This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

Zech 8:23

New International Version
Could Evangelism Lead to Sin?

by Bob Moffitt
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 Int'l Coalition (TOPIC)

Bob Moffitt's Could Evangelism Lead to Sin? 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

Could Evangelism Lead to Sin? 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 30 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 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 (I John 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.


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

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.” NO, it is not all right! In this book I share why it is not all right, and why this view can lead to the sin of disobedience. In the second section of the book I share a tool our organization, Harvest, has used over many years in multiple cultures to help address this problem. It is called The Discipline of Love.

Because I’m writing to evangelicals I use words which I assume have a common understanding with my readers. To be clear of what I mean by these terms, I offer a short glossary with as brief a description as I can manage of what I mean.

**Accountability** – ungrudging sharing with appropriate others the outcome of a commitment.

**Conversion** – a change from not being a follower of Jesus Christ to being a follower.

**Proclamation** – usually a verbal declaration of God’s desire and ability to reconcile and restore man and creation from their current brokenness to wholeness and a personal relationship with him.

**Repentance** – expression of sorrow by word and/or deed for living contrary to God’s will, followed by living in accordance to God’s will. Often includes rethinking the way you see reality.

**Salvation** – God’s rescue of man from eternal separation from God to being accepted only because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross.

After more than 50 years of global ministry among evangelicals, I have come to the conclusion that our emphasis on spiritual conversion rather than biblical discipleship has led us into unintentional disobedience to Scripture, and tragic consequences for the Church, for our cultures and for Christ’s Kingdom.
Before I begin, I want to make three declarations that are important to me.

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 obedience, but on faith in the provision God has made for us in 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.²

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 more than 35 years of passionately helping local churches 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. That isn’t my intention. My intention is to communicate what I understand as 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 also say what I say because I care so much for the Church Jesus established to demonstrate His “manifold wisdom and power” (Eph. 3:10). I passionately desire to see her do just that with maximum impact.
What I argue in general is the following: The method Jesus prescribes for fulfilling the Great Commission is not conversion followed by discipleship. Rather, the methodology is discipleship - a process in which conversion may occur, often in the early stages of learning to follow Jesus.

I also argue that evangelism is only a part – an essential but small part - of completing the task Jesus gave his followers. In practice, evangelicals often reverse the biblical emphasis of the two. Conversion is the task to which I believe we generally and unbiblically assign the largest 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 reversal 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 and that those paradigms keep us from seeing the consequence of this reversal. The consequence is huge: we lose the soul of the 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 from recognizing what is real. For example, the well-known scientist and atheist Richard Dawkins operates within a paradigm that prevents him from seeing what we see as the overwhelming evidence of God’s existence. Similarly, our evangelical experience and perception of truth can keep us from seeing what I believe Scripture makes abundantly clear about 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.” This statement captures my attitude as I write. I am aware that my perspective is not a “photograph of Reality.” Rather, based on my reading of Scripture and long missionary experience, this book is my attempt to articulate my concerns from these hints and guesses. Please remember that as you read. I eagerly welcome feedback and dialogue.

Broadly speaking, our evangelical paradigm leads to two errors. The first is a misappropriation of weight to the message of evangelism rather than the making of disciples. 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. I use the words “practical” and “working” to indicate that these priorities are not necessarily priorities because of a theological or theoretical conviction, but are a priority in terms of the amount of time and resources we evangelicals use for evangelism and teaching content versus equipping for obedience.

I am aware of the fact that evangelism and discipleship are both non-biblical words that were created by Western thinking that divided making disciples into 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. This dichotomy is not biblical and is the source of serious problems which I address below. Western churches and those influenced by this Western 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 that most evangelicals use. I use the words “evangelism” and “discipleship” because these are the terms usually associated with evangelical proselytism, and because I want to avoid the detrimental consequences of misapplying the priority of these two perspectives. Avoiding these terms 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 modern Christian experience with legalism. When I use the words obey/obedience, please be aware that I use these words interchangeably with submit/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 positive. It was the best way you could achieve what you wanted.4

Also, we need to remember that the evangelical and Pentecostal churches were born out of the Great Awakenings and revivalist
experiences in the 19th and 20th 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 energy into proclamation/evangelism rather than discipleship/obedience.

The biblical understanding of making disciples is a continuous process that often but not always begins with conversion and leads to obeying/submitting to Jesus and therefore reflecting or looking like Him. I have observed that some (like Jesus’ disciples) apparently began to “follow” before their conversion. Contemporary examples include Muslim converts in the subcontinent of Asia who work in small groups learning to follow biblical principles of life in personal and financial relationships. They are 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.)

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 has 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 answer 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 in the process of discipleship.

The traditional evangelical understanding is that disciple making begins with conversion, and is followed by discipleship which leads to the convert becoming a disciple. This process is illustrated in the following diagram.

Conversion  →  Discipleship  →  Disciple
In the story above, 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 to learn about him and follow his teachings. In 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 — Conversion — Disciple**

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 me” before they even knew enough to believe. 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/were converted first. The woman at the well is an example.

In Jesus’ ministry we can see that these two processes are not mutually exclusive. His call to believe or to follow depended on the context. In one context, Jesus called people to follow before they believed; in another, he led them to faith on his first encounter with them.

Jesus called us to make disciples. We must recognize and imitate Jesus’ sensitivity to his context. If we fail to do that, 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.

I believe discipleship is both the biblical and practical priority of the Great Commission. The rest of this book elaborates eight reasons why I say that.

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 proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He himself sent us to preach the gospel. A classic missionary passage from Paul's letter to the Romans says it like this: “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?” (Rom 10:13-14 ESV).

Let there be no mistake about my commitment to the necessity of evangelism, i.e. 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 without the redemption paid for by the blood of Jesus sacrificially shed on the cross, our need to confess our sin, to repent and accept the promise and our assurance of the forgiveness of sin, and the glorious hope of eternal life with God. There is no mission without evangelism. And, yet, without discipleship we cannot fulfill the great commission. Being born from above is only one step in the process of discipleship.

NOTES
1 My Utmost for His Highest, April 24
2 The Mission of God’s People by Christopher Wright, Pg. 126
3 from Tensions
4 Doug Greenwold, personal letter, Jan 2015
5 PBT Teaching Fellow Reflection #714 © Doug Greenwold 2014
Jesus identified OUR priority task as that of 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?” (Mt. 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 Jesus’ passion. It was his priority. He told us that this is the reason he came into the world (Luke 19:10; John 12:46-47). When Christians reflect this passion of Jesus, we often use a non-biblical word – evangelism. 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. Jesus doesn’t.

A. In contradistinction to his own priority, 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. Note that Mark’s version of the Great Commission is found only in later manuscripts and is widely regarded as not authentically Marcan. However, the Matthew presentation of the Great Commission is the most comprehensive and complete of the references and therefore, hermeneutically, I think it is the plumb line against which other versions are to be compared.

B. Why did Jesus give us the priority of making disciples? I think it is precisely because Jesus’ priority was and is salvation. If we are honest we know that the most effective form of evangelism is the witness of Christians who first model and then communicate the comprehensive good news of the Kingdom. Those who are discipled to reflect Jesus are far better witnesses/apologists of the gospel than those who “preach” without the obedience learned through the process of submission to the rule/reign of Christ.

