



# Evangelism Without Discipleship



The Danger of Neglecting  
the Commands of Jesus

by  
Bob Moffitt

*Evangelism  
Without  
Discipleship*



*Evangelism Without Discipleship*

The consequences of neglecting  
Jesus' command to disciple

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Harvest Foundation

P.O. Box 2670, Phoenix, Arizona 85002

**Evangelism Without Discipleship: The consequence of neglecting Jesus' command to disciple**

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This book is dedicated to Jesus Christ and the leaders of his Church in the hope that the ideas presented here will stir discussion of the meaning, priority and strategy of biblical discipleship among those who have a passion to lead local congregations in the extension and strengthening of Christ's Kingdom in this present generation.



## *Endorsements*

This book is rich in fresh, thought-provoking insights. Each chapter engages one deeply to consider nothing less than the priority of the Great Commission. Dr. Moffitt's words come from a lifetime of worldwide missionary service helping the local church. This book is a must-read for every Christian. I have been deeply moved and challenged by its long-needed message. May it open many to reconsider the priority of engaging in discipleship and the Great Commission. Your heart will be enriched and your mind challenged when you read and apply this book.

—Bob Schill, Director, Reaching Indian Ministries International;  
Director, Emeritus, Missionary TECH Team

Bob's message in this text is a critical one for God's people, the church. It conveys his wonderful heart for Christ's followers to seek to imitate their Master. If those who name the name of Jesus would follow this we would be good news to others before we even speak about our Lord.

—Tom Parker, Director, Fuller Theological Seminary Arizona

It has been my privilege to know Bob Moffitt for many years. He is passionately committed to God, his family, the Body of Christ and his neighbors (near and far). He is committed to making disciples (The Great Commission) while demonstrating Christ's love (The Great Commandment). This book pulsates with that passion. His critique of the Church is needed and lovingly communicated. You will find his suggestions to be simple (not simplistic) and practical (not the easiest to implement—but worthy of the effort). This is an



important corrective, coming from the heart of one who is a living example of the message he shares.

—J. Paul Landrey; Founding Director, Trainers of Pastors  
International Coalition (TOPIC)

Bob Moffitt's *Evangelism Without Discipleship* is must reading for anyone concerned about the future of Christianity as a shaper of culture. Why? Because he puts his finger on a common misconception about The Great Commission that has kept many in the Church from authentic and effective cultural engagement for too long. Bob Moffitt's message is long overdue. It is timely, relevant and necessary.

—Christian Overman, Director, Worldview Matters

*Evangelism Without Discipleship* is for many of us, as Evangelicals, a startling pronouncement! Bob Moffitt has 'lived the good news of Jesus Christ ... (the Gospel)' in the marketplace with passion, profession, and privilege. He challenges the Church to realize the full meaning of Christ's pronouncement for us as believers to prioritize discipleship, and to see conversion as a part of that process, not the 'end all'. A challenge that has been researched, supported scripturally, and lived sacrificially.

—Naomi Rhode, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame

As a Pastor for thirty years, I'm burdened by our current church culture and how we go about growing churches without making disciples. Somehow we have embraced the concept of a disciple as the great learner who knows all the verses and can quote all the passages and shoot down heresy with deadly aim—but has never understood the simplicity of Christlikeness in conduct and character that comes from a relationship with Christ. Your work in

this area has opened my eyes to the original biblical mandate of discipleship and what that means for us today. Thank you.

—Joel B. Walters, Pastor, Grace Church, Allen Texas

This book is life changing as Dr. Moffitt explains that the emphasis in the Great Commission is discipleship. It inspirationally changes minds and hearts and ACTIONS, mine included. This includes living out the character of Jesus, who indwells disciples, the character of love through service and the purpose of service not only being obedience to Jesus but assisting others in their growth toward God's intentions in every area of their lives. It is wholistic. It is only in loving our neighbor that we show that our love for God is genuine (1John 3:17). This is the irreducible minimum of the Great Commission. I ardently urge others to read this to fully comprehend and follow the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

—Terry Graham, President, The Global Transformation Network, Inc.; The Navigators, Encore Entity

How did we give rise to the Great Evangelical Malady of too many converts and too few disciples? If 90% of an effective therapy is rooted in a sound diagnosis, this is the sobering analysis we need to hear, heed and respond to. With this book, Bob Moffitt gives us the Great Evangelical Wakeup Call. It is biblically solid, pastorally sound and contextually correct. Emphasizing “evangelism” at the expense of the long-term process of making disciples has had anemic consequences. Bob confronts our flawed paradigms with the remedy needed to restore the pale “Great Commission” patient back to robust health so we can (re)discover making disciples Jesus' way.

—Doug Greenwold, Executive Director, Preserving Bible Times



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## *Introduction*

I will never forget that breakfast meeting. The pastor emeritus of our church had agreed to meet me at a local coffee shop. I needed the wisdom of an experienced follower of Jesus whom I trusted. My heart was troubled. It was clear that we Christians were losing the cultural war. I wondered if the core reason was that we evangelicals had a nonbiblical missional focus. Could it be that our focus on evangelism was keeping us from obeying the Great Commission—Jesus’ instruction to teach obedience to his way of living? And could it be that the resulting dissonance between the lifestyle of those who claimed to follow Jesus and what Jesus taught was causing the non-Christian world to reject the truth and beauty of the biblical worldview?

After I presented my question, my pastor friend told me this story.

He was serving as interim pastor of a significant church in a university town on the California coast. Each spring break a beach-evangelism initiative was conducted. Many of the young people working with this initiative attended his church. He heard their exciting testimonies about the amazing number people who “came to Christ” through their outreach. But because he seldom saw any of the new believers in church, he decided to find out why.

He put on a bathing suit, took an umbrella, a book, went to the beach, and sat down to see what would happen. Before long

a young man from this evangelistic initiative came by, said “Hello,” and started a conversation. He recognized this young man as one of the college students in his church who was involved in evangelistic outreach, but the young man didn’t recognize him in this context. He showed interest, and the young man quickly moved to sharing the Gospel. At the conclusion of the presentation the young man asked if I would be interested in giving his life to Christ. He told him he already had and that in fact he had been a follower of Jesus for many years. The college student was surprised and asked why he didn’t tell him earlier. He introduced himself and told the young man that he recognized him from church, and that he had come intentionally to observe the evangelism strategy about which this young man and his friends were giving testimonies.

He asked the surprised young man if he to ask him a question. Upon assent, he inquired, “Tell me how you do your evangelism.”

“Well, I share the gospel with anyone I can—like I did with you,” was the reply.

“If they are interested and make a decision for Christ, what do you do then?”

“I give them some literature; find out where they live and give them a church contact in their home area. I encourage them to go there to be discipled.”

My pastor friend finally got to the point. “What do you think of people who have a child and then leave the raising of that child to others? Is there a parallel between what you are doing here and that scenario? You bring people to faith. They are baby believers and then you give them a list of orphanages where they can get milk and have their diapers changed.”

We evangelicals have a huge problem. Oswald Chambers calls it the commercial view of the Great Commission: “we count how many souls have been saved and sanctified, we thank God, and then we think everything is all right.”<sup>1</sup> In this book I share why it is *not* all right, and why this view can lead to the sin of disobedience—focusing merely on conversion rather than discipleship as the goal of the Great Commission. The second section of the book centers on a tool our organization, Harvest, has used over many years in multiple cultures to address this problem. It is called the Discipline of Love.

I’m writing to evangelicals, but rather than assume a common understanding, here’s a short glossary of the most basic terms I use with reference to the Great Commission.

*Salvation*—God’s rescue of humanity from eternal separation from Himself to eternal relationship with Him, through repentance and faith in Jesus’ payment, by his death on Calvary’s cross, for the debt of our rebellion that led to that separation.

*Proclamation*—The declaration, usually, but not always, verbal, of God’s desire and ability to reconcile and restore humanity and creation from their current brokenness to wholeness, and, for people, to provide each human individual a personal relationship with Jesus.

*Repentance*—the expression of sorrow by word and/or deed for living contrary to God’s will, followed by beginning to live according to his will.

*Conversion*—A change from not being a follower of Jesus Christ to being his follower.

*Discipleship*—The life-long process of learning to increasingly obey Jesus’ instructions for living and thereby increasingly looking more like Jesus.



*Accountability*—Sharing with appropriate others the outcome of a commitment.

After more than fifty years of global ministry, I have come to the conclusion that our emphasis on spiritual conversion rather than biblical discipleship has led us into unintentional disobedience to Scripture with tragic consequences for the Church, for our cultures and for Christ’s Kingdom.

Before I begin, I want to make three declarations.

*First*, I was born into the evangelical tradition, *but much later in life I became a convinced evangelical*. The National Association of Evangelicals describes evangelicals as those who focus “on the core convictions of the triune God, the Bible, faith, Jesus, salvation, evangelism, and discipleship.” Webster includes in its definition, “emphasizing salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the authority of Scripture . . .” If this is what “evangelical” means, I am an unapologetic evangelical.

*Second*, I affirm that *salvation does not depend on our obedience, but on faith in the provision God made for us by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross*. In the Old Testament as well as in the New, people came to God by faith. Israel was chosen as God’s people irrespective of their obedience. However, like Israel, our fulfillment of the mission God has given his people is dependent on living as he commands.<sup>2</sup>

The *third* declaration is that *I love the Church of Jesus Christ* and believe God has given me a specific call to serve the local church. The Church is his Bride—the bride for whom he gave his life. I write this book with almost forty years of passionately helping local churches in various countries prepare their people to be the bride John describes in Revelation 19:7-8, “and his

bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)”

Some of the things I say here may shock my readers. That isn't my intention. My aim is to communicate what is understood to be the truth of Scripture in regard to the Great Commission and, in the light of that Scripture, to identify a weakness in our corporate evangelical practice. I am motivated by my love for the Church Jesus established to demonstrate his “manifold wisdom” (Ephesians 3:10). I desire to see her do just that with maximum impact.

In general, my argument is this: The method Jesus prescribes for fulfilling the Great Commission is not conversion followed by discipleship. Rather, his methodology was **discipleship—a process in which conversion may occur, often in the early stages of learning to follow Jesus.**

Evangelism is only a part—an essential but small part—of the task Jesus gave his followers. In practice, evangelicals often reverse the biblical emphasis between evangelism and discipleship. Conversion is the task to which we generally and extrabiblically assign the larger part of our attention, time, energy and financial resources. Doing so has significant negative consequences for the task God has given the Church. I believe this turnabout is used by our enemy in his war against Christ's Kingdom. I find that my brothers and sisters within the evangelical tradition are often prisoners of the paradigms of traditional evangelicalism, paradigms that blind us to the effects of this reversal. The consequences are huge. One is the loss of the soul of cultures in which this reversal is practiced.

A paradigm is the filter through which we see reality. It is shaped by our beliefs and experiences. Our paradigms can blind us to reality. For example, several well-known scientific atheists operate within a paradigm that prevent them from seeing the overwhelming evidence of God's existence. Likewise, our *evangelical experience and perception of truth can keep us from seeing what* Scripture makes abundantly clear about the primary task given us in the Great Commission.

H.A. Williams says, "Our doctrines are not photographs of Reality. They are the attempted descriptions of heavenly things by means of hints and guesses which earthly things provide."<sup>3</sup> My perspective is not a photograph of reality. Rather, based on my reading of Scripture and long missionary experience, this book is an attempt to articulate concerns from these hints and guesses. I eagerly welcome feedback and dialogue.

Broadly speaking, our evangelical paradigm leads to two consequential errors. The first is a misapplication of weight to evangelism rather than to disciple-making. It is giving practical priority to making converts as opposed to making disciples. The second is the working assumption that if we teach biblical truth, new converts will follow Jesus. The words "practical" and "working" are used to indicate that these priorities are not necessarily priorities because of a theological conviction, but appear to be so in terms of time and resources used for evangelism and teaching content versus equipping for obedience.

Evangelism and discipleship are, of course, extrabiblical words created by Western thinking that often divide making disciples into separate two actions. One action is evangelism—a process that leads to conversion. The other is discipleship—a process of equipping converts to obey what Jesus taught. It is

evident to me that this dichotomy is not biblical and is the source of serious problems addressed below. Western churches and those influenced by this dichotomy don't necessarily believe that evangelism and discipleship are more or less distinct actions, but often act as though they were. Therefore, in order to speak into the paradigms of those who consciously or unconsciously hold this view, I try to address these issues in language most evangelicals use. The words "evangelism" and "discipleship" are therefore used because these are the terms usually associated with evangelical proselytism. Avoiding these terms in this discussion would inhibit the process of understanding and correcting our errors and improving our ability to make disciples.

The concept of obedience is, unfortunately, sometimes connected in contemporary Christian experience with legalism. The words *obey* or *obedience*, are being used here interchangeably with *submit* and *submission*. The Jewish understanding of obedience is reflected in the honor that it was in Jesus' day to come under the teaching and patronage of a rabbi whom you respected and wanted to imitate. Submission to his teaching was the vehicle to become what you wanted most—to be like him. Therefore, obedience and/or submission was not a negative concept like it often is in individualistic Western culture. It was the best way you could achieve what you wanted.<sup>4</sup>

Also, we need to remember that the evangelical and Pentecostal churches were born out of the Great Awakenings and revivalist experiences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These brought glorious renewals, but not without weaknesses. We need to acknowledge both. One weakness was, in practice if not by intention, a misplaced emphasis on the perceived parts of Jesus' Great Commission. In short, our evangelical forefathers—

especially in the Second Great Awakening—put their major energies into proclamation and evangelism rather than teaching obedience.

The biblical understanding of making disciples is a continual process that often but not invariably begins with conversion and leads to obeying or submitting to Jesus and therefore reflecting or looking like him.<sup>5</sup> In the Gospels we observed that some (like Jesus' disciples) began to “follow” Jesus before placing their faith in him. Contemporary examples include Muslim converts throughout the Muslim world who work in small groups learning to follow biblical principles of life in personal and financial relationships. They may be initially unaware of the source of the principles. Participants see the positive changes that result from following the principles and later learn their source. Eventually some are led into a personal relationship with Jesus. (For an example, go to [www.mustardseedsshared.org](http://www.mustardseedsshared.org).)

A recent experience reinforced this concept. I was in Colombia and gave a live interview on a local radio station. Following the interview, I went to lunch with my translator, a Colombian-Syrian missionary who had been ministering among Afghan people for seven years. Without trying to prejudice his answer, I asked, “How do people generally come to faith in your context?” His reply was, “Through discipleship.” To be clear I asked him if that began with conversion. He calmly said, “Almost never.” From further discussion, it was clear that this missionary observed conversion as something that happened during the process of discipleship.

In my experience, the usual evangelical understanding is that disciple-making begins with conversion, and is followed by

discipleship that leads a convert to become a disciple. This process may be illustrated as follows:

Conversion  $\longrightarrow$  Discipleship  $\longrightarrow$  Disciple

I learned that the missionary to the Afghan people invited people who were not ready to believe in Jesus to learn about him and even put his teaching into practice. At the early stages they were not believers in Jesus but were sufficiently interested in learning about him and following his teachings. During this process some of the people my translator was leading were converted. Then they continued their journey toward becoming disciples. The process looks like this.

Discipleship  $\longrightarrow$  Conversion  $\longrightarrow$  Disciple

A friend says, and I agree, “Conversion, as new or second birth, is necessary for new life, but just as how many babies can remember their coming into the world, how much shall we push the disciple to be conscious of the time and circumstances of his new birth? I have no sense of the timing or conditions of my rebirth—but as the physical baby knows he is alive, so the spiritual newborn has a sense of its reality and that is not to push consciousness of the event on him, but rather to celebrate the sensations, reality and joy of life.”

Theoretically, conversion could happen at any point along the above continuum. From a reading of the Gospels it seems that in most of Jesus’ ministry he called people to follow him before they knew enough to believe in him. How many of Jesus’ twelve disciples were converted before they began to follow him? In the process of following and discovering who he truly was,

they believed and were “converted.” There were times when the people to whom Jesus ministered believed first and then followed. The woman at the well is an example. Nicodemus might be another example.

In Jesus’ ministry we can see that these two processes are not mutually exclusive. His call to believe or to follow depended on what was relevant in each circumstance. In some cases, Jesus called people to follow before they believed. In other circumstances, he led them to faith on their first encounter.

We must recognize and imitate Jesus’ sensitivity to context. If we fail to do so, if we believe that conversion must always precede discipleship, we risk making conversion our priority. As a result, when we encounter people who are not ready to believe, we may actually drive them away from Jesus.

Discipleship is both the biblical and practical priority of the Great Commission. The rest of this book elaborates eight reasons why that is so.

1. Jesus identified our priority task as that of making disciples.
2. Our key evangelical documents reflect an unbalanced focus on evangelism.
3. Evangelism without discipleship produces hypocrisy.
4. Scripture commands that we are to live in a way that attracts others to Jesus.
5. God’s glory is his ultimate goal.
6. Evangelicals have key issues that keep us from fulfilling the Great Commission.

7. Our disobedience keeps broken people from seeing God's glory.
8. We need to measure discipleship more than conversions.

Before I go further, I want to affirm without equivocation the necessity of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He sent us to herald the gospel. A classic missionary passage from Paul's letter to the Romans says why: "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Romans 10:13-14 ESV). *Note: The meaning of the Greek word here is heralding.*

Let there be no mistake about the commitment to the necessity of evangelism, that is, preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the world. Sharing the content of the good news of salvation includes the proclamation of our sinfulness, our hopeless condition apart from the redemption paid for by the blood of Jesus sacrificially shed on the cross, our need to acknowledge our sinfulness, to repent and accept the promise of God, our assurance of the forgiveness of sin, and the glorious hope of eternal life with God. There is no Christian mission without evangelism. And, yet, without discipleship we cannot fulfill the Great Commission—the primary task Jesus gave us. Being born from above is only one step in that process.

Finally, I want to be clear that this writing is not meant to be a fully developed treatise but a starting point for discussion.



## NOTES

1. *My Utmost for His Highest*, April 24.
2. *The Mission of God's People* by Christopher Wright, page 126.
3. That is, conversion is not a necessary prerequisite to discipleship, but rather, often comes during the discipleship process.
4. H. A. Williams, *Tensions*.
5. Doug Greenwold, personal letter, January 2015.
6. PBT Teaching Fellow Reflection #714 © Doug Greenwold 2014.

# Part One



# chapter one 1

## *Jesus identified our priority task as making disciples*

Scripture is clear: a person's soul is the most valuable thing they possess. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Heaven rejoices when one soul repents (Luke 15:7). Jesus calls us to repentance so that we might take advantage of the reconciliation provided at the cross between a holy God and sinful mankind (Luke 5:32).

