

How Do We Do It?- PLANS

It's so important that we come up with a plan to make disciples. Many people read books for information, but they often do nothing with that information. Some of us are creative and we are able to initiate plans and strategies to get something done. But many of us just can't do that. We either do nothing or we find someone or something that will help us accomplish our desire. That's good! There are lots of plans out there and many of them are very helpful.

It's also important to find a good plan. Some plans produce shallow believers, filled with information but little formation. Other plans cover the right things but they don't help you walk through the process to help your disciples become fully developed and reproducing. Find a plan that helps you develop your disciple's mind, character and priorities. Work a plan that produces disciples who look like Jesus and are reproducing His life and priorities in others!

We are introducing a plan that you can freely take and use in your own world. And we are pointing out doorways to many plans found across the country, in books, manuals, and conferences. Look everything over, pick or create your own plan and just do it!

We'll look at several subjects on this page with a PDF available to download. We'll also introduce a free set of manuals you can download and use for discipling.

They will provide much a greater detailed plan. There are articles on the value of Group Discipling, how to select individuals or teams for discipling, an outline and then details of how to start discipling, and so much more. Feel free to download the manuals and use each of their parts as tools for training and discipling.

You can find the free set of manuals to download under The Resources. Click on Our Training Manuals to find them.

AUTHENTIC- LEADER'S MANUAL

and

AUTHENTIC- TEAM GUIDE

Let's begin by talking about discipling. We can't plan to make something until we understand what we are trying to make and how to actually make it. So let's unpack that first. Then we'll give you some options to consider and walk you through the planning process.

So What is Discipling?

Robby Gallerty wrote a great, practical book called "Growing Up." He defines discipling as "intentionally equipping believers with the Word of God through accountable relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to replicate faithful followers of Christ." I like that!

Disciplemaking is investing spiritually in individuals so they become fully developed, are living a Spirit-filled life and are in turn investing in others with the same purpose. We will have spontaneous opportunities to help grow other believers, but real disciplemaking is intentional and planned. Disciples don't just happen. They are developed, over time, with lots of care and effort.

What do we call Disciplemaking in Today's Culture? It's Biblical to use the terms disciple, discipler and disciplemaking. But it may not work in your culture. We must never compromise the principles and practice of making authentic disciplemakers. But we can use all kinds of terms that seem better or more relevant to us or to the people we are working with. The terms that I'm hearing are:

**Disciplemaker, Mentor, Coach, Mentor-Coach,
Trainer, Fathers, Mothers, Group Leader**

**Disciple, Student, Team Member, Apprentice,
Sons, Daughters, Group Attendee**

**Some like to "Team Up" for Disciplemaking. others Group,
Huddle or form a Cohort.**

**Some people feel awkward approaching Peer-to-Peer Discipling,
so they call it "friends getting together"
around disciplemaking principles.**

Call it anything you want- But Just Do IT!

Never lose sight of God's passion for disciplemaking.

I've heard some people react negatively to each of these terms. For example, something in their past experience has made a specific word carry a bad connotation. I've heard a younger generation of leaders crying out for fathers and mothers to disciple them as sons and daughters. Then I've heard others condemning the use of the term "father" in disciplemaking because of the abuse, control and domination of some "fathering" leaders in the past. I've heard of leaders misusing the term "disciple" in the same way. Then there's the battle over what mentor or coach means. Some fight for purist definitions like the goals-only oriented coach and the goal-less listening mentor. By the way, websites are springing up to bridge the language barrier. You can now find a mentor/coach- they've covered all the bases. Come on!

Let's stop fighting over words and terms. Pick a term that you like and one that works and use it. Let's get past this and get going.

What are the 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. But most discipling can't happen in mass. Children don't grow up without personal care and instruction. And most people won't grow up without individual care as well. Without intentionally and personalization, formation gaps will and do fill our lives.

