Building great discipleship churches takes time, experience, and the power of the Holy Spirit- there isn't a rush. You've made it this far by God's grace and He will continue to guide you all along the way.

7. **REJOICE** | Take time to give high fives and compliments for the things your church has done well. Victories are important so find them in the assessments and celebrate them.

The Bottom Line: Record keeping and assessments may not be the most exciting thing you do, but they are worth the time it takes to do them right!

CHAPTER 8

Accountability & Church Discipline

Inspect What You Expect

Have you ever thought about the reason why Jesus picked twelve men to eat, sleep, and live life with Him for three years straight? Why didn't Jesus just say, "Hey guys, I'll meet you at the local synagogue every week and give you some life-lessons?" Simple, Jesus wanted to "inspect" what He "expected" from His disciples.

Like any good gardener, the Father wanted His Son to be in the vineyard every day to prune the bad and cultivate the good in His disciple's lives, John 15. However, many in the church today are not held to any kind of standard so their beliefs and their behaviors have become disconnected.

The reason for accountability and church discipline is to make sure what Christians claim and believe is actually what they live out daily. The disciple's accountability starts with the leadership as Hebrews 13:17 states, *"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."*

Take for example, the instructions Paul gave Titus concerning some of the people in Crete who were claiming to be Christians, yet were causing great trouble, Titus 1:10-16,

10 For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. 11 They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. 12 Even one of their own prophets has said, Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.

13 This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith 14 and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Here is another example with Paul and the church in Corinth concerning a man sleeping with his step mom and many other sinful things the people were doing, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13,

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? 3 Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. 4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the

people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you.

In both cases Paul had to use church discipline and accountability to work through the problems in the church. *Accountability* is the act of being responsible for what one says and does and *church discipline* is the corrective and restorative process for people who have sinned against God and others.

As a result, I like to think about accountability as the preventative action to keep one from willful disobedience and church discipline as the result of not being accountable and thus the reparative action. Therefore, if one is truly accountable they will not be easily led into continual sin and need discipline.

Accountability is Normal in the “Real World”

Everyone on the job is accountable to someone and if serious problems arise there are consequences in the form of discipline. If the troublemaker on the job wishes to remain, they will have to endure the discipline for their negative actions or they will be fired. Similarly everyone in society is held accountable to the laws of the land and if they break them they have to suffer the consequences. Even violating the law and receiving parking tickets, if left unpaid, could result in someone being sent to jail.

However, today in many churches, people are not accountable to anyone and so when they sin and cause harm to the Body of Christ there is no godly discipline. Every

discipleship based church must enforce that which Jesus and the Apostles taught concerning accountability and church discipline.

Jesus was so direct with His “problem solving technique” that He said if a fellow brother didn’t repent of their sin, they were to be treated as a “pagan” or a “tax collector.” Read Matthew 18:15-17,

15 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Therefore, today’s church leadership must take the appropriate actions to insure the local gathering of believers is holy and in biblical order. Leaders are to “rid the church of yeast” and “judge those within” so God’s people can live without rebellion or willful sin in their midst. No good boss would allow someone to stay on the job that continually slandered and discouraged the rest of the workers and neither should the church embrace nor accept that which Jesus has said to rebuke and reject.

Restoration & Forgiveness

At the same time, the Bible teaches about how to restore and bring back into the congregation those who truly repent. When the man in Corinth humbly repented, he was welcomed back by the congregation with a strong affirmation of their love for him, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11,

5 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. 6 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. 7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

9 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Also, Jesus, right after His discussion about treating someone like a tax collector who didn't repent, went further on to teach that we are to forgive each other without limit when others truly repent of their sin to us. Matthew 18:21-22 states,

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? 22 Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Plus, Paul in Galatians 6 taught that believers should “gently” restore those who sin and that everyone is to help “carry each other's burdens.” Galatians 6:1-3,

1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Therefore, accountability and church discipline is important in the church. However, it should never come at the cost of grace

and mercy. Love covers over a multitude of sin and truly desires the best for people, 1 Peter 4:8. When people do sin, they should be given a chance to repent and make things right. If they refuse, they should be told in love to leave the fellowship, but at the same time given a pathway to return, 1 Corinthians 5:13. Lastly, if they do return and truly repent they should be welcomed into the church without embarrassment or being looked down upon, Galatians 6:1.

How Accountability Works

I would like to take the next few sections to give some advice on how to do effective accountability in discipleship. I have had the privilege of being in accountable relationships within the body of Christ since bible college- both from those in authority over me and with my peers along side of me.

I can give many testimonies of how God used it and brought powerful victories in the important areas of my life. For example, through accountability I experienced and maintained freedom from sexual impurity, smoking, cursing, and even drug use. Plus, through godly leadership and their investment in my life, I experienced freedom and spiritual growth in deeper areas like anger, selfish ambition, and pride.

As a result of being so powerfully impacted by accountability relationships in my personal Christian life, I have always used them in the ministries God has graced me to lead. I used accountability in the beginning of my church plant with one-on-one bible studies where I would teach the lesson and then have a time of prayer, reflection, and inward examination with the student.

Also, before every 201 discipleship class, I would start with times of asking God to search us and show us if there be any wicked way in us, and to lead us in the way everlasting. Then I would have the students meet in groups of 2-3 to discuss and pray about the things God showed them so He could change their lives by the power of the Holy Spirit, Psalm 139:23-24.

One-on-One Accountability

I believe one of the best ways to keep people accountable is to have them meet together with someone of the same gender who is willing to be honest and grow with them. Then if serious issues arise, they can bring it to the elders and deacons. However, by having the first level of accountability being with the disciples themselves it will teach them not to be dependent upon the leader but rather be open with their peers.

However, in a new church plant, it is always good for the husband and wife to do all the accountability so that the new disciples can learn the best way to replicate it with others as the church grows. At the same, I don't believe the disciple should ever "grow out" of accountability, but rather they should "grow into" new accountable relationships.

For example, in the 101 stage, the disciple may be accountable to their leader, then in the 201 to a peer, when they graduate as a deacon they are accountable to the elders, and if they become an elder to the other elders. Therefore, every disciple, no matter what stage they are at in their spiritual development, should always remain accountable. As a lead elder I am both accountable to the elders on our church staff and to elders in other churches who I am friends with.

Now let us look to the three essential elements of having effective one-on-one accountability starting with you and your leaders; (1) Have a time of prayer, (2) Ask heart revealing questions, and (3) Share testimonies and encouragement.

