

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY

1. Don't make everything easy. Jesus told his disciples they wouldn't have a home, they would be persecuted and probably killed or put in prison. When we try to make following Christ super easy with no commitment and no sacrifice (you don't have to read your Bible, we won't ask you to pray, you don't have to learn how to share your faith, you don't have to discuss I will just lecture, just come listen to a sermon once or twice a month), we do a disservice to people who need their lives transformed by the power of Christ working in their life.

2. Most people's lives are transformed by High Expectations – either from others (a coach, a teacher, a parent, a boss, a mentor) or from within themselves. If they are inner-motivated, then they get up to run 5 miles every morning at 6:00 a.m. because they want to, not because someone expects them to. Unfortunately, not everyone has this kind of discipline. For most of us, it helps to have a partner or some kind of gentle accountability to remind us to do things that will stretch us to accomplish more than we normally would without being pushed.

- People will serve others if we ask them
- People will memorize a verse if we ask them
- People will read a Bible chapter during the week if we ask them
- People will attend some kind of training if we ask them

3. I have asked over a hundred pastors this question “What made the greatest difference to help you grow after you accepted Christ?” Almost all the time they gave me two answers:

- When someone stepped into my life and mentored (discipled, coached) me
- When I got involved in doing, not just listening. (I prayed, I read the Bible, I shared the gospel, I went on a mission trip, I taught a class – I did something that was new, or difficult, or a little scary)

4. One way to get discipleship started is to ask every person in your church that has a job, a task, a volunteer position to find a helper assistant to work with them.

- Children's workers find a helper
- Student workers find a helper
- Sunday School teachers find a helper
- Tech crew people find a helper
- Greeters find a helper
- Choir members and Praise Team members find a helper

I think the statistic is that 20% of the people in a church do most of the work and leading. Now your goal is to double that to 40% by everyone finding a helper.

5. There are four potential environments for growing spiritually at a church: the worship service, an open SS class, a closed small group (3-8 people) or one-on-one discipleship. In general, we do pretty well providing worship services every week. In general, we don't do very well at providing excellence in the other three learning environments.

6. I really, really, a lot, a lot, highly, highly recommend the strategy and model for discipleship used in D-Life (see their website). They combine reading the Bible at home, shared leadership, accountability, prayer, fellowship, discussion, serving others and multiplication into their model. You can use it exactly as it is or adapt your Sunday School class or small group to resemble it.

7. If you are beginning a discipleship strategy from the ground up, it is important to get good advice and observe how others are doing it successfully. Talk with the GBMB, the Mid-State Baptist Association Director, and several leaders at growing churches and make sure you really understand what they are and are not doing. Be teachable!

The curriculum is the least important choice you will make.

The most important choice will be the spiritual maturity and skill of your initial leaders.

Make sure you train your first leaders well and make sure they are all on the same page as far as strategy.

The next generation of leaders – next semester or next year – will be following the example of the first leaders who started your first discipleship groups.

8. Multiplication is so important. Every Sunday School class and every Small Group should have the possible goal of starting another group a year from now. Make disciples who make disciples.