

Second Episcopal Diocese
Discipleship Bible Study 2015
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There is a crisis facing the church today, that crisis is the lack of solid and consistent programs aimed at developing disciples that's capable of advancing local ministries as well as the cause of Christ. There may be a numbers of reasons for this, some of which we will explore as we navigate through the next four weeks of Bible Study. The end objective will be to establish a viable and functional discipleship program that will consistently produce effective disciples who themselves will be able to duplicate the process of making disciples who will serve our churches and communities for years to come.

Please be mindful that the intent of this study is not to try and cover everything that the Bible has to say about discipleship, but to better understand the timeless methods and principle of effectively developing disciples. Once we understand the methods and principles, then pastors and leaders will have the responsibility of internalizing and implementing the discoveries.

Disciple - a follower or student of a teacher, leader, or philosopher. (Those who entered the discipleship process had to be willing to, at least temporarily, to shift their focus from their personal endeavors or occupations to follow the teacher of their choosing. Some never returned to their old occupation thereby dedicating their lives to the cause of their leader.

Discipleship – The concept of discipleship was a common method of training and indoctrinating people into a particular teaching or philosophy during Jesus' day. The scripture records the fact that John had disciples as well as the Pharisees (Luke 5:33). The apostle Paul stated that he learned at the feet of Gamaliel. If we have embraced the message of grace through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then it is our responsibility to teach others so that they may be able to pass it on to other faithful followers of Christ.

The Mandate of Discipleship:

Mandate - an official order or commission to do something. Let us begin our studies by carefully evaluating Jesus' mandate to those He had chosen and trained to carry on His work. By the way, the mandate applies to all of God's people of all times.

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18–20 And Jesus came up 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Jesus gave this mandate or commission to the church based on His authority over all things. He was also commanding His apostles to implement and duplicate the same pattern of discipleship development that He used in preparing them for ministry. Jesus had effectively transformed this group of men from fishermen, tax collectors or whatever He had called them from, into fully capable followers who, after having been prepared, could now go out and do His bidding. After

all, He promised Peter and Andrew if they would follow Him He would make them fishers of men (Matt 4:19).

People are to be **prepared** for and then released into ministry. These men, who were being commissioned and released, had been with Jesus **three years**. They watched Him do the miraculous, confront opposition and gently led them through this transforming process.

It is important that we don't run by the three years of preparation in which these men served with and learned from Jesus. One of the major reasons that the church is not as effective as it could be in both evangelism and discipleship development is due primarily to inadequate and improper training. The upfront sacrifice by both the leaders and new convert is not emphasized as whole therefore new believers struggle longer than necessary to learn the foundational things of the Kingdom, if they learn them at all.

Jesus knew that it was far too important to the future development of His church to leave His disciples unprepared for the task that was before them. The day would soon come when they would have to step away from the instructional phase of learning to the implementation phase and put all they had learned to the test.

As we look further at this passage we see that Jesus commanded them to "go." This is a call to action, but not just any action, but the act of **making** disciples.

What does it mean to make a disciple? It means to make ready or prepare. We already mentioned that preparation is necessary for those who will take up the gospel mantle and carry it to future generations.

Are we preparing or readying those whom the Lord has sent us to serve? When we are called off the stage will they be prepared to step up in the power of the Holy Spirit and carry the work forward?

Next we see the **scope** of Jesus' command to them. When we speak of scope we are speaking of area of operation, it is the boundaries that one is confined to operate or function in. Here they have been given global authority to take the gospel message to all nations or ethnic groups.

Though the area of operation is the world, it is important to understand that Paul's primary call was to the Gentiles while Peter was the apostle to the Jews. I say this because it is necessary to determine the group or segment of people whom God has called you to disciple (more to come on identifying those whom you will disciple).

Though we are called to make disciples, the disciples do not belong to us. We are to baptize under the authority of The Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is important to understand that the Father Son and Holy Ghost are active members in the redemptive process. According to Matthew Henry "Christianity is the religion of a sinner who applies for salvation from deserved wrath and from sin; he applies to the mercy of the Father, through the atonement of the incarnate

Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and gives up himself to be the worshipper and servant of God, as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons but one God”.

When disciples are released to duplicate the process, we have to ensure that they understand whose authority they are to operate under.

Next, disciples have specific teachings they are to

Teachings - (Gr. didasko), to teach, to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses.

There is a lot involved with teaching or instructing others and bringing them to a point of understanding. The process can be challenging to both the one doing the teaching and those who are learning. Here are some things we need to consider to make the process profitable.

- The teacher has to be well prepared
- The students have to be teachable
- Both have to be available

Observe – (Gr. Tereo) here means to guard from loss or injury, properly, by keeping the eye upon. This emphasizes the importance of the teaching that Christ had conveyed to His apostles and how necessary it was that they understand all that was taught so that they first could guard it and teach others to do the same.

God’s command to Joshua to observe:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou may **observe to do according to all that is written therein**: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Paul’s command to Timothy:

That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us.

Notice that they were to observe all. We are not given the option, right or authority to add anything to or take anything away from what the Lord has commanded.

The promise of support and encouragement as we carry out His work:

I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Now that we have looked at the mandate of discipleship, let look at the method.

Method is simply an approach to something. Let us consider the method or approach of Jesus.

