

The Art of Disciplemaking

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I. Introduction.

- A. I took a sabbatical after 18 years of teaching and a group gave me a prayer challenge to disciple them.
- B. I reluctantly took this group on but demanded commitment from them.
- C. We began to meet Wednesday mornings at 5:30 for four years.
- D. These men made serious commitments to be there for our meeting.
- E. Significant changes came out of this meeting, with 72 Bible classes begun on a weekly basis, and a ministry to the Cowboys.
- F. Seminary students came to me for discipleship and I gave them the same challenge, and they took me up on it.
- G. I have seen more significant change in the lives of these men in four months than I saw in years of teaching.

II. I want to give the basic outline of a discipleship program in five contrasts.

- A. Discipleship is a process, not a program.
 - 1. Discipleship focuses on men and women, not on methods or materials.
 - 2. Women need to be involved in discipleship too.
 - 3. There is no gender condition attached to spiritual gifts.
 - 4. I have studied 74 men who failed morally and 72 of them had become involved in counseling a woman.
 - 5. Older women need to counsel younger women.
 - 6. Paul's goal in discipleship was exalting Christ. (Colossians 1:28-29)
 - a. Confrontation is directly related to relationship.
 - b. We are to present every man mature in Christ.
 - 1) This involves time.
 - 2) This involves personal involvement.

B. Discipleships is multiple not individual in nature.

1. I refuse to disciple anyone for more than two years.

C. Discipleship is servant hood not power.

1. What can I do for you is the question.
2. What can you do for me is not the question.
3. We need to avoid having power over people.
4. We work together as a team to reach maturity in Christ.
5. We all have two basic needs.
 - a. To be loved.
 - 1) People follow those who love them and serve them.
 - 2) Do the people we minister to know that we love them?
 - b. To be served.

D. True discipleship is developing hearts, not minds.

1. We need to develop obedience, not people of knowledge.
2. Christianity today is Gnostic in some ways, being too scholarly.
3. Plato said that what is honored in a country is cultivated there.
 - a. We honor knowledge too much.
 - b. I don't honor knowledge even though I teach in a seminary.
 - c. I am interested in the lives of my students.
 - d. Discipleship is ministering to the whole person.

E. Discipleship is trusting God not my gifts.

1. Prayer and the ministry of the Holy Spirit are important.
2. We trust the wrong thing if we trust our gifts.
3. The Corinthian church had the gifts but they lacked trust in God.

II. How do we build into others' lives?

A. We need to build Scripture into the lives of others.

1. Use inductive Bible study to encourage discovery.
 - a. If we spoon feed others they do not discover truth for themselves.
 - b. We need to encourage discovery in the lives of others and get excited when they do.
 - c. Pastors and others who are trained in the Scriptures must not teach too much but encourage discovery.
2. Use a Scripture Memory program.
 - a. I regret not having memorized more Scripture over the years.
 - b. I don't lack for knowledge but for lack of obedience.
 - c. Bible memory encouraged obedience.
 - d. The will of God is found in the Word of God.

B. Personal involvement, involving three areas.

1. Prayer.
 - a. Nothing affects the lives of people like prayer.
 - b. When prayer focuses power falls.
2. Sharing.
 - a. Prayer gives us commitment to each other; sharing gives us community.
 - b. 200 people indicated that lust is the thing that bothers them the most, yet we don't talk about it until it explodes in the life.
 - c. A businessman asked me why we don't talk about ambition.
 - d. We need to disciple businessmen.
 - e. We need to be able to share discouragements when problems come up.
3. Lifestyle.
 - a. Prayer deals with commitment; sharing deals with community; lifestyle deals with character.
 - b. Now we talk about integrity, honesty, and other real issues.
 - c. Do people who know you want to do business with you?

d. Change occurs when we talk about real life issues.

C. Ministerial component.

1. We make a mistake with laymen by getting them involved in ministry before they are prepared.
2. We led a wealthy man to Christ and many ministries tapped into him for help, and he got involved to the detriment of his marriage.
3. The objective is to minister to the person before we encourage them to get involved in ministry.
4. When we minister to them as persons they might become able to minister to others.
5. Two kinds of ministries.
 - a. Individual ministry, teaching people how to minister in the marketplace where they operate.
 - b. Group ministry, operating as a group where people rise up to embrace their ministry by personal ownership. This means the ministry should not suffer when the pastor leaves.

