

Defining Discipleship

The reason **YOU**, as a believer, are on earth is that you might carry out the plan of Jesus Christ and it was with this understanding that you were called to follow Christ as His “*disciple*.”

Jesus’ very first words ever to His disciples were, “*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*” (Matthew 4:19).

THERE IS ONE THING YOU CAN DO HERE ON EARTH
THAT YOU CANNOT DO IN HEAVEN!

Jesus spent a great deal of time training His followers how to be “*His Disciples!*” He taught them how to bring people to “**New Life**” in Christ Jesus!

Christ’s promise was, “*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit had come upon you; and you will be **My witnesses**.*”

Discipleship has to do with sharing Jesus Christ’s life with the unsaved!

Often, when we hear the word “*discipleship*” we think of things like (1) Spiritual growth, (2) discipline, or (3) our own daily work with Christ. All of this, of course, is a part of *discipleship*, but the New Testament concept is much, much more than just this.

“***Discipleship***” is, without doubt, Jesus’ highest priority for every believer and a study on discipleship is **the most singularly critical and important teaching that can be imagined!**

God help us to earnestly pray that he will open our eyes to the truth of His Word concerning these matters!

Satan will do everything within his power to keep you from applying these principles to your life. But you must determine to stand firm. God wants to use you in His magnificent, divine mission to reach “*your world*” with His glory!

To start with let’s look at the word “*disciple*” to see just what it means. The word “*disciple*” has been used in various ways. Sometimes it is used to mean a “*pupil, a learner, or an adherent*” – that is, one whose life or thinking is patterned after or significantly affected by another person. This is the Latin definition – from which we get the English spelling. However, to make it even more confusing, our English spelling is Latin in origin, *but* the meaning is derived from the Greek language.

The Greek word, translated “disciple,” is used over 200 times in the first five books of the New Testament. **It is the use of this word, as it was used by Jesus, which gives us the basis of our definition,** however, it takes in depth study to develop an adequate understanding of what a “disciple” is AND THAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE LESSONS – to obtain an understanding and the meaning of what, Biblically speaking, a “disciple” of Jesus Christ really is.

The meaning of “disciple” is so profound that a failure to comprehend and apply it will mean that you will not be able to be used by God in His fullest desire for your life.

It would be natural to attempt to give this word a simple, one line – or a single paragraph – definition, but, if we desire to have a full grasp of what God’s Word teaches, it cannot be done. In order to know what “being a disciple” truly is, we must carefully examine what Jesus meant by this word – and then that, and that alone – will be our definition!

Jesus transformed the concept of “*discipleship*” into his complete and perfect divine plan for sharing His life with men and women around this globe. The principle of “discipleship” involves that which Jesus exemplified in His relationship with His followers:

We will use as our guidelines:

A disciple is what Jesus meant by “*disciple*,” therefore, “*discipleship*” is the act of being what Jesus meant by “*disciple*” and any other definition of discipleship is irrelevant!

It will be the objective of this study to examine in detail just what Jesus did to turn twelve of His followers into disciples, however, to start with, we want to share some general statements about Jesus’ concept of what He said about being a “*disciple*.”

Being a “*disciple*” involved:

1. An intimate personal relationship with a “*Disciplemaker*,”
2. A personal commitment to be a disciple, and
3. Personal instruction by a “*Disciplemaker*.”

Viewed from a negative standpoint, these can be stated as:

1. Disciplemaking cannot be accomplished by impersonal means,
2. Disciplemaking cannot be done without personal commitment, and
3. Disciplemaking cannot take place apart from personal instruction.

The indispensable element is:

DISCIPLES CANNOT BE MADE WITHOUT A DISCIPLEMAKER

A “*disciplemaker*” is, obviously, one who makes disciples! Disciples must be made. They do *not* just happen accidentally!

Jesus, when He ascended back to heaven, turned the job of “*making disciples*” over to His followers and He gave them the Holy Spirit to empower their disciplemaking efforts.

So, then, **a disciple is one who has been disciplined by a discipler!**

How does one make a disciple?

Answer: Matthew 28:18-20, “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.’”*

Acts 1:8, “*But you will receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be My witnesses...*”

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 stands as the pinnacle of everything Jesus said. It was His last words and stands in the ultimate place of emphasis. He gave it on the basis of His divine authority. Everything Jesus said and did in His earthly ministry led up to this climactic statement. His meaning was unequivocal. It was an absolute command. There are no options implied!

In this command by Jesus – in the original Greek – there is just one subject, one imperative verb and three participles. *This is crucial* in understanding just exactly what Jesus commanded! Because most people believe that the imperative (the command) in these verses is “go,” but that is **not** what Jesus said and not what He meant. The imperative verb in Matthew 28:19-20 is “*making disciples.*”

The subject “you” is understood! The phrase, “*make disciples,*” in the Greek, is in what is referred to as the aorist active imperative. Which means that the emphasis in the Great Commission is not “go,” but rather “making disciples.” Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:19-20, in the most unequivocal manner possible, is “*Make disciples!*”

- “Go” is a participle
- “Baptizing” is a participle
- “Teaching” is a participle
- “Make disciples” is an **imperative verb!**

A proper rendering from the Greek text would read:

“As you go (wherever and however you to in the course of your lives) I command you to **make disciples** of all peoples (of every race), baptizing them (those who believe) in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

The primary imperative of the Great Commission is to “***MAKE DISCIPLES!***”

What did Jesus mean by “*Make disciples*”
and
did His disciples comprehend what He commanded?

Jesus spent three years personally discipling the twelve. Everything they heard from Him, every moment He spent with them, led up to the giving of this command. But did they understand what Jesus meant?

THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTOOD *PRECISELY* WHAT JESUS MEANT!

Jesus spend three years making disciples of them and now He was commanding them to do the same. Did they know how to go about it? There was no doubt in their minds that Jesus was commanding them to *individually* and *personally* implementing His discipling methodology and strategy in the lives of others. Now they were to become the “*fishers of men*”

He talked about from the very start. He had **made** them to be fishers of men. They did not become that way by accident. It was all a planned and scheduled process. Jesus' methodology was specific. His strategy was obvious. They knew exactly what He wanted them to do – to “*make disciples*” just as He had done! Not only did Jesus command to make disciples, but He also gave them (as He gives all believers) the very same discipling power that He had possessed during His earthly ministry – the power of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence.

Notice that Jesus closed the Great Commission by saying “...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” This was the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, which was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Jesus had told them:

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:16-18).

Jesus also said, “*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning*” (John 15:26-27).

Act 1:8 also promises, “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be My witnesses...*”

Upon the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the stage was set. Not only had they been taught *how* to make disciples, but now they had also been given the power to do it!

THE TASK OF DISCIPLEMAKING INVOLVES TWO BASIC THINGS

Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8

1. They were to “baptize” believers!

Discipling means first sharing Christ with the lost and, once they have received Christ as their Savior, baptizing them was a step of obedience to the living Lord.

Baptize was *not* **FOR** salvation but because **OF** salvation.

New believers are to follow the command to identify with Jesus' death and resurrection – water baptism is an evidence of their belief!

2. Discipling involves “teaching”

Teaching what? “*Teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded!*”

Discipling involves instruction, specifically, in “*All that Christ had commanded,*” – that is, in the Word of God.

Colossians 3:16 , “*Let the Word of Christ richly dwell in you!*”

2 Timothy 3:16-17, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*”

Those who receive Christ as their Savior are to be instructed for a measured and definite length of time, in the fundamental principles of Christian living. They must be nurtured in the Word until they are able to stand on their own feet, spiritually, feed themselves, and continue to grow as a result. If this period of disciple-training is missed, a weak and unproductive “*church-goer*” will result.

It is crucial to the whole subject of disciplemaking for us to comprehend the fact that the Great Commission is not just an imperative to evangelize. Evangelism is the “*initial*” phase of the Commission, true, but the command is not merely to evangelize – (that is, “*proclaim the Good News to the unsaved*”) – but the Great Commission is to “***make disciples!***”

Jesus told us **what to do – how to do it – and – He gave us the power to do it!**

- “*Disciplemaking*” is **not** just a way of fulfilling the Great Commission
 - Disciplemaking **IS** the Great Commission!

Jesus makes it very clear when He commanded His disciples, “*As you go, you make disciples, baptizing them, teaching them, and when you have completed their ‘discipleship-training,’ you deliver to them this command – ‘go and make disciples.’*”

This command is to every believer, personally, and without exception!

The Great Commission cannot be fulfilled without personal involvement!

“*Being a disciple*” was not enough (that is not all Jesus wanted) Jesus wanted

DISCIPLEMAKERS

– He wanted them then, and He wants them *now!*

A “*disciple*” who never becomes a “*disciplemaker*” is in a spirit of rebellion, no matter how fine he may be in other areas of dedication!

LESSON TWO

GOD’S DIVINE PLAN

“Discipleship” is God’s plan for reaching the world with the Gospel, and must be defined in terms of Jesus’ Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20. It is *more* than spiritual growth, which, of course, **is** involved as an important aspect of discipleship. Through the Great Commission we see that “discipleship” demands that one become a “*disciplemaker*” – not just a disciple.

There comes a time in the experience of every disciple when the learner becomes the teacher, the receiver becomes the giver, the follower becomes the leader, the saved becomes the servant!

Let’s focus on what Jesus did as a Disciplemaker because what *He* did, we must do also!

Jesus, as in everything he taught, gave us the divine example of how “disciplemaking” works. The Great Commission is an *imperative* that implies to every believer and contains a built-in methodology.

THERE IS ONLY ONE DIVINE METHODOLOGY!

Jesus provided *only one way* of salvation! There is only one way to be saved and Jesus sanctioned “*discipling*” as **the way** to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth!

