

A DIFFERENT KIND OF DISCIPLE REQUIRES A DIFFERENT KIND OF DISCIPLESHIP

Randy Murphy, *CTO Ministries*

PART ONE: THE NEED FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Intro: This is the beginning of a Three-Part Series on Transformational Discipleship. In Part One we will address the need to move past information to transformation as the goal of discipleship. In Part Two we will discuss what a transformed disciple looks like and in Part Three we will look at a strategy to make transformed disciples.

The need for discipleship is a popular discussion within church leadership today. Although there is consensus on the need for it, there is little consensus on what a “disciple” looks like, let alone how you develop “disciples”. This *should be* a topic of discussion since the Great Commission in Matthew 28 calls all believers to “make disciples.” This is not the “Great Suggestion” but an imperative to anyone who is a follower of Christ. As Hudson Taylor stated, “The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed.”

The American church often incorrectly makes a distinction between a “disciple” and a “disciple-maker.” So with this distinction it is possible to *become* a disciple but never engage in *making* disciples. We will propose in Part Two of this study that they are one of the same: **A true disciple will be a disciple-maker.** That is the only way the imperative to make disciples of all nations will get accomplished.

*The Great Commission is not an option to be considered;
it is a command to be obeyed.
Hudson Taylor*

Today there still is a big focus on getting people to a “church service” by finding ways to make that experience attractive to an unbeliever or someone who has had a negative experience with “church.” After many years of creative approaches the question is being asked “How are all these people we have attracted to our church more like Jesus today?” An honest answer to that question has contributed, in part, to the increased discussions about the need for discipleship. Maybe the approach of “let’s get the unbeliever to our church service so they can meet Jesus” is backwards. Maybe we need to help people meet Jesus, *then* get them to our services so they can meet His Body, the Church.

Over 20 years ago, George Barna, in his book *Growing True Disciples*, suggested the need for a new approach – a focus on a new “kind” of disciple – the need for what can be called “transformational discipleship.”

“Churches work hard at trying to expand and strengthen the kingdom of God with all types of creative and life-affecting ministries. Thousands of churches are currently fine-tuning their worship services to make them more attractive and compelling...All

such efforts are well intentioned and bear some fruit. But I would like to propose what I believe is a better strategy for growing the kingdom of God. What would happen for God's kingdom if we did not consider our job complete when people confess their sins and say a prayer inviting Jesus to be their Redeemer, but would use their new commitments to Christ as a launching pad for a lifelong quest to become individuals who are completely sold out—emotionally, intellectually, physically, spiritually—to the Son of God?"¹

Barna's point is that we need a different kind of disciple – one who truly looks and lives like Jesus. Our discipleship today often stops at "learning about Jesus." This has not produced the "sold out" follower of Christ to whom Barna refers. The problem today is not a lack of *information* but a lack of *transformation*. We have more biblical information available to us than any time in history! Yet, the church seems weak and ineffective in growing the Kingdom and influencing our culture.

*The problem today is not a lack of **information**
but a lack of **transformation***

"Jesus isn't merely interested in conforming — changing the appearance and behavior of people. He's interested in transformation. Transformation is more than a surface-level alteration; it's actually becoming something else entirely."²

Jesus' goal is not to make us into a better version of ourselves, but to make us into a whole new person – a person that is like Him – a person that bears His image. It is this kind of transformation that should be at the heart of all of our discipleship endeavors. We are here to be on mission with Jesus – and that mission is to make disciples who put God on display through their changed lives.

Ken Adams says it so succinctly: "Becoming like Jesus does not happen automatically. No one wakes up the next day living like their teacher. We must be trained. We must be trained fully. A fully trained disciple looks and acts like Jesus...Fully trained means you know what it takes to live the way Jesus did and accomplish his mission."³

*We are here to be on mission with Jesus – and that mission is
to make disciples who put God on display through their changed lives.*

The Christian life is about transformation – about being changed and even "conformed" into the image of Christ. Transformation and a changed life are at the center of our theological understanding of what it means to become a Christian. Here are five transformational aspects of salvation.

Five Transformational Realities of Salvation

1. THE CALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST

The call to become a Christian is first and foremost a call to follow Jesus.