C. Jesus rarely connects the gospel to salvation. Rather, he most often connects the gospel to the good news of the Kingdom, which comes as God’s will is done - Matt 6:10. Salvation is an essential, early step in discipleship. Salvation is not necessarily the first step in entering the Kingdom (see Matt 5:3; Mark 12:34; James 2:5; Matt 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. We are saved because God wants us to flourish – to live now and in eternity as God intended. Throughout Scripture our flourishing is a consequence of obedience, of doing God’s will – Deut. 28 and 30; 2 Chr. 7; Isa. 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. Several examples include the following:

• 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,
Jesus identified our priority task as that of making disciples.

- A man cured of leprosy in Mt. 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-45, and Luke 5:12-16,
- A blind man given sight in Mt. 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/believe in him depended on how his Father directed him. Jesus’ emphasis appears to be based on context rather than on a priority of either proclamation or demonstration. A friend of mine, Ron Nikkel, says, “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 without the redemption paid for by the blood of Jesus sacrificially shed on the cross, our need to confess our sin, our need to repent and accept the promise and assurance of the forgiveness of our sin, and the glorious hope of eternal life with God. These are essential parts of obedience to Jesus’ commission to his followers. But being born from above is only one step in the process of discipleship. In spite of the essential nature of proclamation, the Great Commission’s purpose is clearly stated as discipleship – teaching people to obey – to submit to – all the things that Jesus taught.

From years of membership in and observing evangelical institutions around the world, I believe 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. Most contemporary Bible teaching in evangelical churches, however, has little to
no accountability. 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 along with the teaching there is very little in the way of intentional accountability. Where are the churches in which membership is based on the demonstration of obedience rather than an assent to doctrine?

The imperative purpose 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 other won’t make disciples. The three participles work together to reach the imperative goal of discipleship. Our enemy wants to unbalance Jesus’ intended weight 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 to live under and to live out the rule of Christ in all areas/domains of life. Yes, conversion is a prerequisite to full discipleship, but it is not the goal.

In 50 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 with disciples who live lives that imitate the character of the Jesus they follow.

Some may say that we need to interpret the early Christians’ 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 ends of the Great Commission can be observed in Acts, it can be argued that the story of Acts reflects an emphasis on repentance and belief in Jesus rather than 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 bulk of the New Testament, the emphasis is heavily weighted on instruction to equip believers to obey Jesus’ teaching. As you will read later, some historians believe it was the lifestyle rather than the message of the early Christians that seems to have been the primary apologetic for early Christianity.
COULD EVANGELISM LEAD TO SIN?
Our key evangelical documents reflect an unbalanced focus

Our evangelical roots are planted firmly in the soil of the evangelistic fervour of the First and Second Great Awakenings during the 18th and 19th centuries. The “events” of the Great Awakenings were heavily weighted toward winning people to Christ rather than the time and energy-consuming task of discipleship. Large gatherings, including the camp meetings of this time, were preceded by what we would recognize today as advance (sometimes multi-year) planning and advertising which drew people from long distances. Otherwise unconnected people were exposed in mass meetings 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.”

In the 20th Century, the First World War also helped shape our focus on evangelism. Mike Metzger writes, “[WW I] had profound consequences for the church. It launched apocalyptic interpretations of history among evangelicals, giving rise to the End Times movement … which gave impetus to modern-day evangelism with its emphasis on evangelism as the primary task since the world was doomed to get progressively worse.”

This perspective of evangelism as the priority task of the church is famously articulated in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974: “... in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.” This portion of the covenant was written to clarify the distinction and interface between evangelism and social service. The liberal wing of the Protestant church sometimes claims that
the Kingdom of God comes as God’s people do good works, and a personal, saving encounter with the living Christ is optional. In response we, the evangelical wing of the church, protest that the Kingdom does not come without a personal experience of being born again. I understand the history and sentiment of this statement in the Lausanne Covenant but see it as an over correction that goes beyond Scripture. The working out of this emphasis has had and continues to have tragic consequences which I discuss later.

If social service is seen only as good works, I understand and affirm the priority issue addressed in the Lausanne Covenant. Because the Covenant is addressed to evangelicals, the very language of the covenant implies sacrificial service (the demonstration of God’s love) by those who have been born again. If this is what the covenant refers to, then I believe that evangelism (understood in the covenant as necessarily including the communication of content) is not the first priority that Jesus gave us. Personally, I affirm the Lausanne Covenant of 1974, except for this one statement which I believe unscriptural. As a matter of fact, I think this emphasis is the opposite of Jesus’ intentions.

If proclamation is not the priority, then what is it? First, according to the Greek verbs in the Great Commission, it is at least an assumption if not an implied command. We are to “go” and “preach” the gospel. In short, going, proclaiming/preaching are not optional. Second, proclamation is part of what it means to be a witness (Luke 24:44). Third, proclamation is an ally and partner of the demonstration of the Kingdom (James 1:27; I John 4:20-21).

A diagram of the discipleship process might look like this:

As you go  Proclaim  Teach to obey

Though the 1974 issue of primacy 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 spawned around the globe. I have increasingly wondered if the current and growing
Our Key Evangelical Documents Reflect an Unbalanced Focus

demise of the church’s influence on culture is one of the consequences of this misplaced priority.

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 or through Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ (now CRU), the Billy Graham crusades and other similar endeavours? With the angels of heaven I shout with joy! But at the same time I grieve for the lack of emphasis on discipling those who truly were born again to follow, to submit to, to be like Jesus.

I want to be clear that I reject the idea that social service is the priority. Some current movements speak of “mission as transformation.” Many actionable outcomes of this movement are social projects done by Christians. The idea that Christians need to be engaged in the social arena of society is clearly on target. One problem with this approach is that the projects are presented as a way to bring transformation. This way of thinking risks giving the impression that transformation is something people can accomplish through social initiatives rather than something that 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 2 Chronicles 7:14 God makes it clear to Solomon that the healing of our brokenness is 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 this 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 Deut. 28 & 30 and Isa. 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.
Another contemporary transformation movement focuses on the spheres of society. These spheres are sometimes spoken of as the Seven Mountains. The idea is that Christians need to be intentional in seeking ways to bring Kingdom principles into these spheres. The sphere/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/transformation that begins at the personal level and eventually leads to community and national levels is relatively straightforward. How? God transforms on the condition of the obedience of his people. When his people obey he heals. This is another reason for the priority of discipleship.

NOTES

6 Chapter 9 of *Total Truth* by Nancy Pearcey
7 Clapham Commentary, Nov 16, 2015. (See also *The Great and Holy War*, Pg 138 by Philip Jenkins)
Even though most of us are to some degree repulsed by hypocrisy, when we evangelize without discipling we are at risk of producing hypocrites – people who profess one thing and do another.

The New Testament writers understood believing in Jesus implied doing what he asked. Unfortunately, our evangelical urgency to see people believe in Jesus and thus rescued from being “lost” often results in intellectual assent to Jesus as saviour without a commitment to do what he asks. I believe our tendency of getting people to assent to a creed without equipping them to live according to it is a major reason, if not the primary reason, that societies have rejected the only path toward true and sustainable human flourishing.

When someone realizes he is about to leave those he loves, he shares 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 beginning with individuals and families. Yes, we must disciple indi-
viduals, but with the goal of discipling nations so their societies flourish as God intends. As we disciple individuals we need to help them connect the dots between their obedience and the discipling of their nations. A pessimistic eschatology often keeps us from seeing the good news that God intends to fulfill his promise to “heal our land” as his people live out his commands. If it happened in pagan Rome in the first centuries of the church, and in a very corrupt British society in John Wesley’s era, it can happen again.

