



Disciplemaking as a Movement

Five Critical Disciplemaking Questions

Jesus gives us the Great Commission to go and make disciples who make disciples. God's passionate desire is that every Christ-follower and church be part of a disciplemaking movement. One of the results of the gospel is that it sets us free to no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:15). To live for Christ means that He becomes not only our message, but also our model for life and ministry. His disciplemaking way of life becomes our disciplemaking way of life.

If we are going to see the gospel spread and a movement of multiplying churches, it is going to require that we embrace Jesus' disciplemaking way of life. In multiple ways at the end of His life, Jesus said, "Do what I have done (John 14:12); walk as I have walked (1 John 2:6), and follow my example (John 12:5)." When He gave His disciples what we often call the Great Commission, He was simply saying: Replicate with others exactly what I have done with you and help them repeat that same process (Matthew 28:18-20).

We believe there is a great need and opportunity to have fresh conversations regarding disciplemaking and seeing God supernaturally grow a movement of disciples who make disciples. We've identified five critical disciplemaking questions that we believe every leader and their teams need to wrestle with. We are in no way suggesting these are the only questions that leaders need to be asking, but clear answers to these questions give a good indication if you are heading in a disciplemaking direction and movement.

Question #1: What is a disciple?

A critical starting point in disciplemaking is defining what a disciple is. The gospel writers reveal that Jesus had a clear picture of what a disciple is and what one is not (Jn. 8:31; 13:35; 14:26; 15:8; Lk. 9:23). It doesn't matter how you say it as long as your definition is biblical, clear and concise. Along with a simple definition, it is also helpful to identify a few identifiable marks of a disciple (i.e. prayerful, others focused, etc.). If you don't identify the target how will you know if you're hitting the bulls-eye?

Resources:

- Hull, Bill. "Chapter 1." The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ.
- Putman, Jim. "Chapter 2." DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples.
- Mancini, Will. "Chapter 15: Talk the Walk: Measures as Missional Life Marks." Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement. San Francisco, Calif.: Joesy Bass, 2008. pp. 151-163. Summary of entire book: <http://visionroom.com/sums/Sums-Church-Unique.pdf>
- Spader, Dann. "Week 1: Introduction to Walking as Jesus Walked – Making Disciples the Way Jesus Did."
- Chan, Edmund. "Chapter 2: Definition of a Disciple." A Certain Kind.

Question #2: What is your understanding of discipling?

Most churches have the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) somewhere in their mission statement but what does that actually mean? Most churches today, particularly in the United States, are in the "disciple-being" business. People are consumed by activities that reflect being good disciples: worship, prayer, spiritual disciplines, serving in the church, etc. Those activities are a great reflection of disciple-being. Yet comparatively few churches are directly involved in what Jesus terms "disciple-making." Discipling involves a full-orbed, three-generation process of being a disciple who makes disciples who also make disciples. It should result in more disciples. This process is intentional (Matt. 4:19; Mk. 3:13-14) relational (Jn 3:22) and supernatural (Matt. 16:17). It is far more about a way of life in Christ (1 Cor. 4:17) than it is about a curriculum. Your understanding of discipling will shape your ministry strategy.

Resources:

- Summary of Dr. Robert E. Coleman's book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. <http://www.efcc.org/am-site/media/fit-bk-master-plan-evangelism.pdf>
- Ch. 9 *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*.
- *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. B&H Publishing Group: Nashville, TN, 2011. 296 pages. Book Summary: <http://visionroom.com/sums/Sums-SimpleChurch.pdf>
- Spader, Dann. Weeks 9-10. *Walking as Jesus Walked – Making Disciples the Way Jesus Did*.
- Chan, Edmund. "Chapter 3: Definition of Discipleship." *A Certain Kind*.
- Petersen, Jim. *Lifestyle Discipleship: Encouraging Others to Spiritual Maturity*. NavPress Publishing Group: 2007.

Question #3: What does discipling look like in your church?

Once you identify the bulls-eye (what a disciple is) and define the process (what discipling is) then you need to determine how it will flesh out as you cooperate with the Holy Spirit in your unique context. If discipling is the operating system of your church and not merely one of the various apps your church chooses to use, then everything you do in your church should flow from a clear discipling vision and practice. Programs—how you organize your relational time together—should exist simply to support discipling priorities not as ends in themselves. Your church needs a simple, movement-oriented pathway that is focused on helping people live both centered AND sent in Christ, together. Without a clear pathway, mere activity will define success. Does your church have an intentional, clearly defined and understood process that is producing disciples who are making disciples?

Resources:

- "Sums on Simple Church," by Will Mancini/Auxano. <http://visionroom.com/sums/Sums-SimpleChurch.pdf>
- Ch. 4-8 of Steve Murrell's book, *WikiChurch: Making Discipleship Engaging, Empowering, and Viral*.
- Redmond, Jackie. *Discipling Pathway*.

Question #4: How do you measure effectiveness in disciplemaking?

What we count, we will celebrate! And, what we celebrate is what we will become. Many avoid counting because it somehow seems unspiritual, but Jesus spoke about fruitfulness often—it is one way we give glory to the Father (Jn. 15:8). Therefore, we are wise to assess our fruitfulness—output metrics. At the same time, it is not merely our fruitfulness that matters but also our faithfulness (Matthew 25:14-30)—input metrics. God is the one who brings about transformation or what Paul identifies as “the increase” (1 Cor. 3:7). Therefore, although we cannot control the outcome, we can influence the environment by what we do—intentional planting and watering (1 Cor. 3:6). Every church needs to identify and agree upon how they will know they are being effective in accomplishing the disciplemaking mission Jesus has given them. To count nothing is simply irresponsible. Too often we only focus our effectiveness on above-ground metrics—attendance, assimilation and giving. But, with disciplemaking as our focus we’d be wise to give attention to a few below-ground metrics as well—baptisms, those serving inside/outside the church, reproducing leaders, community partnerships, members engaged with lost people, spiritual conversations, etc. Remember, what you count is what you become.

Resources:

- George Klippenes’ Summary of William R. Hoyt’s book, *Effectiveness by the Numbers*.
- Dave Ferguson’s “Keeping Score.” <https://www.exponential.org/resource-ebooks/keeping-score/>

Question #5: Who are you drawing close in disciplemaking relationships?

The conduit for disciplemaking is relationships. You can’t pass on a way of life to a crowd. Therefore, disciplemaking requires intentional time together (John 3:22). This was modeled by Jesus (Mark 3:14-17; John 17) and Paul (Roman 16; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:2) and it is no different for you and me today. A defining mark of a disciplemaker is that they are able to name those—lost, believers and leaders—that they are drawing close in disciplemaking relationships. This, of course, should begin with our own families. But, if you can’t name names then there is a good chance that little disciplemaking is taking place. Names matter!

Resources:

- Ogden, Greg. “A Few at a Time.”
- “Oikos, Your World Delivered,” a video from Tom Mercer.
<http://youtu.be/ol3uJQsw3WU>

Consider wrestling the following questions with your ministry team:

- Which question are your leaders/teams already unified around?
- As a leadership team, which question(s) do you need to give some attention to? Why?
- What other questions would you pose to help your church keep disciplemaking the focus?