The call to sinners for repentance and subsequent salvation was what moved Jesus' heart. It was his priority. He told us that this was the reason he came into the world (Luke 19:10; John 12:46-47). When Christians reflect this passion of Jesus, we often use the word, *evangelism*, to describe it. A contemporary definition of evangelism in Wikipedia reflects the general use of the term by evangelicals: *the preaching of the Christian gospel or the practice of relaying information about a particular set of beliefs to others with the object of conversion*. In light of Jesus' passion and this understanding of evangelism it is easy to see why many Christians regard evangelism as the priority calling of the Church. But Jesus doesn't. The following explains why.

- A. Jesus assigns the priority task of his followers as "making disciples." The only Greek imperative of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 is "make disciples." It could

be argued that other versions of the Great Commission—Mark 16:15 and Luke 24:46-49—don't mention discipleship but preaching and repentance. However, the Matthew presentation of the Great Commission is the most comprehensive and complete of the references and therefore, interpreting soundly, it is the plumb line against which other versions are to be understood.

- B. Why did Jesus give us disciple-making as our priority? I suggest it is precisely because Jesus' priority was and is salvation. If we are thoughtful and honest, we know that **the most effective form of evangelism is the witness of Christians who first model and then communicate the good news of the Kingdom.** Those who are discipled to reflect Jesus are far better witnesses and apologists of the gospel than those who “preach” without the demonstrating the obedience learned through a process of submission to the rule or reign of Christ in their own lives.
- C. Jesus rarely connects the gospel to salvation. Rather, he most often connects the gospel to the good news of the Kingdom, which is God's will being done—Matthew 6:10. Conversion is an essential, and often an early step in discipleship but not necessarily the first step towards entering the Kingdom (see Matthew 5:3; Mark 12:34; James 2:5; Matthew 8:1-13). Jesus defined discipleship as doing God's will. He indicated that we are to obey him with the same obedience with which he obeyed his Father (John 15:10)

- D. Salvation is available because God loves us and wants us to flourish—now and in eternity. Throughout Scripture our flourishing is a consequence of obedience, of doing God’s will—Deuteronomy 28 and 30; 2 Chronicles 7; Isaiah 58, etc. **To teach people to obey God’s will—not just know about it—is the only path to discipleship.**
- E. When we review the story of Jesus’ life in the Gospels, we often see that he sacrificially serves with no record of “evangelistic” content. Consider the following examples.
- The healing of a dying boy from Cana in John 4:43-54;
  - The casting out of a demon in Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:31-37;
  - A man cured of leprosy in Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; and Luke 5:12-16;
  - A blind man given sight in Matthew 8:22-26;
  - The raising to life of the widow’s son in Luke 7:11-17.

On other occasions Jesus proclaims without physically serving, such as his meeting with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), the woman at the well (John 4:1-42), and the encounter with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-9). The manner in which Jesus called people to follow and believe in him depended on how his Father directed him. Jesus’ approach seems to be based on context rather than on a priority of either proclamation or demonstration. A friend of mine, Ron Nikkel, observed, “Jesus always touched them with what they needed most.”

I do not minimize the importance of what we evangelicals often call evangelism—including the critical element of proclamation. Sharing the content of the good news of salvation includes the proclamation of our sinfulness, our hopeless condition apart from the redemption paid for by the blood Jesus sacrificially shed on the cross, our need to acknowledge our sin, our need to repent and accept the promise and assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, and the glorious hope of eternal life with God. But the desired result of proclamation—being born from above—is only one step in the process of discipleship. In spite of the essential nature of proclamation, **the end purpose of the Great Commission is clearly discipleship—teaching people to obey, that is, to submit to, all the things that Jesus taught.**

Evangelicals often equate evangelism with salvation when we should more properly associate it with conversion. Salvation has both a narrow and wider meaning. In the narrow sense it is the reconciliation between rebellious man and God. That is conversion. In the wider sense, salvation is the life-long working-out of the relationship between redeemed man and God. That is discipleship.

From years of observing, being a member, and serving in evangelical churches and institutions, I conclude that the working assumption that knowing content leads to obedience is faulty. Yes, ideas have consequences. But only as they are acted on. I don't mean to discount the importance of learning what the Bible teaches. Sadly, in many evangelical churches people are not held accountable for the Bible knowledge they already have. Biblical content is taught as though it automatically leads to obedience. Evangelicals study the Bible in Sunday School, Bible classes, small groups, etc. This is good and necessary! But beyond

teaching there is little in the way of purposeful application of putting into practice what is being learned. **Where are the churches in which membership is based on the demonstration of obedience rather than assent to doctrine?**

The imperative of the Great Commission of Matthew 28 is to equip would-be followers to obey. The three participles of Matthew 28 are going, baptizing and teaching to obey. Emphasizing one to the neglect of the others doesn't make disciples. The three participles work together to reach the goal of discipleship.

Our enemy wants to imbalance Jesus' intended weighting of these elements so that the process of discipleship is sabotaged. The primary goal—not only of the Great Commission but of the entire New Testament—is to equip God's people both to live under and to live out the rule of Christ in all areas and domains of life. Conversion is a prerequisite to full discipleship, but it is not the goal.

In many years of global ministry, I have observed that the most effective strategy for evangelism—evangelism that produces disciples who remain faithful—is accomplished through relationship. These are relationships between those who are yet to encounter Jesus and disciples who live lives that imitate the character of Jesus.

Some may say that we need to interpret the early Christian understanding of the Great Commission from the perspective of the church in Acts. In other words, how did the early Christians interpret the Great Commission? Though a concern for both conversion and discipleship is to be observed in Acts, it can be argued that the story of Acts reflects a focus on repentance and belief in Jesus rather than on discipleship. Since early Christians



were living out their faith in a context where few knew the story and purpose of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the message needed to be proclaimed before people could respond. Proclamation of the gospel is often, especially in circumstances like those of the early church, a first step in conversion. However, when we read the epistles, the focus is heavily weighted on instruction to equip believers to obey Jesus' teaching. As you will read below, some historians believe it was the lifestyle rather than the message of the early Christians that seems to have been the primary and unspoken apologetic for early Christianity. The sacrificial lives of the early believers must, by itself, have been a huge demonstration of the legitimacy of the gospel.

## *chapter two* 2

### *Some evangelical documents and movements reflect a extrabiblical priority*

Our evangelical roots are planted firmly in the soil of the religious fervor of the First and Second Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The “events” of the Great Awakenings—especially the second—were weighted toward winning people to Christ rather than the time-consuming task of discipleship. Typical of this era were large gatherings, including camp meetings where large crowds would gather to listen to a series of evangelists. These meetings were often preceded by what we would recognize today as advance (sometimes multi-year) planning and advertising that drew people long distances from their home communities. In these events otherwise unconnected people were exposed to the good news of salvation, but follow-through was problematic. When follow-up of converts occurred, it was often in the context of communities that had tenuous, if any, connection to the evangelistic events.

The First World War also helped shape our focus on evangelism. Mike Metzger writes, “[WWI] had profound consequences for the church. It launched apocalyptic interpretations of history among evangelicals, giving rise to the End Times movement.”<sup>2</sup> This movement led to emotionally charged and urgent calls for

listeners to save themselves from the inevitable demise of the world in judgement.

This history enforced the idea that the priority task of the church was evangelism. A well-known and contemporary document of evangelicals, the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 says, “... *in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.*” This was written to counter the claims of the liberal wing of the Protestant church, which sometimes claims that salvation comes as God’s people do good works, and a personal, saving encounter with the living Christ is optional. The evangelical wing of the church rightly protested that salvation does not come without a personal experience of being born again.

Though the portion of the Lausanne Covenant cited above was written partially to clarify its position on the interface between evangelism and social service, it reflects the typical evangelical perspective that evangelism, not social work, is our primary task. Personally, I affirm the Lausanne Covenant of 1974, except for this one statement.

I want to be clear that I reject the idea that social service is the priority. Though I understand the history and sentiment of this statement, I see it as an overcorrection that goes beyond Scripture. In addition, the working out of this priority has had and continues to have tragic consequences discussed later.

If proclamation is not the priority, then what is it? According to the Greek verbs in the Great Commission, there is an assumption if not an implied command to “go” and “preach” the gospel. Going, proclaiming and/or preaching are not optional. Proclamation is part of what it means to be a witness (Luke 24:44). And proclamation is an ally and partner of the

demonstration of the Kingdom (James 1:27; 1John 4:20-21). But the command is to disciple.

A diagram of the discipleship process might look like this:

As you go  $\longrightarrow$  Make disciples  $\longrightarrow$  By baptizing,  
and teaching to obey

Why is proclaiming not listed? Proclamation is implied in the process. However, it is possible to proclaim without discipling, but not possible to disciple without proclaiming.

Though the 1974 issue of evangelism was no longer highlighted as “priority” in the most recent Lausanne Congress (South Africa 2010), it has been and continues to be the priority of many Western evangelical churches and the churches they have given birth to around the globe.

So then, what do I say about the millions who have come to faith in Christ through the evangelistic efforts of generations of evangelical missionaries, through evangelical mission societies, Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ (now CRU), the Billy Graham crusades and other similar endeavors? With the angels of heaven, I shout with joy! But, I also grieve for the lack of emphasis on discipling those who were born again to follow, to submit to, and to be like Jesus and thereby have floundered in their faith.

I have increasingly wondered if the current and growing demise of the church’s influence on culture is one of the consequences of this misplaced priority. What would the comparative long-term result be of people demonstrating the Kingdom versus just being “saved,” if the same resources

invested in the big events had been invested in equipping God's people to live the gospel?

There are many discussions of the effectiveness of evangelistic crusades in terms of producing disciples. One article discussing this issue is by Jeremy Myers, "Is Crusade Evangelism Effective?" It can be accessed at [redeeminggod.com/crusade-evangelism-effective](http://redeeminggod.com/crusade-evangelism-effective).

Let me briefly address the issues of other evangelical movements that have had a somewhat different emphasis. Here is an example. Some current evangelical movements speak of "mission as transformation." One outcome of these efforts is social projects done by Christians. Good! The idea that Christians need to be engaged in the social arena of society is clearly on target. However, a problem with this approach is that the projects can be presented as a method of bringing transformation.

This way of thinking risks giving the impression that transformation is something people can accomplish through social initiatives rather than something God does. Biblically, we understand that the effects of the fall are so profound that even redeemed humans are incapable of understanding, much less healing, their own brokenness.

In 2Chronicles 7:14 God makes it clear to Solomon that the healing of our brokenness is not something we do but something he does in response to our living in obedience to his commands. That doesn't mean that God doesn't use the gifts he has given us in the process of transformation. He clearly does. We see examples multiple times in the lives of Old Testament heroes and in the historic and contemporary Church. But what Scripture does imply is that the best human efforts that are not infused with his supernatural power will fail to bring healing to

our broken lives and/or communities. **Biblical transformation is the result of God's supernatural intervention in human affairs.** (Again, see Deuteronomy 28 & 30 and Isaiah 58.) Even the best efforts of men do not result in transformation. *Our role* in transformation is obedience (read “discipleship”). *God's role* is healing the brokenness that results from sin.

A related transformation movement focuses on the spheres of society. These spheres are sometimes spoken of as the Seven Mountains. The idea is that Christians bring transformation through purposeful application of Kingdom principles into these spheres. The sphere or mountain concept is a helpful metaphor for thinking about the transformation of our societies. But unless the people addressing these areas of society are disciples in the biblical sense, their work will have little eternal consequence. Healing and transformation that begin at the personal level and eventually lead to community and national levels is relatively straightforward. How? God transforms on the condition of obedience of his people. When his people obey, he heals. Discipleship is teaching obedience. This is another reason for the priority of discipleship.

A final observation in this chapter is about the relationship between our objective and transformation. We need to remember that even though we desire biblical transformation and healing, this should not be what we aim for. If it is, we are looking in the wrong direction. Our objective should be to be in a right relationship with the Lord and to thereby glorify him. Transformation is a byproduct of that relationship. Yes, we want to move from the pain of brokenness to the shalom of healing and that causes us to desire what we understand as transformation. But we have such a limited view and understanding of

the incredibly good our infinite God has in store for us if we only would live in relationship with him, as he asks. We are like the slum child that C. S. Lewis describes who imagines fun as making mud pies on the street of his neighborhood, but because of his limited experience, can't even imagine what it is like to play on the shores of the ocean.

#### NOTES

1. Nancy Percy, *Total Truth*, Chapter 9.
2. Mike Metzger, *Clapham Commentary*, November 16, 2015. (See also Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War*, page 138).

chapter three 3

*Evangelism without discipleship produces hypocrisy*

We call people who profess one thing and do another hypocrites. Most of us are repulsed by hypocrisy both in others and in ourselves. **When we evangelize without discipling, we are at risk of producing Christians who live more hypocritically than they otherwise might.**

The New Testament writers understood that believing in Jesus meant doing what he asked. Unfortunately, our evangelical urgency to see people believe in Jesus and thereby rescued from being “lost” often results in intellectual assent to Jesus as savior without a commitment to doing what he asks. We tend to get people to assent to a creed without equipping them to live accordingly. Is it not possible this is a major reason that societies in which we evangelize have rejected the path we advocate—the only true and sustainable path to living the full and blessed lives that God intended?

When about to depart from loved ones, most people yearn to share what is most important. Jesus knew he was about to leave his closest friends. He wanted to be sure they clearly understood his intentions for how he—their Lord—wanted them to carry out the task for which he had come into the world.



What was that task? It was making disciples of nations. The Bible uses the terms “nation” or “nations” over 700 times. That tells us something about God’s heart for the world. He wants to see the nations of the world flourish.

Nations, of course, are discipled by beginning with individuals, families and communities. We must begin with individuals, but with the goal of discipling nations so their societies flourish as God intends. In discipling individuals, we need to help them connect the dots between their obedience and the discipling and eventual healing of their nation.

Though Scripture doesn’t explicitly say, the reason for obedience is clear in both Testaments. God is interested in obedience rather than the appearance of obedience. In ways different than we might imagine. Consider, for example, God’s instructions to Israel in Isaiah 58. In the first five verses he tells Isaiah that his people are so deaf to his intentions for how they are to live that he, Isaiah, will have to shout the message like a trumpet blast in the ears of his listeners to get their attention.

What was the message God wanted Isaiah to shout like a trumpet? That the appearance of piety in their worship, in their prayer, and their study of Scripture wasn’t sufficient. In addition to these important spiritual practices, Israel needed to demonstrate God’s character of compassion and justice to those in need. Acts of spiritual piety were appropriate but not without the demonstration of his love. In this chapter God powerfully and poetically promises—three times—that Israel will flourish when they do as he asks.

It is obedience leads to the promise of healing. One reason we don’t disciple with the vision of national healing is our pessimistic eschatology. Our thinking that we live in the “end

times” tends to keep us from really living with the promise and good news that God intends “heal our land” as his people are disciplined to live out his commands. If movement toward healing happened when pagan Rome became Christian Rome, and in a very corrupt British society transformed in John Wesley’s era, it can happen again. Early Christians thought *they* were living in the “end times.” It was the end times for them but we now realize 2000 years later that it was not what they envisioned as the end times. Yes, we need to live circumspectly but with the awareness that only the Father knows when those “end times” indeed are.

\* \* \*

As in Isaiah’s time, our worship can keep us from discipleship. I’ve attended many “worship” services in our churches that remind me of the Israel we read about in Isaiah 58. These seem more reflective of a therapeutic consumerism that scratches where people itch than a strategy to equip God’s people in the application of biblical content.

In Isaiah 58 God is speaking to his people who were apparently impressed with their programs of liturgy, their prayer and their study of Scriptures. But, he tells them, those things, by themselves, do not qualify as worship. He is saying, “If you want these things to count, you must also demonstrate my character of justice and compassion for the disenfranchised in your world ... what you actually do with your time outside the cloistered service must match the spiritual pietism of your religious gatherings.” Pastor Tony Evans says, **“If you want to have**

**transformation in society, you have to first have disciples in the sanctuary.”<sup>1</sup>**

Hypocrisy not only comes from a lack of teaching and training “to do.” It can “sneak up” on those who have been discipled. I was recently invited to do a week of teaching in Colombia. It was a great time for me, not only because of the opportunities to share the concept of wholistic discipleship, but especially because of one event in which the Lord reminded me of the importance of not just knowing what to do, but doing it. Here is the story.

It was Saturday. In Cali, Colombia. I had been teaching a group of local leaders that discipleship was more a matter of lifestyle rather than simply knowing how to live. The Scriptural basis I used was from Luke 10 where, through the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus told a theologian (expert in the Law) that obedience to God’s will was more important than correct theology. It was time for lunch. We broke the session to go to a local restaurant. I went with my host and four or five conference leaders – some of whom were women.

We were approached by a street person of about 30 years of age. He was bare chested, probably shoeless – I don’t remember, was clearly not wearing underwear and had loose pants that were obscenely low on his waist. He came straight to me and offered a fist bump which I returned. Then he asked for “help.” Partially because of his embarrassing state of undress – at least for me, and I assumed the women – we simply walked on. He followed us continuing to plead, but we continued to ignore him. As we approached our destination, a gourmet food training center, he began to scream at us. We entered, left him outside, and ordered. After we ordered, I asked our party what it was that the

street person had been shouting. My Spanish is limited and I didn't understand.

One of my table partners said, "He must have been listening to your teaching. He was shouting, 'You have eyes but you don't see! You have ears but you don't hear! You have hearts but you have no compassion!'"

I felt like God had delivered a punch to my solar plexus. When we left the restaurant, I looked for this street person but couldn't see him. On the walk back to the teaching venue, all I could think of was Jesus' words in Matthew 25 – "When I was hungry ...."

The next morning, I was scheduled to preach at a church in Bogota. I began my message with a confession. I told the folks that the person who was to preach was a hypocrite. A repentant hypocrite, but a hypocrite. Then I told them the story of the street person I had encountered the day before. From the expressions I could see the Holy Spirit had touched a common nerve.

When I finished, the pastor and a good friend, came to the platform and shared another story. Earlier that week, he had visited a member and former elder of the church who had been ill but hadn't been to church in a long time because of illness. This member told the pastor that he had just been through the most difficult time in his life. The pastor assumed he was speaking of the illness. The member said, "No, pastor, it has been because no one from the church has been to visit me during this long illness, including you, pastor. This is the cause of the most difficult time in my life."

My pastor friend then said to the audience, "I, too, am a hypocrite. I would like to ask all here who are hypocrites to stand

to their feet.” As far as I could see, the entire congregation of hundreds stood. Then he explained our corporate need for confession and he invited all who were standing to get on their knees and join in asking for forgiveness. The pastor’s son told me later that in all of his growing up and adult life in that church he had never seen the congregation on its knees seeking the Lord’s forgiveness.

Why am I sharing this? There are two reasons. First, I need to confess that without God’s help I am helpless to do what I want. Like Paul, in Romans 7, I do what I don’t want to do. But also with Paul in Romans 8, I recognize that there is victory in Christ. Second, I need to remind myself, and those who read this, how easy it is to go along – and even teach others – what Jesus taught us to do, and to not do it. If we are honest, there are hypocritical dimensions to all of our lives.

