

Title: Making Disciples

Text: Matthew 28:18-20 & 2 Timothy 2:2

Date: March 14, 2021

Discipleship is the main work of the church. Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus told His closest followers, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:18-19). We commonly refer to our Lord’s words as “the Great Commission.” Because of His command, disciple making is a nonnegotiable for churches that want to be faithful to Jesus. All generations of leaders must make it a priority.

In Jesus’ day, a disciple was a follower who learned from another. Plain and simple, the church has been called to make more followers of Jesus. For many, the task of discipleship seems like an enigma. Overcomplicating matters, they fail to see the simple nature of disciple making. At its heart, discipleship involves modeling, learning, and relating. Modeling comes from the one who makes disciples. He or she is to provide an example for those he or she leads. Learning means there is some form of instruction involved in disciple making. Jesus set an example in this regard, as He was intentional in teaching the Twelve (Mark 6:7-13). Relating implies a relationship between the trainer and the trained. Discipleship can’t just happen in a classroom. It requires real-world living and relating.

The Next Generation and Discipleship

It may seem like a no-brainer, but a commitment to disciple-making is a fundamental requirement for next-generational leadership. Several threats have obscured Jesus’ Great Commission in modern evangelicalism. One threat is related to mission compromise. Some are unwittingly exchanging Christ’s command for inferior causes. While the church may have a hand in addressing problems like social injustice, poverty, and sex trafficking, such things are not the primary agenda of the church.

Another threat is found in the modern fixation with consumerism. Some have allowed society’s enthrallment with entertainment to shape their ministry in an unhealthy way. For them, the work of the church involves attracting people to a weekly spectacle. Whether they realize it or not, such churches raise up spectators in place of disciples.

A final threat to true discipleship is related to religion. Some have an ingrained approach to preaching and worship that leaves little room for biblical discipleship. Programmed Bible studies don’t emphasize an organic model of replicable training. Ministers and staff are deemed ministry experts, and the church is not included in a discipleship movement.

Learning to Really Make Disciples

I don’t mean to self-righteously judge those who struggle. I myself have not always been on top of my game in this area. There was a time in which my ministry involved little true disciple making. I was good at planning events and driving programs, but I wasn’t multiplying followers of Christ.

A change took place when I was confronted by a man in my church. He had served for years as a missionary in a foreign context, and he had been a part of strong church-planting movements that were based on a replicable model of disciple making. With grace and love, he once asked, “Pastor, what are you doing to make disciples?” I realized I didn’t have a good answer. I preached each week, and I had created a complicated maze of ministry programs, but I wasn’t training, modeling, and duplicating myself.

My newfound mentor taught me the ropes of disciple making, leading me through a system that had been created and used by Chinese nationals to establish hundreds and hundreds of churches. I started slowly. At first, I probably resembled a newborn giraffe attempting to take its first steps on a National Geographic documentary. Overtime, however, I

became more comfortable with a new approach to ministry. The Lord started to bless His Holy-Spirit-inspired methodologies. Disciples were multiplied and the church began to grow.

I include a focus on disciple making in our discussion on next-generational ministry leadership for a reason. Many ministry leaders are like I was years ago. They aren't aware of the Bible's simple teaching on this matter. American church culture has convinced them they need to follow after another cause, or that they need to adopt an attraction-based model to ministry.

On top of all of this, there is this cold reality — real discipleship is the only model that will result in real ministry in the emerging generation. The days of institutionalized, cultural Christianity are passing away with each tick of the clock. Those who want to make a genuine difference are going to need to return to the Lord's methods. I want to help you do that very thing. To guide our discussion on this topic, I want to examine several subjects. First, we will discuss what I call "discipleship distinctions," looking at the difference between typical American ministry and Jesus' method of ministry. Second, we will look at the biblical hallmarks of biblical discipleship. Next, I will give tips on establishing a disciple making ministry in your church. Lastly, I will close with some words of caution regarding typical challenges one might face when committing to the Great Commission.