Here’s another way to explain why discipleship and not just being born again, or merely giving assent to our great creeds, is the priority. Though Scripture doesn’t explicitly say, the reason is clear in both Testaments. God is interested in obedience rather than the appearance of obedience.

Consider, for example, one of the most poignant references to His concern for living out obedience, i.e. God’s instructions in Isaiah 58. In the first five verses God tells Isaiah that the people of Israel are so deaf to His intentions for how they are to live as His people that Isaiah will have to shout the message like a trumpet blast in the ears of his listeners to get their attention. (Every time I read Isaiah 58:1 I am reminded of a summer I counseled a group of junior-high boys at camp. One of them delighted in waking me in the mornings by blowing his trumpet directly in my ear. He got my attention!)

What was the message God wanted Isaiah to shout like a trumpet? Very simply, 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 obey, when they live as he asks.
I've attended many “worship” services in evangelical churches that remind me of God's message to Israel through Isaiah. Worship services can be impressive, entertaining and emotional. In the bulletins distributed for these services we see offerings of marriage enrichment, financial planning, addiction recovery, etc. A friend of mine feels such offerings reflect a therapeutic consumerism that scratches where people itch more than a strategy to equip God’s people in the application of biblical meat.

In Isaiah 58 God is speaking to His people who were apparently impressed with their liturgy, prayer and study of Scriptures. He tells them that these things, by themselves, do not qualify as worship. In essence, God 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.”

NOTES

8 Twitter, Dec 18, 2014
True worship attracts the lost. Deuteronomy 4:1-8 tells us that a lifestyle of obedience positively attracts the attention of those who are outside the community of faith. I Peter 2:12 says that we should live in such a way that those outside the community of faith 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 for lost sinners than that of a people 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 kind of life and liberty that America has enjoyed 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 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 came to worship and be equipped for witness/worship where they live most of their lives.

As we seek to be “seeker sensitive” we run the risk of giving believers who come to worship a “hall pass” for the kind of witness needed. What is that kind of witness? It is witness outside the worship service in the respective worlds of those who come to worship. (For those not of my generation, a hall pass is a permission slip to be in the school hall instead of in class.) 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 goes like this: “If we can just cajole our unsaved friends to come to church they will hear the Gospel and be saved.” “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 outside the church, not because they hear the Gospel in the church. Yes, we should welcome those who are not part of our worship culture, but in the same sense that we welcome people from another culture to come to dinner in ours. As we do so, 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 for discipleship.

I enthusiastically support the idea of evangelistic events outside the church. Those events can and should be structured to attract those from the world through modalities familiar to the nonbelieving
world so they can be exposed to the Good News. And, there are times when the local church can be an ideal setting for evangelism - like Christmas and Easter, for example. These are occasions when outsiders attend for family or traditional reasons. My pastor calls these events “Guest Services.” I like that. But I believe that using corporate worship as a general practice for the purpose of evangelism diminishes both evangelism and discipling. Yes, evangelism should happen in the context of corporate worship. But, let it be primarily by 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, i.e. discipling, i.e. producing servants who look like Jesus.

Discipling is equipping God’s people to be servants to their generation. God has gifted every class of church leader (Eph. 4:11-13) for one purpose - equipping God’s people to worship God through serving. Forms of the Greek words for worship and service are often interchangeable in the New Testament. 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. All of us know people who are biblically literate but don’t look like Jesus.

When the local church program is designed to equip its members to bring people into the church so they can be evangelized, the great potential of a mobilized membership to be the good news of the gospel outside the walls of the church is greatly diminished. How much more could be done if the church spent its energy on 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 outside the church, much is lost.

Recently I had the privilege of attending a church’s mission conference. The speaker at the retreat reminded us of one facet of evangelism - attraction. 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. When that comes first the receiver is more open to the truth of salvation 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 do 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 difficult or hard. The earlier that grace can be brought to bear, the easier it will be for truth to be dealt with effectively, i.e. in a way that helps both the bearer and the recipient of truth grow toward the image of Jesus.

Think of how Jesus comes to you. When he 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.

But, there is a caution here. 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. Creation in Christ by George MacDonald

Let me share a story that impacted my understanding of this principle. Why would a young man, we’ll call him Maro (not his name) 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 when he ran out of funds and couldn’t even pay his hotel bill. The hotel held him hostage until he paid. 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—from his home country who was living in the same city. Sunil was married with two small children and was studying for final exams at a local Christian seminary. Sunil listened to Maro’s story. Even though he needed study time Sunil went to the hotel, managed to get Maro released, took him home to his tiny apartment. Sunil moved his two children from their bedroom to the living/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 funeral. Even so Sunil and his family hosted and ministered to Maro. During these days Sunil and Maro talked a lot about life, faith, 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. Maro stayed in the Philippines for one year, got some training and became involved in some ministries. Maro eventually started sharing Jesus with others of his countrymen 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 was it that Maro saw in Sunil and his family? It was Jesus. Sunil and his family are followers of Jesus. As such, they allowed their hands 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.
God’s ultimate purpose, and the chief end of man, is His glory. Scripture is clear: the way we contribute to this cosmic goal is by doing what God requires of his people – doing what Jesus taught (John 15:8). That is why the end goal of the task Jesus gave us is making disciples who produce the fruit of obedience.

As evangelicals we love to equate biblical fruit with the fruits of the Spirit. A word study of “fruit” through Scripture shows that the biblical use of fruit is far more connected to obedience, i.e., being a disciple, than it is the byproduct of obedience as described in Galatians 5:22.

Evangelism is a necessary part of the process of disciple making but it is not the goal. The goal is not converts but imitators of Jesus. Evangelism can be one of the first steps in the process of making disciples. 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 which do not nor cannot create the conditions for biblical transformation in our cultures (2 Chr. 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.” Treating evangelism as the goal rather than the first step of our task can lead to the sin of disobedience. It keeps us from accom-
plishing the primary task Jesus gave us - discipleship. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission are not in conflict!

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 His Kingdom. (I speak not of the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness, but its coming to whatever degree God intends it to come before Jesus returns.) Conversion should be preceded by and/or immediately followed by teaching Jesus’ followers to submit to what he taught. At its irreducible minimum, Jesus’ teaching is to show one’s love for God through loving our neighbour, love that is demonstrated in serving our neighbour (Mt. 22:36-40; 7:12; 1 John 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 the requirement for eternal life. Let’s use our imagination to put this story in today’s context. Let’s say this man is a Princeton Theological Seminary professor probing Jesus to see how he would answer the question, “How is a person saved?”

Using the familiar tactic of a rabbi, Jesus responds 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: i.e., that salvation comes from belief, from faith. Instead, Jesus’ response seems to be “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 highly respected as a religious teacher and spiritual leader. But this “love
your neighbor” teaching from Jesus gave him a problem. Another prof at his seminary was better liked by the students. Not only that, this other prof subtly criticized the teaching style of our man. Surely Jesus couldn’t be including this “thorn-in-the-flesh” prof as a “neighbor.” Needing an excuse to salve his conscience, he asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” That’s when Jesus tells the story of the good Samaritan. In our modern-day version, a Presbyterian minister and a Baptist missionary pass by the wounded man. Then a Mormon comes along, sees the victim, and helps him. Jesus tells that story, and then asks his own question, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

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. I’ll explain later, but first back to our modern-day version.

