

Lesson Seven

Making Disciples

Synopsis

This lesson will define foundational concepts linked to discipleship and disciple-making, as well as provide a helpful pathway and assessment to improve disciple-making in the local church.

Learning Outcome

The student will

- Discuss areas of weakness in the local church's approach to discipleship and disciple-making.
- Determine effective steps and methods to strengthen disciple-making in the local church.

Learning Objective

The student will know

- The centrality of discipleship and disciple-making to the mission of the local church.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

From Discipleship to Disciple-Making

- Defining Discipleship
- Six Marks of a True Disciple
- Defining Disciple-Making
- Difference between Discipleship and Disciple-Making

The Role of the Church in Making Disciples

- Creating an Environment for Disciple-Making
- Actions that Create a Healthy Disciple-Making Environment
- Implementing the Means for Disciple-Making
- Developing a Disciple-Making Pathway

Conclusion

Lesson Review Questions

Appendix: Assessing Disciple-Making in the Local Church

- Assessment
- Assessment Results

Works Cited



Lesson Seven

Making Disciples

Introduction

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he entrusted his disciples with the mission of multiplication. Men and women who had walked with Jesus throughout his ministry were sent out to disciple others just as they had been discipled. With such a great task came a great promise—Jesus would be with them always. History tells us the words of Jesus found in Mathew 28:17-20 are words that changed the world. It is because of the fulfillment of the Great Commission that you and I have been reconciled to Christ and are part of Christ's church.

The Great Commission is the foundation of the church's mission—go, make disciples. It reverberates to believers in every generation—put your faith into action, go and make disciples. Christ's commission is not only about proclaiming the gospel message. It is about intentionally teaching believers to live like Jesus lived, helping them grow in the likeness of Christ, then sending them out to reproduce themselves in the lives of others.

"The Great Commission is the foundation of the church's mission—go, make disciples."

From Discipleship to Disciple-Making

Defining Discipleship

The word *disciple* means "student." A disciple is someone who becomes a student of another. A Christian disciple is one who becomes a student of Christ, who follows in his steps (way of living) and puts into practice his teachings.

Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit to become more

and more like him. It is founded on the call of God to be transformed into the image of Christ. This process requires believers to continually respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to examine their thoughts, words, and actions and compare them with the Word of God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [dedicating all of yourselves, set apart] as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your rational (logical, intelligent) act of

worship. And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you] (Romans 12:1, 2 AMP).

Discipleship is the believer's transformative journey of becoming like Christ that continues throughout a believer's lifetime.

"Character is the sum of moral and mental qualities that distinguish an individual."

Six Marks of a True Disciple

The life of a disciple is the life of a humble learner that constantly attunes his/her ears to words of the Master. As Jesus teaches us to be disciples through his words, he transforms who we are and how we live in the world. This notion is evidenced in the Great Commission. In his book *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, Bill Hull presents the six marks of a true disciple.¹ These marks are guiding principles that help us crystalize the goal of discipleship efforts.

- **Transformed Mind.** Belief in Jesus is different from believing what Jesus believed. To acquire Christ's mind is to think, feel, and perceive life as Jesus did. A disciple sees the world through God's eyes and values what God values. Fellowship with Christ and other believers in prayer and by reading the Scripture helps us become attuned with Jesus' way of thinking.
- **Transformed Character.** Character is the sum of moral and mental qualities that distinguish an individual. Discipleship is all about developing the character of Christ.

Such development is only accomplished through following Jesus' commands and responding to the challenges of life how Jesus would.

- **Transformed Relationship.** As disciples of Christ, we must love as Jesus loved. Jesus taught his disciples that the law of God was fulfilled in a single decree, loving our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus demonstrated his love by serving others, even those who did not reciprocate his love. The Gospel writers are constantly pointing us to Jesus' unconditional, unmerited love for all. Therefore, we need to discipline our lives to develop such a love. We need to learn what it means to take up our cross and live a life that is for the other and not just for ourselves.
- **Transformed Habits.** A disciple is one that disciplines himself as Jesus did. One of the greatest mysteries about Christ is that he was fully God and fully man. It means that Jesus had to discipline his humanity just like any of us. Jesus modeled disciplines (religious practices) like prayer, fasting, solitude, generous giving, worship, celebration, and more. During the years that Jesus walked with his disciples, they witnessed and emulated his way of relating with God. Anyone who desires to follow Jesus must learn to discipline himself/herself as Jesus did.
- **Transformed Service.** This mark moves us outside the walls of the local church to fulfill the church's mission of reconciling a lost world to Christ. The church is the recipient of the gifts of God and is now obligated to share what it has received with the rest of the world. As we discipline ourselves and press into the mind and character of Christ, we will discern how we can work with God to serve others and lead them to a fuller understanding of who Jesus is. When we serve others, we minister as Jesus ministered.
- **Transformed Influence.** When we model our life after Christ, we learn to lead others as Jesus did. The way we understand

leadership is transformed by Jesus' example of loving servant leadership. Jesus led others in humility and submission to the will of the Father. He willingly sacrificed himself for the sake of the world, rejecting fame while doing so. God calls every disciple to lead others as Jesus did with selfless love and humble submission to God's will.

Defining Disciple-Making

Disciple-making is the outflow of discipleship. A disciple who is being transformed through obedience to Christ and in community with other believers will naturally obey Christ's mandate to go and make disciples.

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV).

This scriptural passage provides clarity on the role and participation of Christians in the kingdom of God. Within the Greek text, these verses are imperative commands: "go," "make," "baptize," "teach." The words of Jesus also come with a promise. "I will be with you always." Therefore, disciple-making is commanded by Christ, empowered by the Spirit, and the charge of every disciple.

"We should always seek to introduce non-believers to the love of Christ and his teachings."