Jesus demonstrated a variety of models for making disciples. Besides talking one-on-one, He walked and talked with three, a dozen, seventy and masses of people. He built intimacy, honesty and transparency, complete openness and clarity of thought through endless, healthy discussions. He knew He needed to invest heavily, so He gave all the time necessary to actually produce real, reproducing disciples. If we want authentic, multiplying disciples, we need to do the same thing, within our own context.

One-on-One – Children need a parent who cares enough to help them grow up and gain independence. Every believer needs a discipling maker who cares enough to help with that same process of maturing and multiplication. Without personal focus and care, most believers never really grow up.

Three- Jesus seemed to focus on Peter, James and John more than His other disciples. In reality, a small group of three to six people allows for greater and more profitable interaction. Many discipling strategies today focus on groups of this size, knowing that one-on-one interaction will also happen along the way.

Twelve- Jesus picked twelve disciples. He invested heavily in all of them, breaking them into smaller groups and having individual conversations. They practically lived together. Eleven out of the twelve changed the world. And the new twelve and some supporting ladies became the one-twenty, which overflowed into masses of disciples. Jesus investing heavily in the three and then in the twelve is why we are here today!

Numbers- The number of people in a discipling group isn't scientific. It should be a product of personal choice and manageability. Individual time with those we are discipling is critical. But grouping people together also makes sense. We can disciple more people with limited time than if we disciplined everyone individually. Plus the synergy of a group often brings more life and energy to the conversation. Everyone stimulates and adds to the journey. We need to have those one-on-one conversations. But we can probably take it even further when we bring it back to the group. That's what Jesus did, all the time.

Authors and spiritual leaders differ on how many people we should disciple. Some encourage us to disciple one person at a time. Others encourage us to decide: pick two to six people. Here's the question: How many people can you effectively invest in and give good, healthy time to, both as a group and as individuals? With our busy lives, many of us will have time for no more than two or three people. That leads us to the next non-negotiable.

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. It's true. How you think and why you came to that conclusion is far more important than any direct answer you might give. Remember when your children asked, "Why, Daddy, or Mommy?" People need to know why. So disciplemaking starts by building and deepening a lasting relationship. And that can only happen over time.

Some of us like the idea of moving quickly and efficiently to achieve our goals. So we'd like a quick solution to making disciples. Train them well and then move on to the next disciple. Unfortunately, I've seen what that produces. For most people, training them well takes more time than we might originally expect. And when we move on, we often leave better-educated people with the same character and priorities that they started with. Most of them

certainly aren't making more disciples. Jesus, God in the flesh, took several years of continual interaction with His disciples to not only share truth but to wrestle with loads of issues. Maybe He knew something about human nature and how long it takes to change at the core.

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 hurt.

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.

Trust grows. It's earned. No one has the right to know your issues until they've proven they can be trusted. Some people prove that they can never be trusted. That's life. As the disciplinemaker, you'll have to earn trust just like everyone else. Not everyone can expose everything to a group. Some things should be shared with only a most trusted friend. At the same time, I'm amazed as I continue to hear of incredible healings as groups of men or women get transparent together and find great victory.

Accountable- Accountability goes hand in hand with transparency. Disciples won't grow if they aren't accountable for their words, attitudes and actions. By the way, accountability goes both ways. An unaccountable disciplinemaker could end up destroying everything that God is working to achieve. So we call it mutual accountability. 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. Some people trust almost too quickly. They're going to get hurt in life. That's an issue for a loving disciplinemaker to wade into. Others have been injured along the way or they've developed a code of self-protection. They will take much longer to learn to trust. Everyone will need to see the benefits of opening up and being real.

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. It's so easy to do what we've done before. It's easy to share what Mike said with just one person, for a really good reason. My wife will never tell. The pastor or elder won't tell. But why did you tell? And why wouldn't that elder just tell his wife, who will only tell Sally, who might, by accident, tell Mike's wife. And so it goes. For Christ's sake and all of our sakes, we need to be confidential.

