

Why Discipleship Is Crucial: The Biblical Vision of How We Change

Why is it that so many Christians are not spiritually mature? What does a faithful disciple look like according to Scripture? What are some of the most common challenges to discipleship in our lives and ministries? This workshop will give a practical strategy on how to grow to maturity in Christ and help others do the same.

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INTRODUCTION

This workshop aims to emphasize the importance of obeying Christ's Great Commission to make disciples. The workshop explores both the definition and the challenge of discipleship. It outlines the different spiritual stages in discipleship and presents the portraits of the disciple-maker and disciple.

A brief story of how:

God changed my life through my involvement in a small discipleship group

God changed my ministry through my involvement with ELF Disciple-Making Leaders YRMN

ARGUMENT

I. A Definition of Discipleship

Paul told Timothy: "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

"Christian discipleship is a concentrated process that occurs when a mature believer prayerfully enters into a committed relationship with a group of faithful and teachable believers for the purpose of building godly character, imparting true knowledge, and developing ministry skills under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, so that they will follow Christ without reservation and do what he tells them to do." (John L. Musselman)

Discipleship is the process of growing to become more like Christ.

Discipleship involves character transformation, sound doctrine, and ministry skills development.

II. The Importance of Discipleship

God's desire is for people to know him – "God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

God's design is for people to glorify him – "everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory" (Isaiah 43:7).

Discipleship is important because that is how people grow in the knowledge of God and are transformed to bring glory to God.

Jesus himself made disciples and commanded us to make disciples, thus modeling and expressing the mission of the church:

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age'" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

III. The Challenge of Discipleship

Discipleship is challenging for two main reasons:

First, discipleship is a time-consuming process.

"For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Unfortunately, we want it all, and we want it now. Jesus spent 3.5 years with his disciples.

Second, discipleship is very costly.

"Salvation is free, but discipleship costs everything we have" (Billy Graham).

"And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it'" (Luke 9:23-24; cf. Luke 14:25-35).

Jesus' call to discipleship is an all-or-nothing summons. It involves giving him preeminence over all other relationships and over the desires for our own lives.

We need to move from building fans of Jesus to building disciples. And this is easier said than done. But we must do it – we must face the challenge of discipleship if we want to see the church renewed and revived.

IV. The Spiritual Stages in Discipleship

Potential disciples are to be found in any of these six stages:

1. Disconnected – spiritually dead – they need to be made aware of their lost condition (“... dead in the trespasses and sins” Ephesians 2:1). Apologetics and evangelism are part of the discipleship process.
2. Curios – searching – they need to be told of the Savior’s solution (“I love those who love me, and those who diligently seek me will find me” Proverbs 8:17). Challenging people to make a decision for Christ is part of the discipleship process.
3. Infant – just born again – they need to be loved and cared for (“I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not ready” 1 Cor. 3:2). Caring for and encouraging new believers is part of the discipleship process.
4. Child – knows enough to be dangerous – they need to be loved and taught (“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth” 1 John 3:18). Teaching the truth of God’s word is an essential part of the discipleship process.
5. Young adult – being discipled – they need to be empowered (“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” 1 Timothy 4:12). Demonstrating and delegating are part of the discipleship process.
6. Parent – discipling others – they need to be released (“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you ...” 1 Peter 5:2). Mobilizing disciple-makers is part of the discipleship process.

V. The Portrait of a Disciple-Maker

Jesus – Philippians 2:5-8

Paul – 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Love people enough to accept them as they are.

Love people enough to help them become who God wants them to be.

Love people enough to see them outgrow you (grow too big for you).

VI. The Portrait of a Disciple

Matthew 5:3-12 (humble, repentant, gentle, thirsty and hungry for more of God, forgiving, kindhearted, peacemakers, willing to pay the cost).

A true disciple is someone growing to love God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind and with all his strength, as well as growing to love his neighbor as himself (Mark 12:30-31).

CONCLUSION

Disciples are made, not born.

Making disciples is the core mission of the church.

Discipleship is a costly process.

Jesus and the Apostles present the best and only model for us to follow in making disciples.

Discipleship is about whole life transformation.

Disciples grow in godliness, knowledge and ministry skills.

Disciples make disciples.