

“Biblical, practical, and insightful...”

Dr. Joel Comiskey, Author, Cell Church Solutions

Organic Discipleship

Mentoring Others
Into Spiritual Maturity
and Leadership



Dennis McCallum & Jessica Lowery

ORGANIC DISCIPLSHIP:
MENTORING OTHERS INTO SPIRITUAL
MATURITY AND LEADERSHIP

Revised Edition

Dennis McCallum

Jessica Lowery

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PRAISE FOR ORGANIC DISCIPLSHIP

“The organic disciple making teachings and practices laid out in this book have transformed the lives and ministries of my two children who became part of Xenos while attending university. Both have blossomed into effective disciples, disciple-makers and godly leaders. The many Xenos workers who have joined World Team for cross cultural church planting often have a distinct advantage over other workers who have learned about discipleship but have not experienced it. I encourage you to read this book with thoughtful reflection and critique so that you can apply it as you and your church disciple others to follow Jesus.”

ALBERT EHMANN

Executive Director of World Team

“Dennis and Jessica are master disciple-makers. Dennis has personally mentored more people into spiritual maturity and leadership than anyone I know. *Organic Discipleship* is a new classic on the details of what, why, and how to make disciples in the 21st century. It is Biblically solid, theologically sound, and practically effective. Buy it. Read it. Do it.”

DR. DAVE EARLEY

Director for the Center for Ministry Training

Liberty Theological Seminary

“*Organic Discipleship* is biblical. It comes out of the life of both a person and a fellowship—Xenos Fellowship. The church is a witness to all Dennis is talking about. I know Dennis; I know the church and am always inspired when I go there. I have said many times that this church represents authentic New Testament Christianity. It comes at a crucial time in the history of the church; a time when we are making Christians without discipling them. May God bless this book as it goes out and may it reach thousands and make disciples of them. Because of its subject matter and content, I predict this book becoming a best seller.”

DR. JOHN PERKINS

President, John M. Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation & Development

“For some time now, those of us in leadership at The Meeting House have known that we should be intentional about learning whatever we can from churches like Xenos. *Organic Discipleship* has brought those important lessons

to our front door. The authors live what they teach and speak personally as well as scripturally. As readers, we are invited to see what biblical principles look like with skin on, incarnated in community. I look forward to increased health at The Meeting House and many other churches because of the influence of this wonderful book.”

BRUXY CAVEY

Teaching Pastor of The Meeting House and author of *The End of Religion*

“Christ’s last command was to make disciples (Matthew 28:18). But what does that look like in the 21st century? *Organic Discipleship* offers Biblical, practical, and insightful steps to make disciples. Don’t expect extra-Biblical formulas or quick-growth strategies. Discipleship takes work and sacrifice, and the authors honestly share their failures and what they have learned from them. I had the privilege of visiting the McCallums’ home in June 2005. I experienced what takes place regularly at their house—a group of University students (both Christian and non-Christian) crowding into the living room to ask questions and explore the Christian faith. The McCallums, like thousands of others at Xenos, open their homes to make disciples who make more disciples. Xenos Christian Fellowship, in fact, has more than two thousand people meeting weekly with their disciples. Pay careful attention to what these authors say about creative disciple-making!”

DR. JOEL COMISKEY

Author and President, Cell Church Solutions

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RECOMMENDED READING

Introduction

or•gan•ic \ôr-'ga-nik\ *adjective*

1. of, relating to, or derived from living organisms

When we entrust our lives to Jesus, God joins us to him in an organic way. Paul says, “He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit” (1 Cor. 5:17). This is not an institutional or a legal linkage. When God joins us to Christ, our lives becomes so entwined with his that the link between us a living one.

Likewise, our connection to one another in the body of Christ is organic. In another passage Paul says, “We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:5 NASB). Here we learn that the body of Christ is not an institution but a living organism. When we understand our mystical union with Jesus and each other, we also quickly discover the cascading implications for other areas of life and ministry.

Christians today are reawakening to the power of an organic approach to ministry; an approach that focuses less on positions in the church and more on relationships. Instead of seeing God working mainly through church programs, organic leaders envision God moving from person to person, creating direct spiritual impact through relational love. Modern westerners may see the church as rows of passive receivers, but God calls us to a community where his life flows through people like blood flows through a living body (Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19).^[1]

Organic growth takes the form of dynamic, multiplying cells as opposed to linear approaches that are limited by schools, degrees, advertising, and buildings. Just as living cells duplicate themselves exponentially, the body of Christ explodes in every direction.

When it comes to ministry, nothing is more organic than making disciples. Disciple making depends more on high quality relationships than any other ministry. As we will see, making disciples is the most natural and relational way to expand and deepen the body of Christ. Indeed, all our aspirations to see God’s

church living out our union with Jesus will break down if our disciple making ministry fails. Under the New Testament model, where every member ministers for God, making real disciples is our best hope for maximizing member-to-member ministry in the church today.

For fifty combined years, God has been teaching the two of us about this dynamic approach to expanding the kingdom of God. He began forty years ago.

Dennis: When I was 19 years old, I had just begun to walk with the Lord, and was trying to figure out how to serve him. I didn't know much, and my life was lame by Christian standards. I went to a conference where Dr. Howard Hendricks spoke on personal discipleship. I felt my heart deeply stirred by his stories of multiplication and fruitfulness through discipleship. I was able to attend a lunch with Dr. Hendricks. I told him I had never heard the discipling concept taught before, and how excited I was about it.

He leaned toward me and said, "The question is, Dennis, if I come back to Columbus in a couple of years, will there be any little Dennises running around?"

I shrugged sheepishly. Then, after thinking about it for a moment, I smiled, "Yeah. I think there might be." That was the day I began praying that God would let me find someone I could disciple.

While listening to Dr. Hendricks speak, I sensed that discipleship might be something I could do, unlike more public types of ministry because you didn't have to preach or do anything public. I knew how to make friends, and I even had a few. My friends and I had started a small home Bible study that was growing, but none of us knew where it was headed in the long run. We often wondered what young guys like us, whose hearts sometimes burned with a desire to serve God, should do. Hendricks's stories of how a godly man named Walt had duplicated himself through a Sunday school class of teenagers who later became well-known Christian leaders fired my imagination. The thought hit me: What if I could raise up a few disciples and they could do likewise? Maybe a process of multiplication could break loose and sweep up huge numbers for Christ. Isn't that what Jesus did?

I approached several guys I knew, but none seemed very interested. Then I found another guy named Gary who had recently come to Christ and was showing signs of excitement about his faith. I explained that I had been studying this notion of discipleship, where you meet and study with someone, and that I was looking for someone who was interested in trying it with me. He said yes.

Gary and I started hanging out several times a week, and since I had no car, he drove me to some Bible study groups where I was giving my testimony or teaching. At these meetings we often had the chance to witness to, or counsel young Christians, which we found quite exciting. We began reading books together and discussing Bible passages. We prayed together often and grew increasingly close as friends. I didn't realize it at the time, but God was already forming a partnership that would endure for decades.

Later that year, I launched my first high school Bible study group, and it grew rapidly. Gary helped me with the group, and the following year, we found a way to have Gary take over a student Bible study of his own. We constantly shared what we were teaching and consulted on how we should handle situations in our groups. He learned to teach and lead groups during that year. Neither of us had any formal training or experience in Christian work. God was interested more in willingness than in competency, and we had plenty of that.

Out of such a vacuum of competence, God gradually transformed Gary into one of the most respected Bible teachers and leaders in central Ohio. He has led hundreds of people to Christ and has taught the word of God to thousands. Even more important, he has disciplined other men, beginning during his first year as a walking Christian. Men disciplined by Gary are teaching and leading groups all over our area as well as overseas. Those men have disciplined many others. Today, scores of groups involving thousands of people are following God because of Gary's ministry.

My friendship with Gary was my first experience with discipleship. The whole story illustrates our central thesis in this book: Any time people want to offer themselves up to God to build into another believer's life, amazing things can happen. Although it didn't look like much at the time, today I look back and realize that at nineteen years of age, and with little expertise, God used me to do something that has impacted the lives of thousands since. Looking ahead, I realize that the process has just begun. Dozens of men in the discipleship generations after Gary are still busily multiplying themselves and reaching non-Christians for God. Gary is discipling several more guys today. Who knows where this process will lead?

Gary and I are ministry colleagues today. I stopped discipling him about the time he came to know as much as I did (which didn't take long!). He and I both later went to seminary. I've moved on to disciple dozens of other men in the years since, and those men and the men they disciplined form the bulk of the workforce in our church, other churches, and our mission efforts around the

world. Not all my discipling efforts in the years since have been as successful as the effort with Gary, but by God's grace I have been enabled to raise up numerous other disciples, some of whom are promising leaders for God. Only time will tell how fruitful these young leaders will be as their ministries continue to develop.

I don't need anyone else to tell me something my own experience confirms: Personal discipleship works!

In the years since I got started with Gary, our little Bible study has grown into a sizeable community with hundreds of house churches in our city, and some more in other cities. More than five thousand people currently attend, and somehow, most of them have bought into the notion of personal disciple making. No longer is it the individual out on his or her own trying to figure out this improbable task. Now people make disciples within the framework of a mature local body where they can get resources and counsel. The organic dimension of disciple making fits perfectly with the community of God. Working in community opens doors we never would have seen open if we were on our own. The church community enjoys incredible enrichment from that fact that people aren't being entertained, but discipled.

Some people shy away from a discipling approach to ministry. After all, investing in relationships over a period of years is costly. And friends can let you down, but we believe that personal discipleship is both biblical and incredibly effective. You will feel that way too if you read this book and take the time and the risk to invest your life into others in life-giving discipleship.

Section 1

Discipleship then and now

Chapter 1

What is Discipleship?

Discipleship in the New Testament

The word “disciple” comes from the Greek word *mathetes* – a student or learner. The concept of discipleship was widespread in the Greco-Roman world. Sophists and philosophers in Greece had disciples. But the New Testament notion of discipleship was probably colored more by its use in Jewish rabbinic training at that time. Jesus was not the first rabbi to have disciples. John the Baptist had disciples before Jesus did (Mat. 11:2; 14:12; Mk. 2:18), as did the Pharisees (Mat. 22:16). The apostle Paul was discipled by Gamaliel, one of the most prominent rabbis of his day (Acts 22:3).^[2]

Ancient rabbis spent years with their disciples, teaching their way of life, their understanding of scripture, and how to teach both to others.^[3] Like Jesus, they often lived with their disciples for extended periods of time. The process of discipleship was a complete shaping of a new rabbi—a passing on of everything the rabbi had; his character, his knowledge, his values, and his wisdom.

Ancient Jewish discipleship was an educational process, but it contained much more than our modern concept of education. Rabbis transmitted biblical knowledge, but the close association in daily life also transmitted elements not found in books. This was personalized education where two men formed a close, trusting relationship in which the rabbi could sense and minister to inner spiritual needs in his disciple. He could see with his own eyes whether his trainees were living out what they had discussed. The idea was to produce a certain kind of person. The intensive personal attention involved in this style of training dictated that a rabbi focus on no more than few disciples at a time.

Jesus took this model, used it, and expanding it. He lived and traveled with his twelve disciples and he seems to have focused even more on the top three: James, John, and Peter. Although some New Testament authors refer to all Christians as disciples (in the sense that they are all followers of Christ), by far the majority use of the word in the New Testament refers to those who were trainees of a specific teacher.^[4]

Before Jesus ascended he gave making disciples the center place in the

great commission. “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you” (Mat. 28:18-19). Of course conversion is necessary, but conversion alone is not good enough. He is clear that we are to make well-taught disciples, not just converts.

Paul (the only apostle for whom we have extensive biographical information) also made disciples. Right from the beginning, Paul worked at the task of training disciples. After his three-year stay in Damascus he escaped by being lowered in a basket from the city walls. According to Acts 9:25, it was “his disciples” who lowered him.

Later, Paul lived and traveled with numerous young men and at least one married couple, teaching them his extraordinary body of knowledge, both from the Old Testament scriptures (in which he was an expert) and the amazing revelations God had given him. They also got the chance to see Paul at work in the field, and no doubt participated with him in actual ministry situations. Field training like this could develop skills and understanding unlike any classroom could. Paul was in a position to see with his own eyes how younger workers ministered. That would lead to the best kind of coaching and feedback.

In his letters, Paul mentions more than 30 men and women by name as fellow-workers. It seems likely that many of these people were discipled by Paul, and there may have been others not mentioned. In a ministry spanning roughly 30 years, Paul could easily have raised up 30 or more disciples.^[5]

In one famous passage, Paul instructs his most successful disciple, Timothy, to carry on the work of discipleship:

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2).

Notice Paul was concerned with duplicating disciples down through 4 generations: 1) himself 2) Timothy 3) “reliable men” and 4) “others.” From this single verse, you can see clearly that Paul used personal discipleship as a conscious strategy for developing leadership in the early church. He also urged women to disciple other women (Tit. 2:3), a practice unknown in Judaism.

In the New Testament church, which had no seminaries or graduate schools of theology, they apparently raised up *all* of their leadership by a process of personal discipleship. Considering that this means is frequently mentioned, and considering the absence of any mention of any other means for raising up

leaders, we can only suppose that discipleship was not just the *main* means, but the *only* means used to that end. Perhaps a few people (like Paul?) spontaneously stepped up as leaders without the benefit of being disciplined but such was probably rare.

Not only leaders, but also most Christians, were disciplined at some level in the early church. Paul says, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28). This statement of his ministry strategy shows that Paul was not satisfied with gathering a large group of converts. He was intent on delivering each Christian to a significant level of maturity through a process of admonition and teaching.

The evidence strongly suggests that personal mentoring was widespread in the New Testament church--not just for an elite group of prospective rabbis, as in Judaism. The idea that every Christian should be a disciple of Jesus probably contributed to the move toward universal discipleship.

Discipleship and Multiplication

The period from the death of Jesus until the end of the first century was the most fruitful in the history of the church. During these few decades, Christianity spread clear across the Roman Empire and even penetrated into Africa, the Parthian Empire, and India. The best estimates put the number of Christians at the end of the first century at around one million.^[6] That's an increase of two thousand times the number of Christians before Pentecost (perhaps 500). And all of this growth was facilitated by the process of discipleship. Without mass media, without advertising, without church buildings, and without seminaries, the primitive church expanded at a rate never equaled in the nineteen centuries since. If the same rate of growth had continued, everyone on earth would have been a Christian before the end of the second century.^[7]

Both Christian and secular observers recognize the New Testament church as a perfect example of a church planting movement.^[8] In this type of movement, local house churches each strive to replicate themselves by planting additional churches. The result can be exponential growth.

To understand the power of exponential growth, imagine the following scenario: Nobody would feel bad about a church that could win fifty thousand people in two years. In fact, we know of no church in the west that has done so well. And if they won an additional fifty thousand each two years thereafter, such a church could win 1.5 million people during a sixty-year period. Remarkable indeed! This would truly be a super church.

On the other hand, a single house church of thirty people where the average member did nothing but win and disciple one other person during a two year period would seem rather unremarkable. They would have a mere sixty people after two years and would become two house churches. But if the original group and the new group both did the same thing during the following two years, and if this process continued for the next sixty years, the result would be far more remarkable than that of the super church. Amazingly, the duplicating group would have won 16 million people!

Sixty years; 1.5 million won versus 16 million won. At this point, the gradual movement of the duplicating church has out-performed the super church by more than *ten times*! Not only that, but within another twenty-five years, this duplicating group would have won every person on earth.

We are not suggesting these numbers are realistic (e.g. they don't account

for losses), but they do illustrate the power of exponential growth. However, notice two important points about these calculations:

1. To achieve true multiplication growth, the duplication of individuals and churches must go forward without degradation. If the quality of disciples or churches declines at all with each duplication event, the whole process breaks down very quickly. Quality is one key to ongoing duplication. Historians have noted that church planting movements tend to fizzle out after a number of years. Why? Probably some movements compromise on quality for the sake of quantity. Others may grow so concerned about quality that they cease duplicating and become saddled with too many rules and restrictions. Balancing quality with the speed of growth in movements is difficult.

2. In the duplication model, the results are very modest during the early years compared with the super church. After ten years, for example, the super church would already have a quarter million members, while the duplicating group would have only 480 members in sixteen house churches. Can you imagine these two groups looking over at each other? How inferior the duplicating group would feel with less than five hundred members to show for ten years of hard work, seeing a super church nearby that had reached a quarter million people during the same period! At this stage the super church would be more than five hundred times larger than the duplicating group. Surely, it would seem, God's blessing rests on the super church, and not on the duplicating church (Although we know the duplicating church is actually doing ten times better than the super church, even though it doesn't show yet). It would take a powerful act of faith to continue using the duplication approach. Anyone impatient for quick results, or too numbers-focused will abandon duplication.

Disciple making multiplication growth is biblical and powerful. God, who works from eternity and for eternity is patient enough to approve of ministry that builds deeply in quality, knowing that quantity will follow in due course.

What about classes?

In advocating multiplying disciple making growth, we are not suggesting that classroom instruction is wrong. Paul used it in Ephesus (Acts 19:9; 20:20), and we use it extensively in our church. But we see classroom instruction as a useful *supplement* to personal discipleship, not a *replacement* for it.

Most local churches in the New Testament probably had no access to classroom teaching. In order for small house churches to become self-replicating, they had to be able to raise up new leadership from within their own ranks. We like the idea of depending primarily on personal discipleship to prepare leaders, with classes also available to help motivated learners quickly add to their objective knowledge of the Bible, ministry theory, and theology.

Again, we are not suggesting that seminaries are harmful or wrong. Most of our top leaders are seminary graduates, and the scholarship we gain from a seminary can greatly enhance the teaching ministry in any church. Our church even hosts an extension campus for a major seminary. It makes sense to send key people to seminary so they can gather up the scholarship there and bring it back to the church. However, for most leaders in the church, personal discipleship--possibly supplemented by periodic church-based classes--is a fully adequate and in fact superior means of training.

Discipleship and movements

Discipleship and church planting movements are intimately linked. Discipleship is a means of leadership development that permits multiplication, because it doesn't require feeding leaders through a central hub, like a seminary or Bible school. When most people in a local church take an interest in discipling others, spiritual growth accelerates. People become motivated to reach out in evangelism. Members develop the competency needed for effective leadership. Whether a local church uses a structure like house churches is unimportant (although some kind of smaller group structure is necessary). The point is that people are building redemptive relationships and God is changing lives through the power of love and his word.

Just as the key to church planting movements is that churches duplicate themselves, the key to church duplication is that individuals duplicate themselves. And individual duplication is the process of personal discipleship. This is why, before any church planting movement can appear, discipleship must precede it.

Even in churches committed to more traditional forms of growth, good discipleship will greatly enhance the quality of church life. Churches that disciple large numbers of members have no shortage of volunteers for ministry. Such churches retain more new people and the level of commitment is higher. In a word, when people in the church are growing spiritually, everyone is happier. And nothing is better for spiritual growth than personal discipleship.

After the New Testament

In the years following the writing of the New Testament, the notion of personal discipleship gradually went into eclipse. During these centuries church leaders began to emphasize the higher position of clergy, who had special prerogatives to lead the church and serve even as mediators between the members and God. This shift apparently began partly because of a good-hearted effort to stem the rising tide of false teaching threatening the church during this period.

But as time went on, the clergy's authority expanded to unimagined extremes, eventually reserving to themselves even the right to read and interpret the Bible. Translating the Bible into local languages even became illegal. When church leaders excluded lay people from reading and learning the Bible, the basis for personal discipleship was shattered.^[9]

The clergy-laity distinction removed personal discipleship from the hands of common Christians. From the time common Christians were banned from major areas of ministry in the church, personal discipleship became meaningless, and indeed forgotten, to most Christians. The idea that someone could help develop a normal Christian like Timothy into a powerful leader for God was replaced by the idea that the church hierarchy creates priesthood through its training facilities and the ritual of ordination.

The Reformation did little to change the church's thinking in this particular area. They continued to advance--in practice if not in theory--the notion of clergy as completely distinct from lay people.^[10] Clergymen learned the languages and read the manuscripts of church fathers and the scriptures during a several year long rigorous process of education. Lay people were not trained to teach the Bible or to do other significant ministry, such as counseling or leading groups.

Certain movements during the past millennium have resorted to personal discipleship as their key ministry method. These make for interesting study, because several of them experienced remarkable results. But they have tended to revert to traditional, western approaches to leadership training, or else have been stamped out by persecution.^[11]

The 20th Century to the Present

Then, in the twentieth century, discipleship reappeared with significant vigor. Dawson Trotman was an important voice bringing the notion of personal discipleship to the attention of the larger Christian world. He was the founder of the Navigators, a ministry based mainly on personal discipleship that has enjoyed immense success worldwide. But Navigators sees itself as a parachurch organization, and therefore has not engaged in church planting in America. Trotman and those he influenced have had an extensive impact on other groups as well. Campus Crusade for Christ leader Bill Bright adopted a form of discipleship under the influence of Trotman and Henrietta Mears. But again, Campus Crusade took a stand as a parachurch group rather than a church planting group. Similarly, Trotman is credited with influencing Billy Graham to introduce a simple type of discipleship in his crusades. Once again, the Graham organization sees itself supporting existing churches rather than planting churches. Although none of these organizations has engaged in church planting, they have had incredible impact in western Christianity.

Books advancing the idea of disciple making have received a wide reading in recent years. In the 1960s author Robert Coleman wrote a very influential book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, in which he advocated a return to the biblical pattern of discipleship.^[12] Numerous other evangelical leaders advanced similar arguments, including Howard Hendricks, Walter Hendrickson, Leroy Eims, Waylon Moore, Bill Hull, Greg Ogden, and others.^[13]

But discipleship has suffered reversals during the past century as well. During the 1970s the idea of making disciples was discredited in America by the so-called “shepherding movement.” This movement advanced a mistaken, hyper-controlling discipleship theory rather than a facilitating theory. They thought that learning to obey a human authority was a good way to learn how to obey God. In this movement, your discipler, or “shepherd,” would be encouraged to oversee almost everything, including your personal finances, dating choices, and every other significant decision in your life.

Predictably, the movement became increasingly authoritarian and controlling. In the end, the church and the press pounded the movement into nonexistence. But the whole experience left a lingering suspicion hanging over the notion of discipleship. Still today, some church leaders view discipleship as cultic, mainly because of the bad fruit born in this movement.

Throughout the twentieth century, discipleship has been adopted far more widely in missions circles than in the western church. Numerous fields around the world practice personal disciple making as the primary way to train leadership in the local church. Partly because of the lack of available seminaries and partly because of a desire to imitate the primitive church, a number of fields in Latin America, Africa, and Asia have systematically pursued personal discipleship and self-replicating church planting. As a result, missions experts are aware of a number of amazingly vigorous church planting movements around the world today.^[14]

However, most western churches have never fully returned to the New Testament pattern of personal discipleship. George Barna documents the sad fact that the church in America talks a great deal about discipleship, but doesn't practice it very often.^[15] The result of this omission is that church-going Christians today often manifest shallow commitment, biblical ignorance, and inability to do advanced Christian ministry.

Even though the concept of lay ministry has risen in popularity in the modern church, without discipleship it runs into trouble. How can lay people be trusted to do complex types of ministry if they are almost completely untrained? Many churches try offering training classes, but these cannot accomplish much in terms of real character change and mastery of advanced ministry skills during their five or ten week curriculum.

Now, in recent years, we see signs that western evangelical churches may be embracing discipleship as never before. In a recent survey, George Barna asked senior pastors to name their top priorities in ministry. He reports, "The most frequently mentioned priorities were discipleship and spiritual development (47%); evangelism and outreach (46%); and preaching (35%)." These easily outranked priorities ranked higher in earlier surveys, like worship and pastoral care.^[16] The western church as a whole may be embracing personal discipleship as its philosophy of ministry, but still struggles to put it into practice.

Some churches and individual Christians do practice discipleship faithfully, as Barna also documents.^[17] In fact, a growing number of churches have established discipleship as the center of their ministry. The cell-church model, which has caught on in many American churches, calls for each group leader to mentor an assistant leader in preparation for planting a new cell group. Famous churches like Willow Creek, Redeemer Church, and Saddleback have given far greater attention to their small groups as a missional thrust of the church, and

they are steadily turning their members' attention to personal discipleship.

Whether or not your church embraces discipleship as the primary way to train up Christians, anyone can embark on a disciple-making project. In this study we hope to supply a framework and practical ideas for discipleship that can get even beginners started on a fruitful life of making disciples.

Chapter 2

Discipleship Overview

Before suggesting practical ideas in a number of different areas of the discipling process, we would like to share an overview of what we mean by discipleship. Our understanding is based on what we see in scripture and on our combined experience in Xenos Christian Fellowship, a local church that grew up spontaneously beginning in 1970, during the Jesus Movement. Since nearly the beginning of our existence, personal discipleship has been at the center of our philosophy and practice in ministry. For the first decade, Xenos had no paid staff of any kind; all ministries in the church were carried out by volunteer leaders who were raised up through personal discipleship. As numbers increased, we moved to a paid staff, but have never lost the ethos of volunteer house church leadership and personal discipling. In spite of a devastating division in the early '90s that set our church back ten years, Xenos has grown today to 5000 in average attendance.

Personal discipleship is widely practiced at Xenos. All staff leaders have several disciples at any given time. But in addition, volunteer leaders are not recognized as such unless they are already practicing personal disciple making. With around 300 student and adult home churches, most led by a team of three to six leaders, the church has over 700 recognized leaders and around 900 “servant team” members engaged in making disciples. Throughout the church, the majority of people are being discipled, discipling others, or both.

Xenos is unusual in one other way: the church deliberately targets the most anti-Christian part of our community. While church growth experts have determined that more than 85% of church growth in America is the result of people transferring membership from other evangelical churches, Xenos members are just the opposite: 82% of our people were “unchurched” at the time they came to Xenos. Fully 65% of all Xenos attendees describe themselves as non-Christians when they came.^[18]

The high percentage of converts means that our assumptions about discipleship may be somewhat different than most churches'. For instance, Greg Ogden suggests that leaders begin discipleship with the most mature members of the church, and that they use a discipleship covenant.^[19] These are good suggestions for established churches where leaders are introducing discipleship

for the first time. But such people were disciplined long ago at Xenos. We are left today using one-on-one or one-on-two relationships to help people who have only recently met Christ and need help just getting started at the most rudimentary level. This difference, like others, demonstrates why each church community has to develop approaches to disciple making that fits its context. If your experience or situation is different than ours, you will have to adapt our material to your situation.

Each home church in Xenos seeks to replicate itself within one to four years, depending on the type of group. To succeed, the home church must raise up a new team of leaders and double the size of the group. Leaders who know they have to get new leaders ready quickly are highly motivated to excel in their personal discipleship work.

This is our ministry environment. We are excited about what God is doing here, and we want to share some of the conclusions that make up Xenos' view of discipleship, not because we believe these conclusions are the only valid ones, but because they affect some of our arguments in later chapters. We also believe today's Christian leaders are interested in models that have actually worked in a western, urban environment. We are aware that other churches have different approaches to discipleship that may be just as valid as ours. ^[20]

Creativity and discipleship

Making disciples is an intensely creative process, and God is able to use all kinds of people for the task. Organic discipleship is creative discipleship. In organic styles of ministry, lists of procedures are off-target. We view the disciple maker as one who takes existing concepts and situations and creatively combines them into ever-changing new ways to build up believers. No two disciples are alike, and no two disciple makers are alike. Therefore, any attempt to describe the “right” way to make disciples is pointless. Because discipleship is creative, we will not offer a curriculum or lesson plan in this book (although in the appendices we do offer a few study guides that might help). Instead of a curriculum, we offer goals and examples that should stimulate your creativity. As you read our ideas and experiences, pray that God will spark new ideas you can use in your situation. Your ideas may well be quite different than what we suggest.

Although disciple making is a creative process, some principles are universal. Try to sort out those parts of our account that apply in most or all situations from other parts that could be changed to fit with your ministry environment.

What are our goals when discipling?

The best way to think about the process of making disciples is to consider what you want to see in well disciplined people. Then you can think backward, determining what will be necessary to reach those goals.

One of the main goals of discipleship is to provide the body of Christ with leaders and role models who can teach others and lead Bible studies, ministry teams, or home groups. We would definitely want our disciples to reach a point where they can raise up additional disciples, and that implies a level of maturity sufficient to teach and model true Christian living and ministry.

If we have any criticism of the popular literature on discipleship during the past few decades, it would be this: the recommendations are solid and needed, but they often don't go far enough. The themes of many popular books on discipleship center on basic grounding of new believers, more than on raising up Christian leaders. We agree with Thomas Graham:

The evangelical church stresses discipleship. The focus is on becoming a self-feeding Christian, encouraging holy living, an effective prayer life and sharing one's faith. But discipling people to become mature leaders in ministry is often overlooked.^[21]

To reach the point where your disciples can lead for God requires significantly more progress in several key areas. But the results of such a job well done are exciting and will likely last a lifetime. Remember; raising up even one mature disciple is equal to your whole life of service to God, because now instead of one of you, there are two!

We have distilled a suggested list of discipling goals to nine areas of growth in Appendix 1. As you read that description, think about whether you feel our description is too exacting, or whether we are missing significant factors.

To summarize, our goals for discipleship include radical change in:

- **Character** (having a good personal walk with God, becoming a loving person with successful relationships, including a family if applicable, exchanging selfishness for other-centeredness; freedom from discrediting sin; manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, a relatively stable emotional life, etc.).
- **Understanding** (a thoroughly developed Christian worldview, good theology, knowledge of the Bible, and ability to use the

Bible in ministry, wisdom, discernment, resistance to false teaching, etc.).

- **Ministry capability** (ability to successfully minister in evangelism, pastoring others, personal discipleship, teaching or discussion leading, etc. Spiritual growth is never complete when it only benefits us. We are created to give love through serving others.)

Together, these constitute a person who is “complete in him,” as Paul puts it (Col. 1:28). Many of the changes we seek will be very difficult and involve many months of struggle.

Does helping a young believer move from immaturity and self-centeredness to full maturity seem daunting? It should! In truth, we will probably never see full attainment of even the limited list we include in [Appendix 1](#) in the life of any of our disciples. But we are looking for *relative* advancement, not perfection (How many of us can claim that even we, as disciplers, have grown to the extent described in every area?). As we continue to grow and patiently convey what we know of God, our disciples will make surprising progress over the course of several years. The closer they come to this ideal description, the better off our disciples will be. We would much rather see some progress in all these areas than great progress in some, little of none in others. Missing any one of these areas could short-circuit the discipling process.

God is surprisingly merciful, and he makes a job that seems impossible happen more often than we would ever expect. On the other hand, the sheer magnitude of the changes involved suggests we should probably work with more than one disciple at a time. Some disciples are going to find this road too long to travel, and give up. But if we lose one disciple, we may still be able to deliver others.

What about corporate discipleship?

A number of authors and leaders have recently argued that the concept of individual discipleship is unbiblical. They point out that most advocates for personal disciple making base their teachings on the ministry of Jesus, which occurred before the body of Christ came into being. They argue that Jesus disciplined his men by himself because he had no choice but to do so. They also point to the abuses in groups like the shepherding movement to show that any time people begin to see others as their disciples, possessiveness and abuse are likely to follow.

Instead, they argue, everyone is a disciple of Jesus, not of another person. They also claim that the body of Christ can disciple its members corporately as different people's gifts operate, resulting in a more balanced result; the cream rises to the surface as the community of God interacts. Some have claimed that one-on-one or one-on-two models reflect a western, individualistic approach to spiritual nurture.

We believe this position is unnecessarily narrow. Yes, the body of Christ should nurture growth as a community. Yes, disciples can benefit from differently gifted members, receiving things they could not get from a single individual. But do these facts overthrow the notion of individual discipleship? We don't think so.

First, the New Testament does affirm individual discipleship other than the ministry of Jesus, as we saw in Chapter 1. We see, for example, that Paul's "disciples" let him down in a basket while in Damascus (Acts 9:25). More important, we see the function of discipleship carried out with Paul's missionary bands and elsewhere, including urging Timothy to disciple others (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul didn't use the term discipleship, but he definitely used personal mentoring to develop leaders.^[22]

A key reason we reject the purely corporate vision of discipleship is pragmatic. Consider the saying, "Everybody's job is nobody's job." Our studies show that in church after church where the corporate vision for discipleship is advanced over against the idea individual discipleship, people are simply not being disciplined. Those same churches complain that their people are immature, ineffective in ministry, and too busy for the things of God. When these churches need leaders, they have to hire them away from other churches.

On the other hand, churches that are successfully pursuing cell or house

church replication approach nearly always embrace the notion of personal discipleship. The same is true in mission fields we have visited in other countries. Those with replicating church planting movements always believe strongly in personal discipleship. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a self-replicating home group movement without group leaders who take it upon themselves to help others grow into leadership. Experienced church planters don't just hope new leaders will appear when the time comes; they take positive measures to raise up the needed leadership.

We certainly believe that people can grow and mature in a corporate setting without anyone viewing them as disciples. However, more people do much better, and much sooner, in an environment where discipleship is affirmed and practiced. This is particularly true in churches where the leadership teaches clearly against possessive and controlling versions of discipleship. In our church people may be discipled by more than one person during different times in their Christian lives, or even at the same time, and we see nothing wrong with that. Further, anyone who reflected a possessive or exclusive view of discipleship would be quickly admonished and corrected. Just because immature Christians have misused the concept of discipleship is no reason to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Discipleship and leadership

Being a mature Christian isn't enough. The church also needs leaders. On one level, every Christian should be a leader. Every time we influence a friend, we are leading. And every Christian should be an influence for God. If we have families, we are expected to lead in that role. So, we are always safe in assuming that God wants our disciples to learn how to lead others. But what about formal leadership roles? When a person leads a group, this represents a higher level of leadership. Such leaders are typically recognized by the body of Christ as formal leaders. We suggest that if we are successful as disciplers, at least some if not most of our disciples should become formal leaders.

We will discuss leadership development fully later. But for now; suffice it to say that if our disciples are to become true spiritual leaders rather than leaders in name only, they will need to learn how to serve and influence others for God. They will also have to learn how to teach or lead discussion in a group. They will have to learn to work with ministry colleagues in a team, to assess their groups, to give their groups vision and motivation, and how to release disciples to form new groups. If we are intent on multiplying both disciples and groups within the church, developing qualified leaders becomes an urgent goal.

In an organic approach to leadership development, we assume that God will move people into leadership naturally as the result of their loving service inside and outside the body of Christ. In this approach, human colleagues "recognize" someone as a leader, rather than "making" someone a leader. When recognizing leaders, we are trying to discern who God wants to lead his church. We can safely eliminate anyone who has not developed sufficiently godly character, since scripture advances godly character as the first priority in choosing leaders. Developing real character is also the most difficult part of making disciples. Therefore, this book will focus most on character development.

When God chooses a person for leadership, the marks of his blessing should be evident. God will move others to respond to our disciple's witness, and they will look to our disciple for guidance and training. Signs like these show that God is moving our disciple toward leadership. Notice that Paul says servants should "first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons" (The term *deacon* means a minister or servant--1 Tim. 3:10). This suggests that Paul wanted to see evidence that God was using the person and that the person could handle the rigors of ministry before recognizing him as a leader.

Discipleship versus grounding

Grounding new Christians means giving them a basic orientation to the Christian life, including how to access their own spiritual food from God's word. When people meet Christ our first concern is to see them "rooted and built up in him," as Paul puts it (Col. 2:7). But is this all we hope to see in discipleship?

If we accept discipleship goals like the ones we described above, we realize that much of what passes as discipleship today is relatively low-level. A discipleship process that results in people learning how to read and memorize scripture, pray, and witness is a good start. But we need to go much deeper if we plan on developing leaders and role models in the church who can be trusted to care for groups of people.

We suggest that our first year with disciples (if they have recently met Christ) will be focused on grounding them in the faith. But we also suggest that we need an additional one or more years to develop mature character and advanced ministry capability, so they can become leaders. In a church with rapidly multiplying home groups, we can pursue some of this development *after* the person is already leading a group. But unless we see believers developing into "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ," they will continue to be "infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching" (Eph. 4:13-14).

Chapter 3

Getting started

To begin the discipling process, we need two things: a disciple maker and a disciple. In this chapter we will consider who is qualified to disciple and whom you should seek out to disciple.

Who should disciple others?

Considering how difficult the task of discipleship is, some wonder whether it would be arrogant to think they are qualified to disciple others. What criteria should a person meet in order to qualify for this ministry?

When we look at the Bible, we find silence on this subject. The examples we have of disciplers are highly qualified (like Jesus, Timothy, and Paul), but this doesn't prove that such high qualifications are necessary. Examples only tell us what was, not necessarily what should be. We think the Bible's silence on qualifications for disciple makers suggests that we have a great deal of freedom in this area. We must assume that the elders appointed by Paul disciplined people in the churches in Galatia (Acts 14:23), yet these men would have been recognized as elders only weeks after meeting Christ. Clearly, it would be nice if the discipler has made more progress than the disciple, but even this is open to question. We have seen spiritual peers disciple each other, like "iron sharpening iron" (Prov. 27:17).

Most of the time, we would like a discipler to be a walking Christian who has made significant progress in his or her walk. We generally feel uncomfortable when brand new Christians try to disciple. But we have seen Christians only months or a year old in the Lord do good work with new believers, especially if they have good coaching. In fact, having a disciple is a great motivation to grow. We love to see believers take on a disciple as soon as they are able, because we know that both the disciple and the discipler will likely do better as a result. However, believers who have not yet overcome flagrant problems in their own lives (like sexual immorality or drug use) should seek to be disciplined before trying to disciple others.

Dennis: Most people had no idea how immature I was when I won my first disciple. As a year-old Christian, my knowledge level was dirt low. I still had not completely broken away from some very bad sin habits that had controlled my life as a non-Christian. Although I was advancing spiritually, there were periodic relapses into drug use and extreme make-out sessions with my girlfriend. My prayer life was anemic. I had no regular habit of spending time in God's word.

But from the time I won a disciple on, my behavior and spirituality both improved dramatically and rapidly. I realized I couldn't afford to indulge the flesh, and my new Christian partner helped keep me accountable. In fact, he was so spiritually responsive that I quickly realized I needed to get a whole lot more

serious with God or he would soon pass me by. Within six months, my life was unrecognizable compared to where I was when I began discipling. Today, it's embarrassing to admit some of the antics I engaged in at the time. But I'm very glad nobody told me I was not qualified to disciple.

Several factors may shift our judgments regarding who should disciple. First, if your group has a large number of Christians needing to be disciplined, that should make you more open to younger Christians discipling. Second, the best choice for whom young Christians should disciple is someone of the same sex that they have led to Christ. Paul mentions the concept of spiritual parenthood: "Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). We would hardly expect natural parents to leave their infant children on the sidewalk somewhere, assuming someone will take care of them. We like to see believers take the natural step of discipling those they lead to Christ if they are at all able. If we doubt a young Christian's ability to disciple effectively, it is often possible to come alongside and help them in a three-way discipling arrangement, as we discuss later.

Discipling work is quiet, slow, and often thankless labor. We would much rather see young Christians doing this kind of work than public teaching, preaching, or leading. Public ministry roles have appeal not only because they can accomplish a lot, but also because people may be drawn to self-glorification through that role. Not so with discipleship.

Building a friendship and trying to influence and instruct another within that friendship is exactly the kind of ministry best suited to young Christians (although our most experienced leaders should also disciple, both as an example to the church and because they are usually most effective). Through discipling, young Christians can learn all the skills needed in larger, more public ministries, but without the public acclaim that poses such a temptation to the immature. At the same time, we find that those who are successful in discipleship are the best candidates for public ministry later.

When young Christians try to disciple, they are far more likely to succeed if they are receiving coaching from an older, more experienced discipler. If you succeed in discipleship, your disciples will win others they can disciple, because part of discipling is helping disciples win their own disciples. You should stay with them while they do this for a good length of time. We will consider coaching in a later chapter.

Some Christians feel unqualified to disciple because nobody ever disciplined

them. This is wrong. Many of us (including Dennis) were never formally disciplined and have been able to do quite well. The difference between believers who were disciplined and those who weren't is often how long it took to mature. Those of us who didn't benefit from discipleship may have grown much more slowly than we would have if a good disciple maker had helped us. But our growth is just as valid as anyone else's.

We conclude, then, that the vast majority of believers in any local body are qualified to disciple. Of course those who are more mature and experienced might do a better job than the inexperienced, but to a new Christian, receiving help from a less experienced discipler is *much* better than receiving no help at all.

Who should we try to win into discipleship?

Perhaps no question is more important than who we decide to disciple. A discipleship ministry involves investing hundreds of hours possibly over several years. Experience shows that you might end up spending huge amounts of time and effort to no effect if the person you choose is unwilling. Most of us who practice discipleship have had the experience of heartbreaking failure when we are eventually forced to admit that no amount of love and effort will ever move a fundamentally unwilling person forward beyond the most rudimentary level. Some disciples actually walk away from God in favor of a life of sin.

You can never eliminate the risk that your efforts might end in failure. But you can minimize the risk if you are careful about whom you commit yourself to in the first place. Some Christians are troubled by the idea of selectivity in ministry. Is this partiality?

We could never justify being selective about who we witness to. Likewise, we should be willing to extend general pastoral help and friendship to all members of the body of Christ. But when it comes to a commitment like discipleship, selection is essential for more than one reason. The most obvious reason is stewardship: you don't want to expend huge amounts of your limited time and energy on a lost cause. But another compelling reason is that the church needs mature leaders and role models, and you can't justify wasting years doing pointless work when other people's spiritual lives are at stake. We also have the examples of Jesus and Paul who both selected disciples from a larger following. Finally, the disciple you select poorly will probably suffer unnecessarily as well. Nobody is happy when discipleship fails, including the failing disciple.

When trying to discern who to disciple, you should be praying for a period of weeks or even months before committing to a weekly meeting with someone. Ask the Lord to reveal his will on this highly strategic decision, because once you begin meeting with a person, you will likely find it difficult to stop. And if you do change your mind and end the discipleship part of a friendship, it may well result in hurt feelings.

If you are apprehensive about your selection, it might be wise to engage in a short term study (four to six weeks) to see how interested the person really is. By stating in advance that the study series is limited in duration, the person won't feel disappointed when it comes to an end. But if during that time you become convinced that the person would make a good disciple, she will rarely complain about continuing the study indefinitely.

Preconditions

Discipleship, as we are using the term, refers to a training and facilitating process aimed at helping Christians reach maturity and fruitfulness. This implies that certain conditions should be present before we enter into a disciple making relationship.

1. Those we seek to disciple should be authentic Christians. This may seem too obvious to state, but we have seen Christians try to use disciple making approaches with non-Christians, on the theory that they will be able to lead the person to Christ and then to maturity. The results are usually poor. Non-Christians cannot understand what we are doing because “the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Friendship building with non-Christians is good, but discipleship should be reserved for those with a clear testimony and convincing evidence that they are Christians.

2. We should only disciple those who are fully involved in Christian fellowship. We have had believers ask to be discipled even though they are only sporadically involved in church life, or not involved at all. But we believe discipleship is a further source of nurture for those already drawing life from the body of Christ. Too often, believers who agree to disciple someone who has not understood the value of body life find that their disciples never develop this value because their needs are being substantially met by their discipler. If you’re providing room-service, why go out to a restaurant? The Bible teaches, “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Cor. 12:21). Christian fellowship, including sharing of spiritual gifts and giving and receiving Christian love, is essential for healthy spiritual growth, and therefore for discipleship. We urge disciple makers to work with friends in a more general way until they grasp the value of fellowship, including not only large worship meetings, but also involvement in a home group where needed relationships can be built.

By only agreeing to enter into disciple making relationships with walking

believers already in fellowship, we give ourselves and our disciples a reasonable chance of success.

Features to look for

Paul urges Timothy to give his time “to reliable men” (2 Tim. 2:2). But how did he know who was reliable? Whenever you are trying to discern things about people, consider this rule of thumb: the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. If we have access to information about a person’s past, this should be carefully considered. We aren’t necessarily looking for a person who never gets into any trouble. The more critical question is, What was their response when they got into trouble? A person who has repented from the heart and admitted fault in the past is showing you something good. Anyone who has a history of pursuing God in the past is also a good bet as a disciple.

Robert Coleman argues that a willing heart, or loyalty to Christ, is the premiere feature to look for in a prospective disciple.^[23] This may well be true, but willingness should not always be interpreted as compliance. Sometimes ornery people make good disciples, and they may become entrepreneurial leaders, capable of feats that compliant people are unlikely to achieve. We would not avoid discipling someone just because he argues or seems hard to persuade at times. And at the other extreme, man-pleasers can be very problematic as disciples.

In our opinion, you should look for a person who is a *doer*. James mentions the difference between forgetful hearers and effectual doers (James 1:22, 23). Whenever we see young Christians who are trying to serve God and others (whether or not they are effective) we should mark that person for possible discipleship.

A young believer who voluntarily, takes some measure to overcome sin is also a doer. Christians who read scripture or related books on their own are doers. Those who bring non-Christian friends into fellowship are doers. Christians who give money to the Lord’s work are doers. In many different areas, but especially in areas where others probably won’t notice (i.e. things not done for attention), we can recognize doers as those who actually take action, rather than simply talking about spiritual things.

Jesus told a story about two boys who were asked by their dad to mow a field. One immediately said he would do it, but he never did. The other refused, but he later felt bad and did mow the field (Mat. 21:28-31). In analyzing this story, Jesus asked the pertinent question, “Which of the two did the will of his father?” That’s what we should ask as well. Young Christians who argue and

fight against the truth, but later go ahead and do the right thing are to be preferred over those who always say the right thing, but are not doers.

Misleading features

Several features can be misleading when choosing a disciple.

A person who is highly gifted may seem like a natural choice, but experience doesn't always bear this out. This is not to say we should avoid gifted people. If all other factors are equal, we would actually prefer the more gifted person. But this is a strictly secondary consideration, far less important than the attitude issues discussed earlier.

Well-educated or highly successful people may also seem like natural choices, because they might be very influential. But this criterion is really worthless. Highly educated or successful people are just as likely, and maybe more likely, to be distracted by their worldly opportunities and unable or unwilling to devote themselves to spiritual growth and ministry.

Jesus warned that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter heaven (Mat. 19:24). While this statement doesn't apply directly to discipleship (where we are choosing among believers), the principle seems to be that highly successful people are often too distracted, and perhaps too self-reliant to do well spiritually. They may have ego issues as well. Viewed this way, high education or professional or athletic success could actually be viewed as risk factors. Notice that none of Jesus' disciples was highly educated or notably successful. Most agree that the disciple with the best education was probably the only Judean, Judas Iscariot. On the other hand, Paul seems to have had some well-educated disciples, such as Luke, Apollos, and Sosthenes.

As we have already mentioned, compliant personalities are sometimes mistakenly viewed as desirable for discipleship. While we would not consider having a compliant personality a risk factor, we would not consider it an inherently positive feature either. Some compliant people make good disciples, while others do not. We should ignore this feature and focus on the attitude features discussed earlier.

Especially important with compliant personalities is that they are doers. If a compliant person is a man-pleaser (i.e. always tells people what they want to hear) but not a doer, her compliance becomes a risk factor. We also like to see initiative from compliant personalities. In other words, does the compliant person only do what others suggest, or does she initiate creatively on her own? We are interested in this question because if a compliant person only acts on

what others suggest, such action may signal man-pleasing more than genuine spirituality.

People who are physically attractive or who have winsome personalities seem to be more influential with people in general, and they also have more success attracting disciple makers. But just as with wealthy, successful, or highly educated people, they are often disappointing. When they do develop into good disciples, this has more to do with their heart attitudes than with their appearance or personalities.

People who know a lot about the Bible or those from strong Christian backgrounds may seem like good choices, because their background could be like a head-start. But this could actually be a risk factor. Unless their knowledge is accompanied by consistent action in serving and witnessing, we may be seeing a bad habit: sitting around studying all the time, but not putting what they learn into practice. Paul warns against those with “morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words” (1 Tim. 6:4). Some heavy Bible students are more interested in debating doctrinal trivia than in “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). We don’t believe these features should necessarily be viewed as a head start.

On the negative side, people who have bad habits such as overeating, cigarette smoking, pornography, bad language, or even occasional drug use or heavy drinking are considered by many to be disqualified. That could be a mistake. If such people continue to pursue the things of God, they may be worth the risk of some investment. We can always work with them on these habits during discipleship, and such sins of commission may be no worse than sins of omission that sometimes characterize more well-behaved people.

Probably the most dangerous and daunting sin habits are sexual sins (promiscuity, both hetero and homosexual), drug and alcohol addiction, and materialistic avarice. These sins are so potent in their habit-forming power, and so debilitating to one’s spiritual growth that they should give us pause. Maybe we could work with such people in a general pastoral way and put off discipleship until we see convincing progress.

Ultimately, none of these factors should be considered decisive. Basic attitudes of the heart are far more definitive than any of these misleading factors.

Dennis: In 1997 I had changed ministry venues within our church. Because my brother went to the mission field, I left adult ministry and took over his role as head of our campus ministry. In a whole new group of people, I was eager to find a disciple. A friend of mine who works as a prison chaplain brought a young

guy to one of our meetings who had recently been released after several years in prison.

He was a street thug from Chicago, where he had belonged to the Latin Kings street gang. His history included rampant sex, violence, armed robbery, drug dealing, and even shooting people. This kid had some really rough edges! He was argumentative, boastful, distrustful, and had a dangerously bad temper. Like many in his position, he smoked cigarettes, drank too much, and used the F-word like punctuation after every phrase in every sentence. He had many doubts and problems with the Bible. But in talking to him, I sensed something within that drew me. He was spiritually hungry!

I began spending time with him, and before long he agreed to do some reading with me. We began a relationship that has lasted now for over a decade. During those years we have “hung out” privately every week in addition to seeing each other several times a week at meetings. During that time, I’ve wrestled with him in a hundred different areas of his life. Also during that time, he has led multiple people to Christ, completed college, and now leads a sizable network of home churches. He completed his master’s degree in biblical studies, and is determined to expend his life for Christ.

The lesson? Don’t always go by the exterior.

The hungry heart

In Luke 19 we read that Jesus was in a huge crowd, and he singled out one man, Zaccheus, to spend time with. Why Zaccheus? He was a criminal, a tax gatherer, and a non-believer. The reason Jesus chose him was probably that, out of the whole crowd, he was the only one so eager to hear Jesus that he climbed a tree. Imagine a grown man climbing a tree. That's hunger! And spiritual hunger should be a premium feature when it comes to picking a disciple. Jesus must have looked out over that crowd and seen a man up in a tree. He probably thought to himself, "That's my guy."