Disciplemaking comprised:

1. Evangelism – primarily personal evangelism
2. Disciple-training – personal nurturing of new believers by disciples

This is Christ’s sole divinely authorized means of propagating the Gospel given in Scripture.

LET’S EXAMINE HOW JESUS WENT ABOUT THE TASK OF DISCIPLING

When asked the question, “*How shall we make disciples?*” – we must look to the Master to discover the components of His divine example.

SEVERAL OUTSTANDING PRINCIPLES COME TO LIGHT

There are at least ten basic principles for discipling evident in Jesus’ ministry to His first disciples – (We will discuss these in detail later in this study) – of r now, suffice it to say that all discipling principles have a singular common element.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP!

If one could formulate an iron-clad rule concerning the nature of discipling, it might be something like: “***Discipling requires a personal relationship between the disciple and the discipler.***” Disciplemaking cannot occur outside this most basic element – ***Personal intimacy!*** This requirement of intimacy in discipling manifests itself in the limitation of group-size. Jesus did not neglect the masses – however, when implementing His plan to spread the Gospel throughout the earth, He concentrated His efforts upon a mere handful of men.

DISCIPLING DEMANDS INTIMACY!

Discipling cannot be accomplished through **im**personal means. Jesus didn’t choose a throng of men, but rather he selected a few individuals who were willing to follow Him. Jesus knew all about “*small-group*” dynamics; and so he should have – He created man! Jesus knew that a larger number would not allow for the adequate development of interpersonal relationships both between the disciples and their discipler – and between the disciples themselves.

There is a need for teaching large numbers of people, however, that is not “*discipling.*” Discipling demands personal relationships! The very nature of the word – “*disciple*” – demands intimacy. Discipling requires that discipler maintain a close personal relationship with those being disciplined until the desire objective is reached.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF DISCIPLING?

The objective in discipling is to grow each disciple to a level of spiritual stability that transforms the disciple into a discipler.

Jesus' divine methodology is designed to take an unregenerate person, transform him by the power of the Gospel implanted through faith, ground him in essential principles for abundant living through the Word, and release him into the world to win and disciple others!

The Great Commission was no a surprise to those first disciples. They knew full well what Jesus meant. They had been discipled – now it was *their* turn. Not only did they know precisely *how* to make disciples, they also knew what the *result* would be. They not only knew the methodology, they knew the strategy as well!

THE DIVINE STRATEGY!

Just as a building is constructed according to the plan for its use, so any particular procedure or technique employed to propagate the Gospel must have a purpose! Otherwise, our activity can be lost in aimlessness and confusion! We must have a course of action that fits into the overall plan God has for our lives and we will find that it will thrill our souls with a sense of destiny!

God does not do anything willy-nilly, nor does he ever work by haphazard randomness – confusion or chaos – His divine, orderly, plan for discipling is designed to impact this globe with His eternal Gospel!

The “*methodology*” and “*strategy*” inherent in the Great Commission are perfectly conceived for the purpose of fulfilling Christ's Great Commission!

The failure to fulfill this Great Commission is because Christians fail to properly apply God's divinely ordered plan to bring about its fulfillment. The fault lies with the “*workers*,” not with the “*Planner*” – with men, not with God!

Soldiers are schooled in combat techniques. However, their combat methodology is useless unless an adequate battle strategy is conceived, through which their combat methods may be applied. Without an over-all battle plan, all combat knowledge and ability are ineffective – without a *strategy*, an advance cannot be made!

The Biblical discipling “*methodology*” likewise is to be utilized within the framework of an equally Biblical *strategy*. When these are rightly meshed, the lost are reached with the Gospel and are trained as victorious and effective disciplers!

Just how serious the failure of Christians to win the lost is realized when one looks at statistics. Base on the number of church-goers, it takes **five hundred** (500) Christians to produce *one convert* in a year's time! That means only one in five hundred professing Christians ever leads anyone to Christ. Tragically, world population growth has been outstripping the *numerical growth* of Christianity for centuries!

The general failure of the Church to reach the lost for Christ is a direct result of the failure to properly employ the divine *strategy* (and *methodology*) inherent in the Great Commission.

Not only does Jesus ***command*** to us to “*make disciples*” have an intrinsic methodology, but it also has a built-in strategy which must be followed if His Great Commission to the Church is to be carried out successfully!

WHAT IS THIS STRATEGY?

It is very simply – The strategy behind the Great Commission might be described as:

REPRODUCTION

Whereas the purpose the ten-point methodology – (which we will look at later) – is *spiritual growth* and *stability*, the goal of the strategy is **NUMERICAL INCREASE**. Multiplication does not describe this discipling strategy, it carries with it an *impersonal* connotation!

“*Reproduction*” denotes intimacy – the most fundamental element of discipling. The strategy of discipling, as a spiritual reproductive process, can be simply explained in the following manner:

A “*discipler*” is a believer who has already been disciplined, who then leads unsaved persons into the experience of the new birth, thus becoming a spiritual parent. The *discipler*, through the application of Jesus’ discipling methodology, trains the new believers, personally guiding them in their walk with Christ. When the group of disciples has been sufficiently grounded in the Word and equipped to the point of spiritual stability, they are commanded to carry out the commission by doing with others what has been done with them.

Disciplers produce disciplers – who produce disciplers – who produce disciplers – who produce disciplers – etc, etc. From every discipler the Gospel radiates through “*generation*” after “*generation*” of believers.

HERE IS THE PROBLEM . . . For decades, even centuries, believers have been taught to “*sit!*” The first thing most new Christians learn is how to sit in church – Church spend a great deal of time and energy conditioning folks how to **S-I-T**. There, of course, is nothing fundamentally wrong with *sitting*, but, in most cases, church-related “*sitting*” involves a lot of input and very little output, many being fed and few actually learning to becoming “*feeders*.”

“*Discipling strategy*” enables the Church to have an entrance **IN** and an entrance **OUT** – one enters in as an “*infant believer*” and emerges out as an “*empowered worker*.”

Discipling is such like military boot-camp. Recruits go in as soft civilians and come out as seasoned soldiers, ready for combat.

Have you ever watched a mother bird raise her young? She spends many long days and nights brooding over her eggs. When the eggs hatch she immediately begins to feed her babies,

working tirelessly, gathering enough food to feed hungry mouths that never seem to be satisfied. As the baby birds grow, the more they eat. Until, one day, they reach a point in their maturing process when the mother bird knows it's time for them to be about being birds themselves. One by one, she maneuvers them out of the nest and forces them, to try their wings. Finally, they are on their own, feeling themselves and the mother bird to reproduce even more of the species.

In a similar way, the strategy of “*disciple-making*” is designed to produce disciplers, and to increase the number of believers greatly over time, efficiently, systematically!

We will detail this “*strategy of disciplemaking*” in a later lesson.

LESSON THREE

The logical question following Jesus’ command to make disciples, would be: “*Did the disciples carry out the divine plan according to the training they received during their discipling by Jesus?*”

In order to discover the answer to this question, one must turn to the book of Acts, which chronicles the first thirty years of church history. If they carried out their “marching orders” correctly, Acts should reveal this and give us some key insights into their perceptions of the Great Commission.

The book of Acts serves to highlight those aspects of church development that the Holy Spirit saw fit to emphasize through the writing of Luke.

THE BOOK OF ACTS IS QUITE REVEALING CONCERNING “DISCIPLEMAKING”

Having been personally disciplined, Luke had an excellent grasp of church doctrine, and policy, and was in a particularly good position to witness the principle of discipleship in operation.

A careful study of the book of Acts will bring to light the fact that the early believers took the Great Commission literally and performed the task of discipling exactly as Jesus commanded.

The first chapter of Acts includes the closing moments of Jesus’ earthly ministry – (Read Acts 1:1-11). Notice that verse 8 is a re-statement of the Great Commission with specific emphasis on the “*strategy*” involved. It states, “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and on into the remotest part of the earth.*” Here is revealed the basic expansion of the Gospel. And it happened exactly that way – Jerusalem first, then Judea, Samaria, and on into the whole world.

THE BOOK OF ACTS FOLLOWS THIS PATTERN

After Jesus gave His final words, he departed into heaven and the disciples returned to Jerusalem as the Lord had commanded. His disciples entered the upper room and waited for the promise of the Holy Spirit. In all, there were about one hundred and twenty person (Acts 1:15)

gathered together, however, this was only the *beginning* of what happened, as Acts 1:1 tell us, “...of all that Jesus **BEGAN** to do and teach.”

When the Holy Spirit arrived (Acts 2:2-13), indwelling and empowering the disciples, the wheels of the divine strategy began to turn.

Jesus had disciplined His followers and established the guidelines for the systematic expansion of the church – that of “*disciplemaking*” – and now, the presence of the Holy Spirit gave power to those who were obedient to the command – “*make disciples!*”

Peter got up to proclaim the Gospel to the assembled multitude – which included a great number of “*foreign*” Jews from throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 2:14-40). They responded to Peter’s message and about three thousand (3000) became believers in Christ.

BUT THIS IS ONLY THE *BEGINNING* OF THE STORY

Verses 41 through 47 are an important part of Acts 2, for here we see “***Discipling in operation.***” Note:

1. Evangelism is evidenced in verse 41 – 3000 people were saved
2. Beginning with verse 42 these 3000 began to be trained in the Apostles’ teaching – that is, Jesus’ teaching

Acts 2:42-47 reads as follows, “*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*”

These 3000 new converts were “*discipled*” by the 120 – They had fellowship, shared in the Lord’s Supper, prayed together and at meals together – (verse 46).