1. Have a Time of Prayer

Make a time to call out to Jesus at the beginning to ask His power and wisdom to be with you both. Then pray at the end for forgiveness of sins, power to live right, and the fruit of the Spirit to be developed greater in your life.

Matthew 18:18-20, "18 I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, I

tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

2. Ask Heart-Revealing Questions

Have your accountability partner ask some good questions to really show your weaknesses and struggles. Remember, accountability time is to challenge you to grow and become more like Jesus. Though we are not saved by good works- we are saved by faith unto good works, Ephesians 2:8-10. Therefore, by the inner dwelling and power of the Holy Spirit, desire to walk worthy of your calling without any compromises, 2 Thessalonians 1:11.

Here are some of the questions John Wesley used in his "Holy Clubs" in the Methodist movement during the 1700's. Any of these questions can be used.

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I'm better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?

8. Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
9. Am I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees...who despised the publican?
20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard? If so, what I am doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
22. Is Christ real to me?

A simplified three-question summary I like to ask is: (1) Are you who you say you are? (2) Is there any sin in your life? And lastly, (3) Is there any good you should be doing but are not?

The biblical basis for “probing questioning” can be found in 2 Corinthians 13:5 when Paul wrote, *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you— unless, of course, you fail the test?"*

3. Share Testimonies and Encouragement

After your heart has been laid bare and you have prayed for the issues in your life to come under the blood of Jesus. Begin to testify about how you have been seeing God work over the past week or from the last time you met. Don't allow the time of meeting together to bring condemnation, but rather have this time be for power and victory in Jesus name. Accountability time should encourage you to *"fight the good fight of faith,"* 1 Timothy 6:12! For John said in Revelation 12:11, *"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."* Therefore, we should always be overcoming our sin and keeping the devil under our feet!

Eight Hindrances to Accountability

Having done accountability for many years, I have seen some people have bad reactions to it, so I made this short list to help expose people's hearts and their ill intentions. You may need to refer to this list in your church when people avoid accountability and make excuses.

1. **INCONSISTENCY** | Starting and stopping accountability because they are not committed to it or they keep switching accountability partners when they get discouraged.
2. **SHAME** | They sin and try hide it from their accountability partner because they feel ashamed and embarrassed.

3. **PRIDE** | When a person feels accountability is not needed in their life. Or they always see the speck in someone else's eye and neglect the one in their own eye.
4. **CONFUSION** | When someone falsely compares accountability and true discipleship to cult behavior and legalism.
5. **BAD THEOLOGY** | They say things like "no one is perfect," thus, they wrongly believe they are incapable of being fully transformed into a new creation.
6. **LOVE OF SIN** | When someone truly doesn't want to change because they inwardly want the evil desires of their sinful flesh.
7. **HYPOCRISY** | They lie and are a hypocrite and prefer their secret world of sin compared to living in the light of Christ's righteousness.
8. **OFFENSE** | When someone is easily offended and distracted because they make Christianity all about their wants, desires, dreams, and run from anything that brings "death to self."

Ten Biblical Proofs for the Practice of Accountability

To address any people in your church that try to avoid and make excuses to not do biblical accountability, I have made this list to teach the validity and benefit of it from the Scriptures. For Paul said, *"faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ,"* Romans 10:17. Though the word "accountability" is not found in the bible, the theology behind the practice is. Similarly, the word "trinity" is not found in the Bible either, however the theology it represents is found all throughout it.

1. **COMMUNAL CONFESSION** | Confessing sin one to another, James 5:16.
2. **LIVING ABOVE REPROACH** | Elders and leaders in the church being above reproach, which comes from investigating their life, 1 Timothy 3:2-8.
3. **COMMUNAL EXAMINATION** | All Christians gathering together to have their lives examined by the Word of God in fellowship as in Acts 2:42-47 and seen demonstrated in Acts 5 with Ananias and Sapphira.
4. **TRANSPARENCY** | The life of a disciple being transparent to all those in the church concerning their doctrine and lifestyle is seen in the corrections of 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.
5. **HONEST RELATIONSHIPS** | Walking together in an open and honest relationship under a leader as seen in the life of Jesus and His twelve as in Mark 3:14 and is commanded to be replicated in Matthew 28:18-20.
6. **ACCOUNTABLE RELATIONSHIPS** | The example of Paul with Timothy in a Father/Son relationship that was supposed to be replicated to other men in the church is found in 2 Timothy 2:2.
7. **BEING KNOWN** | The concept of "*knowing those who labor among you*" teaches the principle that all workers, whether volunteer or paid, should be accountable to the church leadership, 1 Thessalonians 5:12.
8. **CHARACTER REPLICATION** | The idea of obeying and following the examples of the leaders in your home church is seen in Hebrews 13:17.
9. **COMMUNAL SUBMISSION** | All the biblical letters (epistles) from Paul, John, and Peter boldly proclaim the

concept of accountability by their very nature. Meaning, the leaders in the local churches were accountable to the Apostles. All the disciples then were accountable to the Word of God. And the disciples in their homes and in fellowship were to hold each other to the standard of the teachings of Christ.

10. COMMUNAL DISCIPLINE | The concept of "*marking those who cause division among you*" is a clear pattern for every disciple to avoid those who don't continue in the very things they are being held accountable to as seen in Romans 16:17.

Twelve Basic Steps for Church Discipline

If accountability doesn't work and people in the church continue to live in sin, it is the role of the leadership to confront them and give them instruction to repent. If they don't repent or argue with the leadership, the church should meet with them again and if they still refuse to repent they are to be "dis-fellowshipped." To be dis-fellowshipped means that the body of believers will no longer associate with them until they repent.

I would suggest that each church develop its own set of guidelines for the disciplinary process based on the Bible. Below is a suggested guideline to follow with the basic steps that should take place from beginning to end.

- 1. ONE-ON-ONE** | According to Matthew 18:15 try to meet with them one-on-one and show them biblically their sin, "adultery, drunkenness, slander, etc."
- 2. BRING ALONG ANOTHER** | According to Matthew 18:16, if they haven't listened to you by yourself, bring another person, preferable an elder or deacon, see if they come to the same conclusion you came to. If the accusation stands, then correct them again.