We should follow this model. Like Jesus, we should ignore apparent negatives in a person's life if the person shows us authentic spiritual hunger. A person who has manifested consistent hunger for the things of God is an almost irresistible opportunity for experienced disciplers.

Steps toward discipleship

If you identify someone you think might make a good disciple, how can you move into a more structured discipling relationship? The answers to this question are as varied the personalities involved. People have used scores of pathways into regular discipleship, and your creativity and sensitivity to the situation are your best guides. However, some things are needed in most or all cases:

- The first step is to build a friendship. If you are already friends, your best move is to deepen your friendship. Read the next chapter for ideas on how to build and deepen friendships. You could begin discipling someone you don't know well, especially if that person asks you to help. In such cases, you develop friendship while you begin discipleship.
- If you sense your friend is hungry for spiritual growth, you can probably move toward a regular meeting for edification. You could bring this up in a number of ways:
 - o You could suggest meeting for mutual edification, as we suggested earlier. This way, it doesn't seem like you are suggesting a hierarchical arrangement.
 - o You could refer to a study project you did in the past and ask your friend whether she would be interested in a similar study.
 - o You could use a problem or needs-based approach. This approach begins when your friend brings up a problem or need during regular conversations. For instance, your friend may share worry about his marriage. You could point out that you heard a certain book was helpful to other couples struggling in the same area. Would he be interested in reading it together? Or, she mentions that she wishes she had more confidence when sharing her faith, or that her friends asked her questions she couldn't answer. Then you could point out that you know a book that was helpful in

that very area. Instead of just suggesting she read it herself, suggest reading it together, or just ask if she would be interested in going over some Bible passages that might help.

o Some people like to take a direct approach. In this approach, you explain to your friend what personal discipleship is. Then you ask whether he would be interested in embarking on such a project with you. This is good for established believers. It gives you a chance to explain some conditions you want to put on the project; level of involvement, effort you expect him to exert, etc.

- Regardless of how you bring the idea up, once you study and pray together several times, your friend will probably feel gratified by the experience. Most people find God uses these study projects and times of sharing and prayer to build them up, and they naturally desire more.
- As your friendship grows, you can powerfully increase motivation by developing and sharing strong vision for your friend.

Developing vision

When our disciples get a vision for their future as servants and even leaders for God, they become far more motivated in his service. Disciples have to see where the process is headed before they are likely to give their all to growth and ministry. As a discipler, you can impart this sense of vision to your disciple.

In this context, vision refers to a picture of what your disciple could become—how his life could be enhanced by becoming all that God has in mind for him. People operating with vision outperform those operating purely on a duty motive.^[24] Instead of doing what they feel they should or must do, they begin doing what they *want* to do, and with far more energy. When people have a strong sense of vision for their future, they become heedless of the suffering and personal sacrifice needed to reach their goals. Instead of strolling toward the goal, they begin to run as fast as they can.

Jessica: Lexi became a Christian, and although she was shy, she began inviting her non-Christian friends to church right away. But when none of her friends responded to Christ, she became gun-shy and withdrew from trying to minister to others. Even though I was trying to encourage her, she seemed immobilized. As her discipler, this concerned me a great deal. I spent two weeks praying that God would give me a vision for her.

I knew Lexi wanted to be a missionary some day and had a heart for the world. The problem was that she didn't see the connection between her future aspiration and her present day ministry activities.

I tried to motivate her on a number of occasions without much success. Finally, after praying about her again, I approached her in a serious manner. I brought up her desire to become a missionary and affirmed how good that desire was. "The only problem is that you'll never get there if you don't start doing some ministry right here," I said. "If a missions agency called me for a reference on you, I would advise against sending you to the field. The best indicator of future behavior is past behavior."

This came as a shock to Lexi, because I almost never confronted her. We talked some more about how her passivity could be blocking her dream of being a missionary. These skills would be easier to learn here, where the ministry was easier. If she was unable to succeed here, we had no reason to think she could succeed in cross-cultural ministry. "If you learn how to befriend and build people up in their faith, eventually you will probably end up leading a group of

your own, like I am. When you can duplicate your Bible study, you'll be a church-planter. And a church-planter is the perfect candidate for the mission field."

In the two years since this talk, Lexi has become a different person. With quiet determination, she set about trying to build her own ministry with a new vigor. Today, she is a leader in her own home church. She is currently working with three disciples, all of whom have disciples of their own. She has succeeded in evangelism, and has become a good Bible teacher. She should soon become a church planter, and could someday go to the mission field as a seasoned minister.

Acquiring Vision

How do we impart a sense of vision to disciples? The first step is to get a sense of vision for them yourself. Before God, you have to go over your interactions with your disciples, asking God what they could become if all went well. God uses your imagination, combined with biblical categories to create a picture in your mind of your disciple as a successful, mature servant of God. As we linger in prayer over the strengths we see in people, God may give us a growing excitement about this picture. Usually, the picture is not very specific, but rather a general picture of what victory would look like for a given person.

Achieving a sense of vision for disciples can be a lengthy struggle. Most people you work with will confront you with many negatives that can kill your vision unless you react the right way. Discouragement is a constant danger for disciplers, because spiritual growth is so slow and so often punctuated with reversals. But it's crucial that you continue to spend the time with God focusing on the potential you see, even if it hasn't been realized yet. It's wise to spend time in prayer before each get-together with a disciple, asking God to rekindle your vision for that person.

Imparting Vision

When you have a sense of vision for a disciple, you are only part way to the goal. Next you have to sell the disciple on that vision. This may take some time with some disciples, as their own negative views of themselves often make them reluctant to believe that God could use them in a major way.

Begin by sharing your vision with other influential Christians who know your disciple. Sharing your vision helps you refine it. And it may give the opinion leader you talk to a new vision for your disciple. If more than one person believes in the vision and share it with your disciple, it will be more persuasive.

Then, picking the right time, share your vision with your disciple. “You know, I could really see you becoming one of the top evangelists in this church!” or, “I’ve been watching you, and I think you have the makings of an exceptional teacher of the word!” Be ready to give details about the things you have seen that give you such hope. Don’t share an unrealistic vision; vision is too powerful to use carelessly. We know of people who went on wild goose-chases based on faulty visions of their future. Neither are we trying to flatter when we share vision. It must be a picture you really believe is possible.

When sharing vision, your convinced tone and personal excitement carry persuasive weight. You may have to return to the subject on a number of occasions before your disciple begins to buy into it in a serious way. If others agree with your vision, ask them to share what they see with your person as well.

Once your friend begins to believe in the vision, barriers to realizing that vision become challenges to overcome. You can track progress together, suggesting ways to overcome barriers along the way.

Basic steps

Once we feel led to enter into discipleship with a friend, we need to gradually begin introducing the basic elements of discipleship:

- Friendship building
- A regular meeting time
- Enhanced interpersonal sharing
- Appropriate biblical and theological content to study together
- Times of prayer
- Counseling and helping your friend in areas of weakness
- Helping your friend develop a ministry
- Releasing your friend to pursue a life of service to God

These components are not sequential. Although we could see a general progression here, most of these elements proceed concurrently. We will cover each component in the following chapters.

Section 2

Key Components in Discipleship

Chapter 4

Friendship Building

The first step in successful discipleship is forming a good friendship. Unlike impersonal forms of education like classroom lectures, discipleship involves what Paul calls “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15a). When we speak truth to each other in the context of love relationships, we will “grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,” according to Paul (15b).

If you can make a good friend, you should be able to disciple. On the other hand, inability to form close friendships is an absolute barrier to effectiveness in disciple making. In this chapter, we will discuss the theory and practice of developing quality friendships. As you read these ideas, think about someone with whom you could apply them.

What is friendship?

A friendship in the biblical context is a relationship in which we practice real Christian love. So the first thing we need to understand is biblical love.

In scripture, love has a meaning much different than that of our world today. Jesus said, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12-13). According to this key passage, simply liking someone is not enough. Jesus set a very high standard for what constitutes real Christian love. We must love one another “as I have loved you,” that is, sacrificially. Love is all about laying down your life for your friends. On this understanding of love, you will do anything you can (within God’s will) for the good of a loved one. Just as Jesus sacrificed himself at the cross for your good, you are prepared to give up your own preferences, time, treasure, and convenience for the sake of building up your friends. John explains,

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

From this passage we see that love is not just a feeling. Giving the world’s goods to another in need is an action, not a feeling. Of course, such actions are compatible with feelings of affection and compassion and may issue from such feelings. However, we can practice self-giving love even when the feelings aren’t there. Sometimes our friends may be quite annoying, or we just don’t feel warm for some reason. But love-givers know how to come through as servants even during these times.

We can also determine from these passages that love is not something that just happens when we “click” with someone. The moral language constantly used in the Bible to describe love implies that loving others is a decision we can make at any time.

We suggest that biblical love is:

A commitment to, with God’s power, give of myself in every area for the good of another.

According to this definition, if we love someone, then we have a basis to do

what is good for that person, but not necessarily what the person wants. This is why we have a basis for discipline in love as Christians. My friends might want me to approve of whatever they do, but it may be more loving to confront them at times for their own good, just like God sometimes confronts us (Heb. 12:6).

How can someone develop good friendships? Let's take it from the beginning.

Step 1: Initiation

In the secular world, friendships just sort of “happen.” But as effective disciple makers, we want to gain the ability to initiate friendships at any time with people we meet. Notice that God always takes the initiative when loving us. John says, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). He also says, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (4:10). This means that if we are going to love others as Christ loved us, we have to be ready to take the initiative.

In fact, taking initiative in love-giving is an act of sacrifice in itself. The initiator is more vulnerable to rejection. The successful initiator has to expend emotional energy and creativity finding successful ways to reach out to another. It’s much easier to respond when we sense someone likes us. But initiation can be costly.

How do we initiate friendships?

Quality conversation

First, try initiating quality conversation that goes beyond talking about the weather or sports. The easiest way to initiate conversation is to ask questions about the other person and be a good listener.

With people you don’t know, your questions have to be relatively general at first—finding out who they are, where they live, what they do, how they came to be where you are, etc. If your reactions to these questions are personable and friendly, you can usually pass on to deeper questions. What are their likes or dislikes? In music, in art, in activities, you try to get a feeling for where people stand and what their interests are. Also, what are their key relationships? What about their family relationships and history? Who are their friends?

As you ask questions, you should also be prepared to disclose information about yourself, but your focus should be more on taking an interest in the other person. People sense when someone is interested in them, and they usually interpret interest as friendliness. Meanwhile, those who talk about themselves all the time have little success building good friendships.

As someone looking for a disciple and therefore focusing on making friendships with Christians, you have an easy area where you can ask questions. How did this person become a Christian? What is his spiritual history? How does he feel about his experience with God so far? What groups has he been in? What were those like? When we explore someone’s spiritual background,

numerous additional questions should suggest themselves. You can ask follow-up questions or remember your questions for the next time you talk. You are hoping to build on what has already been said by coming back to the same areas, gradually expanding your understanding. You are trying to develop a deepening understanding of how the inner workings of others make them tick. What kind of person is this? Why does he have the attitudes he reveals?

A careful listener can tell not only what people are saying, but what they might not be saying. As a careful listener, you are always attentive to things that “don’t add up” based on what you know so far. Then, you can return later to explore these gaps in understanding. When you return to subjects you discussed in an earlier conversation with more in-depth questions, people perceive that you have been thinking about them, and they usually interpret that as friendliness. Such quality conversations, usually combined with the more superficial kind (like sports, weather, movies, etc.), lead to a feeling of friendship, because the other person feels you understand him or her. They may in turn become interested in understanding you.

These interesting discussions about one another make people feel drawn to one another as friends. Most of us want to share about ourselves and we enjoy communicating, but we feel too awkward most of the time. We feel that others wouldn’t be interested in our story. Good initiators who know how to raise questions and carefully listen to the answers cut through the awkwardness and make people feel understood.

Time

If your conversations go well, it becomes natural to initiate spending some time together. Depending on the people you are relating to, you might suggest joining them in one of their interests that you’ve discovered in your conversations. This way, you’re being sacrificial—not asking others to join in your interests, but being willing to join into theirs. With some people, you should be able to suggest getting coffee or lunch sometime. Some new acquaintances go out fishing, bowling, bird watching, running, watching sporting events on TV, or a hundred other activities.

Dennis: When I went to a new home church in the ‘80s, I was interested in finding a new friend I could disciple. One guy there was younger than me and came from a blue-collar part of our city. His background was radically different than mine, and his interest in automobile mechanics was something I knew almost nothing about. But I had an old car that was giving me trouble, so I asked him what he thought about my engine problems. He offered to check it out.

When I took my car over, he and I spent a couple of hours huddled over the aging engine while I plied him with questions about how engines worked. He explained what he was doing and why. At first, I was acting more interested than I really was. But as he unfolded his expertise in engine diagnosis, I became increasingly interested. I realized that this young man, who had never attended college and spoke with a West Virginian accent and poor grammar, was very intelligent, discerning, and friendly. He had no idea I was senior pastor of a large church, or that I had done years of graduate study. As far as he was concerned, I was just a friendly guy who was interested in learning what he knew about cars, and he was delighted to teach me.

Mike eventually imparted a working knowledge of auto mechanics to me, even helping me buy my own quality set of tools. During the next few years, I imparted to him a knowledge of God and the Bible. He ended up winning a number of his friends to Christ, and they won others. By going outside of my usual circle of interest to develop a new friend, I acquired a skill that has saved me thousands of dollars. I also gained a disciple who eventually became a home church leader with his own disciples.

On another occasion, I met a younger guy who was a lawyer, and had recently met Christ. It turned out he also grew up on a farm, and had never lost his love of rural living. During one conversation he mentioned that he longed for the winter days when he and his dad used to go into the woods to cut and split firewood together.

I saw my opening. I had just converted my old decorative fireplace into a wood-burning fireplace. “Wow, do you think you could teach me how to cut wood?” I asked. It turned out he had his own chainsaw and was more than happy to have an excuse to go out hunting for good firewood. After our first trip to a friend’s farm, I was not only happy to have a nice pickup full of quality wood, I was also intrigued by his insight into quality versus junk types of trees. He could identify trees even in the winter (when trees in our part of the country lose their leaves) just by looking at their bark. I went to the library and took out books on firewood and tree identification (Oh yes, they exist!). I eventually learned the specific gravities of every major tree species in our region, how many BTUs per cord they yield, and can now identify any of them in summer or winter. I have my own saw now, and no lack of quality firewood.

Not long after a couple of trips to cut firewood, I was able to interest Jim in joining me for some Bible reading and prayer. Today he and his wife lead a home church in our fellowship.

Friendships require time. You can't expect to develop closeness on the fly. You must be prepared to invest time developing common ground with a new friend. Some of this common ground may involve sharing social situations with others. If you're going out with other friends, you could invite your new friend along, or, you could look for an opportunity to join in with your new friend and his or her social circle.

The best kind of time is that spent one-on-one. When you meet a friend alone, the quality of conversation is likely to be higher, and you can raise questions that wouldn't be appropriate in front of others. Whenever possible, you should look for opportunities for spiritual conversations. Your continuing exploration into the inner workings of a friend should become easier as you spend time together. Of course you're ready to offer vulnerable sharing from your own life, but without overwhelming your friend with long monologues.

Building a friendship requires patience and perseverance. Many people are simply not willing to invest time consistently over a six month period in order to build a good friendship. But in discipleship, we are contemplating investing several years in a relationship, so building a basic sense of closeness over several months is not too much to ask.

As your ability to initiate grows, you will find that you have little problem opening new friendships. But your time is limited, and this leads quickly to a situation where you may have more opportunities to spend time with new friends than you can possibly take. Now what?

If you're interested in discipling others, you need to make choices at this point. You cannot expend fragments of time in a thousand directions and still expect to be effective in discipleship. Before God, you need to ask who you should invest extra time with, hoping to take the friendship to a higher level. By focusing on a few people, you stand the best chance of building the kind of friendship that will sustain discipleship.

You should try to find someone who is truly willing to move in God's direction, someone to whom you feel you can make a meaningful contribution. In fact, there may be a number of considerations that go into this kind of decision, including direct spiritual leading. Look back to the earlier discussion in Chapter 3 on the factors to consider when facing this kind of prioritizing decision.

Feelings

People are emotional beings. Even those who don't often express strong

feelings have emotional needs. In initiating friendship, you need to be ready to initiate emotional sharing, which involves a wide range of expressions. You will want to share your feelings about third parties, external events, or other things in life. For instance, sharing your feelings about a piece of music or a movie is an act of emotional sharing with low vulnerability. People are more attracted to those who display a reasonable amount of feeling than to those who are completely unemotional. Revealing that you are really passionate about certain things (including God!) is usually attractive. People feel themselves drawn to those who are able to be passionate and express that passion.

More important is sharing emotions about your growing relationship with your friend. Good initiators show discretion and good judgment about how much and when to express their feelings. In newer relationships, expressing feelings like interest, warmth, and enthusiasm is always safe. Think of a person you talked with recently who seemed interested in what you had to say. Isn't that more enjoyable than talking to someone who seems uninterested or blank?

Similarly, warmth means that you are able to show people that you are happy to see them and that you feel positively toward them. A lot of our warmth is signaled with body language. Smiles, appropriate eye contact, a good handshake, or a pat on the shoulder suggests that you feel warmth toward another. The enthusiasm with which you react to things your friend says also suggests warmth. People who don't display warmth seem like the proverbial "cold fish." You'll make agonizingly slow progress in friendship building if you come off as a cold fish. In fact, you may make no progress at all.

Why do we sometimes come off like cold fish? Isn't it because we are self-protective? We don't want to take the risk of showing that we care. Men especially fear being judged as "uncool" if they show too much interest and warmth. Often, unexpressive people actually do care and may be feeling warm under the surface, but you could never tell. It's not enough to *feel* warmth; We have to *express* it in a way others can detect. And that often means we need to push ourselves a bit to be more overt than we're used to.

Of course, some people are overly emotional. People who are perceived as hysterical or who gush in an unnatural way too early in a relationship may seem threatening and weird. Such excessive emotionality could retard your efforts to build friendships.

How can you determine how much feeling to reveal in a new friendship you are initiating? One key is to assess yourself. Are you a highly emotionally expressive person? If so, there's no reason to push for more. In fact, you may

need to control yourself somewhat. Are you generally unemotional? If so, you will need to consciously push to move the envelope outward. Just seek to gradually curb your self-protectiveness and express your feelings more openly. Take a chance! You may need to watch people you know are emotionally expressive and study how they express feeling. If you aren't sure how expressive you are, ask your friends or family what they think.

Dennis: When I was nineteen, I was a cold fish by any definition. I knew I was a deeply passionate person, and I felt able to express feelings with close friends. But with newer people, I tended to be extremely inhibited and shy. I was constantly worrying about the awkward silences in my conversations with new people. Sometimes it bothered me so much that I would just break off conversations. In crowded situations where I was expected to socialize, I often left early because I was so uncomfortable.

My roommate was the opposite. He was the most outgoing, emotionally expressive person I knew. At one point, he took me aside for reproof. He pointed out that people were interpreting my inability to talk socially and my disappearing act after Bible studies as an unfriendly attitude—maybe even contempt. I opened up about how difficult it was for me to express myself when I didn't know people well and asked what he suggested. He urged me to stay by his side for the whole evening the next time we went to a Bible study where most people were strangers to me. He said I should watch him relate to the new people and try to imitate him.

The suggestion sounded strange at the time, but after discussing it for a while, I agreed. I began following him from conversation to conversation and tried to enter in. Some conversations with students began lasting a long time and got pretty deep. I couldn't believe how well his suggestion worked! I found myself imitating the way he would lean toward people or nudge them while laughing. I noticed scores of minor actions and mannerisms, many of which I felt comfortable imitating in my own way. I saw him employing his own simple formula for establishing communication with strangers: "If he says 'Moo,' you say 'Moo Moo!'" In other words, show you understand, summarize what the other is saying, and try to add something additional. Show that you are enjoying the conversation and want it to continue. I noticed that whenever I could truly get my attention off myself and onto the other person, good conversations happened.

During that year, my ability to express feelings even in new relationships expanded amazingly. People regularly commented on how much I had changed

and how much they loved it.

Deeper Feelings

As your friendships progress, more vulnerable emotions become natural. For instance, sharing your gratitude for the relationship itself is a vulnerable but meaningful feeling to share with a friend with whom you've spent a significant amount of time. For example, you might say, "Bob, I really appreciate our friendship. I feel like there's a growing trust between us." By coming out with a serious expression of appreciation like this, you will likely boost the quality of your friendship to a new level.

The same can be said for expressing loyalty. Loyalty means telling your friend that you are there for her—that you can be counted on. Just letting another know that you consider her to be one of your good friends is an expression of loyalty. Why should we feel reluctant to express such a feeling? It may be because the relationship hasn't developed to the point where it would be appropriate. But more often, we are timid about expressing such things because we don't want to risk rejection or judgment. We're playing it safe with the self-protection of emotional distance. We probably would be willing to express the feeling *if the other person did so first*. But this is simply because we don't want the burden of initiation. We are not sacrificial enough to love others like Jesus loves us. However, if we wait for others to initiate, we will make very poor progress in friendship building.

Remember we aren't trying to build a deep friendship in a short period of time. We should envision ourselves hanging out with a friend over a period of months and gradually building the pillars of good friendship: Open communication, warm feelings, common experience, understanding, and loyalty.

Step 2: Investing

If you are successful at initiating a good Christian friendship, you may decide the time is right to move to a more regular time of investment. By this point you should find it easy to suggest that the two of you begin meeting regularly for the purpose of building each other up spiritually. Maybe suggest getting together to do some reading. You don't need to suggest that your friend become your disciple. You may be thinking that discipleship is a possibility, but suggesting it could seem hierarchical. Suggesting meeting for mutual edification is a safer option, and since you will be built up just as much as your disciple, the suggestion is perfectly honest.

Some friends may resist this suggestion, and that tells you something. You're looking for someone who is hungry for spiritual growth. If you can't talk a friend into this kind of regular (usually weekly) meeting, that friend may be telling you that he or she isn't interested in growing spiritually. Or is it that your friend just has no category for such a time, and it seems strange? You can work with the situation gradually, seeking to understand why the reluctance is there. But you may decide that a different friend would be better to disciple.

If you've been talking about the concept of discipleship during earlier conversations, we find it is not unusual for your friend to ask if you will disciple him or her. This is ideal, but don't wait around expecting it to happen; not many suggest this. Later, if your reputation as a disciple maker grows, and as your group gains a corporate vision for discipleship, it becomes more common.

Winning a friend over to the idea of regular meetings for edification is a major accomplishment. Once you reach this point, prayer, study, accountability, and the other things we discuss in later chapters can begin. But friendship building must continue as well. In most cases, you are committed to building such a friendship for years. These friendships become the best in your life, and you will never regret the time and self-sacrifice of pouring your life into another.

This notion of pouring your life into another is what we call *investment*. When you invest into a relationship, you give of yourself with consistency and godly concern. You give of yourself in the hope that, like a good stock investment, what you invest will come back for the kingdom of God (not necessarily to you), and much more besides.

But that's not always the case. Some disciples decide to turn away from the path of discipleship, and you won't necessarily be able to do anything about it.

Nobody knows how to make an unwilling person willing. Even God doesn't do that. This is why your investment into a disciple has to be unconditional. You can never demand that you be repaid for what you have invested. You are always aware that you have no guarantee that your project will work, even if you spend several years and give all you have to it.

No wonder many Christian leaders are unwilling to disciple! Any Christian minister who is hooked on quick, highly visible results in ministry will turn away from discipleship. Viewed this way, investing into discipleship is an act of faith. We must come before God and decide whether we believe Jesus when he says, "The one who loses his life for my sake is the one who will save it" (Luke 9:24).

How much common experience?

As we mentioned earlier, investment into friendships that lead to fruitful discipleship extends over a period of years. Of course, we're not just giving out during this process. We also receive the enjoyment of a quality friendship—one of the greatest joys in life.

Sometimes we find Christians short-changing the need for time and activity investment in their friendships, especially after early progress has led to success. This is a mistake. You need to continually look for opportunities to add to our "relational capital" with your friends by taking the time to build a deep foundation of common experience. Relational capital means that, like a bank account, you have to deposit money before you can cut checks. If you want to develop a friendship in which you exert influence as a leader rather than being a man-pleaser, you have to deposit often and deeply. Your friend's heart will be won through godly investment, but your own heart will be moved as well. You will experience a growing affection and care for your friends as you pour yourself into their lives, and people can tell when you care.

When you have spent years doing things together--whether it be sports, hobbies, enjoying the same social circle, and especially sharing ministry and fellowship--your friendships reach a depth and stability that can withstand difficult times with relative ease. Consider taking trips together. Trips seem to build a sense of shared memories that are hard to match. For single people, living together is an excellent way to build common experience. Even married couples sometimes have a disciple live with them for a time as a houseguest.

Sometimes you might get a feeling of immediate closeness with someone, but that doesn't mean you have a deep relationship. As Americans who like fast food and quick information on the internet, we may find it difficult to accept the

need for long-term investment. We want closeness and trust quickly, but that is not how relationships work.

On the other hand, if you accept the need to build deeply into your key relationships, you will be willing to spend the time needed to build up a substantial backlog of common experience. That will make you feel like you really know a person, having seen her in hundreds of unique situations. With a close friend, you have a sense that you share your worlds. Rich times of reminiscing about your experiences together are nurturing. If you do need to bring a difficult message (like criticism) at times, your friend will usually accept it because she knows how deeply you love her.

In the following chapters, we will cover several major areas of investment. But in addition to those areas, these areas have mainly to do with ongoing friendship building.

Step 3: Assessing and responding

Careful relaters are always watching and praying about their friends, trying to discover the truth in three key areas: 1) Their potential, or strengths, 2) their weaknesses, and 3) their points of resistance.

Potential

You may notice my friend showing empathy and sensitivity in a relational situation with a third party. You should mark that and watch for more evidence of the same. If you come to believe these are areas of strength, you have discovered something very valuable: an area of potential. These areas are often indications of God's design for your friend. If God designed a person a certain way, that design also says something about God's will for the person.

Areas of strength are the keys you're looking for in trying to develop a vision for your disciple. You may notice that your disciple is firm but loving in a situation. That suggests other potentials in working with people. Maybe you notice that when sharing at a Bible study, your disciple was unusually clear or insightful. That could be a sign of a teaching gift.

Dennis: When I was 18, I had just begun walking with God. One night I went to a Bible study at a campus house, and afterward an older student who I admired came over and sat beside me. After we chatted for a while, he said, "Dennis, the way you shared tonight was so clear and convincing, I feel sure you could become a Bible teacher."

I smiled bashfully and looked down. I had never in my life considered teaching or preaching for God until that moment. But later that same week, while registering for spring quarter classes, I signed up for a class on persuasive speaking. Without doubt, I did this because of what that brother said on the couch. I did well in the class, and shortly after, I accepted some speaking invitations to give my testimony and teach at a couple of student Bible studies. I enjoyed it so much that I never looked back.

The older brother moved out of town not long after this incident, but I went on to devote my life to teaching, preaching, and public evangelism. Nearly thirty years later, I ran into him again in another city. I always wondered if he had any idea how much impact he had on my life through that single comment. I asked him if he remembered it, and from his reaction, I don't think he did. Why should he? It was only a few second interaction. It just goes to show that our words may have more impact on others than we think.

When we are building friendships, we should watch for opportunities to speak words of encouragement and vision like these. That way we can promote potential we see in our friends. Don't make things up or flatter. Instead, watch and wait until God gives you a clear sense of real potential in the person. Then, after prayer and reflection, watch for the best way, the best time, and the best words to use in promoting that potential.

If you plant seeds like this, you may later notice your friend acting in a way that shows she took your suggestion to heart. Or she may just tell you she is excited about developing the area you mentioned. Either way, you now have the makings of motivation. You can agree to work together to gather the tools needed to maximize a ministry in that area. You could read books on the area in question or together seek out field experiences that provide practice and give you opportunities for feedback.

People are sometimes remarkably unaware of their own strengths. Even when they do believe they have potential in an area, they may be reluctant to acknowledge it to others. They don't want to seem boastful. But our gifts and abilities are from God, not from ourselves, so acknowledging them is not boasting. Others are well aware of strengths they have in academic, musical, interpersonal, artistic, or business fields, but have never considered how these might apply to the kingdom of God. With many of these people, all they need is a little nudge from you to see how God could use their gifts and abilities and they will quickly show far more interest in spiritual things.

Weaknesses

If you are spending substantial time with your friend, you will also notice weaknesses. You may see him lose his temper with another person or fail to listen in a conversation. Relational problems are common and numerous, but you need to distill what you see to the key, central issues that could block a disciple's effectiveness with people.

During discussions, you may sense that your friend is surprisingly ignorant in a particular area, or you may notice attitudes that are wrong. Good disciplers quietly mark these areas for attention. While praying and planning what to study with your disciple, God will often show you things you could say or read that might help. In dozens of ways, you can look for opportunities to help your friend progress in these weak areas.

Patience and grace are very important when dealing with a disciple's weaknesses. The emphasis in scripture when dealing with weaknesses is "help" and "patience." Paul says, "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly,

encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone (1 Thess. 5:14). Notice the difference between being fainthearted or weak on one hand, and being unruly on the other. Unruliness refers to points of resistance, and we will discuss these later (in Chapter 10). A weakness is not a willful refusal to comply with God's will, but an inability to do so, or perhaps blindness to the problem. All of us are weak at certain points. When you identify weaknesses in your disciples, you should find ways to help them improve.

How can we help? Clearly, this depends on the problem. The first thing is to begin praying. You will probably be praying long and often about the weaknesses you see in disciples. Part of the sacrificial aspect of Christian love is the extensive time and emotional investment in agonized prayer. No doubt this is part of the "daily burden for all the churches" that Paul said was as bad as the many beatings and imprisonments he had endured (2 Cor. 11:28). During lengthy times of prayer God will give you insights about how to help struggling disciples (Also, be sure to read Chapter 9 on counseling).

A second objective in addressing areas of weakness is awareness. Is your friend aware that her weakness is a real problem? Is she exercised about the need to see change? People with weaknesses are often blind to one extent or another to their weakness. They may have elaborate rationalizations explaining why this or that kind of weakness isn't that bad. In some cases they may be completely unaware of the problem. This is particularly common with relational weaknesses. People with anger problems, passivity problems, problems with inappropriateness, lack of forgiveness, bitterness, selfishness and many others, typically feel their reactions and attitudes are justified and normal.

The same may be true with a multitude of habits or deficiencies caused by omission (e.g., failure to witness, pray, serve others, read the word, etc.). Good disciplers have to formulate strategies for making their friends aware of their weaknesses and the harm those weaknesses may be causing. But they need to do so without seeming like accusers or naggers. Sensitivity and creativity are important, because people could feel insulted when you point out a weakness.

Sometimes an indirect approach works. You may suggest reading a book that deals with the weakness in question. During such reading, you can ask questions in a way that helps your friend through a process of self-discovery. When God directly convicts people about their problems, they usually gain a better understanding of why they need to change, and you are left in a position of helper rather than accuser. Sometimes though, you may have to point out the problem yourself. We will discuss ideas for how to do this in the most

redemptive way in our chapter on counseling.

Points of resistance

Every growing Christian eventually develops points of resistance to God. These may involve one of their weaknesses, but the difference is that they don't want to change. In an area of resistance, you are seeing not only a sin problem, but a problem with the will—an attitude problem. Attempts to help won't do any good, because your friend hasn't agreed with the need for help in the first place.

Discovering a point of resistance is always a difficult crossroads in a developing friendship. Naturally, you earnestly long to see a change of heart. But such changes may take time and always call for a careful approach. If you try to force a change, it may backfire. However, doing nothing is unloving. Action here depends on a prayerful calculation of what will be best for your friend.

You are not legalistically bound to take any particular course of action. The principle of biblical love is always doing what is best for the other person, not any need to follow legal principles. Your history in the relationship will have to be weighed, along with your friend's level of accountability. Many other factors need to be weighed as well. Because working with such areas is so important and sensitive, we have devoted an entire chapter to it (Chapter 10, "Encountering Lack of Progress").

If you hope to confront your friends with their needs and help them with their weaknesses, you have to be willing to let them do the same for you. You should be as transparent as possible about your own struggles. You should be willing to receive insight from your friends with gratitude, even if they are less mature than you are. Proverbs 9:8 says, "Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you." Receiving reproof with gratitude is an important lesson in humility and teachability. The best way to teach your friends this virtue is to demonstrate it in your own life. A good friendship should become a mutual commitment to developing each other's character.

This sketch of how to build friendships has been necessarily brief, but we hope it sparks ideas you can combine with your own experience to build successful and deep friendships. Peter says, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Pet. 1:22). If you learn how to love people fervently from the heart, you will probably do well as a disciple maker.

Chapter 5

Modeling

A saying among disciple makers is, “Disciples tend to do what you do, not what you say.” Another is, “You can’t give away something you don’t have.” Both statements point to the same thing: the power of modeling.

Books and talks can teach a lot, but some things are better learned through imitation. You can transmit attitudes and values best through modeling. When you see someone you respect become angry because of a selfish decision made by another, you learn in a memorable way what matters to such people. The same is true when you see the intense joy a respected believer shows when someone comes to Christ. You may see those you respect so zealous about attaining a goal that they refuse to quit.

Ask yourself: How do people learn how to suffer in faith, instead of feeling sorry for themselves? How do they learn how to move deeply into intercessory prayer? How do young believers ever learn how to come forward and admit fault instead of justifying themselves? These qualities and many others are more “caught” than “taught.”

As a disciple maker, you hope to transmit many spiritual and character qualities that are more subjective than objective. You can tell people they should be loyal to God over other values in life, but what does that mean? Only when people are close to someone who lives that way do they fully grasp the meaning, let alone feel drawn to do the same. This is why the author of Hebrews tells his readers, “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7). When we notice that the lives of spiritually mature people are healthier than other people’s, this “outcome of their way of life” makes us want to be the same way.

Jesus was the ultimate example of modeling. He said, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12). His life was the purest example of love anyone could imagine. What a startling contrast we see on the night of the last supper: his disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest, and he responded by washing their feet (Luke 22:24). Afterward he said, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15). How do people learn humility? We can suggest they should be humble, but if you are like most believers, humility is something you learned in

large part by watching humble Christians you respect.

Paul knew that imitation was a premier avenue of learning. That's why he said, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). He reminded the Thessalonians how they "became imitators of us and of the Lord." As a result, they "became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:6-7). He later pointed out that he practiced self-denial and servitude in supporting himself and his friends "in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example" (2 Thess. 3:9). He told the Philippians, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:9).

He also coached his disciples to consciously present themselves as models to their people. He told Timothy, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). To Titus his advice was, "In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:7, 8).

Personal discipleship is the ultimate opportunity to model Christian living.

The key to successful modeling

Not all models are followed. Many hope to lead through modeling, but people ignore them. Others are eagerly imitated, even though they aren't good models. Why is this? Jesus gives us a clue in Luke 14. First, he gave exacting requirements for being his disciple:

If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me. But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first getting estimates and then checking to see if there is enough money to pay the bills? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of funds. And then how everyone would laugh at you! (vs. 26-29 NLT).

He is really explaining the old saying that if “Jesus isn't Lord *of all*, he isn't Lord *at all*.” Anyone who wants to follow Jesus, but comes with contingencies--family, economic goals, or the preservation of one's own life--is profoundly distrusting God in his heart. Why would I refuse to give over everything in my life unless I felt on some deep level that I cannot trust Jesus completely with my life? Even if I attach one condition to my willingness to follow Christ, it means that I'm still the one in control, not Christ.

Of course, deciding to radically follow is different than actually following in practice. No Christian has ever completely lived out total commitment, including the leader of Jesus' disciples, Peter. In this passage Jesus is calling for a *heart* decision, or intent to follow without conditions. This is a big decision, so Jesus urges people to count the cost. Are you sure you can afford to sign over your entire life to Jesus' leadership?

We believe this is a second decision that Christians make after they have come to know the Lord and realize the stakes involved when choosing between Christian mediocrity and vibrant, all-out Christian living. We also find that God will test our decision at a number of points during the years that follow; we will have repeated opportunities to reaffirm our intention to go all the way with God.

Yet the punch line in Jesus' discourse is yet to come. He concludes the talk with these words:

Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear (Luke 14:34, 35).

We should read this in light of Jesus' earlier statement that his followers are the salt of the earth (Mat. 5:13). Here he is warning that salt can lose its saltiness, and he implies this is the fate of those who refuse to go all-out for him. Un-salty salt is like pop with no fizz: nobody wants to drink it. Christians who hold back in a tentative form of following (which is really not following) ultimately lose their "fizz." They cannot inspire others to sell out for Christ. They cannot model radical trust, because at some level in their own hearts, they distrust God.

Disciple makers who hold back from God in one area produce disciples who hold back in ten areas. Disciples rarely rise higher than their mentors. Even Jesus said, "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher." (Mat. 10:24-25). If we haven't settled the question of radical followership for ourselves, we will not be able to model real faith for our disciples.

During years of watching people try to serve God, we see over and over that some people seem to have incredible influence for Christ, while others never seem to gain much traction with people. The difference isn't their level of intelligence or gifting. Neither do circumstances have much impact. The common thread with these highly influential servants of Christ is their high level of commitment. Those with areas of compromise never develop much impact for Christ in spite of sometimes amazing levels of gifting.

Before going out to become a model, you should have a deep transaction with God. Carefully think through Jesus' proposition. Are you ready to go all the way with God? If not, why? Be honest enough to admit your unbelief, and spend time thinking about what your unbelief implies about your view of God.

On the other hand, if you feel ready to make this unqualified commitment to Christ, he will use you to change people's lives, perhaps far beyond what you expect. If you long to see yourself count for God in this life, realize that commitment is the gateway to effectiveness. Full commitment to Christ cannot be sidestepped or diminished if we want to be effective models.

Lessons from psychology

Social learning psychologists have studied the process of learning through models extensively. Albert Bandura did research on how children choose and follow models. Included in his findings were the following:^[25]

- **Bandura found that children must attend to the pertinent clues. The child may misdirect her attention at the time the model is observed, and therefore fail to perform the behavior properly later. A teacher can help by directing the child's attention to those parts of the model's performance that are most important.**

According to this finding, modeling has a weakness: people may misperceive or misinterpret models. They may attribute a model's success to one thing, when the real reason was another thing, or they may not be watching or paying attention during key parts of the behavior.

For instance, my disciple may watch me teach, but didn't get to see how long I studied beforehand. So, as those consciously modeling, we may need to point out the correct interpretation or features: "Did you notice what I said to that guy? Why do you think I took that approach?" By discussing recent incidents like this, we can ascertain that our disciples are correctly perceiving and interpreting what we do.

You see Jesus doing this when he asks his disciples, "Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?" (Mat. 16:9-10). This also explains why Paul so often recalls and explains his own actions, like when he reminds the Corinthians, "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God." (1 Cor. 2:1; see also his extensive explanations of his own actions in 2 Corinthians).

- **Bandura also found that children must be able to retain in their memory what they observe so it will be available when needed. Memories do fade or disappear with time, so**

memory-aiding techniques such as rehearsal, review, or practice help to maintain the image in the other person's memory.

This finding suggests that repetition is important. Disciples are sometimes surprisingly slow to pick up new skills and attitudes in a lasting way. Any disciple maker who thinks it's enough to tell or show a disciple once how to do something is quite naïve. Only after multiple repetitions can we expect disciples to pick up on our modeling in meaningful ways.

For instance, my disciple may need to see me in multiple conflict situations before he begins to see the consistent pattern of Christian conflict management. A disciple learning how to teach the Bible may need to alternate attempts to teach himself with observations of me teaching during multiple cycles before he successfully acquires the skill.

Bandura also studied which people kids tend to pick as role models.^[26] He found that:

- **Children are more likely to model their own behavior after the actions of people they look upon as important, than after people whom they do not look upon as important.**

This again points to the importance of relational investment in discipleship. Close friends are considered important. When working in leadership teams, we have the opportunity to talk up our fellow leaders to others in the group, which usually makes people more willing to follow their example. Hopefully our fellow team members will return the favor.

- **Children are more likely to adopt behavior patterns from models of their own sex than from models of the opposite sex.**

This is another argument for discipling same-sexed people.^[27]

- **Bandura pointed out that models who receive rewards such as fame, high society status, or money are more influential with children than those who do not have these kinds of rewards.**

Of course neither Jesus nor Paul received these kinds of rewards, but they did receive spiritual rewards. Models' spiritual health, good relationships, and personal sense of fulfillment are attractive

to disciples (Heb. 13:7).

- **Bandura found that models who are punished for their behavior are usually not followed.**

This is an important point, but remember, punishment is often a matter of interpretation. Although Paul was beaten, imprisoned, and even stoned, he saw such things as “momentary light affliction” (2 Cor. 4:17). Even after four years in prison, and awaiting possible execution, Paul had nothing to share but the joy of the Lord and a sense that God was blessing him more than ever when he wrote Philippians. In other words, suffering and punishment are not always the same.

This finding by Bandura suggests why leaders who whine, complain, and often feel sorry for themselves have trouble leading. People don’t want to follow an example that leads to nothing but heartache and despair. On the other hand, leaders who undergo trials with thanksgiving and a sense of victory and faith amaze and tantalize their disciples. Disciples want the ability to rise above their circumstances like these remarkable models.

- **Bandura found that children are more likely to follow models who are more similar to themselves in age or social status than those who appear to the child to be quite different from himself or herself.**

Most parents already know this principle. Our kids’ peers have tremendous influence, eventually rivaling or surpassing that of parents in the teen years. The main point here is that disciples need to identify with the models they follow. When disciples can see themselves becoming something similar to the role model, they will imitate. Relational investment enhances identification. So does honesty and transparency. Our disciples have to see us as real people.

Having common interests and common experience leads to identification. Similar age and social situations may help, although in the context of discipleship, we have not seen much disadvantage in being older. Students today seem to have fewer problems with older role models than those twenty years ago. Perhaps the breakdown of families in America has left more students longing for an older role model they can trust. On the

other hand, age becomes a major barrier any time a younger person tries to disciple a significantly older person.

Dennis: I saw this when I was asked to disciple some older men when I was about 22. These 35 to 45 year old men gratefully accepted the Bible teaching I shared with them. And although they admired me on some levels, they didn't seem to feel it was realistic to follow my example in their lifestyles because of the differences in our life situations and age. It was a classic case of discipleship without modeling. They learned their Bibles and went on with the Lord, but I was unable to deliver any of them as leaders because they didn't want to imitate me.

Consider Bandura's findings while praying about your effectiveness as a model. These points should yield some insights that will improve your modeling. Although social learning psychology is a secular discipline, we see no reason to doubt its findings in general. Ask God how these points could apply to you.

Losing credibility as a model

We have already pointed out that models who lack faith when suffering, by whining and feeling sorry for themselves lose credibility as models. Neither do models who are not completely committed to Christ inspire a following. But other things can cost us credibility as well.

Dishonesty can be devastating for any would-be model. Any time a disciple catches you in a lie or any form of dishonesty, trust is broken, and trust is central to people's willingness to follow your example. If you let slip a lie, the only thing you can do is quickly admit it, and apologize. "I wasn't honest with you in that situation, and that really bothers me, because I want us to be honest with each other all the time."

Of course, honesty doesn't mean you have to be exhaustive in what you say. You can always tell friends, "I'm not free to share what I know about that." They may not like being told this, but it won't result in distrust. To the contrary, the fact that you guard confidences creates more trust. The key is whether they think you are being secretive for self-protective reasons or out of concern for others.

Any kind of self-serving is bad for models' credibility. If disciples sense you are serving self rather than God and others, they may well become suspicious about everything you do. You have to demonstrate that you will consistently try to do the right thing, including when it costs you an advantage.

This is particularly important when dealing with people and ministry situations. Some things can appear self-serving even when they aren't, and we may have to explain why what we do is right under the circumstances. For instance, imagine a group of leaders taking turns teaching in a Bible study group that isn't doing well. We know of cases like this where the senior leader made the decision to take on a larger proportion of the teaching. That could seem self-serving to the other teachers, but if the leader explains that, given the problems in the group, he feels the need to get the most experienced teacher up more often, people will generally accept it.

Leaders have to be particularly careful when dealing with opponents. Refuting or reproving an opponent may seem self-serving both to the opponent and to others watching. This is why Paul cautions Timothy, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God

may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:24-25). On the other hand, if your disciples see you handle opponents and critics graciously and fairly, their desire to imitate your example will grow, especially if they hear you pray for our opponents.

Extreme hypocrisy often permanently ruins any chance of being imitated. We can't avoid all hypocrisy, because no Christian is completely consistent. But when hypocrisy becomes extreme, any influence with others is lost. Common hypocrisy might include situations where you don't completely do something you have taught others to do. Most mentors have had a disciple point out one of these areas of failure. This is usually no problem if you admit the fault and good naturedly shrug, “You've got me there!” Having a gracious attitude about your own failings as well as toward others teaches your disciple a valuable lesson.

Most forms of extreme hypocrisy involve some kind of implied dishonesty. A leader who continues to teach God's word while engaging in secret sex episodes is guilty of extreme hypocrisy. A believer who tries to seem more righteous than he really is also commits extreme hypocrisy. Consider the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. They gave money to the church in a way that made them seem more generous than they actually were. Their act was an implicit lie, designed to impress other Christians with how spiritually advanced they were. God's extreme discipline for this act (death) demonstrates how seriously he views “the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1).

This kind of hypocrisy creates cynicism in disciples. They will discount what you say and do because of your hypocrisy and at the same time may feel more free to be hypocritical themselves. Real honesty, however, doesn't create cynicism, but trust. Even if you have to admit some fairly serious failures, your disciples will respect your honesty.

Typical areas where modeling is supreme

We have already suggested that attitudes and values are best transmitted to disciples through modeling. But objective training can usually be combined with modeling to get the best effect. Let's look at several areas where modeling is supremely effective, and how study can enhance the effect.

Sacrificial Love

Perhaps the most crucial area to model for your disciples is real Christian love. Nothing helps people learn how to love like watching a close friend who knows how to love others in a Christ-like way. So many aspects of real sacrificial love are subjective and must be transmitted through modeling:

- *How to empathize with others* – Developing sensitivity and discernment when relating to others is a key skill for servants of God. Disciples need to cultivate both a caring attitude and the ability to project that care to others. They need to learn to reflect feeling by showing appropriate emotional responses to what people say. For some, this is one of the most difficult relational skills to develop.
- *How to listen carefully* – Active listening includes careful concentration on what people are saying as well as what they may be holding back. Body language, facial expressions, and feedback convey interest when listening. Disciples need to learn patience when people are laboring to explain their burden. They may need to ask clarifying questions to see if they have understood.
- *How to intercede in prayer* – We will discuss this in our chapter on prayer.
- *How to think about others when we aren't with them* – The Bible teaches that we should be “considering how to stimulate them to love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24). The imperative in this verse is not to stimulate others, but to “consider.” It's too late when you are already with a friend, trying to think on your feet. Real biblical lovers learn to spend time praying and thinking about friends so they can show up with great ideas about what to say or do that will serve others' needs.
- *How to encourage others effectively* – Encouragement is both a skill and a creative art. We will discuss encouragement more in

our chapter on counseling.

- *How to forgive* – Disciples often don't know how to forgive from the heart. For most people, true forgiveness is a real struggle at times, and a good model can guide people through that struggle. When a disciple watches you exhibit a true forgiving attitude, he or she sees what a gracious person is like.

- *How to confront others in love instead of anger* – Some disciples damage or destroy relationships because of unrighteous displays of anger. Others fail to serve their friends because they are unwilling to confront them at all. We will discuss confrontation later in Chapter 10 on “Encountering Lack of Progress.” For now, we can observe that nothing will help them understand a loving approach in this area more than watching a mature believer in action.

Christians learn these abilities over a lifetime of following God. But trial and error are slow teachers, even when the Holy Spirit is leading and teaching. To more quickly learn how to love deeply, we have to see someone we respect and are close to practicing deep love in our presence. Watching a mature, loving brother confronts a friend about something in his life can teach more than many hours of reading. In fact, reading may never convey all the nuances that go into a careful reproof by a skilled spiritual leader. Still, reading and studying the subject can enhance the disciple's ability to apprehend those skills for him or herself. Just as in other areas, the combination of modeling and studying is far more potent in effecting life change than either one on its own.

Attitudes

Consider the area of one's attitude toward money. If your lifestyle is one of moderation and relatively simple living instead of being centered on loving money and possessions, you may well see your disciples gradually trending toward a similar lifestyle. The importance you attach to faithful financial giving will also likely begin to appear in your disciples' lives.

By teaching principles of stewardship you can accelerate the transmission of such values. Studying quality texts together like Randy Alcorn's book, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*,^[28] can give your disciples a good biblical and theoretical understanding of the issues surrounding stewardship. Reading key Bible passages like the parable of the unrighteous steward (Luke 16:1-15) or Jesus' teaching in the sermon on the mount (Mat. 6:19-34) provide the

opportunity for the Spirit to work through the word of God on a disciple's heart. When you combine truth with example, God uses both as powerful forces for change in disciples' lives.

Outreaching Love

You model love through your own relationship with a disciple. But that's not enough. Jesus asked, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?" (Mat. 5:46). These words highlight the need to practice discipleship in the context of the body of Christ. In community, your disciples get to see how you love people of different backgrounds and personalities, including those who are hard to love. They also need to see your love for non-Christians. Your love for non-Christians and your zeal to see them meet Christ can nurture a similar love in your disciples. Disciples who are unconcerned for the lost tend to create disciples with the same weakness.

Inner Life with God

Your personal walk with God is a key area of modeling. Your love, trust, and appreciation of God are subjective attitudes not easily taught through book study. These attitudes are mostly learned through years of experiencing the faithfulness of God, but also through imitation. First, you learn to appreciate God through your own experience with him over a number of years. Then, your disciple can actually learn through your experience—a process called *vicarious learning*. In vicarious learning, people acquire for themselves what another has learned by accepting the other's experience as valid and credible. This is modeling.

Most young Christians have a lot to learn about gratitude. Young believers are usually dissatisfied with what they have been given and only focus on what they haven't received yet. Study can help them learn a consistent habit of thanksgiving, but nothing helps more than watching a mature believer pray and worship God.