III. Seven constructs that signify a discipleship ministry is in process.

A. Begin with an assessment of your life and ministry.

1. My greatest fear is not that you will fail but that you will succeed in doing the wrong thing.
2. We are behind in our think tanks because we are too busy in our ministries.
3. We need to get away from the grind of our schedules to spend time with God asking if we are on target.
4. I don't do many things that aren't necessarily bad but aren't necessarily the best.
5. Getting discipleship into our lives is possible if we make Biblical guidelines a priority.
6. Allowing people to pour their expectations into our lives is devastating.

B. Four things lead to Biblical balance in ministry, realizing that the whole game is not servant hood but being a servant leader. Jesus did not disciple everyone; he was discriminating. Human beings have 24 hours each day and we can't do everything.

a. What are your objectives?

- 1) Being a great preacher? Big deal.
- 2) We are not called to be great preachers.

b. What are your priorities?

- 1) How badly do you want to reach your goals?
- 2) How you spend your time tells of what you really want.
- 3) Quality marriages require time spent with your mate.
- 4) Show me your schedule and I'll tell you if you have a quality marriage.
- 5) Show me your schedule and I'll tell you if you are a godly person.
- 6) My time with my wife is just as important as my time in class with my students.
- 7) Either you will control your time or someone else will.

c. We must live intentionally.

- 1) I used to think I would meet someone who has it all together but I haven't met that one yet; we are all in process.
- 2) Some of you neglect your families, others spend too much time with them.

d. Determine what you want to develop and then develop what you have determined. What would your disciple look like?

- 1) I am looking for a group of people that is committed. Saying "Yes" to Jesus, with a reservation, is unacceptable.
 - a) Unreserved commitment to Jesus.
 - b) Unreserved commitment to the body of Christ.
 - c) Unreserved commitment to worldwide evangelism.
- 2) I am looking for people that are competent.
 - a) They must know something in the head.
 - b) They must feel something in the heart.
 - c) They must be doing something consistently.
- 3) I am looking for people who are creative.
 - a) They need to be flexible.

b) They need to be resourceful.

C. Recruit people as individuals but train them as a team.

1. Our educational system trains people to be independent but the church needs teamwork.
2. The Largest percentage of people who leave the ministry can't work as a team member.
 - a. Many staff members operate as enemies of each other.
 - b. Mother eagles force their young out of the nest until they learn to fly.
 - c. In church we keep our people comfortable by protecting them instead of challenging them to fly though their crises as members of a team.

D. Allow enough developmental rope for your people to fail.

1. At Yellowstone Park everyone is told not to feed the bears yet they often feed the bears.
2. Many bears die because of it as they lose the ability to hunt for themselves.
3. When we do too much for people they lose the ability to feed themselves.
4. Chuck Swindoll tells his staff they have nothing to prove and nothing to lose; they will make mistakes, yet they cannot fail.
5. We need to create an

E. Expose your people to a variety of gifted individuals.

1. We created a matrix of creative people that came out of various environments.
 - a. Some from Christian homes.
 - b. Some from para-church organizations.
 - c. Each has had multiple people building into their lives.
 - d. Pastors who are hung up on who gets the credit are wrongheaded.
 - e. We need to be hung up on getting the job done.
 - f. Visiting pastors can sometimes accomplish more than you can because they speak with a freshness.

F. Magnify a person's role, not his gift.

1. Many people wait forever to discover their spiritual gifts.
2. The New Testament teaches that we discover our gifts as we minister.

G. Develop an incurable confidence in God's ability to use you.

1. Do you believe God can use you?
2. Trusting in your board does not substitute for trusting in God to use you.
3. We must believe that God can use us.

IV. Answers to frequently asked questions:

A. Jesus ministered to his disciples in a group, not individually.

1. Jesus never said anything to Peter that he didn't say publicly.
2. We tend to put together a group that is like us.
3. We need to trust God to form a group according to his liking; one person's question may seem strange to others, but they will learn by the freshness of unusual questions.

B. If we agree to have an evangelistic breakfast and it doesn't work we learn what not to do.

1. Getting the word out is important.
2. Speaking too long is disastrous because everyone is on tight schedules.
3. God will teach you how to adjust your tactics.

C. Disciple women primarily through other women.

1. I work with my wife as a team.
2. This presents exciting opportunities.
3. We have single women baby sit for mothers so they can attend Bible studies.
4. My wife disciples seminary wives.

D. Some interesting research shows we need to bring men and women together in discipleship groups.

1. Specific problem areas often require one-on-one discipleship.
2. We need to be sensitive here.

E. Begin with felt needs in working with people.