

Making Disciples

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"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses,
commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"

(II Timothy 2:2).

Introduction

Along the way, someone discipled men such as Martin Luther, John Wesley and Billy Graham. Likewise, great elders such as J/T. Pugh, G.A. Mangun, T.F. Tenney and Carlton Coon all had mentors who made a great impact on their life and ministry. At one time, Jerry Jones and Wayne Huntley were kids in Sunday School. Not only were these influential leaders converted to the faith, but they were also discipled and prepared for ministry by faithful men and women.

There were significant people in their lives that encouraged them in their spiritual development. When we see the ministries of these men, we are seeing the fruits of those labors. Many, if not most of these disciple makers have been forgotten by all but a few, but whoever those people were has left a living, legacy.

I. The Mission of the Church

A. The Church has a three-fold responsibility in conveying the Word of God to the world. We are commissioned to evangelize, to disciple, and to equip. These three initiatives are not separate from one another, but are actually part of a continuum that should exist for every believer. We agree that all people should be evangelized and most churches at least recognize this responsibility whether they fulfill it or not. The next stage for every convert is to disciple them into the Christian life. A much smaller percentage of churches endeavor to do this on a systematic basis. Finally, it is the responsibility of Churches, in general, and preachers specifically, to equip disciples for service in the area in which they are gifted.

These are not options- they are commandments. The inability of Churches in these three areas will be the greatest roadblock to reaching our world with the Gospel.

B. Jesus discipled twelve men and commissioned them to go into the entire world, disciple nations and teach them everything He had taught them. To add to the church, we evangelize. To multiply the church, we disciple and then equip. Jesus understood this as he prepared men to reach the world. Even today, the successful missionaries are not just the ones who evangelize, but rather than the ones who teach and train.

Some studies show that Pentecostal churches are keeping less than 10% of all new converts. Many churches do not even have new converts. People go in and out of Churches as though they were a revolving door. Granted, the problem is sometimes beyond our control. We live in a pluralistic society in which people come to church from diverse backgrounds of culture, disabilities, age groups, economic/educational status and life experience. In addition, people come into our churches with a great deal of excess baggage that they have to deal with even after salvation. Divorce, financial problems, addictions- to name but a few- must be dealt with at the altar as well as when they get up from the altar.

The single most important key in reaching and keeping souls is relationship Building and discipleship. The lack of it is why churches with beautiful buildings and great music sometimes win nobody, while home missionaries are growing weekly (or vice versa)! Just consider how you came into the church. Did you just stumble in on your way to the grocery store? Did you follow an ad in the newspaper or telephone book? Did you come because you were impressed with the sign out front?

Over 90% of people in church came because of family or a friend! And they usually stayed because of that friend, or other friends that they made after coming to the Church.

In the first century, on the remote island of Cypress, there lived a man by the name of Barnabas. He sold land and took money to Jerusalem to donate to the young Church that was recently established. The leaders of the church replaced his old name of Joses with a new name, "Son of Encouragement," or simply Barnabas" (Acts 4:36-37). Barnabas is one of the first real models of a disciple maker, and one of his first test cases was none other than a man by the name of Saul who struck terror in the hearts of Christians, in persecuting the Church. Saul was a lot like terrorist today, because he was convinced he was serving God's purpose.

C. In discipling and equipping Paul, Barnabas dispatched a dynamo that rocked the world. When you look at the spiritual technique and disposition of Paul, it is likely a reflection of Barnabas. Later, Paul was reflected the pattern of Barnabas, as he discipled Mark, Silas, Timothy and others. He then instructed Timothy to repeat the pattern when he said to him: "*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*" (II Timothy 2:2).

In Creation, God set a principle in motion for all living organisms: *reproduce after your kind*. Paul understood the principle of multiplication: reproducing after your kind. He understood it, because he was taught it by Barnabas.

D. The goal of every pastor

210349392. Develop self-feeding Christians.

210349393. Develop mature Christians who are capable of equipping others for the work of the ministry. I have not developed disciples till they are discipling others.