That initial trust will allow everyone to deepen their trust and their willingness to get transparent with more important issues. Real healing and freedom often only comes with trust, transparency and confidentiality. If something that someone shares truly needs to go outside the group, that something needs to be navigated carefully and talked and walked through with that individual and then with the group.

Let's look at one example of a moment that calls for discipling. The group is out eating together. And someone tells an off-color joke. If you let it pass, that action gives permission for more in the future. If it's done in a group setting, the group deserves to see the right response. Pulling the disciple aside doesn't help the group. And if your reprimand isn't delivered in a godly spirit, someone has the responsibility to talk to you as well. This entire story is an example from real life. Thank God that the Holy Spirit's been given to help us navigate circumstances like this in a spirit of love and gentleness. If we're walking in the Spirit, we don't react. We do what we're supposed to do. Everyone learns. Discipleship happens. If we aren't walking in the Spirit and we do it the wrong way, everyone also learns. In this case, we learn that we're all human and disciplemakers struggle too. Hopefully there's a next moment with a humble response and another opportunity for everyone to grow. That's the way discipling works.

Coached- Most coaching is intended to bring significant change. Coaches are more focused on helping their clients or players understand the principles than simply providing information. They will work on specific issues to bring about measurable improvement. They set goals and help their players work to achieve those goals.

In the same way, disciplemaking isn't simply filling a mind with information. It's shaping a life with spiritual formation. We get to be those life coaches helping our disciples actually understand the principles that God has taught us. The Word of God is essential. It lays down the Truth and principles for everything! Then the Holy Spirit guides us and helps us to both interpret the Truth and apply the principles within the context of today's culture. As we draw close to God, He shapes, molds and empowers us to gain the mind, the character and the priorities of Christ.

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.

We'll find that there are lots of good resources and books to guide us on the road to spiritual maturity. It's wonderful to find the right tool that someone else has labored over to help us with our discipling. That's why I've written this material. But be careful. There's so much content out there that you can easily get sidetracked and you'll lose sight of your purpose. We're trying to build solid, productive disciples who know the Word and understand how to live by its principles. We want to take time, but we don't want to take forever. God wants us to grow up in an appropriate amount of time. Again, every disciple will be different. Your role in their process is so important. Know the Word. Listen to His Spirit. Do what He tells you to do.

4) Transformative

Discipling must be transformative and not simply informative. I've already said that 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. People can show up or miss church services, classes and home group gatherings. We're happy that many of them at least show up. That's better than the alternative. But making disciples that way is so random, and far too many people simply do not grow up. They only get pieces of the Truth. Their minds are filled with facts and healthy principles that many never do apply, because no one is helping them. Real discipling, on the other hand, must be accountable. And it will have results.

Measurable- Authentic discipling 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. Discipling 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.

Everyone around us will see the changes that are taking place in our lives. Think about this. Our family watches and knows us the most. Those at work are probably second. So a more patient Mom or Dad, a more thoughtful Husband or Wife, or an Employer or Employee who has a disappearing anger problem is very noticeable. Sometimes it's not just noticeable- it's remarkable! All of us are messed up. Some of us have become experts at hiding our weaknesses. But most of show our bad stuff, more than we realize. That's why the transformative power of the Holy Spirit is so obvious.

We are no longer the same. If we don't see these changes developing in us,, our process with God isn't working. Something's holding us back. It's so important that we find out why we're not growing up in certain areas of character development. This is not God's plan. This isn't discipleship. Filling our minds without filling our lives leads to a form of religion without power. Paul talked about that. And there's too much of that in the church today. So real discipling has to focus on real life change.

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. The church is often a bad example of this value. Too many people have been saved and then sit in church on Sunday morning as their primary function as Christians. The Kingdom of God isn't a Country Club experience where we pay dues and feel special. 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. The disciplinemaker has the opportunity to help the disciple see and experience this deeper reality.

