



# CHURCH DISCIPLESHIP

SOME TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHURCH MAKE DISCIPLES WHO MAKE DISCIPLES

# The problem

## ► **Problem #1 We don't understand how people learn.**

We try to make disciples by giving people lots of good information by lecture.

We give lots of good information in sermons and Sunday School lessons.

We provide classes, and handouts and even books to read.

### **This isn't how people learn best.**

Ask yourself how you learned anything – baseball, tennis, math, plumbing, carpentry, computer skills. Did you learn by reading a book or listening to a lecture? No, you didn't.

# The problem

## ► **Problem #2 We try to mass produce disciples.**

We think we can teach 200 people in the worship service or 20 people in the Sunday School class and they have gotten what they need to grow, and they will be fine. It's up to them now.

When you learned football, baseball, basketball, or military training, was it just mass teaching, or did you get some one-on-one instruction and coaching?

Whatever you are now good at, I guarantee you had some personal help.

# The problem

## ► **Problem #3 We try to rush the process of discipleship.**

Lots of us took 3 years of German, French or Spanish in high school. Most of us don't remember any of it and we never learned to speak it well.

Many children grew up going to church as children and teenagers, but they dropped out of church when they reached adulthood.

Our church tools for discipleship are often too short in terms of time – take this class, read this book, go to this New Member's class. Now, you are good to go.

I remember reading that it takes a few months to grow a squash and twenty years to grow a big oak tree. Which kind of disciple are we trying to grow?

# The problem

## ▶ **Problem #4 We make things too easy and take away the challenge.**

Don't require homework.

Don't ask them to read, just read it to them.

Don't ask people to think, just tell them the answer.

Don't ask them to give up any time or effort.

Don't ask them to practice thirty times, once or twice is enough.

Don't have any accountability or coaching.

Don't have high expectations.

# The problem

## ► **Problem #5 We don't have a clear idea of our goal.**

We try this book or that program, but we may not have a clear idea and a clear goal of what we are trying to accomplish.

What exactly is a disciple of Jesus? What does a disciple look like?

If we don't know where we are going, how will we know when we get there?

How will we know what direction to go?

It might help to break down our goal of being a follower of Jesus into smaller goals - some skills, attitudes or behaviors that we hope to teach someone who wants to follow Christ.

# The problem

► **Problem #6 We may not be creating good “environments” for learning.**

**Here are examples of four different environments. All four are needed in our strategy.**

**Personal effort** – reading, thinking, memorizing, answering questions, praying, and practicing at home when they are alone. Practicing with others during group time.

**Small Group time** – are we creating small groups that are intentional about making disciples, not just “teaching” a lesson? Is there lots of discussion?

**One-on-one** – how can we help provide a coach or a mentor?

**Serving others** – home visits, hospital visits, neighborhoods, homeless shelters, jails and prisons, schools, sports teams, other countries, helping people who are hungry or need a job or need education.

# The problem

► **Problem #7 We try to help people become disciples, but not disciple-makers.**

Teenagers, men, women, young and old – anybody can help another person to grow spiritually.

You don't have to go to seminary. You don't have to be a paid minister at a church. You don't have to have a title like SS teacher or deacon.

Doctors, lawyers, teachers, insurance salesmen, construction people, car repair workers, homemakers and retired people – our goal and our vision should be to help them make disciples for the rest of their life, no matter what their occupation is.



# The Problem

## ► **Problem #8 We may overemphasize curriculum.**

I have nothing against reading a book or using a discipleship workbook where you fill in the blanks.

The main problem is that our goal is to help a new Christian build a life-long habit of reading the Bible. If they begin to read a chapter every day, then in a few months they will read, discuss and learn what the Bible says about salvation, prayer, sin, grace and love in the context of the stories and events in which they happened. Those are the same topics that would be covered in the curriculum book, but the Bible will cover it more thoroughly than the curriculum book.

Another problem, as mentioned earlier, is that we tend to let the curriculum define the length of training. “Okay, we finished book one and two, now you are a disciple.”