Jesus called his first disciples and then all those after them to simply “Follow Me.” It is not a call to clean up your life, to start going to church or even to become religious – it is a call to follow Jesus. **It requires a move in a new direction.** It is a call to learn about Him, to begin thinking like Him and then to live like Him. This all requires “change.” To become an image-bearer of Jesus requires a radical change in how we think, live and most importantly how we love. Jesus calls us to a “New Commandment” to love like He loves us – this is a new kind of love.

*The call to follow Jesus is the call to live in a **new kingdom.***

In Matthew 4 Jesus calls his first disciples to “follow him.” He then sets them down in Matthew 5 and describes the new kingdom of which they are now a part. This new kingdom is radically different than what they were expecting. It was an *upside-down* kingdom comprised not of the powerful and prestigious but by those who were being transformed from the *inside-out*. His kingdom, where He is King, was not about being religious but about those whose character reflected Jesus and compelled them to not just hear His words but to do them. Changed people who reflected changed hearts that was seen in changed lives. Lives of obedience out of love for the one who called them and changed them.

*The call to live in a new kingdom is a call to a **new Identity.***

*“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature;
the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”
2 Cor. 5:17*

Jesus told those first disciples that they were no longer *fishermen* but that He would make them *fishers of men*. They dropped their nets, jumped out of their boat and left everything they were behind – they had a whole new identity – followers of Christ. (Matt. 4:18-22). They would never be the same – never who they used to be, never who people thought them to be. They were changed forever, never to return to who they previously were and what they previously did.

*The call to live with a new identity results in living with a whole **new purpose.***

Their new purpose was to be His witnesses. (Acts 1:8) A witness shares what they saw and experienced. I like how John communicates this in 1 John 1:

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life — and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and

*proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us — what we have seen and **heard we proclaim to you also**, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*
1 John 1:1-3

I think this is part of what Jesus was referring to when he described the citizens of His Kingdom as “salt” and “light”. Our purpose is to put Him on display through our changed lives as “image-bearers” of Jesus.

*Living with a new purpose requires living with **new priorities**.*

As we are transformed into better “image-bearers” of Christ, sharing what we experience with Him,` our priority now becomes “making disciples.” In the Great Commission given by Jesus himself in Matthew 28, we are given clear priorities: *baptizing* in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, *teaching* them to observe all that I commanded you.” This is how we fulfill the imperative to “make disciples.” This is why we are here. This is why we live where we live, work where we work and build relationships within the context of our unique network of friends and acquaintances.

“Unless the church makes making discipling its main agenda, world evangelism is a fantasy. There is no way to reproduce, multiply, and decentralize people and the Gospel without first diligently making disciples. The way we have proceeded has not produced the quality of people or the number of people to perform what Christ commanded.”⁴

*The call to become a Christian is
first and foremost a call to follow Christ.
The call to follow Christ is the call to a transformed life.*

As we follow Christ, our lives, our identity our purpose and priorities are changed forever. The very nature of salvation is about change – about the transformation by the Spirit of God working in our lives. Let’s look at a few other aspects of salvation that also reflect transformation and change.

2. THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

Repentance is a pretty central theme of the New Testament gospel. John the Baptist’s primary message was “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 3:2) As Jesus began his formal ministry he began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 4:17). He even stated that he came “not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:32) Jesus sent out his twelve who “went out and proclaimed that people should repent.” (Mark 6:12). Jesus said that “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

The very word implies change – “to repent, change the mind, relent. Theologically, it involves regret or sorrow, accompanied by a true change of heart toward God.”⁵

It requires turning from something in order to turn toward something else. This turning from sin and turning to God requires a heart change that will be evidenced by a change of behavior. To say you are a Christian, yet you have not turned from your sin and turned to the righteousness of Christ is incompatible with the repentance that leads to salvation and the ongoing repentance that should characterize the true follower of Christ.

3. THE NATURE OF REGENERATION

“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”
Titus 3:5-7

A *changed heart* will produce a *changed life*. When Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus with questions about how to have a relationship with God, Jesus told him, “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) To be “born again” refers to a spiritual rebirth or regeneration of the human spirit, and a change from being spiritually dead to spiritually alive through Christ.