Remember most of these 3000 were from out of town, and remained in Jerusalem for a period of *discipling*! Many of these converts had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover. That is why they were in Jerusalem at that particular time. Because of this “*extended time*” involved, a great financial need arose in the new community of believers. Because so many “foreign” converts stayed on in Jerusalem during this ‘discipling period – it created a burden for the 120 disciples who had taken the new converts into their homes. (There would be the need to buy extra food and other essentials in order to support the added population.) It was this ‘unique situation’ that prompted the selling of property and possession until these believers could return home – (Acts 2:44-45).

As a result of the “*discipling ministries*” of those who were disciplined during these months, believers “*praised God, and had favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*” (verse 47).

THIS WAS “DISCIPLERMAKING”

The 120 had been “*disciplined*” – now they were sharing their faith with the lost – and personally “*discipling*” those who came to Christ. There were obeying Jesus’ imperative to “*make disciples!*” The tremendous growth of the Jerusalem Church was not attributed to the efforts of the “*apostles*” alone!

THERE IS AN IMPORTANT LESSON TO LEARN

The people – average citizens – were primarily responsible for this growth because they realized their personal responsibility to spread the Gospel through “*discipling*.”

To full understand Acts 2, read carefully Acts 6, verses 1 and 7. Verse 1 says, “*And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied.*” Then verse 7 says, “*And the Word of God increased . . . [kept spreading] . . . and the number of the disciples multiplied . . . [continued to increase] . . . in Jerusalem greatly.*”

Luke is describing the “*divine discipling plan*” as instituted by Jesus. He could have used any one of the several other words to refer to these believers, but, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he uses the word “*disciple*” as a direct indication that the early believers took the Great Commission seriously – they were “*discipling*.”

WITHOUT DISCIPLING THERE CAN BE NO DISCIPLES!

In chapter 9 (some two years later) we find Saul on the road to Damascus. Verse 1 says, “*And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest.*”

Then, you will notice that Saul is “*disciplined*” by one who had been “*disciplined*.” Verse 10 says, “*And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.*”

Ananias had been “*disciplined*” – now he was a “*discipler*.” He disciplined Saul (now known as Paul). Paul spends several days with the disciples in Damascus after his conversion – before departing to Arabia where he was personally instructed by the Lord for about two years (Galatians 1:15-17). – (Because of Paul’s position in the forming of the early church, he was personally disciplined by the Lord) – and became a “*discipler!*”

Paul returned to Damascus, and then to his home in Tarsus where he continued his “*discipling ministry*.” After five years Barnabas came to Tarsus, and then they both went to Antioch to “*make disciples*” there – Acts 11:26-30.

Acts 14:21-22 says, “*And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and **had made many disciples**, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*”

It is interesting to note that the Greek verb translated – “*had made many disciples*” here in this verse is the same root verb used by Jesus when He originally gave the Great Commission! Here – fifteen years after Jesus said, “*Make disciples* – the divine plan is still being carried out with such fidelity to the original command that the Holy Spirit directs Luke to use the aorist active participle of the verb “*to disciple*” in the only appearance of the word outside of the Great Commission itself!

Acts 14:25-28, states, “*And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.*”

When Paul arrived back in Antioch the local believers were still called “*disciples*.” Discipling others. Luke does not use this term loosely.

Acts 16:1-3 states, “*Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.*”

Paul wanted Timothy to go with him, to assist him in the ministry. He is going on his second ministry journey, and he is very selective about his partner (Acts 15:36-40). Timothy had already been “*discipled*” by his mother (2 Timothy 3:14-15). As a result of both Paul’s and Timothy’s discipling ministries the churches were increasing numerically. Acts 16:5 says, “*And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.*”

On Paul’s third missionary journey (more appropriately “*discipling journey*”), he continued to make disciples, and re-visited groups of disciples, making sure they also had become “*disciplers*.”

Acts 18:23 tells us, “*After he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.*”

Note, throughout this third journey, Luke uses the term “*disciples*,” in referring to believers – emphasizing the fact that these believers were obedient to Christ in being *disciplers* – they had been *discipled* and were continuing to “*win*” and “*disciple*” others in their respective communities.

When Paul had discipled a group of believers in every city he ministered in, he left them with the responsibility of advancing the Gospel in their own communities by discipling others – because Paul knew that the Great Commission was meant for every believer. Paul knew the

principle of “*discipling*” well, and reflects this knowledge in his instructions to his “*son*” in the ministry, Timothy.

{Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, “*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*”

THE EARLY BELIEVERS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS FOLLOWED DIRECTIONS – THEY WERE “*DISCIPLEMAKERS*”

The same explosion of the Gospel can happen today – **IF** – we will:

1. Seek for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and depend on God’s anointing,
and
2. simply ***MAKE DISCIPLES!***

“*Disciplemakers*” are the only people who are obedient to Christ’s Great Commission!

LESSON FOUR

THE MINISTRY OF DISCIPLESHIP

The word “*disciple*” is used well over 200 times in the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. Interestingly enough, it is **not** found in any of the remaining 22 books that make up the New Testament. Why is there such a drastic elimination of the word “*disciple*” beyond the first five books of the New Testament?

THE GOSPELS AND THE BOOK OF ACTS SHARE A COMMON FACTOR DISTINCT FROM THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION – AND – THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION SHARE A COMMON DENOMINATOR WHICH SETS THEM APART FROM THE GOSPELS AND THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Gospels and Acts are the record of “*kingdom expansion!*”

The Epistles and Revelation are written **to** (or **about**) churches already established and the ministry of the functioning *local body of believers*. The word “*disciple*” is an “*expansion-term*” that describes the process of taking the Gospel to the world. Disciples are those who proclaim the Gospel – and disciple others! Therefore, the expansion books – (the Gospels and the book of Acts) use the term “*disciple*” to describe believers. However, when local churches are addressed, they are referred to as “*brothers,*” or “*saints,*” because in these letters the problems of the body ministry are being dealt with and not *KINGDOM EXPANSION*.

So, the term “*disciple,*” reflecting Jesus command to “Go make disciples of all peoples” and the **process** of discipling, is a term used when the *kingdom expansion*” is being described throughout the Gospels and the book of Acts. However, when the context of “*Church*” prevails, as in the Epistles, the term “*disciple*” is absent.

The term “*disciple*” relates to the evangelization of the lost and the initial grounding of new converts in the faith prior to their ability to function as members of a local body of believers.

The message to the “*Church*” – (believes who are brothers and saints) – is the exercise of spiritual gifts for the building up of the Body of Christ. However, to the lost, believers are “*disciples*” who carry out discipling as witnesses of Christ, proclaiming the Gospel to the unsaved and training new disciples in the Word until they are able to make disciples and function as effective members of the local church.

This is the pattern of Acts: – Discipling guides the spiritual development of believes until such time that they are able to be integrated into a local body; when an adequate level of maturity is reached elders (church leaders) are appointed to give spiritual guidance to the functioning body.

Acts 14:21-23 says, “*And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, and encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they believed.*”

Paul writes to the young pastor, Titus and says, “*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order the things that remain, and appoint elders in every city, as I had appointed you*” (Titus1:5).

When discipling was completed, and the believers in a given city were spiritually mature enough to function as a unified body, leaders were then appointed and the new church was “*commanded to the Lord*” as an autonomous, independent, self-sufficient body!

SO WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISCIPLEMAKING – AND – THE LOCAL CHURCH?

It is this:

- Disciplemaking is the responsibility of the believer, Individually;
- The local church is comprised of believers collectively
united for the purpose of Body ministry!

While each believer has spiritual gifts to exercise in relationship to a local body of believers – (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4) – “*discipling*” is not a gift, neither is it an option!

Disciplemaking is the individual responsibility of every believer to proclaim the Gospel and to train those won to Christ is the essential principles of the Christian life.

Believers have a two-way ministry:

1. In the direction of the world, and
2. in the direction of the Church

Now notice carefully – **THIS IS IMPORTANT!**

The essence of the local church is “*fellowship*” Discipling must be accomplished by individual believers as they personally encounter unbelievers in the world.

- ***Fellowship*** occurs when the Church is gathered.
- ***Discipling*** occurs when the church is dispersed into the world by the circumstances of daily living – Jesus commanded, “*as ye go, make disciples!*”

The purpose of discipling is not just to increase the church *numerically*, but to provide the local church with “*spiritually able*” Body members.

DISCIPLING IS PARENTING

New believers were not just “stuffed into the local church” and expected to grow in the faith. No, as an infant must be carefully superintended until a certain level of maturity is reached, so new converts were personally disciplined until he could relate to the local body in a meaningful and significant manner.

→ **Unless God’s divine plan for discipling is comprehended and pursued, churches will continue to be filled with spiritual infants who are incapable of impacting the world for Christ – individually or collectively!**

IT IS TRAGIC THAT MOST BELIEVERS TODAY HAVE ABANDONED THE GREAT COMMISSION AND ARE NOT MAKING DISCIPLES!

Jesus made disciples! He established the divine methodology and strategy, “*discipleship*” Jesus gave the Great Commission, commanding His disciples to carry on the work of discipling, as ***the primary task*** of the Church. When the age of the indwelling Spirit dawned at Pentecost, the early believers were set in motion, fulfilling, with a precise zeal, the imperative of Jesus.

- But, what of the succeeding generations of Christians?
- How long did the Church continue to follow her orders to make disciples?

The answer to these questions is a sad one indeed – because the history of early church development reveals a steady decline of discipling until, finally, no substantive evidence can be found of its existence, at least in written records, beyond the first century.

Certainly Christianity experienced remarkable growth unto about 300 A.D. and even became the state religion of the Roman Empire by the virtue of the edict of Constantine in the year 315 A.D. – which proved to be disastrous! But this disappearance of “*discipling*” by the end of the third century must **NOT** be taken as evidence of a demise of God’s divine plan.