# A Better Approach

**Solution #1 Less lecture.** Help your disciple to do more personal effort and more engagement in ministry (visits, caring for others, phone calls, feeding the hungry, teaching someone, explaining the gospel, praying, mission trips).

**Solution #2 Spend personal time** with people doing life together, not just in large groups.

**Solution #3 One step at a time.** Help people take one step at a time to reach some small goals – reading a Bible chapter every day, memorize a few verses, learn to explain the gospel, and developing a heart to serve others. All of us continue to learn our whole life - there is no set time limit for discipleship.

# A Better Approach

**Solution #4 High Expectations.** When you are helping someone learn and grow spiritually, have high expectations and high support. All of us grow best when we push ourselves to reach a new goal or a new challenge. Keep giving them new small goals.

- ▶ **High expectations** – “Let’s see if we can memorize these five Bible verses.”
- ▶ **High support** – “I put the verses on these little cards for you. We can do it together. Every week I will say my verses to you and then you can say your verses to me.”

# A Better Approach

**Solution #5 Have a clear idea** of what a disciple looks like and help a person to develop new skills, attitudes and behaviors.

Example:

**Goal:** A follower of Jesus has a heart for helping people, a servant heart.

**Action:** Take your disciple with you to help at the homeless shelter, to visit people in the hospital, to set up chairs, to prepare and serve food, to be a helper at a children's event, or to be a chaperone for a youth trip.

# A Better Approach

## **Solution #6 Create good environments for someone to learn:**

**Personal effort** – Example: “Read this chapter of the book before we meet.”

**Small Group time** – Help them find a small group that is warm in fellowship, engaging in discussion, and active in serving others.

**Serving others** – look for ways to serve at church, in the community, at schools, at work, and in the neighborhood.

# A Better Approach

## **Solution #7 Encourage people to start helping others right away.**

Sometimes we think that it is better for someone to wait for years before they try to become a leader or help someone else.

Actually, studies have shown that one of the best ways to learn is to try and explain something to someone else.

Show your disciple how Jesus taught the 12 disciples and then they helped others.

Tell your disciple about the people who helped you and how you enjoy helping others.

As your disciple learns some basic skills, ask him to help others learn the same things. Example: When your disciple learns to share their personal testimony, let them teach another new Christian how to share a salvation testimony also.

# A Better Approach

## **Solution #8 Use the Bible as your main discipleship tool, not curriculum.**

- ▶ Many people don't read the Bible for themselves. They depend on the 20-minute sermon on Sunday and often can't remember the sermon on Monday.
- ▶ Many people *feel* like they wouldn't be able to understand the Bible, that they *need* a professional to explain it to them. The more they read, the better.
- ▶ Of course, the Holy Spirit can use just one word, but a passage is so much more meaningful than a single verse. Think about reading just one verse in the story of the Prodigal Son versus reading the whole story of the father, the prodigal and the older brother.
- ▶ Encourage more than one form of engagement with scripture – read, discuss it, memorize it, pray it, do it and share it with someone else.

# Changing the Culture

## **Our goal is not to have a discipleship ministry.**

- ▶ A ministry can sometimes be an isolated group in the church. An option that people can choose or not choose.

## **Our goal is to have a discipleship culture.**

- ▶ A culture is pervasive. It becomes the DNA of everything we do.
- ▶ Every ministry for children, students, young and older adults all have a goal to make disciples.
- ▶ Pastor, staff, deacons, teachers, small groups – everybody is looking for ways to build bridges, love people, explain the gospel, follow-up new Christians, lead their families, coach new leaders, and make disciples who make disciples.



# Pastor

The pastor has to lead the way. Tell your church what you are going to do and invite members to do some of these things below with you:

- ▶ Read one chapter every day from the book of John (or any book) for 21 days (since there are 21 chapters in John)
- ▶ Memorize these 5 scripture verses and say them out loud with you on Sunday in the worship service.
- ▶ Write down the names of five friends and pray for them every week
- ▶ Join a weekly small group Bible study or start a new one and lead it.
- ▶ Look for a way to do an act of kindness or an act of service for someone else every week (a neighbor, a friend or a stranger)

# Staff

What could the pastor and staff do on a weekly basis together?