3. **OFFER TIME & COUNSEL** | At some point before the final decision is made the leadership would do well to offer counsel and a certain amount of time for the person to change and repent of their sin. This time and counsel can be a good way to help the person realize their sin and receive the needed instruction to avoid being dis-fellowshipped. Some of my greatest errors in church discipline have come from moving too fast. At the same time, more problems can arise if the “yeast” is not removed in a timely way. For this step to work for both the benefit of the church and the person, prayerful guidance from God and your team will be needed.
4. **TELL THE CHURCH (OTHER LEADERS)** | According to Matthew 18:17, key leaders should meet and if they come to the same conclusion give the person the final warning.
5. **REMOVE THEM** | According to Matthew 18:17, after the three meetings if the person still doesn't repent, they are to be removed from the church. Then the rest of the church should be notified to not have relationships with the person until they repent.⁶²
6. **PUT EVERYTHING IN WRITING** | From start to finish have all the meetings and accusations in writing. This way, if the individual desires to repent, there is a clear record of their transgressions should it need to be referenced.
7. **PRAY FOR GOD TO RESTORE** | Certainly, prayers should be offered during the whole process, but specifically at the end so the dis-fellowshipped person will be saved, 1 John 5:16.

⁶² I believe the best practical way to “tell it to the church” according to Matthew 18:17 is to notify (a) the church's leadership and (b) those others who were directly involved. However, if it involves an elder it may need to be brought before the whole church according to 1 Timothy 5:20. Thus, both with elders and non-elders I believe the church leadership should do what is best for the whole church based on God's Word and the leading of Holy Spirit.

8. **RESTORE THOSE WHO REPENT** | At any time in the process if the person repents, they should be forgiven and restored, Galatians 6:1.
9. **DISCIPLE THE WEAK** | At whatever stage the person repents, when they finally do, they should be a part of some kind of private mentorship to help restore them and bring them back into a place of growth and effectiveness in the church, Galatians 6:1.
10. **PUBLIC RESTORATION** | Whoever they have affected with their sin should get an apology with repentance. Usually things like this are good to do by letter, email, or with one group meeting with all those involved. Also, public restoration is not only for the person's repentance but it also gives people a chance to reaffirm their love for them, 2 Corinthians 2:8.
11. **KEEP ACCOUNTABLE** | The restored person, along with everyone, should see the situation as a reminder of the importance of accountability, Galatians 6:3.
12. **LOVE** | Never forget from start to finish to do everything with the love and grace of Jesus, Matthew 18:21-22, *"21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? 22 Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy- seven times."*

I pray that we all might remember the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15 whenever we have to enforce church discipline, *"13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother."*

Do All Things in Love

Accountability and church discipline may not always be easy, but if not done right the church can't grow. When it's done correctly the people will grow and be safe and the world will see the light of the church shining bright! Sometimes the process may seem to drain you spiritually and bring unexpected hurt to the Body, but remember Jesus and the Apostles had to deal with the same kind of issues- you're not alone.

Therefore, whenever your church faces discipline with its disciples never lose sight of Jesus' love for them, John 3:16. Also, remember the Bible teaches us in Psalm 30:5, "*For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.*" Lastly, we should be slow to anger, bitterness, and hurt- and be quick to look to Jesus as our example of suffering and receive His strength, love, mercy, and grace, Hebrews 12:1-13.

The Bottom Line: Accountability and discipline is a part of every person's life, so the church should be no different if we want to be successful in making disciples of the nations.

CHAPTER 9

Overcoming Setbacks

I Die Every Day

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:31 described ministry in a way many popular leaders don't want to admit or talk about publicly- He wrote, *"I die every day- I mean that, brothers- just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Some have taken the phrase, *"I die every day,"* to refer to Paul "crucifying his flesh and sinful nature." In other words, some believe Paul had to keep crucifying the flesh to live for Jesus without sin.

However, not only is the concept of "daily crucifying the flesh" unbiblical in regards to salvation, but salvation and sanctification is not found anywhere in the context of the passage. Therefore, the phrase, *"I die every day"* is describing Paul's hardships, suffering, and trials in the ministry.

Here is the context, 1 Corinthians 15:30-32,

30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I die every day- I mean that, brothers- just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'"

In regards to salvation Paul said in Galatians 5:24, *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."* As a result, at the moment of salvation the believer has crucified (past sense) their sinful nature (flesh) with its passions and desires. Paul in Romans 8:10 writes, *"But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness."* Thus, Paul's statement, *"I die every day"* is not referring to salvation and the sinful nature,

but rather to the hardships of ministry. What he is saying is something along the lines of, "I suffer hardships everyday in ministry that make me feel like I'm dying."

Read the many "deaths" and "sufferings" Paul endured daily in the ministry, 2 Corinthians 11:23-30,

23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? 30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Paul listed the following twenty-three "deaths" he faced in the ministry, (1) Prison time, (2) flogged severely, (3) exposed to death, (4) five times whipped 39x, (5) three times beaten with rods, (6) stoned, (7) three times shipwrecked, (8) spent a night in the ocean, (9) constantly on the move, (10) danger from rivers in travel, (11) dangers from bandits, (12) danger from the Jewish people, (13) danger from the Gentiles, (14) danger in the city, (15) danger in the country, (16) danger at sea, (17) danger from false brothers, (18) laboring night and day without sleep,

(19) suffering hunger and thirst, (20) times of being cold and without proper clothing, (21) the pressure of all the churches, (22) outward physical weakness, and (23) inward spiritual weakness in the form of temptation.

Tired of Only Hearing Half of the Story

One of the most frustrating things for me to read as a seasoned church planter and discipleship leader is “ministry success books” by other leaders. Usually the back of the cover describes the book like this, “Pastor Rock Star started his church with only 30 people and now after just five short years has 10,000 people every Sunday in attendance. Read his inspiring story and learn the ten mountain moving tips to be a *Rock Star Pastor* too!”

The first problem that I have is he started with “30” people. Like me, many church planters never even had that opportunity to have a core group and had to start with just their family. Second, “10,000 people in Sunday attendance” doesn’t speak to the quality of the church or of its discipleship (which Jesus commanded us to make). If we were just counting attendees I should skip Pastor Rock Star’s book and read a real rock star’s book like Bono from U2 because they have over 30,000 a night at their shows.

Third, if he has gone from 30 to 10,000 in just five years there isn’t much I have in common with him because I’ve only gone from 2 to 150 in nine years! Most of the time I actually feel more discouraged by the book because I can honestly say that I’ve already done the “ten mountain moving tips” in the last book and our church only grows 5-15% each year!