Difference between Discipleship and Disciple-Making

Bill Hull outlines three elements that distinguish disciple-making from discipleship. These are deliverance, development, and

deployment. The first one, deliverance, is connected to the task of evangelism. This is the "baptism" part of the Great Commission. We should always seek to introduce non-believers to the love of Christ and his teachings. Development, the second element, has to do with helping people grow in character and in deed. It is about helping people become like Christ, "teaching them to obey" the words of Jesus. Many Christians refer to this as "discipleship," or "spiritual formation." The third and final step, deployment, covers the idea of sending those disciples out to disciple others. Disciple-making is the ultimate task of the Great Commission. It is accomplished as we help believers grow in Christ and equip them to disciple others.

Participant Activity:

Reflect on the following questions:

- What is the biblical basis for the church's mandate to make disciples? How do you understand the passage discussed in this lesson? Can you think of another example?
- Did you experience any challenges to your own understanding of discipleship that others can glean from?
- Can you imagine what the world would be like if the first disciples had not obeyed Jesus' commission?

The Role of the Church in Disciple-Making

Mark Dever, author of *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, speaks of the local church as a "natural environment for discipleship."² It is the most basic and fundamental place for disciples to be formed. The body of believers is the prime space for other believers to learn to follow and obey Christ. The first disciples lived in contact

"Discipleship and disciple-making do not happen in isolation. It is about being part of the body and making disciples together."

with the bodily presence of Christ. Disciples today get to know Christ through his body, the church.

Discipleship and disciple-making do not happen in isolation. It is about being part of the body and making disciples together. The members of the church work in cooperation with each other to fulfill Christ's commission to make disciples. Disciple-making is an embodiment of Christ's love particularly for those who are seekers. These new believers or non-believers should be able to witness communities that are shaped around Christ and his love.

Creating an Environment for Disciple-Making

Jesus' invitation to follow him is an invitation to pattern our lives after him in every way. Jesus is relational. We see this in his relationship with his heavenly Father, the disciples, the communities where he ministered, and how he relates to us today. There is no better way to follow Jesus and pattern our lives after his than bonding with others in the church as we travel together on our spiritual journeys. For these kinds of relationships to exist, however, it is necessary for the church to cultivate healthy environments where growing disciples feel safe.

Bill Hull speaks of the necessary ingredients for a healthy disciple-making environment, namely trust, grace, humility, submission, and affirmation. These ingredients enable growing disciples to become vulnerable so that they are open to learning new things and unlearning others.

Trust

Trust can be defined as reliance of the mind and heart on the integrity and veracity of a person or a group of people. Trust is based on integrity; a person who has proven reliable and honest can be trusted. Establishing relationships with trustworthy people provides a haven of honest acceptance. This allows disciples to come under another person's influence, which opens up the space for accountability and guidance.

Trust is a key aspect of discipleship because people only take in the truth they trust. When a growing disciple finds someone who is trustworthy, he or she can then be vulnerable and accept instruction. Trusting relationships lay the foundation for transformation in discipleship. Only through relationships where trust exists can we honestly deal with the obstacles that hinder spiritual growth.

There is nothing more detrimental to the process of discipleship than mistrust. Fear of betrayal and broken trust disrupts the disciple's desire for learning and growth, which at times results in withdrawing from the process of discipleship all together. The absence of trust in the local church is one the main culprits of dysfunction and growth stagnation. The local church plays a pivotal role in helping people develop trust in one another and in God. Its task is to foster an environment where people learn to trust, exercise trust, and become trustworthy. Trust is built in community and relationship with others.

"When we work to create an environment of grace, we produce a culture of acceptance in which people see the value and good in others."

Grace

Another element needed for disciples to flourish is grace. Grace means treating others better than they deserve to be treated. It means looking past faults to give others our praise and support. Most of us have trouble offering grace on our own, but when we tap into God as our resource, we can draw on the grace that he pours out on every person. When we work to create an environment of grace, we produce a culture of acceptance in which people see the value and good in others. We do not ignore sins, faults, or problems. In fact, we can handle those issues better in an environment of grace. When we offer people a place where they feel safe, affirmed, and more able to risk, they'll be more open to change.

Humility

Humility is one of Christ's primary character traits and is foundational for personal transformation. Without humility, Christ would not have submitted himself to the Father or made the sacrifice of his own life for the whole world. One reason even the very best discipleship plans often fail to bring transformation is because humility is ignored as a necessary component.

Just as humility is Jesus' primary character trait, it should be the foundation disciples build on as they seek to follow him and be formed into his image. Without humility, there's no submission; without submission, relationships of trust can't exist; without relationships of trust, disciples will not be vulnerable; without vulnerability, there can be no influence; and without influence, there can be no change. Humility forms the environment and relationships that make transformation possible.

Submission

Jesus' humility allowed him to divest himself of the rights and privileges of his deity to live among us and as one of us. As it is stated in Philippians 2:5-11, he did not benefit from his equality with God. Instead, he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. He submitted his life and ministry on earth to the will of God and became obedient to the point of death.

Those who are disciples of Jesus are meant to emulate his life and his humility, submitting to God and to one another in love. In Ephesians chapter 5, Paul reiterates the concept of humility and submission among believers. He instructs all members of the church to live in mutual submission out of reverence to Christ. Every Christian must submit to one another in the journey of discipleship, no matter the stage. We should be open to the correction and guidance of one another as we submit to Christ together. Submission doesn't involve someone "keeping you in line," but allows someone to help you keep your commitments to God. Submission means saying, "I choose to let others love me."³

The topic of submission is often thorny and difficult. Many times, the idea of submission has been misused to justify abuse. Therefore, the

"When the local church embodies the beauty of humility and mutual self-giving, disciples learn to submit to God and to one another."

elements mentioned above (trust, grace, and humility) are essential for an environment that is conducive to a healthy view and practice of submission in the local church. "Submission is a love word before it is an authority word."⁴ An environment where healthy submission and love exists is an attractive environment for new believers. When the local church embodies the beauty of humility and mutual self-giving, disciples learn to submit to God and to one another.