Father, thank you for helping us recognize these gaps, and help us to appropriate your strength to do your will – not just talk about and/or teach it.

## NOTES

1. Twitter, December 18, 2014.

## chapter four 4

### *Scripture commands that we live in a way that attracts*

True worship attracts. In Deuteronomy 4—especially verses 5-8—we read that a lifestyle of obedience attracts the attention of those outside the community of faith. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:12 says that we should live in such a way that those who are not believers will praise God, even though they don't "like" our religion. In Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus tells us that we should live in a way that causes people to see and praise the goodness of God. In other words, Christ followers are to live in such a way that outsiders are attracted to the Author of Life. There is no more powerful witness to God's love than disciples who live according to God's intentions.

America was founded largely on biblical principles. Much of that has eroded, but the legacy of these principles has made America a "promised land" in the eyes of people in the economically developing nations where I spend much of my time. When put into practice, these principles have created an attraction to the life and liberty America has enjoyed that is unlike any the world has known.

Many evangelical churches seem to think that the Sunday morning service is a key venue to attract nonbelievers. I disagree. Our worship service should primarily be the weekly gathering of

disciples who come together to corporately worship their Lord and be further equipped to go outside the church walls to witness. The language used in our worship is a learned language. We shouldn't expect outsiders who don't know the language to fully comprehend what is happening. **When we “dumb-down” our corporate worship time to accommodate outsiders, we cheat those who come to worship and be equipped for witness and worship where they live out their lives.**

As we try to be “seeker sensitive,” we run the risk of giving believers who come to worship a “hall pass” for the kind of witness needed. (For those not of my generation, a hall pass was a permission slip to be in the school hall for a specific errand when class was in session.)

What is that kind of witness? It is witness outside the worship service in the individual worlds of those who come to worship. By focusing our weekly service on those not yet in the kingdom, we diminish the sense of urgency in discipling worshipers to be witnesses outside of the worship service.

The thinking of many of our evangelical churches goes like this: “If we can just cajole our unsaved friends to come to church, they will hear the gospel and be saved.” When I hear pastors beg their members to bring their unsaved friends to church so they can hear the gospel, I want to stand up and scream, “No!” If that is how unbelievers will hear about Jesus, worshipers now have an implied excuse to not witness outside the church walls. They just need to bring their neighbors to church!

Our churches should be attractive to outsiders primarily because they see how the people of the church live their lives outside the church, not because they are coaxed to come, be

entertained and happen to hear the gospel. Yes, we should welcome those who are not part of our worship culture, but as we do, we need to be careful to not compromise the values of the biblical culture and language. Is there a place in the church schedule where outsiders should hear the gospel? Of course! But it should not be at the sacrifice of the main purpose of the church gathered—worship and equipping.

I enthusiastically support the idea of evangelistic events outside the church. Those events can certainly be structured to attract those from the world with modalities familiar to them. And, these are also occasions when outsiders attend church for traditional reasons, and/or to be with believing family members. But using corporate worship as a general practice for the purpose of evangelism diminishes both evangelism and discipling. Yes, evangelism may happen in the context of corporate worship. But, let it be not only by the power of the Word, but by the Word become flesh that nonbelievers observing how believers love and worship their God and Savior, love each other, and hear testimonies of how members serve those outside the church. From Paul's ecclesiology in Ephesians, **our energy and resources should be primarily spent on equipping, that is, discipling or producing servants who look and act like Jesus** (Ephesians 4:12).

Discipling is equipping God's people to be servants to their generation. God has assigned every class of church leader (Ephesians 4:11) for one purpose—equipping God's people to worship him through serving. Each gift does this in a different way, but the goal is the same – to produce disciples who increasingly look like Jesus, the chief servant. It is interesting to



note that the Greek words in the New Testament for worship and service are often interchangeable.

You don't have to be a Bible whiz to be a servant. Yes, it is important to have sound and thorough Bible teaching. But **simply teaching biblical content doesn't produce disciples.** There are many who are biblically literate but don't look like Jesus.

The church must spend its energy in equipping its members to be witnesses where they spend most of their lives. **When the church has a focus on evangelism rather than equipping its people for their biblical task of witness—living in obedience outside the church—much is lost.**

Recently I attended a mission conference in which the speaker reminded us of an interesting facet of evangelism. He took us to John 1:14 and 17 where John tells us that Jesus came in grace and truth. The order of these two character-traits of Jesus is repeated in Colossians 1:6 and 2 John 3. In each text, grace comes before truth. An implication is that grace provides the context in which truth can be given. If truth comes before grace, truth is easy to reject. The demonstration of God's love to others is an expression of grace. Grace attracts. When that comes first, the receiver is more open to the truth of salvation that is found only in Jesus.

Sometimes we see faults in others and feel if we really love them, we need to speak truth into their lives. This is good. We need to be transparent. But if we want truth to be heard, we do well to precede truth with grace. Grace creates an attitude of heart that allows truth to be heard—especially when the truth is hard to hear. The sooner grace can be brought to bear, the more

readily truth can be received in a way that helps both the bearer and the recipient of truth grow toward the image of Jesus.

When Jesus comes to me, I know he loves me in spite of what needs correction. Because I am so completely convinced of his love, I listen to his correction. This is grace preceding truth.

There is a caution here. First, there can be times when truth alone could be “extending grace.” Second, we need to be careful not to extend grace without truth, love without correction. Doing so encourages relativism. Extending grace without truth can make us guilty of appearing to approve actions that are inconsistent with truth, suggesting that living out of alignment to truth is okay. It is not.

The importance of lifestyle over content was articulated well by George MacDonald.

*If you who set yourselves to explain the theory of Christianity had set yourselves instead to do the will of the Master, the one object for which the Gospel was preached to you, how different would now be the condition of that portion of the world with which you come into contact! Had you given yourselves to the understanding of his word that you might do it, and not to the quarrying from it of material wherewith to buttress your systems, in many a heart by this time would the name of the Lord be loved where now it remains unknown.<sup>1</sup>*

Let me share a story that impacted my understanding of this principle. Why would a young man, we’ll call him Maro, from a high-class family, who had spent months partying with friends

around the world, be attracted to Jesus? Answer: he met Jesus. Here is how.

After months of high living on his family's money, Maro was in the Philippines. It was there that he ran out of funds and couldn't even pay his hotel bill. The hotel held him hostage until he would pay. He had no way to pay his bills or to contact his family. He had no ticket home. He was stuck, embarrassed, depressed, and contemplating suicide. Somehow, he managed to get the phone number of a stranger—we'll call him Sunil—who was from his home country and living in the same city. Sunil was married with two small children and studying for final exams at a local seminary. Sunil listened to Maro's story. Even though he needed study time, Sunil went to the hotel, managed to get Maro released, and took him to his tiny apartment. Sunil moved his two children from their bedroom to the living and dining room and cleared the vacated room for Maro. They talked long into the night, watched the Jesus film together, and went to sleep.

At that time Sunil was going through emotional sorrow because his father had died of cancer and he couldn't go home for the funeral. Even so, Sunil and his family hosted and ministered to Maro. During those days Sunil and Maro talked a lot about life, and the future. Maro was deeply impacted by this family that sacrificially hosted him, showed him love and eventually led him to faith in Jesus. Maro joined the church and small group that Sunil attended. The believers in the church and small group helped Maro grow in Christ. He stayed in the Philippines for one year, got some training and became involved in ministry. He eventually started sharing Jesus with others of his native countrymen who were in the Philippines. With Sunil's

guidance, he began to disciple them. Two years later Maro returned to his home where he was rejected by his family for his faith. He now works in his home country where he demonstrates Jesus' love to needy people and earns the right to share the good news of Jesus whenever the context allows. Seeing the positive changes in Maro's life, his family now accepts him.

What did Maro see in Sunil and his family? It was Jesus. Sunil and his family are followers of Jesus. As such, they allowed themselves to be the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears and the tongue of Jesus. What Maro saw was Jesus incarnate in the lives of Sunil and his family. And what he saw attracted him to his now Savior and Lord.

#### NOTE

1. *George MacDonald*, From Creation in Christ.



## chapter five 5

### *God's glory is his ultimate goal*

As evangelicals we sometimes equate biblical fruit with the fruits of the Spirit. However, a word study of “fruit” in the Scripture shows that fruit is far more connected to obedience, that is, being a disciple, than it is the byproduct of the indwelling Holy Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22.

God’s ultimate purpose, and the chief end of man, is his glory. Scripture is clear: that the way we contribute to this cosmic goal is by doing what God requires of his people. Jesus taught us to bear the fruit of obedience, as we read in John 15:8. That is why the end of the task Jesus gave us is making disciples who produce the fruit of obedience.

Evangelism is a necessary part of the process of making disciples but it is not the goal. The goal is not converts but imitators of Jesus. Evangelism as usually practiced by evangelicals can be but is not necessarily one of the first steps in the process of making disciples. Still, the evangelical church has generally put the cart before the horse. As a consequence, we have churches full of immature believers who often discredit God’s name and neglect his intentions for the world, and we have churches that do not create the conditions for biblical transformation (2Chronicles 7:14).

Oswald Chambers said, “One life wholly devoted to God is of more value to God than one hundred lives simply awakened by his Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> **Treating evangelism as the goal rather than as a possibly early step of our task can lead to the sin of disobedience.** It keeps us from accomplishing the primary task Jesus gave us—discipleship. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission are not in conflict! When we love God and neighbor, nonbelievers are attracted to Jesus and more interested in following than if they just hear about him.

To some people, reversing the priority of evangelism and discipleship may seem like a small matter. But I believe this reversal has had disastrous consequences in delaying God’s Kingdom. (I speak not of the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness, but of its coming to whatever degree God intends it to come before Jesus returns.) Conversion should both be preceded and immediately followed by teaching Jesus’ followers to submit to what he taught. **At its irreducible minimum, Jesus’ teaching is for us to show love for God through loving our neighbor.** This kind of love is demonstrated by serving our neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40; 7:12; 1John 4:20-21).

One powerful illustration of this principle is found in the familiar but often superficially understood story of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. In Luke’s narrative an expert in the Scriptures comes to Jesus with a question about what was required for eternal life.

Using the familiar tactic of a rabbi, Jesus responds to the professor’s question by asking a question—“What do the Scriptures say?” The answer was the Great Commandment—“Love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all

your strength and with your entire mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus' response isn't what you would expect from an evangelical, that is, that salvation comes from belief, from faith. Instead, Jesus' response seems “works” based. “You are correct. Obey this command and you will have eternal life.” In other words, “Do it and you will have eternal life.”

The seminary professor's conscience is bothered. He is sure he loves God. After all, he's an expert in the Scriptures and respected religious teacher and spiritual leader. But this “love your neighbor” teaching from Jesus gives him a problem.

Needing an excuse to salve his conscience, he asks Jesus, “Yes, but who is my neighbor?” That's when Jesus tells the story of the good Samaritan.

This is where most interpretations of this passage fall short. They see Jesus' response as defining one's neighbor as anyone with a need you can meet. That's true, but I think Jesus means much more.

When Jesus asked “Which one was a neighbor to the wounded man?” the answer was inescapable: “The one who had mercy.”

Was this the end of the exchange between Jesus and the professor? No. Jesus had a much deeper truth to share with his final statement in verse 37, “Go and do likewise.” This was not a tag at the end of the conversation. It was positive reinforcement to Jesus' answer to the original question—“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The answer in verse 28, “Do it. Obey the great commandment.”



At first glance these two answers seem to be declaring a works-based salvation—love God and love your neighbor and you will be saved. But they are not.

The Apostle John, Jesus' disciple, tells us that if we say we love God but don't love our neighbor, we are liars and the truth is not in us (1John 4:19-20). It is basic evidence of loving God, like breathing is evidence of being alive. If faith in his God whom he thought he loved doesn't express itself in love for the thorn-in-the-flesh neighbor, he doesn't have eternal life.

How do we achieve God's ultimate goal, his glory? We do it by fulfilling Scripture's requirements for eternal life. By faith we accept God's love for us and in turn by the power of the Holy Spirit we love him and our neighbor.

Equipping believers to love their neighbor in the power of the Holy Spirit is the essential, actionable component of biblical discipleship. Here's the danger of merely evangelizing without discipling: it blinds new believers to the need for obedience. One deeply important implication of this passage is that if our faith in Jesus doesn't lead to love for our thorn-in-the-flesh neighbor, our "faith" is not real, and we do not have eternal life. This love of God and neighbor isn't necessarily something that is fulfilled or maturely demonstrated immediately on conversion. But, if conversion is real, the seeds of learning to love both God and neighbor are planted by the Holy Spirit—and the life-long journey of learning to be Jesus' disciple begins.

Allow me to tell a story I often share. Many years ago I had a neighbor, whom I will call Dale. I learned soon after Dale moved next door that he didn't like Christians, God or the church. I learned he had issues with alcohol, had problems with late taxes, was unemployed and depressed. He stayed mostly in the house

with the curtains drawn. And he didn't take care of his lawn, which was unwatered, untrimmed and littered.

In contrast to Dale, I enjoyed working in the garden so much that I envision a name change on the weekends as I work in my yard. I imagine myself not as Bob but Adam—placed there to manage the Garden. I do this with joy. So, with great care and pride I trim bushes and trees, plant flowers, carefully mow the lawn, and water. One day I was complaining to the Lord, asking him to motivate Dale at least to clean up his yard. I distinctly remember the Spirit's answer that I should do it. Partially to fix the embarrassment of his lawn next to mine, I did as instructed and without asking permission from Dale.

The next week I worked as I regularly did in my garden. I finished and was about to go inside. Again, I sensed the Spirit say, "You're not finished." Since I'm relatively thorough by personality, my response was a question: "What am I not finished with?" The answer: "You haven't done Dale's yard."

You can imagine the unspoken dialogue:

Me: *I did it last week.*

Spirit: *This is not last week. Clean his yard.*

Me: *Okay.*

This continued for more than a year and a half.

Occasionally Dale would come out of his house, offer something to drink, talk about politics, his personal problems, his broken lawnmower, etc. One night there was a knock on the door. It was Dale. I invited him in and asked how I could help. He had a question, "Why have you been cleaning my yard?" I wanted to say, "I've been waiting for you to ask that question for

more than a year,” but I didn’t. Instead, I said something about Jesus asking me to do it.

That conversation led to our having coffee and talking about the One who had asked me to care for his yard. Not long after we began meeting, Dale and his family moved away. I didn’t know where, and we lost contact.

Almost fifteen years later, Dale called to ask if my wife and I could come to their home for dinner. We accepted. As we drove up to their house, I noticed how clean and groomed his yard was. We had a wonderful meal and conversation. At the end of the meal Dale told me why he had invited us. This is what he said.

“I no longer drink. I have settled my issues with taxes. I have a great job. I’ve met Jesus. I am a leader in my church. And the reason is that you cleaned my yard.”

I was blown away! Then he added a final revelation. He asked if I wanted to know what he did on weekends. Dale told me that he cleans his neighbors’ yards.

What does this have to do with God’s glory? Everything. As I was obedient, God was glorified. Through my obedience Dale was drawn to God. And God is cultivating more than gardens for his glory.

#### NOTE

1. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, April 24.

## chapter six 6

### *Issues that keep us from fulfilling the Great Commission*

It is not that evangelical Christians don't believe in discipleship (or at least what we understand as discipleship). We do. But in today's church I see a number of problems that mitigate against disciple-making. Here are eight that I think are key. (In the appendix you can review a list of twenty such problems compiled by Doug Greenwold.)

First: We don't really know how. So much of the "how" practiced today focuses on the first two misperceptions we have described—a misunderstanding of priorities, and limiting discipleship to teaching biblical content and how to evangelize. Until we get our priorities straight, it is unlikely that biblical discipleship will happen.

Second: We limit discipleship to personal spiritual disciplines and neglect loving our neighbors by serving them. We equip converts in Bible knowledge, prayer, fasting, tithing, meditation, etc., and believe they are now disciplined. These are important, but if our discipleship lacks the core discipline of loving others through humble and sacrificial service, our disciples may look religious but they won't look like Jesus.

Third: Evangelicals often have an unspoken sense that biblical discipleship requires salvation as a first step. Though

discussed elsewhere, this problem is important enough to stress again.

Conversion is often the first step, but it is not the necessary first step. Some people begin with an interest in following Jesus—like some of the first disciples—before they are actually regenerated. When we require it as a first step, we tend to press—sometimes urgently and emotionally—for a decision rather than giving time for people to be drawn by the Spirit to the beauty of a relationship with Jesus and the cost and the joy of submission to him.

Fourth: An honest evaluation will conclude that our global missionary and church-growth activities have been largely out of sync with Jesus' command to make disciples. We have preached and sought converts much more than we have modelled and sought to make disciples. The reason is understandable. So many are lost and urgently need to hear and respond to the good news of salvation. Their lost condition pulls on our compassion. So, we "preach the gospel." Unfortunately, we are so compelled by their need to be saved that we are distracted from Jesus' command to disciple.

Fifth: Evangelicals tend to focus more on methods than on relationships. I attended the second Lausanne congress on evangelism in Manila in 1989. One speaker was given the subject of effective evangelistic strategy. He listed the strategies being highlighted at the congress—crusades, literature, street preaching, radio, TV, etc. Then he told us that he would list those strategies one-by-one, and as he listed them, he asked those who had come to Christ primarily through that particular strategy to stand and remain standing. One by one, he listed the strategies that represented the subtracts of the congress. When he finished,

I was amazed that only fifteen to twenty percent of the audience appeared to be standing. The rest remained seated. Then he asked about a strategy barely mentioned at the congress. “How many of you came to Christ through a relationship?” At that point most of the remaining audience of several thousand global evangelical mission leaders stood to their feet. Point made!

Most people agree that evangelism outside relationship tends to be unfruitful in producing lifelong followers of Jesus. My wife and I receive uninvited sales calls, both at the door and by phone. We resent these as intrusions. Intrusion is an apt metaphor for the kind of evangelism that proclaims the good news of the Kingdom outside a relationship. Yes, a small percentage of cold-calls score a “sale.” But such intrusions, especially when repeated, are increasingly resented.

Sixth: Safe and supportive communities in which disciples are nurtured are essential. Biblical discipleship requires a community in which members walk together in sufficiently loving relationships that they are open to share their successes and their struggles. Such environments encourage and help disciples to more closely reflect the image of Jesus. All of us long to be in such communities but often have difficulty finding them. Building such a community takes time.

Such communities of Christians often take the form of small groups that encourage struggling members without judging them. Accountability is essential in true disciple-making but how do you hold someone accountable without being legalistic? We deal with this in the second section of this book. In short, legalism is not an issue when the leaders and those being discipled come together for the right reason. What is that reason? It is the desire to better reflect the love of our lives—Jesus.

