

## The PERSON Discipling Others

Phillips Brooks once described preaching as “the communication of truth through personality.” If this is true of preaching (and it is!), it is even more true of disciple-making. For whereas many hearers will observe the preacher’s person only at a distance, the disciple-maker’s person is deeply involved in the discipling process. At the 2014 Forum the network leaders collected questions from participants regarding the person discipling others. They fell under various categories:

- 1) The discipler’s life: life-on-life means not only saint-to-saint, but also sinner-to-sinner. When can we really say to others: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1)?
- 2) The discipler’s personality type: what role does it play?
- 3) The discipler’s ability: how can it be developed? Also the question: is this something every believer can/should do, or is it – like preaching – something for the specifically gifted?
- 4) The discipler’s status: if I am not the pastor, how do I get the permission of the church?

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### I. Do I have the CALLING (and the CONVICTION to match it)?

#### A. Matthew 28:18-20 (The Great Commission)

Dallas Willard paraphrases the Great Commission as follows (*The Great Omission*, Monarch, 2006, p.xv): “I have been given say over all things in heaven and on earth. As you go, therefore, make disciples of all kinds of people, submerge them in Trinitarian Presence, and show them how to do everything I have commanded. And now look: I am with you every minute until the job is done.”

So why is the book called *The Great Omission*? Later Willard says (p.61): “I do not know of a denomination or local church in existence that has as its goal to teach its people to do everything Jesus said. I’m not talking about a whim or a wish, but a *plan*. I ask you sincerely, is this on *your* agenda? To teach disciples surrounded by triune reality to do everything Jesus said?”

#### B. 1 Corinthians 11:1: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”; the so-called *imitatio Pauli*.

Don Carson, *From the Resurrection to His Return*, Christian Focus, 2010, pp.26 and 32: “Do you ever say to a young Christian, ‘Do you want to know what Christianity is like? Watch me!’ If you never do, you are unbiblical. After all, the apostle Paul can write elsewhere ‘Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ’ (1 Cor. 11:1). [...]”

You who are older should be looking out for younger people and saying in effect, ‘Watch me.’

- Come – I’ll show you how to have family devotions.
- Come – I will show you how to do Bible study.
- Come on – let me take you through some of the fundamentals of the faith.
- Come – I’ll show you how to pray.
- Let me show you how to be a Christian husband and father, or wife and mother.
- At a certain point in life, that older mentor should be saying other things, such as: Let me show you how to die. Watch me.”

**C. Galatians 3:29:** “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

Development:

- The command to multiply given to Adam and Eve;
- The promise of numerous offspring given to Abraham and Sarah;
- The application of this promise to spiritual offspring.

Conclusion: Disciplemaking is for everyone. “Each one teach one.”

## II. Do I have the CHARACTER?

**A. Luke 6:39-42:** (the blind leading the blind; the log in your own eye)  
As Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, used to say: “Like begets like.”

**B. 1 Corinthians 9:27:** “But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson made this song by Thomas A. Dorsey famous:

I’m going to live the life I sing about in my song.  
I’m gonna stand for right and always shun the wrong.  
If I’m in a crowd, If I’m alone,  
On the streets or in my home,  
I’m gonna live the life I sing about in my song.

### **III. Do I have the COMPETENCE?**

#### **A. Life qualification**

What qualifies parents to raise children?

#### **B. The two foci of the disciplemaking ellipsis**

##### **1. Competence with regard to content**

On this, see the various sessions on The PLAN on Days 3 and 4.

##### **2. Relational competence**

#### **C. Personality Types**

Judy Streeter, *Disciplemaking: Doing What Christ Commanded*, Zionsville Fellowship, 2006, p.9: “And what about my personality? By nature, I am very contented to be alone; in fact, I get worn out by people more quickly than others. And, in spite of my many years of working closely with women, I still score low on relational scales in personality tests! I could easily remind the Lord that I am not naturally equipped to get so involved with others.”

Here, too, the observation “like begets like” comes into play. What are the possible consequences?

## IV. Do I have the CREDENTIALS?

Definition: A credential is an attestation of qualification, competence, or authority.

If I have an official function in a church, this constitutes my credentials. But what if I am a simple church member or even belong to another church than the person(s) I would like to disciple?

### A. The First Step of Disciplemaking: Reaching Unbelievers

When it came to evangelism, John Wesley did not respect ecclesiastical “No Trespassing” signs. On 11 June 1739 he wrote into his Journal: “**I look on all the world as my parish**; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.”

### B. The Second Step of Disciplemaking: Teaching Believers

But what about “No Trespassing” signs when it comes to disciple-making in the narrower sense, the training of those who have already come to faith?

When planning to disciple a person, at least two factors determine to what extent this needs to be “cleared” with the leadership of the church the person belongs to:

- The **role** this person plays in the church (“from the ranks” or “key player”?)
- The **format** chosen (“privatized” individual discipling or “formalized” group discipling?)

From these two sets of factors you can construct a two-by-two-matrix.

***Suggested Readings:*** The books quoted in this outline.