“After the invitation to respond to the gospel is given, God must bring about a change in an individual’s heart before he or she is able to respond in faith. That change, a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us, is sometimes called regeneration.”⁶ Regeneration is the experience of a complete change of life or the “rebirth” of a person. It’s a radical change that moves a person from a state of pollution and death to a renewed state of holiness and life. The Bible describes those who have been regenerated as “new creations” in Christ.

“But God...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved,”
Eph. 2:4a,5

Who was once dead is now alive – this is the most significant change one could experience and it is at the heart of our salvation.

4. THE BASIS OF SANCTIFICATION

Once redeemed and reconciled with God, the process of transformation has just begun! This ongoing process of conforming the follower of Jesus more and more into His image is called sanctification. “Sanctification is a progressive work of both God and man that makes Christians more and more free from sin and more and more like Christ in their actual lives.”⁷ Paul says that we “are being transformed ... from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18).

God transforms and grows us through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who works within us to change and sanctify us, giving us greater holiness in life.

It is the Holy Spirit who produces in us the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23), those character traits which are part of greater and greater sanctification.

That fruit of the Spirit goes beyond just making us better image-bearers who are becoming more like Jesus to producing fruit in our lives that allows us to live like Jesus. Paul prayed for this in the life of the believers in his epistle to the Colossians:

“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”
Col. 1:9-10

Paul prayed that they would have more than just knowledge. He prayed for the kind of knowledge that would lead to wisdom and understanding which would ultimately bear fruit. John tells us in John 15:8 that God is glorified when we bear much fruit. He goes on to say that in bearing fruit we prove to be His disciples.

That work of the Spirit goes beyond just making us better image-bearers who are becoming more like Jesus, to producing fruit in our lives that is the demonstration of living like Jesus.

5. THE COMPLETION OF TRANSFORMATION

The process of becoming like Jesus will only reach its complete fruition when we are taken to heaven – that is when the final transformation takes place!! Right now we are currently *being* transformed, but someday we will *be* transformed. Genuine spiritual change is based on what God has done, is doing, and will do. We can live with the confidence that our transformation will ultimately be complete:

“And I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
Phil. 1:6

“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”
1 Pet. 5:10

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”
Jude 24-25

CONCLUSION:

In Matthew 28 Jesus gives his last directive to his disciples. Of all the things He has shared with them, these are his departing words – the thing He wants them most to remember: “As you go, make disciples.” This is their mission – this is to be their priority. To be on mission with Jesus is to be a disciple-maker – making disciples whose lives have been transformed by their encounter with Jesus and the work of His Spirit in their lives. Changed lives who put Him on display as salt and light to a world that is morally lost and living in the darkness. To put Him on display as the source of a changed life and a hope for the future. And in all of this God receives great glory!

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PART TWO: THE NEED FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF DISCIPLE

John Stott observed that, “The world would be very different if everyone were making fully trained disciples who look like Jesus in their character and conduct...We need to get back to what Jesus told his disciples to do two thousand years ago and make disciples that look like him.”⁸ The current state of discipleship is superficial. This superficiality is seen by the reality that despite significant numbers of Americans professing faith in Christ, there is little impact morally or spiritually on our culture. When asked about the state of the church, the late John Stott responded: “growth without depth.”⁹

The world would be very different if everyone were making fully trained disciples who look like Jesus in their character and conduct.
John Stott

George Barna has sadly concluded, “My research shows that most Americans who confessed their sins to God and asked Christ to be their Savior – live almost indistinguishable from the unrepentant sinners, and their lives bear little, if any fruit, for the kingdom of God.”¹⁰

Today there is a need for a different kind of disciple – one who *looks* like Jesus, *lives* like Jesus and is *on mission with Jesus* to bear fruit and to intentionally build His Kingdom. They seem to be few and far between these days! To address this problem we must start by defining what we mean by a “disciple.”

*In the New Testament culture you didn't just **learn** from your teacher
– you became **like** your teacher.*

The word *disciple* in the Greek refers to a pupil or learner – “one who engages in learning through instruction from another.”¹¹ In the NT culture a disciple was more than just a *learner* who gained information from his teacher but was “someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way.”¹² You didn't just *learn* from your teacher – you became *like* your teacher. But it went even further than that. The disciple was “an apprentice or pupil attached to a teacher or movement; one whose allegiance is to the instruction and commitments of the teacher or movement”¹³ It required that the disciple not merely be a *learner* but a *doer*.