DISCIPLESHIP DISTINCTIONS

Discerning the difference between real discipleship and the run-of-the-mill busyness can be difficult. At face value, the two activities can look the same. Some engage in what they call discipleship, but they don't really tap into Christ's mandate. They lead Bible studies and encourage fellowship, but there is little replication. A Great Commission movement sometimes doesn't occur on account of a failure to grasp important distinctions between real discipleship and modern approaches to ministry in America. To help us gain greater clarity, I want to identify critical differences between the two.

Programmatic vs. Grass Roots

Much of modern ministry relies on a program. Though there is nothing inherently wrong with programs, they can become an obstacle to true discipleship. I'll admit — my ministry is programmatic to a degree. However, I try to be careful that institutional things don't drown out Christ's discipleship mandate. Programs often rely on policies, infrastructure, bureaucratic decision making, and capital requirements. Discipleship can persist despite the absence of such things. At its core, it is grassroots initiative. It simply requires one person who is willing to model the Christ life and personally invest in others. No system or structure is needed. It is for this reason that the Christian movement spread like wildfire during its early days. Considering the topsy-turvy nature of modern society, the grassroots nature of Jesus Great Commission is a great benefit.

Receiving vs. Sharing

Many modern approaches to ministry focus on training and teaching in a way that is not conducive to true disciple making. Yes, the Great Commission requires teaching. Jesus implied as much in Matthew 28:19. Paul did too in 2 Timothy 2:2. However, many contemporary Christians have a focus on instruction that overlooks the need for replication. Disciples aren't to be vessels that continually receive without sharing what they receive. True discipleship will result in one pouring out into others. Too many have an approach to disciple making that involves lesson upon lesson, but learners aren't compelled to invest in others. Biblical discipleship calls us to receive and share, to be mentored and to mentor, to be trained and to train.

Experts vs. Everyone

In the typical American ministry, discipleship is seen as something for the experts. An ivory-tower air keeps the church from fulfilling the Great Commission. The average believer stays

unaware that Jesus wants all to play apart in the disciple-making mandate. According to Scripture, everyone has a role in the Great Commission (2 Corinthians 5:18 and Ephesians 4:11-12).

Education-Driven vs. Example-Driven

It seems most churches have opted for an educational approach to discipleship. Master teachers sit in front of a classroom and impart critical information to students. Passively receiving information, listeners fill notebooks and listening guides with copious notes. There may indeed be a place for Western educational methods in discipleship; however, many have neglected the Bible's mandate for the relational aspect of Christ's commission. Too much emphasis has been placed on education, and the need for a mentor-like approach has been lost. To make disciples, there is a need for a Christian example to come along side and live life with those he or she disciples.

Information vs. Transformation

In one sense, Christianity is an informational movement. The church exists to share truth with others. However, the mere impartation of information is not the end goal of discipleship. Transformation is. Knowledge is key, but more is required. The Lord wants His followers to grow in both grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). One can accumulate great amounts of information about Christ in and still miss the mark. The Lord desires obedience to what one learns (Matthew 7:24-27 and James 1:22). The end goal is a changed life that brings glory to Christ.

Student vs. Self-Feeder

Many modern approach to the Great Commission keep Christians stuck as students. Because of an educational approach to ministry in which experts train non-experts, disciples are rarely encouraged to become spiritually equipped to feed themselves. There is a famous folk proverb that says, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." One could think of the benefit of biblical discipleship in terms of that saying. The end goal is to take people from being students to self feeders. The Lord wants us to lead people to be like the Bereans of the first century, who, when they heard Paul teach, "examined the Scriptures daily to see if" his teaching was in alignment with God's Word (Acts 17:11).

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Many theories cornering discipleship exist. When it comes to the plethora of literature on the subject, one could boldly proclaim Solomon's axiom — "But beyond these, my son, be warned: there is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). In the midst of all of the ideas and opinions related being propagate, one who wants to make disciples might be tempted to give up in confusion and exasperation.