Seventh: Proclamation of the gospel outside of relationship can inoculate the very ones we want to reach against genuine discipleship. Think of vaccination against disease. To prevent polio, we inoculate a person with a dead or low-density living virus that the body quickly defeats. These evangelization “viruses” keep those who don’t know Jesus from experiencing the real thing. Evangelism outside of relationships can inoculate unbelievers with what appears to be “dead” Christianity and keep the unevangelized from receiving the real thing. Gandhi is reported to have said something like, “I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”

I recently received a letter from my son, an executive with a major music company.

*You ... suggest [the churches'] inability to distinguish itself or its message from that of its contemporaries' messages and voices .... I was in Vegas at a corporate convention a few weeks ago and ... was reminded of a distinct feeling I had during the main presentation in Las Vegas of all places—I felt distinctly like I was in church!!! And I was being sold a product with the best of what contemporary entertainment and crowd psychology had to offer. I don't think the enemy could have thought of a more brilliant distortion if he was seeking to disempower the Church than to teach it to "sell."*

Our “selling” culture inoculates against the very thing we long to see accomplished.

Eighth: We like to count. In the Christian West, we have a counting culture, and we have unfortunately passed on this

culture wherever Western evangelical missionaries have gone. Donors want to know how many “came to Christ” as a result of their donation. Of course, those involved on the field report numbers as high as possible. When I was a young missionary there was a joke in mission circles that more people had come to Christ in Argentina than there were people there. How? Many attending crusade meetings raised their hands to indicate they wanted to follow Christ. Those same people went to multiple crusades, raised their hands again, and were counted and reported multiple times.

Evangelicals have become addicted to numbers both in evangelism and church planting. Oswald Chambers says, “There is a passion for souls that does not spring from God but from the desire to make converts to our point of view.”<sup>1</sup> I would paraphrase this to say, there is a passion for souls that does not spring from God but from a desire for numbers that make the minister or missionary look good in the eyes of their supporters.

A Romanian colleague recently wrote that at a conference he attended, it was joyfully announced that since the latter part of the twentieth century about 47 million people had come to Christ in Romania. This announcement was made notwithstanding that the current population of Romania is 22 million. He concluded, “Those who do not chase numbers lose their support!”

A young evangelist and pastor I have mentored in eastern India asked to spend time with me when I was in Malaysia a few years ago. He told me how Americans had been funding his evangelistic crusades that thousands attended and where hundreds raised their hands to indicate an interest in following Christ. Over time he began to recognize the same people



attending meetings held in different venues and repeatedly raising their hands for salvation. But he saw little if any long-term change. At the conclusion of his sharing he said, “Bob, India will never be reached for Christ this way.” He withdrew from this kind of evangelism at substantial personal cost because he told the American donors that he couldn’t continue this strategy of evangelism. He is now engaged in a more wholistic approach of making disciples.

If you understand the priority of the Great Commission as evangelism, the priority emphasis of discipleship will mean equipping new converts to evangelize. The long-term intent may be to equip new believers to look like Jesus, but so much effort and focus will be on training for evangelism that equipping seldom moves beyond it. This is like equipping teenagers to have babies and training those babies to have more babies who have more babies. When this happens, little energy is invested in the much longer and more difficult task of helping those babies grow to responsible spiritual adulthood.

A high percentage of those who appear to come to Christ through nonrelational means seem to disappear. Two years after a major (and apparently successful) evangelistic crusade in his city, a friend of mine decided to contact the churches in his community to find out how many of those churches had new members as a result of the crusade. He contacted many churches asking if they had members who had come to Christ in this crusade. Not one pastor could identify a single person who fit this category.

Think of the relationships you have. Some are people you know and trust. Others are people you know and don’t trust, or people you don’t know well enough to trust. To which of these

are you most likely to listen? What would happen if every member of every church were discipled—not to hand out tracts—but to live in such a way that those they talked to about Jesus wanted to listen, and then were taught how to appropriately share what Jesus has done for them in their own lives?

My Romanian friend concluded the note I shared above with this observation about the Christian young people in his country. “Our youth have few to no models in the discipleship process. They have been exposed to very good teaching but it was not combined with models to follow.” How sad!

Obedience, serving, and living a Christ-like life paves the road to conversion. As the Holy Spirit moves people’s hearts toward Jesus, they need to see what it means to be born again as they watch us and desire him! Then evangelism takes place—the way Jesus did it.

Are we working toward conversion in order to disciple? Or, are we discipling in order that those who begin to follow Jesus are truly converted and then further discipled? It can happen both ways but I suspect the more effective way to evangelize is to model what it means to follow Jesus.

#### NOTE

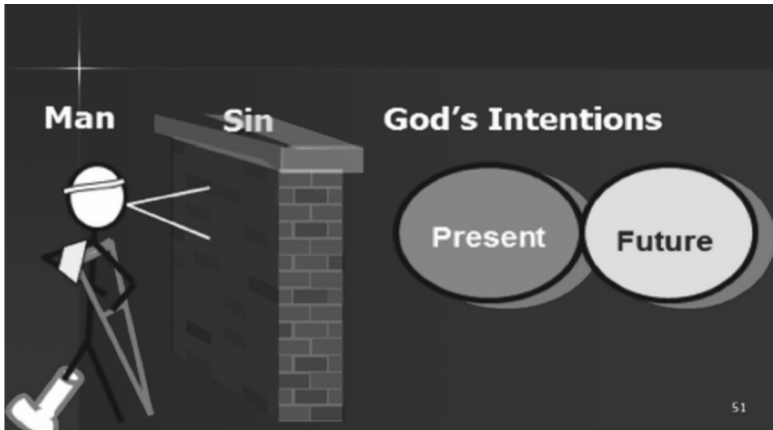
1. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, October 27.



## chapter seven 7

### *Our disobedience keeps people from seeing God's glory*

One of the lessons I teach is called “The Church as a Window.” The diagrams below illustrate the contents.



In the first diagram, we see a broken man standing in front of a wall of sin that keeps him from seeing God's intentions either in the present or in the future. I use this graphic to challenge my students not to see sin in the usual way—corruption, violence, etc. in the world, but as God's people not living in obedience to Jesus' commands.

Then we consider five areas of the Bible's instructions for a disciple's life:

**First for our *personal lives*,**

- Acts 14:22—Endure hardship
- Ephesians 5:17-20—Be sober, Spirit-filled, singing and thankful
- 1Thessalonians 4:3, 11—Live holy, pure, and productive lives
- Ephesians 5:22 to 6:2—Be submissive, honor and give respect
- Ephesians 6:4—Train children in holy living

**Second, for our relationships with our *brothers and sisters in Christ*,**

- John 13:34—Love each other
- John 17:20-23—Live in unity

**Third, for our relationships with our *neighbors*,**

- Romans 13:9—Love our neighbors
- James 1:27—Care for widows and orphans
- Jeremiah 22:3, 15-16—Advocate for those in need

**Fourth, for how we relate to our *government, employers and employees*,**

- Colossians 4:1—Be fair to those under our authority
- 1Peter 2:13-15—Respect those in authority
- Romans 13:1—Submit to those in authority

**Fifth, for how we relate to our *enemies*,**

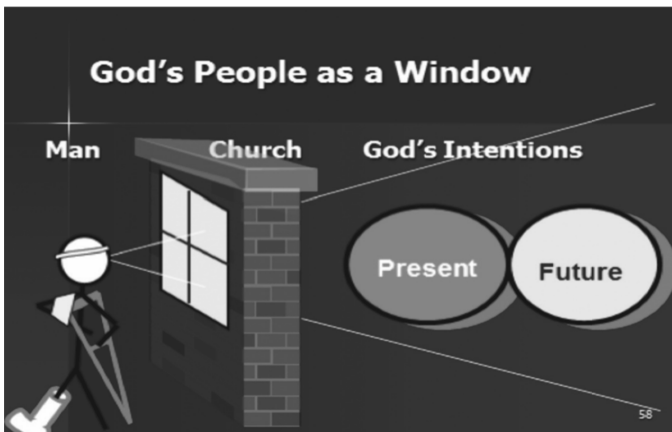
- Luke 6:27, 35-36 – Love your enemies

As my students explore these areas of God's intentions for our lives, it is embarrassingly clear that the sin that keeps broken people from seeing God's great love is primarily not the corruption of government, business or society. It's our own sin that hides God's intention, sin in our personal lives, and disobedience in how we relate to our neighbors.

God has put a window in this wall of sin. That window is the Church. (See the diagram below.) But for the Church to be a window through which a broken world can see God's intentions, **the Church must demonstrate God's concern for brokenness—not only in the spiritual domain but in other domains as well, including intellectual, physical, and social needs.**

The world does not understand God's great intentions. What is the antidote for this? First, we must recapture a biblical understanding of discipleship—personally living in obedience to Jesus' instructions in all areas of life. Second, we must see discipleship as the primary mission of the local church.

Third, we need to implement a deliberate strategy with the goal of discipleship as equipping people to practice what Jesus teaches us, and, as a consequence, they increasingly look like Jesus.



In my opinion, an emphasis on the extrabiblical priority of evangelism can and does lead to sin. “What?!” you say. One English understanding of the Greek word for sin is “missing the mark.” When we focus on evangelism rather than making disciples, we miss the mark. We sin. We do part of what Jesus asked us to do but miss the main objective. Let me illustrate.

Suppose you ask your teenager to clean their room—make their bed, put away their clothes, electronics, and musical equipment. Your teen understands the instructions but only hangs up a few clothes. What would you call that? Disobedience! The disobedience may be unintentional—in the case of misunderstanding, or intentional—in the case of not doing what is understood. What does God call it when we carry out one step in the process of discipleship (evangelism) but omit his agenda of making disciples? When we don’t carry out this primary task, it is disobedience, whether intentional or unintentional. Our culpability may be less if our disobedience is unintentional, but Scripture says we are still culpable (see Leviticus 4-5). Whether intentional or unintentional, God requires repentance for not fulfilling his intentions. And that repentance must be followed by a change in behavior that reflects obedience.

Let me be clear. *I am not* saying evangelism is sin, or that it could ever be sin. But **if we make evangelism an idol** rather than the means by which people are drawn to Jesus and disciplined to be like him, evangelism can lead to sinning—to disobedience.

Here’s an Old Testament example: The people of Israel worshiped a bronze serpent that God commanded Moses to make for their healing (Numbers 21:8). God had provided it for something good, but Israel turned it into an idol (2Kings 18:4). In the same way, we can take something God has made to

accomplish his purposes and worship that thing rather than using it for the purpose for which God designed it. When we do that, the misdirected worship is sin. It seems to me that sometimes we evangelicals come close to worshiping evangelism rather than making it part of the process of discipleship.

Giving priority to evangelism can also encourage irrelevance. Church planting often follows evangelism before the evangelized even realize the basics of discipleship. Church planting is a good thing. But when it is disconnected from discipleship, the people of such churches often turn people away from the very God they supposedly worship by their exclusive focus on “spiritual” issues. Outsiders often look at this kind of church as irrelevant to the brokenness of their lives and community. They see a local church that seems to be concerned only about spiritual things in a future by-and-by.

A story from the early days of my ministry illustrates this point. I was in Peru and over coffee a university-age young man named Rudy told me how God had shown him the essential combination of *proclamation plus demonstration*. Rudy was from an upper middle-class family. They attended church, but Rudy observed that the church showed little interest in the social problems of the poor. He didn't know why, but *he* had compassion for the poor and wondered why he didn't see it in the church or his family.

Rudy's compassion and the lack of it in his church made him an easy target for communist recruiters. He abandoned his nominal Christianity and became a Marxist during high school.

One day a Christian organization showed the Jesus film in his school. As he watched, he was incensed that his school would promote what his Marxist training called a lie, a distraction from



real-life problems. He went home, picked up the large family Bible, blew the dust off the cover, and began to read. He wanted to prove to himself that Jesus was a destructive myth. He began reading in the Gospel of John. He read about Jesus' care for the downtrodden and wondered if this could possibly be true. Prompted by the Spirit, he got on his knees, looked to heaven and said, "God if you are really there, and if what I am reading is true, I want to follow this Jesus—not Marx." He experienced a powerful sense that this was true and decided to find out more.

Rather than go to his family's church, he sought out a small Pentecostal church in his neighborhood and asked to be taught. The delighted pastor invited him to "discipleship" training where he was taught to use tracts for evangelism. When he was ready he filled his pocket with tracts and rode a bus to one of the slums on the outskirts of the city.

A young man, Juan, was leaning against a small house. Rudy introduced himself and began to witness. Juan responded, "I don't need your Jesus; I need a job. I'm hungry and need food." Rudy pulled out a tract, gave it to Juan and shared what he had learned in his evangelism training. "Juan, Jesus is the bread of life. Believe in him and he will help you." Juan took the tract, tore it into small pieces, crumpled it, put it in his mouth, masticated and finally swallowed the tract. Then he told Rudy, "I told you, I don't need your Jesus, I need bread!"

As Rudy told me this story, tears filled his eyes. I asked, "What did you do?" He told me he went to his new church youth group and shared what had happened. Together they started a bakery, returned to the slums with bread and tracts. Their message was now, "Jesus loves you and because he does, he sent us with this bread."

We believe the gospel is not only the power to save souls but to transform—to bring healing to individuals, families, communities and whole societies. The numbers of new believers and churches planted is sufficiently high for us to expect to see evidence of the impact of these numbers. But as I travel, I see little transformation. Something must be wrong. Could it be that we have a verbal message of good news without its demonstration?

I routinely visit countries where thousands of churches have been planted in recent decades. But, in many cases, instead of being agents actively working to bring God's shalom to those communities, these churches are seen by their communities as isolated and irrelevant. In light of this reality, the triumphalism connected to the reported numbers of people saved, baptized, and joining newly planted churches is dishonoring to our Lord.

Peter Hammond, founder of Frontline Fellowship headquartered in South Africa, writes,

*If the Christian Church was doing what our Lord has plainly commanded in Scripture, then these false religions and anti-Christ ideologies would be in defeat and retreat. **It is the basic failure of our churches to make disciples, teaching obedience to all things that the Lord has commanded, that lies at the root of this catastrophic situation.** The salt has lost its savor. The light is being hid under a bushel. The last Command of Christ is not the first concern of most churches. The Great Commission is not the supreme ambition of most congregations. (boldfacing is my emphasis).<sup>1</sup>*

Again, **is it possible that our failure to make disciples is the key reason that the Church is losing** the battle for the soul of our cultures?

Let's be clear. We know who will win the "war." But the battle is fought in each generation. The church is supposed to be comprised of people who hold themselves to a higher standard of integrity, love, and service, etc. Yet studies show little difference between the lives of the people in the church and in the wider culture. Though I love the Bridegroom and his Church, and though I have passionately given my vocational and avocational life to serve it, my own kids who love the Lord often avoid the institutional church because they are turned off by the discrepancy between what the institutional church proclaims and what they see in her people. I know others who have had the same experience with their children.

Mike Metzger writes a weekly column, Clapham Commentary. His 9/29/15 posting included the following. (For clarity I've rearranged the order of his paragraphs.)

*Charles Grandison Finney coined the term "burned-over district" in 1876 to describe the western and central regions of New York in the early 1800s. He believed evangelists had blazed through the area so often that there was no "fuel" (interested population) left over to "burn" (convert).*

*... Given current trajectories described in the recent Pew study as well as Barna research, it's likely that religious "nones" will constitute 46% of the US population (from 23% today). They're into spirituality but not Christianity. For them, popular renditions of the gospel are been there, done that.*

*Exiles will represent 22% of the country. They're mostly millennials and largely disaffected evangelicals. They believe in Jesus. They're Christians. But for exiles, the prevailing renditions of the gospel and church are been there, done that.*

*Exiles are exiting a tradition Pew calls Evangelical Protestant, often found in independent churches.... Given its current trajectory, Evangelical Protestantism will drop below 20% of the population by 2030 (from 26% today) ... By 2030, it is likely that 80% of the US population will view the gospel as been there, done that. They'll be the new "burned-over district."*

I believe a major reason—if not the primary reason—for the lack of revival and shallowness in evangelized cultures is our focus on evangelism rather than discipleship. That means at least two things: 1) Teaching those who decide to follow Jesus to live in obedience to the Scripture scribes (Galatians 5:13). 2) Preparing followers to be servants like Jesus—willing, humble, sacrificial and joyful (Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 12:2).

We have made an artificial distinction between evangelism and discipleship. Can we repent? If we don't repent, if we don't correct our distortion of evangelism and discipleship, I doubt there will be change in our behavior or the long-term results in our pursuit of Jesus' instructions.

Perhaps such recognition of error and reordering of priority is too much to expect from our generation. We may be so steeped in our paradigms that change will be too difficult. But I believe change is coming. Why? I have traveled the Christian world for more than forty years. As I meet with local church

leaders, they increasingly recognize that the influence of the gospel proclamation as they have been practicing it is not having the expected results on their people, communities and nations. They are hungry for answers and are finding them as they begin to emphasize obedience to Jesus teachings.

NOTE

1. Peter Hammond, *Frontline Fellowship Blog*, October 21, 2014.

## chapter eight 8

### *Measuring discipleship more than conversions*

How can we know when discipleship is occurring? How can we measure the process? Scripture helps us answer the question.

John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask whether Jesus was the Messiah. Notice his reply: *“Go and report to John what you hear and see: he blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor,”* (Matthew 11:4-5). Jesus essentially answered the question by saying, “Look at the evidence.” As to how we measure discipleship, the answer is the same—look at the evidence.

I find it helpful to read the headings in the Gospel of Mark in my NIV Bible: Jesus Drives out an Evil Spirit, Jesus Heals Many, Jesus Heals a Paralytic, Jesus Calms the Storm, The Healing of a Demon-possessed Man, Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand, The Healing of a Deaf and Mute Man, The Healing of a Blind Man at Bethsaida, Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight, and Jesus Clears the Temple. These headings, which illustrate the evidence of Jesus’ messiahship, have implications for whether discipleship is happening in our context. Here are eight.

1. Jesus was passionate to heal brokenness. Likewise, we should be passionate to see the brokenness of our respective worlds healed.

What are we doing individually and corporately to heal the brokenness of those around us? Are we individually reaching out in some practical way to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the powerless and disenfranchised? Are we advocating for those who have little or no voice in society? Is the observing world astonished to see evidence of God's supernatural intervention in our service to others?

2. We see evidence of God's concern for the desecration of sacred places. Likewise, we should give evidence of God's concern for the brokenness of the sacred places and institutions he gave us.

What are we doing individually and corporately to heal the brokenness of the sacred places of our families, our churches, our communities, and our nation?

3. Jesus told us to let our "yes" be yes and our "no" be no.

Do we speak with integrity? Can we be counted on to do what we say? Do we keep our contracts, our covenants, our promises with each other and with those in the world?

4. There is a way in which suffering can reflect Jesus. Jesus suffered sacrificially with joy (Hebrews 12:2). When we suffer for others—especially with joy, we reflect what Jesus did for us. We should suffer and serve till it hurts and do so with joy.

When the people in our communities look at us as individuals and/or our church, do they see followers of Jesus who “give until it hurts” to heal the brokenness in their lives?