Likewise, young believers don't really understand what it means to trust God with their lives. Studying scripture tends to build trust. But knowing an older believer who has learned how to trust God at a deep level shows them things they may never understand any other way. Teaching disciples how to cultivate trust and get in touch with why we are thankful involves showing them why daily times with God in prayer and the word are necessary.

Victorious Suffering

Through modeling, you can impart a key area of trusting God; the ability to suffer in faith and even gratitude. When disciples see you suffering without becoming bitter or defeated, they feel challenged. How can someone continue to trust God, even giving thanks, when she is in pain? Sometimes, nothing will convince people that such an attitude is realistic but watching a close friend living it out right before their eyes.

Ministry Skills

Modeling not only excels at transmitting values and attitudes, it is also powerful for training disciples in complex ministry skills. The best way to learn how to share one's faith is to watch an accomplished evangelist witness. So much of good evangelism involves reading the heart attitudes of non-Christians during discussion. This kind of sensitivity is dynamic, because you have to practice it on the fly. When should one put the question of conversion? When to back off until later? When to engage in argument, and when to change the subject? These are judgments based on experience and spiritual discernment.

Your enjoyment and sense of gratification when sharing your faith are also contagious. After a witnessing experience you can discuss what happened, pointing out key parts in the discussion. When disciples see you witness, they will not only learn how to do the same themselves; they will also gain motivation and desire to witness.

Teaching and preaching are best transmitted through modeling as well. Although good books on preaching can help, your disciples will excel far more if you can show them yourself how to prepare a passage and then proclaim the word in a living way. If you don't have much gifting for preaching, all is not lost. Many Christians have developed their own gifting through trial and error, and you can always join them in listening to other effective teachers and noting why a given talk made an impact.

How to Motivate Others

Leaders make it their business to be motivators. We have to learn to motivate people to love and serve God and others. We also want our disciples to learn this almost mystical power. A group may be gripped by apathy or preoccupied with other pursuits when a quality leader enters. Soon, people begin gaining excitement for serving God. They may have already been doing things related to God, but without much excitement. Leaders bring a sense of urgency, excitement, or passion to activities that may have seemed humdrum before. Under the influence of a skilled leader, people begin to gain vision and excitement.

Some people have gifting as motivators, but much of this ability can be learned. Anyone can increase their motivational ability, especially when they have first-hand experience with a good motivator. Models can ask questions to make sure their disciples are noticing the right things--"Did you notice how I recounted recent victories during the prayer meeting?"--And make sure they connect the dots--"Why do you think I did that?"

Ministry Judgment

Another key skill set we transmit through modeling is mature judgment in ministry situations. Human behavior involves so many variables that it becomes impossible to prescribe decision making in ministry. Instead of teaching disciples *what* to think, you need to teach them *how* to think. They may have to decide whether to take a hard line or to go easy in a particular situation, whether to look the other way or to confront someone in sin, whether to wait or to move immediately, who to trust, or when someone is ready, and a thousand other judgments. All of these judgments vary from situation to situation and should be informed by scripture, wisdom, experience, and the direct leading of the Holy Spirit. Learning good ministry judgment through trial and error can take decades. Nothing will accelerate the process more than being near a good model who already has good judgment.

Relations with the Opposite Sex

Married disciple makers have the opportunity to teach their disciples how to relate to a spouse and perhaps how to be good parents. Bringing disciples into your home where they can see for themselves how you relate to your family is important. Single disciplers have the chance to show their friends how to relate maturely to the opposite sex. Single disciple makers realize they cannot do anything in dating that they would not be happy to see their disciples doing. Your disciples are watching you at all times, and they will either learn mature Christian living or something else.

Am I qualified to model?

When you consider the multitude of attitudes, values, and skills best transmitted through modeling, you could easily feel intimidated. Are you mature enough to be viewed as a model? Do you want to risk having a disciple imitate not only the good things in your life, but also the bad? You might even feel that it would be arrogant to put yourself forward as a model to be imitated.

Remember, your value as a model is relative. No model is perfect. Even Paul said, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). This could be understood as, “Only imitate the part that matches Christ.” The question is not, “Am I as good as Jesus?” but, “Am I farther along than my disciple?” If your attitudes and lifestyle have progressed further than those of your disciple, then she can learn plenty from your modeling. Remember how little newer Christians understand about God and the Christian life. Most of the things we have discussed in this chapter take a lifetime to develop, and even then we feel woefully inadequate at times. Satan tries to use accusation to persuade us we are worthless as models and should give up. But even a deeply flawed model could be better than no model.

When we feel the heartbreak of personal moral failure intensified by the knowledge that we are being inadequate models, what should we do? Usually, we have to be realistic about the power of the flesh and continue to move ahead while honestly admitting where we fall short. Those who would make disciples cannot afford perfectionism. Disciple making is too real for that. Perfectionism will only lead to phoniness or quitting. Phoniness, because people try to hide how far they fall short of perfection. Quitting, because people lose heart and give up trying to meet a legalistic, perfect standard. Instead, we must learn to cling to grace.

The worst thing you can do during times of spiritual defeat is abandon your disciples. How often we have seen disciple makers fall into a fit of self-accusation and leave their people, usually with terrible results. We are all damaged, and God uses an army of crippled people hobbling forward on crutches and missing legs to build his kingdom. We are not only saved by grace; we also have to learn to minister through grace. Most successful disciplers are constantly amazed that their disciples do so well, considering how flawed their discipler was!

Becoming a better model for others is a powerful motivation to develop your own walk with God. Disciple makers soon realize that real spirituality

cannot be faked in a relationship as intimate as discipleship. Discipleship will unveil truth about your weaknesses in the same way your true self comes out in marriage. But disciples will still benefit if you continue to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

You might fail so badly that you have to temporarily forfeit your role as a disciple maker. This is a serious decision that should be made with other ministry colleagues, and not in the emotional turmoil and remorse of immediate failure. If you feel you have failed so seriously or consistently that you need to withdraw from your role as disciple maker, you should go to your ministry leaders and colleagues first and get their opinion. Only if they agree, after hearing all the facts, should you withdraw.

We suggest this approach because we have seen too many cases where disciplers have felt obligated to quit, not because they really needed to, but because Satan put them under accusation for relatively minor problems. If your failure is serious enough to require your withdrawal while being restored, that should be clear to your leaders and colleagues as well.

In a hundred different areas, modeling shapes the outlook and behavior of disciples. As they imitate us, they gradually become models in their own right. In a healthy Christian community, people are eventually surrounded by credible, real examples of Christian living that powerfully motivate change.

\\Chapter 6

Imparting a Love of Scripture

Jessica: For me, the Bible has become a necessity in the art of discipleship. When I first became zealous for the things of God, I tried to disciple some of my friends. It didn't go well. They all left, exchanging a walk with God for worldly pleasures. I went in frustration to an older Christian woman I respected.

“What am I doing wrong?” I begged.

She gave the safe answer: “Maybe it's not about you. Sometimes even when we do everything right people will choose against God.”

“I know, I know,” I said, rolling my eyes. “But I want you to tell me how I can do better.”

She smiled and told me that she had something that might help. She handed me a list of elements that help Christians grow spiritually, suggesting that I look at the list and see if I had helped my friends in all of those areas.

As I sat alone with the list, I contemplated my disciple making experience. Did I talk with my friends about the importance of fellowship with other believers? Yes. Did I pray with them? Yes. Did I encourage their strengths and possible gifts? Yes. Then I saw something on the list that I had wasn't doing; sharing the Bible with them. I had never opened a Bible in our multiple meeting times together. When I met with my friends we usually spent most of our time catching up, then I would try to give good advice, and then we would pray.

An opportunity arose to disciple someone new. This time I was going to change my approach. Janet and I sat down for coffee, and I described a couple of study ideas I had. “Maybe we could read through Colossians together and discuss the principles we observe. Or we could do an overview of the Old Testament. What would you prefer?” We decided to do both studies, and by agreeing to this we also committed ourselves to a lengthy regular meeting time. The result of these studies was a pleasant surprise. I noticed that Janet was becoming a powerful spiritual woman, someone with deep personal convictions and a successful personal ministry. She often talked to me about how thankful she was that I helped her “fall in love with the Bible.”

Since then I have become completely convinced that Bible study is a key ingredient in successful discipleship. I have seen that any committed Christian

who is willing to become a student of the scriptures can become a powerful force for God in this world. I have seen one Janet turn into twenty as the multiplication process goes on. My discipling ministry has been much more fruitful since I began prioritizing the Bible as part of my time with disciples that it's hard to measure.

Is studying the Bible essential?

In our experience, many disciplers put too little emphasis on Bible study with their disciples. Too often, we learn (usually from the disciples) that the times they spend with their disciplers are mostly social. They may talk about recent events and even spiritual struggles. They might pray together. They may even talk about biblical principles. But they often admit that little time is spent actually studying the Bible or related books. Such disciples usually don't do as well as others who have regular Bible study as a mainstay of their time with disciplers. Consider several reasons why knowing the Bible will radically transform the lives of young Christians.

Nourishment

The Bible is spiritual nourishment that helps us grow. Peter says, "Like newborn babes, crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2 NASB). According to Peter, scripture should be as important to us as milk is to a newborn. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that God's word performs the work of God inside believers: "When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1 Thess. 2:13).

Mental transformation

In the New Testament, we often read of the need for mental transformation. Romans 12:2 calls on us to “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” And in Ephesians 4:23, Paul pleads “that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (NASB). God wants to change the way our disciples think, not just what they do. Our actions flow out of our thinking, so mental transformation is foundational to a changed life. As disciple makers, we need to see that leaving disciples with a poorly developed worldview isn’t good enough. Particularly in today’s culture, where new converts come to Christ as passive, narcissistic, and mentally apathetic, learning scripture is urgent.^[29] Those who grapple with their thought lives are the ones who have something spiritual and persuasive to offer their peers.

Victory over sin

Gaining depth in the word helps people gain victory over their sin problems. Knowing the word is no guarantee of freedom from sin, but if combined with basic willingness and other factors, scripture is one of the key elements God uses to release us from slavery to sin. Jesus said, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32 NASB). And in this context, he was referring to freedom from sin.^[30] God uses his word to bring a heightened sense of motivation for change in all areas of life.

Motivation

As disciplers, we hope to impart strong and lasting motivation to our disciples. But how do people become motivated? In the world, social pressure and manipulation are adequate ways to motivate people. When a TV ad shows a scantily clad woman with a certain brand of beer, guys buy more of that beer; they know not why. But the advertisers don’t care what the person’s motivation is. They just want to sell beer.

As Christian motivators, this isn’t good enough. We want people to do the right thing, but we want them to do so for the right reasons, too.

So what should a motivated Christian look like? We suggest that:

People are motivated when they are convinced of the correctness and the urgency of Christian goals to the extent that they are eager to act, and keep acting, to reach those goals regardless of what others do or think.

Notice the first objective is that the disciple becomes convinced of the correctness and urgency of our goals. The case for why our goals are correct and worthy comes from the Bible. Nothing will convince people that God's way is right more than studying scripture. When people see the truth so clearly they cannot deny it, they will find it very difficult to leave the path of growth--even when tempted--because they know too much.

The second objective in motivating people is to impart the *urgency* of our goals. This part has to do with modeling and other leadership issues we discuss later. As we suggested earlier, seeing Christian goals as urgent is an issue of our values system, and values are best transmitted through modeling.

When we move on from a "monkey see, monkey do" motivational base to one based on deeply held biblical convictions, we will see disciples go on even without our help.

Discernment and Wisdom

We all need the ability to discern between good and evil in order to flourish spiritually. Indeed, having this kind of discernment is one of the clear signs of spiritual maturity according to Heb. 5:13, 14: "For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (NASB). According to this passage, anyone who cannot cope with the meat truths of scripture is, by definition, a spiritual infant.^[31] Without a deep knowledge of scripture, our disciples will have little success understanding and battling their sinful natures, Satan, false teaching, or the worldly arguments constantly challenging their faith.

Ministry

Knowing the Bible also gives us credibility with other people. Without an intimate knowledge of the Bible, we will eventually hit a wall in our ability to influence others. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Do your best to present yourself as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, but who correctly handles the Word of truth."

This makes sense. As Christians, we want to know what God says about our situation, not just another person's opinion. When people sense that someone can show them God's mind in a deep way that relates to their present needs, they gravitate to that person for counsel and advice. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, "The Word of God is profitable for teaching, encouragement, rebuke, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every

good work” (NASB). The Bible is profitable in every area of a successful disciple makers’ ministry. How can we argue that we have “equipped the saints for ministry” if we have not grounded them in God’s word?

Appreciating Grace

The Bible helps us see the gravity of our sin, and in turn the importance of God’s grace toward us. We understand that without God’s grace, salvation would be impossible, but do we realize the same is true for our spiritual life after salvation? Viewing our growth under grace implies that we see that all our progress must come as a gift from God. “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). God’s kindness causes us to change our hearts at a deep level.^[321]

Understanding Self

The Bible is the best lens through which to see the important truths about ourselves. The Bible is described as a mirror, or a tutor. It can show us our true selves and in the process lead us to a new dependence on Christ. Self-analysis can be a frustrating and fruitless puzzle, but the more we look into the mirror of the Bible, the more emotionally healthy we become. Most of us focus on ourselves way too much for our own good. By turning our focus to scripture, we get God’s perspective on ourselves and grow closer to him in the process.

Enjoyment and pleasure

Finally, the Bible is rewarding and enjoyable once we learn how to engage with it. Proverbs says, “Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding” (Prov. 10:23 NASB). In other words, gaining wisdom should become as enjoyable as the most beloved hobby or pastime. It may not be an enjoyable experience the first couple of times one tries to read the Bible, but it becomes enjoyable to anyone who perseveres. If you can bring your disciples to the point where they begin to really enjoy spending time in the Bible, you will have imparted a habit that can carry them through their entire lives.

Incorporating scripture study into your meeting time

We often begin spending time with disciples on a social basis, perhaps with occasional prayer. Before long, we hope to begin incorporating times of Bible study or reading. We find that many students from generation X and Y are unwilling (or even unable!) to read books on their own, so we often actually read together, taking turns reading a page aloud and discussing it as we go.

Some people are frustrated about learning the Word, and this can be a gateway for initiating Bible study. A friend of ours, Samantha, recently complained that she didn't know anything about the Old Testament. Later, in private, Julie approached her and asked if she would like to do a seven-week overview study of the Old Testament together. Samantha enthusiastically agreed and now these two have developed a regular discipling relationship. People don't always ask for help, but often they do have some frustration or aimlessness, and we can help them, and this can easily lead into a word-centered discipleship time.

When you become a Christians you get a new, heavenly citizenship where all things are new (Col. 1:13; 2 Cor. 5:17). Imagine that your citizenship was suddenly and irrevocably changed. You are no longer an American. Now you are a citizen of Thailand. Think how hard it would be if no one helped you learn the language or showed you around. You'd feel intimidated and overwhelmed. You could easily become reclusive, and perhaps even give up, hopping on the first plane back to America. These are the same emotions new believers feel if they are not guided towards spiritual nourishment. But instead of getting on a plane to go back to America, they have their old homeland – the world system – at their fingertips whenever they want to return to it.

Now, imagine that you were in the same position and a Thai citizen befriended you, helped you to learn the language, showed you a place you could work, introduced you to friends, and helped you learn more about the culture. What a relief! Of course you could make your new life in Thailand work without help, but it would be much more difficult. Disciple making is the bridge from the old to the new.

Deciding what to study

This question is difficult because your approach in disciple making may be different every time. Instead of prescribing a curriculum, we will suggest some of the key areas where you need to devote some time.

The reliability of the Bible

First we must explain what the Bible is: the inspired Word of God. Our goal is that our disciples gain a basic confidence in the reliability and authority of scripture. They also need to be ready to defend biblical authority to others who may ask about it. Unless they view the Bible as inspired and authoritative, they will see little point in studying or following its teachings. We consistently find that disciples who lack a high view of scripture never go far in their faith. Several good books are available for such a study, and we have included a worksheet in [Appendix 2](#).^[331]

Why studying and reflecting on the Bible is important

A key need in most disciples is motivation: getting to the point where they regularly feel the need to study the word for themselves. What motivated you to begin studying scripture? Sharing your own experiences and convictions about scripture often helps to inspire your disciples. Offering direction or forming a plan also motivates people. They may feel overwhelmed by the size of the Bible. Sometimes a simple suggestion such as, “Maybe you could start by reading the book of John and writing down any insights or questions you have for each chapter” is good enough to get someone excited about reading. Any approach that allows them to check off goals as they are accomplished will be more motivating than simply looking at Bible study as a vast, unattainable goal.

Positive reinforcement is a powerful motivational tool. Show your disciples how the Bible can be rewarding for them. Show them how scripture will strengthen spiritual gifts they may possess. Be as specific as possible. Show them how knowing Bible verses could bring a lot of power to conversations they have with their friends. If they see the future incentive that comes with disciplined study, they will be more likely to persevere.

Finally, if your disciple seems too lazy to study, you could motivate through challenge. If someone has made a commitment to God, yet fails to progress in his devotional life, he needs to be warned. For example, the author of Hebrews says, “by this time you ought to be teachers” (5:12a). Here he paints a negative vision that takes the form, “You could be in one place; instead you are

here.” Warning can be motivating if it succeeds in causing your disciple to feel convicted and repent. However, such a style of motivation should be used sparingly. Excessive reproof can lead disciples to withdraw from their mentors. You need to pick your battles and pray that you are working with God and the plans he has for a given person’s life. Reproof should be reserved for cases where other motivational tools have failed.

The story of the Bible

People need help understanding the big picture in the Bible. You may find it helpful to do a short Bible overview. Numerous Bible overviews are available, including on our website.^[34] Understanding the big picture of God’s plan through history helps give a context to each small section of Scripture.^[35] How does the story of Joseph fit in with God’s big plan? Why are the Israelites suffering so much in Lamentations? Why does Hebrews speak so much about priesthood? You can more easily discern the answers to these questions and many more like them when you know the basic story and themes of the Bible.

The main theological themes in the Bible

We should teach our disciples a basic doctrinal framework that will help them understand the relationships between the many details in the Bible. Some leaders question the wisdom doing this because it could lead to a biased reading, but we disagree.

Everyone has an interpretive grid when they read the Bible. This grid is an associational framework that ties the particulars in the narrative together in a comprehensible form. Such a grid could pose a threat to good Bible interpretation, because your understanding of the big picture could lead you to squeeze passages into that grid in a way never intended by the author. For example, Jehovah’s Witnesses have an elaborate theological framework that becomes a bias in one passage after another. For instance, when Jesus uses the expression that Lazarus is asleep, they think this proves that souls sleep from the time of death until the judgment day. Passages that don’t fit the grid are actually re-translated to make them fit. So when Col. 2:9 says, “In him all the fullness of deity dwelt in bodily form,” they add words not found in the Greek to read, “It is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily.”^[36]

So unless we are careful, our framework could become the real authority, and the Bible a collection of proof texts we plug in to the appropriate holes, even if they don’t fit. This tendency is called paradigmatic thinking: once we see things one way, it becomes harder to see them any other way.

On the other hand, without categories, the immense number of details in the Bible become an incomprehensible jumble, especially to new readers. Newer readers tend to become discouraged unless they see the parts fitting into some whole while reading.

We don't advocate going into a detailed systematic theology with younger disciples. But we do think they benefit from a basic doctrinal framework. A simple book like Paul Little's *Know What You Believe*, or various outlines like those we use in our church should be adequate.^[37] We think inductive Bible study should go forward along with some systematic, topical learning. It should be easy enough to teach disciples to question any system we share as they do their own study of the text. You can also challenge them to compare different systems (such as covenantal and dispensational schools, or Calvinist and Arminian schools) as a way to avoid paradigmatic thinking.

Interpretation

You also need to help disciples with proper Bible interpretation. Sometimes even though people are reading the Bible regularly, they only look at it superficially. They may ignore difficult sections, they may only regurgitate things previously taught to them, or they may pick verses out that sound nice without understanding the context. You can teach them to look deeper, to find the buried treasure in scripture. You will never be able to teach them every principle in Scripture, but you can give them a sort of treasure map by showing them how to interpret the Bible for themselves. Even young Christians need an overview of historical grammatical hermeneutics. One of the best ways to learn good interpretation is through inductive Bible study as discussed in Appendix 3. Basic rules of sound interpretation give a theoretical framework for reading. We included a simple outline you can use for this in Appendix 4.

When teaching your disciples how to use commentaries, you should exercise caution. A commentary is one person's opinion. But unlearned disciples often seize on interpretations as soon as they read them, and their own critical faculties are not developed. Teach your disciples to use commentaries in tandem, comparing several credible commentaries to each other. This way, disciples have to use their own judgment to decide which argument is most persuasive. Disciples gain another value in comparing commentaries when they see for themselves that the commentators don't agree with each other. This helps guard them from naively accepting a commentators' explanation at first glance. Readers need to see that commentators are all biased to some extent by their theological system.

Today, Bible software and websites are cheaper than paper books, and work faster. Lookups in several sources can be done in a flash. Drawbacks to Bible software include the tendency to include old commentaries like Matthew Henry or Darby that have no copyright protection, but lack some of the scholarship available in newer commentaries. Your church's library may be a good place to find multiple commentaries without having to spend hundreds of dollars.

Sharing knowledge

Disciples need to learn to teach others. Just because disciples are reading and interpreting the Bible doesn't mean they will be able to share what they know with others. If we are to develop leaders in the church, they must be able to convey their knowledge to others, either publicly or at least one-on-one. Teaching others helps us have ownership of a concept.

Without the exercise of sharing insight with others, people tend to grow stale in their knowledge of the Bible. On the other hand, nothing is more potent for learning and retaining biblical insight than teaching it. You should urge disciples to look for situations in which they can share what they learn. Whether in general conversations, discipling a younger believer, or teaching a group, once believers share Bible knowledge they seem to retain it forever. 'Use it, or lose it' is the rule of biblical learning.

Moving to independent Bible study

All Christians have the capacity to learn the word on their own. God says he has given us a new mind to understand spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14-16). This means that any Christian should be able to develop the ability to be a self-feeder in the Word.

Once people have the tools to do personal Bible study, they generally take more away from a personal study on their own than from a cooperative study. When people take the initiative to study a topic or passage on their own they usually remember and apply results from the study long afterward. With prayer and patience, we may succeed in bringing disciples to a point where they develop a lifelong love for the word of God.

Chapter 7

Prayer I: Getting Started

Dennis: As a young Christian, I was not strong when it came to prayer. My times of prayer usually alternated between whining sessions, where I bemoaned all my problems before God, and quick, almost despairing pleas for help. A quick “Thanks, God!” seemed adequate when things went well.

I was living on a college campus in a rooming house with some Christian friends at the time, and some older brothers asked if they could come down and cook us breakfast on Saturdays. It seemed a bit strange, but we agreed. These four men were middle aged, mature Christians. I guess they felt burdened to help us grow.

We didn’t usually get up at 9:00 on Saturday mornings, and they often had to drag us out of bed. They fed us eggs and bacon with lots of coffee. Then came the Bible reading and prayer. Listening to these men pray was life changing for me. Some of them had walked with God for more than thirty years. The zeal and heart they put into their extensive times of thanksgiving and praise of God were new to me. To an impatient young guy like me, it seemed like a waste of time at first. It took a while, but I began to let them lead my thought and spirit upward, away from myself and toward God. I began to sense myself being filled with a vision of God in all his greatness and love. Later, when we moved to interceding for ministry and people, I noticed a different perspective: I could see who I was talking to. My usual cynicism and self-pity were banished. I felt the power of faith-based prayer.

I’ve read books on prayer since then, and even taken classes on it. But I doubt I could have learned as much so quickly any other way than sitting with older believers who knew how to pray.

Teach us to pray

Jesus was really into prayer.

According to Luke's account, "Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (5:16; see also 6:12 and 9:28). Then, on yet another occasion, "It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (11:1). After seeing Jesus pray so much, they apparently sensed their own need for instruction.

Paul's frequent references to his own prayer life show that he very consciously modeled prayer for his readers. He stresses that he regularly interceded for the churches (Phil. 1:4,9; Col. 1:3,9; 2 Thess. 1:11). He often stresses being devoted to prayer: "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2; see also Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; and 1 Thess. 5:17).

Paul's and Jesus' constant emphasis on prayer means we should emphasize prayer in our discipling ministries. Our disciples won't go far spiritually unless they become men and women of prayer. We have multiple areas to teach and model if we hope to foster a healthy prayer life in any disciple.

Getting started

Your first step is to get your disciple to pray with you. Most new Christians have never prayed with another person, and they may feel very uncomfortable doing so at first. You can just ask, “Do you mind if I pray about this?” Then offer a short, simple prayer and go on with the conversation. Remember not to make your prayers complicated, theological, or long. Any of these will intimidate new believers, who will then think they wouldn’t be able to do the same. They should hear you speaking simply, honestly, and personally, as though to a friend. Such prayer says to disciples, “You could do this.” The more you pray in the presence of your disciple, the less strange it will seem. It soon becomes natural to ask, “Why don’t we pray?” Once a disciple prays with you--no matter what was said--be sure to comment that you enjoyed being able to share coming before God together.

Any ongoing reluctance to pray will generally decline as you pray in your friend’s presence. Teaching about prayer will help the process along. We find that the more people learn about prayer, the more motivated they are to pray. ^[38]

Try introducing short prayers in the middle of conversations. For instance, your friend is sharing about something that is really bothering her say, “Why don’t we pray about this right now?” and if there’s no objection, quickly speak to God: “Lord, I sense this really bothers her, and we’d just like to ask for your help...” We find that frequent shorter prayers are better than infrequent, long prayers. Like any personal relationship, you don’t save up everything you have to say and dump it in a long monologue once a day. It’s more natural to speak to God as you go. Also, disciples should feel that entering into prayer doesn’t always have to involve setting aside an hour.

Taking initiative

Watch for your disciples to cross a significant frontier: the time when they suggest prayer. You want to see them become prayer initiators in their own right. This might happen with you or with others, but a key part of spiritual leadership is guiding others into prayer. If your disciple doesn't initiate prayer, you could simply ask, "Have you ever asked one of your roommates to pray with you?" Hopefully, over a period of months a new disciple will become comfortable initiating prayer with others.

At the same time, you should suggest beginning to develop the habit of a daily appointment with God. Most leaders agree: there is no substitute for this daily time reading God's word and praying. The morning is best because one's rapport with God tends to carry through the day. This daily appointment is a time when young Christians build their personal relationships with God. Teach them to approach this time with expectation that God may speak to them, either while they read the word or during prayer. Disciples' walks improve noticeably as they develop this habit. Once you've made the case for a personal time with God, merely asking disciples from time to time how their time is going will usually suffice to motivate them to develop and maintain this habit.

Many Christians have never fully come to grips with the solemn verdict of James 4:2: "You do not have because you do not ask." Let us never drift into fatalistic theology, believing that "whatever will happen, will happen." James makes it clear that when we pray we have the potential to change the course of eternity. But failure to pray can change the course of history also. Sadly, this verse could be chiseled into the spiritual headstones of many Christians: "He did not have because he did not ask." This verse teaches that, for our own good, God sometimes deliberately withholds blessing until we pray. Otherwise we may come to believe we are performing God's work through our own efforts.

Remember times in your own life when God answered prayer in a powerful or unexpected way, and tell these stories to your disciples. Your experience with God is one of the most powerful tools you have in impressing young believers with the truth. Such stories are far more powerful than we might expect.

Group prayer

Some people naturally pray in groups, but for others this is a major hurdle. If your disciples spontaneously pray in a Bible study or prayer group, don't miss the opportunity to share how edifying you thought their prayers were. Praying in public is a risky venture for anyone who hasn't grown up around church meetings where people pray. New Christians are afraid of sounding stupid, and they need immediate affirmation that their efforts to pray are appreciated and welcome.

What if a disciple doesn't choose to pray in public? Usually, the best place to start is with some teaching on why God teaches us to with fellow Christians. We may want to point out that Jesus taught us to pray, "Our father," not, "My father" (Mat. 6:9). Jesus' ideal prayer is corporate, not individual. He even seems to put special emphasis on corporate prayer in Matthew 18 when he says, "If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (v. 19).

You should teach disciples the difference between corporate and private prayer. Paul says when Christians assemble, "Let all things be done for edification" (1 Cor. 14:26). That means prayers for my sick aunt would usually be more appropriate in private, or with one or two friends, than in a Bible study group where most won't know who she is. In group prayer, we should ask God to give us a prayer that would edify the group. A praying group of Spirit-led Christians corporately try to sense the mind of the Spirit. They try to offer praise and thanksgiving for things that would make the group feel grateful. Such corporate thanksgiving is a way to guide the group into insight and appreciation of the great things of God.

Good corporate prayers are those that come before God in a way that is sensitive to any non-Christians present. Inside jargon and "Christianese" terminology should be avoided in these situations. This is the thought behind Paul's reproof of the insensitive tongues-speaking in Corinth. He points out, "You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified" (1 Cor. 14:17). Although the Corinthians' problem specifically involved praying in tongues without interpretation, the same principle would apply to any form of prayer that is unedifying, including prayers that alienate non-Christians (v. 23).

We find that as young Christians understand the importance of corporate prayer, they usually feel inwardly motivated to join in, but not always. You may need to challenge a disciple directly: "I enjoy praying with you so much, I just

wish the rest of the group had access to what you bring.” Or, you might take a questioning posture: “Have you ever thought about praying at the home group? What do you think is holding you back?”

Young Christians who pray in public expose their spirit to the body of Christ and publicly declare their faith. In a healthy group, that’s sure to be a nurturing experience that makes the young believer feel more a part of the group. God will directly bless any effort they make to pray with an inward sense that they have done the right thing and have given out instead of just taking in. As you encourage more of the same, you are laying the groundwork for a future ministry mindset that will extend into many other areas.

Thanksgiving

Teaching disciples to be thankful is a long-term project. Most of us are working on this ourselves at the same time, fighting our innate ingratitude daily. Still, we have to make the case for thankfulness with disciples if we want them to develop a healthy spiritual walk.

In Jesus' life we have a striking story that puts a point on the need for thanksgiving. He told ten lepers to go wash, and on the way, they were suddenly healed. One of the ten returned and thanked Jesus. We can hear a real note of astonishment in Jesus' reply: "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine--where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:17-18). Even the son of God seems to have been amazed (which didn't happen often) at the incredible omission of nine out of ten lepers to give thanks for such a remarkable healing! The more you think about it, the more you realize how strange this must have been. Can you imagine yourself walking along, and having your dreadful, incurable disease suddenly vanish? You look down and say, "Hey, that worked out well!" and go on about your business.

What's wrong with this picture?

The story of the ten lepers illustrates why God makes a major point out of thanksgiving. We need to teach our disciples that God doesn't call on us to give thanks for his benefit. He needs nothing from us. The point is entirely for our own benefit. We reveal our inner sickness when we receive even the most remarkable blessings from God and think so little of them that we "forget" to give thanks. These nine ungrateful lepers are a picture of us. God knows that humans have many problems, but few are as serious as our lack of gratitude. We are so self-centered that we can receive almost any amount of blessing and take it for granted. We tend to think far more about possible blessings we have *not* received than the multitude we already have received.

God's concern here is not the result of hurt feelings. Rather, he is concerned that such lack of gratitude signals a dark and deadly core of moral filth in the center of our beings. When we aren't thankful, we imply that all we have received is only fitting, and really deserved. Discontent signals that we are angry we haven't received even more. Anxiety signals our suspicion that God can't be trusted and that we have to meet our own needs. Selfishness like this will overthrow every aspect of spiritual growth unless we confront it powerfully. God wants to transform us from self-centered people who think everything should

revolve around us to others-centered people who live in self-giving love. That will never happen if we accept the legitimacy of our inner selfishness. Ingratitude is a clear signal that selfishness is ruling in our lives.

Rebellion against God is bad, too, and lack of gratitude is a major indicator of inner rebellion. Ungrateful people have never accepted the life and situation God has allotted to them. We are so resentful about our makeup and situation that it blots out everything good God has done for us. At times we see this clearly: how could anyone who has been rescued from hell at the incredible cost Jesus paid at the cross feel ungrateful? But how fleeting these moments can be! All too quickly our eyes are glued again on our frustrations and the things we lack.

Often you will meet with a disciple and find him morose and struggling. You have to be willing to enter into the pain he is feeling and explore the reasons for it. Shallow and simple answers serve only to alienate people. We will discuss counseling in a later chapter. In sum, if our disciples are discouraged and in defeat we also owe it to them to address ingratitude.

We have wonderful news in the midst of this dark picture of human fallenness. When God calls us to give thanks and praise, he does so not just because that's what we *should* be doing. Thanksgiving is also the medicine that has the power to heal that dark inner core of selfishness.

Yes, that's right: thanksgiving is not just the *result* of a change of heart; it can actually be a key *cause* of heart change. Young disciples tend to think the opposite. They believe that when they finally have inner peace and happiness, they will be thankful. But the linkage between these two is spelled out very clearly in Philippians 4:6-7. After saying, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God..." Paul continues the thought: "...and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

When we analyze the linkage between verses six and seven, we see the peace and happiness promised in verse seven are the direct result (and are conditional upon) the activities prescribed in verse six. Prayer is one of those activities, but we should teach our disciples that it's not enough to pray. The verse is clear that both prayer and thanksgiving are needed. Praying without thanksgiving may leave us just as carnally-minded, anxious, unbelieving, and discontent as ever.

Facing God and thanking him from the heart for who he is, for his

trustworthiness, and for what he has done has a profound effect on our spirits. Thanking God is an act of faith. To thank God, I have to acknowledge how good he is and all that he has done for me. We actually feel a change come over us as we move deeply into thanksgiving. The problems that seemed so hopeless just minutes ago seem to shrink before our eyes. As the lens of our mind pulls back from the rough and tumble of daily living to embrace the whole picture of an awesome God and his personal love and care, an inner relaxation spreads over our souls. ^[39]

Guiding our disciple into a time of thanksgiving won't solve all his problems. But it will put those problems in perspective. Repeatedly we have seen disciples wallowing in defeat, only to leave feeling full of the Holy Spirit mainly because we helped them move into a good session of thanksgiving to God. We may have to explain God's promises related to the current situation, and suggest we give thanks for those. Or, we could just begin thanking God while praying together and hope our disciple will pick up on our example.

After thanking God, we can move on to plead for answers to our requests. But our requests to God will be different. Because our perspective was aligned with the truth first, we approach our requests from a perspective of faith.

Chapter 8

Prayer II: Ministry and Prayer

Others-centered prayer

Jesus included another part in his ideal prayer *before* praying for daily bread: “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The believer’s prayer to see God’s kingdom built and expanded on earth is a prayer for victory in Christian ministry. This pattern of praying for the furtherance of God’s plan of rescue and for others’ spiritual needs before asking for our own needs matches the rest of the New Testament. Paul’s prayers are usually for others. Even when he asks for prayer for himself, it’s usually that he will be empowered to minister to others effectively (see e.g. Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1).

We should teach our disciples to match their priorities in prayer with their priorities in life. First is God. Focusing on him through thanksgiving and praise is the best way to begin a time of prayer. Next we could offer prayer for others. After reflecting on the faithfulness, power, and goodness of God, we know our problems are going to work out eventually anyway. When viewing ourselves in Christ, our concerns for self decline, while our concern for others takes center stage.

Over time you must convince your disciples that talking to God about people is even more important than talking to people about God. You’re hoping to see many things accomplished in ministry: people’s hearts coming under conviction, their eyes being opened, lives being changed, lost people being rescued, invisible evil spirits being dispossessed. None of these things can be accomplished through human ingenuity or will power! Nothing less than the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit will really change people’s lives or build the church.

When you pray for others with your disciples, you teach them through your modeling that God’s power is our only hope in witnessing, preaching, counseling, and motivating others. You should make this point explicitly when you pray together: “Lord, we know nothing we can do or say has any hope of success unless you empower it.” Every time you teach the word, you should pray (with your disciples if possible), “God, we ask that you take this utterance and

turn it into more than words. We are relying on your Spirit to fill these words with your supernatural power to pierce people's hearts."

Special prayer groups for the purpose of intercession are great to attend with disciples. If your church or home group has one, try to attend it regularly. You may well notice your disciples beginning to feel the pleasure of joining together with fellow servants of God before the throne of grace for an extended time of intercession. These prayer groups are unexcelled for staying in touch with the needs and struggles in fellow Christians' ministries. In addition, you and your disciple should commit to continue praying during the week for key needs in the group.

Don't forget to pray for each other. James says to "confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). By praying for your disciple while with her, you effectively model others-centered prayer. She will soon pick up on the example and pray for you, especially if you are being transparent about your needs and struggles.

If you succeed in teaching your disciples other-centered prayer, it will impact many other areas of their lives. The other-centered perspective is one of the central themes of real spiritual growth, and much of this kind of thinking begins with prayer.

Exploratory prayer

Prayers are not always declarations of thanks or declarations of need. Prayers can also be questions.

Jessica: When I first became a Christian leader, an older leader advised me, “Make sure you reserve a time each week to ask God questions about the people you will be leading.” It was such a simple yet powerful piece of advice. God reveals his wisdom about people so that we can serve them in a way that cooperates with what he is doing.

We can apply this same technique to ourselves, asking God to reveal which things about ourselves he is hoping to challenge. Ask along with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24).

We should come to God hoping to receive wisdom about our plans or direction. We hope each day to see where God is moving so we can work with him. When we approach God with an attitude of submission and discovery, he will give us a more spiritual perspective. Instead of saying to God, “Here are my plans, please bless them,” we should be asking, “What are your plans and how can I be involved?” This time of listening is also the time when God will reveal how we can bless, motivate, or encourage other believers. As we pray through a list of people in our group, God will often cause thoughts to enter our minds about what we could say the next time we see a friend.

Exploratory prayer is very subjective. As we are quiet before the Lord, we may receive subtle leadings in our thought patterns that gradually yield a new conviction on a certain topic. However, we may not always receive an answer to a question during the prayer time itself. We should view any revelation we receive, either during the prayer time or later, as answered prayer.

Praying in the name of Jesus

Our disciples won't be equipped to pray as they should unless we teach them the difference between general requests in prayer and those prayers that qualify as "asking in my name." In John 14:13-14 we read a remarkable promise Jesus made: "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." This apparent blank check from Christ is often misunderstood by young Christians. Why not just pray that everyone on earth receives Christ tomorrow? Believers often fail to notice the two qualifications on the promise.

First, the prayer must be "in my name." This expression means that the one praying should ask as Jesus' agent, or as one authorized by Jesus. Like an employee going to the paint store to order products for his boss on the company account, he is not authorized to order products for his own use at home. He is only to order what his boss wants. To pray in the name of Jesus doesn't mean simply saying the words "in Jesus name" at the end of a prayer. It means asking as Jesus would ask. This qualification is another way of saying the same thing as 1 John 5:14: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."

Jesus also mentions another condition for this blanket promise to answer any prayer. The prayer must be such "that the Son may bring glory to the Father." The implication is that prayers that wouldn't glorify the Father won't be answered. ^[40]

These qualifications are important because misinterpreting this verse as a promise to answer all prayers without qualification can lead to serious trouble. The infinite, personal God of the Bible can never be controlled by anybody, and any effort to do so is supremely irreverent and misguided. We need to warn our disciples against this dangerous misinterpretation.

In other cases, young believers are unable to reconcile Jesus' promise that God will grant all prayers with their observations that God clearly does not grant all prayers. The resulting confusion can undermine their confidence in scripture, or in prayer itself. A wise discipler will anticipate such problems and move to give answers.

Understanding the conditions on Jesus' sweeping promise to answer prayer in no way nullifies the promise. No, God won't grant requests that are against his will. But we have extensive knowledge about the will of God. For instance, Paul

says, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). Talk about a sweeping statement! This passage teaches that whenever we pray for help with an area of sin, we know God’s will. Likewise, we know God’s will when we pray that a friend would gain victory over sin. That means Jesus’ promise applies. We don’t need to ask in uncertainty, *hoping* God will answer. We should pray for deliverance from sin in the name of Jesus, knowing in faith that he *will* answer.

These are the cases where James’ teaching applies: “He must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:6-8).

You should teach your disciples what we can pray for in the name of Jesus, and what we can pray for anyway, but without the same certainty that God will answer. By teaching your disciples what God promises, you can also teach them to pray based on biblical authority, and claim the promises of God in faith. The result will be a more confident and powerful prayer life. For instance, a believer preparing to teach a Bible study may pray that God will empower his speech for the good of the group, but may doubt whether God will answer the prayer. But based on the command that we should “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2), and that his word is effective for changing lives (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Is. 55:11), this believer should be praying in Jesus’ name and in full assurance of faith.

Disciples who learn to wield the power of prayer in ministry are well on their way to a lifetime of fruitful spiritual service.

Spiritual warfare

Paul warns, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12). Learning to confront and overcome Satan and evil spiritual powers is essential to the growth of any disciple. Prayer is only one of the weapons prescribed for this conflict, but it plays a central role.

Satan has important advantages over Christians. He is more intelligent and experienced than any of us. His forces are numerous and generally more disciplined than Christians. Unlike humans, they don’t get tired or distracted. They are relentless, whereas we tend to give up or slack off.

Yet, we have our advantages as well. In the first place, God is on our side—an advantage that should be decisive. “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world,” declares John (1 John 4:4). Paul adds the thought that “the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” (2 Cor. 10:4).

But we have another key advantage that we need to teach our disciples how to use. We gain an advantage because Satan tends to work in *relatively predictable ways*. Paul says Satan won’t take advantage of us, because “we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Cor. 2:11). By knowing how Satan works we are in a position to anticipate his moves and meet them with the power of God through prayer based in truth.^[41]

What are these “schemes” of Satan? Since ancient times Satan has used deception, temptation, and accusation as his main avenues for attacking Christians and non-Christians alike. If our disciples know how these tactics work, they will learn to recognize Satan’s voice in their lives and in the lives of those they serve.

While we teach our disciples how Satan works, we will also likely need to undo some of their thinking about Satan. God’s true enemy is not the being portrayed in popular movies and books. Are we likely to see Satan appear as a flaming monster’s head? Are we likely to see people flung across the room or through a window by a demon? These are the secular visions of Satan grounded in Hollywood. We have to persuade our disciples that the power and weakness of Satan have more to do with truth and deception than anything else.

When Paul describes our “divinely powerful weapons” that can demolish fortresses in 2 Corinthians 10, he goes on to explain, “We are destroying

speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Speculations, knowledge, and thoughts: these are the language of ideas and belief. He seems to be saying that this battle is an ideological struggle and that our minds are the battleground. When Jesus confronted Satan in the wilderness his consistent reply to each temptation was, “It is written...” (Luke 4:1-13). The power of truth withstands and overthrows all of Satan’s lies. This indicates how you should teach our disciples to withstand Satan in prayer—by wielding the power of God’s truth.

Young Christians often believe what Satan tells them. His suggestions come as inner thoughts. They have incredible plausibility because he knows how to develop maximum persuasion based on his observations of individual tendencies and life circumstances. Satan continually tries to guide believers into interpreting their world in a way that undermines faith and puts self at the center. Just as God wants to foster thanksgiving, Satan tries to foster discontent with what God provides and anxiety about whether he will provide in the future. He tries to convince believers that their ministry plans or intentions to witness will never work. He wants them to believe that God would never honor the efforts of such unworthy and unfaithful people anyway. According to Satan, God looks down at us in continual disappointment and disapproval. If your disciples believe any part of these lies, they could be headed for outright defeat in spiritual warfare.

When Satan lies to Christians the stakes are very high. These lies are intended to manipulate believers’ minds, and once we believe one lie it becomes much easier to believe the next. And the lies come in bunches. Satan actually weaves a web of lies as the implications of one lead to another. Temptations, accusations, and deceptions pile on top of one another, creating so much confusion and doubt that Satan may be able to virtually take over a believer’s mind. The believer is usually completely unaware that he is thinking thoughts from Satan. It all just seems so obvious! So undeniable!

This kind of takeover of the believer’s thought life by Satan is not demon possession. He is not being *over-powered* by Satan (which could never happen to a Christian, according to 1 John 4:4). Rather, he is being *persuaded* by Satan, having chosen to believe the super-plausible ideas presented by a being far more brilliant than himself. Unless the downward spiral is interrupted, believers could end up in “the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Tim.2:26). Peter asked Ananias in amazement, “How is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit...?” (Acts 5:3). When a

believer's heart is "filled with Satan" he isn't possessed. He simply has believed so many lies that he completely loses his way spiritually. Yet at any time, he can return to believing what God says and overthrow the whole house of cards.

Here we see the importance of praying the truth. As your disciples learn to pray using the words of faith based on God's truth, Satan's lies lose their effectiveness. A shame-filled young Christian coming before the Lord could point out, "I feel so unworthy and distant from you God, but your word declares that you see me as 'the righteousness of Christ'" (2 Cor. 5:21). A young Christian worker who has lost all confidence to witness because of an overwhelming sense of unworthiness could pray using Paul's words, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant..." (2 Cor. 3:5-6).

A dating single woman under temptation could pray, "God, I know Satan wants me to believe that your provision for love in my life is inadequate. He wants me to surrender to sexual temptation so I won't be rejected by my guy. But I believe you when you say in your word, 'And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus'" (Phil. 4:19). Here is the perfect retort to Satan's accusations. Just as Jesus uttered the words, "It is written" to refute Satan's suggestions, we can teach our disciples how to match up God's promises against Satan's lying suggestions when they pray. With our persistence in praying the truth, his lies lose some of their power.

This is where the struggle comes in. You need to teach your disciples that they will have to struggle sometimes for a prolonged period to believe God's promises. This explains verses in the New Testament like Romans 15:30, "Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (See also Col. 4:12). If you understand prayer, you should know that we have no need to strive with God, because he's on our side. No amount of pressure from us will change his will. To the contrary, we struggle in prayer with Satan and our own fleshly nature. When exercising their choice to believe God rather than Satan, your disciples have to struggle with ongoing inner skepticism about what God says. If they win through, they are using the shield of faith that will extinguish the fiery darts Satan is firing at them (Eph. 6:16).^[42]

Most young Christians don't pray this way. Normal "instinctive" prayer is based on one's feelings. They reflect their feelings to God and plead for change. In doing this, they miss the key to victorious prayer: the truth. Praying the truth,

backed by biblical authority, and battling to believe that truth, is a new skill for most disciples.

Ephesians 6:18 shows us not only a practice that you need to teach disciples (intercession), but also an attitude. The notions of alertness and perseverance are both important when it comes to spiritual warfare.

Alertness is important because of the stealth of Satan. He often does his work without anyone realizing what he is doing. Our superior power never comes into play because we were too dopey and muddled to realize he was working.

Perseverance is important because Satan is relentless. He follows one attack with another, constantly probing for weakness. If we could offer a prayer that would end spiritual warfare, we all would have prayed it long ago. In a game of basketball, you can call time-out when you get tired or hurt. But in war, there's no time-out. Imagine yourself on the field of battle standing up and holding your hands out, crying, "Time-out!" You can take a time-out if you want to, but your enemy isn't going to stop. The fact that you're tired or injured is probably a good reason for him to press the attack harder than ever.

Persistence, alertness, intercession, praying the truth, and battling to believe the truth—these are the weapons of our warfare. If we teach and model their use with our disciples, we will help them avoid heartbreaking defeat in their own lives and in any groups they may later lead.

When you successfully disciple your people in prayer, they will come to love praying with thanksgiving, praying in Jesus' name, praying for others, and praying in a personal way.

Chapter 9

Counseling

Experienced disciple makers know that character and personal problems block disciples' progress more than anything else. Teaching people about the Bible, how to pray, and why the things of God matter are all important. But it's not enough to learn what the Bible says; we also have to live it. Without real character transformation, we never reach our central goal of providing the Body of Christ with leaders and role models who can facilitate multiplication. That's why you should be ready to move into any and every area of a disciple's life with godly wisdom.

Our disciples will need advice and help in a thousand areas--relational, functional, emotional, and even physical. When helping in these areas, you act in the role of counselor. Paul says, "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish [counsel] one another" (Rom. 15:14). He also says, "Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives" (Col. 3:16). The early church had no professional counselors like we do today. People in the body of Christ helped each other as they were able. We believe this should still happen, especially with the ninety-plus percent of people's problems that are not clinical.

What about professional counseling?

In the modern world, people who need counseling go to a professional and pay an hourly fee for help. This could be a good idea. As Christian lay counselors, we should work along with professional Christian counselors, not against them. Good disciplers have learned how to recognize when they are in over their heads with clinical cases. If our friend needs professional care and we try to handle it instead of referring them, we may do serious damage.

So when should you refer a friend to professional counseling? If you find yourself dealing with any of the following, you may need to seek immediate help:

- Suicidal thinking
- Schizophrenia or other psychoses
- Clinical depression
- Extreme and unexplained mood swings
- Situations involving violence, including child abuse
- Some anxiety disorders
- Personality disorders

In [Appendix 8](#) we include an article from a Christian psychiatrist on some of the things to look for when trying to determine whether to refer your friend to professional counseling. If you are in doubt, you may want to play it safe and refer your disciple to a trusted Christian professional for assessment. Many churches have professional counselors either on staff or with whom they have developed a good relationship.

Even if your friend goes into counseling, you should remain engaged with the situation. As someone who is actually in regular daily contact and who lives in community with the disciple, you are in a position to add significantly to what the counselor brings. People who work with both clinical counselors and competent disciplers consistently do better than those with clinical counseling alone. Professional counselor Larry Crabb complains,

We have produced a generation of therapists, an army of counselors trained to do battle with problems they poorly understand because they have spent more time in classrooms becoming experts than in God's presence becoming elders. We have lost interest in

developing mentors, wise men and women who know how to get to the real core of things and who have the power to bring supernatural resources to bear on what's wrong.^[43]

We believe good disciple makers should be able to counsel people in many situations, often gaining results that go well beyond expectations.

Dennis: One young man came to me with serious mental problems. He had attempted suicide a month earlier and almost succeeded. He was even diagnosed as schizophrenic, but later the diagnosis was modified to “clinically depressed with psychotic features.” He was sullen, withdrawn, self-absorbed, and anti-social. His doctors prescribed a range of drugs, which seemed to help only marginally.

Because of his hungry heart and his urgent pleas, I began meeting with him weekly for discipleship, and he became a part of my home church and men's cell group. Later still, he moved into a ministry house related to our home church. My assessment was that his problems were multi-factorial, not all physical or chemical. Many of his emotional problems were really theological and identity-related. His drug use, philandering with women, and inability to develop healthy relationships seriously aggravated his other problems. His doctors agreed with this assessment.