Fortunately, the Bible gives us heaven-sent insight. It is a book unlike any other book. It comes from God (2 Timothy 3:16), and it gives us Divine wisdom. Through it, we have the ability to discover the will of the Lord (Psalm 119:105). In following it, once can receive wisdom for all of life. The Lord uses His Word to make His people into what He wants them to be (John 17:17). Scripture is sufficient. It can give us otherworldly truth concerning the best practices for making disciples. While opinions and experiences of others can help, Scripture reigns supreme. By examining the Bible, we find several truths that can guide our discipleship efforts. Let's consider five.

As-You-Go Mentality

First, true disciple making involves a lifestyle approach. It isn't something that only takes place in a church building. It isn't an institutional type of thing. One doesn't have to wait for permission from a pastor or church leader. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, he said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). The word translated "go" is

a translation of a present participle in the original language of the New Testament. Consequently, it portrayed an ongoing, habit-of-life type of activity. The point of Jesus' command was this — His followers are to make disciples as they go about their daily life. Within their respective circles of influence — at home, in their neighborhood, amongst friends and family, at work, and elsewhere — Christ followers are to work at making other Christ followers. The Great Commission does not need to be, nor should it be, relegated to a church building or program.

Replication

Biblical discipleship doesn't end after one has learned from another. It has only begun. Disciples are intended to make more disciples. An ongoing chain of teachers, learners, and teachers should continue until the return of Christ. After one learns from another, he or she is to teach another who, in turn, will teach others who teach others. Paul prescribed this type of method in one of his letters to Timothy, saying, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). The master teacher format of discipleship that characterizes many churches normally fails to launch meaningful movements. Why? Most of the time, leaders fail to champion the methods Paul promoted. Know this — biblical discipleship has a pass-it-on perspective.

Obedience

Most forms of modern discipleship are mostly focused on the transmission of information. Well-intentioned teachers seek to impart truth, but they do little to gauge obedience. When He gave the Great Commission, Jesus told His disciples to instruct others. However, He didn't just tell them to teach. He told them to teach others to obey. He encouraged the Twelve to teach others "to observe everything" He had commanded them (Matthew 28:20).

Many have overlooked this essential element of discipleship. The word translated "observe" has often been regarded as meaning "to look" or "to watch." In all actuality, the word referred to careful obedience. He carried ideas of one "keeping" or "guarding" a thing.¹ As used by Jesus, the term indicated that discipleship methods should encourage obedience. Teachers and trainers should have some sort of way to call those they train to faithfully obey what they learn. An element of accountability should grace discipleship relationships. The end goal should not be to just share a lesson. There should be a concern with holding trainees accountable to practice what they learn.

Just-in-Time Training

Many forms of discipleship require a lengthy time of development before learners are free to participate in making disciples themselves. One could theoretically wait for years until he or she is released to obey Christ's command. When we study the New Testament, we learn that Jesus empowered His disciples to minister early on in their discipleship journey. They weren't required to prove themselves over the course of years. Mark's gospel tells of the way in which He called them to follow Him in Mark 1:17-20 and 3:13-19. As soon as Mark 6:7-13, Jesus sent them out on their own to minister. Based on Jesus' pattern, modern disciples should have a "just-in-time" approach to discipleship training. In other words, shortly after beginning a course of discipleship, one should be encouraged to disciple others. Sure, there may be exceptions to this pattern. Sometimes, special circumstances or struggles may keep one from engaging in the Great Commission at the outset of his or her faith. For the most part, however, real discipleship demands a speedy transmission of what one learns.

Spiritual Power

Biblical discipleship isn't accomplished in man's power. It requires an unearthly endowment. No one can be used to generate life change and a discipleship movement apart from the

¹ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, [CD-Rom].

working of the Holy Spirit. Disciple makers need spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, and meditation to receive strength from the Lord. When Jesus' disciples ministered, they had to learn a lesson in this regard. On one occasion, they failed to exercise a demon from a young boy. Perplexed, they asked Jesus why they couldn't perform the feat. Jesus replied, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer" (Mark 9:29). The implication was clear — God's work can only be accomplished through God's power. Those who seek to labor for His mission must learn to draw strength from Him. Real discipleship can't occur unless disciples makers learn these lessons.