Discipling had been in the process of abandonment for two centuries, which attests to its dynamic nature – discipling, even partially applied, was successful enough to overspread the entire Empire within a relative short period of time.

Nevertheless, to the degree that discipling was abandoned – to that degree – the Great Commission failed to be carried out!

DISCIPLING ***IS*** THE COMMISSION

What brought about the decline and eventual disappearance of discipling? There are several facts involved:

1. HUMAN NATURE

Human nature is opposed to discipling. This is so because the fundamental essence of discipling is intimacy. Discipling means that one must get personally involved in the lives of those being disciplined.

Relationships must be developed, but relationships mean *vulnerability* and it is the nature of the human species to seek that which offers the least possibility of injury. Humanness desires comfort, protection, and most of all, convenience. The Church began to turn away from discipling for the same reason that most believers today refuse to return to it – ***the cost is high!***

Whenever the old nature dominates, discipling is not practiced, but shunned. Discipling necessitates personal responsibility and sacrifice. The Church, in time, began to give in to the inward pressures to conform to the old nature, choosing comfort over commitment, protection over personal involvement, and convenience over command!

2. “CLERGY” VERSES “LAITY”

The Church began to recognize a division between “clergy” and “laity,” a distinction foreign to the first century church. This was a devastating blow to the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

TRAGICALLY, SATANIC INFLUENCES BEGAN TO EAT AWAY AT THIS VIRALITY

The one thing, aside from the divine power of the Holy Spirit, that made God’s plan of the Great Commission such a sweeping success was the *every disciple was a “witness”* – they were all propagandists! It was right here that Satan struck his blow! The first thing Satan did was so to over-emphasize the distinctions in the divinely appointed division of “offices within the Church” – and to finally get an entirely equal witnessing brotherhood divided into **two companies** – with a great majority in one, and a small minority in the other. The small company came to be called “clergy” – and the large company “laity.” And then Satan worked the witnessing out of the hands of the “laity” until it was finally regarded as the exclusive right of the “clergy.”

Once the concept of the personal involvement of **all** believers in discipling had been eroded away – the ministry of the Church began to slip from the grip of “everyday” people. Eventually, not only was the missionary imperative lost, but also the body ministry crumbled beneath the feet of men clothed in ecclesiastical garbs.

The only logical conclusion was – “*Someone else will do it!*”

Relationship gave way to religion vertically and horizontally!

3. INSTITUTIONALISM

The inevitable consequence of the first two factors, institutionalism, like an icy rigor mortis, crept over the church with rigid formality and traditionalism. Grandiose cathedrals, like ornate tombs, housed what remained of a once vibrant and glorious movement of the Spirit of God – and the Dark Ages was the result!

This was a most terrific blow Satan ever dealt the Church, and one from which she has never fully recovered. It has stunned the Church – and all but killed her.

Although the Reformation gave some promise of returning health and vigor, yet the recovery of her normal functions was only partial, and she is today slowly but surely losing out to the powers of darkness.

The fact is that there are multitudes in the Church today who are still living in the “*Dark Ages*,” at least so far as obedience to the Great Commission is concerned.

It is time for us to come out of the “*Dark Ages*” and determine to fulfill the Great Commission in our own life – no matter what everyone else is – (or isn’t) doing!

There is no optional course for our life. Any detours at this point will lead us away from God’s plan for our life
– “***MAKE DISCIPLES!***”

LESSON FIVE

THE REAL BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH

The command Jesus gave in Matthew 28:19-20 to “*make disciples*” was a perpetual one. ***Every believer***, throughout the entire Church age, is personally responsible for it. Because the Great Commission applies to every Christian in every era and every culture, it was (and *is*) necessary for the methodology and strategy of the Commission to be universally applicable!

TO MAKE DISCIPLES IS THE GREAT COMMISSION!

This is a divine imperative! Not only is the Commission itself of divine origin, but also its inherent methodology and strategy are of divine design! God’s great plan of discipling is the only Scripture-sanctioned means of reaching our entire planet with the Gospel message.

As the *only* divinely-authorized plan for the spread of the Gospel, “*discipling*” is a universally relevant and timeless principle! When Biblical discipling is employed, the result is always the same – an explosion of the Gospel concentrically expanding into the world. Discipling works! It always works! Properly applied, the principle of discipling fulfills the expectations of the Great Commission powerfully and precisely
– and well it should – it ***is*** the commission!

Before we study the reasons for the universal relevancy of “*discipling*,” I believe that an examination of other “*methods*” of the propagation of the Gospel will enhance the dramatic superiority of discipling over these other methods.

1. MASS EVANGELISM

There, of course, is Biblical precedent for *mass evangelism*, but one must remember that evangelism alone is only “*phase-one*” of the Great Commission!

Evangelism, that is, presenting the Gospel to the lost, giving them opportunity to respond to Jesus Christ, in order to meet the requirements of the Commission, **must be followed by a period of training** – (personally disciplined by a discipler).

“*Evangelism*,” without discipling is a dead-end street, as far as the Great Commission is concerned.

New believers must be transformed into disciplers so that the Gospel continues to be proclaimed beyond the “*church building*.”

True, evangelism is better than nothing, but why settle for anything less than what Jesus commanded?

2. CHURCH SERVICES

Church services are a *great tool* in winning the lost to Christ. It is true that many who make professions of faith in Christ come through the services of the church.

Many churches realize most of their growth through the services of the church and, therefore draw the conclusion that an effective plan for growth is through these services of the church. **This is a subtle and convenient way to avoid the major issue!**

Panning For Gold Downstream

Let’s suppose a prospector discovers a stream from which, to his delight, he is able to pan an ounce of gold a day. However, a mile upstream, unknown to him, lies the source of the tiny nuggets. Up there is a hill so laden with gold that whenever it rains, thousands of gold particles are washed down into his little stream. The hill contains so much gold that one shovel full would yield for him a hundred times more gold than a week of panning in his small stream. But, the prospector concludes, “*If such a small, narrow stream produces an ounce a day, just think what a large, wider stream would do!*” So the prospector buys a dredge and proceeds to make a bigger stream! Having made the stream bigger, he discovers, happily, that now he is able to pan two ounces of gold per day – but the hill of gold remains unnoticed to the prospector who spends countless hours picking tiny gold flakes from the sand and mud.

**IF EVERY CHURCH MEMBER WOULD BE OBEDIENT
TO THE GREAT COMMISSION AS A “DISCIPLEMAKE”
CHURCH GROWTH CERTAINLY WOULD BE
MORE HIGHLY ACCELERATED!**

Don’t make the stream larger, just go where the gold is!

Why wait for the unsaved to “*filter*” through the church services as the primary means of reaching people for Christ? Why not train every member as a discipler who will win and disciple others as a daily responsibility?

"Discipling" as compared with all other concepts, is divinely superior!

Anything less than fully implemented discipling, is *sub-Biblical* and therefore, inadequate to fulfill the Great Commission. No other method of spreading the Gospel is universally applicable. Discipling is relevant to every life-context. Discipling requires no special place – no meeting house – no advertisement – no special organization – and no special programs.

There is only one situation where discipling is not relevant – a lone person shipwrecked on a desert island – a prisoner in solitary confinement – or – a hermit who completely avoids people! Discipling cannot take place in the context of one! But where there are *"people"* – the divine plan of discipling can be put into action!

Discipling can be employed in any culture – and – always with *maximum results!* This was Paul's strategy! Paul did not plant missions, he made churches comprised of nationals whom he (or his team) personally *"discipled!"* When a group of believers was properly disciplined, he appointed elders from among them and left them to carry out the work of the Kingdom on their own – under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because they were properly disciplined, these believers became *"disciplers"* to their communities and brothers in the local church body.

"Disciplemaking" fulfills the Great Commission – in the city – in the country – in the suburbs – and in the ghettos! Whether it is in a primitive African village – or – and in a technological society, discipling will work! It works for adults and young people – doctors and plumbers, carpenters and teachers, homemakers and salespersons – it will work! Discipling is viable in peacetime or war, under democracy or communism, in wealth or poverty!

DISCIPLEMAKING IS THE UNIVERSALLY APPLICABLE MEANS OF SPREADING THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL OF JESUS' SAVING POWER!

Water Baptism is the first step of obedience for every believer. It is the outward expression of our trust in Christ's death and resurrection as the means of our salvation. It is an outward expression of *"Sonship!"* Who would think of ignoring Water Baptism as unimportant? Yet, the Great Commission provision for training disciples is almost wholly ignored by many.

The discipling process demands, not only the *"baptizing"* of new believers, but also their training as disciples, until they become disciplers themselves.

It is wonderful that we have such a divinely powerful universally applicable plan for spreading the Good News and for providing a solid foundation for the growth of the Church individually and corporately, and yet, tragically, *it remains virtually untouched!*

DISCIPLEMAKING WILL WORK!

1. There is no place on earth where discipling will not work, no society in which the methodology and strategy of discipling cannot be effectively applied!
2. Christ gave this Great Commission – and *"discipling"* as the vehicle to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth – to every culture and every level of society.

Therefore, the Church (every born-again believer) is directly responsible for making disciples of all peoples – in this day and age – as much as the Church of the first century was responsible for their generation!

THE CHURCH MUST RELATE TO ITS “TWO-FOLD” RESPONSIBILITY

1. To the world as “*disciples*” – and
2. To the body as “*brothers.*”

Question: “*Why is it such an extremely difficult task to interest the Church in the responsibility of ‘disciplemaking?’*”

Answer: “*For the same reasons that the early church eventually lost it!*”

HUMAN NATURE DISLIKES THE THOUGHT OF IT!

