

# Discipleship and Recovery Essentials

by John Woodward

## Chapter 1: A Portrait of Discipleship

What brings you joy? A rise in the stock market? A lower golf score? An A on your exam? Fine dining at restaurant? While they may bring some temporary happiness, spiritual ministry can provide abiding joy. The Apostle John declared: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). The apostle's "children" were his spiritual children--those he had disciplined publicly and personally.

Is the ministry of discipleship only for apostles, pastors, and missionaries? By no means! We have Christ's Great Commission as the primary task of the New Testament people of God: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen'" (Matt. 28:18-20).

If you know the Lord Jesus, can I ask you a personal question? Are you involved in a ministry of discipling? Pastor Ray Stedman summoned "lay" Christians to get in on the joy of discipleship: the "priesthood of every believer which Scripture teaches so clearly ... has been opposed by much of the institutional church through the centuries. Martin Luther recovered it briefly during the Reformation, but it was soon lost to sight again. Yet nothing is more encouraging to a servant of Christ than to see the Lord honoring his ministry by radical and permanent changes made in the lives of those lives he touches." [1]

But, you may be thinking, OK, all of us are to be involved in making disciples, but what does that look like? Is it teaching a Sunday School class? Witnessing? Doing community service? Preaching? It could be all--or none--of the above, depending on the content and manner of one's service. A ministry that is so central to our calling as believers needs to be clearly understood and practically described.

Imagine a portrait--a beautiful oil painting of a Christ-like believer that is displayed in an elegant wooden frame. The countenance of the portrait is attributed to the Spirit of Christ who indwells every true believer (Cf. Rom. 8:11). Here is the dynamic source of spiritual growth: " ... Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27; Cf. Phil. 2:13; John 14:17,18).

The indwelling Christ empowers and directs the spiritual life; He is "the countenance of the portrait." The wooden frame that enhances this portrait will represent the conditions of how disciples are made. Since a frame has four sides, each one will represent a basic element in making disciples. Let's consider a PORTRAIT OF DISCIPLESHIP. To cultivate the centrality of Christ's grace and truth, we need to minister in four ways -- "the sides of the portrait's frame."

Side 1. Discipleship requires TEACHING.

A disciple is literally a "learner." The Great Commission is explicit in stating "go ye therefore and teach all nations" (KJV). What needs to be taught--and learned? Much could be mentioned here, but essentially the discipler teaches The Word of God ( 2 Tim. 4:1-4), the doctrines of Scripture (Titus 2:1), godly character (Titus 2:2-9), and equipping for ministry (Eph. 4:12).

The first and foremost lesson is to know and believe the gospel. Spiritual life can not be cultivated if it is not present. Therefore, discipleship begins with personally receiving Christ through repentance and faith: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12; 5:24; Eph. 2:8,9). Similarly, no regenerate believer can live victoriously unless they abide in Christ (John 15:5). Spiritual disciplines apart from personal fellowship with Christ are just religious activity. Yet, Christ living in and through the believer brings life transformation (2 Cor. 3:17,18; Gal. 2:20).

The scope of learning for the disciple should ideally be biblically and practically comprehensive. As Paul testified to the elders of Ephesus, "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Of course, to be equipped to teach others, we need to be perpetual learners ourselves![2]

Christ invites us all to be learners of Him: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and LEARN from Me ..." (Matt. 11:28,29).

Although every believer needs to feed him/herself from the Word, this is supplemented and guided by teaching gifts in the church (Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11,12), and the mentoring of more mature believers (Heb. 5:11-14; Titus 2:1-4). But discipleship is much more than teaching! This leads us to the second side of the portrait's "frame."

Side 2. Discipleship requires LOVING RELATIONSHIPS.

The Lord Jesus uniquely modeled the discipleship process. When He prepared to wash the disciples feet at the Last Supper, we are told, "... having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1; Cf. 15:12,13). The disciples did not merely meet the Lord Jesus for a weekly lesson; they shared His life! Notice this description of Christ's strategy for discipleship: "Then He appointed twelve, that they

might be WITH HIM ..." (Mark 3:14). They were "with Him" almost "24/7" for over three years! This provided natural opportunities to ask questions, observe the Lord, and embrace His values (Cf. Luke 11:1).[3]

The Old Testament gives a picture of teaching and loving relationships as they apply to parents discipling their children. Moses instructed, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up..." (Deut. 6:5-7).