Today, he has gradually been taken off all his medicine, and has become a friendly, relatively well-adjusted young man. He still occasionally struggles with depression, but he became engaged with the other men in our community, and developed a personal ministry, including discipling younger men. Later, he married, and he and his wife are now leaders in their own house church. Nobody would ever guess today that this guy was near death and institutionalization just a few years ago!

I'm not suggesting that my work caused this striking recovery. I'm sure I made a certain contribution, and so did his doctor. Also, the young man himself was highly motivated and willing to take strong measures in his life. Finally, the body of Christ in a healthy home church made important contributions. This is the way it should be. No discipler should see himself as the only source of help for a disciple, but should draw on any and all avenues through which God may work.

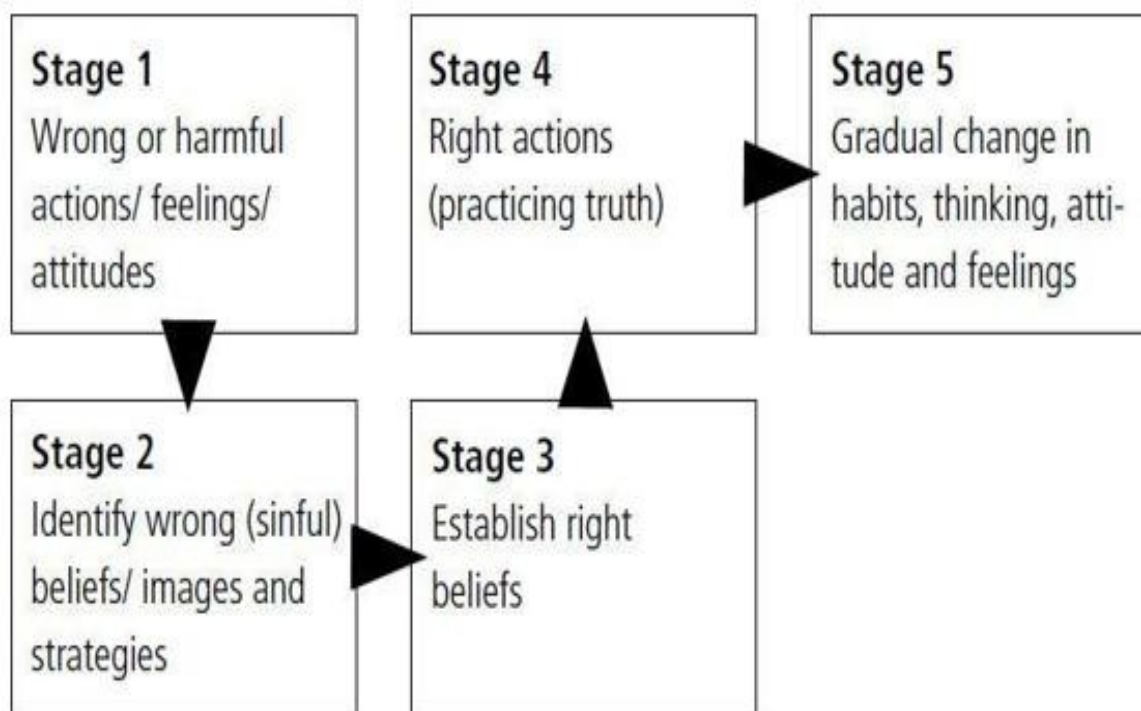
Wise professional counselors welcome the help of lay people who will follow up with their clients. Most people need regular help, not just an hour-long session weekly or monthly, and some pills.^[44]

Lay counseling

Most people's problems are not clinical but may still be serious enough to block their growth and development as healthy people. In these areas you need to be ready to deliver good counsel.

In the Bible, a number of different words are related to counseling. The biblical authors expect regular Christians to minister in all these ways.^[45] Most of us counsel our friends without thinking about it, naturally suggesting solutions, or offering advice when people bring up problems. When our advice is informed by biblical principles and spiritual maturity, that advice may be very helpful.

This is not a book on counseling. But we will suggest several typical areas that may need attention, along with some general directions to move in counseling. When considering how to counsel people, consider the following diagram:



Rather than try to move people from Stage 1 to Stage 4 (which could be simple legalism), we need to identify the underlying belief structures that fuel the person's pattern of sin. By working on belief systems first, you have the best chance of avoiding mere legalistic, external change accompanied with liberal amounts of fakery. Real change comes from deep within as a person adopts

God's perspective on life, and then sees the Holy Spirit empower God's word for change.

We hope these thoughts will spark some ideas, and your own creativity and life-experience can build from there. This chapter is rather long, so you could skip areas of counseling that don't apply with your disciple. For more detailed coverage visit the *Organic Discipleship* website.

Typical areas to counsel: Inter-personal conflict

People are continually falling into fights with each other, and your disciples will certainly have this problem as well. In fact, studies show that the closer a group of people are, and the more urgently they feel about their shared goals, the more likely—and the more violent--conflict becomes. This means that a close, well-motivated local church could become a hotbed of conflict.

Conflict provides one of the best areas to develop and display the character of Christ. Too often, conflict instead derails believers' spiritual growth and even results in permanent alienation and defection from the body of Christ. Every pastor or Christian leader knows that we lose more people to conflict than almost any other cause. Marriages and families are also often damaged by immature approaches to conflict.

Conflict is not necessarily bad; indeed, groups devoid of conflict are most likely dysfunctional. Groups can only avoid conflict in one of two ways: they either avoid talking about controversial issues, in a form of groupthink, or they stay so disengaged that nobody cares enough about what happens in the group to argue. Conflict is often the occasion for creative thought. Opposition from others might make us rethink our position and come up with new solutions that are often better than the original idea.^[46]

Mature Christians develop a marvelous ability to engage in conflict with edifying and peaceful results. They know how to argue their case without alienating others. When alienation does occur, whether between themselves and others, or between third parties, they know how to reconcile.

As a disciple maker, you will need to counsel and train your disciples in mature conflict management early and often. We routinely study Ken Sande's excellent book *The Peacemaker* with disciples.^[47] This book is loaded with biblical principles and has a great history of helping believers avoid the pitfalls of unrighteous conflict. When counseling conflict problems, consider the following points (most of which are expanded in Sande's book):

- The first step in any conflict is for believers to adopt the right perspective. Instead of seeing the conflict as an occasion to get their own way, or as a nuisance to be avoided, mature believers see each conflict as a stewardship from God. In a conflict, we have the opportunity to display the power, love, and wisdom of God. When we stop seeing the conflict as mainly a horizontal

engagement with our opponents and begin seeing it as something God has let happen in our lives, our eyes go to him. He will begin to show us the things we need to see in order to resolve the conflict his way. Paul teaches, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31), and this includes conflict. Sande says, “In conflict, we show that we either have a big God, or we have a big ego and big problems.”^[48]

- After taking conflict to God and offering ourselves as his servants, ready to do as he directs, the next step is to “take the plank out of our own eye.” Jesus said, “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Mat 7:5). Normally, we want our opponents to see what is wrong with their position. But if we aren’t willing to see where we are in the wrong, we become hypocrites, as Jesus suggests. Before God, we have to think through where we may be in the wrong in terms of projecting hostility, showing insensitivity, failure to listen patiently, using punishing behavior, impatience, or a host of other possible sins. You need to patiently guide your disciples into facing their own fault *before* moving on to deal with the fault of their adversaries.

- Next, you should counsel your disciples to purpose in their hearts to go and repent to their opponents, asking forgiveness for their own moral failures in the conflict. In most conflicts, a negative rhythm is in place: “I’m in the right!” “No, you’re in the wrong!” “No, *you’re* in the wrong!” and so forth. When a mature believer comes back to an opponent and says, “Guess what. *I’m* in the wrong,” he disrupts this negative rhythm and replaces it with something new: humility. At that point the door usually opens to progress and godly resolution.

Remind disciples that their repentance should be honest--not apologizing for things they never did, not portraying sin as a “mistake,” and not denying intent or responsibility. Their repentance should also be unqualified--not saying “I’m sorry if you were offended by what I said” or, “I shouldn’t have shouted, but I was really tired” or, “I was wrong, but so were you.” These

qualifications or “if” statements spoil the good effects of the repentance and are really a manifestation of pride and self-protection. Finally, any repentance should be unconditional--not confessing wrongdoing in the hope of pressuring your opponent to do likewise.

- Once your disciples inject humility and repentance into the conflict, they are in a position to deal, if necessary, with removing the speck in their opponents’ eyes. Conflict and bitterness are often fueled by self-righteous indignation. After coming to grips with their own fault, it will be far easier to forgive from the heart. You should cover biblical principles of forgiveness like Ephesians 4: 32: “And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Unless your disciples are prepared to forgive from the heart, they have little chance of resolving serious conflict.

- Next comes the decision about how to handle the substance of opponents’ wrong positions or sinful actions. First consider the option mentioned in Proverbs 19:11: “A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.” Particularly when an offense isn’t that serious, the best response is often to drop it unilaterally. Then they can go on to deal with other issues. Such a response is not phony or cowardly, but gracious. Unless they are able to overlook minor offenses, they will contribute to a critical, hard-line atmosphere that poisons close fellowship and cooperation. You should teach your disciples to avoid becoming hard-liners who terrorize those around them, or they will never become effective servants of God. Study proverbs like the following with your disciples: “A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult” (Prov. 12:16; see also Prov. 15:18; 20:3; 17:14 NASB).

- Alternatively, you may conclude that some issues are so important that they need to be addressed by reproof, admonition, or negotiation. Read our later chapter on reproof and admonition (Chapter 10, “Encountering Lack of Progress”), so we will not deal with those here. Reproof and admonition are for moral problems and require repentance for the sake of our opponents’ well-being. Here we see the importance of dealing with our own wrongdoing first. If we find it necessary to confront wrongdoing

by our opponents, our humility and empathy make it far more likely that we will be heard.

- Negotiation is for issues about which we may disagree, but which do not involve sin.^[49]

A disciple who is equipped and trained in godly conflict management stands heads and shoulders above most Christians in ability to work effectively with people. You will never regret the hours you spend teaching and persuading your disciples to follow God's pattern for conflict resolution. Usually, once a disciple goes through one conflict in a godly way, he or she will find it much easier in subsequent conflicts, and you won't have to coach as much.

You can see from this section that, as a disciple maker, you are in a position to offer terrific help when counseling common areas of need in your disciple's life. In the following areas, we will avoid going into the same level of detail, but more is available at our website for those interested in further reading.

Typical areas to counsel: Self-absorption

We may have disciples who virtually never stop thinking about themselves. Depression and defeat usually result. Even when they are with other people, self-absorbed people either cannot stop talking about themselves, or else they may sit withdrawn, wondering what others think of them.

How can we help such people? Typical steps include:

1. **Awareness and understanding.** Self-centeredness is wrong. Disciples must first set a goal to overcome self-absorption based on biblical teaching and God's power. They need to learn what others-centeredness means and why a life of self-giving love leads to fulfillment (Luke 9:23-24). Deliverance from self-absorption begins in people's own minds as they learn to tear their eyes off of self and onto God and others.
2. **Practical ideas.** We suggest specific actions, or field assignments, that might help disciples make progress in learning how to center their attention on others. These could be actions taken in conversation with others along the lines suggested in our chapter on friendship building. We might also suggest guided reflection on others while alone.
3. **Support and encouragement.** Check back to see how the field experience went, discussing problems or successes. If your person is confused or unable to perform, you may have to go along and model the behavior yourself. Then suggest a next step for further progress.

Working with self-absorbed people is slow, patient work. Only regular checkups on how the problem is coming, along with a stream of suggested countermeasures will likely result in lasting change.

Eventually, we should begin to notice the person "taking off" in the sense that she realizes how to continue developing others-centeredness on her own, without detailed coaching. We are left in a position where we can use generous amounts of encouragement to press on.

Anyone who is extremely self-absorbed will likely continue to struggle with that tendency for years, maybe for life. But we have seen some remarkable and permanent turn-arounds. What a fantastic victory, to see someone tied up within herself become one who can creatively move into other people's lives in a loving way! This is such a powerful gift to bestow that we will feel gratified years afterward knowing we had a part in it.

Typical areas to counsel: High expectation relating

Personal relationships are at the heart of Christian living and ministry. When you are discipling in community, you should be in a position to watch your disciples relate to their friends. You can also gain insight into their relational tendencies from your own relationships with them. As you gain information over a period of months, you may begin to notice patterns of strength or deficiency that point to opportunities for encouragement or for needed change.

For instance, you may find that your disciple exhibits a pattern of placing high expectations on others. These become apparent when your person is continually offended or disappointed by others' actions or omissions. Such people are "hard to please" or "high maintenance" in their relationships. They seem to feel like they deserve a certain standard of treatment from others. Properly understood, these expectations are really love demands that make a person a love-taker rather than a love-giver.

You can discern high expectations when your person regularly complains about friends. Or, you may hear your disciple describing how his feelings were hurt in situations that sound suspicious—the incident doesn't seem like it would have been that hurtful. You begin to realize that your disciple is "thin-skinned." Of course, you can't tell whether the complaints are legitimate just by listening to your disciple, because high-expectation people are able to demonize those they complain against in a way that sounds awful. Here is where being in community together makes all the difference. Your knowledge of the other people involved may contradict what you hear in your disciple's complaints. You may even have been present during an interaction that is later characterized in a way you know is exaggerated or wrong.

Even when he has been wronged, you may sense a larger problem with the high-expectation person's inability to forgive. High expectations seem to go along with an exacting perspective that can't overlook offenses, even when they are minor. This perspective tends to be judgmental, even reading into people's motives in a negative way.

When people believe that their relational expectations are legitimate, those expectations ruin one relationship after another. These expectations are a system of rules that nobody but the love-demander knows or accepts. Consequently, love-demanders are never satisfied with their relationships for long. They punish others for not following their list of rules, creating more hard feelings. Their

refusal to forgive leads them to build ongoing cases against people. They manifest bitterness and suspicion. How can we help such people?

1. **Awareness and understanding.** Helping high-expectation people overcome their weakness can be a real wrestling match. They are convinced that their expectations are only reasonable. They can't understand why anyone would question their right to feel offended or hurt. It all just seems so unavoidable! But we know this approach to relationships is morally wrong (Eph. 4:32). It is also disastrous practically, leading to serial friendships and alienated marriages. As difficult as it is for such people to accept, their way of life falls far short of God's call to Christian love.

Through a process of teaching and admonition we gradually convince disciples that God calls us to a better way. Studying what scripture teaches about love, we learn that real sacrificial love doesn't have high expectations or even low expectations; It has no expectations! Paul explains that "love is patient." (1 Cor. 13:4) That means that people's disappointing behavior doesn't hurt our feelings or offend us. Instead, we see these as areas of need in another, and patiently work with them to see change.

He also says love "is not provoked." (1 Cor. 13:5) In other words, if a loving person becomes angry, it isn't because he lost his temper or took offense. Anger would only be manifested for the good of another. In some cases, a controlled show of anger may be necessary in order to make a point. But it would never be an indulgence of the flesh.

That's because love "doesn't take into account a wrong suffered." (1 Cor. 13:5) It's not that loving people don't suffer wrongs, but that they don't take them into account. This seemingly unlimited reservoir of forgiveness is only available to those who have come to grips with their own unlimited forgiveness from God. Paul even says that love "bears all things" and "endures all things." (1 Cor. 13:7) This picture of a loving person points to someone who is extremely easy to please in relationships. When a loving person holds another accountable to some relational standard, he does so only for the good of the other, not because he feels slighted and is protecting himself.

We need to convince our disciple that failure to forgive from the heart is one of the real serious sins a person can commit. Jesus' emphatic language

signals how important he thought this was: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Mat. 6:14, 15) We should feel grateful that this formula reflects a law, rather than a grace perspective. Jesus often taught the true intent of the law of God when he was refuting the Pharisee’s watered down version of the law.

A grace version of the same teaching says, “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). In this grace version, our forgiveness is not contingent on whether we forgive, but has already been given. Our response to being forgiven should be just as sweeping as Jesus suggests. Paul makes this even more clear in another passage: “bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” (Col. 3:13) “Whoever” and “anyone” are very inclusive terms. It’s hard to find exceptions here, especially when Paul clarifies by comparing our forgiveness of others to God’s forgiveness of us. The truth will be hard for our high-expectation disciples (and really everyone) to accept, but God calls on Christians to forgive everyone for anything.

In most situations, judging others is also a very serious sin according to the Bible. Paul says, “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things” (Rom. 2:1). This statement is invariably true. We don’t have to watch for long before we find our high-expectation friend doing the same kind of thing he resents so much in others. In another passage, Paul pleads, “You, then, why do you judge your brother?” (Rom. 14:10).

He is especially critical of one who would try to judge another’s motives: “Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God” (1 Cor. 4:5). Assigning sinister motives to others results in constant division and unrighteous judgment. How difficult it will be for high-expectation people to change in this area!^[50]

As with other problem areas, then, our first hurdle will be the high-expectation person's blindness to his own sin. Before we see any change, the person must admit in his own mind that his expectations are no longer legitimate once his sights are set on practicing real biblical love. Through teaching, study, and discussion, you will have to gradually make the case for what real love is, and watch to see if your disciple understands the difference between the biblical picture and his own pattern of relating to others. You can usually use a questioning approach to guide people into self-discovery. Studying good books like Larry Crabb's *Understanding People* can help the process.^[51]

2. **Practical ideas.** Gaining insight is a first step. But action is different. Once you've had discussions with a friend about how his relational habits fall short of God's call in this area, you are in a position to help them make progress in applying their earlier insight. Suppose another situation arises where your disciple feels offended or hurt by someone in the church. You may let their tirade pass at first, but later come back to the situation and ask, "So, do you think that might be another case of the high-expectations we were discussing earlier?"

Whether or not he agrees, this should lead to another discussion of the problem. If you are unable to convince him, you could consider dropping the idea and waiting for God to drive the point home in the following days. But if you feel no progress is being made, you may feel led to argue the case more forcefully. Pacing is important. So is prayer. This is patient work, described by Paul as "agonizing for you." (Col. 2:1 NLT) You don't want to nag your disciple, or seem so critical that he closes up and stops sharing his feelings. But if you don't press for change, you're not loving your disciple.

When working with a problem this serious and pervasive, remember that you may not be able to completely fix the problem. You're just looking for progress. Once disciples gain insight, the next step is trying to live out the biblical perspective. Working with personal forgiveness and projecting the grace of God in relationships takes creativity from your disciple and from you. We usually find that once high-expectation people accept God's view that their love demands are wrong, progress is noticeable from that point on, especially if you suggest ways to respond to hard feelings and situations. Struggling in prayer to adopt a gracious, Christ-like perspective on personal hurts is central.

3. **Support and encouragement.** Growing Christians tend to develop a deepening appreciation for forgiving and accepting others because the Holy Spirit guides them in this direction. But you can move this process forward more quickly by helping people see God's viewpoint in relational situations and by encouraging them when they respond in a more godly way. This includes calling their attention to how much better things go when they drop their expectations on others, and focus on giving instead.

Although relational habits like having high expectations, judging others, and inability to forgive are hardly unusual, they are potentially devastating, and change is difficult. In the most striking cases, we have seen significant change in as little as a year. But in most cases, helping someone with this kind of problem is a multi-year project, and even then, change will be only partial. Your goal is clear: helping the person reach a point where he can build and maintain deep relationships, including a successful family. Unless he reaches this point, he is too immature to lead in the church.

When reflecting on the field of relational counseling you can see why so many Christian workers choose to focus on outward actions and sins of the flesh while ignoring inward problems like high expectation relating. Tangling with an entrenched relational pattern like this is just too difficult and messy for anyone who demands quick results. Therefore, you should continually seek out God, asking for a positive vision for disciples who struggle in these areas. God has a vision for them, and we must adopt that vision as our own.

Typical areas to counsel: Sexuality

In our fallen world, most people's sexuality is damaged to one extent or another. Western culture with its loose sexual practices makes it more likely that the damage will be severe. Those discipling singles or young married couples today are regularly challenged by profound sexual problems in their disciples.

Compounding the difficulty is the fact that people's sexuality is one of the most shame-producing areas of life. People bearing a burden of shame become less willing to admit their problems, even to close friends. You may find yourself relating to someone for some time with no idea that a serious sexual issue and heart-wrenching shame lie under the surface. It helps if you anticipate such problems and watch for the signs.

The scope of possible trouble in this area is immense. You could be dealing with someone who is promiscuous and has developed a profoundly sub-biblical view of the opposite sex, as well as a loss of self-control. You may be dealing with someone who has become aversive to sex because of past experiences ranging from rape to molestation to personal failure in previous sexual relationships. We may have to work with people who have obsessive sexual fixations. Homosexual practice or urges are also common.

Sexual sin or dysfunction is a messy area, but this area is so important it could derail all our efforts to train up mature disciples. Paul puts sexual sin in a special category in 1 Corinthians 6:18, saying, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body." He argues in this passage that nothing is more damaging than sexual immorality. People struggling with problems in this area often have difficulty drawing close to God and others because of their feelings of shame. They may have difficulty building successful marriages and families as well. Because the area of sexual dysfunction and sin is so immense, we can't hope to fully address it here. But several things are clear and you should keep these in mind as you struggle with your friends:

First, Jesus Christ changes lives, and this includes entrenched sexual problems. While change in the sexual area can be painstakingly slow, we have no reason to be fatalistic. Unlike people in the world who believe that you are what you are and it can't (and probably shouldn't) be helped, we know better. Our church's ministry in disciple making has resulted in hundreds of examples of restored lives in this area. In fairness, there have been many failures as well. But God has the power and is willing to exert it for change in the life of anyone

who follows him fully.

Second, deliverance may not be complete. At the very least, people with negative sexual habits will continue to feel temptation in those areas, often for the rest of their lives. But let's face it: we all feel sexual temptation in some area. We can anticipate deliverance to the degree that our disciples will be able to form successful marriages.

Third, with serious, pathological sexual problems, we may need to seek help from a professional. Pedophilia, molestation, rape, fetishism, and homosexuality are examples of problems that may be too severe to handle without professional help. Just make sure the professional you enlist to help isn't going to tell a disciple in sexual sin that there's nothing wrong with him and he just needs to learn to accept himself. You would be better to work alone than to bring in a voice that speaks in harmony with Satan.

Fourth, you may want to study the particular problem your disciple has, especially if it is exotic or unusual. Guesswork in these cases is dangerous. By gaining a basic understanding of the causes of unusual sexual problems you will be better able to devise a strategy for change. Disciples with sexual compulsions, fetishism, wrongful orientations, or strange aversions, including frigidity, can be helped--but you will have to do the reading.

Finally, in this area more than any other, we face difficulty even persuading our disciples to disclose their problems. Yet disclosure is one of the most healing things they can do. We find that the power of sexual sin is magnified greatly by secrecy. The first step in appropriating the power of God for change is bringing the problem into the light. Satan binds people in failure by convincing them that their problems are unique and hopeless. He keeps them from admitting problems with dreadful threats that everyone will reject them and be totally grossed out if they confess. In this way, he seals them away from others' help and adds to their sense of shame, because keeping things secret means they also become deceivers and hypocrites.

Whenever a disciple discloses a serious sexual problem, we have a unique opportunity to display the grace of God through our understanding and empathetic response. We can quickly move to counter their fatalistic sense that they will never change. Given these caveats, we can move into a typical pastoral counseling approach:

1. **Awareness and understanding.** We should begin with a thorough study of God's ideals for sexuality. People who gain victory over sexual sin or pathology do so because they are intent on acquiring something better.

Further tirades on how sinful their problems are usually don't help, unless the person hasn't accepted that the problem involves sin in the first place. Learning right from wrong in the sexual area is necessary, but even more helpful is a vision for what the believer can have if he follows God's pattern for sexual love. Reading good books on the subject can help impart a sense of vision for a more positive sexual future.

2. **Practical ideas.** Once your disciple adopts a biblical view of sexuality, you need to discuss a practical plan for restoration. Depending on the problem, such a plan could vary greatly. For instance, someone who is promiscuous may need to strictly limit time alone with dates, or even 'dry out' for awhile without dating. A man addicted to pornography may need to agree to have his computer filtered or monitored with accountability software, giving the password to someone reliable. Your plan may include learning to develop successful non-sexual personal relationships with the opposite or the same sex. We have learned that healthy, serving human relationships are the perfect replacement for sexual obsession. The things we learn about ourselves through deep relationships are the very lessons that will heal us more than anything else. Finally, be sure to get advice from experienced pastoral counselors or Christian leaders who have experience working with the same problem.
3. **Support and encouragement.** Once your disciple agrees to a course of action, you can help by regularly asking how things are going. By developing a level of accountability, you can strengthen your disciple's will power. Often, if you see a period of success accompanied by positive developments in other areas of life, you're on the way to lasting change. So many disciples suffering from sexual problems find that gaining a sense of vision for being used by God and building successful other-centered love relationships leads major change. However, be ready for relapses. Relapses are extremely common with sexual problems, because the sexual urge is powerful and never ceases. Each failure must be admitted, the grace of God claimed, and the person must really repent.

Helping a disciple struggle through a sexual problem is another example of why making real disciples is thorny, frustrating, and costly. But for those willing to pay the price, the reward is spiritual authenticity, including eventually, successful families.

Typical areas to counsel: Marriage

We have to work with married disciples on the biggest area of their lives: their families. Again, marriage and family counseling are such vast areas of need that we can only mention some of the most common areas and refer you to further reading.

- Some marriages are “unequally yoked” (2 Cor. 6:14). In an unequally yoked marriage, one spouse is far more interested in pursuing the things of God than the other. Sometimes one spouse may be a non-Christian or an ambiguous Christian, meaning that his or her testimony is unclear and you see no evidence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the uninterested spouse.
- Sexual dysfunction is also common in marriages and may come up in discipleship. Here, some good reading in the field of marriage counseling can help. [\[52\]](#)
- In the field of parenting we commonly see two areas that may need attention: failure to invest and avoiding extremes in the permissive-controlling continuum. If you share insight with your disciples in a way that helps them win their kids over to a life centered on God and his values, you will have helped both your disciple and the kids in a profound way. See the *Organic Disciple Making* website for more ideas in these areas.

Typical areas to counsel: Avarice

In our opinion, materialistic greed is the greatest enemy of spirituality in the American church. The Bible teaches strongly against greed. Paul says, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people” (Eph. 5:3). The word for greed is *pleonexia*, which means a continual thirst for more. Here we see greed in the same list with sexual immorality, which should give us an idea of the seriousness God attaches to this danger.

Jesus warned, “You cannot serve both God and Money” (Mat. 6:24). Paul goes so far as to say, “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry” (Col. 3:5). Greed is really idolatry according to Paul, because money becomes the thing around which our lives revolve.

Today in the west, greed stands not only for accumulating unnecessary wealth, but for careerism. Careerism places career at the center of life, both for parents and for their kids (in the future). People caught up in *pleonexia* never seem to have time for the things of God. They are so preoccupied by their careers and enjoying or fussing with their money and possessions that they can’t develop quality ministries. With their frequent absenteeism and divided loyalties, they are unable to build quality relationships or engender true love of God in others. Most careerists think the New Testament picture of the church is completely unrealistic for today.

One of the saddest side-effects of greed is the way it chills people’s love for God and for others. Just as Jesus warned, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mat. 6:21). All too many American Christians simply cannot match the enthusiasm they feel for God with that they feel for their latest gizmo, home theater, or room addition. With this area, like others, a simple pastoral counseling approach can bear fruit.

Awareness and understanding. As with other areas, blindness is our first obstacle. We rarely meet people who affirm that they are materialists. Most people look to those richer and more obsessed than themselves as materialists, viewing their own level of greed as only normal. As Americans, we live in an ocean of wealth, unprecedented in the history of the world. We have come to view affluence as so normal and necessary, that it becomes very difficult for most people to detect a problem with materialistic avarice. Americans need to begin with a careful study of God’s

word.^[53] As Christians, we know that happiness in life comes from the spiritual and relational side of life, not from possessions, power, prestige, or money. If we can convince our disciples of this truth, we will be sparing them a life of emptiness and freeing them to enter into the “true riches” (Luke 16:11).

Practical Ideas. How do people get out of the mindset of avarice? Think through with your disciples what practical steps (like regular giving, reassessing purchases, changing goals, etc.) might help effect change in this area. A short-term missions trip to a poor area is often helpful as well.

Support and encouragement. Watch for shifts in attitude and action that may follow. Never miss the opportunity to encourage such shifts. Likewise, don't be afraid to challenge materialistic comments or boasting.

Typical areas to counsel: Bad habits

People generally are creatures of habit. Habits can work for us or against us. As disciple makers, we hope to build healthy habits into the lives of our disciples. But most disciples also come to us with some habits already in place that may be very enslaving.

Jesus warns, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34). The Bible constantly warns about the enslaving power of sin. But Paul reminds us that in our new identity, we “have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (Rom. 6:18). However, those who work with people know that appropriating freedom from sin is no easy matter. Sin habits can be incredibly tenacious.

When working with any disciple who is afflicted with a significant sin habit you have several things to consider.

First, you’ll probably never reach a point at which your disciple has no sin habits. You are forced to work for relative freedom, not perfection (1 Jn. 2:10). This means you have to weigh how strongly you push for change, a determination based in part on how damaging the habit is. Extreme habits like fornication, homosexuality, alcoholism, or drug addiction are pure stoppers when it comes to spiritual growth. You’re really wasting your time if we seek growth while failing to deal with such habits.

Yet other habits may be almost as bad. Congenital lying effectively blocks relationship building, and disqualifies the person from spiritual leadership of any kind. Materialistic avarice is really a habit, and we find that few things strip a person of zeal for God more than avarice. Rage-aholics constantly destroy their own credibility, and are also disqualified from leadership (1 Tim. 3:3). Habitual thieves or those with an extreme habit of laziness are in serious trouble when you consider that both of these are mentioned in connection with church discipline (1 Cor. 5:11 “swindler” 2 Thess. 3:3:14). So are those who are habitual slanderers (1 Cor. 5:11).

Lesser habits still do a lot of damage. Over-eating and eating disorders are highly destructive of a person’s social and sexual life well as his or her physical well-being. Cigarette smoking is also destructive to the body. Pornography is a spiritually devastating habit to millions. The list goes on.

Slavery is bad whether the habit is severe or mild (1 Cor. 6:12). But we think it should be self-evident that you begin at the top of the list and work

down. Timing is your first consideration. Going after a disciple's sin habit is dangerous work. None of these habits are easy to resolve, and you face the danger of revolt or demoralization anytime you grapple with such emotionally charged areas of life. You could wait, and hoping God directly rescues them from some lesser habits as they grow spiritually. In the case of the most severe habits, though, you have no choice but to go for change early on.

Honesty is key. The disciple maker walks a very difficult tightrope between being overly permissive, which leads to no change, and being so hard-line that the lines of communication close. When your disciples go underground with their sin, you have no way to counsel them. Our experience with people coming from evangelical churches suggests that most habitual sinners in these churches indulge their sin secretly. Admitting sin is never easy, but admitting sin to a severe and unsympathetic discipler soon becomes too hard for most disciples. This is really bad, because as we argued earlier, bringing sin into the light is key to seeing progress.

Counseling people with bad habits follows a now-familiar pattern:

Awareness and understanding. You should begin by guiding your disciples into a godly perspective on their habits. You need to know how the dynamics of sin and habituation work in the larger scope of spiritual growth. We know that Christians are forgiven, so God is not going to withdraw even from someone caught in serious sin. But the damage done by habits goes far beyond the direct damage caused by sin. Disciples are also damaged by the guilt and shame any habitual sinner feels. These can be so severe that they become a wedge driving the believer away from his only source of deliverance: God and the body of Christ.

You should work with people who have sin habits in a very patient and gracious way. The first key to deliverance from sin is laying a foundation of grace. Your disciples need to know that Jesus says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). This is the ground of security from which people can face their sin and begin dealing with it. They need to study and learn to believe in their new identity in Christ. Only as they come to believe who they are in Christ will their habits lose power over them (Rom. 6:1-14).^[54]

You should guide your disciples to the point where they admit personal responsibility. A person caught in a habit can feel so enslaved that she has

little *experience* of her free will. Such people often feel they are helpless and perhaps fated to always remain that way. Through the nurture of scripture and your own and others' experience, you must persuade them that God's power is greater than their habits. You may have to work in stages, initially looking for small changes and working toward bigger ones.

Practical ideas. Next, you need a strategy for change that matches the habit. These strategies are often a matter of common sense combined with biblical wisdom. They often include external constraints. For instance, an alcoholic may need to agree not to go to bars or parties where people are drinking. A sexaholic may need to abstain from dating altogether for a time.

You may want to involve a professional counselor in some extreme habits as well. At the very least, we suggest that you consult the wisest Christian leader you know on how people can win change in the area at hand. We also suggest finding someone who has been delivered from the same habit and ask him or her what was helpful. The possible strategies are far too numerous to list here. Books have been written on most of these sin patterns, and you should do relevant reading for more ideas.

3. **Support and encouragement.** As your disciple struggles, don't overlook the principle of replacement. People with bad habits usually can't just eliminate habits; they have to replace them with something else. What have you built with your disciple that could potentially give her the same or greater emotional gratification as her habit? Usually, personal relationships rank high, as well as the joy of being used by God in others' lives and warm personal times with God. When Christians see how gratifying these alternatives to sin can be, they often finally decide to take strong measures against their enslaving habits.

Failure in counseling

Anyone who tangles with serious personal problems looking for real change rather than a surface snow-job will meet with failure some of the time. Looking for authentic change in people's lives isn't easy. What happens when our efforts don't seem to be working?

First, you have to make a sensitive determination: Are you dealing with on-going weakness? Or are you beginning to face a point of resistance, where your disciple is basically refusing to take further steps? This judgment isn't always easy to make. For one thing, you need to be aware of micro-movement. Even the slightest movement forward is very significant when dealing with any of the problems we have discussed in this chapter.

The movement might be disappointing, but you have to adjust your expectations to reality. With humans, change is usually incredibly slow. Thank God for reported cases of almost immediate deliverance from sin. But don't wait for that. Cases of rapid recovery from serious emotional or sin problems are few and far between. Even when people claim to experience instant healing for their problems, the problems usually resurface later: The healing wasn't as complete as they thought. We suggest that disciplers should focus on slow growth most of the time. Instead of comparing your disciple's progress to where he was a month ago, think about where he was a year ago. Is there a difference?

Also, you should watch for signs of effort. Even if you can't see any improvement in outward behavior, a believer who is putting forth effort will probably eventually see results. But what about cases where you aren't sure you see either effort or results? We'll discuss such resistant cases in our next chapter.

Our most powerful tool

When you see either micro-movement or effort, you have the opportunity to use your most powerful tool: encouragement. Scientists who study how people learn have proven that positive reinforcement is far more powerful than punishment for effecting lasting change in people.^[55]

The Bible urges us to encourage one another whenever we get the chance: “Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (Heb. 3:13)^[56]

Positively reinforcing godly attitudes and behavior through encouragement is important for several reasons. In the first place, by noticing when people do right and stressing how happy you are about it, you highlight the importance God places on such victories. At the same time, encouragement often gives your disciples the emotional strength to continue striving. Encouragement can also effectively counter Satan’s debilitating accusations by reminding disciples that they are growing overall.

Encouragement has one limitation: it is highly effective in *sustaining* action, but far less so at *initiating* action. In other words, you have to catch your disciple “doing something right” before you can use encouragement effectively. If you encourage disciples even though they haven’t acted, you are practicing flattery, which works *against* motivation. Flattery works against motivation because it cheapens encouragement. If encouragement is always there, whether deserved or not, people begin to discount it. “Oh, there he goes again,” might be the inner response of a disciple who is being encouraged when he knows he shouldn’t be. The encourager actually loses credibility if he flatters. Therefore, you need to plead, prod, and persuade in the hope of stimulating action; only *then* encourage.

Even when disciples take positive action, you shouldn’t always encourage them. The most important time to encourage is at the beginning. When someone first tries to move out in some way for God, never miss the chance to encourage. But as they become more regular in their movement, you will actually get more response if you only encourage periodically. Scientists have demonstrated that intermittent reinforcement actually leads to higher levels of motivation in the long run than constant affirmation.^[57] Based on these findings, you should do what God often does: encourage people often during the earliest phase of learning a new pattern of living, then make the encouragement more intermittent

as they continue. Instead of relying on encouragement, positive behaviors begin to reinforce themselves because lead to a happier and more fulfilling life.

Try to devise different ways to encourage. For instance, instead of always encouraging people yourself, try organizing indirect encouragement from others who noticed something good to encourage your disciple. Perhaps someone shares with you that your disciple's comment at home group was helpful. You could relay that yourself, or you could urge the person who made the comment to tell your disciple in person. Encouragement that comes from multiple sources has more impact.

Public encouragement is sometimes good if done tastefully. Expressing admiration for your disciple's progress in the presence of others sometimes has far more effect than doing so privately. At a men's group, I might say, "Ted, why don't you tell the guys about that awesome conversation you had with the guy at work?" and follow up by mentioning how cool it is that Ted is speaking up about his faith.

Your encouragement will have more power if you mention specific details that were impressive in what your disciple did. Being detailed helps to convey that you aren't just being perfunctory, but were really paying close attention. This usually leaves a stronger impression than more general encouragement.

Try to show your disciples the benefits they gained in any situation where they made progress. If they see for themselves how the change is enhancing their lives or helping others, they will be able to move toward self-reinforcement. Self-reinforcement is key to disciples being able to continue making progress without ongoing help from others.

By reserving encouragement for actual progress rather than for routine accomplishment, you will keep encouragement special. Overuse of any reinforcer tends to weaken its reinforcing power.

Consider encouragement in writing. Sending a card of appreciation, detailing what you have seen and why you think it is good, seems to have special impact for most people. Let them know how their progress made you feel.

If you know gifted encouragers in your church, study how they work. You can learn a lot from skilled encouragers. Watch for the nuances, inflection, body language, etc.

If you become an effective encourager, you will likely see good progress in your disciples. Particularly when combined with a deep friendship, encouragement has incredible power to motivate people. Your disciple knows

that you aren't just someone who has jumped to a superficial conclusion; you are too familiar with her weaknesses to be fooled, so your encouragement is more meaningful.

Diving into people's real problems and helping them progress is far more difficult than merely teaching them some Bible verses. Patient and loving disciple makers who know how to apply God's wisdom and who are strong in encouragement will see God work in amazing ways in their disciples' lives.

Chapter 10

Encountering Lack of Progress: Discerning What To Do

No disciple is completely willing from the beginning and continues to go all-out for God from then on. Most disciples encounter some kind of breakdown in their progress sooner or later. If you sense that your disciple isn't making good progress, what's your move?

Make the Call

First, consider whether you have actually called on your disciple for action. In many sections of this book, we have suggested that instruction will have a positive effect as disciples develop their own inner convictions based on scripture. Sharing your vision with disciples is also motivating. So is your modeling. But sometimes these are not enough. You also have to be willing to *directly call on people* for change.

Notice that both Jesus and Paul challenged people directly when necessary. Jesus' calls to those who would be his disciples are surprisingly strong (Luke 14:25-35). We see a great example of Paul calling on people in his discussion in 2 Corinthians on giving (chs. 8, 9). He persuaded, urged, and pointedly insisted that they follow through on their earlier commitment.

Much of the time, good leaders find it unnecessary to call on their people for action. People seem to sense what they should do on their own, as the Holy Spirit moves their hearts and as they observe other models. Oswald Sanders argues that the ability to secure compliance without a show of authority is a mark of a good leader. But such indirect leadership approaches don't always work. Not everyone picks up on bank-shots and indirect cues. We need to accept that God places leaders in the body of Christ because he wants to use them to motivate people. Good leaders aren't afraid at times to face someone and directly call on them to do something. Such a call need not be rude or bossy. It may be a case of simply saying, "Bob, you need to do this. How about it?"

The direct call is not a pitch we throw very often. When people sense what they should do or ask what they should do, you can take a consultative approach that helps your disciples learn how to think for themselves. But sometimes you need to throw the direct pitch without apology.

Dennis: Bob was a smart young college student who loved people more than studying. Although he had good aptitude for academics, his grades were up and down depending on whether or not he wanted to study that quarter. After again dropping classes one quarter, he was offered a job that paid as well as any job he would get as a college graduate, and it focused on his skills with people. He shared that he was seriously considering dropping out of school and pursuing a career with this company.

I didn't say much at the time, just nodding thoughtfully, but it concerned me. I knew Bob wanted to be a Bible teacher and leader as well, and I saw great

potential for him there. I prayed about it for a couple of days before I saw him again during our regular “hang out” time. While there, I felt led to tell him directly that I thought the move to take the job and drop out of college was a bad idea. I suggested instead that he should get more serious about college and finish during the next year and a half. I argued strongly that, with his gifting, he would regret not having a degree later in life. At the same time, opportunities like the one in question were commonplace and he could take one anytime he wanted. More than anything, I hated to see him taking the path of least resistance, and giving in to his irresponsible tendencies.

My call wasn’t what Bob wanted to hear. He was argumentative; we actually argued for some time about the pros and cons, at some points in heated tones, as I tried to convict him about his laziness and poor stewardship. When he left he was a bit sullen. I left him to mull it over. I didn’t soften the pitch by reminding him that it was his decision, or that I would back him whichever way he chose, although I felt these were implied when we prayed together. I really wanted him to hear clearly that I had a strong opinion on the matter.

Days later, he stopped by and told me he had decided that I was right. I was glad to hear it, but as his commentary went on, I realized there was much more. He went on to describe how he had been under conviction from God about his laziness in school and elsewhere, and he knew in his heart that taking the big dollar job was the easy way out. In the days after our talk, God wouldn’t let him rest, and he had come to a complete breakdown before God. His whole life came into review, including a pattern of irresponsibility and self-indulgence. He repented before God and committed to going back to school and attending to his other duties in life with a new perspective. He was amazingly thankful to me for bringing the whole thing to a head.

In the years since then he has gone on to finish college with good grades and then graduate school. God has moved him ahead in his ministry, giving him several promising disciples and he has been able to multiply house churches. Now he is one of our large group teachers and leads a network of house churches. He has never stopped feeling thankful for my intervention and call to stick it out in college.

Deciding when to call

Based on my experience coaching other disciple makers, I believe that many disciple makers would not have made the call I did in that case. If they did make it, they might not have been willing to argue, or would not have been willing to leave the situation in a state of tension while the Lord worked on their disciples' hearts. Too many disciple makers are squeamish about pulling the trigger when it comes to making an unambiguous, direct call for action. If they do call, they qualify it so much that it loses force. Of course, I had three years of relational capital built with Bob, and I knew I would get a good hearing. This was especially true because I rarely called on him to do things. Most of the time, subtle hints, story telling, and humorous jabs had been enough to let him sense what I think. He knew that if I was taking a strong stand on something, it must be important.

It was important; and that's one of the keys to knowing when a direct call is necessary. If we call on people all the time for even small things, we begin to seem bossy or nagging. Then, when we need to make the big call, our disciple writes it off as one more case of us not minding our own business.

Another key to this kind of decision is the recent history of the relationship. If I had recently made a major call on Bob, I would have been more reluctant to do so again. Part of the artistry of discipleship is knowing when you can make a call with a good likelihood that it will be heeded. If you sense that your call will be discounted, you're usually (but not always) better off holding your counsel back. In poker, you don't call a big bet unless you believe your hand is good. Similarly, we can't push people faster than the Holy Spirit is moving them.

Starting a campfire

When you make a direct call, you need to be sensitive enough to read how the person is responding. Based on the response you see, you may either withdraw for the time being or advance.

To understand how this works, consider building a fire. When you try to start a campfire, you have to do things in the right order: first gathering the right kind of kindling, little sticks, medium sticks, and larger wood. Then you arrange the pieces the right way. Only when everything is set do you strike the match. Hopefully, you get a little flame that can be nourished slowly. Fire builders learn that a tiny, sputtering fire doesn't need more fuel piled on; maybe a little huffing and puffing, but not more wood. Only when we sense the fire is advancing do we add more and larger sticks.

Likewise, leaders learn to move *toward* responsive people with more ideas on how to progress. They learn to *retreat* from unresponsive people, waiting for a more opportune time. Giving a strong call to an unresponsive disciple is usually worse than a waste of time; it also endangers the relationship. Yet we will argue later that in certain rare cases, you should make a strong call even though you anticipate it will be discounted.

Some leaders simply will not make a strong call on people. Leaders who are afraid to make a call strong enough to create tension become “soft disciplers” who consistently see very poor results in discipleship. You aren't doing your disciples any favors by failing to raise the tension in your relationship at key points when a change in life direction is essential. Sometimes these calls have to be made with some force and fiber. We are so thankful for the older believers who called us up to a higher level at numerous points in our Christian lives.

Soft discipling is a good approach when things are going well. By leaving decisions up to your disciples, or at most collaborating with them on decisions, you foster independent thinking. But good leaders know their leadership style has to be dynamic. Sometimes the collaborative style won't work, so you should become directive.

When considering whether to be directive or collaborative, the importance of the decision in question is one factor. Another is the disciple's competence. With low-competence disciples, You need a more directive approach. You should be assessing the competence of your disciples at all times, not expecting them to know what they don't know or patronizing them with things they

already do know.

These decisions are complicated, so don't hesitate to consult with competent and experienced ministry colleagues. This is one reason we favor team leadership in our church. In a team, leaders have fellow leaders they can consult on difficult ministry judgment calls.

Points of resistance

We argued earlier that disciples manifest strengths, weaknesses, and points of resistance. We will discuss maximizing strengths more in the next chapter. We discussed working with weaknesses in the chapter on counseling. In this chapter we focus on points of resistance.

Points of resistance are different than weaknesses mainly when it comes to the person's will. A disciple with a weakness wants to change, but may have trouble doing so. Such disciples exert effort to change and are distressed when they fail. As we have argued earlier, we should be extremely patient with weaknesses.

A resistant disciple is different. When a disciple becomes resistant, you will see signs that she is not on board with God's agenda for her life. Resistance is not just a matter of behavior, but more important, of attitude.

Discerning resistance

Sometimes resistance is easy to see. The person may openly declare resistance to what you are teaching or may simply refuse to take steps you suggest. But not always.

Much of the time, resistance is not easy to discern. Most Christians want to be seen as willing to follow God, and they will speak and act in ways that suggest willingness even when they really aren't willing. You may sense resistance to God even though the person claims she wants to follow God's way. Even more confusing are those who don't realize they are resistant. God says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). Rebellion and resistance often feel only natural to one in their grip. Then too, we are all resistant to some degree. Nobody is completely obedient, so how do we know when it's bad enough to make an issue of it?

Determining the difference between weakness and resistance is very important, because the treatment for each is very different. For most weaknesses, people need instruction, support, and encouragement, whereas resistance may call for confrontation and discipline.

What, then, are some signs of possible resistance?

1. The same questions keep coming up, and even good answers fail to satisfy. When disciples develop resistance to God, they use questions more as foils to deflect conviction than as ways to discover truth. That's why they begin to seem less interested in answers than in more questions.
2. Resistant disciples manifest sins of omission. When Christians aren't being refreshed by their relationships with God, all spiritual activities become burdensome. Prayer, reading the word, and sharing one's faith are all too much work for resistant disciples. Such a lack of spiritual energy could be caused by other things, but it's a warning sign. Always look past what a person says to what he does. Actions speak louder than words.
3. Dishonesty is not always a sign that disciples are hardening their hearts to God, but whenever they do harden their hearts, dishonesty follows. The most common type of dishonesty is when disciples avoid admitting guilt. You should always be worried when you find your disciples covering up, especially if it becomes a pattern.
4. Responsive disciples are generally interested in spiritual things, but when

they develop a point of resistance, their interest declines. You'll notice a general decrease in eagerness to discuss the things of God, to pray, or to study.

5. "Rabbit trails" are fruitless discussions about unimportant issues. Especially when you get into a conversation about the area where the disciple is resistant, he suddenly wants to go down rabbit trails.
6. Sometimes you might hear about comments a disciple made to others that clearly show an attitude problem. While you always have to be careful with second-hand reports, these are sometimes used by God to tip us off to a problem. These second-hand reports are often where you discover dishonesty. You should always take a questioning posture when checking with your friend about what you heard; not assuming facts you haven't confirmed.
7. Watch for defensiveness. While anyone might be defensive when caught in sin, it quickly becomes a regular pattern for those who are resistant. Defensiveness about sin is usually either rationalization (where they explain that what they did wasn't wrong), minimization (where they explain that it might have been wrong, but it wasn't that bad), or blame shifting (where what they did may have been wrong, but it wasn't their fault).
8. Resistant disciples usually demonstrate a shift in priorities. The things of the world seem to become more important, and they have trouble finding time for the things of God.

None of these signs is definitive by itself, and even seeing most of them isn't always definitive. It's normal for young believers to go through cycles where they are warmer and cooler to God. Also, emotional problems such as depression could result in most of these symptoms rather than a hardened heart. Disciple makers need spiritual sensitivity in addition to objective criteria when making this determination. God will often call our attention to actions or words that signal resistance.

Discerning resistance is so difficult and so important that you shouldn't hesitate to consult with other mature believers who are in a position to have an opinion. If you know reliable believers who are mutual friends of your disciple, you should see what they think. When seeking a second opinion, try to avoid leading the other believer with your questions. How you ask for help can bias the answer you get. Instead of asking, "I feel like Sarah is developing an attitude problem, what do you think?" try asking, "How do you feel Sarah is doing?"

Discerning resistance is not a sudden realization. Any negative sense you get should be sifted carefully over a period of days or even weeks. We all have negative tendencies at times, and it would be easy to jump to the wrong conclusion. Through continual prayer and observation, including ongoing conversations with the disciple in question, God will gradually tend to confirm or disprove your sense of what is happening.

In addition to these points, we should learn to watch for one key exception: dissonance. We believe dissonance should be distinguished from resistance, even though many of the same symptoms may appear.

Dissonance

The word dissonance comes from the word sonic, and so has to do with sound. In particular it refers to something sounding unharmonious. Sometimes when Christians (especially young ones) go through a hard period in their walks, we say they are experiencing dissonance. This is common for young believers who experience an initial burst of excitement after receiving Christ. When the excitement fades, dissonance may ensue. God in his grace may have been sustaining the young believer with extra protection and encouragement, but he gradually removes these in order to refine the new believer's faith.