When Jesus asked the professor who was the neighbor, the answer was clear. Neither the Presbyterian nor the Baptist was the neighbor. Both had correct theology, but neither had compassion. The neighbor was the Mormon, the man with wrong theology but the right action, the man who met the condition for salvation. It was very difficult for the professor to acknowledge this, but when Jesus asked “Which was a neighbor to the wounded man,” the answer was inescapable: “The one who had mercy on him.”

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, “Go and do likewise.” This was not a tag at the end of the conversation. It was a reinforcement to Jesus’ answer to the original question – “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The answer, “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 professor thought he loved God, but he wasn’t sure about his colleague-neighbor. What Jesus was showing him is that you can’t love God if you don’t love your colleague. The Apostle John, Jesus’ disciple, unpacks what Jesus is saying.
Jesus is saying that if we say we love God but don't love our neighbor we are liars and the truth is not in us (1 John 4:19-20). In other words, our professor didn't love God if he didn't love his neighbor. If faith in his God whom he felt he loved didn't express itself in love for the thorn-in-the-flesh colleague, he didn't have eternal life.

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.

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 his Spirit is an essential component of biblical discipleship. The danger of evangelism without this kind of discipleship runs the risk of allowing those who think that they have believed in Jesus to think that this is enough. 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 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. The lessons and implications in this personal story are many and important. Many years ago I had a neighbour, whom I will call Dale – not his real name. I learned soon after Dale moved next door that he didn't like Christians, God or the church. I learned Dale 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 enjoy 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 to at least clean up his yard. I distinctly remember the Spirit answering 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 my neighbor.

The next week I was working in my garden, finished and was about to go inside. Again, I sensed the Spirit say, “You're not finished.” Since I’m very thorough in this task, 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. We didn’t know where, and we lost contact.

Almost 15 years later, Dale called and asked if my wife and I could come to their new home for dinner. We accepted. As we drove up to their new home I noticed how clean and nice his yard was. We had a wonderful meal and conversation. At the end of the meal Dale said he wanted to tell 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! Wow!! Then he added a final revelation. He
asked if I wanted to know what he did on weekends. He cleans his
neighbor’s 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.

NOTES

9 My Utmost for His Highest, April 24
Issues that keep us from fulfilling the Great Commission

It is not that the evangelical church doesn't believe in discipleship (or at least what it understands as discipleship). We evangelicals do believe in discipleship. But in today's church I see a number of problems that mitigate making disciples. Here are eight that I think are key. (In the appendix you can review a list of 20 such problems compiled by Doug Greenwold.)

**First:** We don't really know how. So much of the “how” that is practiced today focuses on the first two misperceptions we have described – a misunderstanding of priorities, and seeing discipleship from the lens of teaching evangelism or content. Until we get these priorities straight, it is unlikely that biblical discipleship will happen.

**Second:** We see discipleship as the practice of personal spiritual disciplines to the neglect of the practice of loving our neighbor by serving them. If you consider discipleship to be the knowledge and practice of spiritual disciplines, you will equip new converts in Bible knowledge, prayer, fasting, tithing, meditation, etc. These are important, but if your discipleship lacks the core discipline of loving others through humble and sacrificial service, your 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—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 benefits 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 to get 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 tasked with the subject of effective evangelistic strategy. He listed the strategies being highlighted at the congress—crusades, tracts, street preaching, radio, TV, etc. Then he asked participants who had come to Christ through crusades to stand (and remain standing). Then, one by one, he listed the other congress emphases, i.e., tracts or other literature, street preaching, etc. He went through the entire list. When he finished these areas of emphasis at the congress, I was amazed that maybe 15 to 20 percent of the audience was 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 door-to-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. Discipleship requires a community in which members walk together in sufficiently loving relationships that they want to share their successes and their struggles. In this environment they are encouraged and helped to more closely reflect the image of Jesus. We all long to be in such communities but often can’t find them. Building such a community takes time.

Such communities will usually 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 paper. 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 a relationship with those we want to see come to Christ can inoculate the very ones we want to reach against genuine discipleship. Think of inoculation against disease. To prevent polio, we inoculate a person with a dead virus which keeps them from getting the real thing. Evangelism outside of relationships can inoculate unbelievers with what appears to be “dead” Christianity and keep the un-evangelized 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 contemporary's 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 in Argentina. 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.” 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/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 20th 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/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 were funding his evangelistic crusades which thousands of people attended and 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 to making disciples.

The Pastor Emeritus of my home church told me the following story. He was serving as interim pastor of a significant church in a university town on the west coast of California. Each spring break a beach-evangelism initiative was conducted by a well-known Christian organization. Many of the young people working with this organization attended the church where he served. He heard their exciting testimonies about the amazing number people who “came to Christ” through their outreach. But, he told me, he seldom saw any of the new believers in church. He decided to find out why.

The portly pastor put on a bathing suit, took a sun umbrella, a book, went to the beach, and sat down to see what would happen. Before long a young man from this organization came by, said “Hello,” and started a conversation. My pastor friend recognized this young man as one of the college students in his church who was involved in the evangelistic outreach, but the young man didn’t recognize the pastor in this context. The pastor showed interest and the young man quickly moved to sharing the Gospel. At the conclusion of his presentation he asked if the pastor would be interested in giving his life to Christ. The pastor told the young man that he already had and that he had been a follower of Jesus for many years. The college student was surprised and embarrassed and asked why his new friend didn’t tell him earlier. The pastor introduced himself and told the young man that he recognized him from church, and that he was there to observe the evangelism strat-
egy about which this young man and his friends were giving testimonies.

The pastor then asked the young man if he could ask him a question. He agreed. It went something like this:

*Pastor:* “Tell me how you do your evangelism.

*Student:* “Well, I share the Gospel with any one I can - like I did with you.

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

*Student:* “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.”

*Pastor:* “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.”

If you understand the priority of the Great Commission as evangelism, 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. 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 see what it means to be born again as they watch us and desire Him! Then, evangelism takes place.

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 most effective way to evangelize is to disciple.

NOTES
10 My Utmost for His Highest, October 27 entry
COULD EVANGELISM LEAD TO SIN?
Our disobedience keeps people from seeing God’s glory

One of the lessons I teach is called “The Church as a Window.” See the diagram below.

We see a broken man standing in front of a wall of sin that keeps him from seeing God’s intentions either in the future or in the present. I use this graphic to challenge Christians, “Instead of seeing this sin as the corruption, violence, etc. of the world, could it be that the primary sin that keeps people of the world from seeing God is His people not living in obedience to Scripture’s commands?”

Then we consider six areas of a disciple’s life:

In our personal lives,

- Acts 14:22 – Endure hardship
- Eph. 5:17-20 – Be sober, Spirit-filled, singing and thankful
- 1 Thess. 4:3,11 – Live holy, pure, and productive lives
In our families,
- Eph. 5:22 to 6:2 – Be submissive, honor and give respect
- Eph. 6:4 – Train children in holy living

With our brothers and sisters in Christ,
- John 13:34 – Love each other
- John 17:20-23 – Live in unity

With our neighbors,
- Rom. 13:9 – Love our neighbors
- Jas. 1:27 – Care for widows and orphans
- Jer. 22:3, 15-16 – Advocate for those in need

With our government, employers/employees,
- Col. 4:1 – Be fair to those under our authority
- Rom. 13:1 – Submit to those in authority

With our 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 our disobedience – not the corruption of government, business or society. I then explain that God has put something in the wall of the sin which will be there until Christ returns. Jesus has put a window in the wall. 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 in all areas, the church must demonstrate God’s concern for brokenness - not only in the spiritual domain but in the other domains as well, i.e., of wisdom, physical, and social need.