Affirmation

Affirmation creates an environment that gives individuals permission to drop their defenses so that transformation can take place. Every

disciple needs affirmation as they walk with Christ to affirm what they are doing right and what they must continue to do.

Bill Hull states,

I've never known affirmation to arouse sin, and the belief that it does reveals a twisted theology. When I receive praise, I want to do better. When a brother or sister in the faith affirms me, I don't become conceited. Instead, I feel humbled that God thinks so much of me that he sends one of his children to affirm me. The messenger is almost as good as a dove descending and a voice from

heaven saying, "This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased." For that reason, I want to make an even greater effort.

Affirmation becomes a way of life in an environment of grace. It reminds people that God values them. This is more than theology; it's a truth they experience. Affirmation allows people to be broken before God and to deal with unconfessed sin, shame, and the other inner-life issues that destroy our good efforts at discipleship.

Participant Activity:

Discuss the following questions:

- What are practices that cultivate an environment of trust in the local church? What are practices that hinder trust?
- Why is grace an indispensable component of discipleship?
- Humility and submission are imperative in the process of becoming a disciple and developing others. Can you think of ways in which humility and submission can be abused in the local church? What can be done to create a healthy dynamic in this area?
- What are tangible ways in which one can affirm those who are engaging in the process of discipleship? Can you think of examples in your own life where you felt affirmed by others? How did that help your growth?

Actions that Create a Healthy Disciple-Making Environment

Authentic Leadership

No one influences the atmosphere of a local church more positively or negatively than the leader. What makes a leader successful is their love for God and for people. The key to a successful disciple-making environment is the authenticity of its leadership. Leaders must exemplify authenticity not only on Sunday morning, but also in their daily lives and relationships with others. Authenticity creates common ground where people of varying levels of spiritual maturity can fellowship, worship, study, and serve together.

Healthy Relationships

Relationships are the engine of discipleship. When a person seeks connection, it is not the type of church or small group, the location, or even the teaching or preaching that is the most important factor. Rather, it's the relational dynamics, which is a direct result of the relationships among the people. If the relationships are healthy, the experience and effect of the relational dynamics will be as well.

Missional Orientation

Every local church has a purpose. Sometimes it's stated. Sometimes it's not. But it does exist. Leaders within the local church can cultivate a disciple-making environment by bringing a missional orientation to the local church's purpose. Help individuals understand that the

"The local church must make a commitment to teach biblical truth just as Jesus did"

mission of the church is the commission given by Christ—"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19, 20). The local church exists to equip disciples to go into their workplaces, neighborhoods, cities, and towns and make disciples of those who do not know.

Implementing the Means for Disciple-Making

Teaching

Paul admonished young Timothy to

Do your best [study—KJV] to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15 NRSV).

In the next chapter, he tells Timothy,

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17 NRSV).

These verses emphasize the significant task of the teacher ("rightly explaining the word of truth") and the significant impact of God's Word in making disciples ("useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness").

Teaching God's Word is fundamental to the task of discipleship. The Lord not only commands us to make disciples, but he modeled how we are to go about doing so, heavily emphasizing the importance of teaching. Throughout the gospels, we observe

Jesus teaching the truths of God's Word to diverse groups of people and individuals in a variety of settings. He taught the crowds on the mountainside and by the lake (Matthew 5:1; Mark 2:13). He taught the religious leaders and the Jewish people in the synagogues and temple courts (Mark 12:35; Luke 19:47). He taught the Samaritan woman at the well and Nicodemus in the darkness of the night.

The local church must make a commitment to teach biblical truth just as Jesus did—consistently with authority, with clarity, and with creativity. Without an unwavering commitment to teach God's Word, the local church will produce believers who do not comprehend how to be faithful disciples. This biblical illiteracy leads to confusion, conflict, and compromise that undermines what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

Systematic teaching can only be accomplished if the local church and specific ministries within the local church have a curriculum plan. The curriculum plan will map out the priorities of what will be taught. The leadership of the local church and specific ministries must answer these questions:

- If the teaching of God's Word is essential to making disciples, then what does a believer need to know, be, and do to become a mature disciple?
- If someone attended a ministry of the local church for six years, what content would we want to be sure was presented to them so that they could grow to spiritual maturity?

Systematic teaching of God's Word can take place in many forms and contexts. One-on-one mentoring sessions, small group meetings, Bibles studies, age-level Sunday school classes, youth and children's ministry sessions, devotions, and sermons are all opportunities to teach God's Word. The local church's curriculum plan can be adapted to any of these contexts assuring that in whatever ministry a believer participates he or she will intentionally be exposed to a well-balanced diet of God's Word.

Regardless of the age or the spiritual maturity of those being taught in the local church, the Word of God should be taught purposefully

with the intention of equipping, developing, and commissioning every disciple. The teaching of God's Word must help disciples see how their faith influences every area of their lives. It must encourage biblical and ethical inquiry. Disciples should be able to see how God's Word influences morality and daily living. The teaching of God's Word should also encourage individuals to apply biblical principles by going out into the world and practicing what they have been taught.⁵

Mentoring

At first glance, mentoring and teaching may appear to be similar activities. Yet the difference between the two is meaningful. Teaching focuses on developing skills and abilities while mentoring focuses on developing awareness of personhood. A godly mentor can help an individual gain awareness of his personhood as he/she follows God. Mentoring can help the mentee build a strong character to grow in faith. With the help of a good mentor, a mentee can identify and uproot destructive thought patterns that hinder spiritual growth.⁶ Mentoring also provides a unique and

"With the help of a good mentor, a mentee can identify and uproot destructive thought patterns that hinder spiritual growth."

refreshing opportunity for cross-generational relationships. At a time when many churches pride themselves on the array of segmented ministries they offer, tailored to a specific niche in the church, mentoring provides a chance for mature Christians to contribute to the lives of younger ones.