Dissonance should be treated differently than resistance. When young believers begin to struggle in their faith, you should ask questions in the hope of discovering the root problem. Why is he experiencing defeat? Be patient with someone going through these growing pains. Young believers are more innocent than older, resistant believers, because they are learning about spiritual living for the first time. You should persuade rather than scold them.

The best thing to do for young Christians is to warn them about dissonance before they experience it in the first place. We do a great disservice to young believers if we let them believe the Christian life will be an easy ride. When they begin to suffer, they wonder if God has abandoned them.

Notice how Paul went through villages talking to believers he had reached only weeks earlier, "...strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22). Is that message really "encouraging"? Yes! To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Paul is managing their expectations, and this removes one of Satan's key tools: the shock effect when a new believer moves from victory and excitement to a period of disaffection and estrangement.

The positive side of dissonance is the resulting strength and stamina disciples gain if they persevere. Believers who withstand a bout of dissonance emerge substantially stronger than before. You should describe this positive vision to young disciples as they struggle, or better yet, before they struggle. Unless our faith is strengthened in this way, we will end up as weak Christians ready for defeat. Faith is what keeps us going, and dry times of dissonance are a blessing in disguise when they make our faith stronger.

To summarize, we should anticipate dissonance in young Christians as a normal part of spiritual growth and not interpret it as resistance. We should

forearm them by warning that they may experience dissonance, and we should make special allowance for dissonance in young Christians. We should not be too reactive to negative comments and actions they may manifest.

Responding to resistance

Once you discern that your disciples are resistant and perhaps in danger of hardening their hearts, you still have an open question: what should we do about it? Since you are not operating under legalism, you are not required to respond a certain way in any given situation. Under law, each crime would have to be recompensed fairly. Under the grace and love paradigm, you are only bound to do what is best for the person. This means your response might be quite different for different people in the same situation. You might even respond differently with the same person in different situations.

What are some of the factors to weigh in determining how to respond to a disciple's growing resistance to God?

First, you have a range of responses available. At one extreme, you could "look the other way" on the issue at hand and continue to offer general spiritual nourishment and friendship in the hope that God will directly change the person's heart. This approach makes sense with newer relationships and younger believers who may not realize fully what is wrong with their attitudes. You will occasionally see remarkable turn-arounds in disciples you are praying for, even though you never confronted them with their problems.

At the other extreme, you could strongly rebuke the person, and call for a change of heart. Such a rebuke could even be accompanied with threats of various sanctions. Paul urges Titus to "rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith," but the reason he calls for such strong medicine is that these are "rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers... who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain" (Titus 1:10-13). Here we notice that 1) these false teachers were knowledgeable and therefore more accountable, and 2) they were doing significant damage in the body of Christ.

In some extreme cases scripture teaches that we should be prepared to put someone out of fellowship rather than let him continue in sin (1 Cor. 5; 1 Thess. 3:12-14; Mat. 18:15-18). Jesus was capable of sharp rebukes, on at least one driving people out of the temple with a whip (Mat. 23; John 2:14-16)!

Discipline is not opposed to love; in fact it is a part of love as God presents it. God certainly loves us, and he is also committed to disciplining us as needed for our good. Hebrews 12 explains:

And have you entirely forgotten the encouraging words God

spoke to you, his children? He said, “My child, don’t ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don’t be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children.” ... If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all (Heb. 12:5-8 NLT).

God doesn’t need to apologize for disciplining us. Anyone who watches a loved one destroy himself and does nothing is simply not loving, according to the Bible. We have to care enough to confront. The book of Proverbs teaches, “If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don’t love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them” (Prov. 13:24 NLT).

Even though many Christians accept the validity of discipline, especially when it comes to children, they lose this perspective when it comes to our peers in discipleship. They may even have a vague sense that discipline could be appropriate for adults, but in practice they aren’t willing to apply it. Why?

People usually fail to exercise needed discipline simply because they are self-protective and unloving. They just aren’t sacrificial enough to risk the displeasure that might be unleashed if they dare to discipline. Or worse, they won’t risk losing popularity by taking a strong stand.

Disciple makers who refuse to discipline become “soft” disciplers. We already argued that soft disciplers are among the worst at being able to foster life change in a disciple. We all desperately need to be reprovved at certain points in our lives, and nobody is in a better position to meet this need than a caring discipler who has invested into the relationship over time.

We know of cases where soft disciplers finally disciplined their disciples and were surprised to find that their friends felt more loved at such times than any other. It’s one thing to have a relative stranger come and tell you you’re in the wrong. But how different it is when someone loves you, agonizes before God on your behalf, and in the end comes and reprovves you. You realize they wouldn’t be saying this if it wasn’t important. We have often had the experience of disciples returning days later to thank us from the heart for telling them what they needed to hear. No wonder Paul reminds the Ephesians that “night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears” (Acts 20:31).

We have argued several times that disciple makers have to be patient. But patience is not softness. Consider the following comparison:

Patience	Softness
Accepts the fact that people change slowly	Accepts lack of any change
Continues to warn, encourage, and admonish	Encourages, but little or no warning or admonition
Withstands the pain of honest assessment	Pretends things aren't that bad no matter what happens
Makes people feel secure, but challenged and motivated	Nothing seems important because "anything goes;" people are bored and discouraged
Workers are able to go the long haul because their lives are changing	Great danger of people quitting because they see no progress or purpose
People are gratified by gradual but real progress	Spiritual depression increases temptation to sin

Considering then, that your response to resistance could range from deliberately "looking the other way" to mild reproof, to strong discipline, how do you decide what to do?

Accountability

First, consider the question of accountability. Different believers are accountable to different standards. Paul urges his readers to "keep living by that same standard to which we have attained" (Phil. 3:16). Brand new believers are hardly accountable to any standard. They don't understand Christian living and often have a very distorted view of what is right and wrong. A home group leader, on the other hand, is highly accountable.

Paul doesn't give lists of moral requirements for membership in the body of Christ, but he does give such a list of requirements for leaders (1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1). Leaders may need discipline even for sins of omission, like failing to do their

job in the church. Most believers are somewhere in between these extremes. The careful discipler weighs what a disciple knows and the progress made so far. Then, drawing from multiple options, he selects the most appropriate response.

History

Recent and distant history can have a major impact on your choice of responses. Is this the umpteenth time this disciple has become resistant, or is resistance a new thing? A disciple who slanders and backbites in the body of Christ on a regular basis, especially after several people have complained about it, may need some strong discipline. On the other hand, you should go softer if you haven't seen such behavior before. A repetitive pattern of resistance suggests the need for stronger discipline, whereas a softer approach would be appropriate for any first-time problem.

Another feature to consider is your own relational history with the disciple. If your relationship has been stressed recently, this would suggest a lower likelihood of success in discipline. If the issue isn't crucial, a wise discipler may wait until a more opportune time for confrontation.

A person who has been consistently responsive to reproof whenever it is offered will probably respond to a milder form of admonition. Some are so sensitive that even a slight suggestion is sufficient.

Seriousness of the sin

Sometimes resistance is not connected to a particular sin problem (although we should always consider whether a sin problem could be involved). Students of scripture know that some sins are more damaging than others. We hear Christians say, "All sins are alike before God." This statement is true from the perspective of what it takes to fall short of God's requirements for going to heaven. However, all sins are *not* alike in terms of the damage they do to the one sinning and to others. These more damaging sins are the ones the New Testament singles out as calling for stronger discipline.

Among these most serious sins are sexual sins. Paul says fornication is really joining the members of the body of Christ to a harlot (1 Cor. 6:15). He is also referring to sexual sin when he says, "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough" (1 Cor. 5:6). In other words, the presence of sexual immorality powerfully defiles the church. He also points out that sexual immorality is worse than many other sins because "the immoral person sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).

Anyone engaging in fornication, adultery, or homosexual immorality is

involved in a sin so harmful that serious warning cannot be delayed long. Even young Christians engaged in sexual immorality must be admonished without too much delay. If the immoral one is your disciple, you are wasting your time trying to foster spiritual growth until such a sin is resolved. We have never seen any Christian grow spiritually to any significant degree while engaging in sexual immorality.

Other sin areas are also very serious. Drug addiction, false teaching, alcohol abuse, divisiveness in the church, extreme laziness, and even materialistic avarice are on the same lists of sins requiring formal church discipline (Tit. 3:10; 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:10-15; 1 Tim. 1:20). Any of these sins will block further spiritual growth, so disciplers should be more inclined to confront someone who is entangled in such a serious problem.

Even lesser sins could become points of resistance that might contaminate one's whole spiritual life. The point is that when we stop struggling with sin, and instead decide to resist God in that area, we are in danger of hardening our hearts. A believer who begins saying "No!" to God is in real spiritual danger. But with sins that aren't that dangerous, defiling, or damaging, at least in the short term, we may want to consider working in ways other than strong discipline.

Chapter 11

Encountering Lack of Progress: Practicing Discipline in Love

When a disciple develops a serious point of resistance, the disciple maker has to come before God seeking discernment. In our last chapter we talked about ways you can discern resistance, and different options you could pursue in response. This chapter is about one of those possibilities: discipline in love.

Preparing for discipline

Once you agree that loving discipline is biblical and good for people, and you discern that reproof is needed, you need to prepare. Discipline includes calculated risk, but careful preparation greatly increases the likelihood that reproof will result in positive change. Shooting from the hip in these situations is dangerous. Even experienced disciple makers who might sometimes get away with spur-of-the-moment reproof know that preparation is preferable and important for effective, loving reproof.

Your first act of preparation is prayer. By asking God to precede you and work on the person's heart before you talk to him, you greatly increase the likelihood that he will listen. You also need to pray for guidance while you think through how you are going to confront your friend.

You can prepare for reproof by carefully thinking and praying about each of the following:

1. Assemble the facts. How do you know this problem is real? Think back to what you have seen and why you feel sure this issue requires change. Especially with subjective issues like attitude problems, you need to think about how the problem is affecting your friend's behavior and demeanor. People in sin are usually blind to some extent, and they may need to be convinced that their problems are real and serious. You may have to build a case for why you see a serious problem in the other's life.
2. What are the main reasons the person needs to have a change of heart? Think in terms of biblical arguments, damage being done to the person, and damage being done to other loved ones. What does the Bible say about this kind of problem?
3. What measures can the person take to overcome the problem? This is a difficult question, especially if the problem is mainly one of attitude. But you should come ready with practical steps a person can take. If the person is responsive to your reproof and wants to change you suggest these practical ideas. Nothing is more discouraging than being reproofed and then left without positive ideas for how to break free from an enslaving problem.

Remember that people caught in sin are often confused and may have false beliefs you need to address (like thinking their problem is hopeless). Some people caught up in habits need outside help; they could be referred for

counseling. Others may need a support group where they can learn how to win against their habit. Maybe you could recommend some reading based on similar cases. Do the research needed to discover realistic suggestions.

As you pray over the situation God may speak to your imagination showing you a particular prayer of rededication or repentance the person needs to pray. Ask yourself, “If my disciple is totally responsive to what I say, exactly what would I like to see her do?”

4. Think through the consequences that will likely result if the person fails to change. You need a negative vision based on the current trajectory of the person’s life. Part of reproof is warning, and you’ll be more persuasive in your warning if you have thought about similar cases and where they led. Don’t exaggerate and thereby lose credibility. The truth about where sin leads is bad enough without exaggeration.
5. Think about an analogous problem that you have struggled with. Remember how difficult it can feel to face repentance and change when you are caught up in wrong attitudes or actions. Remember how hard it is to admit you are in the wrong. By identifying with your friend in this way, you build stronger empathy. Studies show that empathetic speakers are more persuasive. Mentioning some analogous problem you have faced also helps prevent any impression that you are self-righteous—always a danger when confronting someone.
6. Think about the benefits that will come if the person changes. To get a positive vision, you should reflect on all you know about the person and all you can imagine him or her becoming if the problem gets dealt with. The juxtaposition of a negative and positive vision has more persuasive power than either of them on its own.
7. Consider your words and demeanor. Although you can’t script out what you are going to say during the whole conversation, it’s wise at least to plan out how you will begin. We suggest formulating an opening statement that affirms the relationship and sets a tone for the discussion. For instance, “Bob, you’ve become one of my best friends, and I’m continually thankful for our friendship. That’s why I feel I need to talk to you about a problem I see.” Beginning the discussion like this gives the context for the reproof. Your friend needs to see that although you are critical now, this interaction should be viewed in light of the larger positive history of friendship. Defensiveness could interfere with clear communication in these situations,

and beginning with a truthful (not flattering) statement is one of the best ways to reduce defensiveness.

Decide how you are going to describe the problem and what you will call it. Choice of words is important! Wording can be either unnecessarily inflammatory or easier to accept. Telling someone he was not honest, for instance, is better than telling him he is a liar. Telling someone she harming herself with sexual immorality is more easily accepted than telling her she is acting like a tramp. Proverbs teaches, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1).

Your demeanor is also important. If you seem harsh or cold, people will have more difficulty listening to what you say. Think about how you want to come off.

8. At what point will you finish your description of your concerns and put the ball in the other person’s court? You shouldn’t preach a sermon and walk out. Instead, you should be thinking about when you are going to ask, “So, how do you feel about what I’m saying?”
9. Have contingencies ready for different responses. If your friend rejects what you say, what will you do? Continue to argue the case? You could continue if the issue is urgent, or if you feel you can win the person over with more argument. You may decide that if the other person rejects your message you will retreat temporarily: “Okay, it sounds like you don’t see what I’m talking about at all. Will you agree to at least pray about it, and ask the Lord if there’s anything you need to see here?” After this you might try to conclude the discussion and wait several days before bringing it up again.

When retreating in this way, you aren’t giving up; You are backing away long enough to give God time to work. Especially with strong-willed people or those who are too proud to admit fault, this kind of response often gives good results. You may find that by the next time you discuss the issue, you may find that the Holy Spirit has already won your argument for you. If not, you can always return to further efforts to persuade and plead.

This approach has other benefits as well. For one thing, a major change of heart may take some time. By spreading the reproof over a number of days, you avoid feeling like you have to force a change of heart on the spot, and

this makes real change more likely. You certainly don't want to batter anyone. Some argumentation may be needed, but you don't want to end up with a 'change of heart' produced mainly by compulsion. Such changes are usually superficial and won't last.

What if the person explodes? What if the tears flow? With serious problems, some emotional response is not unlikely. Be sure you aren't manipulated by emotional pyrotechnics. Consider in advance how you will react, remembering that a person's immediate emotional reaction may not be the best indicator of how things are going in this kind of talk. Some people grow up learning to use tears or hysterical anger as a way to get out of trouble. When such people realize that tactic won't work, you may see a change in demeanor by the next time you talk.

Have contingencies ready in case the person agrees with you also. What encouraging thing can you say that will reward the person for listening? "Sarah, I'm really moved that you have the humility to admit this, and I think God will use your humility in awesome ways!"

10. Finally, you need to determine how serious the issue is. We could imagine several levels of seriousness, each of which would suggest a different approach:

Problems that are significant, but not serious – Problems in this category are significant enough that something should be said, but they are not spiritually life-threatening or overly damaging. Many attitude problems may fit in this category, because they are more subjective. Or, this might be where we would see a believer who committed a fairly serious sin, but only once, so there is no pattern. It could be a highly accountable believer, like a fellow leader, who did something fairly minor, but you feel he should know better. Or, it could be a younger believer in more serious sin, but at a low level of accountability; he simply hasn't been transformed much yet. With situations in this category you may realize that something needs to be said, yet you are not prepared to press the issue to the limit. If your friend refuses to listen, you might just leave it that way. He may change his mind later, and it wouldn't be worth endangering the relationship by pressing the issue too far.

Dennis: Larry was a young brother living in a house with other committed Christian young men. After numerous reports from the others about the amount

of time he spent playing video games, and from my own observations, I sensed his habit was becoming a barrier to his spiritual progress. Watching for the right opportunity, I planned to share my burden with him. When I got my chance, the talk lasted less than fifteen minutes. He thought I was being legalistic and didn't agree that his gaming was a problem. I made a few observations about how any pursuit could become a barrier if it was out of control (1 Cor. 6:12). I also reminded him of how he had recently claimed to be too busy to do his homework for a Bible class he was taking and wondered how many hours a week he was wasting at this pointless pursuit (I had reason to believe it was more than twenty!). I urged him to take my words seriously and at least pray about it, and we went on to do other things.

Although Larry laughed off most of my comments, during the next few weeks, two different brothers commented that Larry was showing more moderation in his gaming. In the time since, he has gradually lost interest in marathon gaming sessions.

This was a minor disciplinary episode, although it wasn't easy for me. I didn't feel like talking about it in the first place, and when we did talk, I was tempted to press my point hard when he laughed me off. But I'm glad I restrained myself, and I believe it helped him out considerably. Since that talk, I have overheard him making the same points to a younger believer who was gaming too much.

Problems that are serious, but not spiritually life threatening – Maybe you have a disciple who is demonstrating a fairly serious problem, such as dishonesty or fits of rage. It could be someone who is being extremely lazy and won't get a job, or one who is in the grip of avarice. These are potentially very damaging, but often take time to resolve. You should probably take a harder line with such situations, including arguing the case over a longer period of time.

Dennis: Barry was from a cultural background where financial success and owning expensive things were important. As a disciple, he showed promise, but would again and again get into trouble with expensive purchases that cost him extra time at work and left him in debt. I approached the issue as a counseling problem, or a weakness. We read several books I knew were good for ministering to avarice, but they didn't seem to have much effect. He developed the ability to talk about godly values in the area of finance, but he continued to practice the same impulsive, showy spending. He had decided to become a committed giver, but his spending prevented him from keeping his word.

Eventually, I began to realize he wasn't going to grow much unless he

made more progress in this area. His excitement and pride about new wasteful purchases sometimes dwarfed his excitement for spiritual things. In dozens of ways, I saw his avarice choking out the fruit that God wanted to bear in his life, as Jesus had warned (Mat. 13:22). My periodic, mild disapproval at his way of life seemed to have little effect. Having now been close friends with him for more than two years, I felt I needed to draw a line with him on this issue.

When we finally had a lengthy time to talk, I frankly stated that I was very pessimistic about his future for God because he couldn't seem to decide whether to serve God or mammon. He was resistant, feeling that I was exaggerating, so I poured out the case I had been building. I went on at some length and made it clear that I was really upset about his lack of progress. I had stories to tell him of other disciples I had lost to the same failing. The hurt was visible on his face and in his voice, but I pressed on. I didn't actually threaten to stop meeting with him—although the thought was in the back of my mind—but I did make it clear that I was despairing about his growth.

He admitted that his avarice was a problem, as usual, but he alternated between pleading that he was improving and a fatalistic sense that he couldn't change. Again, I pressed the point. I observed that he always made such excuses, and that he was refusing to believe God or submit to him in this area. I pointed out that he was making up for deficits in relational and spiritual areas by these efforts to impress people with his possessions.

When he fell silent, I went on to share what a fantastic future I believed awaited him if only he would have a change of heart on this issue. In the end we prayed together, and although he said the right things in prayer, I didn't have any confidence that a major breakthrough had taken place. The talk lasted longer than an hour.

As I drove home that day, I resolved that this wasn't over. I knew that if he continued to fail in this area, I would return to the reproof immediately. Because I was certain this area was going to either wreck his walk or be dealt with, I was ready for a running battle. I knew he enjoyed our friendship as much as anything in his life, and I was determined to draw heavily on that relational capital to press for change. Instead of adopting the posture of passive advisor, I was ready to become the active disciplinarian and to stay that way. At the same time, I felt sorry for him. I knew it was confusing to experience such a collision between the values he had pursued his whole life and those of his new Christian life.

During the next several months, I won this running battle with Barry. By God's grace, he was granted slowly widening revelation about the state of his

own heart. As he progressively curtailed his avarice, his spiritual life soared accordingly. Within months he was a different man. Everyone who knew him commented on how well he was doing and how his attitude seemed to have changed dramatically. Barry himself reported how he felt happier and more fulfilled than before.

As Barry's discipler and friend, I paid a very heavy price for this victory. But as he went on to become a strong leader and teacher of truth, the result was so fantastic that I hardly remember the pain. I find that I have had similar struggles with most successful disciples. Few develop fully without a major point of resistance and a corresponding struggle. As sacrificial lovers, we have to be prepared to pay the price of bearing the cross for our friends. And discipline is sometimes the supreme price.

Problems that are spiritually life threatening, or menacing to others – Some situations are so serious and extreme that we cannot take "no" for an answer. An addict who won't seek out help is destroying himself before our eyes. We cannot say we love someone if we passively watch this destruction and are not willing to go to any length to stop it.

A believer who is involved in discipleship for spiritual growth but also is sneaking periodic fornication, for instance, is a walking contradiction. If you love that believer, you cannot allow him to go on believing that these two agendas are compatible. If he refuses to repent you have to press the issue to the point where you are prepared to impose sanctions. These sanctions could include ending your discipleship relationship, confronting the person before the community of believers, or even removing him from Christian fellowship. We make clear in such situations that some things won't be tolerated in the community of God.

We are also hoping that even if we do these sanctions, the person will realize the error of his ways and change his heart. We also have to consider the well-being of the church. Severe cases of division, defiling sexual sin, or violence all threaten the spiritual lives of others. By being too soft on one person, we could endanger many others.

Dennis: Sid was raised in a divided family that was extremely dysfunctional. When he came to Christ in his late teens, he had many serious problems. He lacked self control in almost every area of his life, but during one of his positive swings, I decided to try to disciple him. I knew he was a hard case, but he seemed eager, and I had the time. I was also attracted by the fact that he periodically shared the gospel with friends and had brought people around to

Bible studies.

As time went on, I began to realize I wasn't making progress. His fits of rage terrorized the men in his rooming house as well as guests. His over-eating was destroying his body. The periodic drinking episodes seemed to be going on at roughly the same frequency as ever. Probably worst of all was his terminal laziness and self-indulgence. He couldn't hold a job. He couldn't bring himself to study, go to school, or anything that required saying "no" to self at any point.

Even though he showed excitement for God and fellowship at times, it became clear that our discipling relationship of more than a year was going nowhere. Not only was he not progressing, but he was also poisoning the atmosphere at his house and had even frightened and alienated non-Christian guests to whom we were reaching out. After talking to other leaders, we decided that something had to be done. Our periodic reproofs were being ignored.

In stages, the body of Christ gradually cornered Sid. After another particularly awful rage episode in front of guests, we told him we were seriously considering removing him from the rooming house unless he went to counseling and convinced us that things were going to change. He agreed, but four weeks later had still not called the counselor we gave him. His excuse was that he didn't have the funds (which would have been minimal).

I let him have it. In a deliberately angry tone, I pointed out that he always had money for huge piles of food and expensive disc-golf discs. I said I wasn't going to meet with him anymore until he delivered what he had promised, because we were obviously fooling ourselves by talking about discipleship while he lived a life that totally contradicted every aspect of a disciple's character. I said, "You can talk to me after you've been to your fourth session."

Nothing happened. Later, additional episodes in the house led the brothers to expel him. He left Christian fellowship not long after and moved in with a girlfriend.

Was this episode an example of failed discipline? In a sense, but I believe Sid may be better off now, in the world, than in the church living as he was. In the world, God takes over the disciplinary process, like he did with the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Notice that the waiting father didn't go chasing the prodigal into the distant country. He waited, and the savagery of the world broke down the son's resistance.

In our years of ministry, we have seen hundreds like Sid come back after a lengthy journey into the terrors of the world. (Sid himself recently ran into a

believer in our group and said he's thinking about coming back.) The loneliness and lack of love in the world is a painful experience that becomes unendurable for true believers. When people return to the Lord after such an experience, they usually have a whole new attitude. Of course, some never return; but the church is still better off, and if the discipline was necessary, the person is probably better off as well. People who draw comfort from the community of believers while pursuing a life of sin will not grow, and their hearts grow increasingly hardened, which makes repentance even more unlikely. Believers who choose to leave fellowship know they have made a decision to walk away from God. When suffering results, they are less likely to blame God and more likely to realize they themselves are to blame.

If you know you are dealing with an issue of ultimate seriousness, it should change how you approach discipline. Adjusting all these factors based on your disciple's spiritual age and accountability, special circumstances, and past history makes for a difficult assessment. The more serious the situation is, the more urgent it becomes to get plenty of consultation, including with church leadership. Fortunately, most disciplinary situations are resolved long before this point. Only rarely do we find ourselves facing the most extreme cases.

Meeting to discipline a friend

Your main goal in the first meeting is to clearly express what you have planned to say. You hope your disciple sees the problem in his own life and comes to view that problem the right way—not in despair or unbelief in God’s power to change lives. Whether in the first meeting or in subsequent discussions, you also hope to see your disciple agree from the heart with your message and decide to take the measures you suggest, or other measures that accomplish the same end. Your prayer should be that acting in discipline will not alienate your relationship, but actually enhance and deepen it.

Don’t beat around the bush. Remember to begin with your opening statement, already planned out. Be tactful but direct. People sense when you are talking around a subject, and it seems shifty.

As you make your points, watch closely for your disciple’s response. A disciplinary talk is a fluid situation, and you need to adjust your approach based on the response you sense. Responsive people don’t usually need heavy conviction. Resistant people may need more argument, or you could decide to retire, only to return again, as we discussed earlier. The key is that you are aware of how the person is responding. Ask questions if you are unsure, and be willing to wait in silence for the answers. A person who falls quiet during a talk like this is hard to read. We have to get them to talk about how they feel if we are to read their response correctly.

Whether we are calling or reproofing someone, we should always do it with respect for the person’s individuality, never with pestering or browbeating. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.” Accepting reproof is always difficult, because our flesh is naturally resistant to instruction and correction. When we add ego-punishing rhetoric to our reproof, we make it doubly difficult. Spend some time thinking about what it looks like to be firm but respectful. Always stress the free choice your disciple will make. Be clear that you are not making choices for him.

Follow up

Always follow up on a disciplinary talk. It would be very unnatural to have such a talk and leave silence afterward. Whether you felt your disciple was responsive or not, you should ask her soon afterward whether she has thought any more about your conversation. Sometimes initial responses can be misleading. Some unresponsive people reveal later that they were more responsive than you thought. Others who seemed responsive later see problems with what you said. You have to discover what direction their subsequent thinking has taken. Particularly disturbing is the disciple who seems not to have thought about it at all!

Most disciplinary interactions are actually a series of talks. If you are not satisfied with the response you saw, you will want to continue seeking ways to persuade and urge. Particularly in cases you believe are relatively important or even urgent, you have to make it clear the issue won't go away.

“Sand-bagging” is a tactic where people in sin neither openly resist nor fully agree. Instead, they give vague responses and take little or no action. The disciple's hope is that by doing nothing, she will eventually out-wait the discipler and be relieved of the burden of change. To be effective in discipline, you have to make it clear that you cannot be sand-bagged. You usually don't need to escalate the debate: simple persistence is usually enough to convince such disciples that sand-bagging won't work, and you'll soon see a different response.

When disciples respond negatively and refuse the Holy Spirit's conviction, you have to face some difficult alternatives. We already mentioned the option of dropping the issue if you feel it is relatively unimportant. But when the issue is important, you have to be ready to create a significant level of tension in the relationship until you see some movement. You create tension by regularly showing your disciple the discrepancy between where he is and where God wants him to be.^[58] You can also periodically make it clear that you are unhappy or worried about the lack of change.

Tension is a sense of discomfort in the relationship. Without tension, your friend may lack sufficient motivation for change. If you have built up relational capital with your friend, she will feel significant motivation to resolve the tension and return to a point where the relationship is enjoyable. Some disciple makers find it difficult and unnatural to raise tension in a relationship that has

previously been loving and positive. But you owe it to your disciples when the issue is serious. If you reduce the tension even though you see little or no change, you become a soft discipler. Your overall effectiveness will be compromised if you are unwilling to engage in a lengthy wrestling match over serious sin.

At the same time you create ongoing tension, you should be very alert to any change in attitude or action. You will not normally see complete resolution of serious sin or attitude problems after one disciplinary encounter. God needs time to work. More often we see partial movement, and usually we should move to encouragement when we see any movement. Encouragement is far more powerful than punishment when it comes to reinforcing change, as we saw earlier.

Those of us who tend toward perfectionism have to be very careful to avoid taking an overly hard line in discipline. Especially after the first disciplinary encounter on an issue, you may have to be satisfied with minor movement in the right direction. You may still feel inwardly distressed because you know what you have seen so far falls well short of what God wants. But growth is a slow process made up of many tiny movements strung together. If you seem too hard-line, your disciple may feel you are impossible to please or overly critical. In these cases, the tension no longer serves to stimulate positive change, but instead turns against the discipler. If you allow your relationship to become alienated, your chances of seeing the needed change decrease.

So which is it? Do we worry about being soft, or do we worry about being too hard-line? Part of the answer has to do with knowing our own tendencies. Some of us are hard-liners by nature. Others tend to be soft. If you know what kind of person you are by nature, you are in a position to correct for your own tendencies. Hard-liners need to learn to err on the side of grace. Permissive disciplers have to learn to hold the line on important issues, possibly well beyond what they instinctively feel is right. Ministry colleagues can often help with this judgment if they are in the same community and know the people involved.

Failure in discipline

Discipline in love is biblical, and it does work--but not always. In some cases, even after a lengthy struggle over a serious issue, your disciple may remain essentially unchanged. When disciples refuse to respond to discipline, even moderately serious problems can become very serious.

Such unresponsive disciples confront us with more difficult choices. Are we prepared to go on pursuing discipleship with a brother who won't make efforts to confront his own laziness or unwillingness to read? Would we be willing to pursue discipleship with a woman who continues to see nothing wrong with avarice? If we do continue, where do we see the relationship heading? Even moderately dangerous problems like these will effectively block your disciple from any significant leadership role. As you track the trajectory of your disciple's current refusal to change and consider the character requirements for leadership roles, you may realize that you face a somewhat hopeless situation. All the same questions you asked when selecting a disciple resurface in situations like this.

Sometimes our disciples will decide this question for us. Because of the ongoing tension in the relationship, the disciple may begin to move away from further involvement in the discipling project. Disciples who refuse to repent usually don't enjoy spending time with someone whose very presence reminds them of their problems. We have often seen disciples in this situation begin missing times with their disciplers, making lame excuses for their absence. At other times, resistance to God in one area begins to cascade into other areas. Lying, new attitude problems, and omission may all worsen when discipline fails.

Hopefully you have already counted this cost when you entered into discipline in the first place. Discipline often tends to "polarize" people. In other words, while some move closer to God, others are hardened in rebellion and actually get worse. This risk suggests that you shouldn't enter into discipline lightly. The dangers of polarization argue that discipline should mainly be reserved for more serious problems, and only where more positive measures have failed. Surgery on a tumor may involve significant risk, but if the tumor is dangerous, the risks are justified. Doing nothing involves risk as well.

How should you respond in the face of disciplinary failure? You may be right to unilaterally end the discipleship relationship. You can openly discuss this possibility with your disciple as a part of the disciplinary process. "Jim, I

feel we're fooling ourselves by continuing to go through the motions of discipleship when it's clear you aren't willing to change." You can call on your disciple to give you a reason for continuing. You could ask, "What would you do if you had a disciple who wouldn't change his mind on an issue this serious?" As with other complicated decisions in disciple making, you have to consider multiple factors:

1. The situation could change. Sometimes resistant disciples reach a point where they no longer feel like resisting God and spontaneously change their minds. This possibility becomes less likely the longer resistance continues.

2. We should consider the needs of the church. If other believers are eager to be discipled but no one is available to help, it becomes harder to justify continuing with a disciple who isn't willing to change. But if no other potential disciples are available, you may decide to persist even when facing a low probability of success.

3. You should consider the amount of investment you already have made in the relationship. If you have years of investment with the person, you may be tempted to persist rather than write off all your efforts. On the other hand, we have all heard the expression, "throwing good money after bad." You have to be willing to face the truth, and a disciple persisting in serious sin is more likely to cost you additional years of wasted effort.

4. What do your ministry colleagues think? While we maintain that this decision is up to the disciple maker, we also believe colleagues should be consulted (probably multiple times) before making the decision.

5. How long has the refusal been going on? If it's only a matter of days or even a few weeks, you should usually persist. The stakes are too high to make a hasty decision. The decision to terminate discipleship is usually made only after a several month struggle.

Most disciplers are very reluctant to end a discipleship relationship in failure. Some feel that such a move is judgmental and unloving. We don't agree. First, you are not cutting the person off as a friend. You are merely ending the purposeful pursuit of discipleship. Discipleship is not a right but a privilege. Disciples cannot demand this level of personal attention and at the same time refuse to make key decisions to follow God. By warning disciples that you are considering ending the project, you add another component to the disciplinary effort. We have seen disciples finally change their minds when confronted with the possible loss of a discipling relationship.

Second, you aren't removing the possibility of returning to discipleship later. Sometimes only after losing the blessing of discipleship for some time do disciples realize they would rather change. On several occasions we have seen disciple makers who stopped meeting with a resistant disciple later begin again because the disciple's attitude had changed.

While some may consider it harsh to put your disciple making relationship on the line, what is the alternative? Can you reasonably consider it discipleship if the disciple has set preconditions that she be allowed to continue in serious sin? When the sin involved is serious enough to block future leadership or growth, we think the answer is obviously "No." This would be pseudo-discipleship. You truly are wasting your own time and your disciple's time when you continue under these conditions.

(Dennis) When Jim wouldn't stop going to drinking parties where he was regularly succumbing to heavy drinking and diffuse make-out sessions with girls, I told him I was unwilling to hang out with him until he started taking his walk seriously. I felt bad when I saw he was hurt. But the time I was wasting with him became available for another young man who was being ignored. That brother proved to be a promising disciple. Meanwhile, Jim was still attending, and I still talked to him regularly. Finally, I re-engaged with him because I saw he had a grip on his problem. He was a different man, and now leads his own group.

While it may hurt both of you, we believe disciple makers with integrity will put their discipling relationship on the line in such cases and be willing to lose the disciple rather than compromise with serious sin.

Discipline in love is new to many Christian workers. It may seem counter-intuitive, depending on your understanding of love. But when you take the time to study the Bible, reflect and pray deeply about your friend's problem, and take the courageous step of speaking the truth in love, you'll see God use you at new levels to change others' lives.

Section 3

Coaching

By helping disciples build faith, understanding and good spiritual habits, we lay a groundwork for healthy spiritual growth. But Christians who grow spiritually should respond by turning around and using that spiritual progress to bless others. At this point, the disciple maker becomes a coach. Although we cover these stages sequentially, they usually overlap extensively. Spiritual growth develops best when people are *doers* of the word. Young Christians should begin doing the things we discuss in this chapter early in their Christian lives while still learning how to grow. Ministry to others provides a powerful incentive for spiritual growth. Those who fail to minister cannot understand why they should be zealous to strive and even suffer for the sake of growth.

Chapter 12

Early ministry development

Most Christians know that praying, reading the Bible, and fellowshiping with other Christians are key avenues through which God feeds and nourishes spiritual growth. These “means of growth” are so essential that missing any one of them will eventually short-circuit anyone’s growth. However, not all Christians realize that ministry is also a means of growth, no less important than any of the others. Ministry is not just for church leaders, but for every member of the body of Christ.

Ministry is the English translation for two Greek words both meaning “service.” Ministry sometimes refers to doing general good for others, but more often for doing good aimed at accomplishing the mission God assigned the church: winning people to Christ and building up fellow believers in their faith. This way we carrying out Jesus’ instructions in the great commission (Mat. 28:18-20).

New Testament teaching on the body of Christ makes it clear that the health of any local church is dependent on “the proper working of each individual part” (Eph. 4:16). Clearly, Christians should be zealous to accomplish the mission God has given us. But we need to teach our disciples that this is more than doing our duty. Ministry is also a vital link to God and a crucial component in the healthy growth and happiness of any Christian.

In some traditional churches, ministry has often been restricted to the clergy. “Lay” people, or common people can do some forms of ministry, like painting the church building or singing a song. But advanced ministry roles like counseling, teaching scripture, leading groups of people, and discipleship are often considered inappropriate for lay people. If your disciples come from a church tradition where ministry is not considered essential for every Christian, you have some re-education to do.

We have an immense volume of scripture to use when conveying the importance of personal ministry. After sharing the gospel with the Samaritan woman, Jesus expressed how doing God’s will in evangelism fed his spirit: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34). He added, “I sent you to reap” the harvest. Why does ministry feed our spirits? It’s because of the connection between ministry and the New Testament concept of

serving love. Understood properly, ministry means loving others “not with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18 NASB; also see 1 Thess. 2:8). Giving ourselves to others in ways calculated to benefit them is ministry. All the passages that stress the centrality of love in the Christian life are really stressing the importance of ministry.

Happiness comes to those who learn to serve others in Christian love. After washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus said, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15). He also said, “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:17). To be blessed is to be enriched, or to be happy. Many Christians today lack the blessedness God wants for them because they have never realized the importance of serving others in ministry. The joy of others-centered living far exceeds any passing pleasure we can gain through living for self.

Learning to faithfully engage in regular, responsible ministry counteracts a selfish, temporal value system, replacing it with investment in eternal things like other people (Mat. 6:19-21 and interpret in light of 1 Thess. 2:19-20). Ministry also creates an outlet and an unselfish purpose for the other means of growth. Apart from ministry, people tend to view prayer, Bible study, and fellowship as mainly self-serving. On such an understanding, these avenues of grace will not result in growth beyond rudimentary levels.

In this chapter, we are going to discuss strategy for helping your disciples develop their own ministries. We begin from the most basic level—with disciples who either do nothing in terms of ministry, or are brand new Christians. Then, we will think the process through all the way to completion—a disciple who has a fully developed ministry in several key areas.

Disciples who don't minister

Disciple makers could hardly be happy with a disciple who rarely or never prayed. Why should we be happy, when such an omission would completely wreck their efforts to grow spiritually? Yet some disciplers seem to see little problem when they work with disciples who never, or rarely, give themselves away in ministry. This is wrong. Instead, we should see our disciple-making task as incomplete and indeed pointless unless it issues in “faith expressing itself through love.” Paul says this is “all that counts” (Gal. 5:6).

Why do some disciples seem reluctant or ineffective in developing a personal ministry? They may believe ministry is inappropriate for lay Christians, as discussed earlier. Others aren't convinced ministry will be fulfilling or are still too selfish to be eager to serve. Some feel discouraged over past efforts to minister or have come to believe they are incompetent. They may resist the idea of ministry because they know they are completely untrained. You should explore your disciple's understanding and attitudes in this area to identify barriers. Maybe they only see ministry as some high level role, and don't realize they could begin valid, needed ministry right now.

Even disciples with willing hearts and a healthy sense of the adequacy of God need training. We turn now to that task.

Building convictions

Your disciples need firm convictions that ministry is God's will for them, that it is doable, that it is essential, and that their Christian lives will be impoverished without it. Jesus taught that loving others is just like loving God (Mat. 22:36-40). John goes further still when he says, "Anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). You need to convince your disciples that it's pointless to pursue God apart from pursuing ministry.

You also need to work on your disciples' understanding of love. They may entertain a definition of love that centers more on feelings of affection than on sacrificial service. In the modern world, love is a feeling. It can happen at first sight. It may come and go unexpectedly. And whether we love depends on the person we love.

Do your disciples understand the Bible's unique take on love? You can use hundreds of passages to show the difference between the modern conception of love as mere sentimentality and the Bible's view of love as hard-core, committed servitude. At their root, most modern conceptions of love are self-centered—love is when another makes me feel good. Biblical love takes the self out of the equation and replaces it with self-sacrifice. Jesus taught, "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (Luke 9:24). This "losing our lives" for Christ means we turn away from the self-first approach to life and give ourselves away to others.

As a skilled motivator, you should not downplay how enjoyable ministry is. The thrill of leading a friend to Christ is too wonderful for anyone to live without, and you need to make sure your disciples see your enthusiasm. You should be sharing how fulfilling it is to have disciples, teach the word, lead groups of people, serve the needy, and engage in the whole range of Christian ministry. By pointing these things out, you are offering yourself as a model. We notice that in groups where people actively minister, they do so, not because they think it's a duty, but because they enjoy it. In your presentation of ministry, you should stress what a privilege it is to serve God and others.

As you help your disciple build these inner convictions, they will usually make some faltering steps to minister. These may be as simple as sharing a thought at a Bible study or helping a friend move. Maybe he has a good talk with a friend and is able to share insight or encouragement. The careful discipler is alert to each such occurrence, because we are waiting for something to

encourage, which will stimulate further efforts. Also, don't hesitate to suggest specific possibilities for further ministry.

Prayer

We earlier suggested teaching your disciples how to pray for others. Ministry is the natural context for many of these prayers. Early in a new relationship, begin praying alone and with your disciple for her ministry. When we regularly plead that God will grant ministry opportunities for disciples, we usually see those prayers answered.

Each time you meet, you should ask how interactions have gone with non-Christians in your disciple's life. Then you should pray for each one by name. The same goes for believers our disciple has tried to build up. The things you pray for signal what you think is important. God uses these times of prayer by answering the prayers and by causing your disciples' burden for ministry to grow.

Evangelism

We should encourage young disciples to share their faith right from the beginning of their Christian lives. This is a time when they are very likely to get a hearing from their non-Christian friends. Pray that this opportunity won't pass without a number of enjoyable experiences sharing with outsiders.

Each early attempt at witnessing is vitally important, and you should take every opportunity to thoughtfully encourage these attempts. Teach your disciples that even unsuccessful witnessing is a huge victory. The sower must sow the seed on all kinds of ground (Mat. 13:1-23). You don't want your disciple to be too focused on whether people are converted. When disciples become too results-focused, they often become timid. They are afraid of saying the wrong thing or seeming too pushy. Disciples who are more focused on getting more opportunities to share end up talking more, and are more likely to see success as well.

If possible, you should look for opportunities to meet your disciples' friends so you can help win them to Christ. Any opportunity they have to watch how you discuss spiritual matters with non-Christians would be superb training. Here is where you can model good evangelism or pre-evangelistic conversation.

If your disciples succeed in winning a friend to Christ (with or without your help), they will usually be excited about evangelism from then on. Such a new Christian could, in turn, be the gateway into your disciple's further ministry development as she helps her new Christian friend grow.

Think about reading some good books on evangelism with your disciple. Good choices might include Geisler's, *Conversational Evangelism: How to Listen and Speak So You Can Be Heard* or Hybels and Mittleburg, *Becoming A Contagious Christian* are good for motivating evangelism. Even Dennis' book, *Discovering God: Exploring the Possibilities of Faith* [\[59\]](#) is good for getting ideas about what to say.

At the same time you encourage witnessing, you can add some advice. After praising his efforts to make some points with a friend, you could also say, "Nice. You know, another point you could have made is..." Or after hearing that a disciple didn't know how to answer a hard question, you might say, "Oh, I know a good one for that..." These suggestions often register visibly on the face of a young disciple. He may even say, "Oh, I wish I'd thought of that!" To which you can reply, "Well, it's not too late. Maybe the next time you see her,

just say, ‘I was thinking about your question the other day, and this occurred to me....’” In such cases, you end up sending disciples back to people with whom they are sharing, now armed with new ideas. You are actually training the disciple in ministry, but because the tidbits you suggest are linked to actual conversations, the disciple will remember them even years later. This is field training—the best kind of training.

Edification

Even very young disciples can also experiment with ministry by making efforts to build up other Christians. Most young Christians who are making friends in a local church will find opportunities to share or encourage others' faith. Again, you have to be alert to simple acts of giving like these so you can powerfully encourage your disciples.

For instance, if you see your disciple talking with a friend at home group, you may later check in with the other person and ask what they were talking about. If you detect that the person enjoyed any aspect of the conversation, you have the opportunity to stoke the fire of ministry zeal in your disciple. "Jim was saying how meaningful your talk was...." Or, "Sherry said she felt so encouraged by what you said the other night." Even if you don't have inside intelligence, you can always fish for information: "It looked like you were having a good talk with Bob. What was that about?" Usually you will find something to encourage as disciples recount their interactions with other believers.

Building motivation

If you succeed in getting your disciples to witness and build up other believers, you need to call their attention to the right things. Did they notice the power of God moving through them as they spoke? Do they realize how important their acts of ministry are, even in small areas? Do they feel honored to be used by God in his service? Have they realized they may have spiritual gifts in these areas?

Regular questioning is a key tool. “What do you think we could say to Julie that would help her in this situation with her roommates?” Or, “I sense that George has been discouraged lately. I wonder how we could build him up?” By putting such questions in a thousand different real life situations, you teach your disciples how to think like servant ministers. At the same time, you are placing subtle suggestions.

Suppose you discuss ways to help a mutual friend. Afterward, you may take the opportunity to share with that mutual friend along the lines you discussed. Later you can share with your disciple that you used the ideas the two of you discussed earlier, and it seemed to help. In this sequence, you have demonstrated to your disciple how to think creatively about building up another, and then act on it. Of course, you’re really hoping that your disciple gets there first and reports success back to you. Then you can be the encourager again.

We find that most disciples who are witnessing and trying to build up other believers soon come to love ministry. Watch for signs that they are beginning to actively look for opportunities to minister in small ways. These small acts of ministry begin to form a pattern. The others-centered way of life begins to replace the self-centered way of life. You will probably find your prayer times expanding as you pray for people and situations that come up in the course of ministry. Whenever your disciple reports a conversation where he didn’t have the answers, it opens a new area for possible study. Hunger for learning grows rapidly in a ministering believer.

Financial giving

This is also a good time to suggest a giving ministry. Giving is an essential part of a well-balanced ministry, and it has a potent effect on the giver as well as the church. By developing a habit of regular giving, disciples learn that God is the true owner of their money. Bringing their financial lives under the God's leadership avoids wrong attitudes that could later derail their ministry. Jesus said, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?" (Luke 16:10-11). According to this passage, God is not going to entrust ministry responsibility (the true riches) to one who is not faithful in the use of money. If this passage is true, we are wasting our time trying to help a non-giving disciple build ministry. God will oppose such disciples' progress until this matter is dealt with.

Jesus also said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mat. 6:21). Believers who invest regularly into the things of God see their hearts drawn to where they invest. Consequently, enhanced spiritual growth is a common by-product of sacrificial giving.

Expanding ministry: Evangelism

Is your disciple hungry for ministry? Ministry-hungry disciples are in excellent position to benefit from every area of spiritual instruction.

It's good to teach ministry principles and methods. But we suggest *first* getting believers to try serving, and *then* teaching them principles and methods as they struggle forward. This way they will understand the principles at a deeper level. They can put methods into practice immediately, which keeps methods from becoming uprooted ideas that are hard to remember.

Real-life ministry calls for good methods and principles, and when disciples are doers, they feel this need intensely. They will drink in coaching like camels filling up at a desert oasis. Learning ministry methods and strategies is a strong source of motivation in its own right.

Consider evangelism as an example. Many believers find that a major roadblock to sharing their faith with friends is just being able to bring up the subject of God and spiritual things with non-Christian friends. You can help by role-playing. You can do this informally by imagining scenarios with your friend or recounting some of your own experiences bringing the gospel up with people. For instance, you could suggest asking people, "Would you consider yourself a spiritual person?" Most people answer "yes" to this question. But regardless of how they answer, you could follow up either by asking, "Why not?" or "What does that mean to you?" Or, as one author suggests, you could ask, "Do you have any spiritual beliefs?"

New Christians often find it easy to simply say, "Boy, I've been learning some interesting things about God lately." Or, "I feel like I might be having some experiences with God recently." Most normal people will in turn ask something like, "What do you mean?" Then they can go on to share what has happened in their lives. When we suggest concrete things to say, we find that disciples will be far more likely to try using some of our ideas.

Make sure your disciples are able to articulate the gospel of grace, and can share their own stories effectively. Telling one's story is often the best way to open positive and non-argumentative dialogue. When one well-known pastor surveyed his non-witnessing church to find out why people weren't witnessing, he found one leading reason: people didn't feel like they knew what to say. This will happen with your disciples as well unless you equip them with ideas and content they can share in their own words. After this pastor introduced a training

program for evangelism, people began to witness in great numbers and many were won to Christ.

As you coach, suggest ways to respond to various questions or comments they encounter. The discipler is a counselor/consultant in this situation: “So, have you had any more talks with so-and-so?” “What did she say?” “And what did you say to that?” “Not bad! Here’s another idea if that comes up again....”

You should also equip disciples to deal with rejection or hostility. Teach them to respond properly and patiently to those who are not initially responsive. New Christians are often shocked and dismayed to find the level of hostility from some people. They need help processing this hastily without becoming defeated or timid. When you sense your disciple was stunned by rejection, you can make points like these:

- “Sometimes people are defensive when they are under conviction. In other words, they’re hostile because your sharing reminded them of the emptiness in their lives.”
- “Some of us were the same way shortly before receiving Christ. You can’t go by first reaction, because there are too many examples of people who seemed hostile, but came to Christ soon afterward.”
- “It takes time for family and friends to accept changes in one of their own. People will naturally be skeptical about any major change. But just because they made fun of it doesn’t mean they won’t be watching to see whether it’s a passing phase or something real.”

People fear rejection or ridicule. Try some role-playing to show how a person could respond graciously and victoriously to a rejecter. For instance, a disciple might try to share with his friend, who retorts, “I’m not interested in that kind of crap!” If our disciple says, “Oh,” that will be the end of the conversation and probably the end of that witnessing opportunity. But if he answers, “Really; why not?” the conversation goes on. If he follows with, “What experiences have you had with Christians?” misconceptions or fears may be revealed that could lead to fruitful discussion. Most successful evangelists are heedless of resistance or negative comments. We could also tell stories about ridiculers who later believed.

Many Christians are too passive when sharing their faith. A believer recently shared how he invited his next door neighbors to come to a Bible study

at his house. They shook their heads, “No, we don’t want to come to that.” His reply, “Oh, cool,” was way too passive. He should have said, “Why not?” and even been prepared to pursue it further: “I can’t believe you’re judging this before you’ve even seen it!” You may even suggest disciples confront rejecters: “I thought you believed people should be open-minded?”

So many times, people offer a rejection to invitations as a knee-jerk reaction. A moderate challenge to their position often causes them to change their minds. Even if it doesn’t change their minds, it leaves the conversation in a better place. The believer isn’t endorsing their refusal by saying, directly or indirectly, “Okay, that’s fine.”

As you give your disciples ideas for witnessing, they will usually try them out, especially if you are regularly praying together for opportunities to witness. You need to be able to share recent experiences you had while witnessing. You have little chance of inspiring consistent efforts to reach out for God if you are not doing so yourself. Remember, disciples tend to do what you do more than what you say.