As we surrender more and more of our will to the Lordship of Christ, our passion for His mission becomes inescapable. God loves lost people and He wants them found! God places and grows that burden in each of our hearts until we have to do something. Jesus started His movement with an invitation and a plan. He said, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." That's the destiny of every authentic disciple! You and I are surrounded by lost people who desperately need Jesus. We all get to help bring them home! Then we get to help them grow up and bring their family and friends home. That's missional living!

Multiplying- Real disciplinmaking is an investment both in the life of the disciple as well as future generations that are influenced by that disciplinmaking 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 disciplinmaking 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! It's taking the time to make sure that the people we are investing in get it thoroughly enough to be able to pass the same truth and lifestyle on. One or two generations of a little mistruth can slowly begin to cripple the Church! That's why we're in trouble today. The church suffers from the inconsistency of truth being passed on with clarity and application. And that's also why we need an army of godly, Spirit-filled disciple-multipliers to rise up and bring the transformation that God is waiting for!

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.

The life of a discipling maker also moves us into new levels of personal responsibility as we look at our own lives. We've already said that our children often take on many of our traits, whether we like it or not. We rub off. That's scary when we're not reflecting the life of Christ. That's why it's critical that we grow up and become as spiritually healthy as possible. Our family's future and character is at stake. But now we're looking at our lives as disciple-multipliers. Paul understood the significance of this role that we are all to assume. He said this in II Corinthians 11:1

And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

What a powerful and humbling thing to say- "Imitate me!" I think that those words would be hard for most of us to speak. They sound arrogant, and most of us wouldn't want to say it because we see all of our weaknesses. I do. We have to deal with Paul first. He wasn't

arrogant. He actually recognized that the only way his disciples could become like Jesus was to watch and learn from him. Paul knew he had weaknesses and issues, just like you and me. He tells us a few of them throughout his letters. He wasn't modeling himself as a perfectionist. He was standing before them as one who had completely surrendered to the process and life of imitating Jesus. "Watch me. Watch how I handle life. Watch how I handle mistakes that I make. Listen to what I've learned and how I've applied it."

That's exactly what God has called all of us to do with our watching world. There's no room for unresolved issues as disciplemakers. We have to fix them or we'll pass them on. Struggling with things like gossip, slander, pride, insecurity, anger, jealousy, judging or addictions like porn or drinking will cripple our ability to help others get free. We'll either dodge the subjects or we'll learn to carefully lie. Something will come through in the way you disciple others. That's what we'll be passing on for generations. It's unacceptable. Do we just not make disciples? No- we get help, we get disciplined by a friend, we get well and now we disciple with our own story of freedom! All of us need to assume the role and say, "Watch me. Imitate me." The world is already watching, so we need to act like we're being watched. And that's especially critical in the role of the discipler.

A Life-time Journey-All of this can be enhanced as we learn to feed ourselves and we grow stronger and stronger in the Lord. But it doesn't start there. Mothers and fathers were meant to help their children grow up and learn to function on their own. That's the same opportunity that we've been given as disciplemakers. We have the joy and the responsibility to help those under our charge to become fully developed, reproducing disciples of Jesus. What an amazing privilege! It can't be taken lightly. We're making disciples of Jesus, for Jesus. They need to think, look and act like Him. That takes time and ongoing follow-up.

Making disciples should be like having kids and helping them grow up. Think of the level of commitment, the investment and care that a good father or mother provides in the process of walking with their children to adulthood and beyond. In reality, it never stops. We care as they date and marry, we counsel as they make good and bad choices along the way, and we stay actively involved, coaching right through parenting, grand-parenting and beyond. We care! We can't help it. They are Our children!

What if we invested as disciplemakers with that same heart and passion? I believe everything would change. Instead of going shallow and wide, we'd go deep and worldwide. Imagine pouring into a handful of disciples and helping them repeat that very same process. That would be the beginning of a movement! Multi-level marketing tells you that repeating a process with three clients would produce one hundred and twenty clients in only four generations. That slow, steady, carefully built plan will outnumber most other methods by far! Disciplmaking is passing on the life of Christ from generation to generation.

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.