For a thorough discussion of spiritual mentoring, study the lesson "Mentoring Emerging Leaders" in the Foundations: Minister's Development Program course, *The Minister's Role as Leader*.

Small Groups

The Lord Jesus engaged in ministry that was large-scale in nature, small-group oriented, as well as offering attention to individuals within his small group (John 13:6-10). An exploration of his ministry on earth reveals that Christ ministered to the masses, to clusters, as well as to individuals (Matthew 9:9; 16:16; 18:21).⁷

While Jesus is primarily known for his ministry to a small cluster of men, his life was marked by an intense interest in imitative faith. At times, he addressed the crowds; other times, he addressed his inner circle as a group; other times, he addressed his disciples in pairs; and still other times, he spoke directly into the lives of individual men and women. Unlike some modern church growth models, which solely advocate the supremacy of the congregational church service to the neglect of small groups and especially individual discipleship, Jesus struck a balance with an emphasis on all three of these focal areas.⁸

Almost every church has small groups in some form such as Sunday school classes, Bible studies, age-level groups, etc. Many of these small groups focus on relationships, instruction, support, intercession, or serving. However, few intentionally focus on making disciples.

For small groups to become a means of making disciples, they must focus on two disciple-making components. Let's consider Jesus' small group—the disciples—to discover these.

- Jesus began his ministry with 12 untrained men. But his intention was that they become fully trained so that they could fulfill his mission after he returned to the Father. Jesus trained his small group through instruction. He often pulled them aside from the crowds to further explain the truths he had been teaching. He equipped them through intimate association with him. They

"Jesus did not choose the 12 so that they would remain with him. He chose them and trained them so that he could entrust his mission to them."

lived life with him every day. He gave them opportunities to practice by sending them out to preach the good news. And he often provided correction of wrong thinking, words, and actions. When he went back to God, his Father, the disciples were well equipped to do the work of ministry.

- Jesus did not choose the 12 so that they would remain with him. He chose them and trained them so that he could entrust his mission to them. As he was ascending into heaven, he commissioned them with these words, "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus' small group was no longer just disciples, they were disciple makers. For small groups in our local churches to make disciples, they must be intentional in equipping disciples to do the work of ministry and they must be missional—focused on fulfilling Christ's mission.

Participant Activity:

Discuss the following ideas:

- What happens when the focus of teaching, small groups, and mentoring is not discipleship? How does a weak focus on discipleship hinder spiritual growth?
- What strengths and challenges are there when we reframe the means (i.e., mentoring, teaching, small groups) to focus on the process of discipleship?

Developing a Disciple-Making Pathway

A discipleship pathway is simply your process for making disciples. It's your roadmap that shows directions for how to help individuals get from wherever they are now to having a closer relationship with Jesus. Many churches disciple by accident because they haven't thought through their plan for moving people toward Christ. No pathway is perfect, and each will be unique. Note that you will make updates and modify your pathway. In fact, you can possibly implement more than one pathway within your ministry. An individual's growth toward Christ never happens in a straight line, so do not expect people to follow your plan perfectly.

Pathways must be comprehensive to address various generational groups within the local church. It must be holistic. Does your pathway include discipleship training that reaches into every area of an individual's life? These areas include marriage, parenting and other relationships, financial stewardship, ministry calling, spiritual formation, professional and work life, and service in the church and community.

Last, discipleship isn't all about what you know. It's also about what you do and who you are. A comprehensive pathway should include biblical training but also opportunities to apply faith in the world (i.e., mission trips, fellowship gatherings, outreach, and other serving opportunities).

Ed Stetzer's latest research in *The State of Church Planting in the U.S.* showed that churches with clear discipleship pathways had nearly twice the number of conversions as churches that didn't. When you create capacity in your church for people to be discipled, God will likely send you more people to disciple.⁹

Don't be fooled by church attendance. Unless people are on an intentional discipleship path they will not be shaped for God's mission in the world. Jesus spoke to the crowds, but the engine of his ministry was his purposeful gathering and shaping of the twelve. It seems like a small place to start, but it's vital. Discipleship doesn't occur in sterile

classrooms or small group Bible studies. Discipleship is a move toward accountability and vulnerability to learn and practice the way of Jesus on mission.”¹⁰

Pathway Steps:



One: Develop a Shared Disciple-Making Vision

Every ministry must have a clearly articulated vision for disciple-making. A vision is a descriptive picture of the desired outcomes of your disciple-making plan. A vision statement responds to the questions, "Who are we? And what are we trying to achieve?" A clear vision helps establish both short- and long-term disciple-making goals as well as identifying strengths and weaknesses of our ministry methods. In other words, vision gives us a concrete idea to compare our outcomes to. It provides a framework that helps evaluate the effectiveness of our actions.

A ministry's disciple-making vision must be biblical and Holy Spirit led. Praying, Bible reading, and fasting are key. The Scriptures provide us with guiding principles on how to make disciples. Reading through the Gospels and meditating on the words and actions of Jesus gives us a framework of what the disciple-making process should look like. Discerning how the words of Scripture apply in our context requires praying and fasting. We must let God communicate his vision to us, guide our steps, and establish the work of our hands.

A ministry's disciple-making vision must be clear and simple. The clearer the vision, the more likely it will be for our ministry teams and congregants to join the effort. Vision helps people see the big picture. It gives them direction and understanding on what they are doing and where they are going. It is something people can wrap their minds and hands around. Vision gives the church a direction and

a sense of purpose. Vision can take the values of your ministry and set them in motion. Vision considers what your disciple-making ministry is and what it should become. How are we going to achieve it? How can each member contribute?

