Basic Disciplemaking

As we discuss the ministry of Christian Disciplemaking let us consider that making disciples is the means by which God has provided a way for Christian to have a sound faith and practice as they live out their Christian Life. It is a focused time of learning which is vital to Christian life. Disciplemaking was instituted by Jesus Himself and was the means that He used to bring His disciples to Christian maturity. Further, it was His mandate to the church to foster and promote the expansion of the Kingdom which He commissioned the church to carry out until the end of the age (Matt 28:18-20).

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." NASB

What is a Christian disciple?

A Christian disciple is one who knows and understands the Gospel, has repented of sin, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and characteristically follows after, learns, and practices the teaching, disciplines and traditions of his Christ. Jesus called His first disciples to "follow Him."

Matthew 4:18-22 - 18 And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. 21 And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. 22 And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him. NASB

Those fishermen left their nets and committed to Him and His teaching. So it is with everyone who responds to Christ’s call to discipleship. Christians are Christ followers.

Luke 5:27-28 - 27 And after that He went out, and noticed a tax-gatherer named Levi, sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me." 28 And he left everything behind, and rose and began to follow Him. NASB

Luke 14:25-28 - 25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." NASB

Jesus calls us into a devoted life of worship and service unto Him. He will have no rivals in our lives that take a higher place than our devotion to Him. We are called to forsake our old ways of life and commit to His way of life. We exchange the way of sin and self for a new life in Christ. That new life brings not only salvation from sin and death and the hope of eternal life, but new life of delight, joy, and a deep sense of direction and purpose. When we follow Christ, we begin to live for what is truly valuable and virtuous, and we pursue the highest things in life, even the glory of God. And Christ loves us enough to call us to life’s highest ideal, even God’s greatest commandment, calling us to love Him wholeheartedly. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all you mind. This is the great and
foremost commandment.” (Matthew 22:35-40). A right response to Christ is motivated by genuine commitment to love and obey Him wholeheartedly. We cannot serve Christ while cherishing worldly idols above Him. He is most glorified when we obey and follow Him as the object of our love and devotion.

John 14:21 - 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." NASB

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 - 14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. NASB

What is a Christian disciplemaker?
Christian disciplemakers pattern their lives after Christ, they follow Him and do what He does. The book of Acts records many examples of those who learned and followed Christ's teaching. In short, they went and discipled the nations and established the Kingdom of God in much of the known world at that time in history. And church history is full of this same success right down to our own present generation. In fact, we Christians today are the fruit of the labor of the church in every generation making disciples since the time of Christ.

Now if you are a Christian, you also are a disciple, a follower of Christ. His “great commission” to His first twelve followers (Matthew 28:18-20) applies to you as well. You have been commissioned to “go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” As a disciple, a follower of Christ, you too have been commissioned to make disciples because all Christians make disciples. It is the nature of discipleship. And this is how in a spiritual sense the church the church reproduces itself in history, as we make new disciples, who in turn, make disciples.

Christian disciplemakers are growing Christians who help other Christians follow the pattern Jesus set for the twelve. Mark Dever says “discipling is helping others follow Jesus.” That is a great definition! Christian disciplemakers evangelize and teach the disciplines of Christ to those who commit to listen, believe, and follow. We clearly see the results of the first disciples’ obedience to Christ’s command in the narrative of the book of Acts, and the results of every Christian generation since then in Church history. And every new generation faces the same task and privilege, to go and make disciples in our day and in our place and beyond.

Consider what this looked like in Jesus ministry. Jesus’ divine method of disciplemaking takes an unregenerate person, transforms him by the power of the Spirit through faith in Christ (evangelism), grounds him in how to live the Christian Life through the Word, and releases him into the world to continue the process of evangelizing and making disciples of others. And so we see also in Jesus method what disciplemaking truly IS. It is what Jesus did with the twelve. Those who receive Christ need to learn how to live the Christian life. They must be personally instructed in the fundamental principles of Christian living.