Let's make a simple observation, if you are going to disciple someone, you must select those whom you are going to invest your precious resources of time, effort and money into. This is not to be taken lightly because we don't have endless resources to waste on those who are not interested in Kingdom advancement.

The Call to Discipleship:

(Matthew 4:18-22) Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "**Follow Me**, and I will make you fishers of men." **Immediately** they left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He **called** them. **Immediately** they left the boat and their father, and followed Him

Notice, He called those who were busy about their daily affairs. I might be taking a little liberty here but He was not calling the lazy. In Matthew 9:9 Matthew received and responded to his call while he was busy at the tax collectors booth. The point is, He called those who were gainfully employed in their daily affairs.

Notice also their response to the call, they immediately left what they were doing to follow Jesus.

Now, this does not mean that everyone is called to walk away from their jobs, though for some that might be the case. My advice is that each person should sincerely seek the Lord about the nature of their call.

(Luke 6:12) It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and **chose twelve** of them, whom He also named as apostles.

This verse illustrates the serious nature of selecting those who will represent the future of the church. He spent all night in prayer communing with the Father, called His disciples to Him and of that present number, He chose twelve whom He also names apostles.

He called them and gave them a name that signified their purpose of the call. They would be the ones personally commissioned and sent to carry out the work He started.

(Mark 3:13-15) And He went up on the mountain and summoned (called) those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.

Discipleship Continued:

So we can clearly see that the call or selection of candidates is a part of the overall process. But after the call there is the cost and commitment to this discipleship process.

The Cost of Discipleship:

Luke 14:25-26 Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace." So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Large crowd were following Jesus and Jesus knew that many of them did not have the heart to be disciples of His so He threw out the commitment challenge. This commitment challenge let the potential candidate know up front what the cost of following Christ is all about.

Commitment is the character trait that will distinguish between those who really want to follow Christ and those who may be just following for the fish and the loaves.

What a tremendous cost! Jesus was letting them know, as well as ourselves, that there is a high price to pay to be a disciple of His. He's also letting them know that He has to be preferred before all other relationships.

Letting people know what the requirements are up front will do you a big favor as well as themselves. I keep you from investing your precious time and resources in those who does not have the thirst for being committed disciples or seeing others become committed disciples.

Let's look at someone who was not willing to pay the cost for that which he was asking for or at least thought he wanted.

Matthew 19:16-28 And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life? And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. Then he said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS; HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking? Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property. And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich

man to enter the kingdom of heaven. "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."...And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" And Jesus said to them, "**Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**"

Jesus promised those committed followers of His glory and honor for the sacrifice they were willing to make. There are also rewards or crowns associated with our service to Him and His Kingdom.

During the preparation for this training I used several resources, one of which is a book by LeRoy Eims entitled, "The Lost Art of Disciple Making." In it Mr. Eims provided a list of practical areas of training for disciples. This is not an exhaustive list but should serve as a guide for training. It is also important to understand that teaching will also take place when unforeseen situations present themselves as you spend time with those whom you are training. Responding godly and appropriately to the varied situations will speak volumes in the lives of those observing you in those moments.

Training Objectives:

1. Assurance of Salvation
2. The Quiet Time
3. Victory over Sin
4. Separation from Sin
5. Christian Fellowship
6. The Bible
7. Hearing the Word
8. Reading the Word
9. Bible Study
10. Scripture Memory
11. Meditation of the Word
12. Application of the Word
13. Prayer
14. Personal Testimony
15. Lordship of Christ
16. Faith
17. Love
18. The Tongue
19. The Use of Time
20. The Will of God
21. Obedience
22. The Holy Spirit
23. Satan – Know Your Enemy
24. Dealing with Sin
25. Assurance of Forgiveness
26. Second Coming of Christ
27. Witnessing
28. Follow-up
29. Giving
30. World Vision

The Impromptu (as life happens moments)

Many of the things taught and learned during the journey of discipleship will not be based on a formal lesson plan or some structured approach, but will be based on real situations and circumstances of life as they happen.

(Luke 9:51-56) When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village.

In this passage we see Jesus determination to go to Jerusalem, His messengers going before Him into the village of the Samaritans, them rejecting Jesus and James' and John's response to the reaction of the Samaritans.

There are a lot packed into the above passage but the portion we want to highlight is James and John's response to the Samaritan's rejection of Jesus and Jesus' response to them. He rebuked them and said that they did not know what kind of spirit they were of. The Jews and the Samaritans did not have the best of relationship, they did not deal with each other and therefore the disciples' heart was prejudiced towards them so much so that they wanted to destroy them.

The teacher or leader has a responsibility at this point to confront the wrong spirit or behavior so that they do hinder the work of Christ for those He desires to reach. No matter what our personal hang ups are with an ethnic or social group, we have to bring it under subjection to the will of God so that other might be reached by the light of the gospel.

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Pastor, I suggest that we use three weeks of our time to study the information provided along with other resources of you choosing to lay out a practical discipleship program that we can implement to help develop mature disciples.

Remember, those who followed Jesus' ministry followed Him closely to learn long before they were engaged in any level of ministry. Use wisdom in assigning tasks to new converts.

References:

The Bible

The Lost Art of Disciple Making, Leroy Eims,