Vision can be obscured by the lack of clear concept definitions. It is key for believers to know what spiritual learning is and what growth looks like. The marks of a disciple stated previously in this lesson are helpful when crystalizing the vision of our ministries.

"It is key for believers to know what spiritual learning is and what growth looks like."

Pick those characteristics you want to emphasize in your disciple-making pathway. Start with the first four, and then move forward.

- Transformed mind
- Transformed character
- Transformed relationship
- Transformed habits
- Transformed service
- Transformed influence

Once you have chosen, discuss what each characteristic looks like in your ministry context. Ask, "What does it look like to have a transformed mind? How can transformed relationships be cultivated?" Forming a clear idea of what discipleship will do in the lives of those in your congregation helps focus disciple-making efforts. Have in mind that the goal of discipleship is to reproduce people that think, act, and lead like Christ. Every mark is important, but to focus on some areas first may be necessary to start off your pathway.

A shared vision of discipleship helps people commit to the work of disciple-making. When a clear vision is well communicated with all, it provides a gathering point. Not only does it give meaning to our disciple-making efforts,

"From oldest to youngest, all members should be informed of the local church's values, goals, and strategies."

but it also helps all members feel part of the vision. Vision helps unify efforts and clarify the process.

The only visions that materialize are those visions that are shared. A shared vision is created when people listen to God and one another, and when all thoughts are communicated simply and clearly.

Vision without good communication goes nowhere. The local church's disciple-making vision should be shared with the church's core team, lay leaders, and members. From oldest to youngest, all members should be informed of the local church's values, goals, and strategies. Everyone should be able to identify disciple-making as fundamental to the life of the local church.

Steps to Communicate a Vision of Disciple-Making

- A Scripture-based disciple-making vision is more credible than a personal vision. To establish a vision that reflects the principles in Scripture will help the members see how their goals and efforts align with God's Word. It also helps them see that the vision is rooted in God's instruction for the church, and not in personal preference.
- Make the most out of every opportunity to communicate the vision to the congregation. Worship services and Bible studies are great occasions to communicate the vision. A series of sermons on the marks of a disciple or the disciple-making vision can help the congregation understand the goals for disciple-making as well as affecting the disposition of the church concerning discipleship. When a pastor or a leader prioritizes disciple-making in the pulpit, he

or she presents a model for others to follow.

- Let people know they are needed. Be specific. Delegate tasks and designate roles. All believers are called to be disciples and make disciples.
- Connect with people personally. To share the ministry's vision in the bulletin or during a worship service is not enough. People need to grasp how they can be involved individually and collectively. Therefore, it is important to connect with people in a personal way. One-on-one meetings with ministry leaders and volunteers are a good way to maintain open and clear communication.

Two: Identify and Establish Opportunities for Growth

Once the ministry's vision for disciple-making has been discussed, defined, and communicated, the next step is to identify and establish opportunities for the vision to materialize. In this stage, the goal is to pinpoint which ministries are already working in alignment with the vision and which growth opportunities should be created. It is important to remember that "God has entrusted us with the responsibility of crafting ministries that will accomplish his ends."¹¹ With the help of the Holy Spirit, we must select activities and opportunities for people to mature in their faith. We must grapple with the questions, "What should we do to follow the instructions that Jesus gave us? What activities help my local church or ministry to evangelize, teach, baptize, and bring disciples to maturity?"

Every program of the church "must be a servant to the church's discipleship process."¹² Every Sunday service, small group, service group, and mentoring opportunity should work strategically in alignment with the disciple-making vision. All spaces of ministry should be seen as areas of opportunity to communicate and foster the vision of making disciples.

This step of the pathway addresses at least four areas that provide opportunities for growth. These areas are connection, growth, service, and deployment.

Connection

Sunday service, for example, can be a space where the disciple-making vision is communicated, explained, and reinforced.

Assimilation programs such as “Membership Matters” can be used to help new believers see the importance of church membership. These programs can help new disciples connect with each other and with mature believers in the congregation. Their purpose is to give people opportunities to feel part of the church.

Growth

Growth ministries like small groups, Bible studies, and mentoring groups can help people in different stage of the discipleship journey. Since not all disciples are in the same place spiritually, there should be growth opportunities for all levels of spiritual maturity. Deciding which ministries to incorporate will be a task that requires observation of your local church or ministry’s culture and needs.

Service

Service and outreach groups are also a great opportunity for people to learn to love like Christ, not only others in the church but the world at large. Disciples need a mission outside of the four walls of the church. As Bill Hull states, “Christ was a man for others and disciples should be people for others.”¹³ Service prevents people from being self-absorbed; it develops Christ’s love for the hurting and catalyzes their spiritual development.

Deployment

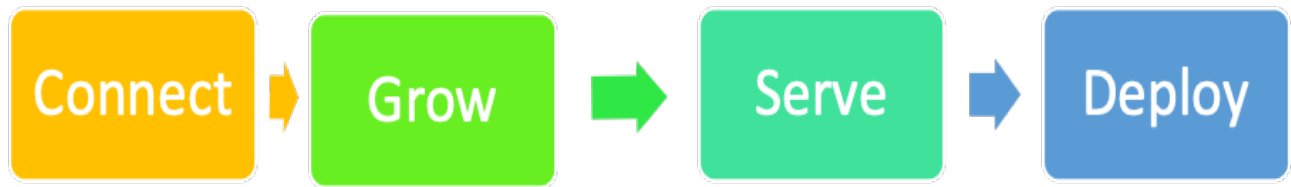
Deployment opportunities are essential for disciple multiplication. As disciples grow through different stages of spiritual maturity, they become capable of discipling others. It is essential that disciples are empowered to disciple others. The local church should have and create spaces for disciples to disciple others. Deployment can vary from person to person depending on their gifts and talents. Some people may be sent out from their local church to serve while others may stay in the community evangelizing and discipling others.