5. An evidence of Jesus’ character is illustrated by the loving care that the first believers had for one another. Likewise, there should be clear evidence among us that we generously share with one another.

What do the people of our individual communities see and hear in terms of our care for one another?

6. Paul commends the Macedonians for giving beyond their ability to needy believers in Jerusalem—believers they had never met. Likewise, we should sacrificially give and extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters we have never met.

Do the people, especially Christian brothers and sisters, see God’s glory in our generosity? Are the people of our individual neighborhoods touched by God’s glory through our hospitality?

7. Jesus told us that to be his disciples we had to “hate” those things that might come as a higher priority than he does.

Are we rejecting the idols of individuality, dogma, materialism, sports, etc. in our lives and cultures? Is Jesus becoming more and more our Lord rather than just savior?



8. Jesus demonstrates God's sovereignty over the cosmos. Likewise, we should reflect that sovereignty through the cultural mandate God gave in Genesis.

What are we doing individually and corporately to reflect God's concern for the brokenness of our physical environment?

Another perspective from which to measure discipleship is the description of Jesus' attitude and attributes in Philippians 2. After Adam sinned, there was no human picture of God's intention, until Jesus came. Only then did we see the perfect human being. None of the biblical patriarchs is an adequate measure of God's intentions for us. Not Abraham. Not Moses. Not David. Jesus was and is the only perfect human model. When we look at him, whom do we see? Amazingly, we not only see God, but we see that God is a servant. According to the Spirit speaking through Paul (Philippians 2:5-8), we see that the characteristics of this perfect servant are:

1. A willingness to voluntarily serve those who were undeserving.
2. A humble spirit.
3. A willingness to serve sacrificially—to the point of giving his life.

In Hebrews 12:2 we have a further description of this servanthood: he served joyfully.

This servanthood characteristic of Jesus mirrors the clearest reflection of what God intended when he made us. Why? Jesus was the perfect reflection of his Father. Have you ever thought of God as a servant? That's what he is! He is more than that, but

God is a servant. Jesus perfectly reflected God's servant heart. In Philippians 2:9 we see that, because of this unique and perfect reflection of the image of God in man, God exalted Jesus to the highest place, giving him a name that is above every name.

What does that mean for us? It means that the closer our servanthood matches that of Jesus, the greater is our resemblance to him. This is incredibly good news. It means that true discipleship is attainable by anyone—including the poorest, the least educated, the lowest born, etc. We don't have to have a high level of education, social status, financial resources, etc., to be this kind of servant.

How do you measure your discipleship and the discipleship of those you disciple? Compare yourself and them with Jesus, the model servant, who served willingly, humbly, sacrificially and joyfully. How do you and they measure up?

Let me add another observation about the motive or goal of this kind of servanthood. It is not just to serve in order to be a servant. Instead it is serving to help those served grow toward God's intention. That is why Jesus serves us. It is to help us grow from where we are toward God's intentions for us. There isn't a better instrument for measuring discipleship than this list of Jesus' servant characteristics.

A third measurement list is found in the criteria Jesus listed in the Sermon on the Mount. When others observe the disciple over time, to what degree do they see these Kingdom characteristics? Jesus spoke of the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, peacemakers, those who are persecuted because of their righteousness, and those who are insulted because of their commitment to him. Jesus was teaching us that to meet these

characteristics is to be perfect (Matthew 5:48) as God is perfect. Of course, these characteristics of a disciple will not be fully achieved until we see Jesus face-to-face. But this is the goal we are to increasingly move toward.

How we measure discipleship is an important issue for those who disciple and for those being disciplined. The criteria we use will have a huge impact on the result. In general, the Spirit through Paul tells us that the goal is increasing growth in the characteristics Jesus modeled: uncomplaining obedience, humility, sacrifice, and joy.

We cannot hope to effectively measure these things from an individual perspective—especially our own. We need the revelation of God’s perspective from the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit also speaks through others who truly love us enough to be honest and tell us what they see. Ask the Spirit. Ask those who truly love you. If you are in a small group, what would it be like to honestly evaluate each other? Scary? Helpful? Fruitful?

To be like Jesus means to reproduce not just new followers or new believers but disciples. Jesus had many followers but he focused his time and energy on the twelve. They did not merely believe in him; they were willing to sacrifice all to follow him. Where are you and/or your local church concentrating your time, energy and financial resources to reproduce the character of Jesus in others? Where are your disciples concentrating theirs?

The above measures cannot be accomplished in human strength. They are the consequence of God’s supernatural intervention. I submit, however, that we can see them if we meet God’s conditions—willingness, humility, sacrifice, and joyful obedience.

We long to see those characteristics become reality, but we need to remember that they are primarily a by-product of living as God intends rather than goals in themselves. If we work toward these results without teaching God's people to live the gospel in their daily lives and worlds, our communities will not be transformed.

Yes, the Body of Christ should engage both in personal development of Jesus' character and in corporate efforts to advance justice and mercy. Corporate efforts and programs without the obedience of individual followers of Jesus will not produce transformation. If the whole world were converted but not disciplined there would be no biblical transformation.

Some church leaders I have met say something like, "We are discipling our people to serve others!" I ask them to describe specifically how the time, and energy of their leaders is spent in discipling. The response almost always reflects time spent in things like Bible study, small groups, Sunday School, and projects that involve a small percentage of the congregation in an occasional few hours of community service. These activities are assumed to lead people to live out a lifestyle of being Jesus' hands and feet. Such church activities seldom produce vigorous disciples who look like Jesus. **What is absent is a strategy of leaders showing would-be disciples how to serve, followed by coaching, mentoring, cheerleading, and joyfully holding them accountable.** (See the discussion on accountability in Chapter 11, "Principle 5, Walking Together with Integrity – Accountability")



## chapter nine 9

### *How missiology informs discipleship*

It is interesting to review how Jesus' passion to see people come to faith in him has been depicted throughout the history of the Western Church. In Chapter 1 of his book *Ancient Future Faith*, theologian Robert Webber presents a chronology of Christianity as follows:

Classical—AD 100 to 600

Medieval—AD 600 to 1500

Reformation—AD 1500 to 1750

Modern—AD 1750 to 1980

Postmodern—AD 1980 to Present

Webber's chronology can be applied to changes in the church's missiology as well.

To consider the evolution of missiology in the Western Church, we need to reflect on the emphasis of the church in each era, since a church's emphasis will influence its missiology. At the risk of overgeneralization, I suggest the following general emphasis of the Church during each of Webber's periods:

PERIOD—EMPHASIS

Classical—Kingdom

Medieval—Institutionalization

Reformation—Scripture and Faith

Modern—Rationality

Postmodern—Relativity

The emphasis of each era suggests the general direction of that period’s missiology. Here is one way to look at the missiology of each era.

EMPHASIS—MISSIOLOGY

Classical—Incarnation

Medieval—Institutional membership

Reformation—Faith in Scripture and in Jesus

Modern—Numbers-driven evangelism and church planting

Postmodern (proposed)—Authentic living and Incarnation

A summary of the above in graphic form looks like this:

<b>Christianity</b>		
<b>EMPHASIS</b>	<b>PERIODS</b>	<b>MISSIOLOGY</b>
Kingdom	Classical 100 - 600 AD	Incarnation
Institutions	Medieval 600 – 1500 AD	Join the Institution
Scripture Only Faith Only	Reformation 1500 – 1750 AD	Faith in Jesus
Rationality	Modern 1750 – 1980 AD	#s Driven, Evan. & Church Plant.
Relativism	Postmodern 1980 - Present	Authentic living - Incarnation

We need to return to the missiology of the early Church, what Webber calls an ancient-future faith. What is that? It is allowing our hands to be the hands of Jesus. Our feet his feet. Our minds, eyes, ears, mouth to become his mind, eyes, ears, mouth. The proposed missiology for our time could be summarized this way—to be who we say we are and who God intends us to be—the Body of Christ in practice as well as in our theology. In summary, it is incarnational living.

Rodney Stark’s study of the early church convinced him that the primary cause of the growth of Christianity during the early part of the Classical period was the lifestyle of the early Christians. Early believers incarnated Jesus. Stark says this “new kind of humanity” attracted others to become citizens of the Kingdom of God and of his Christ.<sup>1</sup>

If we would abandon our evangelical emphasis on the number of converts and churches and return to this ancient missiology, I am convinced that the world would be drawn to Jesus. Jesus would touch them through us. Oswald Chambers says, “We look for God to manifest himself to his children: God only manifests himself in his children.”<sup>2</sup> Evangelism would be a by-product of our lives, the way God shows himself through us, rather than a separate category of Christian activity. And those who come to Jesus would be much more likely to understand what it means to be his followers because of the modeling of those through whom Jesus attracted them.

Am I calling for less evangelism? No. We must communicate the biblical truths of the horror of hell and the dying love of Jesus that rescues all of us who have all fallen short of God’s requirement for holiness. **I’m not calling for less evangelism. I am calling for more biblical discipleship.**



The bottom line? Full discipleship is living incarnationally. That was the discipleship reflected by the early church. That is the kind of discipleship needed today. When Jesus lives in and through us, the unbelieving world will come to us and say, “We have seen that God is with you. Please tell us more” (Zechariah 8:2)

A short word about the importance of worldview and discipleship is in order. With Darrow Miller, I am a founder of the Disciple Nations Alliance, <[www.disciplenations.org](http://www.disciplenations.org)>. Part of our passion is to help churches understand the importance of equipping believers—especially young people—with the ability to understand and critique worldviews that compete with Christianity and to do so with understanding and logic. Understanding worldview—especially in cultures that have been influenced and shaped by the materialistic philosophy coming from the Enlightenment—is crucial to reasoned (rather than blind) faith. Many young people lose their faith in secular schools because they have little training to understand a biblical worldview, or to counter the secular worldviews presented there. While acknowledging the importance of a well-informed apologetic, I want to state as strongly as I can that being trained to obey Jesus and therefore to reflect him is more important to our witness than an intellectual apologetic.

May his Kingdom come now in our lives. May his will be done now as it is in Heaven.

Is this possible? Yes!! In the words of Paul, “To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:29).

NOTES

1. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*.
2. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, April 21.



# chapter ten 10

## *Miscellaneous thoughts about discipleship*

### **God is the source and power for healing**

God promised Solomon, *If my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land*, (2Chronicles 7:14). God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This promise is repeated throughout the Old Testament in passages like Deuteronomy 30 and Isaiah 58. God doesn't change. The implication of this promise to Solomon is as true for us as it was for Israel, so the abiding principle remains. When God's people live as he instructs his blessing and healing and transformation follow.

We often miss the power of this promise by thinking that if we just do the right things, carry out the right projects, get into positions of influence in the key sectors of society, and apply biblical principles, etc. we can heal our brokenness. Not true! We cannot heal ourselves. The world is broken beyond human wisdom or enterprise. Yes, God created humans in his image, and he uses the abilities he gave us, but it is not human effort that brings healing and transformation. The healing for which we long is only possible by the supernatural intervention of God

in human affairs. Only God can heal our individual and corporate brokenness.

There are dangers in our talk of healing and transformation. One danger is that we can take our eyes off God as the source and power for our healing. Then we can observe what we think is progress and take credit for it. Of course we publicly give credit to God, but risk an unspoken smugness that thinks, “We did that.” A second danger is that we make transformation our goal rather than God’s glory. We glorify God by living as he asks us—in such a close relationship with Jesus that his will becomes our will.

Here is an illustration: A few years ago I visited the Democratic Republic of Congo. While there I saw a hint of God’s people living his way and his resulting power to heal and transform. The first instance was while driving from the airport to the city. My first visit to Kinshasa almost ten years earlier was to a city whose main streets looked and smelled like a series of garbage dumps as we drove into the city. This time the road was clean and workers were sweeping not only the gutters but the streets. Amazed, I commented about the change to our Harvest country leader. He casually said, “We started that.” Thinking this was hyperbole, I asked what he meant. He reminded me that in our training we encourage churches to demonstrate God’s glory by picking up the trash in their neighborhoods. This seems like such a small thing, but it shows God’s love and care for creation. How could this small act of obedience have such significance? The churches his team had trained were doing just that, and the government noticed. Not only did they notice, they hired unemployed laborers to keep the main streets as clean as

you would find in well-manicured cities. God turned a small thing into a big thing!

In the second instance, my visit coincided with the graduation of several hundred students from vocational training in a large church. I even got to hand out some diplomas. Later I learned that the pastor was a fourth-generation trainee: that is, his trainers had been trained by those who learned from the first Harvest trainers in the Congo. He had a vision for the hundreds of unemployed youth in his community. One Sunday he challenged his congregation to provide vocational training for these young people. He reminded his people that there were many professions represented in the membership: mechanics, cooks, hair dressers, computer technicians, drivers, dress makers, etc. He challenged them to hold training sessions in their respective vocations for community youth—free of charge. He announced that the church would provide the space in their spacious building for the classrooms.

The classes had started two years before I arrived. This was the first graduation. I will never forget the cheers from the graduates as their vocational class graduated. The cheers were not for students themselves but for the teachers who had sacrificially given themselves to teach the skills to kids who otherwise would not have had such an opportunity.

Each of these examples is a taste of what God does when people of the Body allow Christ to live out his life through them. Imagine the healing and transformation that could happen if all the churches in Kinshasa—or in your city—did the same.

When God's people glorify him by living as Christ calls them to live, only then does the church fulfill Paul's prophetic vision, that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God

should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 3:10). God’s intention is that the Church is the administration of God’s “manifold wisdom and power” of reconciliation and restoration displayed to the onlooking principalities and powers. It is thus that the fullness of Christ—which is incomprehensible love—is seen and felt by a broken world. We see this, for example, in Ephesians 1:23; 4:13, 17-19. These passages teach that the priority mission of the church is making disciples—equipping those who have come to Christ to glorify God through imitating him as servants who are willing, humble, sacrificial, and joyful.

John DelHousaye, author of *Engaging Ephesians: An Intermediate Reader and Exegetical Guide*, writes:

A weakness in the Protestant evangelical tradition has been an overemphasis on individual salvation and the beginning of that salvation. Although Paul always places the church at the center of God’s plan for the restoration of all things, this truth is especially emphatic in Ephesians. He presents the church as the body of Christ, the crucified yet resurrected one, who is her head. However, the bride is not fully mature or sanctified. Christ has given the gifts of Ephesians 4:11 to equip God’s people for the formation of one another according to the Father’s purpose by the Spirit. The word translated “equipping” (*katartismos*) may also be rendered “training” or “discipline.” Collectively, we may picture an army (Ephesians 6:10-20). Elsewhere (2Corinthians 13:9), Paul uses the related noun *katartisis*, which signifies “maturation.” These are all ways of describing

discipleship, the focus of the early church as we find in the Great Commission. The apostle surrounds the verse with a concern for truth, a right understanding of the gospel. A “gospel” divorced from this context is only a torso of reality. The church grows or matures when the truth of the gospel is actualized and every joint serves the whole. Each part supports, energizes, and nourishes the other, as the entire body is guided by the head.

***Disciple-making is not rocket science. It is common sense.***

It is simply the equipping of Jesus-followers to obey him, that is, to give testimony to what he has done in their lives, and to demonstrate God’s love, mercy, justice, and holiness as a lifestyle. This doesn’t require formal teaching as much as modeling, accountability, encouragement and joyful sharing. The beauty and winsomeness of a (biblical) disciple’s practice attracts unbelievers to the Kingdom and the Holy Spirit draws them into it.

**Following Jesus**

At what point were the disciples converted? We don’t know. The first disciples believed in Jesus’ name early on (see John 1). However, Jesus didn’t require them to believe in him before he began to disciple them. Instead, he invited them to “Follow me.” We are sure of Peter’s conversion when he confessed that Jesus was the Messiah (Matthew 16:16). I sense that some if not many of the disciples were converted in the process of following Jesus. When they began to follow, they didn’t have to go through an intellectual process of knowing who Jesus was or what he taught. But they were drawn to him. They wanted to know him better—



they wanted to follow. As they followed, they came to know, to believe and to imitate.

When discipleship is our passion, evangelism will largely be a by-product of God's people living the way he calls them to live. This is not necessarily conversion first followed by learning to be a disciple. It is learning to follow Jesus and discovering who he is in the process. I suspect Jesus' disciples were "converted" in the process of being disciplined rather than the other way around.

Let me give several examples. The first is from a program that trains unemployed young people in multiple centers in Africa for skills in finding a job or starting their own businesses.

Our WORK 4 A LIVING Centers are hubs where the unemployed poor come to get a job or learn how to start a business. We teach them everything, especially interviewing skills, worldview and work ethic. Our ultimate goal, however, is discipleship. How do we get these broken young people to understand, see and respond to the goodness of God?

On Day two of our 13-day program, we give them a challenge to go and serve their community without "Christian talk." We explain that if you serve people in the workplace, you develop personally. We want to see THEM develop so we tell them that they need to practice serving people, and every day we will ask for feedback.

Initially they report back on arbitrary actions. "I picked up someone's pen they dropped!" Or, "I helped with the dishes!" But invariably one person breaks it wide open when they come back and tell us something amazing, "My neighbor is HIV+ and she struggles, and I washed her!" "I went shopping for the local orphanage!" "I went to the local school and cleaned the yard!"

This starts to inspire the students and they do more!!! This carries on for two weeks.

We understand that what we are doing is discipling students, before they even know who Jesus is, by asking them to love their neighbour. When they do what He wants, they are discipled. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, that you love one another” (John 13:35). If we can get our students to love others, we are discipling them!

During the WORK 4 A LIVING program, we present the Gospel and many give their lives to Jesus and, of course, some do not. On the LAST DAY of their training, we tell them WHY they have been serving in the last few weeks – we give them the full picture of, “If you love God, you will love your neighbor.”

We ask our students if they know what the two most important commandments in the Bible are? Often they will say, “Don’t steal and don’t covet your neighbor’s wife!” So we tell them, they actually are:

1. LOVE GOD
2. LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR (Matthew 22:36-40)

BUT John 14:15 also says “If you love me, you will obey me.”

So, if you LOVE GOD, YOU will obey Him. And what is the BEST way to obey Him according to the Bible? LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR!!!

SO, we tell our students, what this says is that what you have been doing in the last two weeks by serving your neighbor is more pleasing to God than the pastor who has a thousand people in his church but cares nothing for his community. You please

God more when you serve your neighbor than the person who tithes thousands of dollars to the church but cares nothing for his neighbor. Whether you are a believer or not, whether you like God or not, you have been DELIGHTING God over the last few weeks as you have been caring for your neighbor.

And the tears fall. “I have been delighting God? Can it be?”

John 14:21: “If you love me, you will do what I have said, and My Father will love you. I will also love you and show you what I am like.”