Disciplemaking lies generally outside our comfort zone. Whenever we are called upon to press beyond ourselves into relationship which demand levels of vulnerability exceeding routine “*normalcy,*” we have an innate tendency to shrink back into our protective personal spaces.

This phenomenon is complicated in our society by an excessive emphasis upon leisure times. Coupled with poor time management, which plagues the majority of people, these factors combine to struggle against disciplemaking which, by nature, requires the pouring of one’s life into another, a process demanding both interpersonal involvement – and quality time.

Unfortunately, most churches have molded and structured themselves to fit the mid-set of convenience and comfort. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with *convenience* and *comfort!* Of course, there is nothing wrong with an attractive and hopefully functional church plant. There is nothing wrong with making services and program conveniently accessible to the members and friends of the church.

The problem arises when a church fails to emphasize the other half of believer’s responsibilities – that is, to the world!

The church must constantly guard against becoming so corporately self-oriented that it measures its success on how many activities can be conceived to get its people involved – precluding members from developing their own personal disciplemaking ministries to those in their world.

Life is time – and a life of time spent behind the four walls of a church building can only mean death to those in the world outside who are without Christ.

Churches spend mountains of time, energy, words, and money getting people to “*come in.*” Then, ironically, turn around and spend more time, energy, words, and money to bring someone in to motivate the people to “*go out.*” God help us to learn the Biblical concept of disciplemaking, and begin to do it God’s way!

This is not to imply that “*meeting together*” doesn’t require depth and vulnerability – it does – if it is done for the proper reasons – (Ephesians 4:11-12 and Hebrews 10:24-25).

But it must be emphasized that, while “*assembling together*” has never passed out of vogue – “*disciplemaking*” has all but vanished! Even the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-21) met together – but they turned inward upon themselves and became “*lukewarm*.” The Ephesians church, great as it was, lost the first love (Revelation 2:4) which Jesus proclaimed, and which was the foundation of the Great Commission.

If any local body of believers is comprised of individuals who, in their personal lives, are not pouring themselves into others who have come to Christ as a result of their witness – then that church – no matter how “*thriving*” it may appear to be outwardly – is in a precarious position indeed.

My prayer is: “*God enable us to defy centuries of tradition (subtle humanism) and adopt the two-fold ministry You gave to us in the New Testament; (1) to the world, and (2) to the church body – not as an option, but as a divine imperative!*”

God help us to face the reality that the edifice constructed by the church over the centuries – its buildings – liturgies – modes of worship – programs – boards – societies – auxiliaries – unions – conventions – synods – or conferences – are **NOT** the essence of the Christian life – nor a sign of it!

The time could very well come, and it may not be too far away, when, as a result of bombs or persecution, the tides of the world will dash all of these things to pieces. Then what will remain amidst the rubble of church-spires, pews, and Sunday School quarterlies? Only the essence of *Christian living* will survive, and that is the two-fold essence God gave the church, – Matthew 28:18-20 and Hebrews 10:24-25 – neither of which requires the frills of formality. They demand only the very basic life of the believer – which is Christ Jesus (Galatians 2:20).

Francis Sheafter said in his book – CHURCH AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY

“A revolution is coming and is here. If we don’t have the courage in Jesus Christ to take a chance of getting kicked out of our churches and being ostracized today, what are we going to do when the revolution comes in force? If we don’t have the courage to open our homes and begin to enter these things into the churches, slowly begin to make the changes that can be brought within the forms of the policy of the New Testament, then don’t be concerned about having courage when the pressures comes.”

Some changes must be made if the desires of the Lord are to be carried out in disciple-making and in Body ministry. These must be brought back in line with Scriptural norms – revived as essential in the life of each individual believer.

The Gospel will never begin to explode into the community – and into the world – until the Great Commission strategy is re-established in the lives of believers – like you and me!

For this to happen, attitudes of complacency, convenience, and comfort must be shattered. To ignore this issue is to invite the discipling hand of the master – Revelation 2:5 warns, “*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*” Revelation 3:19 says, “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*”

LESSON SIX

**WHAT IS THE “METHOD”
– AND –
WHAT IS THE “STRATEGY”
OF DISCIPLEMAKING?**

Jesus ministered to the *multitudes*! He preached to hundreds, even thousands, but His “**master strategy**” for spreading the Gospel throughout the world involved the special training of twelve *specifically chosen men*!

Jesus’ own “divine strategy” for reaching the world with the Gospel was . . .

THE PRINCIPLE OF DISCIPLESHIP!

In our study of discipleship, I want to now take a close look at this “DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE” and discover its exciting application to our lives as believers in Christ Jesus. Let’s look again at the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

First, notice that Jesus gives this command to “make disciples” on the basis of His absolute authority. His LORDSHIP compels us to seek out, and “*make disciples*” of others. Later, just before His ascension, Jesus re-emphasized the Commission to “*make disciples*.”

Acts 1:8, “... but you shall received power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

The order of the movement of the Gospel into the world is significant:

JERUSALEM → ALL JUDEA → THEN SAMARIA → THEN THE WORLD

Jesus’ plan for reaching the world . . . (this plan of “discipleship”) . . . is a systematic, strategic combination of saturation and outward momentum! This simply means that when His “**Master Strategy**” is followed correctly, the movement of the Gospel explodes outwardly from the point of concentration. When the Gospel had effectively saturated Jerusalem, its natural and ever-widening influence moved outward through Judea and Samaria and ultimately into every part of the world.

How does all this apply to you and me? – We must be disciples!

We must become committed to follow God's Divine Plan. If the Gospel is not exploding from a concentration point involving our lives, then we need to discover why Jesus' *only* official commission for believers is not being fulfilled through us.

If Satan can keep us believing that good fellowship, singing, banquets, activities, and programs are somehow carrying out the Great Commission, then he is happy!

ONLY DISCIPLEMAKING FULFILLS THE GREAT COMMISSION!

We have now come to the "*meat*" of this study on Discipleship –

Jesus' METHODOLOGY!

Let's study Jesus' methodology of discipleship, point by point, applying these factors to our present day life. As in everything Jesus taught, He provides Himself as the prime example for the "*Principles of Discipleship*." Let's see how Jesus demonstrates His discipleship *methodology* through His ministry to the twelve.

Disciplemaking is not a haphazard business. On the contrary, the process of discipling one or several individuals has a Biblical methodology just for that purpose!

The "Divine-Design" for disciplemaking is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has provided, by personal example, the formula necessary for the proper development of disciples. As we examine the discipling ministry of Jesus, several elements come to light. In His relationship to the twelve, Jesus utilized at least *ten factors* that, together, form His divine "*methodology*."

The first factor:

EVANGELISM

From the outset of Jesus' ministry, many "*followed*" Him. Thousands of people flocked to hear Jesus of Nazareth speak. Jesus did not neglect the masses. However, when it came to the task of taking the Gospel to the world, Jesus did not appeal to the great throngs of people who followed Him about – *Jesus concentrated His discipling efforts on the lives of a mere handful of men!*

Luke 6:12-13 tells us, "*And it came to pass in those days, that He [Jesus] went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.*"

Jesus prayed earnestly about those who would be His disciples – **NOT** just those who "*thronged to Him*" – but men who would undergo the kind of training necessary for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

The men Jesus chose were not necessarily the most intelligent, the best educated, or the most finely cultured, but, whatever they were, they possessed a common characteristic – they were will to follow Jesus!

WHY ONLY A SELECT FEW?

Why not start with a hundred – or a thousand? Because Jesus was not interested in attracting a crowd, He was, by Divine plan, initiating a – *Great Movement!* Jesus knew the dynamics of human nature. He was aware of the fact that a large number would prevent the establishment of a proper “high-yield” environment for learning. Jesus wanted to produce an explosion of the Gospel into the world – *and explosions occur only when the conditions are right!* By concentrating on a small group, Jesus was able to control the reaction, making sure that it took on the right form and the proper direction at the correct time.

The effective outward movement of the Gospel begins by concentrating discipleship efforts in the lives of a few willing people. Selecting those to be discipled must be done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Christian disciplemaker must be sensitive to the Lord’s direction in sharing the Gospel.

In witnessing, what we are actually doing is allowing Jesus, through our lives, to call men and women to Himself

Those who are willing to follow Jesus Christ, to receive Him as their Savior, as a result of one’s personal witness are to be discipled *immediately*. The moment that a person trusts Christ and chooses to follow Him, discipling must begin under the “*parentship*” of the one who led him to Christ.

When “*spiritual babes*” are left alone for a time, the diseases of *disinterest* and *waning desire* set in, possibly initiating a life-long pattern of carnality and marginal Christian living.

The Greek word from which our word “*evangelism*” is derived means “*to bring . . . [or announce] . . . Good News,*” or “*to proclaim the Gospel.*” In the early days of the Church, while disciplmaking was still carrying out the fulfillment of the Great Commission, every believer became a proclaimer of the Good News.

Acts 8:1 tells us, “*And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.*” Note verse 4, “*Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the Word – [That is, proclaiming the Good News]”*

Who were the “*they*” that was scattered throughout all the regions, proclaiming the Good News? “*It must have been the Apostles,*” I hear you say? No, it was **NOT** the apostles! We didn’t finish reading verse 1. Let’s look at it again and note the last three words this time. It says, “*they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria – ‘except the apostles!’*” The “*apostles*” stayed in Jerusalem. It was “*discipled-believers*” who were scattered throughout the regions and who were proclaiming the Good News!