- ▶ Read and discuss a chapter from a book?
- ▶ Share a prayer request and pray for one another?
- ▶ Set a goal to memorize 10 verses on salvation in the next 3 months?
- ▶ Take turns leading a short devotional each week at staff meeting?
- ▶ Each staff member be part of a weekly small group of any size?

# Sunday School Classes

## An Example of a Different Kind of Class That Emphasizes Greater Involvement

1. **20 minutes** - Ask every class member to read the verses during the week and come prepared to share. During the first 20 min. let class members share **3 things** that stood out to them. (Or another option - what they learned about **God** and about **people** from the verses they read during the week.) Send them an email reminder of the verses each wk.
2. **20 minutes** – The teacher shares only the most important things that stood out to him from the lesson curriculum (not 50 minutes, just 15 or 20) with ideas for application.
3. **20 minutes** – Have 5 or 7 discussion questions for the class to discuss in smaller break out groups (4 to 6 in a group). If it is a small class and you stay together instead of breaking up, then have other class members lead the discussion – so that you, the teacher, are coaching them to become good small group leaders.

# Deacons

What could the deacons do each month to increase their learning, grow as fathers and husbands, and set an example to other men?

- ▶ Memorize 12 verses on salvation this year (a different one each month)
- ▶ Take turns leading a 10-minute devotion at the monthly deacon meeting
- ▶ Read a book together and discuss a different chapter at each meeting.
- ▶ Choose another man to be their assistant and go with them on hospital visits, home visits and other ministry tasks.
- ▶ Choose 12 families to visit this year and share their testimony at each visit.
- ▶ Each deacon could recruit 2 – 3 families to do a service project with them three times this year.

# Small Groups in Homes

Your church could set a goal to start 3 new small groups in homes every year.

- ▶ Every group would have a leader and 2 assistant leaders. The leaders and assistants would take turns leading each week.
- ▶ The small group could give a homework assignment to read verses each week and come prepared to discuss. (share your 3 favorite verses or what you learned about God and people from the passage we read)
- ▶ Small group members could memorize 10 verses this year and say them each wk.
- ▶ The small group could do some service projects together – maybe 4 times a year?
- ▶ The small group could have a fellowship supper every month or every other month and invite a friend or another couple to come with them each time.

# Smaller Groups – D Groups

Some churches have had a lot of success starting smaller D-Groups.

- ▶ A leader enlists 2 other people who want to meet each week for one year to read and discuss 1 or 2 books that they commit to read, or a book of the Bible.
- ▶ The group could be three women or three men.
- ▶ They could meet any time, any day, whenever they choose to meet.
- ▶ They are doing Bible study, increasing their friendship, praying for one another.
- ▶ They could all get together once a quarter with their spouses for a supper if desired.

# Every Ministry Trains New Leaders

Every leader in every ministry should recruit an assistant leader and let them also learn to lead.

- ▶ Men's Ministry
- ▶ Women' Ministry
- ▶ Tech Crew
- ▶ Greeter Team
- ▶ Choir or Praise Team
- ▶ Student Ministry
- ▶ Children's Ministry Workers

# Student Ministry

If your student group is large enough, could you enlist or vote for a boy and girl leader for each grade? These leaders would have some sort of ministry responsibility each week.

Could you recruit several students to be discussion group leaders? When you have Bible study times, these leaders could lead the breakout groups in the discussion questions that go with your lesson.

Could you have some sort of goal for the whole student group to memorize these 10 verses, share their testimony and memorize a way to explain the gospel?

Could you have older students be responsible to welcome, call or visit younger students who visit the church?

Could college students help in high school ministry?



# What will your legacy be?

Who won the World Series or the Super Bowl in 1974?

Who won the gold medals at the Olympics in 1976?

I don't remember.

But I do remember the people who spent time helping me grow spiritually back then.

Terry T. → Gary S. → Carroll M. → me!

What they did changed the direction of my entire life and my family.

When we make disciples who make disciples, we change the lives of people, of families, of children and grandchildren for all eternity.

You can do this! Give your life to making disciples who make disciples!