What is the antidote? I think it begins by recapturing a biblical understanding of discipleship – living in obedience to Jesus’ instructions. Second, I believe the Bible tells us that discipleship is

The church must demonstrate God’s concern for brokenness - not only in the spiritual domain but in the other domains as well, e.g., of wisdom, physical, and social need.
the primary mission of the local church. Third, discipleship requires an intentional strategy that sees the goal of discipleship as equipping people to put into practice what they learn, and as a consequence increasingly look like Jesus.

In my opinion, an emphasis on the non-biblical priority of evangelism versus discipling can lead to sin. “What?!” you say, “Never!” 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 his room – make his bed, put away his clothes, electronics, and musical equipment. Your teen understands the instructions but only hangs up a few clothes. What would you call that? You would call it disobedience! Disobedience may be either unintentional – in the case of misunderstanding, or intentional – in the case of not fulfilling what is understood. What does God call it when we carry out one step in the process of discipleship (evangelism) but omit the priority of his instruction for how we should advance his agenda - making disciples? When we don’t carry out this primary task, it is disobedience, whether intentional

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or unintentional. Our culpability may be less in the second than in the first, but Scripture says (Lev. 4-5) we are still culpable. 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. God forbid that what I am saying could be so construed. But if we make evangelism an idol rather than the means by which people are drawn to Jesus and discipled to be like him, it can lead to sin.

Here’s an Old Testament example: The people of Israel worshiped a bronze serpent that God had commanded Moses to make for the purpose of healing (Num. 21:8). God had provided it for something good, but Israel turned it into an idol (2Kgs. 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 discipling people to be like Jesus.

Giving priority to evangelism can also encourage irrelevance. Church planting often follows evangelism before the evangelized even realize the basics of discipleship. Church planting should be a good thing. But when it is disconnected from discipleship 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. 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. The family were church attenders but Rudy seldom
noticed the church's 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 he had learned in his Marxist training was a lie and distraction from the real-life problems of his country. He went home, picked up the large family Bible, blew the dust off the cover, and began to read to prove to himself that this Jesus of the film was a destructive myth. He began reading in the Gospel of John. In his reading 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.

He saw a young man, Juan, who was leaning against a small house. Rudy went up to him, 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 said what he had learned in his new 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 did, 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 reported 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 have visited countries where thousands of churches have been planted in the last five decades. Instead of being agents that actively work to bring God’s present intentions for shalom to those communities, many of these churches are seen by their communities as isolated and irrelevant. I have personally witnessed this. In light of this reality the triumphalism connected to the reported numbers of people saved, baptized, and joining 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. Frontline Fellowship Blog, October 21, 2014*

*Again,* is it possible that one of the consequences of not making disciples is perhaps the key reason that the Church of this generation 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 that there is 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 percent 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 percent 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 percent of the population by 2030 (from 26% today) … By 2030, it is likely that 80 percent of the US population will view the gospel as been there, done that. They’ll be the new “burned-over district.”

I believe that a major reason – if not the primary reason – for

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the lack of revival and increasing shalom in the cultures that have
been evangelized is that our focus has been on what we call evan-
elism rather than teaching those who are willing to “follow Jesus”
to be like Jesus. That means at least two things: First, it means
教学 those who decide to follow Jesus to live in obedience to
the order which Scripture subscribes. (Galatians 5:13) Second, it
means preparing followers to be servants after Jesus’ model – will-
ing, humble, sacrificial and joyful. (Phil 2:5-8; Hebrews 12:2)

Can we repent from our understanding of evangelism and dis-
cipleship as two separate events/tasks? Biblical repentance
mandates that we first start to see things differently, to change our
paradigms before we can realize our error. We need another pair of
glasses to see things as they were intended. Apart from seeing the
issue of evangelism and discipleship differently, and the subsequent
repentance that seeing things differently will require, I doubt there
will be change in our behavior or the long term results in our pur-
suit of Jesus’ instructions.

Perhaps such recognition of error, consequent repentance 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 dif-
ficult. But, I believe change is coming. Why? I have traveled the
Christian world over the last almost 40 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.
We need to measure discipleship more than conversions

This final point is not another reason as much as it is a discussion of measurement. How can we know when discipleship is occurring? How can we measure the process of discipleship? Scripture helps us answer the question.

Notice Jesus’ reply to John’s disciples’ question of whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. “Go and report to John what you hear and see: The 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” (Matt. 11:4-5). Jesus essentially answered by saying, “Look at the evidence for the answer to your question.”

I find it helpful to read the headings in the gospel of Mark in my NIV Bible. Examples include: 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 or not discipleship is happening in our context. Here are eight.

1. Implication: Jesus was passionate to heal brokenness. Therefore, we should be.

Question: What are we doing individually and corporately to heal the brokenness of those around us? For example, 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. Implication: **There is evidence of God's sovereignty over the cosmos.** Therefore, we should reflect that sovereignty through the Cultural Mandate God gave in Genesis.

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

3. Implication: **We see evidence of God's concern for the desecration of sacred places.** Therefore, we should give evidence of God's concern for the brokenness of the institutions God gave us.

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

4. Implication: **Jesus told us to let our “yes” be yes and our “no” be no.**

   Question: Is there integrity in our words? Can we be counted on to do what we say? Do we keep our contracts, our covenants with each other and with those in the world?

5. Implication: **There is a way in which suffering can reflect Jesus.** Jesus suffered sacrificially with joy (Heb. 12:2). When we suffer for others – especially with joy, we reflect what Jesus did for us. Therefore, we should suffer/serve till it hurts and do so with joy.

   Question: 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 families and community?

6. Implication: **An evidence of Jesus' character is illustrated by the loving care that the first believers had for one another.** Therefore, there should be clear evidence among us that we generously share with one another.

   Question: What do the people of our respective communities see and hear in terms of our care for one another?
7. *Implication:* Paul commends the Macedonians for giving beyond their ability to needy believers in Jerusalem—believers they had never met. Therefore, we should sacrificially give and extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters we have never met.

*Question:* Do the people, especially Christian brothers and sisters we have never met, see God’s glory in our generosity? Are the people of our respective neighborhoods touched by God’s glory through our hospitality?

8. *Implication:* Jesus told us that to be his disciples we had to “hate” those things that might come as a higher priority than him.

*Question:* 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?

Another perspective from which to measure discipleship is the description of Jesus’ attitude/attributes in Philippians 2. In verse five, Paul encourages us to imitate Jesus - The Servant - by having the same attitude that Jesus had. I don’t think there is a better instrument for measuring discipleship than this.

