

MENTORING

Making Discipleship Work:

DELETE or DESIGN

By: Dr. Waylon Moore

What numbers do you find worth counting, worth keeping track of? For instance, can you find any records in your church, association, or Christian organization of the number of new disciples built over the past year? Some persons might say "I abhor numbers," while other ministries track every statistic—from tickets sold for the youth banquet, to Bible study attendance, to the sign-up list for a new basketball league. And most certainly we track baptisms for our congregation. Notice Jesus' last command which we call "the

Great Commission"-- to "make disciples of all nations."

Ask most pastors for a one-word definition of the Great Commission and they will instantly say "evangelism." That would be like new parents saying about the tiny baby in their arms, "Well, we've done it. Our job is finished." The only imperative command found in Matthew 28:19-20 is to "make disciples." Many sermons have been built on what appears, in some translations, as a command to "go." However, that verb is a present participle, "while going." Jesus does clearly command us to "make disciples." Why has this been so difficult to design rather than delete?

The Design: Three years to save the world

Everyone can make disciples by design, on purpose. Dying on the cross was not Jesus' total design to change this world. He came for two intertwined purposes: 1) to die on the cross for our sins, and 2) to make disciples who would live to transmit the message of his life, death, and victorious resurrection. He had to do both. Jesus' strategy linked the cross with the mentoring of men to be His followers. For three years Jesus

"M&M-ed" discipling essentials (he "modeled & mentored"¹). He shaped a handful of uneducated, un-traveled, mainly single young guys into life-changers and world shakers. They, in turn, risked their lives to share the good news of Jesus. With His disciples, but without the cross, there would have been no salvation acceptable to a holy God. On the other hand, without Spirit-filled disciples, the message of the cross would have died. It's both—and: sharing the Gospel and sticking with those won to Him.

Four Aspects of Jesus' Private Ministry

Jesus modeled both publicly and privately for 3 years the ministry he wanted his disciples to reproduce. His public ministry involved four things: 1) preaching, 2) teaching, 3) healing, and 4) miracles. Few in a church will be involved in these. However, anyone can do one or more of Jesus' private ministries! He gave his life to them 14 to 16 hours a day without vacation time. Since few of us can duplicate the staggering time investment of Jesus-living with 12 men for 24 hours a day, a period of three years-- We must reduce the number of people we invest in personally. Intensive min-



istry produces an extensive pay off. Our goal is Christ-likeness in attitude, character, and walk. Mentoring others into discipleship includes times in prayer and God's Word, problem solving, outreach, with encouragement and patience. These growing disciples rarely join our churches... **we must build them.**

As Jesus lived the life before them he said, "follow me." Note **4 essential private ministries Jesus modeled.** I use the acrostic **W.I.N.D.** The Scriptures record Jesus living with them and:

Witnessing — In his classic book, *The Great Physician*, G. Campbell Morgan recounts from the Gospels some 40 people individually to whom Jesus witnessed and met needs. Jumping into our mind is a staggering flow of different people like Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the rich ruler, children, soldiers, lepers, the blind, cripples, religious leaders, sick women, Zaccheus up a tree, close friends, and grieving parents. The disciples were exposed to Jesus' multiple ministries. We take the person we're discipling with us, as we contact a church visitor, or witness to a waiter at a fast food place. We're bridge-building to a heart when we pick up a neighbor's dropped trash, or help a widow mow her yard. Recently we got to witness the baptism of a girl whom I'd given a tract to. It is His Word made flesh that is the essential bridge to winning the hard to reach (I Cor. 9:19)!

Intercession — The disciples slept while Jesus rose early to pray (Mk.1:35). They were staggered at his immediate answers to prayer: the fruitless tree shrinking, the wind and waves ceasing. The only thing they asked him to teach them was "teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." Many of his nights and early mornings were in

prayer. What's the biggest thing you've asked God to do this year? Bring Jesus into the tiniest cracks of your life, asking in prayer for "little things" like a parking place. We help the young disciple set up a daily prayer list. Pray together. See our meditation and Bible study tools at www.mentoring-disciples.org

Nurturing — Like a parent with multiple babies, Jesus loved his new followers. They saw the Word alive. He protected them against religious zealots, and contemporary wrong interpretations of the Bible. "You have heard it said-- but I say unto you." He went past the form to the heart of Scripture, and gave it wings of power. He was patient, tender, humorous, available, and all man too. Today Bible study methods and doctrine can be taught well in a group. But it is the gift of customized attention, combined with the Word that more quickly nurtures young believers into fully-devoted followers of Christ.