Again, when identifying and creating opportunities for your disciple-making plan, consider that individuals are at various steps of the journey, from pre-conversion, conversion, growing, and mature Christian. There should be

"The goal of discipleship is to raise disciple-making disciples."

a place that is welcoming to all, no matter what stage they are in.

The goal of discipleship is to raise disciple-making disciples. It is not only about teaching people the basics of the gospel, or the dos and don’ts of the Christian life. The energy and focus of our ministry should be raising servant leaders that are not only equipped to make disciples themselves but have the desire to do so. Therefore, it is important that our pathway includes opportunities for people to connect, grow, serve, and ultimately be deployed into their disciple-making mission.



Three: Assess and Align Your Ministry Activity

Designing a disciple-making pathway and assessing how your actions meet your vision will largely involve critiquing your current process in general and your primary ministries. Aubrey Malphurs, professor of pastoral ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary, proposes the following steps to assessing your ministry's effectiveness.¹⁴

- Identify the beginning stages of the discipleship process and the desired aim using the following chart.
- Identify the ministries in your local church including ministries that offer biblical instruction, fellowship, worship, service, and evangelism. Place the ministries in the chart. Then assess what stages of the discipleship process each ministry addresses. (Appendix A: Assessing Ministry Contributions to the

Discipleship Process provides a chart for you to complete of the ministries in your local church).

- Evaluation. Measure each ministry's impact. Ask the following questions: Is this ministry designed to develop at least one of the *marks of discipleship*? How well is this ministry helping people grow? Are people proactively engaged with the activities in the group? Do any ministries need to be replaced? Are there any *marks of discipleship* we may be overlooking?

	Conversion	Connection	Growth	Service	Deployment
Ministry Ex: Age level Bible study		x	x		

Ministry's Function

If the activities within any ministry are not working toward the joint vision of disciple-making, it is necessary to reconsider the approach and goals of such groups. Every ministry must have a clear understanding of its purpose and end. No ministry should function for its own sake. Disciple-making should be the focus of all areas of ministry, from outreach groups to Sunday morning service. A few questions to consider in the process of pathway development are "How do our small groups align with the vision and goals of disciple-making that we've established? How can mentoring be improved among members of our congregation? Is the local church being intentional about discipling people of all ages and in every stage of life?"

Appendix B: Assessing Disciple-Making in the Local Church can be a helpful tool for your ministry to use as you develop and establish your disciple-making vision. It can also help you assess how your ministry is executing the vision. Remember, assessment is something that must be done periodically.

Think of the pathway for disciple-making and discipleship as a map and not as a recipe. A map shows all the roads that can lead to a particular destination. It also helps us identify our areas of growth and progress as well as setbacks.

Conclusion

Making disciples is at the heart of the church's mission in the world. If it was not for discipleship, the church would not exist today. Christ commanded the church to make disciples. Making disciples is not only an obligation of the church, but it is also a natural outcome of being led by the Spirit of God. All believers, pastors, ministry leaders, and laity are entrusted with the responsibility of fulfilling the Great Commission. It is not the work of a few, but the mission of all who identify as disciples of Christ.

Lesson Review Questions

1. The word disciple means _____.
 - a. Teacher
 - b. One who honors
 - c. Student
 - d. Missionary
2. Christian discipleship _____. (Choose all that apply)
 - a. Is a transformative journey of becoming like Christ
 - b. Continues throughout a believer's lifetime
 - c. Requires believers to continually respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting
 - d. All the above
3. According to Bill Hull, what are the six marks, or guiding principles, of a disciple?
 - a. Transformed mind, transformed behavior, transformed thought life, transformed habits, transformed desires, transformed influence
 - b. Bible reading, prayer, fasting, worship, solitude, celebration
 - c. Transformed mind, transformed Character, transformed relationship, transformed habits, transformed service, transformed influence
 - d. None of the above
4. The three elements that distinguish disciple-making from discipleship are _____.
 - a. Deliverance, growth, and consistency
 - b. Deliverance, development, and deployment
 - c. Evangelism, growth, and consistency
 - d. Preconversion, conversion, growth
5. According to Mark Dever, what is the "natural environment for discipleship?"
 - a. The local church
 - b. The Christian home
 - c. Small group
 - d. None of the above
6. In order for growing disciples to develop relationships the way Jesus did, it is necessary for the church to cultivate environments where growing disciples feel _____.
 - a. Productive
 - b. Esteemed
 - c. Safe
 - d. Needed
7. According to Bill Hull, what are the necessary ingredients for a healthy disciple-making environment?
 - a. Trust, grace, and affirmation
 - b. Humility and submission
 - c. All of the above
 - d. None of the above
8. The key to a successful disciple-making environment is the _____ of the leadership.
 - a. Strength

- b. Faithfulness
 - c. Authenticity
 - d. All of the above
9. In order to make disciples who fully comprehend how to be faithful disciples, the local church must make a commitment to _____.
- a. Mentoring relationships
 - b. Teach biblical truths
 - c. Develop small groups
 - d. Invest in missions
10. The Word of God should be taught purposefully with the intention of _____ every disciple
- a. Equipping
 - b. Developing
 - c. Commissioning
 - d. All of the above
11. True or False? Mentoring focuses on developing awareness of personhood, can help build strong character to grow in faith, can help identify and uproot destructive thought patterns that hinder spiritual growth, and provides an opportunity for cross-generational relationships.
- a. True
 - b. False
12. In order for small groups in the local church to make disciples, they must _____?
- a. Be intentional in equipping disciples **and** missional-focused
 - b. Meet consistently
 - c. Have strong leadership
 - d. Emphasize mentorship
13. True or False? You should encourage and expect others to follow your disciple-making pathway plan perfectly.
- a. True
 - b. False
14. A ministry's _____ will answer the questions, "Who are we? And what are we trying to achieve?"
- a. Vision
 - b. Growth opportunities
 - c. Values
 - d. Evangelism strategy
15. Connection, growth, service and deployment are four areas that _____.
- a. Share a vision
 - b. Lead to mentorship
 - c. Provide opportunities for growth
 - d. All of the above