Between Adam and Jesus, we could not understand what God intended when he created us because after Adam sinned there was never a perfect human being – until Jesus. The first perfect human being we could see after Adam’s disobedience was Jesus. None of the biblical patriarchs is an adequate measure of God’s intentions for us. They were not perfect. Jesus was and is the only perfect human model. When we look at Jesus, who do we see? Amazingly, we not only see God, but we see that God is a servant. According to the Spirit speaking through Paul we see that the characteristics of this perfect servant are:

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

We can go even further in the description of this servanthood if we go to Hebrews 12:2 where we see that he served joyfully.

I think that this servanthood characteristic of Jesus mirrors the clearest reflection of the image of God in man. Why? Jesus was the
perfect reflection of his Father. And, in verse nine 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. So what does that mean for us? It means that the more we are servants after the model of Jesus the perfect Man, the more we are like him, the more we are disciples. This is incredibly good news. It means that true discipleship is attainable by anyone – including the poorest, the least educated, the lowest born, etc. How do you measure your discipleship?

How do you measure your discipleship and the discipleship of those you disciple? Compare yourself/them with Jesus, the model servant who served willingly, humbly, sacrificially and joyfully. How do you 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 serve or to be a servant. Instead it is serving to help the ones served grow toward God’s intention for them. That is why Jesus served/serves us. It is to help us grow from where we are toward God’s intentions for us.

How we measure discipleship is an important issue for those who disciple and for those being discipled. The criteria we use will have a huge impact on the result. In general, the Bible tells us that the goal is increasing growth in the criteria Jesus established - reflecting the character of Jesus. When others observe the disciple over time, to what degree do they see the Kingdom characteristics Jesus identified in the Sermon on the Mount? He 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 commit-

To be like Jesus means to reproduce not just believers but disciples.
ment to Jesus. Jesus was teaching us that to meet these 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 that goal.

We cannot hope to effectively measure these things from one person’s 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.

Here’s one final but important note. To be like Jesus means to reproduce not just believers but disciples. Jesus had many followers but he spent his focused time and energy on twelve disciples. These were not people who just believed in him but those who were willing to sacrifice all to follow him – to be his disciples. Where are you concentrating your time, energy and financial resources to reproduce the character of Jesus in others? Where are your disciples concentrating theirs?

The above measures are not goals we can accomplish in human strength. They are the consequence of God’s supernatural intervention in our lives. I submit, however, that we can see them … if. The “if” is dependent on our meeting the conditions God has set out – willing, humble sacrificial and joyful obedience to Him, i.e., discipleship.

We long to see the above “ifs” become reality, but they are primarily a by-product of living as God intends. 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.
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 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 that systematically takes new followers by the hand as observers to see the how of serving through the example of their teachers followed by coaching, mentoring, cheerleading, and then holding their disciples joyfully accountable.
I’d like to suggest that the passion of Jesus – to see people come to faith in Him – will be accomplished best by going back to the missiological strategy of the early church. In Chapter 1 of his book *Ancient Future Faith*, theologian Robert Webber presents a chronology of Christianity as follows:

- Classical – 100 to 600 AD
- Medieval – 600 to 1500 AD
- Reformation - 1500 to 1750 AD
- Modern – 1750 to 1980 AD
- Postmodern – 1980 to Present

Webber’s chronology provides a framework for identifying the missiology of the church in each of these eras. How has the church’s missiology changed through history?

To answer that question, 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 have suggested the following classification:

- 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 – at least in the Western church.

**MISSIOLOGY**
- Classical – Incarnation
- Medieval – Institutional membership
- Reformation – Faith in Scripture and in Jesus
- Modern – Numbers-driven evangelism and church planting
- Postmodern (proposed) – Authentic living/Incarnation

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis</th>
<th>Periods</th>
<th>Missiology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom</td>
<td>Classical 100 - 600 AD</td>
<td>Incarnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>Medieval 600 – 1500 AD</td>
<td>Join the Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scripture Only</td>
<td>Reformation 1500 – 1750 AD</td>
<td>Faith in Jesus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faith Only</td>
<td>Modern 1750 – 1980 AD</td>
<td>#’s Driven, Evan. &amp; Church Plant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rationality</td>
<td>Postmodern 1980 - Present</td>
<td>Authentic living - Incarnation</td>
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<td>Relativism</td>
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With Webber, I believe we need a return to missiology of the early church, 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. Our needed missiology 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 theology.

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. In other words, they incarnated Jesus. It was the beauty of what Stark calls a “new kind of humanity” that drew others to become citizens of the Kingdom of God and of His Christ.\textsuperscript{11}

If we would turn from our predominant evangelical emphasis on numbers of converts, numbers of churches planted, etc., and return to our own ancient missiology, I am convinced that the world would be drawn to Jesus because they would be touched by him through us. Oswald Chambers says, “We look for God to manifest Himself to His children: God only manifests Himself in His children.”\textsuperscript{12} Evangelism would be a by-product of the way we live, 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.

Please don’t misunderstand me. Am I calling for less evangelism? No. We must communicate in the biblical pattern the horror of hell and the dying love of Jesus that rescues humankind, we 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.”

A short word about the importance of worldview and discipleship is in order. With Darrow Miller, I am one of the two founders of the Disciple Nations Alliance, 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 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 image 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” (Col 1:29).

NOTES
11 From The Rise of Christianity
12 My Utmost for His Highest, April 21
Obedience Results in 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 (2 Chr. 7:14). The abiding principle of that specific promise remains: when we equip God’s people to live as he calls them, when we equip them to be disciples, his blessing/healing/ transformation follows. We often miss the power of this promise by thinking that if we just do the right projects we can heal our brokenness. This is not true. 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 human efforts alone do not bring healing/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.

I saw a hint of this revealed truth in a couple of instances when I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo a few years ago. The first instance was driving from the airport to the city. My first visit to Kinshasa almost 10 years earlier was to a city whose main streets looked and smelled like garbage dumps. This time the main street was clean and workers were actually sweeping not only the gutters but the streets. Amazed, I commented about the change to our country leader. He casually said, “We started that.” Thinking this was hyperbole I just as casually asked what he meant. He
reminded me that in our training we encourage the churches we train to pick up the trash on the street where their church is located as a demonstration of God’s love and care for creation. The churches in the city that his team had trained were doing 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.

In the second instance, my visit happened to coincide with the graduation of several hundred students from vocational training in a large church in the capital city. I even got to hand out some of the diplomas. I learned later that the pastor of this church, a fourth-generation pastor that our team in the Congo has trained, had a vision for the hundreds of unemployed youth in the community where his church was located. One Sunday he challenged his congregation to provide vocational training for these young people. He reminded his congregation that there were many professions represented in the membership, e.g., mechanics, cooks, hair dressers, computer technicians, drivers, dress makers, etc. He challenged them to hold training sessions for community youth – for free. He said the church would provide the space in their spacious building for the classrooms. Two years before I arrived the classes started. This was the graduation. I will never forget the cheers from the graduates as their particular vocational class graduated. The cheers were not for themselves but for the teachers who had sacrificially given themselves to provide vocational training to kids who otherwise would not have had this opportunity.

Each of these examples is a taste of what can happen when people of the body allow the Christ who dwells within to live out his life through them. Imagine the healing/transformation that could happen if all the churches in Kinshasa – or of your city - would do the same.

When God’s people live 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_, (Eph. 3:10). The Church is the administration of God’s “manifold wisdom and power” of reconciliation and restoration displayed to the observing
principalities and powers (Eph. 3:9-10). It is thus that the fullness of Christ - which is incomprehensible love - is seen and felt by a broken world (Eph. 1:23; 4:13; 4:17-19). I believe this Scripture teaches that the priority task of the church is making disciples – equipping those who have come to Christ to imitate him as servants who, as we have seen above, are willing, humble, sacrificial (Phil. 2:5-8), and joyful (Heb. 12:2).