Discipling — Jesus modeled, then gave his team tasks to do; they returned rejoicing, reporting on their travels. Discipling involves goals, accountability and mission. His "Great Commission" includes a missing link few put into discipling. The disciples were to teach for the bottom line. You cannot mentor men from a couch—you have to get in the messiness of life! Knowledge alone was never the goal. Daryl Eldridge, the president of Rockbridge University in Springfield, MO, explained our dilemma at a Lifeway conference in North Carolina: "Our discipleship is run amok. It's not our theology. It's the fact that people don't know how to implement it."² Furthermore, he shared that the answer lies in helping biblical revelation go "from the head to the hands to the heart" and also "translate into habits that in turn grow the church."³ "...Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you" (NLT). **Scripture must become life.**

What is a "disciple"?

Are new converts "disciples"? Only potentially. "Not every saved person is Christ's disciple, but a disciple is a certain kind of Christian.... Evangelism makes converts, timely follow-up makes disciples."⁴ Now, let's get Jesus' definition of a "disciple." Luke also picks up the word in Acts for a grand total of 269 times. A disciple is produced as we follow that "how" sentence of the Great Commission, "baptising... teaching them to **obey everything**," Jesus commanded.

First, we can understand being a "disciple" as a **Learner**. We must be regularly in the Scriptures. Have you cried out for a passion to know Christ (John 8:31,32; Matt.11:28-30; Phil. 3:10)? Following Christ, a disciple soaks up the Word of God and lives it out. It's like baby food, easy to digest, given in love regularly, over time. How can you help a new believer learn to use a "spoon" and feed himself quickly on the Word of God? The Bible is God's supermarket of spiritual food, with 31,000 verses (canned goods, boxes, and packages of food) which we must eat and digest (apply). We get personal on "doers of the word and not hearers only..."⁵

Next, a disciple is a **Lover** (John 13:34-35). In the Body of Christ, we sacrifice for others, live in community, give time, serve and pray together. Mentoring cannot just stay in the "learning mode" surrounded with a Bible and your concordance. See I John 3:18.

A disciple is always a **Life-transmitter**, a fruit-bearer (John 15:8,16; Matt 4:19; I Thess. 2:8). More than simply doing acts of kindness, we seek souls for Jesus, and mentor them into disciples. The "fruit" in context of these verses is not "the fruit of the Spirit" and character, but a vine or tree that reproduces what it is; the result is more grapes, more grape vines.

Fourth, a disciple, in his essence, is a **Lifter** (Luke 9:23; Luke 14:25-32).

We strive to obey the Lord. We choose to daily deny self, lift up our own cross and carry it daily, pursuing the will and ways of God. *“That part of the cross we refuse to carry is the part that makes us ineffective for the Kingdom of God. The lighter our cross, the weaker our witness”* writes A.W. Tozer.⁶ There is a theological fog that hides the picture of a cross-bearing disciple from our minds. As a pastor, in order to raise up new men of God, I set personal goals after prayer. As a “fishing pond,” I taught men in early morning groups before work, and they did homework each week using an inductive Bible study method. Through the groups, I was able to find hungry men, who would go out to do evangelism with me and discipling of others. Frankly, I was more interested in getting a man to meet me to go witnessing, than having him come on Sunday to hear my sermon! I prayed for spiritual growth, guts, and gifts they would discover from the Lord. And I yearned and fought for their reproducing spiritual children.

WHY AREN'T WE MAKING DISCIPLES?

1. We stop with baptisms.

After people are baptized, in many churches, we shake their hand and register them for a small group. Do we perhaps imagine that disciples are born, not made?⁷ What do you call a man who doesn't marry but only makes babies, and never sticks around to father them? Churches are full of orphans, unless we also build “parent-hearted” disciples through mentoring. I am all for keeping baptismal records, for example, and realize that it's hard to quantify the blurry lines of ministry, wondering “How can I best track progress, to see if the church is growing?” But I would add a step: why not keep records on how many growing disciples we are producing?

When “making disciples” is defined primarily as evangelism by our leaders, there will be no second and third

generations. Face it: babies don't have babies. But trained disciples are a never-ending, lifetime source of new babes in Christ, who grow up! We do unto others what's been done unto us that works. Let's take Southern Baptists as an example. Some, like the current president Johnny Hunt, also invest deeply in men. Yet this SBC Convention in the USA lost nearly 39,000 in membership last year. A current LifeWay Statistics Report indicates that only 31% of pastors rate discipleship/mentoring as critical to the future health and process of their church. As to the most important ministry in the church only 7% of pastors feel making disciples/spiritual growth is the most important. So far as influencing staff or lay leadership, 60% of pastors give no *individual time* to those in charge of evangelism and growth by groups.

