The Initiation of Discipling: Evangelism

Fundamental to the discipling process is of course Evangelism. Of course if you’re going to have someone to disciple, they must be willing to embrace Christ with faith and repentance. That is, unless you have a kind of discipling relationship with someone you are evangelizing. This is actually a very effective way to bring someone to faith in Christ. To meet regularly with them doing “one to one” reading through the Bible, and/or going over different passages of Scripture and different biblical doctrines to help someone come to understand the Gospel and thereby believe and be saved. It also helps if possible, to bring them into your life and allow them to see how you live and how the power of godliness affects your life. At some point they will need to come in repentance to Christ and embrace Him by faith alone for righteousness before God to be saved. At that point a full blown discipling relation can begin and should continue for two or more years. So it is therefore incumbent upon us to be sharing the Gospel with others in our sphere of life (family, work, neighbors, acquaintances) in order to bring them to saving faith and have someone to disciple. This is something the twelve did very effectively and ended up by God’s grace reaching much of the Greco-Roman world of their generation. This is what Jesus taught the twelve, and then commanded them to teach us (Matt 28:19-21).

Luke 24:45-49 - 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 "You are witnesses of these things. 49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." NASB

Acts 1:7-8 - 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 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

2 Corinthians 5:20 - 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreatings through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. NASB

In order for us to be effective in sharing the Gospel, we will need to do evangelism in the way of the Master. Here are four important ways.

1. Learn the biblical Gospel – People cannot be saved in any other way than by the hearing of the Gospel. This is how biblical saving faith comes to people. Salvation is surely God’s work, granting faith through regeneration, but that happens in response to the Gospel.

Romans 10:12-17 - 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; 13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, " Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. NASB

Therefore it is important for us to know how to articulate the Gospel clearly and winsomely. First, the essential parts of the Gospel need to be clearly understood. The essentials are;
God is both our sovereign Creator and our righteous Judge. (Neh 9:6, Psa 98:9) God therefore has the right of ownership over us by virtue of creating us, and He has the right to punish or reward us by virtue of his royal, judicial office. And because God is both our Creator and Judge, we are doubly accountable to Him for all our behavior - word, thought, and deed.

Man was created by God, in God's image, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. But man sinned against God by disobeying His holy law. Man therefore separated himself from God's holy and satisfying presence, and incurred His wrathful displeasure. (Gen 1:27, Rom 1:18, 3:23)

Jesus Christ's death was the substitute payment for the penalty that we deserved for our sin. His death is God's only provision for the forgiveness of man's sin and the appeasement of God's wrath against him. (Isa 53:6, John 3:36, Acts 4:12)

We are called to respond to this good news in repentance and belief, turning away from our sin and self-sufficiency toward God, and trusting in the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the substitute penalty that we deserved for our sin.

Secondly, we need to share the Gospel in a loving and winsome (appealing, engaging) way. People not only need to hear the words of the Gospel but need to hear it in the TONE of the Gospel. As ambassadors of God's love and grace we are responsible to represent Christ in a way that expresses God's love and grace.

2. Pray for opportunities to communicate the biblical Gospel to unbelievers – Surely those who will come to faith in Christ have been chosen and called by God. It is important then to remember that God is sovereign in the process of saving people and so we can do it patiently and in a non-forceful way.

Acts 13:48- 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed, NASB

We should pray that God will use us to reach others and that He will have mercy on those who we share the Gospel with, and that He will grant opportunities to share the Gospel with unbelievers. Maybe our lack of success has to do with the fact that we rarely engage God to save people before we engage people.

3. Take advantage of those opportunities as they arise – As we pray we should expect God to answer and provide opportunity. We should look for opportunities to share with people and learn different ways to engage them and move conversations toward the Gospel. There are many helpful teaching available about how to do this.