The late Christian musician and songwriter, Rich Mullins, appreciated the teaching and compassion he witnessed in his mother. His biographer noted, "Rich recalled how his mother was friendly toward an eccentric woman. 'You know, I have a great mom. It is just wild that this woman and my mom are friends. I asked, "Do you ever feel weird around her?" and my mom said, "Yeah, sure I do! But here's the deal: No one was ever won into the kingdom of God through snobbery. We come to know Christ through love. I really believe that.'" His mother's love won Rich into the kingdom as well." [4]

Disciple making cannot bear fruit without loving relationships. In his book, *The Normal Christian Worker*, Watchman Nee remarked, "Brothers and sisters, in the light of God's passionate concern for people, can you still regard your fellows with indifference? We shall be worthless in His service unless our hearts are enlarged and our horizon is widened. We need to see the value God has placed on people." [5]

The familiar saying still applies, "people will not care how much you know unless they know how much you care." And where do we get this love? By the indwelling Holy Spirit! "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5).

In the concluding article, let's deal with sides three and four of the "frame" around the portrait of discipleship.

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Notes:

[1] Ray Stedman, *Authentic Christianity* (Multnomah), p. 168.

[2] Gary Kuhne has organized a discipleship curriculum around three key areas: devotional, doctrinal, and discipleship (training). Devotional topics include salvation, assurance, devotions, prayer, memory, Bible study, confession, temptation, Holy Spirit, obedience, discipline, habits, guidance, stewardship, and church. Discipling in the area of doctrine covers Bible doctrine, systematized Bible knowledge, apologetics, and counseling issues. And under discipleship (training) are these topics: evangelism (sharing the gospel), personal testimony, follow up,

counseling (skills), apologetics, and time management. (This list is not given as a requirement, but as an example of the scope and potential of discipling another believer.) Cf. *The Dynamics of Personal Follow Up* (Zondervan), pp.76-86

[3] Discipleship through loving relationships is the bridge for sharing values (Acts 4:13), allows for a positive example (John 13:12-15), provides encouragement (Rom. 14:19), and accountability (Luke 10:17-24).

[4] James Bryan Smith, *Rich Mullins: An Arrow Pointing to Heaven* (Broadman and Holman), p. 12,13.

[5] Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Worker* (CLC), p. 38.

## **A Portrait of Discipleship, Continued**

We have been comparing the process of discipling another person to a disciple's framed portrait. The countenance of the portrait's subject symbolizes the Spirit of Christ--the One who empowers and directs the spiritual life. And the sides of the "frame" represent four a basic elements involved in making disciples.

Side 1. "Discipleship requires TEACHING."

Side 2. "Discipleship requires LOVING RELATIONSHIPS"

Now consider

Side 3. Disciple making requires MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT.

The Lord Jesus involved the disciples in His public ministry when He sent the twelve on a tour of evangelism and healing (Luke 9:1-10). They also helped in practical matters like distributing food during the feeding the five thousand. Later He sent them out again: "... The Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go" (Luke 10:1).

Christ stated that His mission was to "seek and to save the lost." When He first called Peter He gave him a preview of discipleship: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). And after His resurrection Christ conferred His mission on the apostles whom He had trained: "So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'" (John 20:21). So the disciples were servants, not spectators!

Veteran church planter and and missiologist George Patterson, explains the role of accountability and ministry involvement in his obedience-oriented leadership training

strategy. It has been very fruitful in Central America. "Both extension and resident theological institutions must verify each student's progress in his practical activities. A checklist or register of his progress should depict each activity that he must do to raise up a church, edify its members and deal with the problems that every pastor faces. This register is not simply a list of pastoral skills; it is a guide for helping a congregation to grow. Our aim is to edify a church. The register or checklist presents a projected history of a church as it grows from infancy to maturity. It mentions congregational activities--duties of parents, deacons, Bible teachers, services for special occasions, congregational visitation, missionary projects, and community development." [1]

I can't help but notice how this training strategy differs from the traditional, academic, institutionalized way most pastors seek to prepare themselves for church leadership.