The new convert and new member desperately need the one-to-one touch. As a 12 year old Christian, my Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Wallen, and a business man in our church, Mr. Garrison, gave me concentrated time. They listened, guided, and encouraged me to the point that at the age of 16, I was entrusted to teach a boy's Sunday School class.

2. Busyness cancels discipling.

“I'm overwhelmed,” I've heard so many pastors exclaim. Most churches are not designed for discipling. But let's not delete it! Honestly I felt like I was on a treadmill for most of the 13 years of my last pastorate. But then logically, how could I NOT multiply myself, through mentoring, so that there *would* be more leaders?

I had to balance the expectations of church people, not to mention the needs of my wife and three kids, including a mentally challenged son. God used the lessons in rearing our son Paul as a perfect example of some of our church members—they might be years old in the Lord, but their struggles with bad attitudes, multiple sin problems and

poorly-placed values could reflect the maturity of a 10 year old. Every babe in Christ has an unlimited potential - as big as the grace of God and His promises. Babies becoming men means cleaning up messes, changing diapers, repeating the same things over and over. Love and patience. God prefers people and productivity to sterility and order. *“Where no oxen are, the crib is clean; but much increase is by the strength of the ox”* (Prov.14: 4). Oxen produce milk and manure. The two go together. I recall at my Tampa church we had multiple nurseries with babies, bottles, and bother. But we also had dozens of couples coming to Christ and growing spiritually.

Last month I taught in 11 classes at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth. I was thrilled to have dear friends visiting in one class, Hugh and Millie Roberts. I was their pastor years ago in Tampa. Hugh gave a striking testimony of four years of our meeting together, in a small group and one-on-one. We did problem solving, witnessing, and it all melted together with “tools” for ministry. I also took him overseas on missions' trips. This mentoring radically marked their whole lives, their children now grown, and grandchildren, too. If pastors/leaders in 50,000 SBC churches prayerfully design to disciple for six months just two men, we've grow to 100,000. If these chosen then disciplined two others, in a year 200,000. God would soon have a million men. His!

1 I first heard this use of “M&M” by Donna Jensen, one of our board members, at our 24-Hour Mentoring Workshop in Tampa, Florida.

2 Quoted by Andrea Higgins, “Intentional Discipleship: a process not a program,” Baptist Press, 25 July, 2005, www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp

3 Andrea Higgins, “Intentional Discipleship,” Baptist Press.

4 Waylon B. Moore, *Multiplying Disciples: The New Testament Method of Church Growth*, Nashville, TN: Classics Department, Lifeway Press, 2008, pp. 21-23.

5 See James 1:22

6 A. W. Tozer

7 See classic with interesting title: Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples are Made, not Born*, Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2002.



Spiritual Parenting

Have you begun to train and equip "spiritual parents" to adopt each new babe in Christ within your ministry or church? Spiritual babies need the same four things as physical babies: 1) to be loved, 2) fed, 3) protected, and 4) trained into maturity. An immediate growth group geared for spiritual babies is a first step. Our goal is grandchildren and great grandchildren who wholly follow Jesus Christ. Multiplication of disciples over the entire world is God's supreme strategy.



At the IMB in Richmond, VA, **Dr. Moore** shares about his heroes who have gone Home to be with the Lord before leading in prayer.

Family News and Prayer Concerns

Clemmie and I celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary in August. Through His grace we are still active mentoring and being blessed by others. Grandchild, **Gwen**, with red hair and blue eyes, is growing and crawling at 9 months. **Bruce and Heather** are happy serving at LifePoint Church, North Tampa. You may want to listen to his April 5th sermon called "CPR" about uncovering God's hidden blessings (go to iTunes, podcast for LifePoint). **Martha** is being led to stay longer in Sevilla, Spain, to win college students to Christ. Join in prayer for disciples, that God will call to open a permanent Connexion campus work and new church start there.



MENTORING in the SKY (PE)

Using SKYPE.COM with a small camera on your computer is a simple, free way to maintain heart contact with someone who has moved away. I saw and talked with our daughter in Spain for an hour this week. She calls Germany to encourage and pray with those she loves and has disciplined.



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