Those early believers were proclaiming the Gospel and they were “*making disciples.*” Evangelism is – *bringing the Good News of Life in Christ to those who are lost!*

Is it fair to say that the average Christian today is not involved in evangelism? Statistics tell us that the vast majority of Christians *never lead anyone to Christ – ever!*

Many reasons can be given for this very negative fact. But among all the reasons that could be given – one stands out as the bottom line –

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THE FAILURE TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL  
IS DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO  
THE FAILURE TO PROPERLY DISCIPLE BELIEVERS

Every believer who is *discipled*, and becomes a *discipler*, will do the task of evangelism. A discipler is sensitive to evangelistic opportunities in daily living because he sees as a way of life that calling of men and women to follow Jesus Christ.

The discipler, *properly discipled*, has been taught from the day he was received into Christ via a total-life commitment (of faith) – the no-option nature of “*disciplemaking*.” And precisely here is a big problem in today’s evangelism. Being a discipler is not optional! One not involved in disciplemaking is living outside God’s will by way of disobedience of Jesus’ most fervent command – “*make disciples!*”

The new believer must be discipled from “*day one*.” The new believer’s concept and perception of the Christian life must be formulated according to New Testament standards, not according to the watered-down versions of Christianity extant in the world today. “*Present-day Christians*” will never begin to evangelize until they are taken back to square one and properly discipled in the truth of the Word concerning their responsibility, as followers of Christ, to fulfill the Great Commission in the first person singular.

**EVANGELISM**, isolated from **DISCIPLEMAKING**,  
– perpetuates the near-extinction of “**PERSONAL EVANGELISM!**”

The Great Commission is “*to make disciples*,” not merely “*evangelize*.” Evangelism is only the **FIRST FACTOR** in the fulfillment of Jesus’ imperative. The evangelism factor is lost if the other factors of personal discipling are not carried out to the fullest! The Great Commission is the mechanism for reaching the world with the Gospel, and evangelism is the ***cutting edge of the arrow***. Without the support of ***the shaft*** (discipling) the point fails to reach the mark. The “*ministry of the local body*” can be portrayed as the ***guide-feathers of the arrow*** that serve to stabilize its direction.



Disciplemaking is the most fundamental principle in the expansion of the Church  
– not evangelism alone!

## **THE EVANGELISM FACTOR MUST BE APPLIED TODAY IN THE SAME WAY IT WAS APPLIED IN THE 1<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

It was simply applied *through the daily life of every believer!* There was no “*slick techniques,*” not even a course on “*personal evangelism.*”

- Isn't it true that most people just don't know how to share their faith and don't do it because of the “fear of embarrassing themselves?”

### **HOW DID THE FIRST CHRISTIANS LEARN TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL?**

First, we must understand, that discipling means approaching the Christian life on a “*no-option*” basis.

In the early expansion of the Church, when the Great Commission was literally being followed, if one was not willing to “*take up his cross*” in discipleship, which included total surrender to the Lordship of Christ and the willingness to be discipled in all aspects of the faith, – *he was not following Christ!*

### **Taking up one's cross means, self-death and absolute commitment!**

When one accepted Jesus as their Savior by faith, it meant repentance and turning from their former life and becoming obedient to Christ.

The Greek word, translated “*believe*” in our Bibles, denotes entering into a personal union with Christ, therefore, submitting to His commands and desires.

When one accepted Christ in the first century, they were called “*Those of the Way,*” because, when confronted with the claims of Christ, there was a radical commitment that included becoming a “*disciple,*” that is, one who would bear the Good News to unbelievers and who would disciple those entering into Christ through faith!

In the first century, a Christian was a “*proclaimer of the Gospel.*” Those who followed Christ knew that if they did, they too would become “*proclaimers,*” even though it meant there would be a very good chance that, in the process, their physical lives would be terminated by persecution.

Today, Christianity is generally offered as a basic fire insurance policy with a number of options to be selected at the recipient's convenience!

There seems to be no “*counting the cost*” – no explanation of the demands of discipleship, hence no discipling!

**One of the most outstanding characteristics of the *normal*  
Christian life of the first century Christian was  
“*discipling*”**

New Testament “*evangelism*” can only be re-introduced through bold application of disciplinemaking methodology and strategy by believers who are willing to fulfill the Great Commission in their own lives!

## Discipling CAN begin with one!

The road may be hard and long, but the result will be the salvation of men and women who will otherwise be passed over as believers pursue more comfortable and convenient enterprises.

YOU are called upon to share the Gospel with those who fall within the context of your life – whoever you meet in the course of daily living.

### YOU ARE CHRIST’S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE!

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 teaches, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*”

HOW ARE YOU TO SHARE? —————▶ **IN LOVE!**

We share the Gospel because the love of Christ within us compels us to reach out to those who so desperately need Him.

WHAT DO WE SHARE? —————▶ **THE GOSPEL**

The “*Gospel*” is the Good News of what Jesus Christ has accomplished for mankind.

### WHAT IS THE GOSPEL OF GOOD NEWS?

1. God loves them and desires to enter into a personal relationship with them (John 3:16) and that’s why they were created (Genesis 1:27).
2. But all people have sinned (Romans 3:23) and are, therefore, separated from God [*spiritual death*] (Romans 6:23) and cannot enter into a right relationship with God based on their own efforts or merits (Ephesians 2:8-9).
3. Yet God still loves them, and provided the way, His Way, for them to be forgiven of all their sins through the death of Jesus Christ, His Son (God in human form), on the Cross (Romans 6:23 and 5:8), and to receive eternal life by Jesus’ resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).
4. Only by receiving Christ (John 14:6 and 1:12) through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 10:9-10) can they experience a right relationship with God; this must be done personally by opening up the door of their lives to Christ (Revelation 3:20), following Him with unreserved commitment (Matthew 16:24-25).

5. God's Word, the Bible, promises eternal life to all who have received Christ through faith (1 John 5:11-13), and they can receive Him now if they truly desire to follow Him (2 Cor9inthians 6:2). They can express the true desire of their life to God through prayer and He will not turn them away (Romans 10:13).

Once these things have been shared in love, people must be encouraged to give their lives to Christ – before it is too late. When one receives Christ, they must be *DISCIPLED!*

## LESSON SEVEN

The first factor of discipling, as we saw in our last lesson, is “*EVANGELISM.*” However, evangelism alone is not able to fulfill the Great Commission. There are several other factors that must be met in order for Jesus’ imperative to be satisfied.

Once one has received Christ, a period of discipling must begin. This discipling period, through which the new believer is trained in the basics of the Christian walk, should include the same kinds of things Jesus did in making disciples.

There are none more facts of discipleship to be followed beyond evangelism.

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Factor 2:

PROXIMITY

One of the most important things that Jesus did for the twelve was to allow them close proximity to Himself. Jesus did not call weekly meetings or schedule convenient times to meet. What He did do is very significant to the whole process of discipling: They were with Him.

Luke 8:1 says, “*And it came to pass soon afterwards, that He [Jesus] went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and with Him the twelve.*” Mark 3:14 adds, “*And He [Jesus] appointed twelve, that they might be with Him.*”

Jesus, the Master Discippler, made certain that the disciples were able to view and experience His life on a daily basis. They watch Him eat. They watched Him deal with people. They watched how He reacted to frustrating situations. They watched Him minister, pray and teach. And, whether they consciously realized it or not, the twelve were learning a great number of things as a result of simply being around Jesus.

Jesus – through this principle of discipling by example and teaching – was stressing the importance of “*being*” as the basis of “*doing*.” This close personal contact provided the disciples with a picture of the continuity and harmonious orchestration of the particulars of Jesus’ life. No matter what the tone of the environment – serious or light; tense or relaxed; joyful or sorrowful – any type of situation at hand – the twelve experienced the stability of Jesus’ life. ***They saw what He was!***

When discipling others – the discipler must be visible and accessible. The disciples must see more than the “spiritual” side of the discipler. They must experience a demonstration of the

discipler's spirituality in as many different contexts as possible. Life is not lived in a church building – nor in someone's living room.

An effective movement of the Gospel requires that disciples gain a first hand view of the discipler's ability to apply Christianity in the real world. This demonstrates that the discipler IS what he teaches!

A chief requirement of proximity is time – **QUALITY TIME!**

For the discipler to do an adequate job of training disciples – he must be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to be with them – not only for teaching – but also for them to see him as he encounters various aspects of life – decision-making – joy – stress – morality ethics – family life – prayer – evangelism – etc.

Those being “*discipled*” need to experience the Christianity of their “*discipler*” in the broad spectrum of REAL LIFE! This subjects the discipler to a great deal of *vulnerability*. This, however, is not an unjust pressure on the discipler. It simply requires that he live what he teaches.

DISCIPLIEMAKING LEAVES NO ROOM FOR HYPOGRISY!

In an age when the phrase, “*There isn't enough time to do what has to be done, much less what one wants to do,*” how can enough time to found in order to pour one's life into others?

Charles Swindoll speaks to this issue in “***Killing Giants and Pulling Thorns***” “*Step aside and sit down. Let your mother idle down for a minute and think for a change. Think about your pace and your business. How did you get rapped in that squirrel cage? What is it down inside your boiler room that keeps pouring the coal on your fire? Caught your breath yet? Take a glance back over your shoulder, say, three or four months. Could you list anything significant accomplished? How about feelings of fulfillment – very many? Probably not, if you're honest. Busyness rapes relationships. It substitutes shallow frenzy for deep friendship. It promises satisfying dreams but delivers hollow nightmares. It feeds the ego but starves the inner man. It fills the calendar but fractures a family. It cultivates a program but plows under priorities.*

*Many a church boasts about its active program: ‘Something every night of the week for everybody.’ What a shame! With good intentions the local assembly can create the very atmosphere it was designed to curb. **Want to change? Here's How: First, admit it. You are too busy! Second, stop it! Starting today, refuse every possible activity which isn't absolutely necessary. Third, maintain it!”***

If we are going to fulfill Christ's Great Commission and be “*Disciplmakers*” – then we must bring into check our superficial busyness – and – only then, will we find ample time for family, church, business, and – “**DISCIPLIEMAKING.**”

It is a matter of setting priorities – and it is not just a matter for individuals to employ – churches that desire to help members become involved in fulfilling the Great Commission must re-evaluate their priorities. Church members must be freed to pursue individual ministries to the world.