II. The Nature of Making Disciples

A. Disciple making is achieved through the relationship and intimate interaction of two people who are committed to each other. One in the relationship will be more spiritually advanced in their development than the other.

B. The nature of a disciple maker is comprised of four very important elements: *teaching, mentoring, modeling and equipping*. In discipling new converts- and even our church youth- these tasks may fall on one individual. However, they are usually more effective if they are shared by several individuals that each contribute to the convert.

In describing the five-fold ministry, the Apostle Paul said,

*Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and **teachers**; ¹² For the **perfecting of the saints**, for the **work of the ministry**, for the **edifying of the body** of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

In this Scripture, we identify two primary areas that the ministry should achieve:

1. **The perfecting of the saints (at all ages and stages), for the work of the ministry**
2. **the edifying of the body of Christ:**

This is to continue for a specified time period:

1. *Till we all come in the unity of the faith,*
2. *and of the knowledge of the Son of God,*
3. *unto a perfect man,*
4. *unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*

With the ultimate purpose of:

1. *That we henceforth be no more children, or simply stated, that we continue to mature*

Statistics tell us that if a new baby would be left alone with no care for more than three days it will die. *As soon as someone is born again there needs to be saints standing by ready to adopt the new babies!*

In the 13th century an experiment was done by Frederick II with infants. He wanted to know what language they would develop if they were never spoken to. Orders were given for no one to speak to or give them attention except to feed and clothe them. His experiment ended in tragedy. Not only was no language learned the infants all died! In the early part of this century another experiment was performed with monkeys. Baby monkeys were divided into three groups. The first had no mother, the second a cold metal mother substitute, the third a real live mother. The little monkeys with no mother died and the ones with a cold substitute were sickly. But the ones with real mothers thrived and grew! The obvious conclusion is that it takes more than food and shelter to survive- it takes relationship.

Another study ranked the types of personality which have the greatest power of persuasion with people- a friend, a salesman, or a teacher. By a clear margin, people are persuaded by those they feel to be a friend. Yet the traditional approach of evangelism has placed the role of salesman and teacher first with friendship as just an occasional byproduct. We need a paradigm shift in our approach to outreach which places relationship building as a top priority!

Evangelist Tim Downs makes the following suggestions for New Converts. He writes,

It is very important that the new converts are personally contacted by the adoptive parents within 24 hours. We suggest bringing cookies or some small gift... Also they will want to make 3 contacts in the first three days.

C. Teaching

A disciple maker is an instructor. This may take place in a group or individual setting. In teaching, the new disciple will begin to mirror the beliefs and perspective of the teacher. Jesus spoke to his disciples about this very thing when He told them,

Luke 6:39 He also told them a parable: "One blind person can't lead another blind person, can he? Both will fall into a ditch, won't they?"⁴⁰ A disciple is not better than his teacher. But everyone who is fully-trained will be like his teacher. (International Standard Version)

Every church needs an ongoing discipleship class that incorporates the basics of what it means to be a Christian. This should cover, among other things:

Prayer
Giving

The relationship of the disciple to the pastor and other authority
Worship
Faithfulness
Discovering gifts and talents
Soulwinning
Spiritual warfare
Holiness

D. Mentoring and Modeling

Informal versus Formal Learning

There's an old workplace joke that goes, "*See that person? She's the smartest person in the company. And do you know who is the next smartest? The person sitting next to her.*" If we want to become smarter, we need to encourage informal learning. We need to create collaborative learning environments, where we seamlessly knit together formal and informal learning.

1. To illustrate the difference between formal and informal learning, let's consider the game of baseball. If you want to learn to play baseball, you can go to a seminar, read a book about the history of baseball, watch a tape of great baseball moments, but you really haven't learned to play baseball. You can then buy and enjoy a great baseball computer game, talk to a baseball pro, take lessons, visit a batting cage, practice pitching and catching. But after all this, have you learned to play baseball?