PUTTING THINGS INTO PRACTICE

Real discipleship requires practical action. For a movement of multiplication to occur, leaders must be wise concerning nuts and bolts types of matters. What I detail here may seem simple. It is. The Lord's method of making disciples isn't complicated. It is not complex for a reason. Practically anyone can follow the Great Commission.

Despite the simplicity of the Lord's command, it seems many struggle. We often assume things must be profound and complicated in order to be spiritually impactful. I made that mistake for years. When I finally discovered the power of a Matthew 28:18-20 and 2 Timothy 2:2 discipleship strategy, I had to learn a few basic biblical actions. I would like to outline them by providing you with six steps you can take to make disciples.

Choose or Create A Curriculum. When Jesus trained His disciples, He shared specific content with them (Mark 6:7-13). Paul encouraged Timothy to relay certain doctrinal precepts (2 Timothy 2:2). If you are going to make disciples, you must define what types of things you are going to teach. My mentor in discipleship encouraged me to write ten basic lessons. They focus on subjects like the gospel, Bible reading, prayer, the Holy Spirit, assurance of salvation, trials, temptation, and more. I have created outlines and listening guides. The outlines are for the trainer and the listening guides are for the ones being trained. All files are readily available for distribution. My ten lessons are at the center of my disciple-making endeavors.

Ask people to participate. This is the hard part for many. There are several different approaches you can take. I have heard of some who have a philosophy wherein they ask anyone and everyone to join take part. I tried that for a season. Now I have a somewhat different approach. My disciple-making work is a part of my regular prayer time. I ask the Lord to lead me to individuals I should disciple. Throughout my daily interactions, I'm often thinking about who I should train next. I am somewhat free in asking a good number of people to join me, but I don't just ask anyone. Many people may say no, but I've found the Lord usually leads me to the right people He wants me to train. Some drop out from time to time, but I've never faced a season in which I had no one to disciple.

Set A Time. The busyness of modern society makes this the toughest part for me. I like to have groups that range from three to five participants. It can be really difficult to get that number of people to agree on a set time. It requires work and effort. At times, I have to be super flexible, willing to bend my schedule to meet the needs of others. The important thing here is to land on a time that works for the people in your group. Make sure they can reserve it and keep it guarded for a duration of twenty to twenty-six weeks.

Alternate weeks and encourage disciples to make disciples. Once you have set your time, make it your habit to meet every other week. This rotation gives those you train an opportunity to start their own group. If you are meeting on Friday mornings at 8:00am, you can encourage your trainees to meet at the same time with their people on your off weeks. This is a way of calling them to be disciple makers. Remember, biblical discipleship is about replication. No one is to receive without giving. Biblical discipleship is also just-in-time in nature. In most situations, disciples shouldn't wait to make disciples. Great personal growth and kingdom growth occurs when we follow Christ's model of giving and receiving.

Train people to be self feeders. The end goal of disciple making is not to create pristine students. It is to lead people to be mature disciples who make more disciples. This

requires that disciples gain the capacity to read and study the Word without a teacher. The Bible teaches that each believer has the spiritual capacity to do such (1 John 2:27). Furthermore, it warns of the spiritual sickness wherein some a believer is unable to masterfully read and digest the Word (Hebrews 5:11-14). It is for this reason that my last lesson trains people to study the Bible themselves. I provide an acronym that outlines a proven method for understanding and applying Scripture. After my ten sessions are complete, I meet two or three more times with my group to practice studying the Bible with that acronym. We pre-select a passage to study and disciples come to the final two sessions ready to examine it in light of our newly discovered Bible study method. The end result is that disciples have greater confidence in being spiritual self feeders. The condition of Hebrews 5:11-14 is avoided.