4. Pray that God will open hearts, grant repentance of sin and faith to believe, and bring sinners into His kingdom. – When we are focused on seeing others come to faith the Lord will use us to do exactly that. It certainly starts with a desire to be obedient and be a witness for Christ and all the good things He has done for us. Then let us bring that desire to God and ask Him for success. Many great evangelists in history have attributed much of their success to effective and fervent prayer for the ability to evangelize and the work of God in the hearts of those who hear them.

Consider Who You Should Disciple
Since we are all disciplemaking disciples of Christ, we should always be looking for opportunities to disciple others. It is our responsibility in the church to nurture new believers in the faith and see them learn to live effective and productive Christian lives. We should be prayerfully considering others around us and look for newer believers who need this vital
help. Of course, **men should disciple men** and **women should disciple women** whenever possible, as it would be inappropriate to develop the kind of close personal relations with members of the opposite sex required in discipling. Look for someone at work, within your family, your neighbors, your friends, or at church. Ask that person if they’d like to be discipled. Or if they are an unbeliever, ask if they would like to meet regularly and read the Bible together.

Let us not disregard our responsibilities to evangelize and make disciples of people everywhere. It is the Lord’s Great Commission to us.

**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

Here are some **important things to remember** once you have someone to disciple.

**Commitment of Disciplemaking**

1. **The Commitment of the Disciplemaker - To the task of disciplemaking and being a godly example** - The disciplemaker must commit to carrying out all aspects of a healthy mentoring relationship. These include teaching, praying, encouraging, rebuking, serving, counseling, befriending, and exemplifying Christian virtue. The disciplemaker must also be willing to do whatever is necessary to help a Christian disciple grow to maturity. This commitment will surely involve conscientious investment of time, money, energy, resources, talents, and abilities in the disciplemaking process. Discipling will no doubt require many sacrifices of time, talent and treasure (money). But this we do out of sincere love for God and neighbor. Christian disciplemakers should always be motivated by fond and loving affection for their disciples, striving always for their highest good – which is the formation of Christ in them. The Apostle Paul is an excellent role model for us.

**1 Thessalonians 2:7-12** - 7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 8 Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. 9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, 12 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. NASB

See here how Paul was motivated by love and fond affection for those he discipled. And this he did being a godly example of Christian virtue and also, “exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you to walk in a manner worthy of God.” See this godly example of how Paul follows Jesus which is a model for us in discipling.

2. **The Commitment of the Disciple - To the Lordship of Christ and to the process of discipleship** - The commitment of a Christian disciple is, most basically, a commitment to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who genuinely confess Jesus as Lord should fall into a pattern of submission to His leadership. That is why we consistently define a disciple, as a
follower of Christ. Learning to follow Christ rightly is extremely difficult to do all by yourself, and going it alone is actively discouraged in Scripture. Just as Jesus commanded mature believers to make disciples, it is obvious he would encourage new believers to enter into discipling relationships with mature believers. They are to do this for the purpose of learning to live as Christians and become effective, productive members of the body of Christ. Following Christ, then, begins by heeding His command to be discipled. Mature believers should be consistently encouraging new believers to seek out godly disciplemakers who will instruct, encourage, and hold them accountable to obeying all that the Lord commanded. Therefore, it will take a strong commitment to following the instruction and exhortations of the discipler. In our post-modern American environment, people are very autonomous and do not like submitting themselves to instructions, reproof and exhortations, especially to moral commands from the Bible! It is important therefore to get an upfront commitment from those whom you disciple that they will conform themselves to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles that you exhort them in. This is a fundamental part of discipling and it requires a verbal commitment, and even some reminders about it along the way if/when things get tough.

Have a Relationship with Your Disciple
Have a close personal relationship of trust with your disciple. Work on the social aspect of your relationship as well. Walk with them, help them, love them in practical ways. Be their friend and invest your life into them and live as their brother or sister in Christ. Do them deliberate spiritual good by always encouraging them to trust God and Christ, and to honor God in all they do. Be their teacher and counselor and don’t be afraid to exhort them or even correct them when need be. Be sure and tell them and show them in tangible ways that you love them and want what is best for them and teach them what that means from the Bible.