Disciple-making is not rocket science. It is simply the equipping of Jesus-followers to obey Him, i.e., 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.

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 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 (Matt. 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, believe and 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 from the beginning. I think some of Jesus' disciples were “converted” in the process of being discipled rather than the other way around.
I’ve been mentoring a young leader in Mongolia for several years. He recently shared a conversation with one of his mentees who is a missionary among reindeer herders. This missionary teaches in a village high school and is dreaming about how to reach his students who know nothing about Jesus. The students are interested in learning how to use computers. He plans to build a relationship with them by gathering them in cohorts of 10. With each group he will introduce basic computer skills and second, involve them in community service projects. As his relationship with them builds he plans to share the Who behind their desire to learn and the why of sacrificially serving others. As I heard this vision my heart rejoiced. I believe this missionary understands discipleship.

We were created with a place in our souls that can only be filled by our Creator. When we begin to live the way he wants – even if we don’t yet know 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 young 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 - I believe some hearts will begin to open to eventually knowing, believing and following him.

The Target

We are unlikely to achieve any task if we don’t have a clear vision of the target, our goal. If our goal is equipping disciples to look like Jesus, we need to ask, “What does that look like?”

Not long ago a friend suggested that Jesus’ Beatitudes in Matthew 5 comprise one of the best templates to describe what a disciple looks like. At the end of Chapter 5 Jesus admonishes us to be perfect. What does perfection look like? It looks like Jesus – the only perfect human to exist after Adam sinned. Only by looking at this perfect Man can we understand what God intended when he created us. The Beatitudes are one way to unpack the appearance of that perfection. Jesus met all of these characteristics.

As a young Christian I wondered which one of these Beatitude’s characteristics I could strive for. I now realize that the
goal is not an expression of one but all of them. This is not a small achievement and it is not accomplished in human strength or perfectly achieved in this life. But perfection/completion is the goal and the target toward which we strive. Like Paul, we need to keep reaching toward it until we see Jesus face to face (Phil 3:12).

Abiding

Jesus taught his disciples to so abide in Him that they would naturally and joyfully reflect their rabbi, Jesus. 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 (Phil. 2 and Heb. 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.

Evangelism that is real and lasting comes from 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.13 If we don’t have the supernatural strength that comes from the Holy Spirit we will soon be exhausted in our attempts to be like Jesus.

Teaching them to Obey - Submission is not Optional

I am not saying that being a disciple or making disciples is easy. It is not. It means submitting to that comprehensive and absolute authority that Jesus claimed in Matthew 28. It means that his commands, 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.

A missionary friend, Jim Yost, has an interesting question for converts when he baptizes those who come from anti-Christian contexts. He doesn’t ask if they have put their faith in Jesus, he asks, “Are you prepared to die for Jesus?” If those who desire 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

13 My Utmost for His Highest, April 21
There are probably as many discipleship programs and strategies as 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. Training disciples to evangelize and/or plant churches

Classic discipleship disciplines include such activities as abstinence, fasting, solitude, silence, honoring the Sabbath, Bible study, prayer, worship, community/soul friendship, reflection, etc. Each of these is an important step in discipleship, but they miss what I feel is the most important task of discipleship – living out the character of Jesus. That character is the servanthood described in Phil. 2 and Hebrews 12:2. Traditional spiritual disciplines are mostly inward focused with the intention of making our outward life more Christ-like as a by-product. By themselves, the inward emphases of these disciplines often miss the target.

Instead, this discipline has an outward focus. Its by-products include both inward conformation to the image of Christ and outward demonstration of the character and love of Jesus for others. The assumption of this discipline is that the goal of making disciples can best be attained as we equip God’s people to abide and then do the primary thing that Jesus commanded — to demonstrate their love for God by loving their neighbor.
Some pastors expend great energy, encouraging their people to become doers of the Word—but don’t see results. Why? For multiple reasons. One 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 of an ignorance of how 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 suggested cohesive strategy, a tool to apply the discipleship principles I’ve been writing about. I call this tool “The Discipline of Love.” It can be used in the following ways:

1. A **pre-evangelism** introduction to the lifestyle Jesus calls his followers to live out.
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. A renewing exercise/discipline for **longer-term believers** who 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). In this book, I highlight only one of them, 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.

To only review and practice these tools will not produce disciples. They are just an aid leading to the goal. To only review and practice these tools will not produce disciples. The end result of disc-
Discipleship is to look and behave like Jesus. This is not our responsibility. It is God’s. Our role is to live as Jesus asks.

The primary element of obedience is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. As we saw in the first part of this book, an essential way to do that is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. When we do that, we demonstrate 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 2 Chr. 7:14. God is the healer. We are not. Our role is to live as he has called us to live.

The idea is very simple and has been effectively reduced to something as simple as this: Guided by the Holy Spirit, find at least one way 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 this step of obedience; and 3) What results you saw in the person(s) you served. 4) On an ongoing basis, repeat the above process one or more times each week.

The discipline of love is that simple. In fact, you don’t need to read further if you will just DO what is 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?

The following passages are the six places that record the Great Commandment in the New Testament. Four are from Jesus, two from Paul.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love God and Neighbor</th>
<th>Love Neighbor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Matthew 22:36-40</td>
<td>• Matthew 7:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mark 12:28-31, 33</td>
<td>• Romans 13:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Luke 10:27</td>
<td>• Galatians 5:14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 most important (Matt. 22:37-38). He said the most important of the two is loving God. Still, it is the lesser of the two – loving neighbor – that both Jesus and Paul make 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 (1 John 3:17).

“As we wrote earlier (see p. 29-30), Jesus said we can’t have God if we don’t love our neighbor.” This idea is backed up by passages including Matt. 5:43-45, Col. 3:12-14, and I Jn 4:16-17. Yes, we are saved by grace, and if that salvation is genuine, it will be accompanied by a demonstrated love for others.

The Discipline of Love is truly a personal discipline, and it is greatly aided by intentionality and accountability. Preferably it is done in the context of community such as a small group that practices the discipline together both for 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 a daily practice – an always-present lifestyle. Group projects are usually periodic. Participants believe they are exercising their discipleship with the group activity. They finish one project and wait for the next to love their neighbor. Take weekend small-group projects as an example. If the end-of-week activity is the primary outward expression of discipleship for the believer, what about the rest of the week?

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. 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 12 categories of serving, the Discipline of Love could be as simple as, “Make a commitment to find at least one way that is new/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 where each member will share, discuss and pray for those who are serving 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 of serving.

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 no outward focus. As a consequence, I have observed that the average length of individual participation in a small group I have been a part of is about 2 years.

**Schedule:** Most small groups take about 1½ to 2 hours for their meetings which include food, fellowship, study, discussion and prayer. All this inwardsly focused activity leaves little time for something new. To incorporate a Discipline of Love activity 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 can easily take an hour. I recommend at least 40% of the 1½ to 2 hours be given to Discipline of Love activities.

