

Discipling Christians
for Effectiveness and Productivity
in The Kingdom of God

Disciplemaking CMCM 2210

Dr. L. Thomas Strong III

Leavell College

Gregory M. Finch

December 9, 2004

Discipleship by definition:

To disciple another believer is to purposefully pass on a hunger for the attributes and disciplines of Jesus Christ.

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-8”

The effective and productive disciple by description:

This plan, like any other, seeks to achieve a specific result. The successful journey will have certain benchmarks that can be tangibly assessed. The inherent challenge in determining success or failure lies in the fact that the journey of discipleship is a never-ending quest. Therefore, the description of an effective and productive disciple is an ideal snapshot of what we hope to become.

The effective and productive disciple will live out, in growing measure, each of the following seven character traits: (1) Agathos – goodness in character, a moral energy. (2) Gnosis – a seeking to know spiritual truth. (3) Hupomone – a heartfelt submission to authority. (4) Makrothumeo – taking a firm stand under trials and difficult circumstances. (5) Eusebeia – a Godward attitude. (6) Adelphos – truly loving his brothers and sisters in Christ. (7) Agape – love that seeks the welfare of all, including your enemies.

A true disciple has a character remodeled by faith that is equipped and available for God's purpose in God's time.

Establishing progress in effective and productive development:

Initially a new believer will enter a Celebration Group, in which they will be encouraged and taught basic foundations of faith and doctrine. After completing that step they will be paired with a mentor who will devote at least a year to their discipleship training. The mentors do not necessarily attend the same discipleship training. A mentors calling is to provide encouragement and accountability. The intimate relationship with the mentor provides a spiritually mature assessor. With the guidance of their mentor a new disciple is brought up through the seven steps of Simon Peter's plan.

- I. Goodness
- II. Knowledge
- III. Self Control
- IV. Perseverance
- V. Godliness
- VI. Brotherly Kindness
- VII. Love

Transformation of character is the goal, not the number of completed workbooks.

Who can be an effective and productive disciple?

This is primarily a plan for the new believer, but every new member to the church would join a Celebration Group. New members would be paired with a mentor to ensure their successful integration into the new family of faith. Whether

that relationship would need the same investment in time, as a new believer, would be the decision of the mentor. Inherent in this plan is the “speak the truth in love” factor. There is no way to drive this plan with programs, although Bible studies, and education programs are integral, those elements are character-building tools only. The driving force of this plan is the Holy Spirit working through disciples in an environment where God is allowed to transform an individual for His purpose. The list of “things you need to change to be more like me” is replaced with the list of “things I will help you learn to be more like Jesus”. As a disciple progresses through this character development they are encouraged to become mentors, teachers, and advisors on the Discipleship Team.

What practical elements are necessary to develop effective and productive disciples?

You must create a Discipleship Team. Depending on the resources available, a Minister of Discipleship is a great asset. The members of this team will be spiritually mature; active lay people, preferably hand picked by the Lead Pastor for their discernment of godly character, and their ability to carry out the “speak the truth in love” factor. This team will be responsible for working with the Education Team on curriculum, and the Missions Team on projects, as well as training and encouraging mentors. In cooperation with the Education Team and the Missions Team the following essentials should be established for each of the seven steps:

- I. Goodness
 - a. Curriculum that establishes Christ-like character, and the moral standards the church expects of one of its members.
 - i. A study of the fruit of the Spirit is excellent at this time.
- II. Knowledge
 - a. This area is unique in that the seeking of spiritual truth will last a lifetime. This step also overlaps many of the other steps regarding the specific curriculum needs. A wide variety of curriculum should be available.
 - b. At this point mentors and new believers would seek their own studies.
- III. Self Control
 - a. Curriculum focused on the authority of Jesus Christ and developing a healthy fear of God.
 - b. The mentor plays a crucial role at this stage. Self-control is a common problem for the pre-believer who sees himself as the ultimate authority over his universe. The Spiritual fruit of self-control, longsuffering, and peace are often the most welcomed benefits to a new believer's home.
- IV. Perseverance
 - a. This is an especially important stage for the new believer. The church has long wondered how someone, full of the Holy Spirit, just drifts off shortly after their salvation experience. The role of the mentor is key at this stage. The mentor is to walk side by side with the new disciple from the beginning so they don't assume they are fighting a spiritual

war they know little about all by themselves. It is not enough for the mentor to be available for phone calls, they must physically be there as often as necessary.

- b. Missions experiences are important ways to experience victory over difficult circumstances and trials.

V. Godliness

- a. This stage is most valuable as an assessment gauge. By this time the disciple should be exhibiting a Godward attitude. The believer should outwardly show a confidence that God is providing for their needs.
 - i. If this is not the case the mentor should guide them back to a stage like self-control or perseverance, and encourage them to be open and transparent before God.

VI. Brotherly Kindness

- a. At this stage the disciple should be encouraged to become a mentor or Bible study teacher. It is time for them to give back to the community that has raised them up in Hope.
 - i. If you have achieved an environment of discipleship very few will “stall out” at this stage. The danger to avoid is that mentoring and teaching is for a very select few saints who have mastered the Bible.

VII. Love

- a. This stage is where the environment of discipleship is realized in your church. As more and more disciples come to a heartfelt understanding of Agape love the culture of your church changes.
- b. The Missions Team needs to be prepared to put disciples to work for God's Kingdom. These disciples must have an outlet for their desire to love the unloved or they will become frustrated.
- c. Remember to encourage your Discipleship, Education, and Missions teams, this is their goal.

The backdrop of all these wonderful elements of discipleship is worship. When a discipleship plan that purges legalism is developed to the point that it has infused the culture of the church the result will be open and glorious worship where divine results are expected.