Maintain a relationship. Discipleship cannot be relegated to a weekly meeting. Online channels of communication and edification must remain open. Remember, Christ's method of training and multiplication was based on followership. He provided a living example for the Twelve. There are some things that are better "caught" than "taught;" consequently, a relational connection is a must. Spend time with those you disciple outside of your teaching times. Hangout together. Do ministry with one another. Text and call often. Be real and be personable. It's worth reiterating something I said earlier — real discipleship doesn't just happen in a classroom. It requires real-world living and relating.

HOSTING A SESSION

A discipleship session is different than a Bible study meeting. Because of biblical emphases on obedience and replication, certain things should happen in each session that will make it different than an ordinary Bible study. Below I am going to list a basic outline you can use for each meeting. Each item is critical. Be careful to include each of the things I list in every meeting. If you don't, you will unwittingly reduce your discipleship group to a mere Bible study, and it's unlikely you will multiply disciples.

I've often failed in this regard. In fact, I still struggle to put these things into practice. It's easy to overlook the more personal matters of this approach. Being open and honest about one's own spiritual walk requires vulnerability. It's hard to press people and ask whether or not they are being faithful to the Great Commission. Simply sharing a Bible study is more comfortable and less challenging. There have been a number of times in which I have had to recalibrate and reorient my group with real discipleship. There will always be a temptation to deviate from the outline below, but be on guard.

Prayer and Care

I start each session with what I call prayer and care. After everyone has settled down, I ask, "So, how are you all doing in your spiritual walk?" This is a time for everyone to talk about their walk with the Lord and their spiritual disciplines. Sometimes someone will share about a pressing struggle, a recurring temptation, or a trial they are experiencing. Prayer and care is devoted to having a time for appropriate openness and honesty about our spiritual health. After each person has shared, we spend a few moments praying for one another. This aspect of a discipleship meeting moves the session far beyond what is typically experienced in Bible study. It adds an element of authenticity and accountability that encourages spiritual growth and discipleship.

I would like to add one word of caution. Vigilance must be exercised so that this part does not get out of focus. The main aim is to check up on each other's spiritual walk. If you are not careful, the session can become hijacked here. At times, some may share about a huge struggle, or one may open up about a large, hidden sin. I once had a guy confess that he was a closet alcoholic during this part of our meeting. You must be prepared to defer such confessions or conversations to a later date. There is a time to deal with such issues, but the prayer and care time of a discipleship meeting is not it.

Vision

Good leaders know how to cast vision. If you are leading a discipleship group, you are a leader. I like to take just a few moments to cast vision to my group immediately after our prayer and care time. This can come in the form of a testimony from me or someone else in the group. Sometimes, I like to share the story of someone who has really taken hold of Christ's disciple-making mandate. I might cast vision by talking about how that person is being used by the Lord to shape others.

At other times, I like to tell a story about a time in which the Lord used me, or someone else, to lead someone to faith in Christ. The point here is to cast vision — to paint a picture of what faithful and effective discipleship looks like. Vision casting is indispensable to effective leadership. Followers need to be able to visualize and perceive Christ's desired end for their lives. Story telling and testimonies are a great way to help. I learned the importance of this technique from Scott Smith and Ying Kai's book *T4T: A Discipleship ReRevolution*.²

Lesson

Next it's time to teach the lesson. My lessons are focused on basic, fundamental doctrine related to Christian faith and practice. I make them simple enough so that I can teach them without looking at elaborate notes. All I have in front of me is a basic outline with corresponding Scripture references. If your lessons are too complex, your discipleship program will not be replicable.

In addition to being simple, my lessons are also rather short. Avoid the master teacher format. Resist the temptation to be long-winded, or to dive too deep. Don't chase rabbits, and don't divert too far from the content you want to share. The point is to impart simple, life-changing truth that disciples can share with others.

I give each of my participants a fill-in-the-blank outline. I encourage them to take as many notes as they desire, but getting the blanks filled in is critical. They won't be able to impart what they receive without completing the outline.