Teach Your Disciple God’s Word
1. Make Sure Your Disciple is Saved – To the best of your ability. Teach them all the fundamental parts of the Gospel and make sure they know it and can articulate it spontaneously.
2. Teach them what God’s Word is – Explain what inerrancy and infallibility are to them. Maybe take a few weeks to read through Grudem’s Doctrine of Scripture or a book like “Taking God at His Word” by Kevin DeYoung.
3. Teach them what the Bible says - Spend many months taking them through a Gospel (like Mark) and some epistles like Romans and Ephesians, 1 & 2 Peter. Show them how to be careful in interpreting passages and reading and thinking about scripture with discernment.
4. Teach them how it applies to their life – Explain to them how to do what the Word says and how important obedience to God is. “teaching them to obey all that I commanded you.”
5. Teach them how to live by the Word – Explain to them how you are making decisions in your life based on what God has said and show them how important it is to have integrity, humility, and virtue. Take several months to read a book on Sanctification with them like Jerry Bridges “The Practice of Godliness” or Bill Farley’s “Gospel Powered Humility.”
6. Use resources that help them learn. Brand new believers can learn a lot if you walk them through the workbooks we have called “Foundations” and “The Fundamentals of the Faith.”
   a. See “Book Recommendations for Disciplemakers”
7. Consider **what your disciple needs to learn** and teach them accordingly. Answer their questions. Be sure to ground them in the **Fundamentals of the Faith** and make sure they learn and become **disciplined** in the 3 Basic Disciplines of Christian Life.

**Teach Your Disciple the Basic Disciplines of the Christian Life**

1. **The Word of God**
   a. Teach them to **know the Word** by reading it everyday.
   b. Teach them the **importance of reading the whole Bible** all the way through several times.
   c. Teach them to **live by the Word**
   d. Teach them to **hunger** for the **Word** and **meditate** on the **Word**
   e. Teach them **how to study the Bible** and how to use Bible study resources

2. **Prayer**
   a. Teach them **how to pray from Scripture** and by **modeling** it.
   b. Teach them the **importance of prayer** from the **Bible** – David, Daniel, Solomon, Nehemiah, Paul and others

3. **Fellowship and Service**
   a. Teach them the about the body of Christ and how important it is to **be in church regularly** to **worship God** and give Him glory through singing, fellowship, and corporate prayer. Tell them how important it is to sit under the **Word preached** every week to have their **mind renewed in the Word**. Tell them how important it is to **love people in the church**. Teach them that people in the church are people with real problems and failings and to learn to be patient, forgiving, and accommodating to God’s precious saints.
   b. Teach them how to **love and serve the church** for who Christ died. Explain from the Bible that they have gifts that God has given them to use in loving and serving the church. Help them understand what their gifts are. Exhort them to make sure they keep **life priorities** like marriage, family, church, work, etc. are all in the **right balance**. Show them and explain to them how you carefully live to balance your life priorities.

**Train Your Disciple to be a Disciplemaker**

Don’t forget that at some point your disciple will have **learned how to live the Christian life** from you. This would and should include how you have been committed to discipling them. Teach them that it will **soon be their time to help someone else follow Jesus**, and that this is the Lord’s command. Explain that when you have finished with them, you will be looking for another to help follow Jesus, and this will continue until the Lord returns.

**Why Do We Make Disciples?**

1. To obey Jesus’ Great Commission
2. To teach believers to worship Jesus and follow Him as their ultimate priority
3. To emphasize the necessity of loving, enjoying, and glorifying Christ in all aspects of life, worshipping Him and submitting our life to Him in obedience.
4. To encourage believers to keep Christ and the Gospel at the center of their lives and that discipling is the means that God has chosen to train new believers in Kingdom living.