

## **Discipleship in Community**

There is a tendency to think of discipleship in individualistic terms. Though not less than individual, it is much more than that. This session will look at the theological foundations for thinking rightly about discipleship. This in turn provides a solid foundation for our practice in the church. This has implications for the way we think about what church is and what it is for, as well as implications for our church structures, forms, and leadership practices. In addition, we will look at the inseparability of discipleship from mission and the disastrous consequences of separating them.

**Mark Stirling** is the leader of the European Disciple-Making Leaders Network. He is a former medical doctor who pioneered work amongst university students with the Navigators in Edinburgh from 1998 to 2004. In 2007 he completed an MA in Exegetical Theology at Covenant Seminary in St Louis and in 2011 gained a PhD in Biblical Studies from St Andrews University, his thesis examining issues of discipleship and maturity in Ephesians. He, his wife Jenny, and their four children now live in St Andrews, Scotland. Mark currently pastors a new church (Cornerstone St Andrews) and is the director of The Chalmers Institute, a learning community that exists to resource and equip men and women to exercise faithful biblical leadership in the church and in society.

### **I. Introduction - what is at stake? Why is discipleship important?**

- A. The great business of the church
  
- B. Is it possible to get Jesus' work done in non-Jesus ways?

### **II. The big picture of discipleship - its relationship to mission and to leadership**

- A. Parallels between Ephesians 2:11-22 and 4:11-16
  
- B. "Missional temple" in Ephesians
  
- C. No little people
  
- D. Equipping every member to take their place and make their contribution for the sake of the Church's mission
  
- E. Role of leaders – example and content-full relationship

### **III. Practical implications for the way we think about, organize, and lead church**

- A. Relational outcome requires relational input – leadership must be relational
- B. Criteria for evaluating our activities and structures
- C. Long, slow work of investing in people
- D. The dangers of “success” measures
- E. Numbers of leaders required
- F. What kind of leaders will nurture people to maturity?

### **IV. Suggested practical next steps**

- A. Evaluating your church?
- B. Getting practical but resisting pragmatism