It is fitting for pastors to be equipping all God's people for strategic ministry (Eph. 4:12), since they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own special people, that they may proclaim the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). This leads us to the last "side" of the portrait's frame.

Side 4. Discipleship requires ACCOUNTABILITY.

Much of our Christian education centers only on teaching. Without loving relationships this teaching would be out of context because it neglects the demonstration of loving one's neighbor--in this case, the students!

When the apostles reported back to Jesus after their preaching tour, He was able to correct their priorities: "Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven' (Luke 10:17-20).

The role of accountability is usually lacking in organized ministries. Perhaps the teacher feels that it would be asking too much of the students; students get uneasy with the thought that they may be called upon to testify of how they have--or have not--applied God's Word.

In his book, *The Disciple making Pastor*, Bill Hull highlights the need for personal accountability: "What student learns without exams? What work would get done without deadlines? What teen would clean room without his parents threatening life and limb? Why does behavior change when the teacher leaves the room, the coach the field, the parent the house? The answer is simple: It's the nature of human nature ... Report forms, report cards, authority figures and systems are essential to good human performance ...

Those who refuse spiritual authority when they need it but don't want it are doomed to spiritual mediocrity." [2]

I am most comfortable with accountability when it is negotiated. If the disciple agrees to certain tasks like Bible memory or visiting shut-ins, he should welcome the added incentive that reporting brings. As biblical goals are agreed upon, the value of friendship and teaching are multiplied.

Our ultimate accountability as believers anticipates Christ return: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ..." (2 Cor. 5:10). (This Judgment seat does not determine one's destiny, but his or her degree of reward.) If we desire to maximize our opportunities in this life, why not welcome negotiated spiritual accountability?

Christ's Great Commission is not just to teach, but "teaching them to obey all That I have commanded you."

The salvation of the lost is the first step--not the only step-- in the process of discipleship. After spiritual birth should come spiritual growth (Cf. 1 Peter 2:2).

Now let's apply these principles. What examples of discipling most naturally include all four elements? For starters, consider these two methods.

### **A. One-to one discipling**

Lately known as "mentoring," one-to-one discipling should provide a loving relationship as the bridge to the learning process. The personal nature of this friendship allows for accountability that is relevant without being intimidating. This process should include practical Bible lessons that emphasize God's grace and truth in Christ. If the disciple is equipped to reproduce this process with another believer, ministry involvement is included.

Paul modeled this role with Timothy: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

### **B. Small groups**

Since the Lord Jesus disciplined the disciples as a team of twelve, we are ill-advised to overlook the value of a small group for effective disciple making. As the leader abides in Christ and the participants express Christ's love, the Bible study builds up the members. As they demonstrate God's will to each other and reach out with the gospel, the group functions as a ministry team. With such expressions of Christ's life dispersed throughout the community, unbelievers would catch a glimpse of God's love in action.[3]

Dear reader, if you know Christ, how are you involved in making disciples? For example, if you are raising children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," are you discipling them? (Eph. 6:4). If so, how do teaching, love, ministry involvement, and accountability factor in?

If you are involved in one to one mentoring and/or a small group, wonderful! Are you including the four "sides"? Is Christ's grace and indwelling presence empowering and motivating your ministry? May God multiply our joy as we see those that we disciple walking in the truth.



[1] George Patterson, Obedience-Oriented Education. Available online at <http://www.CrossSpot.com/opt>. He also mentioned, "The teacher of the practical work class shares the responsibility for the effective weekly ministry of his student. If his student fails, he fails; if his student succeeds, he succeeds. The proof of effective teaching is in the spontaneous growth and development of the student's congregation. The student's progress is measured primarily by the results of those activities for which the church has made him responsible."

[2] Bill Hull, The Disciple Making Pastor (Fleming H. Revell). p. 116. Hull also observed, "Obedience to the Great Commission hinges on three qualifiers: an intentional plan that defines and trains disciples, a commitment to reproduction by training in evangelism with ACCOUNTABILITY, and a commitment to multiplication by special training in order to produce disciple-making leaders.." p. 54.