Fourth, the books are all the same in content and style. All the titles and subtitles could be basically summed up as, “Big Churches: How You Can Become Big Like Me.” The “secrets to success” are all the same. For example, pray, have faith in God, don’t give up, dream big, make a plan with steps, be creative, have passion, etc.

Fifth, none of the ministry success books I've read lately really answer the big questions that I face, "What do I do when I fail over and over again?" "How do I keep being excited about my church that grows at a snail's pace?" "What do I do when people leave me and I want to quit?" "How do I relate to others who always seem to succeed and I don't?" "How do I stop feeling so alone?" "Why don't most of the church growth principles work for me and my church?"

Lastly, and most importantly, I simply believe most of the leadership books and conferences out today only give half the story- the side of success and neglect the side of suffering. Pastors love to tweet and post on Facebook how great their church is when the seats are full, the award winning play they had at Easter, how super creative their new sermon series is, how they miraculously raised \$100,000 in one service, and how their staff and leadership team is "AWESOME!"

Most church leaders including myself already know how to have a good day. We know how to pay the bills when the money comes in, give a shout out to good leadership when they hit a home a run, and how to take a victory lap around the church after "Brother Big Bucks" gave his large offering. However, I want to know how to have a bad day! I so deeply desire to read tweets from Pastor Rock Star concerning a bad week like the ones I've had. For example, we planned an outreach for three months but had lower numbers than expected, or I had to remove a leader from their position because of sin, and I missed spending time with my wife and kids all week because I had to have three extra "cleanup" meetings that I didn't plan. Pastor Rock Star, I beg you, "Tell me the other half!"

Paul on the other hand, knew how to tell the whole story- *suffering* and *success*. As a matter of fact, if you came to him sharing your struggles in ministry he'd probably pull up his shirt and show you some of his scars and share some tears with you. As a result, of not being "real" and sharing the "whole story" of ministry I believe we are setting up our leaders to fail. Often times when leaders don't "hit it big" in the church world, they feel like giving up because they think something is wrong

with them. However, the problem isn't with them- it's with "us." We as a body have allowed only one half of the story to get published and be set as an example. It's time we tell the other half and validate people's struggles and hardships like Paul did.

Make Our Weak Hearts Strong & Brave

I believe as a result of not telling the whole story of ministry (suffering & success) and making discipleship our main focus the American church is facing many enormous problems in the ministry. Below are some of the most shocking and devastating stats of our time.

- 1. Ministry Drop Out** | An average of 1,500 ministers drop out of the ministry a month in the U.S.
- 2. Longevity** | Only 10% of ministers will make it to the age of 65, which means 90% of ministers will quit before they reach 65 (retirement).⁶³ 50% of ministers don't even make it 5 years in the ministry.
- 3. Depression** | 70% of pastors battle with depression.
- 4. Lack of Close Friendship** | 70% of pastors state they don't have a close friend to confide in with their struggles.
- 5. Discouraged** | 50% of ministers would leave the ministry today if they could make a living outside of the church.
- 6. Unhappy Family** | 80% of pastor's wives wished their husband would chose a different job. 94% of pastor's families feel the negative pressure of being in the ministry.

⁶³ "Surviving the Anointing," David Ravenhill, pg. 15. For points 1 & 2.

7. **Church's Closing** | 4000 new churches start each year, however, over 7,000 close down.
8. **Low Self-Esteem** | 70% of pastors say they have lower self-esteem since being in the ministry than when they first started.
9. **Church Attendance Down** | 3,500 people stop going to church a day in the U.S. Church attendance in the U.S. over the years has been steadily declining; 1990-20.4%, 2000-18.7%, and 2004-17.7% of the general population attended church in an average week.
10. **Losing Cultural Ground** | Only 6% of churches report growth each year in the U.S., 94% are either maintaining or losing ground. However, the U.S. population grows around 1% a year, thus the people of God are losing ground in both society and in the church. As a result, the Body of Christ is roughly running 10,000 churches behind every 4 years to meet the current population needs.⁶⁴

After reading these alarming and grieving stats, the solution can't be to keep doing the same ole' things. Church leadership conferences and books need to change drastically. Discipleship based leaders need to be at the forefront of bringing the change because discipleship itself is at the heart of the problem. If pastors themselves were being discipled and were in accountable relationships with other leaders, they could make mature disciples and thus avoid loneliness, drop out, fatigue, and other harmful ministry effects.

Could the solution to our greatest failures in the church concerning pastors and effective growth really be as simple as discipleship? Yes. Jesus wasn't giving suggestions; He was giving commands that bring success. His Great Commission to

⁶⁴ Stats from Barna and The Fuller Institute found at <http://www.pastoralcareinc.com/statistics/>, accessed Dec. 24th, 2012. For points 3-10.

make disciples was not only a model for church growth, but also for ministerial health.⁶⁵

The 2% Are Doing 100% of the Talking

George Barna's research reveals that only 2% of all U.S. churches have more than 1000 people in weekly attendance. That means the other 98% of us are all reading books and going to conferences by leaders that most likely have either forgotten our struggle or never even dealt with it to begin with. Plus, Barna notes that the average church in the U.S. has only 90 adults and that 60% of all churches have less than 100 in attendance.⁶⁶ Thus, if you can reach 100 people- you've made it statistically speaking! On top of the stats for church attendance in the U.S., the average house church Paul pastored was only around 30-35 people!⁶⁷

I have nothing against mega churches or people believing God for great things in their church. But why are we exalting the top 2% of church leaders, who Paul the apostle couldn't even relate to in his day-to-day struggles? Sure there are things we can learn from the top 2%, but they shouldn't be doing all the talking. I believe the other 98% needs to do the majority of the talking in the form of discipleship.

Hence, the New Testament epistles- Paul, a suffering church planter, was encouraging other suffering church planters and leaders to not give up. Paul encourages others with his suffering in 2 Timothy 1:8, *"So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God."* Therefore,

⁶⁵ Also, consider reading, *"The Great Evangelical Recession,"* by John Dickerson for the most recent book to bring to light the decline of the Evangelical church in the U.S. He gives the tally of four independent surveys that estimate only 7-9% of the total U.S. population are Bible believing Christian, pg. 26. And he states that around 260,000 young adults between the ages of 18-29 leave the faith each year, pg. 103.

⁶⁶ Barna's online article found here, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/126-small-churches-struggle-to-grow-because-of-the-people-they-attract>, accessed Dec. 24th, 2012.

