Disciplemaking in the Early Church

What is discipleship?

In one sentence discipleship is what Jesus did with the twelve, and what the twelve did with the early church. Let’s look at three simple elements of discipleship.

- Discipleship is what it means to be a follower of Christ.
  - It is the responsibility of every Christian
- Discipleship is God’s method for growing the church.
  - Reproductive
- Discipleship is a non-optional mandate for those who will obey Christ.
  - Disciplemaking must be done-
    
    Matthew 28:18-20 - 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Elements of Disciplemaking – seen in Jesus + the Twelve

- Evangelism
- Intimate personal relationship
- Mutual personal commitment
- Personal instruction
  - Teach them to obey
  - Teach them everything I have commanded you
- Personal Accountability – become Doers of the Word
- Commitment to disciplemaking after maturity

Question -

How well did the disciples carry out the ministry of disciplemaking as they were taught it by Jesus?

Great Commission is restated –

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

Number of disciples was increasing - Reproduction

Acts 6:7 - 7 And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. NASB

Paul baptized and discipled -

Acts 9:18-20 - 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized; 19 and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, 20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." NASB

Paul and Barnabus make disciples -
Acts 11:25-26 - 25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. NASB

Making Disciples

Acts 14:21-22 - 21 And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." NASB

Question -

What elements of disciplemaking do we see in the book of Acts? Is it consistent with what we learned about Jesus method of making disciples? Check the boxes on the elements seen in the text below.

- Evangelism
- Intimate personal relationship
- Mutual personal commitment
- Personal instruction
  - Teach them to obey
  - Teach them everything I have commanded you
- Personal Accountability – become Doers of the Word
- Commitment to disciplemaking after maturity

Acts 2:41-47 - 41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added [unto them] in that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. 46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

1. v-41 – Baptizing
2. v-42 - Continually in Apostles teaching, (Jesus teaching extended)
3. v-42/44 - Fellowship – A vital element of Discipling
   - Relational, eating together, intimacy
   - Sharing and conversing allows Q&A and relevancy to learning
   - Discipling cannot be impersonal
4. v-42 - Given to prayer –
   - Aligning with God’s will together brings intimacy and accountability
   - Teaches trust and reliance upon God
   - Strengthens faith
5. v-43 – Awe of God as they learn and grow
   - Coming to know Christ bears the fruit of Worship, Reverence and Awe
   - Strengthens faith
   - Demonstration of the Spirit’s power
6. **v-44-45** – Demonstration of God’s love in sacrifice and sharing
   i. Vital element of Discipling
   ii. Great Commandment – Foremost in our teaching/example

7. **v-46** – Worshipped at Church and homes
   *Acts 5:42 - 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. NASB*
   i. Corporate worship is vital
   ii. Small group ministry is vital

8. **v-46-47** – Fruit of the Spirit
   i. The product and evidence of saving faith
   ii. The purpose of God fulfilled

9. **v-47** – Evangelism/Reproduction
   i. The product and evidence of Maturity
   ii. The mandate and goal of Discipling

Q. Therefore in response to this, what should we assume should be the practice of the church today? *(Matthew 28:18-20)*

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Q. Should we be carrying out the ministry of disciplemaking as they did and in the method they were instructed by Jesus? *(Matthew 4:19)*

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Q. Should every Christian be instructed and commissioned with carrying out this ministry? *Luke 6:40 - 40 "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. NASB*

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Q. How do you suppose this would affect the expansion of the gospel? *(Matthew 24:14 - 14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come NASB)*

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Q. How do you suppose this would affect the love, fellowship, and personal holiness of the members of the local church? *Acts 2:46-47 - 46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.*