[3] If you're looking for tools to use with these discipleship strategies, I recommend Dynamic Churches Int'l <http://www.DynamicChurches.org> Their Dynamic Life Handbook is designed for Christ-centered one-to-one reproductive discipleship. They also have workbooks to train cell group leaders and apprentices. See also [www.ChurchDynamics.org](http://www.ChurchDynamics.org) Their four lesson Follow Up and One-to One Discipling are very user-friendly. For small group training, Al Broom wrote the Care Circles manual. See <http://multimin.com/product.asp>.

At G.F.I. (<http://www.GraceFellowshipIntl.com>) we publish the Grace Discipleship Course by Dr. Lee Turner (basic and advanced). It is ideal for small groups and can also be used in mentoring. I thank one of my mentors, Rick Polson, for introducing me to discipleship as teaching/loving relationship/ministry and introducing the church planting approach of George Patterson.

## Chapter 2 Four Spheres of Discipleship

When our Lord commissioned His church to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, He left a blueprint and an adequate source of power. The enablement comes, not by our own good intentions, but by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through our lives: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Yet even with this enablement, we dare not miss Christ's blueprint for HOW to make disciples. We need to apply these principles to our lives as individuals and as local churches. Consider four spheres that show vital contexts of the discipling process.

### Sphere 1: THE PERSONAL WALK

Nothing will take the place of our personal walk with God. Enoch epitomised this relationship with the Lord: "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Gen 5:24). So God calls each of us, not only to a conversion experience (John 3:3), but to continual, personal fellowship: "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. 1:9).

What is involved in this walk? It includes two-way dialog: God speaks to us through His Word, and we speak to Him through prayer. It is not enough to know about God; we need to know Him personally and intimately. We learn from the lives of those who have gone before us that God deals with His people individually. God personally called Abraham out of Ur to the Promised Land; God personally called Moses at the burning bush; God recommissioned Joshua to lead the people into Canaan; God made a covenant with David to give Him an eternal dynasty (culminating in the birth and reign of the Lord Jesus). The examples continue.

Friend, how is your personal walk with God? I heard about a couple driving along in their car after many years of marriage. On the bench seat, the wife wistfully remembered the early days of their courtship when they would drive down the road cuddled next to each other. She remarked, "Honey, look at us; remember when we used to sit so close together? Why don't we do that any more?" Her husband replied from behind the steering wheel, "My dear, I haven't moved!" So believer, if you feel that you're not as close to God as you once were, guess who moved? "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you..." (James 4:8).

### Sphere 2: ONE TO ONE MENTORING

Here is a vital context for discipleship that so many have yet to discover. In his research, church consultant Al Broom found that 90% of church leaders are developed through mentoring.[1] Yet how few churches use a one-to-one strategy?

Acts 16:1-5 records how Timothy was summoned in Paul's second missionary journey to be his helper and traveling companion. In the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy we see how Paul functioned, not only as a teacher, but as a spiritual father to this younger missionary. The scope of this mentoring relationship is shown in 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). One of the benefits of mentoring is the increased potential for spiritual multiplication. Notice the four "generations" mentioned in Paul's challenge: Paul, Timothy, "faithful men," and "others."

Although we are grateful to each one who is ADDED to Christ in salvation, how much better to have MULTIPLICATION of disciples! Notice the results of Andrew's personal witness: "One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'... And he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:40,41). Waylon Moore noted, "It was by reaching Peter that Andrew's ministry extended even to our day. At Pentecost, Peter evangelized thousands of Jews who trusted Christ ... This is multiplication; from Andrew, to Peter, to the thousands converted in Jerusalem, to the first mission church in Antioch ... This is how you can expand your ministry around the world--by reaching just one other person who may multiply mightily." [2]

My grandfather (a banker) impressed the principle of multiplication by asking me, "Which would you rather have: a million dollars, or a penny that multiplies every day for a month?" I quickly picked the "million dollars" option. After doing the math I discovered that the penny would be a million dollars by the 28th day of the month! Then why should we settle for addition when in the precious calling of discipleship?