⁶⁷ *"Pagan Christianity,"* Frank Viola. Kindle location 621.

disciples making disciples should apply in the ministry with leaders as it does with the congregation.

It seems to me that the pastor of a 25-person church would be more likely to find encouragement and guidance from a veteran pastor with 150-350 members verses the one with 1,000. The pastor of the mid-size church most likely can relate to being “stuck” for years at certain plateaus. Plus, he can relate to the frustrations of “doing all the right things” and still not seeing the results. Therefore, the “Paul-like” leader encourages not from a place of “church growth is super easy once you learn these steps,” but rather from the place of empathy. Instead of giving steps they may simply say, “Be encouraged, I’m suffering with you. There are no ‘quick fixes’ out of this, but don’t give up because God is with you!”

Please don’t misunderstand my point; I do believe leaders in the top 2% have major issues and trials themselves. I also believe they can encourage others through their suffering in discipleship. I don't believe in church “classism.” Meaning, I don't believe leaders of smaller churches are more spiritual than leaders of larger churches. Or all large churches have it easy and small churches have it hard.

I believe each leader and church should be assessed equally and honestly. That is why I like to talk with other churches based on percentages not just raw numbers. In other words, I like to ask questions like, “What percentage of your church is in discipleship and small groups?” “What is the leader to attendee ratio in your church?” And, “What percentage of your church is called into full time Christian service each year?” I believe by answering questions like this we can find the best kind of discipleship leaders to instruct all of us- especially the smaller churches.

For example, imagine if you did an anonymous survey of three churches with their lead pastors. One church has 70% in discipleship, the other 50%, and the last one has 15%. Who would you want to pick to teach the session on “Effective Discipleship?” I would choose the one with 70% regardless the size of his congregation. Now if we wanted to discuss visitor growth we could see who gained the most visitors in

percentages but that conversation would not replace discipleship growth.

However, when speakers are being chosen to encourage the 98%, let's get a seasoned pastor of 25 years who has worked his entire ministry-life growing a healthy church of 250 to encourage us. I want to hear how he remained faithful in his suffering, didn't quit when he felt like a failure, and how God used the 25 years of ministry to do greater things than just grow Sunday attendance.

Now I know what some may be thinking right now, "This author has it out for large churches!" Nothing could be further from the truth. I'm actually one of the biggest fans of real church growth, granted most of my heroes come from overseas because they have a humility and honesty that I can relate to, but even in the U.S. I love church growth- even kinds that I can't relate with. However, my issue is how the 2% are addressing the 98%.

I believe there needs to be more compassion, sympathy, and lifting up of a "mid-sized church model" for leaders rather than continually making the mega church model the standard. Also, it grieves my heart how the same speakers keep circuiting the same conferences, I would like to hear from others on the main stage that use their examples of suffering to encourage the Body. Meaning, I would love to hear a pastor of 10,000 say of a pastor of 250, "He has taught me so much about being effective in discipleship!"

The Top Seven Setbacks in Discipleship

Below is a general list of setbacks that most discipleship based churches face.

1. **Drop Out** | Christians love to hear the pastor preach about discipleship but few are willing to actually do it, Luke 9:61-62. As a result, it may take ten people to start with just to finish with one! Remember Jesus had a huge dropout rate, John 6:66.

2. **Lack of Funds** | Because the discipleship based church is intentionally holding the people accountable to the commands of Christ, most of the crowd doesn't stick around. Thus, they leave and take their shekels with them.
3. **Fatigue** | Many discipleship based church remove the mid-week and simply do Sunday service, small groups, and discipleship because getting personal into people's lives takes a toll on everyone in leadership.
4. **A Broken Heart** | Nothing hurts worse than spending a considerable amount of time in someone's life and then watching them leave and fail to graduate the process. Whether its sin, compromise, or them just wanting to run away to a different church to hide, the heartache hurts deeply.
5. **Slow Growth** | Remember the chart from Chapter One? After five years if you have 16 disciples you're doing an awesome job! However, having "only" sixteen disciples after five years of heartbreaking labor in the harvest doesn't build your ego, it crushes it into a million pieces!
6. **Lack of Outside Encouragement** | If you don't have people around you who understand what you're doing- comparing yourself to the "quick shallow growth model" can crush your spirit.
7. **Crazy People** | Whether its gossiping, being lazy, rebelling against the leadership, quitting without notice, hiding sin, having a know-it-all attitude, or slander; some people in the church can just act plain ole' crazy at certain times, no matter what kind of church you may have!

Dying a Thousand Deaths

At this point, I would like to “practice what I preach,” and share ten of the deaths I have suffered in ministry.

1. Closing my first church plant after just four years was the saddest day of my life. I literally felt as if I had failed God and the entire city I served.
2. For the first year of my second church plant, I preached to less than 20 people every Sunday. My wife and I had to set up everything, I played the guitar and sang by myself (not a pleasant sound), did the announcements and offering, preached, led the prayer time, and put everything away. One time only four people including my wife came to a service.
3. I lost every major giver that first joined with us over a period of 18 months. My in-laws, an upper middle class man, and others for a total of 6. This meant the average 10-15 people I ministered to every week were all under 25 and without professional jobs. As a result, our average offerings were around \$700 a month- the majority of which came from my wife’s job.
4. When I first rented a facility that I could do an outreach at, I spent hundreds of dollars on a credit card and expected 100+ people to come out. A popular band came as a favor and we had less than 20 people show up. I felt like a loser in front of the band and questioned if I could ever reach the community.
5. After two years of writing our discipleship books I finally finished the second phase. Four youth joined the class after finishing the 101 and all dropped out within the first week. I had to wait another year, for a total of three years to graduate people from a two-step discipleship process that should’ve only taken 6-8 months.

6. Our first graduating class of Elders and Deacons all confessed hidden sin in the same 60 day time period resulting in the loss of most of our leadership which took years to train. My wife and I at the four-year mark had to do mostly everything we had done for the first three years all over again until they got restored several months later.
7. I dreaded and disliked Easter for the first five years of our church because we would always drop in numbers and I would have to pretend I didn't notice.
8. We've started and stopped a young adult service, a mid-week service, morning prayer meetings, and various fellowship nights because either people stopped showing up or the leaders got discouraged and quit.
9. After five years of blood, sweat, and tears we finally broke 75 people on a Sunday so I decided to rent a new space and over the next two years we couldn't pay the high rent so we had to break the lease. We then closed our 501(c)3 and renamed our church because our lawyer said it would be easier to start over again. Within 24 months of our greatest success, one bad deal led us into two years of a "living financial hell." I felt as if I wasn't even fit to lead the church anymore.
10. I've had to sell two cars at different times to help pay bills, racked up my \$8,000 credit card three times, had to work as a Bible college professor to make ends meet, and even had to claim personal bankruptcy for \$400,000 of debt because of the before mentioned lease gone bad. And only after 7 ½ years was I able to be fulltime in the church.

