

DISCIPLEMAKING

What & How

Introduction

Today, if someone come to you and ask, “Are you a disciple of Christ?” How many would say yes?

What if this person continues and asks, “But, are you also a disciple maker?” How many would still say yes?

I want to tell you that if you're a disciple of Christ, you're called to be a disciple maker. Why do I say so? Because Jesus said so. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus even said, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). “I will make you fishers of men” is another way of saying I will make you disciple-makers.

So here is the simple truth: If you're a disciple of Christ, you need to know that you're called to make disciples of Christ. That is our main job as redeemed Children of God. Mike Warren said, “We are called to make disciples; our jobs are meant to support our calling.”

Christ-followers have jobs so that we can support our efforts to love God and make disciples. Our employment is a means for kingdom deployment. We work to fund the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through our own activity and that of our churches. Working puts food on our tables to sustain our bodies so that we can have energy to worship God and make disciples. We can witness within our jobs, seeking to make disciples of our coworkers, but we can also use the resources we gain from working to be disciple-makers in our communities and around the world. In short, we work not to advance our careers, but to advance the Gospel. Tim McKnight, Professor.

So what is disciple making?

Thankfully, we don't have to guess because Jesus, the Master Disciple-Maker has already revealed to us in **Matthew 28:18-20**. What is it?

There're three particples that tells us what disciple making is all about. They are: Go, Baptize and Teach.

GO is about connecting, witnessing or evangelizing the non-believers with the Gospel.

BAPTIZE is about bringing people into right relationship with God by affirming and confirming their professed faith through water baptism.

TEACH is about developing the disciples in spiritual maturity towards Christlikeness, so that they can continue to make more disciples.

With that, we can say, that Disciplemaking is the process of:

- *bringing people* into right relationship with God (Go. Baptize.)
- *developing* the disciples in Christlikeness (Teach)
that they might *do the same* process with others also.

At the core of discipling is spiritual multiplication. So if there isn't any spiritual multiplication then something is amiss in our discipling.

Let me use an analogy to show you the process and implications of discipling.

Discipling is like the process of someone: [*refer to PPT slide*]

- getting married
- starting a family by producing kids
- raising them up to be mature man and woman
- and then later on releasing them to reproduce the same process in their lives

First, just as it begins with the physical union [with a spouse] to produce biological children, likewise in discipling, it begins with our spiritual union [with Christ] to produce and reproduce spiritual children (disciples).

Our union with Christ today is the result of someone's union with Christ who took the step to connect and share the Gospel with us. Likewise, as a result of our union with Christ, we should connect and sharing the Gospel [GOING] with our non-believing family, relatives, friends and colleagues.

Second, just as the physical union [with a spouse] is generally designed to produce biological children, our spiritual union [with Christ] is likewise designed to produce spiritual children (disciples).

This reminds us of 2 Cor 5:18-20 where it says that God has given to each one of us the ministry of reconciliation – to reconcile people to God! And so discipling is about sharing the Gospel with the aim to bring people into right relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That's how a new disciple (Spiritual child) is made or produced. And one of the first steps to know that we've produced or made a new disciple is his/her water baptism because it authenticates and symbolizes the birth of a new disciple of Christ.

Third, just as we would nurture and develop our biological children into full maturity so that they can become independent and know how to live life on their own and even start their own new families, it is likewise in discipling – when you produce or make new disciples, you don't just say praise the Lord and wish them good luck to grow on their own. But you would help them to grow; you develop them into full maturity so that they can know how to live as disciples and also start making disciples on their own.

Talking about nurturing and developing, the different stages of our physical growth is a good analogy of the different stages of our spiritual growth. Just as a newborn baby need to grow through the different stages of physical growth, a new disciple need to grow through the different stages of spiritual growth [*refer to PPT slide for the diagram*].

So, developing disciples into spiritual maturity toward Christlikeness is about moving from the spiritual infant stage to the spiritual parent stage so that they can start making disciples. This is what *teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you* looks like.