As suggested earlier, the best thing you can do is go with your disciple to meet her friends. So often, you will find opportunities to witness, and your disciple will get to see with her own eyes how you do it. She will probably have far less trouble carrying on the process after you’re gone. At the same time, you’ll find it easier to coach if you actually know the people involved.

When disciples become comfortable witnessing and trying to build up Christians, they will also probably begin to see God bear fruit through their efforts. If you follow up early efforts with ongoing suggestions, two things become increasingly likely: 1) their witnessing results in someone meeting Christ, and 2) their efforts to build up believers results in growing friendships with other Christians. Either of these becomes a door to expanded ministry.

Expanding ministry: Discipleship

If your disciples succeed in leading someone to Christ (particularly someone of the same sex) you should encourage them to see it as their responsibility to nurture further growth. You can suggest areas of truth they might teach their new Christian friend. New Christians urgently need training in the basics of Christian living. Understanding how and why to pray, why being in fellowship with believers is important, how to view suffering, and the role of the Bible are all issues your disciples should begin covering with new believers within the first days of their conversion. Biblical teaching on the nature of grace and on Satan will also protect them in the most vulnerable period of their Christian lives.

If the new believer is in your Bible study or home group, you could do this training yourself. But why not have your disciple do it? By learning how to nurture a new Christian, your disciple learns crucial ministry skills that will be useful for a lifetime. At the same time, a disciple who nurtures a newly converted friend is building an important relationship that already includes sharing truth and feeling responsible for the other's spiritual well-being. This kind of relationship could easily grow into a disciple making relationship. And your goal, as one who believes in multiplication through discipleship, is that your disciples win their own disciples.

Likewise, if your disciple has been building up any Christian friend, a door may open for disciple making, even if the person came to faith through someone else.^[60] The more someone encourages, serves, and instructs another, the more likely it becomes that the person benefiting from such help will look to the one who gave it for more help. In cases where nobody is discipling the believer in question, and you sense your disciple commands a level of respect, you should suggest trying to move the relationship from simple friendship into discipleship.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2). If you are working with a young disciple is willing to disciple others, teach him to pray to the Lord of the harvest and let God know that he is willing to do this kind of work. Tell him to pray for opportunities, and pray together as well. Winning a disciple could take months or even a year or more in some cases. Others win a disciple relatively soon after they begin to actively seek one. Either way, your disciple needs to know that it's important and good to seek a disciple.

Once your disciple begins to disciple another person, you have crossed an important threshold. Instead of doing only informal, ad-hoc ministry, your disciple is now formally meeting with another to build maturity. This is the point where coaching goes into high gear.

Chapter 13

Moving toward independence

Unless you intentionally foster independence in your disciples, you may create an illusion of growth based on them complying in order to please you. This type of mentoring will not result in multiplication, because once you are out of the picture, the disciple loses motivation and direction. You want your disciples to become independent, in that they have their own convictions and function well apart from you. You can entrust leadership responsibility to such people. To get to this point, you need to transition from a more directive style of leadership to a more collaborative style, which is coaching. Coaching is how you help your disciple to fly solo.

Disciple makers sometimes feel a type of herding instinct that they don't fully understand. It feels good to have people "with us," sharing, asking for advice, working together in a group. If a disciple goes in another direction or begins making decisions without consulting you, it can seem like he is deserting you. You may even find yourself feeling critical or hurt. This new stage in the disciple making process could bring to light inner problems in your life—problems with egotism or control. Instead of being happy that your disciple doesn't need your direction anymore, you could feel unappreciated. Don't go there!

You are finally reaching your goal—that your disciple reaches a point where she no longer needs you. A well-taught disciple will continue to serve God and others years into the future with little or no support from you. Even if everyone else quits, a committed servant of God will go on. To reach this goal, you have to consciously foster independence from spiritual adolescence on.

Correctly understood, seeing disciples begin to spread their wings is an exciting experience! You realize it means they are close to spiritual maturity, and you will feel happy that you got to help them. Elton Trueblood wrote, "The glory of the coach is that of being the discoverer, the developer, and the trainer of the powers of other men. But this is exactly what we mean when we use the Biblical terminology about the equipping ministry."^[61]

As your disciples grow, your role changes. Instead of seeking to stimulate action, you realize the disciple is already motivated to act. Coaching involves stepping back to take your place at the sidelines. You watch carefully, giving

your disciples tips and advice on strategy, helping them think through what is happening, but letting them play the game on their own.

Coaching discipleship

Disciple making is a skill that takes years of practice to fully develop. Many people have a hard time the first year they disciple. This is normal and you should anticipate such problems when your disciple tries to disciple another. Try to become friends with anyone your disciple is mentoring. That helps you ask the right questions during times of coaching. You can compare your own impressions with those of your disciple.

You could also help at points, which shouldn't hurt as long as you are careful not to take over. You should only help in ways you feel will enhance the discipling relationship, never accidentally discrediting or superseding your disciple. Most of the time, you want to work with the new person *through* your disciple, not directly. If you succeed in engineering success for your disciples, they will probably become life-long disciple makers. It's much easier for them to get back to success once they've been there.

Most new disciple makers need lots of advice on what to study, how to motivate, when to move to the next level, and when to confront. Their discernment is often questionable. When you meet with your disciple, it should be natural to periodically ask how things are going in the new discipling relationship. We usually subject our disciples to a regular battery of questions about what they are seeing and how they assess progress.

Even if you aren't close to the new person in question, you can usually tell from the way your disciple answers questions where problems may lie. When discussing your disciple's ministry you may notice that he can't easily answer some questions you raise. These show areas he needs to explore further. When he does have answers, you can compare what he sees to what you see. But always be careful not to undermine your disciple's confidence by doubting too many of his opinions. If you doubt your disciple is seeing things correctly, try to use further questioning rather than direct rejection of his view. You don't want to make him feel he is clueless compared to you.

Your questioning plays an important role in reminding the new discipler of key steps he may forget otherwise. For instance, you may know he tends to be weak in encouragement, and your questions could help him remember to encourage. Eventually, he will probably develop this habit when he sees how helpful encouragement can be. But early in the process the coach needs to remind him regularly.

Another area you should question is prioritization. Your disciple may see many areas of weakness and need in his disciple, but which one should he focus on next? Which ones can wait? By prioritizing, you help new disciplers avoid calling for action in a hundred areas at once. Calling for change in too many areas at once can be demoralizing—the disciple may begin to feel that spiritual growth is a hopeless project.

Planning

Experienced disciple makers are able to lay plans instinctively. They sense where disciples are at, and know what they need much of the time. But new disciple makers don't have this ability. They're not sure how to assess their disciples, and they haven't developed the instincts needed for good planning.

You need to help newer disciple makers think through principles and the ever-changing conditions they face with their disciples. Here is where you will see the value of having your own relationship with the one your disciple is trying to mentor. You can use your own instincts, trained by experience, to sense progress and needs in the younger believer. Subtleties like shifts in attitude, or a rise or fall in motivation can best be read through personal contact. You also have the opportunity to discern some of the most difficult problems, like what *isn't happening*, but should be. You may also be able to notice strengths in the person that your disciple hasn't noticed.

If you aren't in a position to build your own relationship with a person your disciple is mentoring, you have to gather your information through carefully questioning your disciple. Skilled disciplers know how to read between the lines and sense problems and opportunities during a questioning process. You have to be careful not to jump to premature conclusions, but you can sense things during sequential discussions that lead to a growing certainty about your conclusions. Watch, not only for what he is saying, but for what he is not saying. Not infrequently it is the missing material that gives the key to discernment.

Try stepping your disciple through disciple making material like this book or others, stopping periodically to ask how your disciple feels she or her disciple is doing in the areas covered. Be sure to follow up with "Why?" questions: "Why do you feel that way?" By thinking through these questions, she has to go beneath feelings and impressions to consider the actual data that either does, or does not support her answers. This is the kind of thinking she needs to exercise in order to lay helpful plans. You want to move your disciples away from flying by the seat of their pants and toward careful, prayerful analysis.

When you and your disciple agree on a need to address with another person, you can step him through a planning process. Help him anticipate possible reactions and have something ready for each possibility. You might role-play some ways he could state things that would be sensitive. Be sure to point out the role of prayer and reflection before trying to effect change. God can prepare people's hearts to hear what we say. Remind him to begin most interactions with

some positive comments. By sending your disciple in to ministry interactions spiritually prepared, and with a good plan, you make success far more likely.

At the same time, some areas will be going very well with the new person, and these give you the opportunity to point this out to your disciple with encouragement: “Yeah, I think you’ve done an excellent job leading her into a life of prayer!”

Dealing with setbacks

Making disciples always sounds like a great idea, but those who have the courage to actually engage with disciples soon realize it's a lot harder than they thought. Disciples are often disappointing. Progress is usually slow. And our expectations often exceed what is realistic.

As coaches, we play a major role adjusting our disciples' perspective on what they are doing. We will find many occasions where we need to calm anxieties, renew faith, and encourage success. The coach is a major source of positives in a project that could easily discourage an inexperienced disciple maker.

Think of a number of typical conversations you may need to have with your inexperienced disciple maker:

Patience: First-time disciple makers usually aren't used to the length of time required for real life change.

"You have to realize that these things take time. Think about where you were when you were two years old in the Lord."

"Your guy was raised in a highly dysfunctional home; he doesn't understand how normal people relate."

"Let's remember, this guy's only about nine months old in the Lord."

Perception: Your disciple may be missing key signs of micro-movement. Movement in the right direction can be quite subtle from one month to the next. You need to help her become sensitive to the slightest progress so she will be good at encouraging.

"Yes, your girl fell into sin, but it's been far longer since the last time this happened. A year ago she was doing this several times a month."

"She did that? That's pretty impressive! I don't think she could have done something like that six months ago."

"Yes, she hasn't won anyone to Christ, but she is sharing her faith. That's a lot better than some believers."

"Did you notice she was asking about that Bible passage? She must have been reading."

Negativity: Satan will try to overwhelm your new disciple maker with negative thoughts.

"Let's not forget that defeats like these are typical in ministry. I remember having something similar with so-and-so, and he ended up pretty good."

“Yes, you may have to give up for now, but this story isn’t over. A lot of people in his situation change their minds after a while.”

“God is pretty powerful. I hope we’re not discounting his power to change people’s hearts. Maybe instead of despairing, we should pray.”

\\nick General encouragement: Take opportunities as appropriate to point out how God is using your disciple to bear real spiritual fruit.

“I don’t know whether you realize how awesome it is that you have been used to persuade this woman to take an interest in someone other than herself.”

“Boy, it would have been so easy to give up a couple of months ago when things looked so hopeless. But you just persevered and won the victory! I hope you remember this turn-around when disappointment hits again.”

“A year ago, you were just focused on your own survival. Now you’re focused on helping someone else. You should feel good about your spiritual progress.”

These and scores of other situations call for the creative disciple maker to engage in thoughtful dialog when coaching.

Skills needed in coaching

Coaching is probably the most creative part of the discipling task. Good coaches have to continually read complicated situations and creatively devise suitable responses. They must also try to anticipate needs and pitfalls so they can move in ahead of time with needed preparation. This new level of ministry competence calls for new ministry skills.

While Jesus was conducting his earthly ministry, he sent his disciples on short-term trips to spread God's word. One such occasion is recorded in Luke 10:

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him... He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house... stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages... Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you...' He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.' The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (vs. 1-11; 16-18)

From this description, we see Jesus using a number of key skills when coaching his disciples.

Directing

Jesus was very clear and directive when it came to describing the mission goals. He gave the seventy two a picture of what he wanted them to accomplish. He even set up possible scenarios and explained how to deal with them. He told them what to say, what to do, where to go, who to look for, and when to leave. So, directive leadership is appropriate, especially for learners who have little experience.

Yet even though he gave them direction, you still see the enormous

responsibility and freedom he gave to the disciples. Jesus trusted that if his followers understood the big picture, along with some specific directions, they would figure out the rest.

Vision

We have already considered vision in an earlier chapter, but now we need to see how vision is conveyed in the context of coaching. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two, he used vision in three ways.

First, he explained their mission in a way they could visualize. As he explains going from town to town, it is easy to imagine the things they must do. They needed to meet a “person of peace,” stay at his house, accept his hospitality for as long as it was offered, and preach the kingdom of God. As they went from town to town, they were to go without provisions. It’s easy to picture being an empty-handed traveler looking for hospitality from strangers. Jesus wanted them to learn how to depend on God’s provision.

Second, Jesus helped them anticipate the potential failures they might face. He wanted them to have the kind of vision that looks beyond superficial circumstances. Maybe there would be people who persecuted them. “That’s okay,” Jesus says, “you can think of them as wolves and yourselves as sheep among them.” Maybe there would be people who rejected them. “That’s okay,” says Jesus, “shake the dust off your feet when you leave that place. They are not rejecting you, but me.” Jesus doesn’t send the seventy-two out wearing rose-colored glasses. He’s very honest about the difficulties they may face, but he wants them to see beyond those things. Appearances can be deceiving, but what looks like failure may actually have been accomplishing what they needed to accomplish.

Lastly, Jesus looks beyond the natural world into the spiritual world. As the disciples returned full of joy, Jesus encouraged their work with a peculiar statement; “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Something about their work had positive spiritual consequences that could only be seen with God’s help. If God permits us to see something like this, we should share it. If God doesn’t give us any insight into the spiritual repercussions of our actions, we must simply persevere in faith that our earthly actions are having supernatural consequences.

Notice too how Jesus directed their attention to their identity, more than toward their results in ministry in verse 20: “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.” He was teaching them that they needed to learn to minister out of their

new identity, not out of works.

As we coach our disciples, we want them to see what their mission looks like, the spiritual truth behind difficult circumstances, and the supernatural reality beyond what they experience with their senses.

Practice

Humans learn best through practice. As disciple makers, we can help our disciples practice ministry in two ways: role-playing and beginning actual ministry.

Role-playing can be awkward and condescending, but it doesn't have to be. For instance, you can bring up a situation you have faced and ask your disciple how she would respond if in the same situation. Continue asking questions until you see a satisfactory resolution. Or, bring up a situation she is facing and ask how she is planning to approach it. What is she planning to say, what does she hope will happen, and what will she do if the worst happens instead?

In addition to practicing conversations and teachings in your one-on-one time, disciples also need to get a taste for doing real ministry. Just as Jesus gave his disciples the opportunity to minister while he was still physically with them, you also should allow your disciples to begin ministering while they are in close proximity to you.

Goal-setting

God doesn't want us to be aimless. Without ordering our thoughts and intentions, we will often be left in a self-centered rut, occasionally crying out to God for help. That's why some successful disciplers like to set spiritual goals with their disciples. As the saying goes, "If you never set a goal, you'll make it every time." Spiritual goals are not antithetical to faith. The Bible affirms setting spiritual goals. Paul says, "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air" (1 Cor. 9:26). In other words, Paul set goals and pursued them.^[62]

The proverbs warn that those who refuse to work according to a plan bring disgrace: "A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing" (Prov. 20:4). Unfortunately, many Christians could be described in these terms as well. By failing to work in view of a goal, they have no harvest.

Disciple makers who practice goal setting with disciples usually have fun and see exciting results, especially when goals are understood under grace.^[63] Make sure the goals you set together are achievable and measurable so you can

celebrate success together.

Under a grace approach to goal setting, we can rejoice even when a goal was only partially met, because partially met goals indicate more growth than meeting no goals at all. Aimlessness is bad, but no worse than the opposite extreme of legalism. The legalistic mentality turns goals into laws that define one's self-worth. Spiritual goals are a tool—a means to an end—not the be all and end all. You should warn disciples that any goals you set may not be met, and you should explain how a person under grace would view such a failure: we simply set new goals and try again.

\\Persuasion

Paul says, “Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). The ability to persuade is of pivotal importance to every Christian worker. In Proverbs we read, “The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable” (Prov. 15:2 NASB).

One of the best ways to persuade someone is to demonstrate that you understand them. Spend time praying about a friend you want to persuade. Observe and attempt to appreciate your friend more. Listen when he prays, notice when he serves someone, and notice what kind of things bring him down. The ability to understand others is one aspect of wisdom.

Your persuasion will also increase if you demonstrate tact and sympathy. Kindness is not flattery. You can tell the truth in a compassionate way. Often when we become harsh with others, we speak more from personal frustration than concern. It's easy for people to pick up on such frustration and discredit what we are trying to say. An even-tempered approach usually affects people in the most potent way. “A soft tongue breaks the bone” (Prov. 25:15b NASB). We are not suggesting that you should never employ emotional heat. Jesus himself rebuked his disciples on a number of occasions (e.g. Mat. 17:17). But you need to be sure your anger is righteous, and be sure to pick your battles. Angry conversations should be rare and controlled.

Flattery is not persuasive. Honesty is. “He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue” (Prov. 28:23; see also Prov. 26:28b; 27:6). If you tell the truth while retaining the intimacy of friendship, your friends will trust you and probably eventually appreciate any hard things you may need to bring up. Flatterers forfeit respect because they seem to be shallow and dishonest.

What some consider persuasion may be closer to begging. Begging and

“guilt-tripping” are only effective for temporary, superficial change. Persuasion is not manipulation. Good persuasion involves effective use of scripture rather than out-of-context proof-texting. Persuaders are also able to develop good, critically sound arguments that simply make sense.

Coaching involves persuasion in a thousand situations. Your goal is to convince your disciples that a particular approach is right. When you see a disciple taking a questionable approach to a ministry situation, don't simply say, “No, do it the other way.” If disciples are continually told what to do, you fail to develop independence. But if you can argue the principles involved, you equip disciples to understand similar situations in the future.

Not only should you hope to be persuasive with your disciples, you also should try to teach them how to be persuasive with those they serve. Paul says to Titus, “These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:15). How could Titus prevent people from disregarding what he said? This is probably a call to use his powers of persuasion, as well as the spiritual conviction supplied from God's side. Paul had taught Titus how to persuade others. He would have used his own example, as well as regular feedback on what was, or was not persuasive in Titus' speech.

Discernment

Discernment is the ability to judge the difference between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, and wisdom and foolishness. It also implies the ability to see beneath surface factors to underlying causes or character issues. Christian servants with good discernment gain important advantages in ministry. These benefits include timely recognition of need, opportunity, or danger and massive time savings through correct selection, matching the right treatment to needs, and dealing with problems before they get too advanced.

Any Christian can acquire this skill. Hebrews teaches that, “Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (Heb. 5:14 NASB). Mature Christians have been trained to discern through deep study of the Bible and regular practice. This passage implies that all Christians can enhance their ability to discern. Discernment is closely associated with wisdom in the book of Proverbs.

Without discernment, disciple makers are taken by surprise in ministry. They won't notice that a disciple is slipping into an alienated state. Then, when things get really bad it seems like a slap in the face. Without discernment we may miss opportunities to give preventative advice. Without discernment we may buy into dishonest masquerading; we may write off someone with a good

heart because of her rough edges. These all result from only looking at the external. “Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16, NASB).

Many of the things disciples need to discern are subjective. For instance, whether a person is trying or faking it. What are the signs of real effort? Or, they may need to discern when someone is truly repentant, or if is she merely remorseful that she got caught. Again, what is the difference between someone yearning for God, versus being dutiful toward him? As a disciple maker, you have to think long and hard over issues like these. We improve over a whole lifetime of trying our hand at discernment.

Bible knowledge helps us develop discernment by showing us God’s perspective on life. For instance, in scripture we learn about the psychology of sin. Sin affects how people think and act. “The wicked flee though no one pursues” (Prov. 28:1). Someone who is thinking without any agenda is different than someone who is thinking like a sinner. Recognizing this difference can be crucial.

Good discerners also learn to look beyond first appearances. Find older Christians whose discernment you respect and make it a point to go to them for advice. Ask how they came to the conclusions they share with you. Wise disciplers realize that discernment doesn’t always have to come from within. Sometimes the wisest thing to do is to get advice from someone else.

Prayer with an open mind is good for discernment. Too often we see what we want to see rather than what the facts right in front of us show, and God may remind us of that. Watch for common misleading factors. “Oh, we had a good talk,” is a statement we frequently hear in connection with poor discernment. Words count for less than deeds. Likewise, when dealing with a compliant person who tells you what you want to hear, it’s very easy to incorrectly discern the person. Or, when dealing with an ornery person who acts more resistant, it’s easy to think he’s worse off than he really is.

In coaching, you hope to enhance your disciples’ discernment. Many coaching discussions center on comparing discernment regarding people or situations with which you are both familiar. When you see things differently than your disciples, you have the opportunity to ask how they reached their impressions. These discussions often lead to investigations of people’s motivations or underlying spiritual principles. Group dynamics, God’s work in people’s lives, the psychology of sin, and Satan’s possible moves may all come up when discussing discernment.

Part of refining discernment includes teaching disciples not to over-discern. Some people assume they can tell what others are thinking or feeling in a way that becomes prejudicial. Good discernment is mainly useful in showing us what questions to ask. Any final conclusion in subjective areas like others' attitudes or secret motives must await confirmation through facts, including the person's own disclosures or actions. In other words, if we think a person is bitter at another, we can ask questions to discover the truth. But when the person admits she is bitter, we reach a final conclusion. If we jump to conclusions based on our supposed ability to discern, we often damage relationships.

We should also take disciples back to situations they mis-discerned and ask why they think they may have missed the signs. Learning good discernment involves many trials and errors. Noticing errors in discernment helps them avoid putting too much confidence in their discernment. Applying spiritual principles from God's word takes practice, as the author of Hebrews argued. By patiently guiding a learner through the process of refining his discernment, we can greatly increase his fruitfulness for God, and reduce frustration.

Try going over the goals for discipleship as described in Appendix 1 with your disciple's person in mind. Looking at a list of traits like these, while asking "which of these is a real sore point for your person?" could help awaken discernment.

If you can coach your disciples into significant success in disciple making, you will equip them with all the most important ministry skills. Once believers succeed in discipleship, they are usually able to return to success again and again in later years.

Chapter 14

Coaching group leadership

If everything goes well, some of your disciples should reach a point where they are ready to lead a group. We believe the best way to move into leadership is to first learn to lead one other person. If disciple makers learn to lead one person successfully through discipleship, they are in good position to try their hand at leading larger numbers.

We usually like to see disciples lead a small group before leading a larger group. This is in harmony with Jesus' principle that "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much" (Luke 16:10). We also like to see prospective leaders actively sharing their faith. Leaders who don't witness usually cannot lead their groups into witnessing.

If you put people up to teach and lead who have not witnessed or taken on private ministry like discipleship, you are presenting the church with models who are inadequate and will send mixed signals to members. To build real evangelism and discipleship into the DNA of your church, you need to be careful about who you place into public roles, like teaching. In our opinion, having knowledge, seniority, training, or gifting to speak isn't enough. We also believe that the rest of the church watches who we honor and respect as role models, and therefore effective and convincing service in non-public ministry is a prerequisite for public roles. Put differently, if someone wants to teach or lead, the priorities are:

1. **Teach and lead yourself** – gain the character qualities typical of a serious Christian believer
2. **Teach and lead one or more others** – win a disciple (preferably a new convert) or two or three, and show that you can guide them into commitment and life change
3. **Teach the public** – first in smaller groups, then in larger ones

Getting started

How does your disciple end up leading his own group? He may initiate a neighborhood or workplace Bible study with friends. Or your home group might be ready to plant a new group through partitioning itself. In an organic approach, any disciple who is ready to lead a group will have one or more disciples, and other people who were brought around by him or his disciples. These would naturally be the first members of the new group. Your church's approach to group replication will be an important factor.

Group leadership represents a new level of responsibility, with new dangers and opportunities. If you have prepared your disciple well, he should have a good chance of stepping up to this role with success. But you will need to continue coaching for at least a number of months, trying to engineer success. People who succeed at leading their own groups usually retain a high level of motivation indefinitely.

One way to get started in coaching group leadership is to co-lead the same group with your disciple for a period of time. By leading together, you get a chance to see how your disciple thinks about situations and people you know personally. That way, you can compare your own thinking with hers. If you lead a home group, you could have your prospective leader(s) sit in your leadership meetings for a number of months before sending them out with their own group. In our church, we routinely have the prospective leadership team join the existing team for several months before a group plants. This way, we get to see the dynamics of their new team and get extra chances to comment on issues we see in their private lives or ministries. At the same time, the new leaders get to see how the older team relates and makes decisions. We can model team dynamics for them: showing respect for each other, talking openly about issues, stressing prayer, encouragement, unity, etc.

Some churches have groups lead by teams of leaders. Others have single leaders. But even if your disciple is the only recognized leader in the group, he will need to cultivate a group of fellow-workers who help lead the group, and this is really a team.

A successful home group must maintain the unity of its leaders and top influencers. Disunited leaderships are incapable of leading group growth. To maintain unity group disciples have to learn how to deal with their conflicts maturely and quickly. Your task is to teach your disciples how to work with their team to build unity and motivation. Your own example may be the best teacher.

However, you should also go over principles like those in Appendix 11, “Principles for fostering successful leadership teams.”

If you show your disciple how to build a unified ministry team, you have given her one of the most potent ministry tools possible. Quality leaders are consistently able to assemble teams of people who enjoy working together. Bringing people together and helping them overcome barriers to understanding, personal resentments, jealousies, and prejudice is typical work for leaders. Good leaders can engage in conflict management with peaceful results. Out of a unified team of opinion leaders comes a consensus that will motivate most groups.

Leadership theory

Most Christians are not fully aware of what leadership should look like. You may need to offer instruction in the areas of leadership responsibility and leadership characteristics. A vision of godly, facilitating, non-controlling, servant leadership can be extremely motivating.

Christian leaders have spiritual responsibilities. As Christian leaders we are accountable to God for the way we conduct ourselves. James 3:1 says, “We who teach will be judged more strictly.” Before you send someone out as a leader, you need to be sure they know what roles they should be playing. Christian leaders have to function in a number of areas, and different leaders will perform better in some areas than others. Leaders should appraise their own strengths and weaknesses, not hesitating to get help in their weak areas when possible. ^[64]

At the same time, all leaders need to be ready in principle to perform in all of these areas on occasion. In Appendix 12 we have included a summary of the main biblical tasks leaders should fulfill. This would be a good study to go over with your disciples before they go out as leaders. By teaching your disciples what leaders should and should not do, you protect them from being manipulated into assuming improper roles later.

Delegating and empowering

When your disciple begins leading her own group, you should coach her on the process of delegating leadership to members in the group who will become the next leaders. Coaches can help with the needed discernment during the process of empowering and training new leaders.

For one thing, we should watch for signs that our disciples are trying to do everything in their new group. New leaders often mistakenly think they are responsible for all spiritual work in their group. They may be weak in delegation skills. Any time we find new leaders reporting that they are tired or “stressed out” in their new group, we should investigate whether some work could be delegated to others in the group. We have to remind leaders that their role is not primarily fishing, but teaching others to fish. Feeling stressed out or burned out can also be the result of failure to depend on God for ministry results.

Another area where coaches can help in this process is the discernment as to what tasks people are ready for. Over-delegation could lead to discouragement if we put people into positions for which they are not ready and failure results. But at the same time, people need to be stretched or their growth will be stunted. So, because this area is not always easy to determine, frequent discussions between new leaders and coaches are helpful.

Teaching

Disciples who move toward group leadership usually need to learn how to teach scripture or lead discussions. These involve spiritual gifts, but are also learned skills, and we can greatly enhance a disciple's ability to communicate with groups through careful coaching. Begin this training while your disciple is still in your own group. That way, you can hear him teach or lead discussion and you will know for sure he can communicate effectively to groups.

Teaching or preaching usually involves larger groups like home churches, youth groups, children's classes, or special events. You will usually have to show disciples how to put a Bible teaching together.

Make sure they know how to develop the key elements that should be present in every teaching: Introductions that arrest attention, conclusions that summarizing the big picture in a way people will remember, and clear content in the body of the teaching.

We also like to teach disciples how to present information in a thesis-antithesis format. In this approach, each major point is argued alongside an antithesis. The antithesis is what we argue against. The approach, "We want to do this, not that," or "This is true, not the other thing some believe," adds conflict and interest to a teaching. People like debates, and in this approach, the teacher debates with himself.

Even when disciples have excellent content in their public teaching, they at times lack affect, or feeling, in their presentation. Most people are too inhibited when speaking to groups, so we may need to provide them with input and observation about their presentation. They should learn to monitor their volume, facial expressions, eye contact, and body language.

If possible, especially when a disciple is beginning to learn how to speak to groups, have him bring his teaching and practice it for you. This serves two purposes: it helps him get used to giving his teaching in front of an audience, and it gives you the chance to share pointers that could improve the teaching. Your effort should be to engineer success in early teaching efforts. This will prevent your disciple from developing aversive feelings about public speaking.

Leading discussion

Even more common than public teaching is leading group discussion. Leading discussion doesn't require any particular spiritual gift, so most disciples should be able to learn how to lead discussion skillfully. Developing this skill will empower our disciples to effectively lead smaller groups where so much ministry occurs.

When teaching discussion skills, we need to cover the main sections in a guided discussion:

Introduction

In our introduction, we touch on the skills of public speaking. The leader must stimulate and excite the group about the subject under consideration. During this first part of the meeting, the burden is completely on the leader to raise the group's consciousness of the issues. This is done by defining what the issues are, and why they are urgent. If this part goes well, the leader will have achieved arousal. People sit up, furrow their brows, smile, laugh, and in other ways show that they have been impacted emotionally, whether excited, disturbed, provoked, or inspired.

Probes

Next, the leader will normally introduce "probes" or questions intended to prod members toward a particular line of thought. We need to teach our disciples how to devise effective probes that lead to good discussion.

The most important thing to explain here is that discussion is not recitation. Recitation is when the instructor calls on the group to clarify content or asks questions requiring specific knowledge of study content. For instance, "Where does Paul teach on the body of Christ," is a recitation question because it requires prior knowledge which is recited in the group. This will not lead to discussion.

Discussion questions, on the other hand, call for creativity, problem solving, personal opinion, and personal experience. For instance, you could set up an apparent contradiction in your introduction, and ask the group how it might be resolved. For instance: "Paul says 'knowledge makes arrogant, but love builds up' in one passage, and 'may your love excel in all knowledge and discernment' in another. How do we reconcile these?"

Or you could ask them how a particular truth might apply either to life in

general, or to specific situations you imagine. “How would you apply this to someone who is worried about a shortage of income?” The point of good discussion probes is to stimulate thinking and sharing that is accessible to anyone. They don’t have to know the material in advance, but they do have to *engage* with the material. Overly simplistic questions and yes-no questions also make poor probes.

Responses

As people suggest answers, the discussion leader must respond. Responding during discussion is a complex skill involving a brief summary of what the person meant, approval for their efforts to share, and a call for more from the group. But responses can’t be long. The leader shouldn’t give mini-sermons after each comment from the group or discussion will collapse. Then too, the leader has to decide when to move on to another subject. These skills and the others involved in successful discussion leading take practice, and you can coach your disciples best if you sit in on discussions they lead.

You can offer a critique on content and delivery after a practice session, or after an actual teaching or attempt at leading discussion. You should be careful not to be too critical, but disciples won’t progress unless you are willing to offer needed correction. Consider taping a teaching or discussion and going over the tape interactively with your disciple. Be sure to point out the good points as well as those needing improvement.

Any disciple who learns to give edifying teachings or discussions has a valuable ministry tool that will increase her credibility and lead to additional ministry opportunities.

Assessing a group

Hebrews 13:17 mentions another role for leaders: “They [leaders] keep watch over you.” Leaders need to keep an eye on the spiritual health of their church. Like good shepherds watch out for their sheep, we need to be shepherds who follow Jesus’ example. A good leader periodically asks questions like, “Are there any unhealthy trends in our church? What is the cause? What might help to turn this around?”

If you have a disciple leading a Bible study or fellowship group, you need to show him how to think strategically about the group. Good leaders are continually asking themselves questions about the group’s health. Only the most natural, instinctive leaders ask these questions without prompting. For most disciples, you should go over what questions to ask in a number of areas. The more specific these questions are, the more we can rely on our assessments. Consider going over questions like those in Appendix 10, “Assessing your group” with your disciple.

Chapter 15

Releasing: Preparation

Releasing a disciple means our task is almost complete. When we release disciples, we send them off to continue their own ministries with far less ongoing support from us, except for coaching as needed. Sooner or later, if we are to continue raising up new disciples, we have to let the old ones go. In most cases, this should be a natural process that both disciple maker and disciple agree on. You'll no doubt continue to enjoy your friendship, but now at a somewhat more distant level. You will probably no longer have time for weekly meetings, but you may continue getting together occasionally.

The most natural way to release disciples is in association with group multiplication. If you lead together with your disciples for a time, and your group is growing, you naturally reach a point where you need to multiply and launch a new group. At that point, your disciples go out to lead their own groups independently. In the model used by some churches, mature disciples go out alone to begin a new group which may be made up of people from the larger church who want to join a home group. In other cases, disciples begin a new group from scratch, often with friends and neighbors to whom they have witnessed. In churches without home groups, a disciple may join a different ministry team, or just move into a different sphere of ministry within the same team.

Just because your disciples begin leading their own groups doesn't mean you're done. Although the process of releasing may begin when disciples start leading their own groups, it may not be complete for months thereafter. You should continue to meet for some time, monitoring their progress with the new group and continuing to coach until you see they don't need it anymore. You also have to make sure key points have been covered that will help them withstand the rigors of Christian service. Only then will you be ready to release them completely.

Teaching God's part in ministry

If our disciples are to survive and flourish in leadership, they must develop a clear understanding and dependence on God's part in ministry. Be prepared to teach specifically on what we should expect God to supply in our ministries. Many have a vague idea that God should help, but may not understand what to pray for. We should teach them to look for God's help in two key areas.

In the first place, God wants to *direct* our ministries. Leaders should come to the scriptures, and to the Lord in prayer, seeking to know his will for their ministry. Ministry that departs from the God's direction may bear some kind of fruit, but becomes "wood hay and stubble" the further we depart from the leading of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:10-15). Interestingly, God seems willing to continue using some ministries that are off-target, apparently because he places a higher value on reaching the lost than on complete fidelity to his leading. Paul observed this phenomenon in Rome (Phil. 1:15-18 see also Mark 9:38-40). Even in 1 Corinthians 3, the "wood hay and stubble" may be used by God, but it will not be rewarded. In fact, the Bible abounds with examples where God continued to use leaders who went astray, sometimes very badly. What are we to conclude?

Direction

On one hand, since God wants to direct our ministries, we should seek that leading often and earnestly. Even though God may continue to use off-target ministries, we assume that we will bear more spiritual fruit the closer we are to his ideal. This is increasingly obvious as time goes on. In the short term, human-based ministry may look good, but it tends to deteriorate over time or bring disgrace upon the Lord's name. On the other hand, people shouldn't become paralyzed by the notion that "Unless I know exactly what God wants in each situation, I can't move forward." They should feel free to move forward based on the general knowledge of what God wants, and in areas they are unsure, they can remain open to any correction in our course that God may want to show them, knowing that he will not let us come to irreversible harm (Phil. 3:15).

God's direction extends not only to major issues like whether to preach the word or to disciple others, but to more subjective areas like when someone is ready for leadership, or who we chose to disciple. Teachers have to consult God on what slant to take when teaching any particular text. Evangelists ask when to make a more direct call on the lost. Leaders must plead for insight as to how much to expect from a particular disciple. All believers need discernment as to Satan's next move. In all, there are thousands of decisions in ministry requiring

divine guidance.

Empowering

Secondly, God wants to *empower* our ministries. Jesus' declaration that "apart from me you can do nothing," (John 15:5) is again, a figure of speech. He doesn't mean we can do nothing at all, but that we can do nothing *of spiritual value* apart from him. As Christian leaders, we realize that we depend absolutely on God for things like these:

- **Evangelism.** While a warm demeanor, patience, good arguments, and heartfelt pleas matter in evangelism, only the Holy Spirit can finally convict a person of their need for Christ and bring them to repentance (John 6:65).
- **Conviction.** We can preach truth, but we depend on God to convict people's hearts to follow the truth. Apart from spiritual conviction, people will listen to the truth with passive curiosity. This is probably the power Paul referred to in 1 Cor. 4:20: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power."
- **Development of Christian character.** No amount of blustering and Bible thumping will transform human lives, "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).
- **Overthrowing Satan.** How could any human hope to impact a spiritual being like Satan apart from the power of God? (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Rom. 16:20).
- **Filling Christian meetings with spiritual power.** Paul asks his friends to pray that he be "given utterance" when preaching (Eph. 6:19). He knew that preaching must be anointed by the Holy Spirit in order to be effective.

Failure to understand or believe in God's role in ministry will always have negative results. These results include arrogance during "in season" times, as well as panic, pushiness and discouragement during "out of season" times. On the other hand, reliance on God's role in ministry will promote thankful humility during "in season" times, and stable perseverance during "out of season" times (2 Tim. 4:2). Those who depend on God's part in ministry have confidence in God's adequacy to minister through them.

When our disciples achieve balance in their view of God's and human's part in ministry, their ministry will reflect that balance. You will likely be

watching for signs of imbalance in this area right up to the time you release our disciples.

Perspective on failure

One key goal with outgoing disciples is to make sure they develop a biblical theology of failure. Experienced servants of God know that real ministry includes failures as well as success, and usually more than success. This could include failure in their new group. Some new leaders become soft from experiencing too much success. Such leaders are like a child riding a bike on training wheels who thinks he has actually learned to ride. His parents warn him, “It’s a little harder when you take the wheels off,” but until they actually do take them off, the kid continues to enjoy a false sense of mastery. Once the wheels come off, the child may have to endure a few nasty crackups that could lead to tears, and even a refusal to ride any more. But without removing the wheels, he will never learn to ride. Successfully leading a group of people for God is a complex task that takes time to learn. Like any complicated task, we have no reason to believe we will be successful the first time we try to do it, let alone every time we do it.

In our own training, failure has played a prominent role, and in fact a crucial role that success never could have played. We have failed at group leadership, where groups disintegrated in spite of our best efforts. We have failed at evangelism, personal discipleship, and assorted ministry projects, often with embarrassment and a feeling of public disgrace. While we still don’t like to fail, we increasingly realize that nothing teaches us more than our failures.

Dennis: Some years ago, I was asked to teach a group of young athletes from an area high school. I took a guy I was discipling at the time, and we began meeting with this exciting group of twenty-five or so promising new Christians. For six months, we held meetings which mostly seemed to be quite good. But for some reason, the group was steadily declining in attendance. Within six months, attendance had dwindled to less than ten students. And it went right on down from there. Eventually only two to four guys were still coming. But we carried on. One evening in early summer, we arrived at the house where the study was that week, and nobody was home! We lay in the front lawn and waited until half an hour after the study was supposed to begin. Nobody came. I turned to my young friend and said, “I think our work here is done.”

Not all failures are so clear-cut. But we have presided over dozens of failed groups and projects. Why does God let failure come to sincere servants? Be sure to consider this question with your disciples *before* they actually experience failure, so they will know how to think about it when it comes.

From failure we learn to be effective. Biblical guidance is important in ministry, but we are still left to apply biblical teaching in area after area, and these are often judgment calls requiring wisdom and experience. Success in ministry can often lead to the wrong conclusions. Suppose we conclude, based on our success, that our ministry methods must be extraordinarily good. Meanwhile, our success may be the result of something completely different than we think. Our attribution of success to our superior methods may be wrong, but we usually have no way of knowing that until we fail using those same “miracle methods.” The experience of failure throws us into state of amazement and disillusionment, and this confused state of mind is exactly what God needs to bring us out of our ego-driven paradigm. Only then can we listen to new ideas, new ways of explaining past success, and engage in original thinking for the future.

Through failure we learn dependence on God (2 Cor 11:30-33). At the heart of our carnality in leadership is often a self-sufficient attitude. Our shortchanged prayer life is a warning signal, but we find that easy to ignore. Failure is much harder to ignore. As we strike off in first one direction and then another, failing at each turn, God is able to corner us into conclusions we weren't willing to look at before. A growing sense of ineptitude at the deepest level begins to strike a note of caution in all we do. Ironically, this sense of helplessness grows at the same time we know we are increasing our competence in the basic skills of ministry. Such an inner tension is exactly what God uses to convince us that he alone can bring us to ultimate spiritual success. As Paul expresses it, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:7).

Through failure we deepen our discernment: One of our problems in ministry could be that we are driving for the wrong goals. We often assume that good results, like greater numbers, are the will of God. We may think certain types of people are best suited to lead. These assumptions may be partly right, but they often overlook important exceptions that could lead to unfairness or corruption in the church. God often shows us through failure that we are looking at things superficially and that we need goals more in harmony with the deeper picture. We may realize that our pragmatism leads to outward results without inward spiritual reality. At other times, we may see that our super-spirituality has led us to ignore the plain facts of our situation.

Through failure we learn how to minister under grace. God may have to work with us for years to bring us to the place where we understand in our heart how it can be possible that my abilities matter, and yet take no sense of egotism

from that fact. Most young ministers insist on taking their identity from their ministry results. Usually, only profound failure will convince us that “apart from the vine we can do nothing,” and yet we need to strive all the harder (1 Cor 15:10). This is the paradoxical outlook of the mature worker--an outlook only accessible through a combination of success and failure.

Through failure we develop deep spiritual convictions about ministry: Most of us become excited about doing ministry because of the thrilling experiences we have while doing it. Such profound thrills are some of the most gratifying pleasures we can experience in life. On one level, God must approve of our feeling good from ministry victory, because he says we will be more “blessed” if we serve (John 13:17). But feeling pleasure is not the foundational motive for serving God. We must learn to do it because God wills it, even if no one else does it, even if we don’t succeed at it, and even if it brings us pain and frustration. 1 Cor. 4:2 says, “It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.” Notice he doesn’t say “successful,” but “trustworthy.”

Failure separates the quitters from the servants. Failure is a painful experience that puts the question squarely: Am I going to continue doing something that often brings me pain? God also uses other painful experiences to put this question, such as betrayal by friends, suspicions, lack of appreciation, and accusations from our people. But failure seems to be the supreme negative experience. God wants to know whether we are prepared to serve in failure, or only in success. In 2 Tim 4:3 Paul urges Timothy to “be ready in season and out.” Isaiah’s call in Is. 6:8-13 promised a ministry characterized by failure throughout. But Isaiah was willing and faithful to that calling—and he did fail. Nobody ever listened to Isaiah, and all the judgments he warned of eventually happened. And this in spite of the fact that he spent three years preaching buck-naked! (Is. 20:2, 3). Talk about hard duty! We may not be called to anything as difficult as Isaiah, but God will test each minister on this point (often though failure) to purify our motives.

Leaders thus broken through failure become suitable tools in the hands of the Lord. But unbroken leaders pose a threat to the health and spirituality of the church. Leaders accustomed to nothing but success become, themselves, hard to lead. They are always convinced they are right, and will fight to preserve their base as though their self-worth depended on it, which it often does. In their dread of failure, they may become downright unethical and manipulative. When success becomes the be-all and end-all in ministry, God must throw down that idol. Failure may come in an area other than our main ministry, but it will surely come.

Leaders inexperienced in failure not only fear failure in themselves, but also in others. They may become unwilling to let others have the chance to fail, and this leads to poor delegation in discipleship. Young leaders are hardly ever as competent as older ones, and history shows they are more likely to fail. But this observation begs the question: Is such failure necessarily a bad thing? We argue that it need not be bad, especially when our new leaders have been well trained in their view of failure. Those who dread failure tend toward a conservatism that seeks to protect the existing ministry rather than open new ministry. When the church becomes conservative and self-protective, it loses the offensive spirit needed in spiritual war. We find ourselves unable to penetrate tough sectors of the non-Christian community.

We need to convince our disciples that nothing will advance them more than getting some good failure under their belts! We should assure them it isn't that bad once you get used to it, and the fruit over the long haul is well worth the pain.

The experience of failure is always a crisis, because Satan will move in and suggest God let them down, or that they are unworthy for such work. Therefore, we should be actively preparing our disciples for failure as well as for success.

If our disciples suffer from fear of failure, tell them to ask themselves, "What is the worst thing that can happen to me if I fail?" Does failure in ministry really endanger our lives, or only our egos? The ego-centered minister dreads failure mainly because he will have to admit it to colleagues or others he hopes to impress. Just imagining himself admitting defeat can send the ego-driven leader into a panic of self-protection. But God calls us to deny self and serve in ministry, not to glorify ourselves through it. Our disciples should imagine themselves shrugging their shoulders before colleagues and saying, "Yeah, that didn't work out, but at least we tried." And they shouldn't forget to add, "I guess we'd better try again!"

Disciples who have developed deep convictions about how to handle failure are truly prepared for the rough and tumble of real-life ministry.

Integrity and stability

Leaders are regularly battered by circumstances, by Satan, and by their own people. All good leaders must demonstrate that they can take it without losing composure. People are drawn to strength of character, and tend to believe what strong people say. While they may feel sympathetic toward the weak, they tend not to follow them. This doesn't mean leaders should pretend they are not suffering, but that their determination and integrity dictate that they maintain consistency even in the face of suffering.

It also means that a leader would continue to pursue the right goals and live for God even if no one else follows. A good leader is not afraid of rejection by his followers because his concern is doing right, not being followed. Jesus taught that the good shepherd "goes out before them" which means such a shepherd sets a course knowing the sheep will follow after (John 10:4). When people sense that a leader is more concerned about being followed than about what God wants, they grow cynical about following. Most people are suspicious of leaders anyway, and will test leaders by threatening not to follow. Only when they see that a leader can't be manipulated will they realize their choice is to follow or to take their chances elsewhere.

We should stress the value of stability with our disciples. Good leaders tend to be relatively stable over a period of years. While poor leaders periodically strike off in radically different directions, good leaders commonly stick with their handful of central values and convictions. Innovation takes the form of finding new and different ways to achieve old goals that haven't changed in decades. Another common form of instability is quitting. Unstable leaders leave the work for various reasons, while good leaders are present and accounted for year in and year out.

Many who demonstrate terrific natural charismatic leadership ability end up being poor leaders because of the erratic course of their lives, while others who manifest little natural leadership end up being respected and effective leaders because of their sheer dogged focus on basic biblical principles. In times of crisis, people tend to fall apart and panic, often proposing destructive radical solutions to the problems at hand. The good leader is the one who stands firm under crisis and cannot be moved from the foundation of truth. People are attracted to such stability and reliability, rightly discerning that such reliability is the result of clear vision for God's way.

Compromise

We should also think through with our disciples when it's right to compromise. Ironically, good leaders are also compromisers at times. While doggedness and determination are important, perfectionism works against effective leadership. We live in a fallen world where our visions will never be completely fulfilled. People never quite do what they should, and life always presents us with the unexpected. As a result, leaders realize they need to get the best they can, while not insisting on perfection or even on complete agreement. Wise leaders realize that the closer they come to their goal, the better, and that any movement is better than no movement. They also realize that their following will be very small unless it includes those who have a different view in some areas, even though they generally agree on the most important issues. Good leaders realize they must prioritize goals and they feel good when major goals are attained even though lesser goals are not. Leaders who fail to prioritize, or who are perfectionist, run the danger of eventually breaking themselves and those around them. They are poor at team building, and cannot negotiate effectively. In the end, they nearly always forfeit their following.

As our disciples progress in leading their own people, and we complete the task of teaching key values like these, we naturally reach a point where we begin to sense that we are no longer needed. If we succeed in discipleship, we work ourselves out of a job.

Chapter 16

Releasing: The transition

In our experience, the best way to release disciples is by agreement. Successful disciples naturally become busier as their ministries grow. Eventually they have trouble fitting an extra meeting with their mentor into their schedules. Your disciples may suggest ending your meetings, and you should agree, unless you see serious issues that still need attention. You will always sense that they have more areas that could use growth, but such a sense will never dissipate completely. Disciples often develop a healthy urge for independence. If they feel the need for help, they know your number, and you can suggest periodic get-togethers.

In other cases, disciples won't suggest ending your meetings, but you'll hear them complaining about being too busy. In these cases, you can suggest reducing your meetings from weekly to monthly meetings. They usually welcome such a suggestion without much argument. Monthly meetings are sufficient to stay in touch with how things are going and the longer intervals between meetings encourage more independent and creative thinking. Whether the monthly meetings happen, or how long they keep happening, depends on how much you or your disciples desire them. Usually, they tend to taper off and become irregular.

Alternatively, you can suggest moving to unscheduled meetings as needed. You both understand that you won't be meeting as often as before, but you're still expressing availability. If you're involved in different groups, these meetings also tend to diminish in frequency. But you can still enjoy infrequent meetings where you catch up with each other.

In some special cases, we may continue with weekly meetings, even though the discipling component is over. We may simply enjoy getting together regularly with a close friend. I (Dennis) continue to meet weekly for breakfast with my original disciple, Gary, and we've been meeting now for over forty years. Of course we long ago moved away from a discipling relationship and into a peer fellowship meeting. Jesse and I also meet weekly, as we have for many years. The point of such meetings is pure enjoyment of a good friendship. Even though we lead different groups, it's wonderful to track each other's lives and share insight and encouragement.

Nurturing ongoing motivation

When disciples have been released, they hopefully continue to serve God, but now without the regular coaching and support they had when you were discipling them. However, when you no longer reinforce disciples much, a crisis may result. They still have the rewards that come from a life of service. But this may be noticeably less gratifying than the encouragement you were supplying. Some disciples begin to feel a sense of isolation or lack of appreciation. They begin to face the question of why they are living this way if no one appreciates it.

Viewed biblically, we realize they are under pressure from God to shift their motivational base off sociological support and human appreciation, and directly onto God. Moving back in to a close support role would usually be a mistake. Although it may be hard to see a friend suffer, you need to recognize this adjustment as needed and healthy.

This crisis of adjustment may be very acute if most of their motivation has been based on human emotional support from their discipler. That's why you should wean people off dependence on your encouragement well before you release them. The crisis will also be worse if they have little understanding of why they do what they do, or little personal conviction about why their goals are right and urgent. This danger also suggests you should work well ahead of time on building a deep understanding and deep convictions about ministry.

If you sense a released disciple is struggling during periodic meetings after releasing them, you should be ready to enter into a counseling process to help your disciple understand his or her own feelings. They need to see the importance of shifting away from a wrong to a right motivational base. They must learn to draw their life directly from Christ at a new level. You can point these things out and offer insight about their motivations and emotional needs, but they must figure out for themselves how to integrate such insights into daily living.