- daily meditation on the Word
- daily communion with God through prayer
• regular Christian worship, fellowship, and service in the Church. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Effective disciplemaking produces growing Christians, who are able to evangelize and make disciples on their own. Christian disciples are disciplemaking disciples. They are Christians who have come to enough maturity to live healthy Christian lives that are fruitful and productive. In short effective discipling produces Christians equipped to live the Christian Life and make disciples of others, just like Jesus and the twelve. They help others follow Jesus. Consider discipling in our role of the priesthood of all believers.

1 Peter 2:5, 9 - 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. .. 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; NASB

What is Christian discipleship?

Discipleship is really just living the Christian Life. But the word emphasizes that part of Christian Life that includes being obedient to Christ in discipling. Discipling takes place within close personal relationships. Although a teacher or writer may do a certain amount of “discipling” through books, Bible study lessons, or audio-recordings, fully effective disciplemaking does more than communicate information and stimulate application. It also focuses on personal situations, questions, desires, and needs through personal counseling. It is focused on everyday situations and helping others follow Jesus in the everyday stuff of the Christian Life. This will be most effective when disciplemaker and disciple enjoy a close, trusting, personal relationship. Such a relationship will resemble that between Jesus and His disciples.

The disciplemaker’s life should be an example of the things being taught to the disciple. Discipling will take enough integrity that your life as a discipler is genuinely reflecting the kind of godly life that others can follow. You are in a sense saying to them, come follow me as I follow Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 - 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. NASB

If we are going to help others follow Jesus, then we must also be following Him. Thus, the disciplemaker is accountable to the disciple as well. We are all learning to grow together.

Luke 6:40-41 - 40 "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. NASB

Instruction in the knowledge of God and His Kingdom is a fundamental part of discipling. Biblical instruction fosters Christian maturity, which when reached, qualifies the disciple to making disciples on his or her own. Thus discipling is focused on bringing the disciple to Christian maturity. This means they have learned how to live the Christian Life and walk in the basic disciplines of Christian Life. They must be personally instructed in the fundamental principles of Christian living.
• daily meditation on the Word
• daily communion with God through prayer
• regular Christian worship, fellowship, and service in the Church. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

If a disciple has not learned to feed themselves on the Word of God daily, and how to commune with God in prayer and fellowship regularly with other godly Christians, they have not learned how to live the Christian Life. They must also realize that these basic disciplines should have the effect of transforming us so that we become more like Christ in our character and in our practice. The Christian Life is a godly life of virtue fueled by the Word, prayer, and regular fellowship.

2 Peter 1:5-8 - 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

Jesus left all Christians a mandate to make disciples in His Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The visible church has been slow in heeding Christ’s call to nurture new believers as they as they grow in grace and knowledge of God’s Word. Consider that a healthy church should be filled with Christians who actually do the hard work of nurturing new believers in the faith so that they can enjoy the maturity of a godly life, and better yet, put the glory of God on display by the way that they live!

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

May God grant us deep desire to walk after the example Christ set for us! We have been called to high and holy privilege of making disciples! (Matthew 16:24-25)

Qualifications for the Disciplemaker

Are you spiritually mature enough to make disciples? Does your life exemplify effective, productive Christian living that will instruct and encourage disciples? Does the Holy Spirit reign in your life over your sinful passions and vices? Is your love and enjoyment of God clearly evident in the way you live? When you sin, do others see you humbly confess and repent? Those are good questions for any Christian as they consider their spiritual health. Clear evidence of growing spiritual maturity is fundamental to your effective disciplemaking. Therefore as we think about our role as a discipler, helping others follow Jesus, let us briefly consider our own spiritual health, and some qualifications for being and effective disciplemaker.

1. Spiritual maturity – If we are going to help others follow Jesus, then we must also be following Him. The disciplemaker’s life should be an example of the things being taught to the disciple. Discipling will take enough integrity that your life as a disciplemaker is genuinely reflecting the kind of godly life that others can follow. You are in a sense saying to them, come follow me as I follow Jesus. Consider Paul’s example to the Thessalonians.