And that's why we need to humbly evaluate our own spiritual state, find where we are at this point in life, and then continue to grow. For if we don't, we'll be missing the very essence of why we are saved in the first place.

Finally, when our children grow mature they are released to reproduce the same process – that's when we get biological multiplication! Likewise, we develop the disciples in Christlikeness so that they're equipped and empowered to reproduce more disciples who will reproduce more disciples.

In other words, like I said earlier, at the core of discipling is spiritual multiplication. But understand this, spiritual multiplication is not about having more members filling up the empty pews in our church, rather it is about having all, if not, more members growing constantly in Christlikeness, and as a result produce or make disciples of Christ who will also make other disciples.

That is what we need to desire to want to see happening in our church more and more. For if we see that happening, it means that we, ourselves, will grow more and more mature in Christlikeness, and we will have more and more new disciples of Christ joining us, and some of them could be your non-believing parents, relatives, siblings, friends and colleagues.

Wouldn't that be amazing? You see, it is not about growing the membership of our church, but it is about our love for those people that God has placed them in our lives today, who are yet to experience the tremendous grace and mercy and love of God. And who knows, you might be the only hope for them to experience that. That's why we need to be serious and come back to our call, our mission in life that Christ has given to every single one of us – discipling!

So how can we go about making disciples of Christ who will also make disciples? Let me give four principles that we can apply today to make disciples.

I will use the acronym of F.I.R.M. Be F.I.R.M if you want to make disciples who will also make disciples.

First, be FIRM. The letter F is for Focus. Be Focused. That means, pray and select a few people in your circle of influence. That is the same thing Jesus Christ, our Master Disciple-Maker did. He prayed and chose a few people and invests His life on them. Who are those few people in your life today? Pray and invest your life on them. Does that mean that you don't care about others? No, you do. Christ did too. But the point here is, to make it a priority to invest on your selected few for effective multiplication result like that of Christ.

Second, be FIRM. The letter I is for Intentional. Be Intentional. That means, plan, set aside time, money, energy and understand the whole process of discipling. Spiritual growth doesn't happen naturally; it isn't automatic. It is commonly said that there are three types of people – first, those who make things happen; second, those who watch things happen; and third, those who wonder what happened. If we want to make disciples that will make disciples, then we've got to be the first type of people – those who make things happen. And that is what it means to be intentional.

Third, be FIRM. The letter R is for Relational. Be Relational. That means, build good and genuine relationship with those whom you are trying to make or already making disciples. Discipling happens best in the context of relationship. Why? It is simply because discipling is about leading people into right relationship with God and with one another. Someone also said that, "Life is [about] relationships...the rest is just details." Do you have non-Christian friends or colleagues? I suppose you do. The most loving thing you can do for them before it's too late is to share Christ so that they are given the chance to believe and experience God like you did.

Fourth, be FIRM. The letter M is for Modeling. Be a Model. That means, show others how to live as a disciple and how to make disciples through your life. One evening, the children were talking very loud in their room. So the mother went in and asked, "Hey children, stop it! What are you two quarreling about?" The eldest one immediately turned to her mother and said, "Oh mother, we're not quarrelling. We're just playing "Mummy and Daddy."

As parents, we all know how our children learn best – more by our actions than words, right? "One example is more valuable than twenty precepts written in books."— Roger Ascham

Being a model reminds us of Paul who said to the Corinthian Christians, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." So, if we want to make disciples of Christ who will also make disciples, then we have to be a living example, not a perfect example (we can't), a living example for others to follow. For this reason, we need to continue growing in our spiritual maturity so that we can become living examples for others to follow – we can only produce our own kind of disciple.

Conclusion

Imagine about the potential of investing your life in a handful of people for the rest of your life. Imagine these handful people reproducing disciple-making disciples – generation after generation of disciple-making disciples. They probably won't even know who you are, but that doesn't matter, because they will know who Jesus is!

Let me ask you. Can you count the number of seeds inside an apple? I believe we can. But can you count the number of apples in a single seed? I think it's not only too many to count but impossible to count. That's what discipling can do! And that's what all of us called to do! Amen!