Fifteen Ways to Overcome Setbacks

Though my setbacks may fail in comparison to what Paul and the early church went through- they were enough to break my pride and bring me to my knees in holy desperation, 2 Corinthians 12:9. As a result, over the years I have learned some simple lessons that I pray will encourage you to finish your race!

1. **Stay in Close Relationship With God** | Doing the basics like prayer, worship, and reading the Bible will encourage and refresh your soul.
2. **Act Normal** | Try not to freak out when you face a setback or experience a failure. Just like how coughing and sneezing is natural to the body's health, troubles and hardships are natural to the Christian. Relax, and keep preaching, praying, and plugging away.
3. **Be Accountable and Vulnerable to Good Leaders** | Find 2-3 people in ministry you can trust and talk to them often about the ups and downs of ministry.
4. **Don't Take Failures and Setbacks Personal, Its Just Ministry** | Always remember, things fail, not people. You are not a failure because an outreach or service doesn't go as planned.
5. **Always Put Family Before Ministry** | Never sacrifice your family. It's not worth it and it's like chopping off the branch you're sitting on. Family is the greatest asset to your personal life. They keep you strong and healthy.
6. **Stay Focused** | Think of baseball as an example: not every hit is a home run; some are just base hits- some at bats are even strikes out. Thus, stay focused on making disciples and getting up to bat, eventually you'll get on base!

7. **Never Compare** | Comparing yourself to others is the best way to ruin your day or make a bad day even worse. Remind yourself of your calling and celebrate other's victories- yours will come, 2 Corinthians 10:12.
8. **Consider it More Training** | Think of your trials and hardships as going to the ministry school of "Life Lessons." You're learning things you could've never learned from a book. Invaluable experiences you'll never do again or gaining lessons on how to deal with various problems, Proverbs 4:7.
9. **Go Fishing** | Rest and refresh your soul with a fun hobby and good fellowship. I love to go fishing and listen to worship and preaching on my iPhone.
10. **Only Quit What Can't Be Saved** | You'll get tempted to quit certain ministries and even ministry altogether at times but always ask yourself, "Have I given God a chance to do everything possible to save this?" If the answer is, "yes," drop it like a hot potato and move on with "no condo-bondo." If, "no," hang in there and suffer some more!
11. **Have a 24hr Funeral** | If something dies and wrecks your momentum, throws off your groove, or deeply hurts and grieves your heart, give yourself one full 24-hour day to deal with it. After that, bury it. Have someone keep you accountable to how much you can even mention it.

Don't let one defeat be a broken record that keeps playing in your mind and steals all your joy and faith. Philippians 3:13-14, *"...one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."*

12. **Pray in Tongues until the Cloud Lifts** | The Holy Spirit will guide you to pray when you don't know what to pray. He will give you more direction, energy, and creative solutions

while you're speaking in tongues of angels than you'll get from a thousand books! Jude 1:20 & 1 Corinthians 14:2.

13. **Celebrate Every Victory- No Matter the Size** | If you have just one disciple in the class, remind yourself and the devil every day, "Jesus is making disciples through me!"
14. **Always Remember Jesus** | Remember Jesus' rejections, His pain, His suffering, and how He never gave up. Jesus is with you- you will make it. If you do give up, repent, and come back to work! Jesus said in John 16:33, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*
15. _____ | You fill in the blank with what works best for you. Learn to create your own defense against stinkin' thinkin'. For me it's, "Try not to make an important decision on a Sunday or Monday, give the situation 72hrs to settle down." What's yours?

Read Hebrews 12:1-13 for Encouragement

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

The Bottom Line: You are going to face major setbacks and heart breaking failures in ministry but if you stick with discipleship, embrace godly suffering, and rely on the Holy Spirit's power- *you will make it!*

CHAPTER 10

Being Faithful to the Vision

Faithful in Little is Better than Faithless with Much

In this last chapter, I would like encourage you to be faithful to the discipleship vision by reminding you of the words of Jesus in Luke 16:10, *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”* To be “faithful” simply means, “trustworthy, committed, and loyal.” The opposite of being faithful is to be “double minded, faithless, and uncommitted.”

Proverbs 20:6 states, *“Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?”* Thus, it is not just what you say and believe that is important, but also what you actually do. Anyone can read a book like this one and say, “Amen, I want to let Jesus build a discipleship based church through me!” However, the real question is, “Will you still be making disciples when Jesus comes back?”

Discipleship based churches must always remember that small beginnings can produce large outcomes. The multiplication chart given in Chapter One proves that slow and steady “multiplying growth” will always outpace and out produce fast “adding growth.” Therefore, you and your team are going to need the fruit of faithfulness to see the goal come to pass, Galatians 5:22.

Oftentimes churches start discipleship programs but after they face the setbacks and challenges they quit and move onto something else. However, Paul wrote in Galatians 6:9, *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”* So be faithful when discipling a few because God will give you a great harvest of disciples if you don’t faint and quit.

Paul also said in Galatians 6:7, *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”* Consequently, you

as a leader in the church will reap what you sow to be the church. If you sow and plant weak believers, you will reap a weak church. However, if you plant committed disciples you will reap a strong church of world changers, history makers, and roof breakers!

Try to think of discipling in small numbers like rising up Navy Seals in the church. They may be few in numbers but they are powerful in the battle against Satan. Jesus' disciples were able to win cities, raise the dead, and make Christianity the largest and fastest growing religion in the world! I would rather have a small church of growing disciples that please God and live in Holy Ghost power than a large fast growing powerless church that only pleases people. Therefore, look to Jesus as your example of being faithful with little and follow His method of discipleship.