I keep an eye on my disciples as I train. Most end up writing a lot of additional information on their outlines. I think such a practice is helpful. It gives them something to look at later when they prepare to lead their own group.

Throughout my lesson, I try to make multiple references to replication. I drop in periodic reminders that there is an expectation that each learner needs to pass on why they learn. I often say something like the following — "When you meet with your group make this point..." It is important to keep the priority of discipleship multiplication in front of those you disciple.

After my training is complete, I email both the outline and listening outline to those I'm training. This serves as a reminder concerning their responsibility to make disciples. It also provides them with the necessary material to relay what they have received. When I have completed the entire course of study, I like to give my students a thumb drive that includes all the files in one place. This serves as a final encouragement for them to make disciples. It also provides a backup, in case they lost any documents along the way.

Share and Prayer

After the lesson, I have a time I call "share and prayer." It is devoted to accountability regarding discipleship and evangelism. I start by simply asking the following question — "How are you all doing with sharing the gospel and training other disciples?" I wait for someone to speak up and respond. I then give time for testimonies from whoever wants to share.

I have found that many people confuse this part of our meeting with the previously mentioned care and prayer. Sometimes people want to talk about share and prayer during care and prayer. At other times, they want to revert to care and prayer during share and prayer. I've learned to be real clear. Oftentimes, I have to repeat myself and say something like,

² Smith, Steve and Ying Kai. *T4T: A Discipleship ReRevolution*. (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011), 185-201.

“Remember, during share and prayer we are talking about how we are doing with evangelism and discipleship. We aren’t talking about our personal walk with the Lord.” Such reminders seem to help keep things on track.

Share and prayer is all about accountability, the type of encouragement spoken of in Hebrews 10:24-25. It is a way of keeping people focused on the Great Commission. If someone can’t give a testimony during this time of the discipleship meeting, it is unlikely that they are doing their part in the mission of the church. Lovingly encourage people to follow Christ’s command. Though it may be uncomfortable and awkward at times, don’t neglect this part of the meeting.

From personal experience, I’ve learned that share and prayer can be a blessing. Since I’ve started following the program outlined here for you, I’ve grown in my witnessing and discipling efforts. Whereas I was intimidated by such things in the past, I am helped by the regular encouragement and accountability I receive in my meetings. When you are the leader of a group, you will be greatly motivated to come prepared to talk about evangelism and discipleship during the share and prayer time. It’s hard to hold others accountable if you aren’t being obedient yourself.

Assignment

I close each meeting with an assignment. Homework seems like a drag for many people, but it is a crucial part of multiplying disciples. My assignments are all related to evangelism and discipleship. They give disciples baby steps for witnessing to others and starting their own training groups.

For the first week, I ask my group to identify five people who might be prospects for a group. At our second meeting, I assign them prayer as homework. Participants are expected to pray each week for their prospects. By the third week, I ask my group to contact those they’ve prayed for. Every week I ask them if they have had the opportunity to share the gospel with anyone.

The share and prayer time is the time in which we report on assignments. Following that time with a new assignment is natural. Again, all assignments are related to evangelism and discipleship.

You can follow the sequence of assignments I use, or you can create your own list. You can read my list of assignments at www.patricklatham.com/discipleshiptools.

TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

Let’s close our discussion about real discipleship by talking about some important tips and suggestions. As you commit yourself to the Great Commission, you’ll encounter different challenges. A seeming innumerable amount of extenuating circumstances will arise. Don’t let challenges stop you. You’ll learn as you go. Below I’d like to learn some things I have learned as I’ve worked at training others.

Expect quitters and cancellations. Some people will not show up. Others will cancel or quit. If you expect perfect attendance and participation, you will soon be disappointed. Approaching discipleship in the right way will help in this matter, but there are always those who will fall by the wayside. Be realistic in your expectations. Some never get busy in the work of the Great Commission because they are afraid of failure. They give up when others give up.

