

# Essentials for Disciplemaking

## 1) In Community

**We are all born into a Community, called the Family of God.** Over and over again, we are commanded to help each grow up and get strong in the Lord. We certainly need to be committed to help each other, through both spontaneous and intentional encouragement and exhortation. We need to build a culture of love as a community, identifying and caring about those who need to grow up.

## 2) In Relationship

**Disciplemaking was meant to be done in relationship.** A disciple in historic cultures was the student of a teacher or the apprentice of a master. Jesus' own example modeled intense interaction. As I said, the disciples practically lived together. A classroom can never match the interaction necessary to build authentic disciples, unless the teacher also spends extensive time with each student. That's the only way to be sure they really understand. This is too important to leave to hope and chance.

**Life Together- Making disciples will take a lot of time and effort.** The disciples and discipler must grow to know each other well. You are shaping someone's life, for life. And you're doing it for God! Your very words and actions will help build your disciples. People learn far more from what you do than what you say. Howard Hendricks, a great teacher of truth, said that Christianity is more caught than taught.

**Transparent- One of the secrets of growing up is getting transparent with trusted friends.** Most of us learn to hide our weaknesses and insecurities, as best we can. We've learned the hard way that there is always someone out there who will hurt us if they know the truth. At least we think there is someone out there. It's happened in the past, so it's likely to happen again. We build levels of protection around ourselves to keep from being vulnerable.

**Here's the problem: we won't get well if we don't deal with our inner issues.** We don't see our blind spots because we are blind to them, by definition. It's trusted friends who can best help us deal with our issues so we can become all that God wants us to be. Look at the stories of the disciples. We learn so much about bad and good character as we see the disciples interacting with each other and with Jesus. The disciples clearly grew to identify their weaknesses and their need for Holy Spirit power as they were just themselves hanging out with Jesus. The same thing will happen as we develop trust and respect for each other in a band of disciples.

**Accountable- Accountability goes hand in hand with transparency.** Disciples won't grow if they aren't accountable for their words, attitudes and actions. We help each other

grow up. That level of transparency and accountability has to be talked about from the very beginning. Both are a must. That won't happen overnight, but the group needs to know the foundations that relationships are being built on. Surrendering to become increasingly transparent and accountable to someone or to a group takes time and it varies from person to person.

**Confidential**- Another key part of accountability and transparency is confidentiality. What happens in a discipling relationship must stay in that relationship. Individuals or groups that open up with each other need to know that what they share with the group will stay within the group.

### **3) In the Spirit and Word-Based**

**Our plan to make disciples has to always remain focused on God's Word and what His Spirit is trying to build in us.** We meet with one intention- to grow stronger and more mature as disciples of Christ. We can't become a social club. What a waste of time. And we can't become a philosophy club, the club of the latest opinion or the newest book club. We can read and discuss and thoroughly analyze the best spiritual books out there today. But if they're not founded on and guided by spiritual truth, we're setting ourselves up for trouble. The Word of God brings life to all of our discussions and the Holy Spirit is right there to guide us and to bring understanding and conviction.

### **4) Transformative**

**Disciplemaking must be transformative and not simply informative.** Information is part of the package, but it's so not useful and unfruitful if it stands alone. The church is full of venues that provide information for all. And most of the forums are voluntary with no accountability.

**Measurable**- Authentic disciplemaking will produce clear and unmistakable changes in a disciple that can be seen as measurable. It's obvious when we grow up from childhood to adulthood. Our bodies and the way we think, look and act change completely. Our transformation spiritually from childhood to adulthood should be just as obvious. Disciplemaking helps us grow up. The process forces us to deal with the inner and outer issues that need to come into alignment with godly living. As we progress, we see things differently. Our character is measurably different. For example, all of us have character defects. As the Holy Spirit transforms us, we should all be amazed as we watch ourselves changed. If, for example, we're impatient, we see this miraculous refining and redefining of values. We become more and more patient without even trying. We realize the distinct difference is our surrender and dependence on the Holy Spirit. We see other changes- a softer heart, a deeper passion for right and wrong, more commitment for Kingdom service and more love for the Lord, the Family and the Lost. The list goes on and on.

**Missional- An authentic discipling process helps believers actually align their lives with God's mission.** God saves us to go on mission with Him the rest of our lives. We are called to so much more. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:13-16

*You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.*

*You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.*

*In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

**An authentic disciple increasingly recognizes that he or she is under the Lordship of Jesus, serving everyday at His will.** We are no longer our own. We understand that we've been bought with a price. These concepts aren't simply words known to be the truth of God. They have to become the reality of our lives. Our careers, our desires, our family, our dreams, and our assets all come second to serving God with our lives. This sounds terrible if we are choosing to live life our way and are marginalizing God. But, in reality, walking with God and reflecting His mind, character and priorities makes everything else in life so much richer. We don't throw away all the things that we enjoy, just to serve God. God actually transforms those things into the tools we use to touch and change the world. Our family life deepens and is far richer. Our purpose at home and at work becomes clearer. Life takes on a whole new meaning when Jesus and His vision of life becomes our own vision of life.

**Multiplying- Real discipling is an investment both in the life of the disciple as well as future generations that are influenced by that discipling relationship.**

A father or mother pours into his or her children. They often make a lasting image of themselves that can be seen for generations to come. Parenting goes far beyond raising a child. As the child grows up, gets married and has children and grandchildren, parents continue on the adventure of molding and shaping thinking, character and priorities. But now they are impacting generations! Their influence now includes children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and on and on.

**We're talking about intentional legacies that blossom as families put God first and pray for blessing and influence.** Real discipling can have the same power and influence. If we disciple for lasting results, we will walk with our disciples as they grow up, as they begin to disciple others and as they help their disciples disciple others. Why

wouldn't we want to insure the fruitfulness of our efforts? Paul said this to Timothy in II Timothy 2:2-

***You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.***

**Paul is clearly describing a natural process of passing truth on that looks a lot like parenting.** Someone taught me what I've taught you. Now pass it on so they too can pass it on. This doesn't sound like a classroom process. Paul took the time to make sure that Timothy really understand and was walking in these truths. He now was fathering him to pass them on to people who would be reliable enough to do the same thing. This is discipling!

## **5) Fully Invested**

**Highly Committed- It sounds like real discipling requires that we live life together.** We eat, we walk, we talk, we laugh, we cry, we play and we pray together. We hang as families and singles, we go out, we camp out, we barbecue, we evangelize, and we disciple, together. We give ourselves the time to naturally create profound and undeniable change in those we are walking with.

**Now, we also have our jobs, families, home groups and other responsibilities.** Most of us can't take off like Jesus did with His guys. That's another reason why it will take time. And it clearly demands a high level of commitment, both from the discipling maker and those he or she is discipling. Without that, something will die along the way. And it will probably be the goal of making an authentic, reproducing disciple.

**Disciples are made like a home is built. Blueprints have to be studied and adhered to and the foundations have to be poured. The framework has to be built and finished and then all of the components can be added. And everything gets inspected along the way. Does this match what the architect drew? Is this what the Master had in mind? What does the Word say? That kind of requirement takes our full investment.**