I cannot emphasize this enough

– We must change our ministry from: “Come and get it” – to – “Go and share it!”

If “*Disciplemaking*” is to be re-established, there must be ample time for the **PROXIMITY FACTOR** to take effect. For disciples to see only the “*sacred side*” of the discipler is to give them a distorted view of reality and to set them up for serious disappointments and disillusionment. The disciple’s proximity to the actual life of the discipler is a critical part of the discipleship process – **and that takes time!**

Factor 3:

FRIENDSHIP

Jesus’ relationship with the twelve went beyond that of teacher/pupil. He was their “*friend*.” Jesus said in John 15:15, “*No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you.*”

Jesus was concerned not only with their education, but also with their personal problems. They knew they could count on Him when they had no one else to turn to.

Jesus socialized with His disciples, they laughed and cried together – they were friends!

Those being disciplined must be able to sense true friendship in their relationship to the discipler. A sense of acceptance is important to the overall discipler-making process. The failure to allow the development of friendships seriously hampers the effectiveness of discipleship by undermining the aspects of mutual trust and intimacy that are crucial to the discipling process.

Friendship involves several things – but possibly the two most important ingredients in friendships are – **TRUST AND LOVE!**

Trust between friends is developed as the relational knowledge of each individual grows. “*Knowing*” leads to trusting. This, however, is a most difficult thing in the context of discipler-making – Because . . .



How can a discipler experience this kind of relationship with each disciple, especially when the discipler is working with a larger group of say, several people? Is the discipler to entrust himself to every person he trains?

No, not exactly!

What must occur is the area of trust is the confidence of the *disciples* to their discipler. The disciples must be able to trust their leader, know that he or she is a person of their word, that they are honest, and that their leadership is worthy of their fellowship. The disciplemaker may not implicitly trust every disciple. There may be much spiritual growth to be had before some of the disciples themselves are trustworthy. However, each disciple must sense that his or her discipler is trustworthy!

Love is a powerful agent!

If a would-be discipler does not have love, he will fail at the task of making disciples. The very love of God, born through the believer by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22) is the motivation for the discipler's work. One will have no desire to make disciples if love is not found within.

Remember, Jesus' disciples were not altogether a "lovable" lot! Yet, because of Christ's great love for them, responded to Him. He knew what they *could* become. He saw their potential!

This is precisely the kind of love a disciplemaker must have for those he trains. Paul's tremendous passage describing this "agape" love is highly instructive for the discipler:

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." (1 Corinthians 13:2-8)

Through friendship, you are able to communicate Christ-likeness. After all, every disciplemaker is but an imitator of the Master Discipler.

Factor 4:

EXAMPLE

While this principle may be similar to that of "proximity," and requires it, the emphasis here is on "**DOING**," which is the result of "**BEING**!"

Jesus said in John 13:15, "For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you." Jesus did not teach in word only! He was never one to give orders without first providing Himself as an example.

A notable instance of this is Jesus' teaching on prayer. He stimulated the disciples' interest by fervently praying Himself. Then, when His disciples witnessed His praying, they requested, "*teach us to pray*" (Luke 11:1-14).

Jesus, at every turn, provided a personal example of "*How to.*" And these were not examples of a *secondary* nature – they were examples woven into the fabric of everyday living. Jesus' examples were not merely simulated for the purpose of instruction – they were the reality of His life.

THE DISCIPLER MUST PROVIDE PERSONAL EXAMPLES OF WHAT IS BEING TAUGHT TO THE DISCIPLES!

If there is a task or an activity that is better done according to a pattern, then a model will give impetus to the learning process. Examples (models) should, ideally, be actual situations and not something that is "*staged.*" Disciples need to see how the variables of real life affect systematic approaches to ministry activities and personal disciplines.

The ministry of a discipler cannot be all "*talk*" – ***Talk is easy!*** It is one thing to speak about the truths of Christian living – it is another things, altogether, to live those truths.

Disciples may become discouraged or disheartened if all they acquire from their discipler is "*theory.*" They must be convinced that these principles of abundant living are actually ***livable!***

The discipler must demonstrate that the power of God to transform lives is a practical reality and not merely the stuff of clichés and hackneyed phrases!

This takes time – And, again, our society seems to tie one's hands. Neither the discipler, nor the disciples, appear to have the time necessary to devote to such pursuits. But here is the beauty of discipling . . .

DISCIPLEMAKING IS *DONE* AS YOU "GO!"

This strongly implies that the strategy of discipling is primarily aimed at one's peers, one's colleagues. The field of harvest for any person is one's own sphere of activity. One need not make (or plan) special trips outside of an established life-context in order to fulfill the Great Commission. On the contrary, the Great Commission makes the believer a missionary in his own world.

Therefore, when you, as a discipler, proclaim the Gospel, it is in your own situation – within a familiar environment. When this results in the salvation of one or more persons, you will use the same environment as the discipling ground – with the common experiences of that environment as examples of the Christian faith in action.

Of course, this whole factor of *example* requires that you literally possess a life transformed by the Holy Spirit. The mediocre spiritual lifestyle displayed by many believers will not meet the demands of discipleship. Without the proper model – you cannot disciple others.

Factor 5:

COMMITMENT

The level of commitment required to be a disciple of Jesus was high.

Listen to Matthew 16:24-25, *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.”*

John 6:53-66, *“Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven: not as the fathers ate, and died; he that eateth this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? But Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at this, said unto them, Doth this cause you to stumble? What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who it was that should betray him. And he said, For this cause have I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father. Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”*

Jesus made each disciple count the cost. He required obedience and discipline. He rebuked them when they acted according to selfish motivation (Matthew 16:21-23). When a great number of His followers were not willing to meet Jesus’ demands for discipleship, the twelve remained faithful. They were *committed* – committed to the point of no return.

The outward movement of the Gospel requires that each disciple make a **LIFE COMMITMENT**. *“Commitment”* is often a vague term. We say that one is *“committed”* to Jesus Christ, generally meaning that there has been an acceptance – (usually mentally, or in the *“heart,”* as we sometimes call it) – of Christ as their Savior, and an acknowledgment of His divine Lordship. But while this use of the word is somewhat, at least lexically, accurate, it fails to place any emphasis on the proper thing – that is, a transformed life!

Can there be a true inward commitment without changes being manifest in the whole personality?

It is one thing to say, *“I am committed to democracy,”* and quite another to take the time necessary to cast one’s vote. A commitment to democracy *without participation* in its due processes is to enjoy the benefits of democracy as a parasite!

Many Christians seem delighted to take the benefits of Christ’s blood as a safeguard against eternal damnation – while rejecting the call to deny oneself – taking up one’s cross and following Christ.

**COMMITMENT IS THE PRACTICAL RESULT OF FAITH.
A TRUE SAVING FAITH RESULTS IN COMMITMENT!**

Listen to James 2:14-26, “*What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.*”

In sports, it is often said that a player “*committed*” himself too early – (as in the case of a basketball player who misjudged a rebound and jumped too soon) – and, therefore, missed a pay or became guilty of a foul.

A player may have reacted mentally to several split-second options, but the moment he reacted physically – (jumping, turning, passing, kicking, etc.) – to one of those options, he has “*committed*” beyond the point of no return.

COMMITMENT MEANS ACTION!

In the life of a believer, commitment means action! This must be communicated to the disciple. A disciple will learn the true meaning of a commitment as the discipler relates it to daily living.

For example, if a disciple-group meeting is to be held at 7 P.M., Thursday evening, each disciple must know that true commitment means being there on time and ready to learn.

The believer’s somewhat hazy desire to be disciplined is translated into a concrete commitment the moment he actually walks through the door.

By making every conscious effort to communicate the tangible nature of commitment, the discipler will build within a disciple an attitude of action, service, and responsibility. Where there is commitment, there is accomplishment. A lackadaisical approach to life is an insult to Christ!

Factor 6:

RESPONSIBILITY

Jesus required His disciples to fulfill appointed tasks. In Mark 6:7, we read, “*He [Jesus] summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs...*”

They were required to **do** what they had learned. Jesus knew that teaching which only went into a “*notebook*” could never win the world – what is *learned* must be *lived*!

The ultimate assignment of responsibility came with the articulation of the Great Commission., this was the final note sounded in the disciples’ instruction.

The disciplemaker must see to it that those being trained are directed to become “*doers*” and not merely “*hearers*.” Disciples must experience involvement in ministry. This kind of “*on-the-job*” training prepares them for their own future ministries as disciplers.

One thing that the disciplemaker must constantly avoid is the notion that – the spiritual growth gained through discipling is **NOT** *an end in itself*!

DISCIPLES ARE BEING TRAINED AS INSTRUMENTS FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF THE GREAT COMMISSION!

In a successful discipling situation, there will be a spiritual maturing. There will be a fellowship. The experience will be an enjoyable one. But there is a ***danger*** here . . .

Human nature seeks comfort, convenience, and security. Within a brief period of time the atmosphere surrounding the relationship between “*disciple*” and “*disciplemaker*” may become, in the minds of those involved, a sort of ***release*** from the affairs of daily living – a means of relaxation, a good change of pace. At this point the group may turn inward upon itself and lose any sense of outward momentum. The discipler **CANNOT** allow this to happen, but must maintain in the group environment an attitude of personal responsibility of sacrifice. Along each line of teaching there must be some creative sort of assigned responsibility that directly relates to that teaching.