You discover what you know and can do, pitch, swing, catch and ask all sorts of questions. You fail and succeed, practice and practice, before you really learned to play the game. Real learning is the state of being able to adopt and adapt what you know and can do—what you have acquired through formal learning—under various informal circumstances.

<p><u>Formal</u> learning happens when new knowledge is captured or discovered by the student from another source- usually a teacher. The knowledge can be captured in many formats of teaching—written, video, audio. <u>Informal</u> learning is what goes on around or outside our formal learning process.</p>

2. 75/25 Rule of Learning. We get only about 25 percent or less of what we use in our jobs through formal learning. The other 75 percent of learning happens in a much less formal setting, such as fellowshipping with others, following role models and asking for opinions or advice.

3. Jesus spent much of His time in informal teaching, spending time with His disciples, mentoring and modeling to them through His actions and words. Proverbs, 27:17, says, "As iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."

4. Much of what your students learn they learn from each other both in the classroom, in the worship service and in everyday life. The wise disciple maker recognizes this, and harnesses this effective power in the learning of his/her students. Think about how people learn about holiness, worship and prayer. Some of it comes through formal instruction, but much comes from fellowshipping and observing others.

Formal Mentoring

In some instances, mentoring may be more formal. When the Greek warrior Odysseus went off to fight in the Trojan War, he left his young son, Telemachus, in the care of a trusted guardian named “Mentor.” The siege of Troy took ten years, and then Odysseus spent another ten years on his journey home. When he returned, he found that the boy Telemachus had grown into a man – thanks to Mentor's guidance.

With informal modeling and mentoring, the mentor is just a friend or instructor. In formal mentoring, the roles become more established. The mentor arranges regular times to meet. During these times, the progress of the mentee, or new disciple, is discussed. There might be troubleshooting of problems that are taking place. Goals may be set, or revised. This type of mentoring could last for a longer period of time than informal mentoring, but is very powerful.

In the New Testament, the relationship between a mentor and a protégé was also referred to as teacher/disciple. The concept of “relationship” is critically important. A convert does not become a disciple by sitting in a pew and listening to preaching and you are not a disciple maker because you support a local congregation. Disciples are made through relationships.

E. Equipping

Most churches have some plan for evangelism. Some have a plan for disciple making. Unfortunately, very few have a plan for equipping, or it is designed for a select few in the congregation.

Everyone should be equipped.

1. Everyone needs to be trained to be a soulwinner.
2. Everyone needs to have an opportunity to find their specific talents, and then be given training to develop them
3. The number one reason that equipping doesn't take place is:
 - a. Because pastors feel unqualified for training in certain ministries
 - b. It is built into the church calendar planning
 - c. A Church has not surveyed the talents of the members, or the areas of need in their congregation

d. Appropriate materials have not been discovered.

III. Summary

In a recent research project, church dropouts were asked two questions:

(1) Why did you drop out?

(2) What would most influence your choice of a new church home?

The answer most commonly given to the first question was, “I did not feel part of the group.” The response of why they selected a new church (almost 75 percent), was “the friendliness of the next church’s people.” It again shows that how we respond in welcoming newcomers and making them feel a sense of “place” is important. Remember, they don’t just need a ‘friendly’ church- they need friends!

Mephibosheth, ended up as a dependent on the largess of King David because of his difficulty in walking, yet he was born a healthy baby.

“And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.” (2 Samuel 4:4)

Mephibosheth was lame because of his caregiver’s hurry. Her hurry became his harm. No impairment came to her because of her haste. Mephibosheth survived but was forever handicapped by her hurry. Making disciples takes time, care, patience and love. And most important, it takes a plan.

Adoption:

We teach that as soon as someone is born again there needs to be saints standing by ready to adopt the new babies! Now when we speak of adoption we are not talking about financially taking care of them, we do not believe we need to pay their bills or give them money. We do believe that adoption will include constant contact, via home visits and phone contact.

It is very important that the new converts are personally contacted by the adoptive parents commented, “We had a good little church till all these new converts came along.”