Appendix A
Assessing Ministry Contributions to the Discipleship Process

Ministry	Conversion	Connection	Growth	Service	Deployment

Appendix B

Assessing Disciple-Making in the Local Church

The following assessment will help you identify the strengths and weaknesses in your current disciple-making efforts. Identifying areas of lack can help you develop an efficient discipleship pathway and a concrete plan for development. The assessment will cover four areas: definition of discipleship and disciple-making, environment, means of discipleship, and pathway.

Circle the number that best reflects the current state of your ministry.		Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Much	Very Strong
	Definition and Centrality of Discipleship and Disciple-Making					
1	Members have a clear understanding of what it means to be a disciple.	0	1	2	3	4
2	Members have a clear understanding of what the process of discipleship entails.	0	1	2	3	4
3	Members show interest in making disciples.	0	1	2	3	4
4	Members feel empowered to mentor and teach others in the faith.	0	1	2	3	4
5	Members know the difference between discipleship and disciple-making.	0	1	2	3	4
6	Ministers actively promote discipleship in all areas of the local church/ministry.	0	1	2	3	4
7	Ministers encourage members to grow and use their gifts to disciple others.	0	1	2	3	4
8	Ministers actively seek to disciple members.	0	1	2	3	4
9	Ministry/local church provides members with tools and material for discipleship.	0	1	2	3	4
10	Members understand themselves as lifelong disciples.	0	1	2	3	4
	Environment					
11	Ministers foster trustworthy relationship with members.	0	1	2	3	4
12	Ministers encourage graceful communication between members.	0	1	2	3	4
13	Ministers demonstrate humility and submission to those in their care.	0	1	2	3	4
14	Ministers address faults with grace seeking restoration.	0	1	2	3	4
15	Ministers understand the discipleship stage of each member.	0	1	2	3	4
16	Members feel encouraged to share their lives with other members and their leaders.	0	1	2	3	4
17	Members voice that they feel comfortable to be submitted to leaders.	0	1	2	3	4
18	Members demonstrate humility and willingness to serve others.	0	1	2	3	4
19	Ministry/local church is perceived as a place of openness and graceful accountability.	0	1	2	3	4
20	Ministry/local church is perceived as a healthy environment for discipleship.	0	1	2	3	4

		Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Much	Very Strong
	Means of Discipleship					
21	Ministers and lay leaders function as mentors to new believers.	0	1	2	3	4
22	Mentoring is an important part of the life of the congregation.	0	1	2	3	4
23	Mentors are proactively involved in the life of mentees.	0	1	2	3	4
24	Mentors make themselves available for mentees (provide a schedule for regular interaction, set apart time on a regular basis).	0	1	2	3	4
25	Teaching is biblical and intentional.	0	1	2	3	4
26	Biblical literacy is a primordial goal of the ministry/local church.	0	1	2	3	4
27	Members are encouraged to participate in Bible studies.	0	1	2	3	4
28	Ministry/local church makes space for small groups for all ages and stages in life.	0	1	2	3	4
29	Discipleship is the primary goal of small groups.	0	1	2	3	4
30	Members of a small group intentionally connect with each other and with their leaders.	0	1	2	3	4
	Pathway					
31	Every ministry within the local church follows a common vision of discipleship.	0	1	2	3	4
32	Ministers and leaders discuss disciple-making goals on a regular basis.	0	1	2	3	4
33	There is a space for discipleship for every believer, no matter their stage in the journey.	0	1	2	3	4
34	Members feel part of a common discipleship journey.	0	1	2	3	4
35	All ministries and sub-ministries take steps to match common vision of discipleship.	0	1	2	3	4
36	Deployment is part of the local church's discipleship plan.	0	1	2	3	4
37	Discipleship is the common goal of all ministries within the local church and/or common goal of all efforts.	0	1	2	3	4
38	Ministry leaders meet regularly to assess disciple-making groups.	0	1	2	3	4
39	Ministry leaders meet to discuss disciple-making opportunities.	0	1	2	3	4
40	Ministry leaders have a clear understanding of the disciple-making vision.	0	1	2	3	4

Assessment Results

0%	10% 16/160	20% 32/160	30% 48/160	40% 64/160	50% 80/160	60% 96/160	70% 112/160	80% 128/160	90% 144/160	100% 160/160
(Poor)					(Excellent)					

Works Cited

- ¹ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 130-149.
- ² Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 97.
- ^{3,4} Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 159; 149.
- ⁵ Carl Ellis Nelson, *Growing up Christian: A Congregational Strategy for Nurturing Disciples* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 2008), 89.
- ^{6,7,8} Aaron David Rock, "Developing a Spiritually-Formative Leadership Mentoring Ministry at Southwood Community Church" (Ph.D. diss., Liberty University, 2006), 55; 19; 19.
- ⁹ John Davidson, "What is Your Discipleship Pathway?: Whatever It Is, It Should Be Strategic, Comprehensive, and Clear," *Influence Magazine* (January 7, 2016), accessed October 5, 2021, <https://influencemagazine.com/Practice/What-Is-Your-Discipleship-Pathway>.
- ¹⁰ J. R. Woodward, *The Church as Movement: Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 89.
- ¹¹ Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 49.
- ¹² Eric Geiger, "4 Foundations to a Simple Discipleship Strategy," accessed October 5, 2021, <https://www.visionroom.com/4-foundations-simple-discipleship-strategy/>.
- ¹³ Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 236.
- ¹⁴ Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple-Making*, 137.