This period after releasing a disciple is when you find out how well you did as a disciple maker. You may discover that the foundation you thought was adequate is not. You may sense a decreasing level of motivation, and increasing tendency to take their eyes off the ball, or even a desire to quit. If you continue to reinsert yourself into their schedule with periodic meetings, you can usually talk them through such an adjustment period.

You can also significantly help released disciples by hooking them up with a group of fellow-disciple makers for fellowship and encouragement. We will discuss this option in the last chapter.

Chapter 17

Leading Disciple makers

Pastors, ministry team leaders, or Para church leaders may succeed in building an ethos of disciple making in their groups. When people buy into the notion of discipleship, the result can be multiplication. Over time, the group may include a growing number of disciple makers. Successfully leading a group of disciple makers is a key challenge for upper-level leadership.

As leaders in a church where more than a thousand people meet weekly with their disciples, we have some ideas to share on how to lead a group of disciple makers. Visitors to Xenos Fellowship constantly ask us how we cause blue and white-collar family-aged adults and busy students to exert themselves so strenuously to disciple and be discipled. The answer is complicated, involving multiple factors. For instance, our church's DNA includes high commitment and aggressive ministry efforts by all. But in addition, our leaders study motivation and take deliberate steps to keep people excited about what God can do through their ministries.

Disciplers need oversight

Some self-starters have such clarity of vision that they continue to work hard even without any encouragement from others. But many people lose their way unless leaders periodically call them back to their foundations. When we leave people alone, we can expect most of them to see a gradual decline in their zeal and focus. The same people, if skillfully led, will grow in competence and fruitfulness.

The best time to begin gathering a group of disciplers together is early. If you work with two, three, or four other disciple makers, why not get them together periodically for mutual encouragement and learning? These meetings need not be frequent. Once a month is best, but even once a quarter is usually enough to keep people on-mission. If your meetings are quarterly, you should supplement the meetings with ad-hoc discussions one-on-one with your disciple makers during the time between meetings.

If you oversee a number of home groups, a combined leaders' meetings can serve as your chance to lead the disciplers who lead the groups. Disciple making issues have to share time with issues like evangelism and pastoring, but we believe discipleship should remain front and center. If people pursue disciple making effectively, other issues like evangelism and pastoral work should automatically go forward in home groups. Evangelism should go forward because each discipleship dyad is striving to succeed in evangelism. Pastoral work goes forward because nobody can counsel and encourage better than a trained and motivated disciple maker.

When you gather your disciple makers for a meeting, make sure the meeting is good. Whether you spend time yourself, or delegate leadership of the meeting to a rotation of speakers, you need to make sure these busy leaders never feel like they are wasting their time. A periodic meeting of fellow disciple makers should be a high point in their lives.

We began meeting with the group leaders and disciplers in our church when we had about twenty. As word about the excitement in that meeting spread, others wanted to join in. The group grew, as home groups also multiplied. Within a few years, more than a hundred disciplers and home group leaders were attending. Today that group has grown to a thousand. Our meetings usually include a presentation on a passage or key ministry issue, and time for group interaction and prayer. The leaders usually socialize before and after the meeting.

Leaders should view involvement in a disciple makers' meeting as a privilege. We hold out for attendees who have been discipling successfully for some time. Attendance is by invitation only. People regularly report that these meetings are their favorite times in our church. One meeting each year is a weekend retreat especially for disciple makers and group leaders. Leaders usually leave these meetings eager to return to the work.

Goals: Reminding them of the vision

Making real disciples is slow work, and progress can be so gradual that people begin to bog down. Disciple makers often have to struggle with a litany of personal problems and ministry details. When do they get to lift their heads up from the work and re-acquire the big picture?

Good upper-level leaders know how to re-cast vision when they gather their colleagues for a meeting. Don't make the mistake of thinking that because you already covered the vision, people don't need to hear it again. Repetition is necessary, but should also be varied to avoid boredom. You can teach key passages on discipleship. Illustrations like the duplicating church versus the super church, as presented in chapter 1 of this book are also helpful. Waylon Moore tells a great story about a discipleship chain that began with Edward Kimball and eventually included Billy Graham in his book, *Multiplying Disciples*.^[65] In fact most books on discipleship have some good stories.

Testimonials from people in your group who are getting good results serve a double purpose. The stories help build a sense of vision, but they also give you a chance to recognize and encourage disciple makers who are doing good work.

We have to keep reminding our colleagues that discipleship isn't easy, and it's not a shortcut. We have to stress that we are doing what we believe is God's will, and that we are willing to pay a higher price to get the authenticity and quality that good discipleship brings.

Reporting

- Multiple factors tend to sap morale in disciplers:
- Even in a discipleship network that is progressing well, people may not see much progress in their particular circle during any given month.
- Satan actively sows defeatism in the minds of any group of disciple makers.
- Native impatience prods people to give up the long road of discipleship in favor of faddish gimmicks that can produce quick, but shallow results.
- Reversals and disappointments are part and parcel of a disciple making ministry.

For all these reasons, we believe it is well worthwhile to gather the facts about your discipleship network and present those facts as feedback. When people see objective feedback about their work they usually find new resolve—especially if the feedback is positive.

To accomplish this part, we need the cooperation of group leaders in helping us gather information. The larger the network becomes, the more difficult gathering information becomes. If we start early, leaders will be used to the minor nuisance of reporting progress, and they will realize it is important because they enjoy getting the feedback.

Developing a sense of team

People in the world, and even many Christians, simply don't understand why someone would devote so much energy and time to something like making disciples. We have seen that disciple makers love spending time with fellow workers who "get it." Committed disciplers find that they can enjoy a special kind of fellowship with each other.

Upper-level leaders are in a good position to foster fellowship among disciple makers. Our periodic meetings or retreats are a good base, but on that base we should build mechanisms for mutual sharing. One of the easiest measures we can take is to establish an invitation-only email group for our disciple makers. These forums are free, and an administrator can control who has access to the email. Anyone posting to the forum automatically sends email to all the members. The administrator can also publish rules for the forum. We urge people not to flood other members with meaningless or unimportant chatter. The forum is for discussing issues of interest to disciple makers. Book recommendations are helpful. Sharing victories elevates the morale of the group. Sharing problems gives other practitioners the chance to give advice.

We have email groups for small groups of disciplers (like a home church leadership team) as well as big groups (like our 900-member servant team). The forums are also a great place for upper level leaders to make announcements. Whenever a group plants a new group we announce it via email and congratulate the leaders. We encourage members to report the stories of people coming to Christ in their groups. A constant flow of conversion stories keeps the issue of evangelism on the front burner where it belongs.

If your group of disciple makers gets large, additional measures are necessary. Large groups of disciplers have to be divided into manageable groups. Groups of several dozen disciplers can develop good community. If the group gets larger, they need to divide, Though you can still hold large meetings for the special sense of inspiration people get from being a part of a large movement.

When a group of disciplers grows to more than forty or fifty, the church should also consider hiring their first staff coach. We strongly recommend hiring one of your own people who has an established record of good discipling work. When churches hire from outside, they send a negative message to their discipling leaders: For some reason, none of them are considered competent enough to be a coach. On the other hand, long-time disciple makers usually have

many connections with other disciplers and will be trusted more than outsiders.

Manageable groups of leaders can have leaders' social nights. We like to hold these after a regular fellowship meeting so people don't have to commit an additional time slot. We usually meet at someone's house and enjoy snacks. After half an hour, we get everyone together and the senior leader gives a short presentation announcing any new developments, a short reminder about ministry issues, or any grounds for hope. We might go around the room for a report from each home group, usually according to some script. For instance we might say, "Tell us something your group has learned during the past year, and your biggest area of need, so we can pray for you." Or we could say, "Describe your upcoming leadership team, and estimate how soon they might be ready to lead their own group. What do you see as the main barriers they face?"

Corporate prayer with a group of disciplers is always enjoyable and edifying. Whether the group breaks up into smaller groups or prays together, they really feel each other's enthusiasm and love for the things of God.

A group of fellow disciple makers who meet, socialize, share, and pray together gradually develops a deep-seated sense that they are a team. Being part of a team prevents disciplers from feeling isolated. Leaders who see themselves as part of a team also tend to develop a level of consistency good enough for the long haul.

Ongoing training

Training is motivational. People who invest their time and effort acquiring training want to use that training in the field. Your presentations at periodic team meetings can include useful equipping. Retreats are especially suitable for ongoing training. You should also consider offering three to five week classes for disciple makers and leaders. In our church, leaders take seven ten-week classes as part of their basic training (although some of these can be taken after they are already leading). But we also offer continuing education opportunities. Leaders invariably enjoy the classes and report that their ministries were invigorated as a result. Make sure any classes you offer are high quality. This is a good time investment for top leaders in the church. Equipping those who are actually doing the work of ministry is one of the most strategic things pastors and top leaders can do with their time.^[66]

One of the main benefits of ongoing training is increasing competence in our disciple makers. Because of the complexity of the discipling task and the confusion that can result, disciple makers become uniquely open to training. They appreciate receiving a constant stream of ideas from upper level leadership. Some ministry principles cannot be properly learned until one is actually struggling with problems in the field. We find that leaders drink in practical training in a way they never could as younger Christians.

Coaching

Even though disciple makers belong to a team, they still have specific questions that need individual answers. Upper level leaders need to practice a high level of availability with other disciplers, regularly checking on how things are going, and giving counsel and advice.

As suggested earlier, when a disciple making group grows large, the top leadership in the church may need to seek out staff coaching help. We have had success hiring part-time coaches. Learning about groups and the people in those groups takes time, and for coaching to be effective, coaches need a good level of familiarity with the personalities, special needs, and history of the groups they coach. They also benefit from warm personal relationships with the leaders they coach. We find that coaches often do a better job overseeing only a handful of groups in their part time, rather than trying to cover dozens of groups as full-time coaches.^[67]

Coaching is a multi-faceted skill. Part of this ministry involves simply letting leaders know that someone is interested in what they are doing. But coaches also assist group leaders and disciple makers in their thinking, asking a range of questions that cause the leader to think about her ministry in the way she needs to in order to be effective. Leaders can easily become reactive in the swirl of events and problems in a typical home group. The tyranny of the urgent crowds out thinking about less urgent but often more important issues, like discipleship. Such leaders benefit greatly from being asked questions that require proactive thinking. Meanwhile, coaches help keep us, the top leadership, aware of developing situations in home groups.

Coaches typically set up meetings to go over conditions in the group. But they also do a lot of work responding to unexpected calls and emails seeking advice on a wide range of ministry situations. We teach disciplers and leaders to seek outside views on complex ministry judgments. While coaches usually leave actual decision-making in the hands of the person on the spot, they can suggest options and principles he may have overlooked. At least he can usually suggest what questions need to be asked. Even if the coach has nothing additional to offer, leaders feel comforted knowing that an experienced colleague saw things the same way.

Recognition

We have argued that delivering a disciple who is “complete in [Christ]” is a monumental piece of work. The hazards are many and the short-term rewards are few. Motivating people to give their lives for disciple making is not a simple proposition. Yet in many churches, successful disciple making is never publicly recognized. And for a long time, our church was no exception.

Years ago, we realized that in our church, those who sing or play music, those who prepare events, and those who preach and teach are all recognized. We also recognized evangelism when people baptize those they led to Christ. But strangely, when someone completed the awesome work of discipleship, nothing happened. One reason was that “completing” the work of discipleship is a subjective concept. What does it mean? After all, we might continue some mentoring with a disciple for many years.

We decided that discipleship should be recognized and celebrated in the church just like we celebrate evangelism when we baptize people.

First, we defined a point where we could say discipleship was successful. The point we defined is when disciples qualify for membership in our servant team. The servant team in our church is a group of highly committed Christians who have devoted themselves to living for God and serving him. These servants have typically spent several years growing, learning, and practicing Christian living. We deliberately make entrance into the servant team difficult. We would rather see people excluded who could qualify, than include people who don't belong. If we are in any doubt, we wait. Our requirements include:

- Character qualities in line with those of deacons in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3:8-12). These qualities must be witnessed and confirmed by people in their home group over a period of years.
- Regular participation in Xenos large meetings and a home group for a period of years
- Completion of at least six quarters of our basic training classes with passing grades
- Practicing regular personal times of prayer and Bible study
- Practicing defined ministry, including evangelism and personal discipleship at a level considered to be effective by their home group members

- Currently leading a home church except for special exceptions for service ministers
- Becoming a committed giver at the level of our Fiscal Support Team (implies at least 5% giving to our church's general fund).
- Help with shared ministry needs like children's ministry, youth ministry, music, light, sound, snack bar, etc. at least one quarter every other year
- Nominated for the team by a current member and confirmed by other members
- Approved by upper-level leadership
- Willing to sign the Xenos Servant Covenant, which promises ongoing obligations such as more classes, attendance at servant team meetings, and general mature Christian living^[68]

Meeting these requirements typically takes two to five years of concentrated spiritual growth. In our judgment, any disciple maker who helps a young believer mature to the point where he qualifies for the servant team has succeeded at making a new disciple. Most new members of the servant team continue to be discipled for some time after joining, but you have to draw a line somewhere.

With this objective definition of success, we were in a position to begin publicly recognizing success in the disciple making process. We set up harvest celebrations where more than a thousand people attend. At these festivals we introduce each new servant team member *along with his or her primary discipler*. We explain the new member's ministry contributions. The crowd cheers furiously. We also introduce each new home church planted since the last meeting, and the new leaders in those groups tell their story.

Our church really enjoys these celebrations of success in the most important ministries going on in our church: discipleship and church replication.

Of course being recognized before the church as a successful disciple maker is not the reason for making disciples, but we see no harm in encouraging good work. New servant team members and leaders appreciate being congratulated, and disciple makers enjoy their recognition. At the same time, these celebrations make a statement to the church about what matters in our fellowship. However, we teach disciplers that the real reward is not being on the stage with their disciples, but seeing their disciples on the stage with *other*

disciples. When we see multi-generational discipleship, we know the process is really working.

Anyone who manages to coalesce a group of disciple makers has developed the most potent force possible for expanding the kingdom of God. By leading them, helping them, and recognizing them, we will fuel a ministry that can change the world.

The well disciplined church

People in the twenty first century are increasingly frustrated by the western church. Authors on every side today insist that modern western Christians are shallow, uncommitted, narcissistic, and have a consumer attitude. They are not winning their culture.

How different it is when an entire local church takes seriously the task of discipling its own people. Personal disciple making and the relationships associated with it have the potential to completely revolutionize any group. People who live in communities where most people are disciplined to a good level of maturity simply love their groups! In place of apathy are people who can't get enough of each other, scripture, prayer, and service. Yes, a closer community also reveals more problems, as people disclose the truth about themselves to one another. But everyone knows that what they are experiencing is real, and that makes it satisfying.

A turn away from a program or show-oriented church to one that focuses on making disciples must be made for non-pragmatic reasons. Pragmatism is when people base everything on getting good results. Stated differently, while the results of making disciples are positive, a group must turn to it out of biblical convictions rather than a desire to produce a certain result. The fruits from making disciples are long-term and develop way too slowly to satisfy pragmatists.

The real question is whether Christians should love one another, and whether loving one another implies discipling one another. According to Jesus, it does. And we should be satisfied with that.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Goals for discipleship

One of the best ways to conceive of the disciple making task is to work backward from the end goals. By considering what you would like to see in a mature disciple, you can reason backward to the likely steps needed to see those things develop. The following worksheet and subsequent commentary summarize nine areas where you should look for improvement in your disciples' lives (see Chapter 2).

At any time you could think through where your disciple stands on these issues, recording your impressions in the spaces provided. A full explanation follows the chart. If you don't know where your disciple stands on a particular issue, just say "unknown" and look for an opportunity to explore that area later. For more information on any category look below to the corresponding text.

Another way to use these goals is to go over them with your disciple present and ask him where he thinks he stands on them. Disciples are often more critical of themselves than you will be. That provides the opportunity to point out, "I think you're being too hard on yourself there..." On the other hand, you may also have to say at points, "I think this might be more of a sore point than you think."

Name:

1. Law and Grace	Comments:
Knows how to confess sin and claim grace	
Able to set goals under grace, and able to shake off failure and carry on.	
Knows, articulates, and depends on God's part in ministry.	

Has developed reasonable ethical priorities, in the sense that he/she knows what constitutes serious sin versus minor sin. The disciple is focused on the main issues in sanctification rather than “straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel.”	
Understands the true role of the law.	
Understands the true role of discipline.	
Consistently grateful to God.	
2. Character change	Comments:
Understands his security in Christ, and how our actions should be empowered by God, not self-effort.	
Knows how to worship God in all ways, and with enthusiasm.	
Understands the process of spiritual growth verses quick fixes.	
Knows and practices the means of growth as a lifestyle.	
Able to withstand suffering with an attitude of faith.	
Obeys God much of the time.	
Victory over discrediting sin.	
Loyal to God over materialistic goals.	
Eternal values system.	

Convinced that self-giving love is the key to fulfillment.	
3. Interpreting the Bible	Comments:
Able to articulate and defend biblical authority, inspiration, and canon.	
Knows and can use grammatical historical biblical interpretation.	
Knows how to do inductive study.	
Knows how to use Bible study tools.	
Familiar with typical lines of attack on conservative biblical interpretation.	
Knows how to harmonize and resolve most problem passages.	
Understands salvation history.	
4. Understanding God	Comments:
Knows how God's attributes apply to personal trust, ministry, and prayer.	
Able to articulate and defend the Trinity.	
Understands how God's image is reflected in humans.	

5. Satan	Comments:
Knows who Satan is and understands the angelic realm.	
Able to discern aberrant teaching on demons.	
Knows how to recognize, bind, and fight demonic attacks in self and others.	
Understands the “world system” and the proper response to it.	
6. Evangelism	Comments:
Able to share own testimony.	
Able to witness and actively witnesses.	
Has learned sensitivity to others’ decision-making processes.	
Has won people to Christ, or at least brought people to church services or a small group who received Christ.	
Conversant with the main world views opposing Christ in their culture and have at least some defenses for each.	
Understands and can effectively refute common misconceptions about Christianity.	
Understands and participates in world evangelism.	
7. The church and ministry	Comments:

Active in body life at all needed levels (large and small meetings).	
Knows and embraces the importance of ministry.	
Understands what the church is and can distinguish it from the Old Testament covenant.	
Understands spiritual gifts, church offices, church discipline, and church finance.	
Has established a personal ministry within, and perhaps outside, the home church.	
Is a consistent giver.	
Has won another person into personal discipleship.	
8. Personal relationships	Comments:
Understands biblical love and is able to maintain lasting friendships.	
Able to handle and resolve interpersonal conflict.	
Practices sexual self-control.	
If married, has adjusted to marriage and fulfills role as spouse and parent.	

Has developed relationship-related character qualities (patience, kindness, initiative, honesty, etc.), so that he/she is known as a loving person both inside and outside the church.	
9. Teaching on the Holy Spirit and Jesus	Comments
Knows what the ministries of the Spirit are and regularly depends on the power of the Spirit for living and ministry.	
Knows the difference between the role of the Spirit in the OT & NT.	
Ready to answer aberrant teaching on the Holy Spirit.	
Looks for where the Spirit is leading and responds accordingly.	
Knows scriptures and can articulate the uniqueness of Christ, His dual natures, His deity, His work, and His return.	

Detailed explanation of the nine areas above:

1. God's grace

Our disciples need to understand the central biblical themes of Law and Grace. God works with us through grace—meaning a free and undeserved gift. Both personal salvation and spiritual growth are to be accomplished through drawing on God's grace, rather than through humanistic self-improvement.

A disciple who understands grace knows how to confess sin and claim God's forgiveness and acceptance. How freeing it is to admit our failures to one another because we understand God's forgiveness in our lives! We need to teach our disciples how to avoid alienation from God when they fall into sin. Knowing grace also means our disciples are able to set spiritual goals

and pursue them under grace rather than in a legalistic way. Understanding grace will also enable them to shake off failure in their lives or ministry and carry on. Grace gives us the courage to fail, at the same time it gives us the power to succeed.

Understanding grace also means they need to know about God's part in ministry—that he alone can empower us to win others and see lives change. Healthy disciples depend on God's power to come through for them when they go out to serve him.

We should also help disciples develop reasonable ethical priorities, in the sense that they know the difference between serious sin and minor sin. We want them to be focused on the main issues in spiritual growth rather than “straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel,” like the Pharisees did. When holding a legalistic mentality, people want to focus on minor, external issues in order to distract attention from their failures in major areas. We need to teach disciples that grace gives us the ability to be honest about where we're failing in our growth—and be sure to show them grace when they confess! We may need to focus on sins of omission (like failing to love others, to serve, to pray, etc.) because these are important but are often ignored.

Disciples need a theology of law and the role it has played in salvation history and in becoming our tutor to lead us to Christ. Until our disciples recognize legalism in themselves and in others they will be unable to escape Satan's accusations.

2. Character change

We pray that our disciples will see their lives changed and their character conformed to the image of Christ. We have to teach them how to live in their identity in Christ, rather than their feelings about reality or their performance for God. Seeing real progress in character development is very slow and difficult. Negative habits may stand as key barriers to spiritual growth. Our disciples may have a habit involving sexual wrongdoing, over-eating, drugs, pornography, compulsive gambling, fits of rage, constant suspicion of others, lack of forgiveness, self-righteousness, or a host of other problems. We have to uncover the problems and help them apprehend the power of God for change. Any of these or many other habits may completely block spiritual growth if left unresolved.

A key sticking point here is learning how to initiate and develop good relationships based on mature Christian love. Jesus taught that loving others is just as key to spiritual growth as loving God (Mat. 22:36-40), but people come to Christ as selfish relaters with many false conceptions about how relationships should work. We have our work cut out for us if we hope to help a young Christian change from being a selfish love-demander or alienated non-relater to a warm-hearted, loving Christian who knows how to form lasting, quality relationships. Here is a typical area where only first-hand knowledge based on actually seeing how someone relates to others can hope to make a difference. Modeling is key. When younger believers see their discipler loving others, they come to realize what real love is. In this area, we see the superiority of personal discipleship over other forms of instruction.

Character transformation means not only loving other people, but also loving God. A successful disciple learns how to worship God in all the ways named in scripture. This includes fully committing her life to Christ (Rom. 12:1), serving him in ministry (Rom. 15:16), giving generously (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:15) and praising him consistently (Heb. 13:16). All of these passages use the language of worship. People need help seeing how reasonable, biblical, and pleasurable worshiping God can be.

We need to convince our disciples that being conformed to the image of Christ is a process of growth, not a quick fix or shortcut. Many in the Christian world today advance miraculous shortcut approaches to sanctification that are actually pointless distractions.

If we want to help our disciples see change in their characters, we have to teach them to take advantage of key means of growth presented in scripture. They must learn the importance of regular times in the word of God, deep involvement in body life and fellowship, a consistent prayer life, and ministry, or service to others. God uses all these to transform lives, and missing any one of them will eventually block spiritual growth (see Appendix 7).

Disciples must also develop the ability to withstand suffering with an attitude of faith and even thanksgiving if they are to move on to full maturity.

Eventually, growing disciples need to reach the point where they enjoy obeying God much of the time. We don't expect they will ever obey him all the time, but we do hope to see them living a life generally centered in Christ, following his will, and free from discrediting sin habits.

Especially important in American culture is that mature disciples are loyal to God over materialistic goals. They will experience many trials where the world demands that they spend their time making and enjoying money and possessions. These demands will often conflict with God's goals for their lives. To be victorious here, they must develop an eternal values system—a values system that sees how eternal things are much more important than passing pleasures. People with an eternal values system also draw their sense of security from their future with God rather than from laying up treasure on earth.^[69]

3. Interpreting the Bible

You should equip your disciples to use their Bibles. We discuss this in Chapter 6 and Appendix 2, 3, and 4.

4. Understanding God

Our disciples need to understand God and his attributes. This area of theology has great impact in every area of life and biblical interpretation. The fact that we can trust God, how we do ministry, and how we pray are all based on the attributes of God as revealed in scripture. Our disciples should be able to correct people's common misconceptions about God.

They need to understand the trinity and be able to defend biblical teaching on this key area against the many cult-based and New Age attacks they will encounter. Understanding God's personality and his moral attributes is also crucial for a correct understanding of humans created in God's image. See Appendix 6 for help on this.

5. Satan

Our disciples will need to know about Satan. Unless they understand who he is and how he works, they will be poorly equipped to wage effective spiritual war. They will need knowledge about the angelic realm in order to resist unbiblical teaching on angels and demons. Unless they know how to

recognize and resist demonic temptation, accusation, and deception, they will continually be confused. They also need to understand key New Testament teaching on the world system and how to respond to it. ^[70]

6. Witnessing

You need to teach your disciples how to share their faith, as discussed in Chapter 12. Unless disciples develop in this area, their Christian walks will be impoverished and may well turn inward. An inward version of Christianity will be a self-centered version.

Finally, we think God wants disciples to have a heart for world missions. We should try to inspire our disciples to participate in world evangelization, and have a general understanding of what missions is all about.

7. The body of Christ

Our seventh area has to do with the church and related truths. Disciples need to understand what the body of Christ is and how they fit into it (1 Cor. 12-14; Rom. 12; Eph. 4:1-16). The last thing we want to do is develop individualistic disciples who don't understand that Christian growth is a corporate activity that cannot be attained in isolation. They should be active in body life at all needed levels—worship, group study, and small group fellowship—because only in small groups will they be able to develop relationships and use their spiritual gifts.

Besides knowing about the church, they need to specifically understand principles of Christian ministry, as discussed in Chapters 12 and 13. We find that when disciples become ministry-minded, their growth accelerates noticeably.

Aside from these crucial areas, it is good (if you have time) to make them aware of the main issues in church history including the early church, the medieval church, the reformation, the evangelical awakening, the rise of theological liberalism, and recent movements. Questions about these issues come up with some regularity, so the more we equip them here, the better. However this is probably one area you could skip if you need to.

Disciples certainly need some training in biblical issues like spiritual gifts, church offices, church discipline, and church finance. ^[71]

We also do not feel that our job is complete until our disciples become consistent givers. Paul warns that leaders should not be “fond of sordid gain” (1 Tim. 3:3). A Christian who is enslaved to materialistic avarice is ill-suited to serve God. Jesus warned that unless we are faithful in insignificant areas like the use of our money, God will not entrust us with the greater riches of the church, such as caring for other people’s lives (Luke 16:10-11). We have seen that disciples who won’t give in a disciplined way usually make poor leaders. The failure to give, especially in a culture as affluent as ours, signals a much bigger problem than some think.

8. Special relationships

In addition to understanding biblical love and being able to maintain lasting friendships, good disciples must develop several additional specific skills that apply to particular relationships.

The sexual drive is powerful. We find that many would-be disciples are lost to Christian service because they cannot control their sexual desires. Others are lost because they marry someone who has no desire to follow the Lord. Some people come to Christ already in a marriage where they may be “unequally yoked,” meaning that their spouses do not share their zeal for God. These cases clearly show why we need to get involved helping our disciples succeed in this crucial area as discussed in Chapter 9.

9. The Holy Spirit and Jesus

Finally, we should teach key theological truth in the areas of the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. Good disciples know what the ministries of the Holy Spirit are, and they know how to regularly depend on the power of the Spirit for living and ministry. We should also have them ready to refute unbiblical teaching on the Holy Spirit. Mature disciples look for the Spirit’s leading and respond accordingly.

When it comes to Jesus, our disciples should have a basic knowledge of the uniqueness of Christ, his dual natures, his kenosis or emptying of himself (Phil. 2:7), his deity, his work, and his return. We should remember that cult groups always attack and deny biblical Christology, so this area is especially important.

Appendix 2

The inspiration of the Bible

We believe studying the case for biblical inspiration is foundational if we plan to use scripture to train disciples in every other area. This simple outline is good to go through, looking up each passage and discussing how it contributes to the case.

Definition

Inspiration – “All Scripture is inspired by God [*theopneustos* = “God-breathed”] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). – God so moved the authors of Scripture that the resulting product was the Word of God written, totally without error in the autographs, in every area including theology, history, geography, and science.

Reasons for accepting this view

An Inductive case for verbal inspiration that avoids circular reasoning:

1. Demonstrate the *relative historical reliability* (not inspiration) of the gospel records.

Bibliographical test – Are there enough copies to reconstruct the originals? Yes! The New Testament has an unprecedented number of very ancient manuscripts.

Internal test – Does the author disqualify himself by contradictions or known factual errors? No. The gospels have only as much variation as one would expect from independent witnesses. Each is internally consistent.

External test – Do other historical materials confirm or deny the author’s testimony? The gospel books are confirmed by external testimony from secular historians and archeology at many points.

(See F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* or Gleason Archer, *Survey of Old Testament Introduction* for details on these questions.).

2. Note Jesus’ claims to Deity recorded in the gospels.
3. Verify his claims deductively by eliminating unsatisfactory explanations (the Lord, liar, lunatic argument) or by demonstrating the authentication of Christ based on fulfilled biblical prophecy.
4. Therefore, since Christ is God, His teaching on biblical inspiration is

authoritative.

Christ's teaching on inspiration:

With your disciple, go over each of the following passages, answering the question, "What does this passage teach or imply about the nature of inspiration?"

1. The Old Testament: Jesus held that the Old Testament scriptures were the word of God and could not err.
Mat. 5:18; 19:4-5; 12:39-40; 22:29-32; Mark 12:36; Luke 17:26-32; 24:44; John 5:39-47; 10:35.
2. His own words: He put his own words on exactly the same plane as the Old Testament.
Mat. 7:24-27; 24:35; John 3:5 "truly I say"; 8:31-32.
3. The Apostles writings: Before his death, Jesus pre-authorized the apostles to write scripture that would be directly inspired by the Holy Spirit.
John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-14

The human authors agree with Christ's position

Again, if you have your disciples read these passages with you and determine what each teaches or implies about inspiration the knowledge will last longer in their memory than it will if you simply tell them.

1. The Old Testament:
Joshua 1:8; 22:5; 2 Sam. 23:2; Neh. 10:29
2. The New Testament: The authors knew perfectly well that they were writing scripture.
John 21:24; 1 Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:18 (Where in the scripture does it say "The laborer is worthy...?" This is from Luke, so Paul is affirming the inspiration of books written in his own time). 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:16-21; 3:2; 3:15 (Notice that Peter affirms the inspiration of Paul's writings), 16; Rev. 1:3; 22:18-19

Appendix 3

Inductive Bible study method

Dennis McCallum and Gary DeLashmutt

Use this study plan for a book of the Bible. Select a short book like Ephesians or 1 Thessalonians to study. Then go over this plan, demonstrating how it works in the chosen book. After getting a start while together (perhaps in the first chapter or two), challenge your disciples to do their own work before the next meeting. You should also do fresh work on the same book and during the next meeting, you can compare your work and talk about what you have learned. Hopefully, disciples will gain a sense of mastery in their ability to read the Bible and analyze what the text is saying.

Introduction

Inductive study is a process where the student gathers as many facts about a passage as possible, and only then draws conclusions about the meaning. The main point of the discipline is to teach disciples how to interpret individual passages in the context of the whole book. It also teaches readers to avoid jumping to conclusions based on similar words or expressions in other, unrelated passages.

Overview

A. Read the book all the way through writing down titles for each paragraph. This reveals the general thought development of the book. The titles should meet the following requirements:

1. The title should be short. No sentences are allowed. A phrase of a few words is the maximum length. We are not writing synopses. Summarizing compels us to get the main idea clearly fixed in our minds.
2. The title should cover all of the significant content in the paragraph. If there is subject matter that is not covered in your title, it needs revision.
3. Decide how you will determine where the paragraph divisions belong. If studying with a study group, it is probably best to stay with the existing paragraphs. However, if studying one-on-one, you may not agree with the paragraph divisions in your translation. These are purely a matter of opinion. You may decide to divide the paragraphs in a different location than those used in any particular version. Feel free to discuss where the divisions should be and why (Remember they are not inspired, and are

different from one version to another).

B. Compile all the references to the author, audience and key third party. You can do this by drawing three columns on a sheet of paper—one for the author, one for the audience, and one for others. The data should be referenced with the chapter and verse, and marked with an asterisk if the insight is implied rather than directly stated. The implied data are less conclusive in reconstructing the historical situation. You can also record the editorial possibilities. These are answers to the question, “Why might the author be talking about this subject?” For instance, Paul talks about the supremacy of Christ in Colossians 1. Do they have a problem in their Christology? Although this question comes up later for full consideration, it’s a good idea to begin already considering possible answers. Just put a question mark by any guess you make, and don’t draw conclusions yet. If a pattern emerges through the book, it makes your guesses more likely.

C. From B, summarize each party's respective situations with a short paragraph.

D. Record your conclusions about the author's reasons for writing the book. Differentiate between major and minor reasons. Remember that this could affect the interpretation of some passages.

Specific study (6 questions for each paragraph).

After doing the overview study for the whole book, go back to the beginning and do the following six studies for each paragraph, recording your findings as you go. For any of the six questions that don't apply in any given paragraph, just write N/A.

A. Language

1. Identify and define key and/or difficult words and phrases. If necessary, perform word studies using concordances and lexicons. Look at other uses, especially by the same author, to understand the likely meaning of words and expressions.
2. In some cases, the style of the paragraph affects its interpretation. This is the case if the author employs sarcasm, parable, diatribe or poetry.

B. Historical

1. How does your understanding of the historical setting affect your understanding of the words?
2. Identify and explain any additional historical references.

C. Theological

1. What does this paragraph teach about theological issues such as the nature of God, sin, man, Satan, salvation, the church, and the Christian life? Limit your observations to the information in the paragraph at hand in light of the preceding paragraphs.

D. Strategic

1. How does this paragraph fit into the overall purposes of the author for this book? Why does he write this paragraph? Why does he include it here? How does it relate to the structure of the book?

This is the question that gives depth to your interpretation and ensures that your application is legitimate, because you are making the same point the original author was. In the strategic question, you are asking yourself how this was supposed to apply to the original audience.

E. Contemporary Application

1. How does what is taught in this paragraph apply to our world today? How does it affect your overall Christian worldview?
2. What are the implications for the church or for individuals? How does this paragraph contrast with faulty views in the world today?

F. Personal Application

1. How does this passage apply to my own life and ministry? What are its implications for my sin problems, relationships and general spiritual growth? What are its implications in the same areas for the people in my ministry?

The point here is to make sure you are applying the passage to actual situations in your life, as God uses the Bible to speak to your life.

Appendix 4

Grammatical-historical hermeneutics for lay readers

By [Gary DeLashmutt](#) and [Dennis McCallum](#)

This study covers principles of Bible interpretation according to the grammatical-historical approach. Most of this approach is nothing but a common sense way to establish the intent of the original author, and to balance any truth discovered with the rest of the Bible. Go over the rules, discussing why each does or doesn't make sense. Then, look up the verses, trying to see how each illustrates the rule mentioned.

1. Interpreting grammatically

The grammatical-historical method assumes that words and expressions have a relatively stable meaning during given periods of history. Therefore, we begin by taking what we can determine as the normal, everyday meaning of the words, phrases, and sentences to the extent possible. In other words, our interpretation must correspond to the words and grammar in the text in a reasonable way. Otherwise, the interpreter could assign his own meaning without objective control. The Bible would become a horoscope of vague sayings we try to plug into our lives however we want.

Most of the Bible can be easily interpreted by simply taking the language (either in the original or translation) in the usual way (John 3:36; Acts 1:11). In other words, if the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.

A plain sense reading should not be confused with a literalistic interpretation. We should allow for figures of speech, symbolism, and poetic language (Mark 1:5; Luke 22:19). If a passage contains symbols or a special literary genre (or style) this should be indicated in the text, either by textual cues or because symbolism is required in order to make sense of the text. Most symbols are explained by the Bible itself (Rev. 1:9-20).

2. Interpreting historically

Historical interpretation means that we take into account the historical background of the author and the recipients as much as possible. The Bible was written to common people, and is understandable to anyone. However, it was written thousands of years ago to a different culture. Therefore, as

modern readers, we have to try to recover a general sense of the meaning of words, phrases and concepts in the ancient cultures.

We are not interested at first in the question, “What does it mean to me?” but rather, “What did it mean to those whom it was originally written?”

Examples:

- Rev. 2:12,13 - Pergamum was the center of the worship of Aesclepius.
- 1 Cor. 11:4-6 - Shorn hair was typical of Aphrodite priestesses, who were also ritual prostitutes; shaven heads were typical of convicted adulteresses (vs. 5).

Use Bible dictionaries or other sources to discover customs, money, geography, etc. Then find a corresponding meaning in our culture.

Examples:

- Good Samaritan (Luke 10)
- 200 Denarii (Mark 6:37)
- 50,000 Drachma (Acts 19:19)
- Pharisees’ teaching on the relationship between illness and sin (Mark 2:5-10; John 9:1-2).

3. Interpret Critically

Your interpretation must make rational sense. If interpretation is permitted to contradict itself or other passages, there is no reason for a hermeneutical method, since we can make a passage say whatever we want.

Six rules for interpreting critically

These rules will enable you to arrive at a critically sound interpretation. Some of these rules are the outgrowth of a high view of scripture. In other words, the entire Bible is the product of one author (God) at the same time that it is the product of many authors. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to seek to find a consistent message throughout the Bible. Notice that Jesus and the New Testament authors harmonize the messages of different, unrelated passages in the Old Testament when interpreting (see, for example, Paul’s reasoning in Gal. 3:6-17).

1. **Interpret in light of the context of the passage:** Follow the thought development in the book you are reading, and make sure your interpretation flows along with the general direction of argument. Sudden changes in subject are unusual. If you have the thought development of a book centering on one subject suddenly switching to another, and then back to the

first, your interpretation is almost certainly wrong.

Consider the larger context as well: Which Testament? What author? What time period? Never view a passage in isolation from its surroundings. The context should be considered the most important kind of evidence in the interpretation of a passage. Usually context supplies all we need to know. We should turn to other explanations only when we can find no critically feasible interpretation based on the English text in context. Anyone who claims to see a break in context bears the full burden of proof.

Examples:

- Mat. 16:28 - Referring to the transfiguration (in context of passage).

- 1 Cor. 14:34 - Means to disrupt (see I Cor. 11:5 - context of book and passage).

- 1 Cor. 3:17 - The thought development of the passage limits interpretation – he is talking about the church as God’s temple, not individuals. Therefore this is not teaching that suicide is the unforgivable sin. Notice that some connect this verse to 6:19, but that is a different context. Avoid “word association interpretation” and interpret using thought development instead.

2. **Interpret in light of progressive revelation (Heb. 1:1-2):** While God’s purpose for man has never changed, his strategy in accomplishing that purpose has gone through different phases. He has dealt with man under different covenants. Therefore, it is important to ask, “Under which program was this written?” Primary application of the passage will be to the people operating under that covenant (mainly here concerning the old covenant and the new covenant). There secondary applications for those under other programs based on principles which have universal application. Note special problems here in connection with the ministry of Christ before the cross; He operated under the Old Testament covenant (Gal. 4:4).

Examples:

- Polygamy was permitted in the Old Testament, but taught against in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3:2)

- Theocracy was commanded in Old Testament, but secular government is affirmed in the New Testament (Rom. 13:1-7; Mat. 22:21; 2 Chron. 7:14)

- Animal sacrifices, dietary laws, Sabbaths, holy days, festivals, priests and liturgy have all been fulfilled in Christ and are thus obsolete (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 8)

- Tithing is absolutely required in the Old Testament, but not in the New

(Mal. 3:7-12; Num. 18:21-24; Deut. 14:22-29; compare to 2 Cor. 9:6-7)

- 3. Interpret scripture in harmony with other scripture:** Since the Bible is inspired by God, it does not contradict itself. Therefore, never interpret scripture in such a way that it clearly contradicts other scriptures. First discover the allowable range of meaning for a passage, then choose the interpretation that doesn't contradict any other passages.

Examples:

- Acts 2:38 could either be referring to baptismal regeneration, or simply adding baptism as a desirable adjunct to the minimum requirement for salvation (i.e. faith; compare with Acts. 16:30)
- In James 2:14-26 "justify" can also mean "justify before men" (v. 18 compare with Gal. 2:16)

- 4. Interpret the unclear passages in light of the clear passages:** Scripture teaches every major, essential truth clearly and many times. Never build a doctrine on an unclear passage.

Examples:

- Luke 16:9 is used by Roman Catholics to support indulgences and purgatory
- 1 Cor. 15:29 mentions an obscure, unknown practice used in Corinth. Today the Mormon Church uses this passage to elevate dead ancestors to a higher status in the afterlife
- In 1 John 5:16-17 the "sin unto death" is never defined. Don't base a doctrine of falling away on such a passage

- 5. Interpret the "spirit" of the passage, not necessarily the "letter":** Don't necessarily follow a literalistic meaning, especially when the text is a literary genre prone to figures of speech or colorful statements.

Examples:

- Proverbs 22:6 - the book of Proverbs contains many general maxims, but not all are absolute promises. Not every child will go right, but most will.
- Proverbs 15:1 - not every gentle word will turn away wrath, but in most cases it will
- 1 Cor. 11:1-18 - In some New Testament passages interpretation by the "letter" contradicts the "spirit" of the passage. Paul's point is that they should not offend cultural sensibilities by praying with no head covering. By insisting on head coverings today, we offend cultural sensibilities, and at

the same time, fail to communicate submission, since head coverings have long since lost all meaning in western culture (c.f. 1 Cor. 10:32-33).

6. Interpret with dependence upon the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to teach you.

Mark True or False.

- Proverbs 3:5 - “Lean not unto your own understanding” means we should avoid approaching the Bible on an analytical level.

[False – this passage is referring to making autonomous plans, not how to interpret scripture.]

- Since the Bible is “living and active,” the interpretation of a passage may be different for different people.

[False – application can be different for different people, but the correct interpretation is the one intended by the author, and that means only one interpretation is right.]

- Unless we approach God’s word with a deep reverence for God and a passion to know His will for our lives, we may often get the wrong interpretation.

[True – lack of these attitudes could lead us to distort the meaning.]

- If the rules of interpretation give one answer and the Holy Spirit shows another, we should choose the latter.

[False – this would never happen. If we think the Holy Spirit is indicating something different than the properly interpreted text, we are elevating our subjective feelings or impressions above scripture.]

- We should pray before studying that God will enable us to understand the passage.

[True – God can help us think clearly, and he can show us how to apply passages to our lives.]

Appendix 5

Assurance of salvation

Introduction:

This paper is designed to be studied with a new believer, or you could give it to a new believer for her to read on her own. The language is simple and designed for anyone to understand, whether they have a church background or not. If you read this together, pause to look up the verses mentioned and discussing how they apply.

What is salvation?

- We are naturally rebellious toward God, and separated from Him by our sins (Rom. 3:10-13, 23; 5:8, 10, 12; James 2:10; Eph. 2:1).
- God wants the separation to end; he wants to bring us back together with him and rescue us (2 Pet. 3:9; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:20).
- He initiates with us throughout our lives “drawing all men to himself” (John 12:32).
- God won’t overpower us and make us right with him against our will. Responding to his initiation and accepting his offer of forgiveness is the most spiritually significant decision we make in life (Mat. 23:37; John 1:12; Rev. 3:20).
- It’s important to prayerfully confess that we have been sinful, that we want to be reconciled to God, and that we believe God can accomplish this reconciliation through the cross of Christ (Rom. 10:9-13; 1 John 1:8-9).
- Once we do this, we can be assured that we are reconciled to God forever. Nothing can break this relationship (Rom. 8:38-39; John 10:28-29).
- We can also be sure that every sin we ever commit (past, present, and future) is forgiven because of the price Jesus paid on the cross (Heb. 10:12,14; Col. 1:21-22; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Our new identity

- We now have a new spiritual identity because of God’s gift; we

are no longer seen as “sinners.” We are God’s children now. Although we may not feel like it, a spiritual change has occurred, and although we may continue to sin, sin is no longer our master. God has paid the ransom price to free us from our life of slavery. Sin no longer characterizes who we are (Rom. 6:6, 11, 14, 18; 2 Cor. 5:21).

- Because we are accepted by God, our guilt feelings should lose their power over us. We can always go to God without worrying what he thinks about our behavior (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:16-17; Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13-14; Heb. 10:19-22).

- We can look forward to eternal life with God. We are going to a place without the pain and hate that fills this world. We no longer have to fear death. We no longer have to worry about whether or not we are “getting enough” here, we will have plenty in a matter of time – this realization will free us up to think about the needs of other people (Eph. 1:11, 14; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:12-26, 50-55).

- We are adopted children of God. We have belonging. We have a family with God and his other children. We have a God who cares for us, who wants to give us good things, and who understands us (Rom. 8:15-17; 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:18; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5-6).

- We have been delivered from Satan’s authority. If we are afraid because of strange experiences we may have had, we can take security in the fact that we belong to God now, and God is stronger than Satan (Luke 10:18-19; Eph. 1:20-21, 2:1-7; Col. 1:13, 2:10-15; Heb. 2:14).

- We have a unique role in God’s purpose. We can take significance from the fact that God wants to use us to help others. He put us where we are for a reason (1 Cor. 12:18; 2 Cor. 3:9-15, 4:1, 5:17-20; Eph. 2:10).

Appendix 6

What is God like?

How do we know we are relating to the true God, rather than a god we made up? While we can never fully comprehend the infinite God, he has revealed important points about his character. Understanding the character of God is important. These features, or attributes of God are all eternal and co-equal. We should never stress one attribute of God at the expense of another. Anything we say about God should not contradict any of these attributes. You can study each attribute and read the verses, considering how theologians deduce these attributes from the passages listed. Then ask how each particular attribute might apply to daily Christian living. Think about how an attribute of God might affect your prayer life, your ministry, your attitudes toward him, etc.

1. God is *omniscient*. That means he knows all things actual or possible at once. This includes the past and the future (Ps. 147:5; Is. 40:28).
2. God is *omnipresent*. This means God transcends all limits of space. He can be everywhere at once (Ps. 139:7-10).
3. God is *omnipotent*. That means he can do whatever he wants. God's power is unbounded except by his own nature (Gen. 18:14; 2 Tim. 2:13).
4. God is *sovereign*. This means he owns the creation and rules it, and all of His creatures depend on Him. Sovereignty doesn't have to mean God directly causes everything, but nothing can happen without him permitting it (Ps. 14:1; Gen. 14:19; Acts 7:24-28).
5. God is *loving* or *gracious*. He treats his creation with love and an attitude of mercy (1 John 4:8,16; Is. 30:18-21;49:14-16).
6. God is *righteous*. His moral character is the definition of goodness (Mark 10:18; Job 34:10; Hab. 1:13; James 1:13).
7. God is *immutable* or *unchanging*. He is devoid of change with regard to His attributes or promises. Note that this doesn't imply that God never does or says anything different. Only his attributes and promises are unchanging (Heb. 13:8; James 1:17; 1 Sam. 15:29).
8. God is *truthful* and *reliable*. He tells the truth and cannot lie. He is also faithful (Heb. 6:18; Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; 2 Tim 2:13).
9. God is *infinite*. This means both that he had no beginning and that he is

free from all limitations. It also means he holds all his attributes to an infinite degree (Ps. 90:2; Jude 1:25; Is. 44:6; Rev. 1:8).

10. God is *self-existent* or *independent*. The ground of God's existence is himself. He is uncaused and exists by necessity of His own being (See divine name *Yahweh* which means "I am."). This attribute also means God does not need his creation; he meets all his own needs (Ex. 3:14; Is. 40:28; John 8:58; Acts 17:25).
11. God is *just* or *fair*. God cannot ignore evil. He must repay evil or good fairly (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 19:9; Rom. 2:1-5;).

Appendix 7

Five things that help people grow spiritually

Teaching new Christians about the so-called “means of growth” is urgent. Their spiritual survival may depend on learning about these in the first weeks of their Christian walks. We suggest going over outlines like this, reading the verses together and discussing what each passage contributes to our understanding of that area.

1. The Bible – Reading and learning from the word of God is like spiritual food: with it we grow stronger; without it our spirituality suffers. Go over each of the following passages and discuss what each teaches or implies about God’s word and its role in spiritual growth:

John 8:31,32

Col. 3:16

John 17:17

2 Tim. 2:15

Acts 20:32

2 Tim. 3:16

Rom. 10:17

Heb. 5:11-14

Rom. 15:4

1 Pet. 2:2

2. Prayer – Prayer is talking to God. We can’t develop a good personal relationship with Christ without communicating with him regularly, intimately, and honestly. Also, in some cases God waits until we ask before he acts (James 4:2). Go over the following verses and try to determine what each teaches or implies about prayer:

Mat. 6:5-7

Rom. 15:30

Mat. 18:19

1 Cor. 14:15

Luke 18:1-8

Eph 6:18

John 15:7

Phil. 4:6

Acts 2:42

Col. 4:2

Acts 12:5
1 Thess. 5:17
Rom. 8:26-27
1 Pet. 5:6-8
Rom. 12:12
1 John 5:14-15

3. Fellowship – Because we are a part (and not the whole) of the Body of Christ, we need what the other parts of the Body supply (1 Cor. 12:21-22). Going to Bible studies is important, but we will grow even more spiritually if we build good relationships with the Christians we know. Involvement in the body of Christ makes God’s love for us and our love for God more concrete (1 John 4:20). Study each of the following passages and try to distill what it teaches about fellowship:

Acts 2:42
Eph 4:11-16
Col. 3:12-17
Jas 5:16
Rom. 12:4-16
Eph. 5:18-21
1 Thess. 5:14 1
1 Cor. 12:14-27
Phil. 2:1-5
Heb. 3:13
Gal 6:2
Col. 2:19
Heb. 10:24-25

4. Serving Love – Helping other people will help us to grow spiritually more than any other thing, because it motivates us to read more, pray more, and fellowship more. “Love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). Loving others will help us see life as it was meant to be lived. Study these passages about serving love and determine what they teach or imply about the role of serving love in spiritual growth:

John 4:34
Eph 4:11-13
John 6:1-13
Col. 2:19
John 13:12-17,34-35
Phil. 2:1-4

Acts 20:35
1 Thess. 5:14-15
Rom. 12:10-13
Heb. 10:24-25
1 Cor. 12, 13
1 John 3:16-18

5. Suffering – Sometimes we go through suffering, and this suffering can help us grow spiritually. Sometimes God lovingly brings discipline into our lives. At other times, the suffering we experience is not from God, but he allows us to suffer as part of the fallen world in which we live. Even suffering that results from the fallenness of the world, however, can help us to grow spiritually if we let God teach us something through it. Decide to receive discipline as a sign of God’s love for you. Actively seek to learn what God wants to teach through each experience of suffering (James 1:2-5). Study the following passages in context and discuss what conclusions you can reach from each about the role of suffering in the Christian life.