Jesus made this clear in the final summary of His great Sermon on the Mount, that the true believer – the true disciple – was the wise man: “The one who hears these words of mine and does them...” He contrasted this person to the foolish man: “The one who hears these words of mine and does not do them...” (Matt. 7:24,26). This is the same

call James referred to when He said, “*but be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*” (James 1:22). This is a different kind of disciple. One who was not just a knower but a doer. One who did not just have changed behavior, but one who had a changed heart.

1. THE CALL AND CRITERIA TO BE A TRUE DISCIPLE – A SIMPLE CALL WITH SIGNIFICANT CRITERIA

Jesus’ call to the first disciples was quite simple: Follow Me. It was not a call to become a Christian but a call to be his disciples and to follow Him into a whole new Kingdom – to become part of a whole new movement. He was more than a teacher who taught about this Kingdom – He would establish the reality that He was “King” of that Kingdom. He made it clear that this Kingdom was not about external appearance and changed behavior, but comprised of those who had a *changed heart*. It would be made up of those who were being changed by the Spirit of God from the inside-out – it was not about appearing “religious” on the outside. That is why the simple call to “follow” came with some significant criteria – a call that was “hard and narrow and few find” (Matt. 7:13-14). Many “would-be” disciples initially followed Jesus but when things got tough they bailed out. Those who remained – those willing to trust Him, continue to follow Him and obey Him were the ones who were “truly His disciples.” (John 8:31)

*Real faith and real transformation are accompanied by real action.
Though transformation occurs in the heart, it is validated by obedience.*

Jesus was very direct in communicating that to follow Him would put a great cost on one’s life. In the CTO article [Intimate Discipleship](#) we list some of the criteria Jesus established for those who would follow Him – the criteria of truly being one of his disciples:

One who denies self and follows Christ

“...If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

One who is willing to suffer

“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,” (Phil. 1:29)

One who places his relationship with Christ before all others, even his own family

“If anyone comes to me, and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26)

One who is willing to crucify self – to die to self

*“And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”
(Luke 14:27)*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was killed in a concentration camp in Nazi Germany for his faith, understood the deep cost of discipleship when he spoke these words, “When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die.”¹⁴ The disciple must be willing to suffer for His sake.

One who lives with an eternal perspective – not attached to the world

“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33)

One who lives by truth

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31b,32)

One who loves sacrificially

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)

One who bears fruit

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:8)

One who imitates God

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us...” (Eph. 5:1,2)

2. THE CHARACTER AND FRUIT OF THE TRUE DISCIPLE – TO BE LIKE JESUS

This call was a radical call to a whole new life – living for a whole new Kingdom. The citizens of this Kingdom were different, they had a changed heart that changed everything about them. They were to be like Jesus – to become like their teacher – a true disciple.

It required that they learn about Jesus – but this involved more than just gaining information about Him. It was about being transformed into an “image-bearer” who put Jesus on display through their changed life. It required that they move beyond information to transformation. Knowledge alone “puffs up.” (1 Cor. 8:1-2). That is why Jesus never equated knowledge with discipleship.

In *Transformational Discipleship* the authors concluded:

“We have observed two common yet flawed views that unfortunately impact a church's likelihood to make disciples that are transformed: equating information with discipleship and viewing discipleship merely as behavioral modification. Discipleship is much more than information and much deeper than behavioral modification.”¹⁵

The essence of discipleship is transformational, not informational. This flies in the face of our western approach to learning, which is based more on the Greek model of learning rather than the Hebrew model of learning.

- Greek teaching method focuses on CONTENT
Hebrew teaching method focuses on CONTEXT
- Greek method of teaching seeks to shape a student's MIND
Hebrew method of teaching seeks to shape a student's HEART
- Students under the Greek method learn what the teacher KNOWS
Students under the Hebrew method pattern themselves after what their teacher IS
- Greek method teaching is EFFICIENCY driven
Hebrew method teaching is RELATIONSHIP driven¹⁶

In the Greek model, truth was communicated by the master teacher. When the student could *recite* that truth it demonstrated that he had learned. In the Hebrew model, *truth taught wasn't truth learned until it was truth applied.* As Greg Ogden stated, “making disciples is a transformative process.”¹⁷ He goes on to say:

“As one who has been a pastor and a professor, I am certainly not opposed to acquiring knowledge. But information alone does not lead to transformation. We can hold truth in a compartmentalized fashion without having it change the way we think, feel or act.”¹⁸

In the Hebrew model, truth taught wasn't truth learned until it was truth applied.