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 about 15 each 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. The small-group activity also included study, prayer, and fellowship. But the activity of this group was primarily focused on learning to extend the love they had received to people in their respective 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 greatest way we 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 multiple strategies as much as it is 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. I suggest 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 to unpack 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 part immediately under the bark of both vine and branch are in tight 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 into us and 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 something I learned from C.S. Lewis: “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 him no matter what I am doing or what are the circumstances. 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 enables me 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 must disciples have this 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!” (Rom. 7:25), obedience is possible. It is in the continuous practice of obedience that service moves from obligation to joy, from legalism to freedom, from religion to grace.

I don't mean to ignore the other spiritual disciplines—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” (Matt. 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. 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 mentees 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 practice. It begins before I leave home for the office. I put a plastic grocery bag—sometimes two bags—in my back pocket. As I walk the two blocks to and from my parking space to the office, I pick up trash and sometimes subconsciously hum “This is My Father’s World.” I don’t talk about it, and I don’t do it to be noticed. Actually, I’m shy about this strange-looking behavior, but I do it anyway. Whether this expression of service is noticed or not, it
allows 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” (Heb. 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 continuous rein-
forcement and coaching of 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 ser-
mons, 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, intentional
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 intention-
ally implicit throughout the equipping process in order to
maximally impact the ministry 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 Phil 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 corpo-
rately. The call to faith-praxis in this church is intentionally 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.

**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” (1 John 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—even 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 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 driving, this skill is best learned through experience, but it is one of the most important arrows in the quiver of one who has a passion to hit the target of making disciples.
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 is a community in which members walk together in love and the integrity born of mutual accountability. Because of the way it has been misused in some church contexts, accountability has a bad reputation. It may be culturally difficult but I think it is urgent to rescue the relevance and respectability of this concept. Any community that strives to achieve a common goal has to measure progress toward that goal without being 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 attaching 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 the transparent sharing of what went well and what didn’t go as well as we 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’s lives as we submit to him? Remember, Isaiah 58 reminds us that the demonstration of God’s sacrificial love is the essential form 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 fol-
low 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.” Maybe 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, Pg 261

Principle 6: Encouragement

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thess. 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 like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Phil. 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 follower of Jesus who is just learning true discipleship needs the encouragement that comes from recognition, group interaction, coaching and the coverage of prayer. If done in the right spirit such encouragement and recognition will not lift up the disciple, but the Lord the disciple follows.

Principle 7: Celebration

“Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together” (Ps 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 num-
bers over obedience, we will celebrate the number of people who have “been evangelized,” the number of people who were baptized, the number of churches planted, the number of new church members, the size of offerings, etc. We can legitimately celebrate these things. But if the end goal 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 website, www.harvestfoundation.org. But I want to 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. Permission is granted to copy, adapt and/or revise these tools 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 website) for use in a teaching context;
3. A Lesson Narrative

This and other tools are available in multiple languages on our website.

NOTES

14 For more information, see our website—www.harvestfoundation.org>materials.
COULD EVANGELISM LEAD TO SIN?
The Tool

“THE Discipline of Love”

To intentionally identify yourself with God’s interest in others

Overview Statement:

The Discipline of Love is a spiritual discipline that is an effective discipleship tool designed to help followers of Christ practice demonstrating 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 intentionally plan, act, reflect and be accountable in our serving.
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 24 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 3 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: I Timothy 4:7b-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 2:12b

J. II Timothy 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?
   1 John 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


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 (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 the 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 between each meeting.

9. Contact each group member between meetings to encourage and affirm.
### Suggested Two-Hour Schedule for a Small Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Interval</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Testimonies of Disciplines of Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Peer Support and Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Planning Next Application</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Sharing and Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>Between-Meeting Contact by Group Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>Intercession and Application by Group Leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Small-Group Leaders’ Record

Attendance and Journal Record

Start Date _______ End Date _______

Leader: ___________________________ Group: ______________
Lesson Handout #1

**THE Discipline of Love**

**KEY VERSE**

1 Timothy 4:7-8

... 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. 1 Timothy 4:7b-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: 1 John 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREAS OF NEED</th>
<th>Wisdom</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. May 2</td>
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<td>Your World</td>
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<td>or a Culturally Different World</td>
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**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/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/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 who? My family

3. When? Monday

4. Where? At home at dinner
PLAN

Entry No: ___ Date: ____

Context/Area: ______________________

1. What is the need and what will I do?

2. With or for who?

3. When?

4. Where?
Lesson Handout #4

JOURNAL

Date: __________ Context/Area: _______________________

1. What did you do?

2. What were the results?

3. What did you learn?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise Steps</th>
<th>Exercise Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pray—prepare spiritually</td>
<td>1. Point to God’s concern, rather than bring attention to yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify the need</td>
<td>2. Not impose something that would not be welcomed by the one being served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Meet the need</td>
<td>3. Cause you to go beyond what you would normally do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reflect and journal</td>
<td>4. Require sacrifice but not divert you from your other high-priority responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Record the exercise</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Lesson Handout #5

**Discipline of Love**

<table>
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<th>Wisdom</th>
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<tr>
<td>CONTEXTS FOR SERVICE</td>
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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 (Gen. 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” (Col. 1:20) and in making known the manifold wisdom of God through the church (Eph. 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/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 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, our linguistic 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 that Adam and Eve believed the original lie, people have turned the attributes of God’s image to selfish advantage and have distorted the image of God. 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 (Heb. 1:1-3b). 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. We see more than perfect spirituality, 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. We see in Jesus 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” (Matt. 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” (Phil. 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” (Phil. 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 (Isa. 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 (Matt. 25). Pure and perfect religion is summarily defined 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 (Rom. 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” (Eph. 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 servitude 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 (1 John 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, 1 John 3). We must never diminish our consciousness of God's plan that we, the Body of Christ, are the primary instruments through which God's life-transforming power is channeled!

Loving and 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 other persons. 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” (Phil. 2:12b-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 what God has placed in us. Obviously developing Christ-like character requires new habits and new skills. To develop new habits and skills, we have to be disciplined. Why submit to a discipline? Athletes who want to become professionals must discipline themselves to rigorous schedules of training and endless hours of practice. All students who want to finish at the top of their class and get the best jobs possible discipline themselves to study hard for years. Ultimately, people submit themselves to a new discipline because their desired outcome is very important to them.

Similarly, 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” (1 Tim. 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 practice demonstrating 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 a vertical emphasis, strengthening the relationship between disciples and their Lord. This discipline has a horizontal 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 dis-
cipline 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 respective 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 (Matt. 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! 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.

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A story from Kampala

I referred to this story above but it deserves an expanded place of its own.

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 come and see. I came, 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 another than 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 economically 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 50 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 one of the member’s homes, 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 – not as believers, 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 was, 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 come. 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 what he learned was their standard procedure, 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 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 which the woman who was giving her testimony couldn’t afford. The neighbor, who was a member of this cell, 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 to each member’s immediate neighbors and give them an opportunity to financially contribute for the medicine this child needed. Within 24 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. One of the other cell group members heard that she was very ill with AIDS. Though the cell group member didn’t know her, she went to the small home 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 who was giving her testimony said she was very sick, 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 and return 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 each member 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.” 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? In my view, this is biblical transformation!

Let it be so.
20 Reasons Why “Discipleship” Died (RIP)

(90% of an effective therapy is rooted in a sound diagnosis)

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 (non-biblical) 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/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, e.g., attributes. 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 30. 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, i.e., “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 21st-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 Long 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/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/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, Matt. 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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