Mat. 18:15-17
2 Cor. 7:8-10
Luke 9:23-24
Phil. 1:29-30
John 12:24-26
Heb. 12:1-13
1 Cor. 10:12-13
James 1:2-5
1 Cor. 11:30-32
1 Pet. 1:6-7
2 Cor. 1:3-9
1 Pet. 2:19-21
2 Cor. 4:7-13
1 Pet. 4:12-19
2 Cor. 7:8-10

Appendix 8

When to refer to professional counseling

Recognizing emotional disorders

Amy Merker, M.D.

The following are notes from a lecture given by psychiatrist, Dr. Amy Merker to a group of disciple makers on when they should refer people to professional counseling.

Introduction

The goal of this discussion is to help you learn to recognize symptoms of emotional disorders that could indicate that someone needs professional help. Hopefully, by the end of tonight you'll be able to identify individuals who need to be referred to a psychiatrist, or a mental health clinic.

I don't expect you all to become diagnosticians tonight, but it is helpful to be able to think of symptoms in clusters that make up a diagnosis. In the field of psychiatry, we have the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders or DSM IV. This is the Bible of psychiatry and includes descriptive classifications of symptoms or clinical features of emotional disorders. It does not, however, include any information on etiology or treatment.

Tonight we're going to discuss six diagnostic categories and how to recognize if someone has an emotional disorder:

- Affective Disorders (Unipolar and Bipolar).
- Schizophrenia (psychosis).
- Anxiety Disorders (Panic Disorder, Agoraphobia, OCD).
- Personality Disorders
- Substance Abuse Disorders
- Eating Disorders

Affective disorders

There are a number of different types of affective disorders, or mood disorders. There are two Major Affective Disorders:

- Major Depression
- Bipolar Disorder

These are called “Major” because of their severity.

Major depression

In order to merit this diagnosis, a person must have at least five of the following symptoms nearly every day for at least two weeks:

- Sad mood
- Tearfulness
- Psychomotor retardation
- Decreased energy
- Diminished interest or pleasure
- Insomnia
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Poor concentration
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Hopelessness or excessive guilt
- Suicidal ideation

This is the most common type of major depression. However, there is also an atypical type of major depression in which an individual experiences increased sleep and appetite, rather than decreased.

Dysthymic disorder

If a person has experienced a depressed mood more days than not for the past two years and has at least two of the previously mentioned symptoms, she likely has what is called a Dysthymic Disorder. This is a chronic low-level depression and is not considered a Major Affective disorder. People with a dysthymic disorder may benefit from anti-depressant medication.

Both of the above disorders are considered Unipolar mood disorders because there is only one direction the mood tends to swing.

Bipolar disorder

The other type of Major Affective Disorder is called Bipolar Disorder because the person’s mood tends to swing in two directions.

Major Depression and Bipolar Disorder are differentiated by whether or not

an individual has ever had a manic episode. The person with a major depressive illness has recurrent depressive episodes through out their life, whereas the Bipolar patient (or Manic Depressive as they once were called) has periodic depressive episodes and has had at least one manic episode in his lifetime.

How does one determine if someone is currently having, or has previously had, a manic episode?

Definition of a Manic Episode: One or more distinct periods (a few days or weeks) with a predominately elevated, explosive, or irritable mood, and at least three of the following symptoms:

- Increase in activity or physical restlessness
- More talkative—difficult to interrupt
- Jumping from one topic to another very rapidly (flight of ideas or loose associations).
- Inflated self-esteem (delusions of grandeur).
- Decreased need for sleep (can stay up for 3-4 nights cleaning etc.).
- Easily distracted
- Excessive involvement in activities with a high potential for painful consequences—buying sprees, foolish business investments, sexual indiscretions, etc.

These individuals may even become psychotic during a manic episode. In other words, they may lose touch with reality. They may hallucinate, or experience delusions. (*Definition of a delusion:* a “fixed false belief which no amount of objective evidence will change.” *Definition of a Hallucination:* a false sensory perception in the absence of any external stimuli, not merely a misinterpretation of something that is really there--i.e. not an illusion.)

Schizophrenic disorders

These individuals are usually quite ill. This is considered a psychotic disorder; people with schizophrenia are out of touch with reality. They experience delusions and or hallucinations. We have already discussed delusions.

The most common type of hallucination is an auditory hallucination. My first patient came to the hospital with newspaper stuck in her ears in an attempt to lessen the voices she was hearing. To be considered true auditory

hallucinations, these voices must be experienced as coming from out in the room, not just from inside one's head.

In addition to delusions or hallucinations, these individuals (with schizophrenic disorders) are typified by disorders of thinking. Their thinking is often not linear, meaning it doesn't follow a logical flow.

Someone once said that being schizophrenic is like dreaming while you're awake. In a dream you may be on the way to the airport when you end up at the zoo, where you run into a friend from work who you later realize is actually your sister. There is no logical flow to this type of thought pattern.

In talking with someone who is actively schizophrenic, you may find it very hard to follow him and you may end up thinking "Either he is crazy or I am." This is called *derailment*—where thinking gets off track. People in this state exhibit what is called loose associations or flight of ideas.

Anxiety disorders

The predominant symptom in this group of disorders is obviously anxiety. These folks are considered neurotic, not psychotic, because they are in touch with reality.

This category includes Panic Disorders with or without Agoraphobia, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Social Phobia, PTSD, and Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

Panic Disorders consist of sudden distinct episodes of extreme anxiety that include four or more of the following symptoms:

- Shortness of breath, heart palpitations, chest pain, dizziness, sweating, shaking, or a fear of losing control or dying
- These individuals may also have Agoraphobia and are afraid to leave their homes. Agoraphobia means, literally, fear of open spaces. These people often find it very difficult to be in a crowd. For example, they may get overwhelmed and experience a panic attack in a grocery store.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is characterized by recurrent obsessions or intrusive, unwanted thoughts, or compulsions, which are repetitive behaviors or mental acts which the person feels driven to perform in response to an obsession or according to certain rules or rituals.

The individual realizes these thoughts or actions are abnormal or excessive, but is unable to control them. They are a significant source of distress to the

individual and/or interfere with social functioning. In other words, these are more than merely excessive worries about real life problems.

Examples of OCD include people who are obsessed with contamination and therefore feel compelled to wash their hands fifty times a day, or shower two or three times daily. Jack Nicholson portrayed OCD in the movie, *As Good As It Gets*.

People with OCD may be obsessed with symmetry, like the main character in the film *Sleeping with the Enemy*. They tend to organize their spices, socks, etc., and feel the need to keep the towels perfectly straight.

Some folks with OCD feel compelled to count, hoard, or check things over and over and over again.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder is the most common anxiety disorder. Symptoms include excessive worry that interferes with daily functioning, and at least three of the following:

- muscle tension
- insomnia
- poor concentration
- feeling restless or keyed-up
- irritability or fatigue

This disorder is more common in women and often occurs in people who also suffer from depression.

Personality disorders

We all have certain personality traits that we have developed over the years. These are enduring, ingrained patterns of perceiving and relating to the environment and ourselves. When these personality traits become inflexible and maladaptive and cause either significant impairment in social or occupational functioning, they constitute a personality disorder.

Examples include: Narcissistic, Paranoid, Avoidant, Dependent, Anti-social, Histrionic, Schizoid, Passive-Aggressive, and Borderline Personality Disorder.

These people are very difficult to relate to and can be highly abrasive human beings. They often alienate people and become caught in a cycle of fragile relationships, which they periodically shatter because of their behavior. They often do not view themselves as being at fault, and therefore don't consider

that they themselves need to change. They often have very rigid strategies for coping with people or situations, and therefore have difficulty assimilating healthy, biblical methods of responding to situations.

They may be so fearful of rejection that they cling so tightly to a person that they end up pushing the person away. They set themselves up over and over again, in relationship after relationship, with the same self-defeating paradigm.

They also often misconstrue essentially benign events. For example, if you bring a friend to a party at their house, they assume it was because you didn't want to talk to them. They are supersensitive to rejection or being slighted in any way.

Substance abuse

The important point here is to determine whether a person abusing drugs or alcohol merely needs to be admonished in order to overcome their problem, or if their abuse is serious enough to merit treatment in a chemical dependency program of some sort.

It is important to determine the severity of their abuse, because abruptly stopping the drug or alcohol could cause withdrawal seizures. Some individuals require inpatient detox or a 30-day inpatient drug rehab program in order to safely come off the substance they were abusing.

A pattern of pathologic use involves intoxication throughout the day, the inability to stop or cut down, or blackouts.

The difference between alcohol or substance abuse and dependence is that someone has become dependent if he has developed tolerance or withdrawal symptoms. Tolerance is the need for markedly increased amounts of the substance to achieve intoxication. Withdrawal symptoms include tremor, nausea, agitation, and seizures.

It is also important to determine if he has had to miss work because of his abuse, and if he has had any legal problems, such as an OMVI (drunk driving).

Eating disorders

Anorexia

- Intense fear of getting fat
- Disturbance of body image—they think they are fat even when thin
- Weight loss of at least 25% of original body weight

- Refusal to maintain body weight over a minimal normal weight for age and height
- No known physical illness that would account for weight loss
- Amenorrhea—(loss of menstrual cycle)

Bulimia

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating—rapid consumption of large amounts of food in a discrete period of time, and a sense of lack of control over-eating, or often eat in secret
- Recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior in order to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, fasting or excessive exercise
- The binge eating and compensatory behavior both occur at least twice a week for 3 months
- Preoccupation with weight and shape
- Not due to any physical disorder

For example, if you're living in a ministry house and you notice food continues to disappear; you may have a bulimic living among you. You will need to directly confront the person about bingeing and purging, since secrecy is paramount to the bulimic and openness is key to recovery.

Attention deficit disorder

This disorder has a number of symptoms that overlap with Bipolar Disorder, but the symptoms are not episodic in ADD. Instead, they are consistent from day to day.

Symptoms of ADD include: poor concentration, distractibility, tendency not to finish projects, easily bored, impatience, tendency toward addictive behavior, poor listening, and the tendency to drift away in the middle of a page or conversation.

In addition to ADD, there is also Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity which includes hyperactivity as a core symptom. In order to be diagnosed with ADD, the symptoms must have begun in childhood. This disorder does not begin in adulthood.

When to refer

The red flags to look for in discerning if someone needs professional help

are:

- suicidal ideation
- out of touch with reality (psychosis).
- OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder).
- severe depression with changes in sleep, energy, appetite, and motivation
- addiction to (dependence on) substances (drugs or alcohol).
- physical causes of depression or anxiety which require an evaluation by an internist

Let's look at some of these in more detail

Suicidal ideation

You should ask directly if you suspect someone may have thoughts about hurting himself. It's important to get him to verbalize these thoughts, since he is less likely to act on them if he talks about it. Ask him if he has thought of a plan. Also ask him if he's ever had these thoughts before or ever made a suicide attempt in the past.

If he says, "I wish I were dead," this is not nearly as serious as if he says, "I'm thinking about taking an overdose, and I have some pills." If he has a plan it must be taken seriously, and you should take him to mental health facility or hospital.

Need for medication

If people are psychotic, significantly depressed, or experiencing OCD, they ought to be referred for an evaluation by a psychiatrist in order to determine if they need medication. Individuals with symptoms of Major Depression, Bipolar Disorder, and in some cases Dysthymic Disorder will likely need anti-depressant medication.

Also people with OCD, Panic Disorder with or without agoraphobia, or other anxiety disorders such as trichotillomania (hair pulling) may benefit from an anti-depressant or an anti-anxiety medication.

Those with a schizophrenic illness will definitely need an anti-psychotic drug.

Recent evidence suggests that eating disorders may benefit from medication, but group therapy can also be quite helpful for these folks. If

someone with an eating disorder also has a mood disorder, she may benefit from an anti-depressant.

Unfortunately, medication doesn't seem to help people with a personality disorder. However if someone with a personality disorder also happens to be depressed, then an anti-depressant may be helpful. Psychiatrists used to say the only effective treatment for someone with a borderline personality disorder was weekly psychotherapy for a minimum of 5 years. I think therapy can help these individuals, but personal spiritual growth is probably their best bet.

Many people are reluctant to take medication because of the cultural stigma attached to it. They fear it will imply that they are "crazy." However, if someone has gotten depressed, medication can correct an imbalance in their neurochemistry and restore normal functioning.

Medication alone is not always sufficient, but individual and/or marital therapy in combination with medication is very often helpful. Most research shows that the combination of medication and therapy provides the best chance for recovery.

People often need to have their thinking or perspective brought in line with God's truth in order to help prevent future recurrence of problems.

Need for hospitalization

If people are suicidal or homicidal, they need to be admitted to a hospital. These days, having a severe problem like these is about the only way to get someone admitted to the hospital. If they are psychotic and unable to care for themselves then they may also be admitted.

Need for detox

If they are dependent on drugs or alcohol they may need to be hospitalized in order to be detoxed. This is because if someone who is dependent on alcohol stops drinking cold turkey, she is at risk for withdrawal seizures. In the hospital her vital signs can be monitored closely, and she can be administered medication which can prevent withdrawal seizures.

Need for specific psychotherapy

I believe that the most biblical type of psychotherapy is probably cognitive behavioral therapy. This type of therapy attempts to identify wrong thinking and replace it with the truth. This is particularly good therapy for OCD, social anxiety disorder and phobias.

Need for referral to an internist

It is always important to rule out any physical causes for depression or anxiety. If someone is fatigued and unmotivated he may actually be anemic or hypothyroid. If someone's thyroid is too high he may appear anxious. Blood work can identify these physical causes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is helpful to look at hurting people in terms of these types of symptoms. If you suspect someone is depressed, for example, you may want to inquire about his sleep and eating patterns. It is also crucial that you directly ask if he has had any thoughts about hurting himself. If so, does he have a plan?

If someone becomes delusional or begins hearing voices, you would want him evaluated as soon as possible, particularly if he is experiencing command hallucinations which are telling him to hurt himself or others.

In my opinion, it is always better to err on the safe side. In other words, I take it seriously when someone mentions suicide and will try and draw her out and find out what she is thinking. If she has a plan, I think it is best to get her in to see a professional right away. Professionals have been trained to determine lethality, and it should be up to them to decide if someone needs to be hospitalized, not you. You should also give a written report to the Xenos office of the event and what you did in response. Your staff leader may have questions designed to make sure everything necessary happens.

Appendix 10

Assessing your group

An outline like this is designed to help leaders gather their thoughts and any objective information on how their group is doing. This kind of assessment usually brings facts to light that would be missed by a simple inner sense about how the group is doing.

I. Outreach/evangelism

1. How many first timers have been to the home group during the last six months? Are you satisfied with that level of outreach?
2. Of the first timers from the past 6 months, how many were probably non-Christian? Do you think your people are talking to non-Christians or mainly to other Christians?
3. What proportion of the people in the group do you believe are actively sharing their faith?
4. Do you see a trend in people's attitude toward outreach during the past few months? How would you describe the group morale concerning outreach?
5. Overall, do you get the impression that your church is soft, average, or strong in the area of outreach?
6. Summary: How do you feel about the outreach in the group? How can you encourage progress or stimulate change?

II. Follow up (refers to how well the group continues ongoing involvement and discussion with first time guests)

1. Of the first-timers coming to the group during the past few months, how many are still coming? What is the ratio of first-time visitors and those staying on? (For instance, on average, perhaps one person stays out of every four that visit.)
2. Do members take it upon themselves to greet and talk to new people? Do their discussions include spiritual content?
3. What about people who have been lost during the past 4

months? Were the losses unavoidable (in that the group did the best they could), or the result of poor work (e.g. the person was ignored)?

4. Summary: Is your group's follow up on new people adequate, or is this a weakness? How can you encourage progress or agitate for change?

III. Leadership development

1. Have you identified people who are likely to be your next leaders?

2. Name the men and women most likely to reach group leadership, in order of likelihood if possible:

3. Are others actively discipling people in the group? Who is discipling whom?

4. Who in your group do you think really desires to become a group leader some day? If you aren't sure you can answer this, what steps should you take?

5. Do you have any married people desiring leadership whose spouse may be uninterested? What should be done?

6. Can you think of anyone in the group who should be disciplined, but is not being disciplined?

7. Summary: How strong would you rate the group in leadership development? How can you encourage progress or stimulate change?

IV. Body Life (refers to the quality of community and relationships)

1. How would you assess the general emotional or relational health of the group? Are people engaged and loving one another?

2. Do your members appreciate body life as a significant value in their lives?

3. How well do you think people are doing in the area of assisting each other's ministries?

4. What do people do after the group meeting? Do they enjoy staying and relating to each other, or do they leave quickly?

5. How deep is the involvement between members during the week?
6. What percent of the group regularly attend large services at your church, and do they do anything together after those meetings?
7. Summary: How satisfied are you with the quality of body life in your group? Do you see any need for change in this area?

V. Prayer

1. Does the group have a special meeting for intercessory prayer?
2. If there is no special prayer meeting, is there any extensive intercessory prayer at other meetings?
3. Are you aware of other *ad hoc* times where members get together to pray?
4. Do your group members understand the important doctrines involving prayer? Have you taught adequately on prayer?
5. Summary: Are you satisfied with the group's prayer ministry? How can you encourage progress or stimulate change?

VI. Group Meetings

1. Is it possible that the teachings or discussions are not consistently good enough to truly hold the interest of the people? How would you rate the teachings?
2. Do you think teachers or discussion leaders are getting adequate feedback on their presentations? How do you know?
3. Who is the best teacher or discussion leader in the group?
4. Does that person teach more often than others?
5. Is group sharing dead or alive? Why? (i.e. teachings are too long, one person monopolizing talk, too much silence, etc.).

6. Are members burdened for the meeting's health? How do you see them contributing?

7. Summary: How would you describe the quality of your meetings? How can you encourage progress or stimulate change?

Conclusion:

What key points are you coming away from this evaluation with?

On a scale from 1 (the group may fizzle soon) to 10 (doing awesome in most ways), how would you rate your group at this time? Circle your opinion, and then compare notes and reasons with other leaders.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

Appendix 11

Principles for fostering successful leadership teams

This list of points is good to read and pray through once or twice a year.

Encouraging fellow leaders

- Can you name personal characteristics you admire in each of your fellow leaders? If not, you need to spend time with God pleading for a more realistic and fair assessment of your colleagues.
- For each leader, can you name ministry accomplishments you appreciate? Again, pray for your eyes to be opened, and for the humility to admit others' value to the ministry.
- Have you articulated any of these points to your fellow leaders in person during the past two months? If not, you are tardy in your encouraging role. They will find criticisms and advice hard to accept from you if you are weak in encouragement.
- Pray for vision for each of your fellow leaders. Ask God to show you why their unique contributions are important. Then look for an opportunity to express your vision to each in a non-showy and realistic fashion.
- Pray together for each other. Make your prayer times opportunities to review what God has bestowed on the church through each of your leaders, not just a time for fretting and problem solving.

Resolving personal conflicts

- Take time to spell out and resolve conflicts as they arise. Help each other resolve personal problems by helping others communicate their concerns and interests. A peacemaking influencer can help people understand each other's positions.
- If leaders have taken offense or felt hurt, the conflict has moved out of the issues-oriented category and into an affective or feelings-based conflict. These affective conflicts are more dangerous and require special attention. Review the section on counseling interpersonal conflict for ideas on how to resolve

conflicts in a biblical way (Chapter 9, Counseling).

- Encouragement is especially important during times of conflict. Controversy needs to be balanced with encouragement, kindness, and approval.
- Take time for positive social relating with other leaders. Spending time with your fellow leaders should be a priority. Leaders who become relationally disengaged are far more likely to misunderstand and become suspicious of each other.
- If an irresolvable problem arises, seek help from outside. Your church leadership should be able to mediate any difficult disputes.
- Leaders should agree on a realistic, hard-working standard for group leadership. Leaders who are not living by such a standard should be reproved to their faces, rather than behind their backs, and challenged to step up.
- If you feel you must offer criticism to a fellow leader, your perception of any shortcomings on the part of other leaders should be objective and serious. Avoid picking at each other for unimportant issues, which leads to a critical atmosphere.

Observing the principle of the “man on the spot”

- You should exercise extreme caution when you encounter negative thoughts regarding another leader’s ministry, especially if that work is carried on where you can’t personally observe it. This is because the man or woman on the spot is the one who is usually best able to judge what is happening.
- The value of other leaders in this situation is mainly that of questioning the situation, rather than defining it. In other words, by a questioning process, the other leaders should bring out any doubts they have about the ministry of the one on the spot. However, if the answers given are sensible and correspond with objective fact, they should be believed. Also, if a leader contradicts an account given by a member, we should be disposed to believe the leader over the member, according to 1 Timothy 5:19. Even though this passage is specifically about elders, the principle seems to be that we should attribute high credibility to leaders’ accounts.
- It will often be necessary to re-asses your impression after

talking to the one on the spot. If doubt lingers, you should usually keep it to yourself until the situation is completely clarified.

- Leaders should be very wary of tendencies found in most people to second-guess other workers, and to feel that “I know best.” We should be very reluctant to meddle in other leaders’ decision-making process beyond questioning them.
- All leaders should, however, submit to questioning of their ministry by other leaders—even questioning of a close nature. Only by being questioned do we re-examine our own positions, and thus benefit from other leaders.
- A leader who refuses to be questioned or who takes offense at being questioned is displaying an immature attitude that contradicts team leadership. Such refusal becomes an issue in itself and must be resolved before a reasonable level of cooperation can be expected. While any leader may react defensively at first, we have no excuse for continuing in such a posture.
- Don’t withdraw from a leader who flares up when questioned. This problem won’t go away and must be resolved at any cost. Get help from higher church leadership if needed.

Commitment to success

- Each group leader should commit him or herself to the goal of seeing real success in the work of all of the other leaders. Unless we can honestly affirm that this is our goal, nothing we say is reliable, because we are not working from a motive of trying to help. If we have competition or contempt in our hearts, our views will be biased and unloving.

Communicating respect

- Other leaders should be viewed as colleagues and treated with all due respect. We should view fellow leaders in a way that assumes their basic competence, and we should communicate this in the demeanor and the words used in a leaders’ meeting. Think about how respect is communicated. Leaders who talk down to colleagues or insult them are not being respectful.

Focusing the ministry

- Unless the leaders are all focusing the majority of their attention and efforts on work that is needed and effective, frustration and negativity will inevitably result. Good leadership teams are proactive. Ascertain whether the bulk of leaders' and workers' time and effort are being used to focus on problems, or on positive, strategically sound ministry.
- Follow the principle of focusing on the responsive field. Jesus taught his followers to focus on towns that were willing to listen rather than on those that refused the message (Luke 10:8-11). Within each ministry sphere, identify the most promising and responsive people at this particular time. Avoid the three most common errors in this area: a) Trying to force-feed a believer (or non-Christian) who does not want it. b) Ignoring good, growing Christians because "they're doing alright." c) "Greasing the squeaky wheel"—expending all of the work of the church (and all of the discussion time in the leaders' meeting) on people who demand and complain the loudest, without considering others who may demand less but who are more promising. Unless we resist this tendency, we will actually reinforce fleshly and neurotic behavior, and people will begin to sense that the best way to get attention is to have a crisis of faith or an emotional breakdown.

Dealing with negativity

Every leadership team and every leader has to deal with negativity and defeatism from time to time. These attitudes are extremely damaging to the morale of the group and of fellow-leaders. When dealing with negativity, remember the following:

1. Distinguish between negativity and realism. We have to admit authentic problems before they can be resolved. However, we should appraise every problem area without exaggeration, and we should admit God's power to work through the situation.
2. Leaders need to remind each other that Christian work, like all war, is full of reversals and unexpected misfortune. Yet there are unexpected victories as well! The setbacks we see today should be seen in the light of the overall history of God's work with the group. We can usually see that there have been periodic reversals, but overall progress.
3. Negativity regarding other leaders' ministries is particularly suspicious

(see above regarding the man on the spot).

4. We should try to verbally balance negative facts with positive ones in the leaders' meeting. What a terrible mistake it would be to have most of the people in our group earnestly seeking growth, but focus on the few who are uninterested.
5. A leader who is projecting negativity and defeatism in the leaders meeting should be reminded to express faith in God.
6. When real problems arise, are the leaders only bemoaning the situation, or are they also creating steps to correct the situation? If no steps are possible, it is usually unwise to spend much time discussing that particular situation.

Appendix 12

Leadership responsibilities

When moving out to lead for God Christians should have a clear idea of what they hope to provide as leaders. Don't assume that everyone's idea of what leaders should do is the same. Think through these four areas considering carefully what leaders should and shouldn't do in each area.

Provision

The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not be in want. (Psalms 23:1).

Leaders are responsible to see that those in their charge are able to access provision for their spiritual and personal well-being and development. Note this does not mean leaders must provide all nourishment themselves, though they will naturally provide much of it. Followers are responsible to go and take available provision for themselves after leaders have shown them where and how to find food. Here analogies like that used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2 (of a mother nursing her baby) break down. Paul was primarily pointing to his feeling of love for the Thessalonians, not how dependent they should be. Part of equipping young Christians is teaching them how to feed themselves.

Leaders should provide spiritual food, such as the word of God. They should provide good Bible teaching and help understanding difficult passages. Leaders also should provide structures that are conducive to body life and spiritual growth. By structures, we mean meetings or other arrangements that enable people to gather in larger and smaller groups suitable to the functions of the body of Christ. People should be able to worship, study, pray together, share, bring non-Christian guests, and raise questions. Usually, more than one meeting type is necessary to meet these needs.

Protection

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me (Psalms 23:4).

Shepherds are useful for protecting their flocks from wolves. While we are never called to eliminate all dangers from the church, a well-led church is a generally secure place to grow. Leaders should strive to see that the church or ministry is relatively free of wild doctrinal aberrations, dangerous or menacing people, and disruptions that make body life impossible.

Leaders must weigh the level of freedom versus control they will exercise. After all, young Christians need exposure to a wide range of viewpoints and problematic people and situations. This is real life! Leaders should be careful not to exceed their legitimate authority. God gives leaders authority in the specific area of operating the ministry. They are not authorized to direct people's private lives in non-moral areas. But if dangers begin to threaten members' well-being, leaders should act to protect. People sometimes even need to be protected from the damage they may do to themselves, and this could call for discipline in love.

Direction

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters (Psalms 23:2).

The world assumes people will automatically know what to do based on following their feelings. God rejects this idea, and instead advances the idea of leadership. In his view, we often need outside advice on which direction to go. Aside from what believers can learn directly from God's word or what they hear from his inner promptings, believers may at times need the wisdom of godly leaders. Certainly, a group or ministry needs leaders to suggest, or even at times to insist, on a particular direction in the operation of that ministry.

Again, directing does not suggest that followers cannot or should not develop their own ability to apply truth to their lives in a wise way. Therefore, the godly leader will at times withhold his counsel and call on members to decide for themselves. Only when people make mistakes some of the time will they develop the wisdom to avoid wrong in the future. Therefore, no leader should seek to direct every aspect of a given ministry, let alone the lives of those involved.

Directing is not controlling. New leaders should be taught to shun any controlling attitude over others' lives. Direction means sounding a clear note on the trumpet. While more advanced members may benefit more from a consultative approach that refuses to say what should be done, young Christians often need direction. Groups need direction as well. Leaderless groups falter in virtually every case. But groups with strong but humble leaders who can advance a convincing case for their direction tend to flourish.

At the same time, leaders should be warned that some people want to depend on someone, and they should refuse to allow this. Group members will sometimes ask for direction in areas where they should make their own decisions, such as who to date, or how to manage their money, or how to parent their children. Leaders are free to share advice in these situations, but they

should make clear that the decision is the member's to make.

Motivation

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalms 23:4b)

Someone has said that without vision, the people perish. Often, God sends leaders to impart vision to his people and to bestow the gift of motivation. Motivating people is completely different from the idea of issuing imperatives or instructions. While these may be appropriate at times, here we refer to leaders behaving in such a way that others feel a sense of excitement or need to act in a certain direction. Effective leaders are able to agitate and excite people who were formerly dull, listless, apathetic, and bored. Leaders can develop and impart a vision of godly living and accomplishment that people adopt as their own. After people act, good leaders know how to encourage more of the same through positive words.

Some leaders are able to excite, but it doesn't last. With others, their followings have continued to eagerly follow God over the years. This ability to create long-term motivation is even more complicated, because people have to be gradually brought off motivational support from leaders and taught to draw motivation directly from God on their own. The artistry and creativity of leaders enables them to sense what is needed at different levels of spiritual maturity and respond accordingly.

Recommended reading

For a complete, annotated bibliography, see <http://www.xenos.org/discipleship>

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your church. (Columbus, OH: New Paradigm Publishing, 2010).

Moore, Waylon B. *Multiplying Disciples: The New Testament Method for Church Growth.* Tampa: Missions Unlimited, 1981.

Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Petersen, Jim. *Lifestyle Discipleship: The Challenge of Following Jesus in Today's World.* Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1993.

Robinson, Martin, and Dwight Smith. *Invading Secular Space: Strategies for Tomorrow's Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2003.

[1]

See a detailed account of the implications for modern churches of our mystical union with Jesus in Dennis McCallum, *Members of One Another: How to build a biblical ethos into your church* (Columbus OH: New Paradigm Publishing, 2010). The title is a companion volume to *Organic Discipleship*. If you find you like this book, but have more questions, *Members of One Another* would be good follow-up reading.

[2]

See Richard Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 3. The fact that everyone in the gospels speaks about discipleship in a way that needed no definition indicates they were working from a commonly accepted understanding already in place.

[3]

The apocryphal book of Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) talks about discipleship during pre-Christian times. Ben Sirach exhorts the prospective student to find a wise teacher. The pupil is to “attach” himself to his teacher (6:34) and almost constantly be in his house (6:36). First century disciples needed their wives’ permission to leave for more than 30 days at a time while studying with their rabbi (Mishnah, Ketubot 5:6). Learn about rabbinic disciple making in Günter Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2002) 31-34.

[4]

New Testament authors, Luke and John, sometimes use the term “disciples” to refer to all followers of Jesus regardless of their level of commitment or proximity to him. Especially in the book of Acts, Luke frequently uses the term “disciples” as a synonym for “Christians” (see Acts 9:19; 9:26; 9:38; 11:26; 11:29; 13:52; 14:20-22, 28; 15:10; 18:23, 27; 19:9, 30; 20:1; 20:30; 21:4, 16). Thus Luke, mainly in the book of Acts, refers to all followers of Jesus as disciples, although even he distinguishes between disciples of Jesus and those of Paul (9:25) and of John the Baptist (19:1).

This use of the word *disciple* by Luke is different than the majority usage in the New Testament. The term appears ten times more frequently referring to students in the more intimate sense described above (over 260 uses in the New Testament). On one level, all Christians could be called disciples of Christ. But that doesn’t erase the usual meaning of the term (in both the New Testament and contemporary Jewish and Greco-Roman sources) as a special trainee following a particular teacher. “Disciple” may not always follow a particular technical definition, and the meaning depends on the context. In this book we are talking about the process of personal mentoring leaders in the early church used as the main means of raising up new leaders. No one disputes that this was the main way the early Christians developed leadership during the apostolic period. Even those who don’t use the word discipleship (like Paul) clearly envision the process of personal mentoring. For the contrary view (that personal discipleship was eradicated after Jesus) see James Montgomery Boice, *Christ’s Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986) 16, or Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) 24-47. Authors like these tend to see Luke’s use of the word disciple as cancelling the other uses.

[5]

Paul likely disciplined most of these people to one extent or another: Timothy, Silas, Pricilla, Aquilla, Tertius, Sosthenes, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Aristarchus, John Mark, Jesus Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Silvanus, Crescens, Titus, Erastus, Trophimus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, Artemas, and Onesimus. He probably also disciplined others, like some of the leaders in churches he planted who are not mentioned by name in his books.

[6]

For instance, the *World Christian Encyclopedia* estimates that by A.D. 100 there were one million Christians in the Roman

Empire out of a population of 181 million. David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World A.D. 1900-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3. Recently, Rodney Stark has written a book offering an entirely implausible estimate of only eight to twenty thousand Christians by the end of the first century. We would join most historians in rejecting this estimate. In the first place, we can account for eight thousand Christians within the first few chapters of Acts, unless these narratives are completely discounted (as they are by Stark). Secondly, his estimate is based on a straight mathematical formula assuming 40% growth per decade for 300 years, ending with six million Christians by the time of Constantine. But this is not how Christianity grew. The growth was far better during the early years and slowed thereafter. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1996).

For a more responsible account see Latourette: "Our records, unsatisfactory though they are, suffice to show that by A.D. 180 Christians were in all the provinces of the Empire and in Mesopotamia." Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970) 85. He also observes, "Never in the history of the race has this record ever quite been equaled. Never in so short a time has any other religious faith, or, for that matter, any other set of ideas, religious political, or economic, without the aid of physical force or of social or cultural prestige, achieved so commanding a position in such an important culture" 112. Of course Islam and communism spread quickly, but both used military force. Notice that Tacitus refers to the "huge multitude" of Christians captured during Nero's persecution in the 60s AD. Tacitus, *Annals* XV. 44. Shortly after the first century, anti-Christian governor Pliny says that in his province, Christians were so numerous that temples were empty, and they couldn't sell sacrificial animals or fodder (*Pliny*, 10.96.1-2).

[7]

Not until our own day has a comparable level of growth returned in some parts of the world, unfortunately not including Europe or the U.S. See Martin Robinson and Dwight Smith, *Invading Secular Space: Strategies for Tomorrow's Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2003) Chapter 1. Also see David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTack Resources, 2004).

[8]

On the difference between movements and institutions, see Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968); Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, translated by Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963); and Jay Conger, *The Charismatic Leader: Behind the Mystique of Exceptional Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989).

[9]

Personal mentoring still happened during this period, but people no longer viewed it primarily as a way to raise up leadership in the church. For instance, the monastic movement had mentors or spiritual directors, but their goal became personal holiness and transcendence. In second and third century churches, lay people were trained in the basics of Christianity by catechumens, who taught small classes for the purpose of instructing new believers. Priests and bishops were increasingly developed in schools as they are today. The mentors, or older priests, assigned to students were more like personal counselors and spiritual guides during their stay in school than field trainers in ministry, like Paul. Even though some priests and bishops were trained through an apprenticeship process, the overwhelming majority of church members never received any personal mentoring. See a good survey of this period in Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 1.

[10]

As William Pauck explains the reformers' perspective, "All Christian believers, therefore, are ministers, servants, priests, by virtue of their faith in the Word of God, but not every one of them can or should assume the function of preaching, teaching, and counseling. For the sake of order, certain ones must be set apart from the group of believers to undertake the office of the preacher... 'We are all priests,' wrote Luther, 'insofar as we are Christians, but those whom we call priests are ministers [*Diener*] selected from our midst to act in our name, and their priesthood is our ministry.'" Wilhelm Pauck, "The Ministry in the Time of the Continental Reformation," in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams, Ed (New York: Harper & Rowe, Publishers, Inc. 1956, 1983) 112. Calvin says, "Neither the light and heat of the sun, nor any meat or drink, are so necessary to the nourishment and sustenance of the present life, as the apostolic and pastoral office is to the preservation of the Church in the world." 115.

[11]

For instance, the medieval underground movement known as the Waldensians practiced discipleship widely. Giorgio Tourn cites Catholic descriptions at the time as saying, "Every one of them, old and young, men and women, by day and by night, do not stop their learning and teaching of others." And the Waldensians themselves said, "In our home, women teach as well as men, and one who has been a student for a week teaches another." Giorgio Tourn, *The Waldensians: The First 800 Years (1174-1974)* Translated from the Italian by Camillo P. Merlino, Charles W. Arbuthnot, Editor (Torino, Italy: Claudiana Editrice, 1980), p. 6, 21, 39. Another description says, "men and women, great and lesser, day and night do not cease to learn and teach; the workman who labors all day teaches or learns at night... When someone has been a student seven days, he seeks someone else to teach, as one curtain pulls another. Whoever excuses himself, saying that he is not able to learn, they say to him, 'Learn but one word [verse of scripture] each day, and after a year you will know three hundred, and you will progress.'" "The Passau Anonymous: On the origins of Heresy and the Sect of the Waldensians," in Edward Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, PA: The Penn Press, 1980), 150-153. German pietism, under the leadership of Jacob Spener advanced the used of home groups with lay leaders. See Dennis McCallum, "Philip Jacob Spener's Contribution to the Protestant Doctrine of the Church" http://www.xenos.org/essays/spen_a.htm. The early Wesleyan movement and the house church movement in China also depended almost exclusively on personal discipleship for leadership training. See Dennis McCallum, "Watchman Nee and the House Church Movement in China"

<http://www.xenos.org/essays/nee1.htm>, and Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns For Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1980).

10. Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1963).

[13]

. Howard & William Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1999); Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1979); Waylon B. Moore, *Multiplying Disciples: The New Testament Method of Church Growth* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1981); Jim Peterson, *Lifestyle Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993); Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made, Not Born* (Wheaton: Victor, 1974); Bill Hull, *The Disciple making Pastor* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1988). See our reading list for more titles.

[14]

See David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*. We have had opportunity to observe explosive discipling-based church planting movements in Cambodia and India. The cell church movement has resulted in huge movements on several continents. See Joel Comisky, *Home Cell Group Explosion: How Your Small Group Can Grow and Multiply* (Houston: Cell Group Resources, 2002).

15

. George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Ventura, CA: Issachar Resources, 2000), Chapter 3, “The State of Discipleship.” He also cites some notable exceptions.

[16]

. George Barna, Barna Update, <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=182>.

[17]

. George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, Chapters 6, 7. Even by his extremely liberal definition (where discipleship might be participating in an online spiritual chat group), only a minority of American evangelicals have been discipled. By the stricter standard where discipleship would entail a weekly meeting with a mentor, his figures appear to show that as few as 3% of American evangelicals report being discipled.

[18]

“Nationwide, less than 20% of all church growth comes through conversion—that is, through people who were previously not followers of Christ, but who accept Jesus as their savior and commit to involvement in a church.” George Barna, *Grow Your Church From the Outside In*: (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 2002) 132. Author Ken Sidey agrees: “Perhaps church growth’s greatest challenge in North America comes from research that shows that more than 80 percent of all the growth taking place in growing churches comes through transfer, not conversion. Ken Sidey, “Church Growth Fine Tunes Its Formulas,” *Christianity Today* (June 24, 1991), 46. At Xenos, we suspect that the American church’s strategy of outreach based on central worship services rather than on individual duplication may have something to do with these unwelcome findings. The Xenos numbers come from a church-wide survey of home church members completed in April 2005.

[19]

Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* (Downers Grove Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003) 190.

[20]

For more information on Xenos Fellowship, visit our extensive website at <http://www.xenos.org>, or feel free to visit us sometime, especially during the annual Xenos Summer Institute.

[21]

. Thomas M. Graham, Ph. D., “Leadership Development: An Empowerment Model” (La Habra, CA: The Center for Organizational and Ministry Development, 1995) 2.

[22]

Perhaps Paul avoided the term because he wanted to avoid some of the associations found in Greek thinking about “disciples,” such as a disciple having a homosexual relationship with his mentor.

[23]

. Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 50ff.

[24]

. See George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992).

[25]

Adapted from Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977).

[26]

From Albert Bandura and R.H. Walters, *Social Learning and Personality Development* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), 10-11, 50, 84, 94-100.

[27]

We rarely agree with cross-gender discipleship. Exceptions might include elderly women discipling younger men, or fathers discipling their daughters or other close relatives.

[28]

Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Revised Edition, 2003).

[29]

We believe J. P. Moreland's book *Love God With All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1997) is essential reading today, especially for gen-X and millennials.

[30]

Notice David also teaches this in his classic Psalm extolling the wonders of God's word: "I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path" (Ps. 119:104) and "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you" (Ps.119:11).

[31]

See also Prov. 2:6: "The Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." and Prov. 3:13: "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding."

[32]

Legalistic teachers think that focusing too much on grace will lead to apathy or slackness in Christian living. But Paul said grace had the opposite effect on him: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). He also pointed out that what matters is not our strength to do the things of God, but dependence on him to work through us. "[God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" (2 Cor. 12:9). When our disciples steep their minds in scripture, they will be far more likely to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1).

[33]

Our favorite is R. Laird Harris, *The Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Greenville, SC: A Press, 1995). See also, Norman Geisler and William Nix, *From God to Us* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1974).

[34]

<http://www.xenos.org/books/cdm.htm>.

[35]

See a simple explanation of God's plan through the ages from the fall of Satan until eternity future in the first half of Dennis McCallum, *Satan and His Kingdom: What the Bible says and How it Matters to You* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2009).

[36]

New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, <http://www.watchtower.org/e/bible/index.htm>, Colossians 2:9.

[37]

Paul Little, *Know What You Believe* (Downers Grove Ill.: IVP Books, 2008) or see the free outlines at <http://www.xenos.org/classes/principles/index.htm>.

[38]

Good books to go over together include Ole Halesby, *Prayer* (Augsburg Books, Updated edition, 1994), Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not to Pray* (Downers Grove IL: IVP Books; 20th Anniversary Edition, 2008) and Paul Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2009)

[39]

This is the "opening of the eyes of our hearts" that Paul prays for: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:18-19). This enlightening of the eyes of our hearts doesn't usually come to us out of the blue. It comes as we move toward God in thanksgiving and acknowledgement of what we already see. Then, God shows us more.

[40]

James makes it clear that God will not answer all prayers, particularly if we "ask amiss." "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:3). Of course, no believer who knows God would ever want any prayer answered that was not according to his will. He alone knows what is best for us and for others.

[41]

Of course, we would be remiss if we didn't suggest reading the best book every written on the subject: Dennis McCallum, *Satan and His Kingdom*.

[42]

This is also what Peter means when he says, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, *standing firm in your faith...*" (1 Pet. 5:8,9 NASB, emphasis ours)

[43]

Larry Crabb, *The Silence of Adam: Becoming Men of Courage in a World of Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 35.

[44]

This young man was perfectly willing to waive confidentiality and let his therapist talk to me, as are most people. The extreme obsession with confidentiality in the modern world is a recent phenomenon. Only in the 90's did lawmakers begin legislating actively to keep everyone's life a secret. In our opinion, maintaining extreme confidentiality works against real community. The idea

of counseling each other on our problems makes no sense in a setting where nobody is willing to let anyone else know what is really going on in their lives.

[45]

The following words are used in the New Testament and addressed to all Christians

<p><i>Parakaleo</i> (107 times in New Testament): encourage, comfort, exhort</p> <p>1 Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.</p> <p>Hebrews 10:25 “...let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”</p>
<p><i>Didasko</i> (97 times in New Testament) teach, instruct (formally or informally)</p> <p>Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...”</p>
<p><i>Noutheteo</i> (11 times in New Testament): admonish; counsel</p> <p>Romans 15:14 “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”</p>
<p><i>Elencho</i> (17 times in New Testament): reprove, expose, convict, refute</p> <p>2 Timothy 4:2 “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”</p>
<p><i>Epitaimao</i> (33 times in New Testament) rebuke, warn, tell sternly</p> <p>2 Timothy 4:2 see above</p>

[46]

Donald E. Bossart, *Creative Conflict in Religious Education and Church Administration* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1980), 38. Bossart goes through a number of ways in which conflict can actually enhance groups.

[47]

Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991, 1997).

[48]

Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 22.

[49]

Most conflicts are a combination of affective and material discord. Affective conflict is when people’s feelings have been hurt, or they are personally offended by something the other did (e.g. feeling disrespected, insulted, discounted, etc.). Material conflicts center on actual issues, like where to go for vacation or how to run a Bible study group.

You should teach disciples to deal with the affective part of any conflict first. People won’t negotiate positively on material issues when they are struggling with hard feelings toward their opponents. But if we deal with the hard feelings, we should be able to move on to the skills needed in good negotiation. Begin with prayer, asking God to reveal what the opponents’ position means and why they hold it. Look for underlying interests that could be met another way.

Next, be sure your disciples get the facts. They should study the situation, being careful not to jump to conclusions. Teach them to identify their own interests, including where they can give way or defer to their opponents, and where they feel they must stand their ground. They should work on new options that may be acceptable to both sides, and be ready to show their opponents why

these new options will benefit them and satisfy their underlying interests.

You will want to coach your disciples through how to meet with their opponents, how to begin negotiations with some positive reflections that affirm relationships, how to invite brainstorming, how to give in on less important issues, and how to persuade opponents to accept important points. You may need to go with your disciple to a meeting as a mediator and show him in person how to use these skills. See also Sande's excellent section on negotiation.

[50]

In Greek, the word "judge" can be used in different ways, similar to our use in English. Having sound judgment in a situation is a good thing. It means we are able to tell right from wrong, true from false, and important from unimportant. Similarly, we find positive references to judgment in the New Testament, where "judging" means "discerning." Jesus urges his hearers to "judge what is right." (Luke 12:57) Paul says he had judged a man in Corinth, in the sense that he had determined that his behavior was unacceptable in the church. (1 Cor. 5:3) He tells the Corinthians, "But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment." (1 Cor. 11:31) here again meaning judgment as discernment. Judgment is bad when it is condemning, or results in holding someone in contempt.

[51]

Lawrence Crabb, *Understanding People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987).

[52]

Titles we have found helpful include Neil S Jacobson and Gayla Margolin, *Marital therapy : strategies based on social learning and behavior exchange principles* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1979); John M. Gottman, Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 1999); Leslie Vernick, *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001); John Gottman, *A Couple's Guide to Communication* (IL: Research Press, 1979); Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler, *Crucial Confrontations* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004); Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1999).

[53]

You can begin with the outlines on the Organic Disciple Making website. We also recommend studying Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (Wheaton IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003).

[54]

On this issue, see Dennis McCallum, *Walking in Victory* (Navpress, Xenos 1992, 2003).

[55]

Erickson, speaking in the context of education, says, "Basic and applied research on reinforcement confirms the dominance of reward over punishment. This reminder is relevant to instruction because it is so easy to make comments that are critical, negative, caustic, and threatening about what a student believes, says, and does. A direct or implied put-down to a student can quickly undo the tenuous allegiance and feelings of identification toward the teacher and the area of knowledge he or she represents." Stanford C. Ericksen, *The Essence of Good Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1984), 44, 46.

[56]

See also Romans 12:8, where Paul mentions the spiritual gift of encouragement and urges those with the gift to use it. Paul often says he is sending one of his guys to a local church so he can encourage them (Eph. 6:22; Col. 4:8; 1 Thess. 3:2) He urges the Thessalonians, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11; see also 5:14) When writing to his disciples, he repeatedly urges them to encourage their people (2Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:6,15).

[57]

Erickson explains: "A significant finding is the holding power of being reinforced only once in a while--the slot-machine or patient fisherman phenomenon. For reasons that are still a matter of theoretical debate, material learned under conditions of aperiodic [intermittent and irregular] reinforcement remains in memory better than if it were learned under constant or regular reinforcement." Stanford C. Ericksen, *The Essence of Good Teaching* (NY: Jossey-Bass, 1984) 45.

[58]

See a good discussion on how leaders can use tension to motivate people in Bruce Powers, *Christian Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979), 34ff.

[59]

Due to be released in 2012.

[60]

This assumes the one who reached the new person isn't around in the same group, or for some other reason isn't in a position to disciple the new believer. For instance, the one who reached the new believer may be of the opposite gender, or may be too busy to disciple the person. In some cases, the person isn't interested in or isn't qualified to disciple someone. However, Don't jump to any of these conclusions hastily. We believe that allowing those who do successful evangelism also enjoy discipling those they reach is good for morale in the group and is a more organic approach with many benefits. This is probably what Paul refers to in 2 Tim. 2:6. See a more detailed discussion of how to make decisions like these and what factors might disqualify someone from ministry in Dennis McCallum, *Members of One Another*, Chapters 13 and 14.

[61] Elton Trueblood, *The Best of Trueblood: An Anthology* (Nashville: Impact Books, 1979), 140.

[62] See also 2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; Eph. 5:15-16; 2 Cor. 5:9; and Lk. 13:32.

[63] In order to avoid attaining our goals by human effort (Gal.3:3), we should be careful to place our goals under the sovereignty of God in faith (James 4:13-15). James isn't against setting goals; he just wants us to set goals in a way that is contingent on the will of God.

[64] A helpful paper here may be Dennis McCallum, "What is a Christian Leader? 12 Ways To Conceive of Leaders" (<http://www.xenos.org/classes/leadership/11leaders.html>).

[65] Waylon B. Moore, *Multiplying Disciples: The New Testament Method of Church Growth*, 14ff

[66] A number of pastors have asked me (Dennis) where I get the time to put so much focus on discipling and equipping. The answer is that I have been released from many of the functions that typically take up pastors' time. In our church, most ministry is delegated to home churches. When someone gets sick or injured or has a baby, their own home church leaders and members handle the visitation. We have also empowered our home church leaders to marry and bury people. As the senior pastor, I only agree to marry people in my own home church. Home church leaders also counsel their own members, or refer them to our staff counselors or outside pros. I don't counsel people except those in my own home church, or leaders I'm coaching. We have also hired an adequate administrative staff under a management team. These competent people run the church, freeing our senior leadership to focus on working with people. We also have a deep bench of quality preachers and teachers who can substitute for us if we need to miss a weekend sermon. Our elders' team shares the conviction that nothing our senior leaders do with their time is more valuable to the church than raising up new leaders. They periodically check on me to see if I'm getting too caught up in non-essential work that others could do. The result is that I and the other top leadership are free to focus on bringing up the next generation of leaders. I find that more than anything else, lack of free time to disciple and train are the result of pastors' own lack of priority for this area. Too many pastors are reluctant to delegate time-consuming traditional functions to others, or to teach their fellow leaders why they should focus on equipping the saints.

[67] Some of our part-time coaches become full-time employees by serving in other capacities such as teaching classes or administration to make up the balance of their time. Others are able to work in a part time capacity because they have other profitable vocations (e.g. medical doctors or salesmen) or because they are housewives with a second income.

[68] You can read more about the Servant Team and Servant Covenant at <http://www.xenos.org/admin/steam.htm>

[69] For the best teaching on this, be sure to get your disciples to read Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers,)

[70] Again, the tool we use for this is Dennis McCallum, *Satan and His Kingdom: What the Bible Says and Why It Matters to You* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2010).

[71] Our preferred tool for this is Dennis McCallum, *Members of One Another*.

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