Discipleship is much deeper than behavioral modification. As the followers of Jesus learned from Him, they began to live and love like him. This change in their lives produced what Jesus called “fruit.”

“This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:8)

*In Christ, as a new creation, my fruitfulness
is an extension of my transformation.
Doug Halliday*

Doug Halliday makes this observation:

“What strikes me about Jesus’ message on fruit-bearing is that He marks the source of the fruit. Where will this fruit come from? Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. The fruit is a part of the tree. The fruit cannot be separated from the identity of the tree. The fruit comes from what is ‘stored up in his heart.’ The external, visible evidence of a true Christ follower comes from an inward transformation of identity. The fruit isn’t just something I have, or something I produce. The fruit is who I am. **In Christ, as a new creation, my fruitfulness is an extension of my transformation.**¹⁹ (emphasis added)

The CTO approach to making disciples zeros in on the value of transformation versus information. What we do is best described as...

*A journey that is shared in relationship,
not a lesson that is taught in a classroom.
Mike Dunford, CTO Ministries*

3. THE COMMITMENT AND MISSION OF THE TRUE DISCIPLE – ON MISSION WITH JESUS

The call to follow Jesus, to truly be one of His disciples, was not just a call to a commitment to Jesus as their teacher, but to His Mission as their leader. Unfortunately today, becoming a disciple is often separated from becoming a disciple-maker. Bobby Harrington and Bill Hull share their concerns in this area:

“The discipleship movement is often in crisis due to the disconnection between discipleship and reproduction. A movement based on the idea that it will reproduce and doesn’t will languish. The ‘teaching them to obey everything Christ commanded’ part of the Great Commission didn’t create reproduction because it fell into the same dark hole of low expectations — the same expectations that often sink evangelism. Instead, we need to figure out how to cast vision for high expectations of multiplication.”²⁰

Back to our definition of a disciple: The disciple was “an apprentice or pupil attached to a teacher or movement; one whose allegiance is to the instruction and commitments of the teacher or movement.”²¹ Jesus was not about giving His disciples new information that they could share with others – he was about beginning a movement – the establishment of the Kingdom of God here and now! Starting with John the Baptist and continuing with Jesus, the call was to repent, “for the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

To be on mission with Jesus is to be a disciple-maker – making disciples whose lives have been forever changed by their encounter with Jesus and the transforming work of His Spirit in their lives.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 gives the imperative to “make disciples.” (See Part One of this series). The participles *go*, *baptizing* and *teaching* give direction on how to make disciples. Reproduction and multiplication is assumed. The mission would never get accomplished if the disciples did not make disciples, who made disciples, who made disciples. The first disciples shared their experience with Jesus with others (1 John 1:1), who shared their experience with others, who shared their experience with others and eventually you and I heard the gospel. This is Jesus’ plan. To teach them to “observe all that I commanded you” included teaching them to make disciples. I cannot see how it is possible to be a true disciple who is not a disciple-maker. Yet somehow we have separated the two with the result that we are not being very effective at fulfilling the Great Commission.

The church has lost its primary mission. John Whittaker affirms this point:

“It’s not some add-on that you do later. It isn’t even evangelism *plus discipleship*. It’s discipleship, which includes evangelism. **In other words, disciple-making is the core mission of the church...** It’s all aimed at helping people become disciples and live as disciples, which means they have to rearrange their life to become like Jesus. So, here’s a subtle shift in thinking that makes a massive impact on our ministries: **Disciple making isn’t something we do; it’s everything we do.**”²² (emphasis added)

Making disciples who make disciples is why we are here. It is how the true disciples are reproduced and how followers of Jesus multiply the followers and build the Kingdom of God.

How do we make *transformed disciple-makers*? That will be the topic of the next article in our series.