Faithful to the Lovable Losers

I've had the privilege of living on the north side of Chicago for many years and became a Cub's baseball fan by default. My first apartment was on Addison Street, just three miles west of Wrigley Field, and like any good north sider I support the Cubs. The White Sox and U.S. Cellular Field on the south side are like a different planet for most of us north siders. Personally, I'm not a real big sport's fan or a baseball guy but whenever someone invites me to go see the Cubs play, I usually go just to hang out and have fun with friends. The thrill and enjoyment always comes from the fans because the game usually doesn't go well for the ole' Cubby's.

For those who don't keep up with sports it's important to note that the Cubs have not won the World Series in over a 100 years! They hold the record for the longest championship drought in the history of major league baseball. Thus, they've been given the nickname, "The Lovable Losers."

However, I've noticed a surprising trend with the die-hard fans; they always have hope for "next year." If faith in a baseball team were a virtue then Cub's fans would be saints!

After having a terrible losing season loyal Cub's fans will say things like, "We're gonna have a good draft this year- next year's lineup is going to be awesome!" Or, "We had some real good players this year, but just couldn't get everything together- we'll make it happen next year."

In 2007 and 2008 when the Cubs won consecutive titles in their division (the National League) I was blown away by the excitement and celebration of the fans. It appeared that Cub's fans were literally running out onto the streets and celebrating in larger numbers than White Sox fans when their team had won the World Series in 2005! They were everywhere waving flags, chanting, and screaming at the top of their lungs. If someone didn't know any better, they would've thought the Cubs had just won the World Series.⁶⁸

Sad but true, the Cubs lost one year in the first round of playoffs 3-0 to the Los Angeles Dodgers. They didn't even win one game! However, like always the fans said, "next year!" What the church can learn from the Cubs is they have developed a faithful fan base that can withstand the "wins and losses" of any season. That's what true disciples do. They are faithful to the discipleship based church even when they face hard times. They don't "church hop" to the next church down the road when things get tough- they remain loyal and believe that their major victories are coming!

Disciples have even more to be excited about than a baseball team because every time they see a soul saved and get disciplined heaven rejoices with them! Though people may quit the process and the church may grow slowly compared to other churches, the "lovable losers" don't give up, they get back in the harvest and say, "The 'next one' we witness to will be a disciple of Jesus!"

⁶⁸ To watch a video of the celebrations on the streets visit, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYN7oPukzMM>, accessed Dec. 26th, 2012.

Jesus' Solution for the Church's Problems

If being called a "lovable loser" is tough for some of you "Word of Faith" folks, you wouldn't have liked Paul's description of being a church planter in his day because he said they were considered by some to be the "scum of the earth!" Take a few moments to read Paul's description of what doing ministry was like for him in comparison to the people around him in 1 Corinthians 4:8-17,

8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! 9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! 11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

14 I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. 15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

First, it is obvious from the above passage that Paul was rebuking a lukewarm church that felt it could be successful apart from the cost of following Jesus. The Corinthians were allowing sin to go unchecked (1 Cor. 5), dividing the community over leadership styles (1 Cor. 3), abusing spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:37), and we're suing each other to get their own way (1 Cor. 6). Secondly, in verses 8-10 Paul mockingly calls them "kings," "wise," "strong," and "honored," to help them see how prideful they had become in their man-centered ways of being the church.

Third, Paul refers to himself and the other true apostles as, "men at the end of the parade sentenced to die," "spectacles for angels and the world," "fools," "weak," "dishonored," "hungry," and the "scum of the earth," to give the reality of what following Jesus cost them. He wanted them to know beyond any shadow of doubt what being a true disciple would be like in this life.

Fourth, this passage may be in a mocking tone, but it gives a great insight into the mindset of the Christian people in Paul's day. They thought they could take the easy road of success and build Jesus' church any way that worked best for them. If allowing believers to live in continual sin brought more people into their services- then it was okay with them. If putting down Paul, their founder, made them look more spiritual- then they were all for it. However, Paul boldly points out that they are really just playing make believe church because the real church of disciples was nothing like them.

And lastly, the verses that really stick out to me the most are 15-17 in which Paul reminds them that he is their father through the Gospel and that he wants to warn them as children to imitate him. He then declares that the practical solution to their problems would come from a disciple named Timothy, who would be faithful in the Lord to teach them. Therefore, Paul's way of correcting the massive problems in the Corinthian church was to send a faithful disciple to do the work of discipleship!

In turn, we as leaders need to imitate Paul in being who God called us to be, even if the church world doesn't

understand and mocks us. We need to build relationships with our people like a father does with his son so they can be faithful to teach others what we have taught them. We can learn from Paul's experience in the Corinthian church that though discipleship based churches are not void of problems, faithful disciples of Christ like Timothy are the solution.

Seven Biblical Examples of Being Faithful

Everyone needs role models and someone to look up to. In your journey as a discipleship based leader you can find courage and hope from the real life stories of God's people found all throughout the Bible. You and I are not the first ones called on by God to do what is impossible in human effort. Therefore, let the "heroes of the faith" encourage you to dream big and stay faithful to your calling!

1. **Abraham** | He was faithful to wait twenty-five years for the promise of a son.
2. **Joseph** | He was faithful in all stages of his life- from the pit, to Potiphar's house, to prison, and in the palace. He never gave up on his God-given dreams.
3. **Moses** | He was faithful for forty years in the desert leading people that knew they were going to die and not see the promised land. However, he remained faithful for the sake of God's glory, the Jewish people, and for righteous men like Joshua.
4. **John the Baptist** | He was faithful to preach a message that eventually got him beheaded but he never turned his back on his calling to be a "voice in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord."
5. **Jesus** | He was faithful to the Father in everything He did and spent 3 ½ years faithfully making disciples with just a

few people. And after He went to heaven, 120 of them in an upper room changed the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

6. **Stephen** | He was faithful to preach the way God told him, even if it meant his life and ministry would be cut short. He chose to live a full life, rather than a long life.
7. **Paul** | He was faithful to finish his race despite dying daily and facing numerous challenges.

Ten Ways to Increase the Fruit of Faithfulness

In Matthew 25:23 Jesus presents what disciples should hope to hear from Him if they've been faithful to make disciples that make disciples, *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your masters happiness!"* Therefore, today as Christ's disciples we must strive to rely upon the grace of God to enable us to finish what He started. We ought to remove any and all hindrances and humbly follow the path marked out for us.

Below is a basic list of ten things to do to increase your faithfulness to discipleship.