Factor 7:

KNOWLEDGE

Something must be known before something can be taught! The knowledge to be gained in discipleship training is that of God’s Word. Jesus taught the word – this is, the Old Testament truth, and His truth as its fulfillment.

As you personally begin to disciple others, you will become increasingly more adept at teaching. The Holy Spirit indwells you and will teach God’s truth through you (John 14:26).

Teaching can take place *ANYTIME – ANYWHERE!*

LESSON EIGHT

Factor 8:

GOAL

Being “*discipled*” is not an end in itself – it has an ultimate “**GOAL!**”

Jesus never let His disciples forget the reason they were following Him. Note these words of Jesus to His disciples:

Matthew 4:19, “*And he [Jesus] saith unto them [His disciples] Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*”

John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

John 4:35, “*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*”

Luke 19:10, “*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*”

Matthew 28:18-20, “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*”

“**MAKE DISCIPLES!**”

The purpose of discipling is not “*spiritual growth*,” although that is an important part of it, but the ultimate goal of discipling is **TO REACH THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL!**

Discipling is the mechanism by which the saving message of Jesus Christ is carried to the lost. Believers must be continually reminded of this. An integral part of discipleship training is to impress believers' minds and hearts with the fact that each is responsible to fulfill the Great Commission!

Factor 9:

POWER

Jesus did not send the disciples into the world under their own power, but He sent the Holy Spirit to energize them with divine power – the power needed to carry out the Great Commission!

Acts 1:8, “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*”

The Holy Spirit, given *vertically* to the Church at Pentecost, and subsequently expanding *horizontally* to the world, provides the power for the propagation of the Gospel through “*discipling*.”

The Holy Spirit is to indwell every believer, giving them the **power** necessary to be a discipler.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT
– IN THE GREAT EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE 1ST CENTURY –
WORKED THROUGH PROPERLY *DISCIPLED* PEOPLE!**

This cannot be over-emphasized! Jesus spent His entire earthly ministry training, discipling, those who would begin the explosion. Those men and women disciplined others. And those they disciplined won and disciplined others – and on – and on – and on – it continued!

The point is this: Without discipling as a foundation – the Holy Spirit would have had nothing to work with.

**The Holy Spirit works through people
– those saved, disciplined people –
who are able to be used because they have been
prepared according to
God’s plan of “Discipling!”**

Had there been no discipling – had Jesus merely taught multitudes – had He not poured His life into His select few – there would have been no explosion of that early first century Church.

The power of the Holy Spirit energized the people who were obedient to God’s divine plan. And He will do the same today – in the life of every believer who takes the Great Commission seriously and obeys!

**FAILURE TO MAKE DISCIPLES
QUENCHES THE ACTIVITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Why? Because the Holy Spirit was sent to empower the discipler – in order to bring about the fulfillment of Christ’s Great Commission.

(Read again Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus said in John 7:38-39a, “*He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive...*”

That channel through which the Holy Spirit must flow is **YOU** and **ME!** Don’t stop God’s love from flowing through you to your world by shutting the floodgate of discipleship through disobedience.

Factor 10:

LAUNCH

Jesus brought *the time of instruction* to a **close** and gave the twelve their marching orders.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 once more, “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*”

Now, as Jesus had planned all along, the disciples were to do with others what He had done with them – **MAKE DISCIPLES!**

Discipling is NOT complete until the disciple becomes a DISCIPLER! The world is the target of discipleship. For any believer to ignore this fact and to settle for anything less than a personal ministry as a discipler is for that believer to live in rebellion to Christ’s Great Commission!

Jesus commanded us to “**MAKE DISCIPLES!**”

These q0 factors make up Jesus’ discipling methodology. There is only one way to “*make disciples*” – His way!

But the Great Commission not only has this “*methodology*,” – it also has a built-in “*strategy!*”

A strategy is an overall plan of action designed to reach a specific end. Whereas the **METHODOLOGY** is the instrument of discipling at the personal level – the **STRATEGY** of the Great Commission is the orchestrated, over-arching battle plan for impacting the world with the Gospel.

In preparing soldiers for war, a fighting methodology is taught which will enable troops to effectively and successfully engage the enemy in combat. They are taught to handle and fire weapons and they learn the “*how-to*” of hand-to-hand combat. Each soldier learns the *methodology* of fighting well. But, when the time comes for battle, the soldiers don’t run onto the battlefield “*every-man-for-himself.*” That would prove disastrous. The methodology of combat-trained soldiers must be applied through a **STRATEGY** in order to reach full potential. There must be a plan of attack!

In the same way, the *methodology* of discipling is applied through the plan of action, which will insure **maximum** results. Let’s examine this strategy and see just how it works:

The Strategy of the Great Commission

Jesus said to His disciples, “*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him*”(Matthew 4:19-20).

At the very outset of Jesus' ministry, He made this statement of His purpose for the lives of His followers – "**I will make you fishers of men!**"

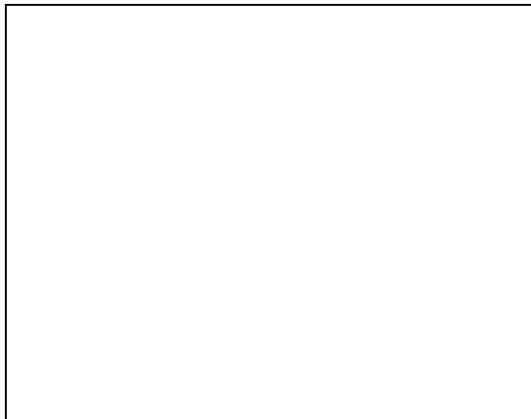
By using the image of "fishing" Jesus revealed the nature of the "**strategy**" of His Great Commission.

The ministry of the "**body**" of Christ (the church) is directed toward fellow believers; however, the ministry of "**discipleship**" is directed toward the world! When the "body" is gathered (Hebrews 10:24-25), there is a building up of the Church, *spiritually*! When the body is dispersed into the world – in jobs, homes, schools, etc – it is like the casting of a great net in order to draw in people to Christ and into the body.

But this can only occur when **DISCIPLEMAKING** is the life-style of the believers involved. Each *un-discipled* person within a local church body represents a "**gaping tear**" – a hole – in the network of the Great Commission strategy – God's "**net**" for catching unbelievers for His glory!

Interestingly, Jesus emphasized reaching the world both at the beginning and end of His earthly ministry to His first disciples. It was His goal throughout!

Great numbers of people are brought into the Kingdom of God only when disciples are properly related to Jesus' Master Plan.



If one does not become obedient to Jesus' command to become a disciplemaker, personally proclaiming the Gospel and discipling those they lead to Christ, then it will mean this – People will be slipping through their "hole in the net" into an eternity of separation from God in a place called hell.

The net is made – one "**strand**" at a time – by the application of the discipleship *methodology* (through disciplmaking) to the individual lives of those brought to Jesus Christ.

Disciplmakers multiply

The goal of the "**methodology**" is to produce disciplers.

The goal of the "**strategy**" is to consistently and systematically impact communities with the Gospel until the entire world is reached.

The "NET" of discipleship strategy grows by a process called

"SPIRITUAL REPRODUCTION"

Spiritual reproduction is a process by which the Holy Spirit multiplies the number of believers using the vehicle of discipling.

Within just a few “*generations*” the network of disciplers begins to increase dramatically. At every juncture, new believers are not allowed to become lost in any shuffle or to be overlooked; each is thoroughly disciplined and becomes a *discip*ler, and the process continues on and on.

The object of the strategy is the numerical increase of the Church. However, the emphasis is NOT numbers – but on *people!*

Discipling is not an easy thing to accomplish – Each disciple/discip

er is produced as the result of *painstaking training, developing a deep interpersonal relationship, and the pouring out of life in self-sacrifice.* There is a price to be paid – the price? – “*Self Death!*”

Discipling is not merely “*multiplication,*” but it is *self-sacrifice!*

Let’s use a simple example:

If one discipler, each year, won and disciplined three others who, in the next year, each won and disciplined three more, the number of disciplers at the of just two years would be a total of 16

Year one: 1 X 4 = 4 Disciples
 Year two: 1 X 3 = 12
 + 4
 16 Disciples!

If this same process is repeated for five years, the number of disciples become **1,024**. At the end of ten years, the number would be **1,048,576**.

Is this being realistic and practical? Is it too much to expect that every believer should win and disciple *just three people in a year’s time?* The reason it is not being done is simply because the divine methodology and strategy has been largely ignored!

HOW IS THE NET CAST?

The net is cast every time a body of believers departs after having gathered together. The body disperses into the community, penetrating every niche of society. Each believer (discipler) being sensitive to the Spirit’s leading and to the needs of others, applies the ten-factor methodology, beginning with evangelism.

HOW IS THE NET “DRAWN?”

The net is drawn in as disciplemakers personally train new believers and help them to become integrated into the body as *functioning* members. By the end of a discipling period, each new believer has not only taken up his appropriate relationship with the Church body – but also has become a part of the network of disciplemakers who are cast again into the world.

Disciplmaking **IS** the Great Commission!

Jesus gave just **ONE** methodology and **ONE** strategy! After His resurrection, Jesus re-emphasized His demand that the disciples become “Fishers of Men.”

Look at John 21:1-19, “*After these things Jesus shewed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed He Himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed Himself to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow me.”*

There is a significance, here for the discipler. Jesus made a point – that **when they followed His instructions, even in catching fish, they would achieve maximum results.**

THE IMPLICATION IS OBVIOUS!

***Discipleship is Not An Option
It Is A Commandment of Our Lord***