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PART THREE: THE NEED FOR AN INTENTIONAL, REPRODUCIBLE STRATEGY

Jesus staked the future of his ministry on his investment in a few. Do we do the same? Why did Jesus choose the Twelve and spend so much time with them? If we were to follow this model, what would it look like?... “Once the biblical model of Jesus and Paul has refreshed our theological vision, we will see how the imperative to make disciples a few at a time can become integral to our church or ministry-based approach.”²³

Failure to pursue disciple-making hinders any movement toward fulfilling the Great Commission. As Bill Hull explains,

“Discipling leads to reproduction and finally multiplication, which are God’s design and method to reach the world. Because the church has largely ignored this process, the cause of Christ has greatly suffered.”²⁴

As I evaluated my 30 plus years involved in church ministry, I realized that I had spent countless hours and thousands of dollars on programs and activities – none of which were unbiblical. However, the majority of these activities were not mandated in scripture – yet the very thing we are all commanded to do, to make disciples, wasn’t happening very effectively.

*Only 5% of Christians have or are discipling others.²⁵
George Barna*

Why are so few who claim to be followers of Jesus actually following His example in this area? Why are believers not investing their time in making disciples?

George Barna discovered that “not feeling qualified or equipped is the main barrier for this group. (37%) Additional Barna research shows that disinterest in disciple-making is tied to a fear of not being good at it, of not having enough knowledge or of being the wrong person for the job. The confidence crisis is a core issue.”²⁶

*Not feeling **qualified** or **equipped** are the main reasons Christians give for not making a priority of making disciples.*

It is often shared from the pulpit that discipling someone is not that difficult. Just meet with your friend over coffee and take them through the Gospel of John. This is overwhelming to most people in our churches. “How do I do that? Do we read verses together? Do we read a chapter and discuss it? I don’t know what to say or how to lead a discussion like that! What do I do when we get to the passage that says ‘eat my flesh and drink my blood’?” In addition, there often is the lack of a clear strategy of taking the disciple beyond just gaining more information and pointing them to the deeper personal

issues in their lives that is hindering them from being transformed into fully devoted followers of Christ who are “obeying all that I commanded you.” (Matt. 28:20)

“Jesus appeared to rely on two means to carry his life and mission forward: the Holy Spirit and the Twelve. His life was transferred to their lives by his Spirit and by his association with and investment in them. The irrefutable legacy Jesus wanted to leave behind was the transformed lives of ordinary men who would carry on his work after he returned to the Father. Internalization occurred through intense association.”²⁷

So, we cannot stop at merely making a disciple. A true disciple will be a disciple-maker. “Biblical discipleship does not allow for two classes of followers: the ordinary and extraordinary, Christian and disciple.”²⁸

We have separated being a disciple from being a Christian and we have separated disciple-making from being a disciple.

I believe there are five key elements to encourage disciple-making to begin to take place in a greater way within our churches and within the Body of Christ. These elements are part of what is needed by most people to give them the confidence to engage in a discipling relationship.

THE 5-T's OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

Many people do not engage in discipling others because they do not know what to do or how to do it. They feel inadequate and fear they may be asked questions they do not know how to answer. The following 5 T's of Disciple-Making address what can help encourage a culture of transformational discipleship.

1. **Transformational Experience** to model

We don't use travel agents much these days due to Expedia, Priceline, Hotels.com and others. However, the role of a travel agent is pretty simple. I tell them where I want to go on vacation and how much I have to spend. They will then reach into their file cabinet for a brochure or take me to a website and show me pictures of where I can stay and things I can do.

When traveling in India, my friend Benjamin, an indigenous pastor, was our host and tour guide. He gave us some clear instructions before our plane landed in central India:

“First you will notice that the plane once landed, stops in the middle of the runway – there is no gate to pull up to. Next we will all depart off the back of the plane – as you move down the steps you will notice a “teenage-looking” young man in a military outfit with a machine gun in his hand waiting to greet

you. Don't worry, he is there to protect you. Next you will notice our luggage scattered all over the runway – remember there is no gate! Find your luggage and proceed to the little shed at the edge of the runway. As you walk through the rickety door either a red light on the left or a green light on the right will go off. This is a completely random. If green – continue through the exit door. If red, you will be surrounded by three to four of those military boys and taken to a private room where they will dump out your suitcases and inspect every square inch of everything. Once they are satisfied you can repack your bags and join the rest of us – don't worry – we are waiting for you. As you walk out the exit door you will be hit by a smell in the air you have never smelled before and it will be with you your entire trip – you will still smell it on your clothes weeks after you have returned home. Welcome to India!”

