

## **Discipleship in Action: Developing Tools to Help People Towards Maturity**

The practice of biblical discipleship always demands that we consider the social, linguistic, geopolitical, economic, ecclesiastical, and spiritual context in which we are operating. How do we develop tools to effectively disciple the people whom God has given us without disregarding their uniqueness and need to be placed in, or treated as a part of, a broader context. Without succumbing to various ready-made discipleship “programs,” how can we creatively and imaginatively design effective and life-transformational tools to build mature believers who will follow Christ without reservation and be wholeheartedly devoted to seeking first His kingdom? During this session, John Musselman will be sharing how he has developed tools in his context to help him disciple people as well as discussing how you might do the same in your own context.

**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 disciplemaking 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. It All Begins with the Selection Process**

A. Who has God brought into your life for the purpose of discipleship?

B. How well do you know them?

C. What character traits have they exhibited to you?

D. Consider using personal profiles to help you understand how God has uniquely made them in His image?

1. RightPath Profiles ([www.rightpath.com](http://www.rightpath.com))

2. DiSC Profiles ([www.discprofile.com](http://www.discprofile.com))

E. Meet with each person individually to get to know his/her heart and needs (spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual). What do they perceive they will be receiving from you, their mentor?

F. Guidelines for selecting your discipleship group members

1. Each person should be a Christian.

2. Each person should have a personal commitment to his own spiritual growth.

3. Each person should be willing to commit himself to the others in the group.

4. Each person should be willing to do a minimum of preparation.

5. Each person should be teachable.

6. Each person should be open to conviction.
  
7. Each person should be willing to share his/her life with the others in the group.

G. Four vital questions to ask of each potential disciple:

1. Have I spent time with the Father to seek His will concerning this person I wish to disciple?
  
2. Is the person I intend to disciple faithful?
  
3. Is the person I intend to disciple teachable?
  
4. Have I perhaps unconsciously selected this person on the basis of his/her wealth, status, community standing, or any other reason that would not be pleasing to Christ? Why did I choose this person to join me and the others in my discipleship group?

**II. Are You Clear on the Type of Group You Intend to Lead?**

- A. Be aware of the principle that “product determines process.”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. Develop a thorough profile of a mature disciple (Col. 1:28).

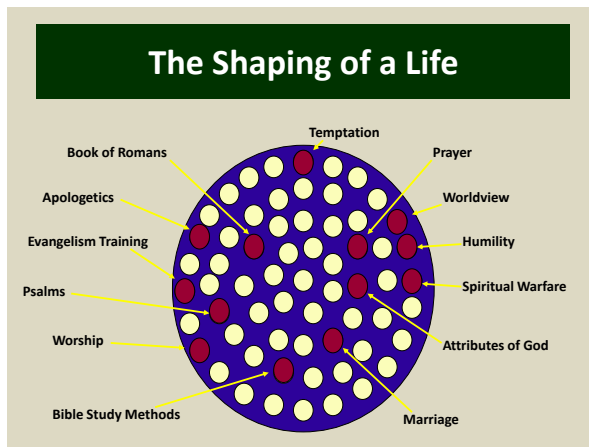
- C. Design processes by which character, knowledge, and skills might be built into your disciples' lives.
  
- D. Make yourself aware of the many types of groups that can be formed to meet the goals and objectives that have been established by those joining the groups. Differentiate your discipleship group from the other types (e.g., committees, task-oriented groups, prayer groups, accountability groups, mission groups, fellowship groups, literary groups, service-oriented groups, study groups, support groups, focus groups, evangelistic groups, etc.).
  
- E. Select the elements that you intend to use in your discipleship group (e.g., prayer, worship, Bible study, accountability, shared meal, spiritual disciplines, music and other arts, etc.).
  
- F. Develop a schedule showing a suggested time to accomplish each element (i.e., "We'll spend 45 minutes in our group studying the Word each week").

### **III. Creatively and Imaginatively Select Effective and Life-Transformational Tools**

- A. Realize that growth objectives some first.

B. What does God want him/her to know (knowledge), to be (character), and to be able to do (skills).

C. Learn how to use *The Shaping of a Life* (below) to determine where the “holes” are in your disciples’ lives.



D. Ascertain the period of time you plan to have them in training with you.

E. Prioritize the items you will seek to place in their lives by the power of the Spirit.

F. Establish growth objectives for each one of these items.

#### **IV. How To Evaluate the Quality of Curriculum to Aid in Spiritual Development**

A. It is God-centered.

B. It is biblically sound.

C. It is well-written.

D. It is clear and understandable.

E. It emphasizes life application.

F. It is stimulating and challenging.

G. It fosters good group discussion.

## V. Practical Considerations

- A. Ascertain what discipleship curricula is available in your country.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. Accept the role of a “process observer” each time your group meets.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C. Meet with each person in your group occasionally and on an as-need basis for personal fellowship, evaluation, and accountability.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- D. Encourage unity among all group members in the discipling process regarding the selected curriculum.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- E. If you meet as a group for nine months each year, consider meeting with each disciple at the commencement of the 9<sup>th</sup> month (for me, that is May of each year) to plan a strategy for his/her on-going spiritual formation during the remaining 3 months and before the group reassembles for another year.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- F. Consider the personal, social, cultural, ecclesiastical, etc. challenges you and the other members of your group may encounter and prayerfully seek to resolve these matters in a wise and godly way (e.g., some people may not want to be held accountable to the others in the group; others may resist having to do any kind of preparation each week; there may be doctrinal issues that arise, especially when your disciples are from varying denominations, etc.).

G. Encourage each person to become involved in mission as soon as they are ready (you may have to urge them out of the nest). How will they participate in the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the Cultural Mandate?

H. Above all, pray for each person in whom you are investing your life. Nothing ever happens apart from believing prayer.