Keep in mind that OUR ultimate goal is to meet with them and disciple THEM. So after all of this, on the last day we present the service challenge. (In Africa we call it the Ubuntu challenge or Harambee challenge.) By now they have completed our WORK 4 A LIVING training. The students have heard the Gospel, some have become believers, and others have not. Hopefully many have a new worldview. We want to make full use of this opportunity to draw people into continuing to serve, thereby:

1. Discipling them into the things that please God
2. Attracting them to small groups where they can continue serving the community, and we can subsequently continue to disciple them into the things that please God.

So the SERVICE CHALLENGE is where they continue serving their neighbors in a slightly more formalized way (a type of seed project) and after three weeks, they will receive a CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE from the WORK 4 A LIVING Center that they can put in their Resume.

We have seen the most amazing things. The poorest of the poor serving the poor. In Nairobi we had a group of girls from Kibera slum, the largest urban slum in Africa, serving, cleaning the drains of a local orphanage for disabled kids!!

Students have come back with plans of how they will tutor local children at poorer schools or teach English in their communities or look after all their neighbors' kids after school to stop them running wild in the streets. Every week they bring feedback which in turn has allowed us to disciple them in the ways of God.

The desired end result? People who have broken the cycle of poverty over their lives as they are now working, loving their neighbors, changing the world as they live the way He intended us to live.

A second example is from a friend who worked in Muslim Bangladesh for many years shared her experience with me. The majority of the staff in the organization her husband led did not come from a Christian background. Her husband had challenged her to create a staff development program. She told me,

God led me to highlight biblical values. I did not fully understand his purposes. I saw biblical values as guiding principles for all of life and hoped, at least, that staff would practice them within the organization and change its culture.

I was amazed how they embraced these values and put them into practice at home as well as at work. For example, many husbands served their wives by doing household chores culturally reserved for women. One of the most surprising outcomes to me was that colleagues

testified that they had come close to God as they obeyed him and practiced his values.

I realized I was observing what Jesus said in John 6:43, ‘No one comes to me except the Father draws him.’ Jesus’ teaching and example and the guidance of the Holy Spirit were drawing them to the Father. I came to realize that God’s purpose was to teach them *the Way* as they practiced the biblical values in obedience to him; *the Way* to restored relationships with God, others and creation and a restored attitude to self; and the way to discover Jesus who is *the Way*. His heart was also for them to discover truth and a biblical worldview through what was taught and directly through their growing relationship with God. I understood in a new way Jesus’ pronouncement, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’”

We were created with a place in our souls that can only be filled by our Creator. When we begin to live as he wants—even before we we learn to trust in him—the door to that place in our heart begins to supernaturally open to the personal Love that passionately desires to fill that space. As these people begin to take even the smallest steps to live as Jesus calls his disciples to live—even if they don’t yet know about Jesus—hearts will begin to open to eventually knowing, believing and following him.

A third example is from a friend who works with young people in a country with a very small Christian minority. His ministry looks for groups of unreached youth—punk rockers, skaters, break dancers, etc. They recently began to work with motorcycle gangs. My friend took his motorcycle to a repair shop and began a friendship with a mechanic who was a gang

member. He discovered that this gang was tired of their negative image, being chased by the police, etc. My friend suggested that Jesus' teachings might help change that image. That led to meetings with the gang in which they studied Jesus' teachings and began to love their neighbors by planting trees, cleaning up garbage, help older people across the street during rain storms, tsunami relief—basically “doing church.”

My friend writes, “They don't necessarily look like typical ‘church people’ but they are all on a new journey to Jesus and they are wanting to impact their part of the world with a message of hope that transforms.”

## **Abiding**

Jesus taught his disciples to so abide in him that they would naturally and joyfully reflect him as their rabbi. What does it mean to be like Jesus? It means to be a servant who willingly, humbly, sacrificially and joyfully places others' needs above their own (Philippians 2 and Hebrews 12). This is not possible in our own strength. It is possible in his strength. His strength is available only as we abide in him.

Real and lasting evangelism comes in serving others as we abide in Jesus. Oswald Chambers reminds us that Jesus' strength came from obedience to his Father—dwelling in him, and that our strength comes from abiding in Jesus.<sup>1</sup> If we don't have the supernatural strength of the Holy Spirit, we will soon be exhausted in our attempts to be like Jesus.

What if you are not yet converted? Can such a one abide in Jesus? Since it is the Spirit who draws people to Jesus, and God knows who those people are, I suspect that Christ's spirit is

working toward a future and more complete abiding in those he is calling before conversion.

### **Discipleship is not easy**

I am not saying that being a disciple or making disciples is easy. It is not complicated but it is not easy. It means submitting to that comprehensive and absolute authority that Jesus claimed in Matthew 28. It means that his commands and his purposes are to be followed in every sector of our lives. It may include great sacrifice. It may mean going to prison, or giving our lives to stand firm. That is not easy, or even possible, without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Austrian Franz Jägerstätter was a martyr for his faith during World War II. Revered in his community, he was outspoken in his refusal to compromise with National Socialism. He rejected all attempts to cajole him into accepting conscription into the Nazi military. Friendly local police, clergy, friends, and his own family pled for Franz to change his mind. Even the judges at his trial begged him to recant his refusal, promising he would not have to bear arms. But Franz stood firm, stating repeatedly that to acquiesce would be a lie and he would thereby be sinning against God all the more.

Just before his death, Franz wrote to his wife these words:

I thank you once more from my heart for everything that you have done for me in my lifetime, for all the love and sacrifice that you have borne for me. ... It was not possible for me to free you from the pain that you must now suffer on my account. ... I thank Jesus, too, that I am privileged to suffer and even die for Him. ... How pain-

ful life often is when one lives as a halfway Christian; it is more like vegetating than living.

...The true Christian is to be recognized more in his works and deeds than in his speech. The surest mark of all is found in deeds showing love of neighbor. To do unto one's neighbor what one would desire for himself is more than merely not doing to others what one would not want done to himself. Let us love our enemies...

Franz Jägerstätter was a disciple who lived – and died – in loving commitment to Christ his Lord.<sup>2</sup>

A missionary friend, Jim Yost, sometimes baptizes converts who come from anti-Christian backgrounds. Their family often has the “right” to kill members who have converted to Christianity. Jim does not ask the convert if they have put their faith in Jesus, but rather, “Are you prepared to die for Jesus?” If those who have come for baptism don't answer in the affirmative, he won't baptize them.

American Christianity has a tendency to soften the hard edges of the gospel. This is a huge error. Yes, we need to be humble in sharing our commitment to the authority of Christ, but the rest of our culture needs to know where we stand, and that we stand without compromise in our commitment to his authority.

## NOTES

1. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, April 21.
2. <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/nonviolence/franz-jagerstatter-a-quiet-martyr>





# Part Two



chapter eleven **11**

*Introduction to “The Discipline of Love”*

There are probably more discipleship strategies than there are denominations and parachurch organizations. These programs most often have goals like:

1. Personal piety—the vertical relationship between the disciple and God
2. Knowledge of Scripture
3. Learning how to pray
4. Training disciples to evangelize and/or plant churches

Classic spiritual disciplines include abstinence, fasting, solitude, silence, honoring the Sabbath, Bible study, prayer, worship, community and soul friendship, reflection, etc. Each of these is an important part of discipleship, but these programs often miss what I feel is the most important task of discipleship—living out the character of Jesus in relationship to others. The first goals listed have an essential deficiency of an outward focus. Living out the character of Jesus has an outward focus. It is the character of servanthood described in Philippians 2 and Hebrews 12:2. Traditional spiritual disciplines, the legacy of monasticism, tend to focus on inward piety. We assume that Christlike love toward others will naturally follow. But love is

not the natural fruit of other disciplines; it needs to be a practiced discipline itself.

Love as a discipline has a direct outward focus. Its by-products include both inward conformity to the image of Christ and outward demonstration of his character and love for others. The goal of making disciples is most directly attained as we equip God's people to habitually do the primary thing that Jesus commanded—to demonstrate their love for God by loving their neighbors. Repeated practice becomes a habit that shapes our thinking and our worldview.

Some pastors expend great energy encouraging their people to become doers of the Word—but don't see results. Why? For multiple reasons. One reason I frequently hear is that the people being discipled really don't want to do what Christ asks. That may be partially true, but I think what is often seen as unwillingness to do the will of God is really more ignorance of how to obey rather than an unwillingness to obey. Many Christians lack practical knowledge about how to obey Jesus in their context. Many also lack a cohesive strategy for realistic and practical application.

In this chapter I introduce a tool to apply the discipleship principles previously mentioned. It is called “The Discipline of Love” and can be used in the following ways:

1. A *pre-evangelism* introduction to the lifestyle Jesus calls his followers to live.
2. An initiation into the outward demonstration of following Jesus for *new believers*. Such an initiation should be included with teaching the content of discipleship and other spiritual disciplines.

3. An ongoing and renewing exercise or discipline for *longer-term believers* who truly desire to practice the practical and outward expression of Jesus' love but have not known how.

Our mission uses several simple tools to start the process of discipleship—to initiate the process of living out of the character of Jesus. These include the Discipline of Love, Seed Projects, and BASICS. They are all available for free download on our website (<[www.harvestfoundation.org](http://www.harvestfoundation.org)>). In this book I highlight only one, the Discipline of Love. Note that these tools can be used in the process of discipleship—before, during, or following conversion.

For more than thirty years across cultures and within a wide range of demographic contexts, we have found these tools—and particularly the Discipline of Love—to be excellent starting points for discipleship.

Merely reviewing and practicing these tools will not produce disciples. They are aids leading toward the goal—to look and behave like Jesus. Achieving this goal, however, is not our responsibility. It is God's. Our role is to live—to do—as Jesus asks.

The primary element of discipleship is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. As we saw in the first part of this book, an essential way to demonstrate that reality is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. When we do that, we show that we not only love God, we also love our neighbor. Therefore, we meet God's conditions for the supernatural process of our healing—and ultimately the healing of our nations. That is the

promise of 2Chronicles 7:14. God is the healer. We are not. Our role is to live as he has called us to live. His role is to heal.

The idea has been effectively reduced to something as simple as this: **Guided by the Holy Spirit, find at least one way today or this week to significantly demonstrate God’s love to a “neighbor.”** Then in a small accountability group share: 1) What you did; 2) What God taught you through those steps of obedience; 3) What results you saw in the person(s) you served; 4) On an ongoing basis, repeat the above process daily to once a week.

The discipline of love is that simple. In fact, you don’t need to read further if you will just *do* what I’ve just described in the above paragraph.

This exercise is based on the premise that discipleship requires a disciplined approach to obeying what I call the “irreducible minimum” of the Great Commandment—loving our neighbors. What do I mean by the irreducible minimum?

Six passages record the Great Commandment in the New Testament. Four are from Jesus, two from Paul.

Love God and Neighbor

- Matthew 22:36-40
- Mark 12:28-31, 33
- Luke 10:27

Love Neighbor

- Matthew 7:12
- Romans 13:9
- Galatians 5:14

Why is “loving your neighbor” the irreducible core of the Great Commandment, the summary of the law and the prophets? In three of these statements (those in the left column) both parts of the Great Commandment—loving God and loving one’s neighbor—are included. In the other three (those in the

right column), only one of the two parts of the Great Commandment is quoted as a summary of both. This one—loving our neighbor—is not the one Jesus said is the more important (Matthew 22:37-38). He said the more important of the two is loving God. However, both Jesus and Paul make the lesser of the two the irreducible summary of the Law and the Prophets. John explains this apparent discrepancy. He says that loving our neighbor shows that our love for God is genuine (1John 3:17).

As we saw earlier in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus implied that we don't love God if we don't love our neighbor. This idea is backed up by passages including Matthew 5:43-45, Colossians 3:12-14, and 1John 4:16-17. Yes, we are saved by grace, and if that salvation is genuine, it will be accompanied by a love demonstrated for others.

The Discipline of Love is truly a personal discipline, and it is greatly aided by deliberateness and accountability. Preferably it is done in the context of community such as a small group that practices the discipline together with both encouragement and accountability. I think the Discipline of Love is far superior for developing disciples than projects done by groups. Why? Here are two reasons:

1. The Discipline of Love is designed to be a lifestyle that includes discrete practices, that is, individual actions (done daily or weekly) as well as group actions (performed once per month or quarter). The individual practices are essential because a monthly or quarterly group project does not comprise a lifestyle of discipleship. It's too easy to do a group project once a



month and neglect loving one's neighbor until the next group project.

2. Group projects are usually initiated and planned by others. The Discipline of Love requires personal initiation, organization and implementation.

Yes, the Discipline of Love is harder—much harder—than joining a group project, but it is far more effective at producing the character of Jesus in a disciple in a shorter period of time. Many of the people I have mentored through the Discipline of Love have told me that this particular discipline radically changed their lives in two ways. 1) They became aware of a far greater spectrum of opportunities to serve others. 2) They learned a discipline that actually made a difference in becoming more like Jesus. Also, many have told me that though the concept seemed simple, it was one of the most difficult exercises they had ever attempted.

The model I describe below has come out of both personal experience and years of application in multiple cultures. To be effective, however, it must be contextualized.<sup>1</sup> The format here is appropriate for mentoring people who are more or less literate and linear in their thinking, but it works equally well as a very simple idea. For example, rather than using the grid with twelve categories of serving, the Discipline of Love could be as simple as stated earlier, that is, **make a commitment to find at least one way that is new or fresh to you to show God's love to someone in your world—family, church or community—and gather weekly with peers who have made the same commitment who will share what they have done, discuss and pray for those who served and who have been served.** Ideally this

discipline should be done daily (several times a week at a minimum) over several months until the practice becomes a new lifestyle.

The Discipline of Love can be included as part of already ongoing small groups. However, it will take a radical restructuring of the usual small-group *focus* and *schedule*.

*Focus:* Most small groups are inwardly focused. Few small-group activities end up in tangible, outward demonstration of Christ's love. Like the Dead Sea, these groups often kill the life within because there is little or no focus on serving those outside the group. As a consequence, I have observed that the average length of individual participation in small groups with which I have been a part of is about two years.

*Schedule:* Most small groups take about 1½ to 2 hours for their meetings, which include food, fellowship, study, discussion and prayer. All this inwardly focused activity leaves little time for something new. To incorporate a Discipline of Love component into a group will require setting aside sufficient time for each person to share their experience of serving since the group last met, as well as group debriefing, discovery and encouragement, and prayer for those who have been served. Depending on the group size, this alone can easily take an hour. I recommend at least 40% of the meeting be given to Discipline of Love activities.

*Sample Schedule Comparison:* Below is a matrix that illustrates a sample traditional small group, and an adjustment to make room for including the Discipline of Love as the outreach component. The recommended change is shaded.

<b>Components</b>	<b>Traditional Times</b>	<b>New Time</b>
Fellowship	30 min—33%	20 min—22%
Worship	10 min—11%	10 min—11%
Study	40 min—44%	15 min—17%
Prayer	10 min—11%	10 min—11%
<b>Additions</b>		
Accountability		20 min—22%
Planning		15 min—17%

One small group that developed a simplified version of the Discipline of Love as its main focus grew from three people to four groups of twelve to fifteen people in two years. Almost all the new people had been recipients of this group’s “love actions” and had become new followers of Jesus as a result of Jesus’ love being extended to them by the individual members’ disciplines. The small-group activity also included study, prayer, and fellowship. But the outward activity of this group was primarily focused on learning to extend the love they had received to other people in their individual worlds.

### **God’s Glory**

As discussed in the first part of this book, the ultimate goal of a disciple’s life and service is God’s glory. Living as he has called us to live—as servants—is the best way we can glorify him. So, equipping those we are discipling for works of service is an essential means to that end. Different discipleship scenarios can be effective. The purpose of this presentation is not to propose one method as much as to encourage the embrace of principles on which effective strategies can be built. While strategy needs to

be contextualized, biblical principles are nonnegotiable and they work across cultures for whatever strategy is employed. These principles could be articulated in various ways, but I will share those that, in my opinion, appear to work in any cultural or generational context.

Here are seven principles.

### **Principle 1: Reliance on Enabling Grace**

*But if you stay in me and obey my commands, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted! My true disciples produce bountiful harvests. This brings great glory to my Father.... When you obey me you are living in my love, just as I obey my Father and live in his love. I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your cup of joy will overflow! (John 15:7-8, 10-12 TLB).*

The first principle is coaching disciples to find and maintain a relationship with Jesus. Unless disciples are abiding in Christ, other principles for equipping will not produce disciples who bring glory to God. Their efforts will be man-powered. They may look good to an outside observer, but their "service" will have little lasting eternal impact.

I was recently challenged by a colleague about what I meant by reliance on enabling grace. A metaphor Jesus used to describe this practice is grafting. When grafting a branch into a vine, it is essential that both are cut and placed together so that the parts immediately under the bark of both vine and branch are in close contact with each other. Only in a good graft can the sap of the vine flow into the branch. In our relationship with Jesus, we have to stay so tightly in contact with him that the Spirit of Jesus

flows from him into us. Only then do we have the ability to bear kingdom fruit.

For me, this means that the first thing on my mind as I awaken is a practice I learned from C.S. Lewis. I say, “Good morning, Father. Good morning, Spirit. Good morning, Jesus.” Then I intentionally practice the awareness of the Trinity throughout the day. This enables me to easily talk to God no matter what I am doing or what the circumstances are. This doesn’t take the place of the biblical “in the closet” quiet time of prayer and meditation but is in addition to it. It is amazing how this awareness of the presence of the Lord can enable us to rely on Jesus and his grace. A model that further describes this behavior is Brother Lawrence’s book, *Practicing the Presence of God*. As a cook in a monastery, Brother Lawrence made it a discipline to be aware of Jesus in the mundane routine of preparing meals, washing dishes, and cleaning the kitchen.

Not only do disciples need a solid connection to their Lord, they must also learn constant reliance on the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to do what they cannot do in their own strength. Perfectly and consistently doing the Father’s will in one’s own strength is impossible. But “*Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” (Romans 7:25), obedience is possible. It is the continual practice of obedience that moves service from obligation to joy, from legalism to freedom, from religion to grace.

I don’t mean to ignore other spiritual disciplines like fasting, observing the Sabbath, sacraments, etc.—but I think the practice of abiding is the essential component of reliance on enabling grace.

## Principle 2: Integrity and Modeling

*Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19).*

The second most important element in equipping is integrity between the messenger and the message, between the discipler and the disciple. Equippers must be modelers. Jesus demonstrated and taught that doing comes before teaching (Acts 1:1). In other words, equippers must develop the spiritual DNA of humble, sacrificial, and joyful servanthood in their own lives before they encourage their disciples or those they mentor to develop and practice the same.

When I was writing discipleship materials for my doctoral studies in the early 1990s, I was convicted by the Spirit that the discipleship material I was developing would have no power unless I was writing from personal experience. Thus began an intensive year of exploring the spiritual discipline of sacrificially loving others. That exploration shaped the rest of my life.

