

The Importance of Truth in Disciplemaking

Discipleship involves the transformation of the mind as well as of the heart and will. What we think about forms the raw materials from which our lives are formed and actions taken. During this session, we will build upon the idea that “the Christian mind,” as James Sire argues, “is always in both formation and reformation.” The formation of a Christian mind is dependent on loving and assimilating God’s truth and learning how to live in persistent obedience to what we know He requires of us. Special attention will be given to evaluating why our current practices in discipling have not produced mature, reproducing believers for the church and for the world. While the formation of the Christian mind is a life-long process, discovering the vital role that truth has in the deliberate short-term discipleship process can lead to greater spiritual maturity and a fruitful and replicating ministry for generations to come.

John Musselman is the President of the Jackson Institute, a leadership development organization whose mission is to contribute to the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual formation of individuals who are on a passionate quest to be welcomed, received, and acknowledged by God. He studied at the University of Alabama (Honors BS in Mathematics), Reformed Theological Seminary (MDiv), and Fuller Theological Seminary (DMin). After serving on the staffs of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and Perimeter Church in Atlanta, he founded the Jackson Institute in 1991. John has trained leaders in discipling in India, Romania, Poland, Australia, Mexico, Tanzania, Kenya, Belize, Spain, and the U.S.A. He has edited John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, A.B. Bruce’s classic work, *The Training of the Twelve*, and Thomas Watson’s *Man’s Chief End: God’s Glory*. In addition, he has written *Classic Discipleship*, a manual for equipping leaders in Christian discipleship, and *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts*.

I. The Formation and Reformation of the Christian Mind

A. As a man thinketh: a God-given capacity and gift

1. Man as the image of God
2. The catastrophic effects of the fall

B. Shaping our minds into the image of Jesus Christ

1. The sanctifying power of God’s Word
2. Renewal of the image: knowledge, righteousness, and holiness of the truth (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24)
3. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7)

C. The foundation of our thought

1. Three senses for truth in Scripture: metaphysical (absolute, underived, eternal), ordinary (epistemologically correct), & practical (ethical behavior)
2. God's eternal and infallible truth
3. General and special revelation
4. Students of God's Word and God's world

D. Using our imaginations and engaging in rational thought

1. Promotes personal joy (as opposed to succumbing to discouragement or depression)
2. Deepens human longing (rather than abandoning hope)
3. Strengthens faith (when the ground around us seems to be so unstable)
4. Develops a Christian worldview by which we see the world

E. Thinking analogically vs. univocally

1. Analogical thinking: man acting self-consciously before the background of an absolutely personal God
2. Univocal thinking: man acting self-consciously before the background of an ultimately impersonal principle
3. Removes barriers to spiritual sight
4. Provides understanding and wisdom

F. Obedience to God: knowing and doing

1. Obedience begets knowledge
2. Knowledge begets obedience

- G. The importance of developing a disciplined mind
 - 1. A knowledge of God's will in particular situations
 - 2. Opening our eyes to see things God's way
 - 3. Walking in the light
 - 4. Capacity to discern good and evil
 - 5. Focus on building God's kingdom

II. The Failure of Current Practices in Disciplemaking

- A. Equating every kind of small group with discipleship
- B. Inadequate vision for building mature disciples
- C. Weak leadership for Jesus' global challenge
- D. Lingering focus on elementary principles and curriculum
- E. A lack of curiosity about all that God has said and done
- F. Limited confidence in challenging people to extraordinary growth

III. How to Challenge People to Think in the Disciplemaking Process

- A. Promoting reading that directs our thinking (especially the Bible)
- B. When thinking must direct reading
- C. Reading beyond one's capacity (books that are beyond you)
- D. Allowing books to make demands on you (moral and spiritual persuasion)
- E. *Lectio divina*: finding the heart of God

- F. “We read not just to listen to what others say and to discern what others think; we read to learn the truth, to know and participate in the reality God has created, not the reality only imagined by others” (James Sire).

IV. Moving Beyond Random Curriculum Selection in the Discipling Process

- A. A seminary professor’s life-changing challenge (personal story)
- B. Individual assessment
 - 1. Who are you discipling?
 - 2. What do they need to know?
 - 3. Considering the broad spectrum of knowledge
 - 4. How to find the “holes” in one’s understanding and knowledge
- C. Establishing growth objectives
- D. Seven characteristics by which to evaluate curriculum
- E. Curriculum selection: primary and secondary materials
- F. Assisting those you are discipling to build a biblical framework of truth

V. The Fruit of Incorporating a Serious Emphasis on Truth in Discipleship

- A. Mature believers whose minds and hearts have been shaped by truth
- B. Mature believers who can discern truth from error
- C. Mature believers who have been taught to think analogically
- D. Mature believers who have built a biblical framework for thinking
- E. Mature believers whose ethical living emerges from careful thought
- F. Mature believers who are able to understand and evaluate the culture
- G. Mature believers who are fully and thoughtfully engaged in effective evangelism
- H. Mature believers who are making significant contributions to their areas of interest and specialty for the glory of God and the expansion of His kingdom
- I. Mature believers whose lives are well-lived and informed by careful, godly thinking
- J. Mature believers whose lives are pleasing to God

Recommended Reading

Alder, Mortimer J. & Van Doren, Charles. *How to Read a Book*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1940.

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