I was greatly helped by a mentor who once gave me, from his experience, statistics concerning what I should expect from my groups. He said one out of every five is likely to quit. Two out of every five will participate and receive training, but they won’t train others. One out of every five will train others, but those they train won’t train others. Finally, one out of every five usually becomes a multiplying disciple. That is, they train others who train others. The numbers my mentored shared are not backed by empirical research; however, I’ve found that they give pretty good guidelines as to what to expect. Scott Smith and Ying Kai share something similar, saying, “We also find that the percentage of trainees who become fruitful

trainers is only around 20%. This kingdom percentage is almost impossible to increase much.”³ When expectations are more realistic, perseverance in discipleship seems easier.

Morph and change as needed. Be flexible. Adapt to your context. Be willing to change as needed. Remember, the end goal is not to perpetuate a program; the end goal is to produce disciples. Stick to the basic biblical principles of discipleship, but be willing to make course adjustments as needed. In my time of leading groups, I have made multiple changes to my lessons and my meeting structure. I am always trying to refine and hone how I approach disciple making. I have remained flexible, making myself available to meet with people at various different times in order to accommodate their schedules. Learn to have a similar adaptable mindset. Trust in the Holy Spirit to lead you.

Lead two groups. One of the beauties of meeting every other week is that it gives those you train an opportunity to start their own group. Since each disciple is likely available at the set time at which you meet, they can probably meet on alternating weeks with others. Another benefit of this approach is that it makes it possible for you to meet with another group as well. I like to disciple ten people at a time, meeting on with groups of five on alternating weeks. Such an approach maximizes my impact for the kingdom.

If I stick with this approach, I know that I will disciple at least twenty people a year. From those twenty, if the aforementioned statistics are true, four of them will multiply disciples. As a result, there is a potential that I could potentially be used to train, whether directly or indirectly, forty people a year. That number does not include the potential of trainers training trainers who then train trainers. Doubling up and doing two groups at a time maximizes discipleship opportunities.

Be sensitive regarding how to handle deeper issues that may surface during discipleship sessions. Sometimes people will bring up areas of great struggle during the care and prayer time. I mentioned this earlier in our discussion about how to host that part of the meeting. At times, people will be compelled to confess a struggle in area like substance abuse, adultery, pornography, or gambling. I don’t believe a discipleship meeting is the time to dabble deep in such matters. Sure, one’s confession should be acknowledged. The group should pray for the individual, but it is best to defer deeper conversations and counseling to a time outside of the group.

Consult Resources. As you lead groups, commit yourself to being a continual learner. Read books on the subject from time to time. Hone your craft. Ask the Lord to make you more mature in how you make disciples. I have personally benefited from reading resources like Smith and Kai’s *T4T*, Robby Gallaty’s *Growing Up*, Chan and Beuving’s *Multiply*, and Mark Dever’s *Discipling*. Though I haven’t copied the methods any one book verbatim, each has provided me with different insights.

Track, encourage, and celebrate as needed. I have found it beneficial to keep a list of everyone I have trained. In addition, I have tried to track the people they have trained. This helps for two reasons. First, it is encouraging to see all of the names of people I have impacted. Second, it is important to reach out and encourage those people every once in a while. Intermittent encouragement and celebration can do a lot to build a discipleship movement.

After I had discipled people for a couple of years in a church I once led, a man who had mentored me asked to schedule a lunch with everyone who had been trained as a result of my work in training. I was hesitant because I was busy and I didn’t see the point. When I expressed my concerns, he replied, “You need to see what has taken place.” I relented and we met for lunch.

When we gathered, my mentor asked a few different people to give testimonies. I am so glad I agreed to have the meeting! I heard heartwarming reports from people I didn’t even know had been discipled as a result of my initial efforts! The gathering greatly encouraged me. Tracking your work and celebrating from time to time can do a lot to perpetuate the work you

³ Smith and Kai, 113.

invest in training. There are a multitude of options as to how you can do these things. You decide what works for you. The main point is to celebrate and encourage the ongoing work of discipleship.