For example, let me share a small discipline I began then and which I regularly practiced when I worked from our office. Before I left home for the office I put a plastic grocery bag or two in my back pocket. As I walked the two blocks from my parking space to the office, I picked up trash and sometimes subconsciously hummed "This is My Father's World." I didn't talk about it, and I didn't do it to be noticed. Actually, I was self-conscious about this strange-looking behavior, but I did it anyway. Whether this expression of service was noticed or not, it

allowed me to teach and mentor others about small and larger demonstrations of our Father’s love.

### **Principle 3: Ongoing Teaching**

*But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil* (Hebrews 5:14 NIV).

*And I have been a constant example of how you can help the poor by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35 NLT).

The third principle is ongoing teaching—the continual reinforcement and coaching regarding the centrality of what can be called faith-praxis. This emphasis on living out the irreducible minimum of loving our neighbors needs to be a constant component of sermons, Bible studies, small group meetings, Sunday school classes, special interest groups, retreats, youth group activities, etc.

What is faith-praxis? For me it is the disciplined, purposeful lifestyle of allowing Christ’s spirit of sacrificial servanthood to flow through our every thought, word, and action. This principle can be introduced through curricula or a teaching series. However, faith-praxis is not likely a sustainable feature of the membership of a local church unless it permeates all of the teaching, discipleship, and mentoring of the membership. If the teaching and modeling of sacrificial servanthood is not explicit, I believe it must be made deliberately implicit throughout the equipping process in order to maximally impact the ministry and lifestyle of a local church. Why? Living our faith in a way that reflects what Jesus modeled and taught—sacrificial servanthood—is a critical vehicle for reaching the goal of glorifying God

*and* of being his glory. In Philippians 2:5 Paul reminds us that we are to have the same attitude that Jesus had—that of a servant. Isaiah reflects this same sentiment (49:5) when he recognized that being God's servant was God's purpose for Jesus from his formation in the womb.

A large church in East Africa integrates this kind of teaching and practice throughout the body. Sermon themes, Bible studies, and cell groups constantly remind the members that the principal call of God is to live out his Kingdom, both individually and corporately. The call to faith-praxis in this church is purposely both implicit and explicit in all of the church's equipping process. As a result, this church is known—from the neighborhoods where its people live to the halls of the national government—as a people who sacrificially invest to see their society healed of its brokenness. These people adopt the problems of their communities as their own problems—and then, with the community, work to solve them.

#### **Principle 4: Application**

*Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions. Then we will know for sure, by our actions, that we are on God's side, and our consciences will be clear, even when we stand before the Lord (1John 3:18-19 TLB).*

Wherever possible, discipleship must lead to present—not future—action. Obedience to God's commands is to be done now—in the present. Obedience is not merely a good idea to be carried out sometime in the future.

Unfortunately, disciplers sometimes see application as something reserved for the more mature disciple. Jesus told the rich



young ruler to obey first and then follow. I wonder how the results of our evangelism and discipleship would change if we first asked seekers to do what Jesus commands as a sign that they want to follow?

Guiding the application process is not easy, especially for those who have not developed the needed skill. Leading a group of Christians to application is like learning to drive a stick-shift vehicle. In the beginning, there are jumps and stalls. After time and practice, the maturing driver coordinates starting, steering, and stopping with ease—eventually without thinking.

Unless new disciples apply what they learn, little will change in the lives of the people they are called to serve. Leading or facilitating a lesson that leads to application requires humility, patience, persistence, a deep love for Jesus, and a commitment to obey by discipling others to obey. Other than evangelism and spiritual discipleship, the skill of leading disciples to live lifestyles of “doing” what Jesus commanded is not often modeled or taught in Bible schools, seminaries, or church-based teacher trainings. Like archery, this skill is best learned through experience, but it is one of the most important arrows in the quiver of anyone who has a passion to hit the target of disciple-making.

### **Principle 5: Walking Together with Integrity— Accountability**

*When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them (Acts 15:4 NIV).*

The fifth principle involves a community in which members walk together in love and the integrity born of mutual accounta-

bility. Because of the way it has been misused in some church contexts, accountability has a bad reputation. It may be culturally difficult but it is urgent to recover the relevance and respectability of this concept. Any community that strives to achieve a common goal has to measure progress toward that goal without feeling threatened. If discipleship is the common goal, it will be necessary to evaluate how the group and its members are contributing toward that goal.

We all desire the fellowship and comradeship of a supporting community. If the evaluation style is critical and confrontational, the spirit of walking together is damaged and could even be destroyed. Supportive community is essential. So is accountability, including recognizing consequences to not fulfilling the spirit of the objective.

Both the regular worship service and the small-group meetings should set aside time for reporting from those who have served. It is important that they have opportunity to give testimony to their service and its consequences. Such sharing should be expected, positively anticipated, regular, and frequent. And, it should include transparency of what went well and what didn't go as well as was hoped.

Some worship leaders may feel their meeting schedule is too tight to allow time for this kind of sharing. What better way to worship our God than to give testimony to what he is doing in our lives and other lives as we submit to him? Remember, Isaiah 58 reminds us that the demonstration of God's sacrificial love is the essential component of true worship.

Where are the evangelical churches where membership means more than a desire to belong, an assent to a statement of faith and local-church doctrines, and a handshake? Shouldn't it

at least mean that the member is committed to being joyfully accountable to follow Jesus? Does this seem counterintuitive to the growth and maturity of the churches you know? Some say, “Our people are uncomfortable with accountability; we could lose people if we insist on accountability.” Could it be that such losses are a necessary price to pay for the health of the body.

Those who are truly interested in sustainable growth would do well to heed Nancy Pearcey.

It is a common assumption that, in order to survive, churches must accommodate to the age. But in fact, the opposite is true: In every historical period, the religious groups that grow most rapidly are those that set believers at odds with the surrounding culture. As a general principle, the higher a group’s tension with mainstream society, the higher its growth rate.—*Total Truth*, Page 261

### **Principle 6: Encouragement**

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (1Thessalonians 5:11 NIV).*

*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose (Philippians 2:1-2 NIV).*

Encouragement is especially important for the inexperienced disciple. Sustained joy of serving comes naturally when service as a lifestyle is so practiced that it becomes unconscious. The new follower of Jesus learning true discipleship needs the encourage-

ment that comes from recognition, group interaction, coaching and prayer covering. If done in the right spirit, such encouragement and recognition will not lift up the disciple, but his Lord.

### **Principle 7: Celebration**

*Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together*  
(Psalm 34:3 NIV).

When I see what people celebrate, I have a good idea of what they value. What we celebrate reflects our values. If we value numbers over obedience, we will celebrate the number of people who have "been evangelized," the number of people baptized, the number of churches planted, the number of new church members, the size of offerings, etc. Yes, perhaps we can legitimately celebrate these things. But if the end of our efforts is to bring glory to God as our people serve in his name, our celebrations should primarily reflect that value. When we see our people serve, let's celebrate! Let's glorify the Lord who enables us to be his glory. Let's celebrate obedience, not numbers!

How? We can tell stories. We can talk about the struggles, the surprises, and the evidence we have seen of God's supernatural intervention. Numerical growth is good, but saints who serve are a greater evidence of fruit than numbers.

Below you will find the content for the Discipline of Love. You can also access it on our web site <[www.harvestfoundation.org](http://www.harvestfoundation.org)>. I provide it here for ease of reference.

Let me again emphasize that this discipleship tool is written for literate and linear thinking people, but that it can be and has been very successfully contextualized in multiple cultural

contexts. (A good example of how this tool has been contextually modified is the first example under Following Jesus in Chapter 10.) Permission is granted to copy, adapt or revise as long as recognition is given to their source—Bob Moffitt of the Harvest Foundation.

This tool is presented in three parts:

1. A one-page Overview Statement;
2. A Participant Outline and accompanying Power Point (available on our web site) for use in a teaching context;
3. A Lesson Narrative

This and other tools are available in multiple languages on our web site ([harvestfoundation.org](http://harvestfoundation.org)).

#### NOTE

1. For more information, see our website—[www.harvestfoundation.org/materials](http://www.harvestfoundation.org/materials).

## chapter twelve 12

### *The tool—“the Discipline of Love”*

To deliberately identify yourself with God’s interest in others

#### **Overview Statement:**

The Discipline of Love is a spiritual discipline that serves an effective discipleship tool designed to help followers of Christ demonstrate God’s love by serving others. The image of God is best reflected in man through sacrificial servanthood. Believers should become more aware of the need to personally reflect Christ’s character in four areas of God’s concern (wisdom, physical, spiritual and social) in the world in which they live (family, church and community).

#### Main Ideas:

1. We were created in the image of God. Servanthood is the highest reflection of God’s image in man.
2. Jesus is the incarnation of God’s love as expressed through servanthood. We are to be conformed to Christ’s image—that of a willing, obedient, and loving servant.
3. God’s love is demonstrated through our obedience in serving others in all areas of life.

4. Discipline is necessary for training and growth in godliness. We have to train ourselves to serve.
5. We can plan, act, reflect and be accountable in our serving with intention.

Outcomes:

1. Now:
  - a. To grasp and express the main ideas of the lesson in their own words.
  - b. To plan and carry out one Discipline of Love in the next twenty-four hours.
2. Beyond:
  - a. To recognize that loving servanthood is the highest expression of the image of God and to commit to complete at least one full cycle of the Discipline of Love in the next three months.
  - b. To work as leaders to teach, encourage and lead others to live a disciplined lifestyle of loving others.

## The Discipline of Love

### Participant Outline

- A. Review
- B. Introduction
- C. Key Verse: 1Timothy 4:7-8
- D. How do people train to be godly?
- E. What other words are associated with training?
- F. Is discipline necessary for growth?
- G. Does God want his children to be like Christ? Romans 8:29
- H. What is our role in being conformed?
- I. Philippians 2:12
- J. 2Timothy 4:2
- K. John 15:4-5
- L. What is God's role in our being conformed?
- M. Philippians 2:13
- N. Ephesians 3:20
- O. What does it mean to be created in God's image?  
Genesis 1:27
  - 1. Ability to create
  - 2. Ability to use words
  - 3. Purposeful relationships
  - 4. Moral choice
  - 5. The aspect of the image of God he most wants reflected in us.
    - Matthew 20:28
    - Philippians 2:5-9
- P. Development begins with me



Q. What is the relationship between service and love?

1John 3:16-18

R. Key Ideas Reinforcement

S. Application Plan

- New
- Realistic
- Specific (4 W's)
- Share

Small-Group Leader's Guide for the Discipline of Love

1. Review this Small-Group Leader's Guide and Lesson Handouts.
2. Before leading a group, complete and journal at least one Discipline of Love in each category—Family, Church, and Community.
3. Use the teaching time of one meeting to introduce the Discipline of Love to your small group. (See Lesson Handouts 1-4.)

Give each member the assignment to plan, do, and journal one Discipline of Love before the next meeting.

4. Modify the suggested schedule for your group's needs but be sure to include sufficient time during subsequent meetings to debrief the Disciplines of Love that were done and to plan for the next Discipline of Love.
5. Facilitate discussion among group members of their Disciplines of Love and encourage them to give each other suggestions and encouragement.

6. Provide guidance only if group members are not giving each other suggestions and encouragement.
7. Keep a record of each member's practice of the Discipline of Love. (See "Small-Group Leader's Record" on next page.)
8. Personally practice the Discipline of Love at least once next meeting.
9. Contact each group member between meetings to encourage and affirm.

### Suggested Two-Hour Schedule for a Small Group

30 minutes	Fellowship
30 minutes	Teaching
15 minutes	Testimonies of Disciplines of Love
15 minutes	Peer Support and Prayer
15 minutes	Planning Next Application
15 minutes	Sharing and Prayer
---	Between-Meeting Contact by Group Leader
---	Intercession and Application by Group Leader

### Small-Group Leaders' Record

#### Attendance and Journal Record

Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_

Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Group: \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson Handout #1

### *The Discipline of Love*

#### KEY VERSE

*... train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*

1Timothy 4:7-8

#### *DISCOVERY QUESTIONS*

1. How does one train to be godly?
2. What are other words associated with training?
3. Is discipline necessary for growth?

#### SUPPORTING VERSES & DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think God wants his children be conformed to Christ's likeness?

Read: Romans 8:29

2. What is God's role, and what is our role in being conformed to Christ's image?

Read: Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 3:20; John 15:4-5

3. According to these verses, what aspect of the image of God and Christ, who perfectly reflected his Father's image, should be reflected in us?

Read: Matthew 20:28; Romans 15:8-9; Philippians 2:6-8

4. What is the relationship between service and love?

Read: 1John 3:16

### APPLICATION PLAN

Exploration and Reflection

Review Participant Handouts #2 through #4.

Decision and Intercession

Share your commitment with one other person. Then pray for each other.

### APPLICATION REPORT

Be prepared to report at the beginning of the next class session.

Lesson Handout #2

Sample Matrix

AREAS OF NEED / CONTEXTS FOR SERVICE	Wisdom	Physical	Spiritual	Social
<b>Family</b>	<p>1. <u>May 2</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discuss one Proverb and how to apply it in family devotions each day this week.</p>	<p>2. <u>May 9</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wash dishes after evening meal three times this week.</p>	<p>3. <u>May 16</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ask a different child to lead family prayer each day.</p>	<p>4. <u>May 27</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Go with my spouse on a date without the children.</p>
<b>Church</b>	<p>5. <u>June 3</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus my devotions this week on applying this week's sermon.</p>	<p>6. <u>June 10</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Volunteer to help in the church office on the weekend.</p>	<p>7. <u>June 17</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take fifteen minutes daily this week to pray for our pastor and elders.</p>	<p>8. <u>June 24</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take a child of one of our single parents on an outing.</p>
<b>Community</b>  Your World or a Culturally Different World	<p>9. <u>July 1</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visit elected leaders to learn about community needs and ask how I can help.</p>	<p>10. <u>July 9</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pick up trash on the streets each day this week as I walk to work.</p>	<p>11. <u>July 16</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ask my Jewish co-worker how I can pray for her son and pray for him each day this week.</p>	<p>12. <u>July 25</u></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take doughnuts and a note of thanks to the police station.</p>

In Acts 1:8 Jesus told his followers they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem (where they were) and in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth—in progressively widening geographic and cultural circles.

Family includes spouses, children, parents, siblings, in-laws, extended family, roommates, close friends. Church includes *all*

*members of the Body of Christ*, including pastors, church groups, the church building. Community includes our work, school, daily activities, neighborhoods—places where we spend much of our time—but *excludes our* family, church, and fellow-believers.

Culturally Different World includes people with special needs (orphans, prisoners, aged, unreached people groups) and local, regional, national and international issues.

Write the date completed on the line \_\_\_\_.

Check the box when an exercise is done.

Lesson Handout #3

*Sample Plan*

Entry No: 1 Date:

Context and Area: *Family—Wisdom*

1. What is the need and what will I do?  
(for example) *I need to lead my family in regular devotions. I will begin Monday with a devotion on a verse in Proverbs.*
2. With or for whom? My family
3. When? Monday
4. Where? *At home at dinner*

PLAN

Entry No:\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_ Context or Area:\_\_\_ 1. What is the need and what will I do?

With or for whom?

When?

Where?

Lesson Handout #4

*Journal*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Context or Area: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did you do?
2. What were the results?
3. What did you learn?

Exercise Steps	Exercise Guidelines
1. Pray—prepare spiritually	1. Point to God's concern rather than bring attention to yourself
2. Identify the need	2. Don't impose something that would not be welcomed by the one being served
3. Meet the need	3. Go beyond what you would normally do
4. Reflect and journal	4. Sacrifice, but don't be diverted from your other high-priority responsibilities
5. Record the exercise	



Lesson Handout #5  
*Discipline of Love*

AREAS OF NEED  CONTEXTS FOR SERVICE	Wisdom	Physical	Spiritual	Social
<b>Family</b>	<b>1. <u>May 2</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discuss one Proverb and how to apply it in family devotions each day this week.	<b>2. <u>May 9</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wash dishes after evening meal three times this week.	<b>3. <u>May 16</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ask a different child to lead family prayer each day.	<b>4. <u>May 27</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Go with my spouse on a date without the children.
<b>Church</b>	<b>5. <u>June 3</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus my devotions this week on applying this week's sermon.	<b>6. <u>June 10</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Volunteer to help in the church office on the weekend.	<b>7. <u>June 17</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take fifteen minutes daily this week to pray for our pastor and elders.	<b>8. <u>June 24</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take a child of one of our single parents on an outing.
<b>Community</b>  Your world or a culturally different world	<b>9. <u>July 1</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visit elected leaders to learn about community needs and ask how I can help.	<b>10. <u>July 9</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pick up trash on the streets each day this week as I walk to work.	<b>11. <u>July 16</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ask my Jewish co-worker how I can pray for her son and pray for him each day this week.	<b>12. <u>July 25</u></b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take doughnuts and a note of thanks to the police station.

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*members of the Body of Christ*, including pastors, church groups, the church building. Community includes our work, school, daily activities, neighborhoods—places where we spend much of our time—but *excludes our* family, church, and fellow-believers.

Culturally Different World includes people with special needs (orphans, prisoners, aged, unreached people groups) and local, regional, national and international issues.

Write the date completed on the line \_\_\_\_\_

Check the box when an exercise is done.

## *The Discipline of Love*

### **Narrative**

*When we begin to form a habit we are conscious of it. There are times when we are conscious of becoming virtuous and patient and godly, but it is only a stage; if we stop there we shall get the strut of the spiritual prig. The right thing to do with habits is to lose them in the life of the Lord until every habit is so practiced that there is no conscious habit at all.*

—Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, May 12

All parts of God's creation reflect his glory, but he placed the richest reflection of himself—his image—in us! As he created people, God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground (Genesis 1:26-27). So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."

### **Created in God's Image**

The uniqueness of bearing the image of God has staggering implications. Because of God's image in us, we are involved in restoring "all things" (Colossians 1:20) and in making known the manifold wisdom of God through the church (Ephesians 3:10). We also carry characteristics of his image in us. His creativity is reflected in our ability to make something new, to shape the future, to bring order out of disorder and chaos, and to work as God worked and works. With our linguistic ability we

are able to communicate ideas and abstractions through words. We are relational beings; we know how to form intentional and purposeful interaction with people, nature and work. We have been given moral choice that animals and nature do not share. We have the capacity to discern and choose between the constructive and the destructive, between beauty and nonbeauty. And we have the ability to act in intentional selflessness towards others: sacrificial servanthood.

Loving and sacrificial servanthood—the last characteristic—is the most important mark of God's image. Why? Without it, the other attributes can become corrupt. We have plenty of examples in our world: creativity has been used to produce an atomic bomb, artistic ability has produced pornography, relationships can become tyrannical, moral choices have been used to justify ethnic cleansing and partial-birth abortion.