Why could Benjamin give such detail? Because he has experienced it all himself. All the travel agent can do is show you pictures of a place they most likely have never visited and merely communicate what information is on the brochure or webpage.

As believers, we are called to be Tour Guides not Travel Agents!

It is hard to take others to a place in their walk with Jesus you have not been. Most people have never experienced a committed personal discipling relationship so they have no model to turn to in disciplining someone else. Not many have experienced the transformation that the Spirit of God can bring in the context of the encouragement and accountability that such a relationship can offer. John gives us a glimpse of what being a "Tour Guide" looks like in 1 John 1:1-4:

*“That which was from the beginning, which we **have heard**, which we have **seen with our eyes**, which we looked upon and have **touched with our hands**, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and **we have seen it**, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—**that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you,**” [emphasis added]*

Most pastors have never experienced a personal, one-on-one, committed discipling relationship. In most cases, they certainly did not get that as part of their seminary education. With no personal model or example, it is hard to know how to take others to a place they have never been in a context they have never experienced. It is also difficult for them to get excited about equipping their members in transformational discipleship because they do not know how to do it.

*Two out of three pastors (63%) say their greatest need is for additional training in disciple-making.²⁹
Lifeway Greatest Needs Research 2022*

I have seen that when the Spirit of God works through the Word of God in the context of an intimate discipling relationship, transformation is more likely to occur. When a disciple experiences the power of the Spirit of God in their lives, they want others to experience it as well. When others see that kind of transformation, they also want to know how they can experience it. This produces a real willingness and desire to engage in such a discipling relationship.

2. **Track** to guide

People need to know where they're going — direction. A strategy (process) is needed that provides cohesive structure with flexibility to adjust relative to the Holy Spirit's leading and the disciple's needs.

Most people do not feel equipped to lead the discipleship time with just a topic or with just a passage of scripture. They need a "roadmap" that guides them down the "track". A "track" is needed that is intentionally designed to get people "in" the Word of God and "under" the Word of God to guide the growth process.

The CTO approach is designed to help you practically apply biblical principles in your daily life.

This experiential path will help you reconcile the key relationships in your life by teaching you how to forgive, renewing your mind, releasing fears, and giving thanks. In addition, you will be encouraged to be anchored in the character of God.

We have found this takes place most effectively in a one-on-one or couple-to-couple relationship.

3. **Tools** to engage

People need to know how to get there — practical steps. A process (method) is needed that incorporates practical exercises and "how to's" that personally apply to each concept, equipping life-on-life disciple-makers to help others move forward on the track.

"So what do we do when we get together?" They need tools that they are confident will help direct the time and conversation and guide them in helping the disciple in addressing the real issues in their life.

These tools in the form of some type of curriculum is needed to help the discipler fulfill Matt. 28:19-20 in (1) grounding their disciple in their relationship with Christ and His Body (*baptizing*) and (2) in living a life of practical, love-motivated obedience (*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*).

The primary disciple-making tool in the *CTO Discipleship Series* is a Three-Part series that applies the Gospel to all your relationships.

This curriculum includes 24 primary studies along with many practical projects. These are strategically organized to guide your discipleship journey by addressing your relationship with others (Part One), your relationship to the fall (Part Two), and your relationship with God (Part Three). Most individuals and couples complete the formal part of the process in 9-12 months. However, since the focus is on the relationship not the curriculum, an informal relationship often continues indefinitely.

4. **Time** for application and transformation

How long does it take to make a disciple? It will probably take longer than you think – especially if you want a truly transformed disciple who has experienced the transformation of the Spirit that has come from the application of biblical principles that have become way of life. This is a hard one to define because going through a program isn't what changes us at a deep heart level. **We are changed by the Spirit of God, through the Word of God in the context of the people of God.** This happens over a lifetime.