1. Pray the Word of God Daily, Ephesians 6:17-18.
2. Speak the Word of God and His Promises in Your Conversations, Romans 10:17.
3. Confess and Remove All Doubt, James 1:6.
4. Avoid All Sin, Matthew 6:13.
5. Be Patient in Affliction, Romans 12:12.

6. Find Two or More People to Pray with You Regularly for the Vision, Matthew 18:19.
7. Use Your Imagination to Picture Success. Like Abraham, Counting Stars and Grains of Sand, Genesis 15:5.
8. Spend Time with Other Leaders Who Have Made Disciples Longer than You, Philippians 2:22.
9. Always Remind Yourself that it is Christ Who Builds the Church, Psalm 127:1.
10. Never Lose Your First Love- Always Stay Deeply in Love with Jesus, Revelation 2:4-5.

Lastly, may the words of John in Revelation 17:14 encourage you to stay the course, *“They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings- and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”*

The Bottom Line: Leading a discipleship based church is not going to be easy but it will be worth it. Remember when you're faithful to make a “few” disciples you'll eventually have a church full of disciples if you don't quit.

FINAL WORDS

Follow Jesus

Luke 9:23-26,

“23 Then he said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? 26 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.’”

I pray that this book has encouraged you to follow Jesus and His method to build His church through discipleship. Jesus said in Matthew 28:19 to, *“go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* He then promised His disciples in verse 20, *“surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* Therefore, it is up to you to follow Jesus and do the work of making disciples until Jesus comes back.

Jesus gave three important things one must do to be His disciple: (1) Deny yourself; (2) Take up your cross daily; and lastly, (3) Follow Him. First, to *“deny yourself,”* means to *“admit your need for Jesus.”* You must *“confess Jesus as Lord,”* and deny any impulses, thoughts, or ideas that try to replace Him as the Lord of your life. Jesus is your Master and Boss, so see to it that what He commands you fully obey.

Second, *“take up your cross daily,”* means to *“embrace the suffering and trials of being a follower of Christ.”* Paul said, *“I die every day,”* referring to the massive amount of trials he faced in ministry. Likewise, you too must die daily in the ministry with the trials you will face. Being a disciple that makes disciples may cost you everything in the form of persecution and hardships.

Third, *“follow Him,”* means to *“go wherever Jesus goes, say what Jesus says, and do what Jesus does.”* You are to be a

living example of Jesus to this world. By following Jesus you are to be like Him in every way, 1 John 4:17. People must be able to follow Jesus by following you because you walk on the narrow path and the highway of holiness.

Therefore, may you deny yourself, daily pick up your cross, and follow Jesus. For you to be a disciple of Christ you cannot try to save your life because in the end you will lose it. However, if for Jesus' sake you lose your life, you will have eternal life. Live out discipleship first through your own personal life and then make other disciples. In other words, be a disciple that makes disciples.

In closing, I would like to pray for you and ask God the Father to first make you *faithful* and then second, *fruitful*; so that you can have both *quality* and *quantity* in discipleship for the rest of your life.

Our Father in Heaven,

You are worthy of all the praise, adoration, and glory because of your great splendor, majesty, and everlasting power. I pray for those who have read this book that they will be the disciples you commanded them to be.

I ask that you will fill them with your Holy Spirit to give them the anointing to see miracles, the power to be your witnesses, whether by life or by death, and the grace to live wholly for you. May your kingdom come through them on this earth as it is in heaven.

I humbly ask that you will build your church upon the disciples they make from the teachings of Christ that they teach. I pray that you will give them the nations as an inheritance to your Son. May they be the answer to Jesus' prayer for laborers in this great end time harvest of lost souls.

I believe that you have chosen them to be your servant-leaders and I entrust them to you with the words you have given me. May we all do what your Son Jesus did and change the world through transformed disciples. Precious Father, let everything we do here in this life bring you glory and honor in

heaven. For you alone are worthy of our lives. Make us disciples that make disciples.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

MORE RESOURCES

Discipleship Books by the Same Author

- (1) *Welcome to Your New Life, Seven Steps to Spiritual Growth*: “*Welcome to Your New Life*” is more than just a book; it is a new way of living. Jesus Christ came to give you a new life and that new life starts now. Have you ever wondered what made Peter live a different life than Judas? Have you ever asked yourself what is God’s will for your life? Do you want to make a difference for God with your life? If you answered “yes” then this book is for you. Get ready for seven steps that will forever change your life!

- (2) *Disciples That Make Disciples, Twelve Lessons in Biblical Leadership*: “*Disciples That Make Disciples*” is a call to radical Spirit-filled disciples to advance upon the kingdom of darkness and turn the world “right-side-up” for Jesus Christ. This book gives twelve challenging, inspiring, and anointed lessons that are firmly grounded in the Word of God so that you can have all you need to be a generation shaker, world changer, and history maker for the Glory of God!

- (3) *Life Changing Devotions, 365 Days of Faith Inspiring Lessons*: Do you want to live the kind of life God created you for? Then “*Life Changing Devotions*” is for you! Simply choose from one of the 12 different series you desire to see change in and start today. Each lesson contains a Scripture reading, a short informative lesson, a reflection, and practical steps to help you implement what you have learned. If you want what you’ve never had, you have to do what you never done. So start learning from the Word of God today and let God change your life one day at a time!

(4) *Disciples of the First Disciples, Learning Powerful Lessons from the Past*: “*Disciples of the First Disciples*” takes the reader from the early days of the first disciples through the Great Reformation to the present outpouring of the Spirit around the world. This book is a perfect introduction to church history and revival. A must for every lover of discipleship!

Other Books by the Same Author

(1) *Helping Muslims See Christ in Christianity, Understanding Islam in Light of the Bible*: “*Helping Muslims see Christ in Christianity*” is a very fresh, informative, and bold look at the differences between Islam and Christianity. Whether you are already a follower of Jesus or not, this book will challenge you and inform your beliefs in light of what God has said to the prophets in the Bible. You will learn the difference between Islam and Christianity’s view of Jesus, the Bible, and the Trinity. What you read in this book will change your life!

(2) *Date Like a Christian, Seven Steps to a Godly Marriage*: “*Date Like a Christian*” is a practical look at dating in the real world and guides you along a biblical path that will help you find true love and romance. In the midst of all the dating “drama” of the 21st century, this book answers important questions such as: When am I ready to date? How should I get to know someone I like as a Christian? And am I in love or is it just lust? Every “single person” should read this book before setting out to find “Mr. or Mrs. Right!” Make a move in the right direction and get this great book today!

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