### **Created for Servanthood**

God intended that people use his attributes in the context of service, but from the time Adam and Eve believed the original lie, people have turned the attributes of God's image to selfish advantage and have distorted that image. Romans 1:22-32 graphically describes what happens when people exchange the eternal image of God for a corrupted image: our societies are full of sexual impurity and worship of the creature rather than the Creator. We are prone to envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip and slander. There is constant God-hating, insolence, arrogance, boasting, evil intent, and disobedience; living in ways that are senseless, faithless, heartless and ruthless. And we'd rather approve others who do the same instead of helping each

other live better lives according to God's intended purposes. We have become fools.

In the Old Testament, people were never fully able to see what it means to bear the image of God—especially the attribute of loving and sacrificial service. In the New Testament, though, God revealed his image in two clear ways—in Jesus and in the church.

At the appointed time, God sent his Son, the perfect and complete image of God (Hebrews 1:1-3). For the first time, people could see what God is like. They could see not only divinity, but also humanity as God intended it—humanity that perfectly models what it means to be made in the image of God. Now when we look at Jesus, we see the most important attribute of God's image. What is more important than perfect spirituality, the physical stamina and strength of a carpenter, wisdom that exceeded that of the Pharisees, and relational skills that endeared him to the humble and silenced the proud? Jesus shows us what is more important than all these, that most important aspect of God's image—servanthood. Jesus himself described service as his purpose, saying “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

Consider also Paul's strongest description of Jesus' servanthood:

*[Jesus,] being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man,*

*he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8).*

God is a servant, and Jesus modeled that servanthood! As the passage continues, we see that God exalted Jesus as he fully expressed the highest expression of God's image—voluntary and sacrificial servanthood.

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name ... and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).*

Servanthood is seen in other passages, as well. God told the people of Israel that he was pleased by their sacrifice of service to the oppressed (Isaiah 58). Jesus told his disciples that the distinguishing mark of those in the Kingdom is their service—they feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit those sick and in prison (Matthew 25). Pure and perfect religion is defined in summary as serving the widow and the orphan—those who need protection (James 1:27). Elsewhere, Jesus emphasized the priority of loving and serving our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31).

God now invites his children to be conformed to the image of his Son (Romans 8:29)—including servanthood. Only as servants can we fulfill the role God gives us. Created in God's image, we were also created to serve sacrificially. When we sacrificially serve as Jesus did, we most fully bear the image of God. And as we reflect God's image and glorious nature, he is honored. God also revealed his image in the church. The church expresses the fullness of God: "the church which is his body, the

fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22-23). The church, the Body of Christ, is a community of servant-believers who bear his image and carry out his agenda by facilitating the process of new birth, discipleship, equipping, and sending people into the world as servant-ambassadors.

Many Christians—especially those who are economically and politically disadvantaged or historically abused—are often offended by the idea that they should be servants. In their frame of reference, servanthood is degrading and involuntary. Indeed, involuntary service can be outright slavery. It can be a degrading action that is required by economic hardship. It can be servitude forced on the unwilling by those who are powerful. But this is not the willing, sacrificial servanthood of which the Bible speaks. This is not the image of God that is the birthright of his children.

God does not command service for its own sake, but because it demonstrates and is motivated by his greatest attribute—love. Love was not listed as an expression of God’s image because the love of God is most reflected through the church and its people as they serve. In fact, John asked how the love of God could be in someone who says he loves, but does not serve a brother in need (1John 3:17). God wants to so fill us with his love that onlookers will know that the love we express to them is God’s love. Scripture shows that the principal way to demonstrate our love for God is by loving others (Luke 10; Isaiah 58; James 1 & 2; 1John 3). We must never diminish God’s plan that we, the Body of Christ, are the primary instrument through which God’s life-transforming power is channeled!

Loving, sacrificial servanthood is perhaps the most difficult characteristic of the image of God. Why? Serving others as

Christ did means giving up our rights and positions. It means denying ourselves for others. Serving as Jesus served is impossible except by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, but serving as Christ served is possible. Not only is it possible, its practice results in the fulfillment of God's intentions when he created us in his image.

The church needs to help its people reclaim the biblical understanding of servanthood. What are we to do if we have not been servants in the biblical sense? Where we have served our self-interests, we must turn and walk in the other direction—serving the interests of others. Biblical servanthood is not possible without the indwelling Christ, but it is possible through the power of God's Spirit. Paul reminded his readers that God and man work together to achieve the purposes of God:

*... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Philippians 2:12-13).*

### **Discipline and Practice**

If all this is true, how do we reflect this aspect of the image of God? One way is to develop the character and skills God has placed in us. To do so requires new habits and skills, and that requires discipline. Why submit to a discipline? Athletes who want to become professionals must discipline themselves to rigorous schedules of training and endless hours of practice. Students who want to finish at the top of their class discipline themselves to study hard for years. Ultimately, people submit themselves to a new discipline because their desired outcome is very important to them.



Likewise, discipline and training are necessary for growth in godliness. Paul called his young protégé Timothy to spiritual exercise. “Bodily exercise is all right, but spiritual exercise is much more important and is a tonic for all you do. So exercise yourself spiritually and practice being a better Christian because that will help you not only now in this life, but in the next life too” (1Timothy 4:8, LB). Yes, discipline requires sacrifice and effort, but it is good! It is good for those who are being served, and it brings us closer to what God created us to be.

### **The Discipline of Love**

We propose an exercise to help discipline us in becoming more conformed to the servant aspect of God’s image. This exercise—the Discipline of Love—is a spiritual discipline. It is designed to help followers of Christ demonstrate God’s love by serving others. In other words, it trains us to serve! Other spiritual disciplines—such as prayer, Scripture reading, meditation, memorization, and fasting—have an internal/inward emphasis, strengthening the relationship between disciples and their Lord. This discipline has an external/outward emphasis—so that the infusion of God’s love in us that comes from abiding in Christ is expressed outwardly to others.

The Discipline of Love is essentially simple. Those who use it prayerfully look for opportunities to serve—and then serve! This discipline requires commitment and a close relationship to God, so his strength can work through us. Though simple in concept, practicing this discipline will change one’s life.

The Discipline of Love is also very practical. It helps believers personally reflect Christ’s servant character in four areas of God’s concern (wisdom, physical, spiritual and social) in the

world in which they live (family, church and community). God's love and his intentions are demonstrated as we serve others in different contexts and areas of life! The people we serve most frequently in this discipline are the people we know and normally encounter in daily life—the people in our families, churches, workplaces, schools and neighborhoods. Our service to them can be very simple. We do not need great amounts of money, time, talent, personality or expertise. We simply need to reflect the image of Christ by sacrificially serving them. Think of the impact that servant-believers, one by one, can make on the world around them—and then think of the impact that many obedient and loving individual believers could make as they serve the people God brings across their paths!

People who practice the Discipline of Love experience growth in several ways. They show sensitivity to others' needs. They learn to obediently respond to the needs of others in a broad and balanced manner. They are creative in their service. They display ability to intentionally point to God as the source of their love. Their service to others is marked with grace. They are developing a lifestyle of loving service. And most importantly, they experience increasing intimacy with God.

### **The Discipline of Love Exercise**

The Discipline of Love uses a matrix to record small expressions of service to our families, fellow believers, and non-Christian neighbors. The matrix gives us a wide spectrum of opportunities for service. Afterwards, each service is recorded in a short journal, so we can prayerfully reflect on our service and be accountable to a mentor or small group. We use its principal tool to plan, act, reflect and be accountable.

May God use the Discipline of Love to help us and those we disciple to become more Christ-like—more of a reflection of God’s loving, sacrificial, willing service. May it enlarge our ability to see and respond to the needs of those in our individual worlds, and may it help us develop lifestyles of service that reflect the image of God. May we grow in intimacy with our Father when we love others with the power and abundance of his love in us and when we obey the greatest commandment—to love God with all of our hearts, souls, and minds by loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-38). And may those we serve experience a fresh and more complete understanding of God and his love—through his image in us.

Please see the accompanying lesson to participate personally and encourage others to do so! The Discipline of Love has been a helpful tool for followers of Christ around the world who have walked this path of discipleship and service. Hear from some of them and read their stories of service by selecting Stories at [www.harvestfoundation.org](http://www.harvestfoundation.org).

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## *chapter thirteen* 13

### *A story from Kampala*

I referred to this story above in Chapter 11. However, I think it deserves an expanded place of its own. So I want to expand on this story here.

Watoto Church (formerly Kampala Pentecostal Church) is a megachurch in Kampala, Uganda. Watoto adopted the Discipline of Love. Its practice has impacted the city and the nation of Uganda. I heard from one of the pastors about the impact the practice had in his satellite church and asked if I could go and see. I went, and I saw!

This church is a cell-based congregation. To be a member you must belong to a cell group. Each of the satellite churches has dozens and even hundreds of cell groups. I visited one of these groups that meets weekly. I was told by the pastor that what I saw is representative of the other cells. The group met on a night different from their usual night just to share their story with me and some of my friends. I will share only three of the testimonies I heard from more of the dozen members of this group.

This cell began with three women from one of the satellite churches. They started meeting about two years before my visit. The members live in a primarily Muslim and relatively economi-

cally poor neighborhood of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. In the two years they have been meeting, they have multiplied from one cell to four cells with a total of almost fifty members. Most of the new members have become disciples from the outreach activities of the cell members, not from other activities of the church.

In that unforgettable meeting held in the home of a member, the dozen or so members from the original cell went around the circle, each sharing their individual story. The pattern in each story was very similar. They were ministered to by one or more members of the cell in a time of need, they were invited to come to the cell so that they could share their problem and the group could pray for them. In most cases, they came as unbelievers and shared their stories, and the cell group prayed for them. In some cases, the cell discussed how they could practically help. The cell helped as it could. That person began to attend the cell as an unbeliever. They eventually gave their lives to Christ and began participating in the “life” of the cell. As the numbers grew, the cell divided. It had divided four times in the last two years. Here are three of the stories that impacted me the most.

*Story One* was from a young man in his mid-twenties. He was a refugee from one of the wars in the Congo. He didn't know where any of his family were, or if they were alive. He had managed to get into a local university but ran out of funds for his schooling and for living. Because he was a refugee it was difficult for him to find work. He was destitute and contemplating suicide when one of the members of this cell spotted him in a depressed mood and asked if she could pray for him. He said yes but she wanted to know how to pray so she asked him to explain his situation. He did and she prayed. Following her prayer, she

invited him to come to her cell group that evening and share so that they could all pray for God to help him. He decided to go. At the meeting he observed their fellowship around popcorn and punch, their Bible study, their time of sharing how each member had expressed God's love since the last meeting, and then prayer. Following this he was invited to share his story. He did and the group laid hands on him and prayed. After the prayer the group leader asked the members to put the pocket funds they had brought with them on the table. They did. Then she asked him, "Could these funds help you?" He was amazed. They didn't know him and yet they were willing to share their resources with him. He had never experienced anything like this. He said, "Yes!" They gave him the funds. He came back the next week and subsequent weeks. He eventually gave his life to Christ and became a member of this cell.

*Story Two* was from a woman who had a five-year-old son. She was a neighbor of another member of this cell. The neighbor knew that this woman's little boy was seriously ill and in need of medical treatment that the woman giving her testimony couldn't afford. The neighbor, offered to pray for the boy and invited her to come to the cell so that the entire group could pray. She came. After the standard meeting the group listened to her story, which included the need for funds for the boy's medicine without which he would be permanently blind. The cell members prayed. After the prayer the leader led a discussion in which the cell members explored what they could do to help. Together they decided to each go home, share this woman's need with each member's immediate neighbors and give them an opportunity to financially contribute for the medicine this child needed. Within twenty-four hours sufficient funds were made available to

purchase the medicine. The woman giving this testimony said to me, “Look at my boy. He can see!” The fact that she was giving this testimony was evidence that she, like the young man above, had come to Christ and joined this cell and its pattern of serving others.

*Story Three.* A woman stood to give her testimony. She was all smiles, holding a large Bible and looked in robust health. It turned out that before she was part of the cell group, one of its members heard that she was very ill with AIDS. Though the cell group member didn’t know her, she went to her small house to see what she could do to help. The daughter of the sick woman opened the door. The house was a mess and smelled like a toilet. The woman giving her testimony said she was very sick, at the time malnourished, lying in bed in a soiled gown and bedding. (Later the cell learned that the woman was taking government-issued anti-retroviral medicine but it had little to no effect because of the woman’s malnutrition. The only food the woman and her daughter had was from boiled leaves that the daughter collected for meals.) The cell group member asked how she could help. “Just leave me alone, I want to die!” was the response. The cell group member responded that as long as the woman was alive, she couldn’t just leave her alone. Instead she went home, prepared a meal, returned and fed the invalid and then washed her body and changed her gown and bedding. The next day, the cell group member brought other members of the cell. They cleaned the small house and the members decided to take turns in bringing daily meals.

“Slowly,” said the woman with the large Bible, “I got better. I’m so well that I can go door to door selling vegetables and make enough to live on.” And she said, “Do you know what I do

when I go door to door? I ask how I can pray for my customers and invite them to attend my small group so they can also pray.”

Can you imagine the impact of this scenario being repeated weekly in thousands of instances in one city? That is truly biblical transformation!

Let it be so.





*appendix*

*Twenty Reasons Why “Discipleship” Died (RIP)*

(Ninety percent of an effective therapy is rooted in a sound diagnosis)

By Doug Greenwold of Preserving Bible Times

*Nondiscipleship is the elephant in the church.*

– Dallas Willard

*Trying to be a disciple of Jesus is not the same thing as training to be his disciple.*

– Bruce Demarest

- 1) Unlike Solomon, the church in America cut the “make disciples” (MD) baby in half, creating two new (extrabiblical) words—evangelism and discipleship. This separation has had adverse consequences. It allowed the church to prioritize “saving” over discipling. We never did get around to doing much discipling. That takes too much effort; plus it can be messy and frustrating. But at least we saved them!
- 2) We confused being a convert or believer with being a disciple of Jesus.
- 3) We assumed that people will know how to disciple others—they don’t. How can you pass along something you have not experienced?

- 4) Faith became more a creed to assent to than a lifestyle verb to be lived out. Then life got separated into two spheres—sacred and secular—which gave rise to compartmentalized Christianity.
- 5) We failed to challenge people to take responsibility for their own discipling, and they didn't.
- 6) We don't know what a first-century disciple of Jesus looks like, so how then would we know what we are trying to reproduce or become?
- 7) We failed to reproduce ourselves. Recent data reveals that two out of three children raised in a Christian home are lost to the faith by age thirty. Why is it that the life we are "living" isn't something they care to emulate?
- 8) We assumed that MD would automatically happen if people hung around the church long enough. It didn't. As a result, we were not intentional about MD and thus failed to create a church climate that was conducive to discipling.
- 9) We treated MD as a periodic program that deserves an occasional emphasis rather than a purposeful, life-long process that is always Job #1, "Discipling is everything and everything is discipling."
- 10) We took our eye off the MD ball and were seduced into offering "therapeutic consumerism" events where we felt people are itching; e.g. parenting skills, financial skills, divorce recovery, etc., etc. No time left for in-depth (transforming) Bible study and discipling.
- 11) We emphasized "knowing" over "doing" and "being." And valued orthodoxy (right thinking) over orthopraxy (right

- doing). Then we falsely equated the acquisition of knowledge with spiritual maturity.
- 12) We failed to grasp the genius of Jesus' experiential "Do and Teach" (Acts 1:1) pedagogy for MD, substituting in its place a Westernized classroom, cognitive approach of "Teach and Maybe Do."
  - 13) The old mentoring model is not working. Most of the gray hairs still don't see themselves as quite ready (yet) to disciple others. They always seem to need to read a few more spiritual books!
  - 14) We have a twenty-first-century, Westernized, industrialized, urban understanding of Jesus, which is not the Near Eastern, village, agrarian, Jewish Jesus of the Gospels who showed us how (contextually) to MD.
  - 15) MD takes place in community with transparency and intimacy. Too many believers are functional Lone Rangers in the church, strangers in the worship crowd. We need to rediscover the biblical paradigm for our life together.
  - 16) We aimed at too small and narrow a target. We failed to disciple the whole person. Peter Scazzero postulates there is no spiritual maturity without corresponding relational and emotional maturity. Why do we fill people up with biblical facts while still letting them continue as emotionally maladjusted, relational misfits in our midst?
  - 17) We fostered a church model where clerics have taken the place of the "priesthood of ALL believers." We have seminaries (mostly) training church managers, not shepherds of the flock who model discipling.

- 18) The narcissism of the culture has spilled over into the church resulting in people who think being a disciple of Jesus is a personal journey in self-development, self-actualization and self-fulfillment. Wrong! Missing are obedience, submission, emulation of Jesus, communion with God and the Body, and yes, joy unspeakable.
- 19) We have been dispensing spiritual and biblical facts without frameworks that tie everything together. Ever tried to work a puzzle without seeing the box top? That's why we created a biblical framework for MD—it's a missing piece that makes a huge difference.
- 20) It isn't the "Great Commission." That phrase is not in the text. Apple trees don't have to be exhorted to make apples. That's just what apple trees do! In the Greek, Matthew 28:19 reads much more as the "Great Given"—of course disciples will be making disciples (MD). Like apple trees, that's what disciples (super) naturally do!

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## *About the Author*

Born to a young pastor and his wife in Los Angeles, Bob has been immersed in the local church all his life. He grew up loving the local church his father pastored. It ministered wholistically to the local community and sent many of its young adults around the world as missionaries. Bob served as a Peace Corps volunteer as a teacher in Malawi in the early days of the Peace Corps and then majored in missions in seminary. It was at that time he lost his love for the church he knew. Why? His student ministry was to minister to delinquent youth in the city.

He believed that Christians in the local churches of his denomination were ideal candidates as mentors who would love and provide models for the mostly disadvantaged single parent kids on probation who were in his student ministry. After many failed attempts to recruit fellow Christians in these churches, he became disillusioned with a church that offered to pray but not to get involved with the youth in his program. He reluctantly abandoned the church he knew as a practical reflection of God's love. For five years he continued to love Jesus but rejected what he knew of the local church.

At the end of that five years, Bob believed the Holy Spirit spoke clearly, saying, "The church is my bride. She is imperfect, but I love her. I gave my life for her. Until you love her, I can't use you." Bob repented and asked for forgiveness, and a

miraculous change in his heart – from disillusionment to love. God heard and answered.

Since that time in Bob has passionately poured his life into discipling the local church to equip its people to look like Jesus in both word and action. This book is a reflection of that passion.

The platforms God has used for this endeavor include the following:

Founder and Director, Partners Inc., a mentorship program for delinquent youth – 1968-1980.

Founder, the Hunger Corps, a Christian peace corps of Food for the Hungry International – 1980-1981.

Founder and President, the Harvest Foundation, a global local-church discipling endeavor – 1981 to present.

Two-term Elder, and 17-year Chairman of the Missions Committee of a local church.

Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board of Directors, Disciple Nations Alliance, a global alliance of those who develop materials and advocate for the implementation of a biblical worldview in all areas of life – 1997-present.

Co-Founder, Trinity Education, a global, discipleship-driven, on-line education program for the competent but economically challenged – 2012-present.