### Sphere 3: SMALL GROUPS

In his profound study of Christ's principles of training the twelve disciples, Robert E. Coleman observed the importance of investing in a smaller group: "We should not expect great number [of disciples] to begin with, nor should we desire it. The best work is always done with a few. Better to give a a year or so to one or two men who learn what it means to conquer for Christ than to spend a lifetime with a congregation just keeping the program going. Nor does it matter how small or inauspicious the beginning may be; what counts is that those to whom we do give priority upon our life will learn to give it away." [3]

Christ preached to multitudes, but spent most of His time teaching training the twelve. At the conclusion of His earthly ministry He could declare to them: "As the Father has sent

Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). And to the Father He could testify, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4) In terms of preparing the leadership of the first generation church, His mission was accomplished in three and a half years!

In his book, Beyond Church Growth, Robert Logan points out the relevance of Christ's example with small group discipleship: "What is the span of care that one Spirit-filled human being can give to others? Christ himself drew the line at 12. Yet here we are, pastors and lay leaders, attempting to draw into our fold and then single-handedly care for the needs of people in groups of 50, 100, 250, 500, and sometimes 1,000 people! Are we greater than our master?"[4]

Although fellowship in small groups has become standard part of most effective churches in North America, relatively few designate the purpose of these groups as dynamic discipling. The qualities of Christ's life, teaching, pattern, and commission call small groups to include two additional features: a focus on reaching the lost and the multiplication of lay leaders. This turns generic small groups (focused on fellowship and learning) into living, REPRODUCING cells. It may not be a coincidence that the human body--a symbol of the church--grows through the multiplication of living cells.

If cell leaders are equipped and commissioned for a pastoral ministry to their cells, the church ministry could be revolutionized. Logan continues, "It's critically important to turn your organizational chart upside down in order to help everyone realize the strategic importance of the cell-group leader's ministry. All other support functions in your church should exist to enable and equip the cell-group leader in the task of being a pastor to his or her group ... I don't know about you--but I am excited tremendously by the thought of a church where every need would be cared for, where ninety-nine could be left safe in the fold to pursue the one who was lost (instead of vice a versa), and where no one would fall through the cracks. What a potential such a church could have to reach a hurting world!"[5]

Are you part of a small group that can fulfil the "one another" commands of the New Testament? If not, you're missing out on a vital context of discipleship!

#### Sphere 4: CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

Although every believer is part of the church universal (Matt 16:18), most of the New testament references to "church" refer to local congregations and the epistles were mostly written to them So, we are admonished to do what should be in our hearts anyway: "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24,25). There is a

special blessing to have all the believers together as a testimony of unity and praise (Cf. Acts 2:1).[6]

Fellow believer, if your spiritual growth has been less than your potential in Christ, take advantage of each of these spheres of discipleship, "making the most of every opportunity..." (Eph 5:16 NIV).

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[1] Al Broom, Dynamics of a Growing Church, (Campus Crusade for Christ/Here's Life, 1987), p.15 (from video lecture) Al Broom is founder of Church Dynamics. [www.churchdynamics.org](http://www.churchdynamics.org)  
Cf. Leroy Eims, The Lost Art of Disciplemaking (Navpress)

[2] Waylon Moore, Multiplying Disciples, (Navpress, 1981), p. 36.

[3] Robert E. Coleman, The Master Plan of Evangelism, (Fleming H. Revell: 1968), p.117.

[4] Robert E, Logan, Beyond Church Growth, (Fleming H. Revell,1989), p.123.

[5] Ibid., pp.139-40. Cf. Ralph Neighbour, Where do We Go From Here; Dale E. Galloway, 20/20 Vision; Melvin J. Steinbron, Can the Pastor Do it Alone? Cf web sites [www.touchusa.org](http://www.touchusa.org)  
[www.dynamicchurches.org](http://www.dynamicchurches.org) An ideal tool for all four spheres of discipleship (with a grace orientation) is the Dynamic Life Handbook, available from Al Middleton:  
[dcimiddleton@shaw.ca](mailto:dcimiddleton@shaw.ca)

[6] In this larger context we see gifted leaders used of God to strengthen the church "... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (Eph. 4:11-12).

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