Final Assessment

1. True or False: Most believers were converted in the context of a network of friends, family, and social connections.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. What is a benefit of the small group setting?
 - a. A non threatening atmosphere
 - b. Opportunity to build relationship
 - c. Serve as a bridge for people to go to actual church in person
 - d. All of the above
3. House of Faith Church presented a Christmas drama with live animals, a choir, and soloists for the community. How would this type of evangelism event be classified?
 - a. Entertainment
 - b. Education
 - c. Children-Focused
 - d. Crusade
4. True or False: It's okay to retell the stories of the gospel with your own words to engage a modern audience.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. When the missional "prime directive" is displaced by other motivations, the church _____ power, traction, and relevance.
 - a. Loses
 - b. Gains
 - c. Attracts
 - d. Both b and c
6. "The church is the only society in the world created for the benefit of _____." - William Temple
 - a. Congregants
 - b. Lay leaders
 - c. Pastors
 - d. Non-members
7. Relating together was a by-product of the first two goals of Wesley's bands and classes. What were these first two goals?
 - a. Fellowship and learning
 - b. Personal spiritual development and mission
 - c. Learning and mission
 - d. Bible study and building relationships
8. Jesus made _____ the major tool of discipleship for all of His disciples.
 - a. Parables
 - b. Miracle working

- c. "Doing" mission
 - d. Prayer
9. Mission establishes discipleship on the foundation of _____.
- a. Living and doing
 - b. Following
 - c. Knowing
 - d. Studying Scripture
10. True or False? Projects and programs that begin with great compassion for people can drift from passion for people to a drive for results.
- a. True
 - b. False
11. As pastors and ministry leaders, a truth we must emphasize to the new believers we are discipling is that every believer is a _____.
- a. Sinner
 - b. Missionary
 - c. Servant
 - d. Leader
12. The missional Christian considers every day that they are a missionary and _____ to see, understand, relate, serve, love, and influence others.
- a. Moves out
 - b. Moves in
 - c. Moves alongside
 - d. Moves toward
13. A practical application of missional living is to "move in" by taking Christ to not-yet Christians through your long-term commitment to _____.
- a. Personal Invitation
 - b. Preaching
 - c. Serving in the church
 - d. Relationship
14. Five missional habits Michael Frost and his faith community have adopted are: Bless, _____, listen, learn, send.
- a. Pray
 - b. Enjoy
 - c. Eat
 - d. Know
15. Missional engagement is primarily about _____.
- a. Getting people saved
 - b. Demonstrating God's life together
 - c. Equipping new leaders
 - d. Both a and c

16. Exposing an individual to opportunities, situations, and circumstances that provide an environment for growth and experience is called _____.
- Development in the releasing stage
 - Development in the identification stage
 - Development in the equipping stage
 - None of the above
17. To intentionally cross boundaries of race, age, language, and culture and bring the mission Dei to your community takes _____.
- Training
 - Relationship
 - Courage and commitment
 - Wisdom
18. Conversion to Christianity should be given expression through public witness/public declaration of faith which shows a clear understanding of _____.
- Scripture
 - Salvation
 - Commitment
 - Both b and c
19. True or False? Churches that have low membership standards are more likely to grow.
- True
 - False
20. Membership courses:
- Should be newcomer friendly and provide a clear explanation of the gospel
 - Optional if potential members have been regular church attendees
 - Should be exciting, interactive, and use alternative strategies for teaching the course
 - Both a and c
21. What should be the main focus of all areas of ministry?
- Growing numbers
 - Fellowship
 - Disciple-making
 - Mentoring
22. Asking the questions, "How well is this ministry helping people grow? Are people proactively engaged with the activities in the group? Do any ministries need to be replaced?", is what step in the assessment process?
- Identification
 - Analysis
 - Evaluation
 - None of the above
23. Connection, growth, service and deployment are four areas that _____.
- Encourage development of relationships
 - Lead to accomplishment of vision
 - Provide opportunities for growth
 - All of the above

24. In order for growing disciples to develop relationships as Jesus did, it is necessary for the church to cultivate environments where growing disciples feel _____.
a. Productive
b. Esteemed
c. Safe
d. Needed
25. When the church of Jesus Christ is at her best, she is a _____ movement.
a. Tight knit
b. Congregation focused
c. Forward thinking
d. Mission-driven
26. The Christian faith is incarnational and, according to Helmut Thielicke, since every generation has its own unique questions, the gospel must be proclaimed _____ to each generation.
a. Consistently
b. Fresh in new ways
c. Creatively
d. All of the above
27. What is the one characteristic of Jesus's ministry that he announced first?
a. His compassion
b. His authority
c. His mission
d. His relationship with the Father
28. What is one reason why established churches begin to stagnate after about ten years?
a. Members of the church live in the community
b. The congregation is too focused on church structure
c. The church's organizations and leaders spend so much time in activities that there is no time for missionary outreach
d. Pastors spend too much time doing demographic research
29. Through what type of ministry do the unchurched sense the warmth and acceptance of Christianity with no strings attached?
a. Personal invitations
b. Small groups
c. Sports ministry
d. Ministry of presence/need meeting ministries
30. The hardest part of serving vulnerable populations is _____.
a. Determining what to do that will help
b. Overcoming the desire to see immediate changes in those served
c. Locating the vulnerable
d. Building relationship with the vulnerable



Center for Biblical Leadership
"Developing Leaders Globally"

THE MINISTER'S COMMITMENT TO EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

A Course in Foundations:
Minister's Development Program



LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT AND DISCIPLESHIP