“Disciple makers all over the world are rushing the process. Instead of building vision, heart, and skill into each one they disciple, they simply try to get the disciple to start discipling someone else. It's just not enough...

What churches fail to realize is that making better disciples results in more disciples, while making shallow disciples results in stagnant disciples. The great weakness of modern disciple making is the belief that scale is superior to small and that faster is better than 'fatter.'”³⁰

Jesus spent significant time with His disciples. They lived with Him, learned from Him and became like Him. This does not happen in a “six week class.”

“Disciples cannot be mass produced. We cannot drop people into a program and see disciples emerge at the end of the production line. **It takes time to make disciples.** It takes individual personal attention.”³¹

In reality, no one is fully discipled this side of heaven!!! No one will be completely like Jesus until the sanctification process is completed at our glorification. There is however, the formal process of discipling that may end in its scheduled meetings but is continued through a more organic relationship as we participate in the Body of Christ. New discipling opportunities provide ongoing relationship, encouragement and accountability through new discipling relationships that continues the discipling process for both the disciple and the discipler.

5. **Training** in how to reproduce

People need to know how to multiply—make disciples who make disciples. Our life-on-life model incorporates a natural reproductive element. Transformed lives instinctively desire to help others find freedom, however, our process (method) provides specific training on how to engage relational and reproducible disciple-making.

The CTO disciple-making process equips you to easily pass what you have learned to others.

It includes:

- A launching module to support the natural desire to share transformational growth
- Access to 100+ video, audio, and digitally interactive resources to support disciple-making
- A roadmap for getting started discipling another person
- Access to an online community of disciple-makers

Since CTO is experientially learned – *life to life*, rather than taught in a classroom setting – *head to head*, it doesn't require a lot of training. The first disciples took the "hands on" experience they had with Jesus and shared it with others who shared it with others and eventually you and I heard the gospel!

These Five T's are best accomplished in the context of a personal, intimate, committed relationship. The relationship should be the focus and priority over the curriculum. The curriculum serves as a tool in the hands of the discipler as he/she shares the transformation they saw in their own lives through their discipling experience.

CONCLUSION:

We are all called to "make disciples who make disciples." This involves getting the disciple grounded in their new relationship with Jesus and connected with His Body, the church. But it also involves teaching them how to live in obedience to Jesus out of their growing love for Him. This involves transformation that often comes over time in the context of a committed discipling relationship. Yes, it is the Spirit of God, through the Word of God that transforms. But what a privilege to think He would use you and me as part of that process!

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- ² Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship, Digital Edition*, © 2012, B & H Publishing Group and LifeWay Research.
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- ⁵ S. Zodhiates, (2000), *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.
- ⁶ Wayne & Elliot Grudem, *Christian Beliefs*, <https://books.apple.com/us/book/christian-beliefs/id387709973>.
- ⁷ Ibid., Grudem.
- ⁸ John Stott, as quoted by Roger Steer, *Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 267.
- ⁹ Ibid., Stott.
- ¹⁰ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, <https://books.apple.com/us/book/growing-true-disciples/id601922346>.
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- ¹⁸ Ibid., Ogden.
- ¹⁹ Doug Halliday, *True Disciples Bear Good Fruit*, Discipleship.org, <https://discipleship.org/blog/true-disciples-bear-good-fruit>.
- ²⁰ Bobby Harrington and Bill Hull, *Evangelism or Discipleship*, <https://discipleship.org/discipleship/discipleship>.
- ²¹ Ibid., Achtemeier.
- ²² John Whittaker, *Disciple Making is Everything the Church Does*, <https://discipleship.org/blog/disciple-making-everything>.
- ²³ Ibid., Ogden.

²⁴ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, Fleming H. Revell, Oct. 1999, 13.

²⁵ Ibid., Barna.

²⁶ George Barna, <https://www.barna.com/research/christians-discipleship-community>.

²⁷ Ibid., Ogden.

²⁸ Ibid., Ogden.

²⁹ Lifeway.com, <https://research.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/The-Greatest-Needs-of-Pastors-Phase-2-Quantitative-Report-Release-1.pdf>.

³⁰ Justin Gravitt, *How Long Does It Take To Make a Disciple?*

<https://www.justingravitt.com/blog/how-long-does-it-take-to-make-a-disciple>.

³¹ Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978), 45.