

Arbor Foundations
22 – Disciple Making
Mar 17, 2019 – John Raquet

Key Ideas / Biblical Basis

Biblical Mandate for Disciple Making

Matt 18:28-30 (Great Commission)

- Primary command: Make disciples
 - o Baptizing them (implies evangelism)
 - o Teaching them to observe what Jesus has commanded

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Col 1:28-29

- What we do:
 - o Proclaim Christ
 - o Warn
 - o Teach
- Purpose/Goal:
 - o To present everyone mature in Christ
- Who does it
 - o God gives the strength (and ultimately does the work)
 - o We work with all our strength (which is given to us by God)

2 Tim 2:1-2

- Paul is training Timothy to train others...
- Is explicitly talking about pastors
- Principle applies for non-pastors as well (example: parents)

Ephesians 4:11-16

- V. 13: the goal is for us all to reach maturity
- V. 15: We should speak the truth in love to each other for the purpose of “growing into Christ” (relying on him, becoming more like him)

Scripture writers recognize that there are varying levels of spiritual maturity, and that the goal is that people become more spiritually mature

- 1 Cor 3:1-2
- Heb 5:11-14

“Moving People to the Right”

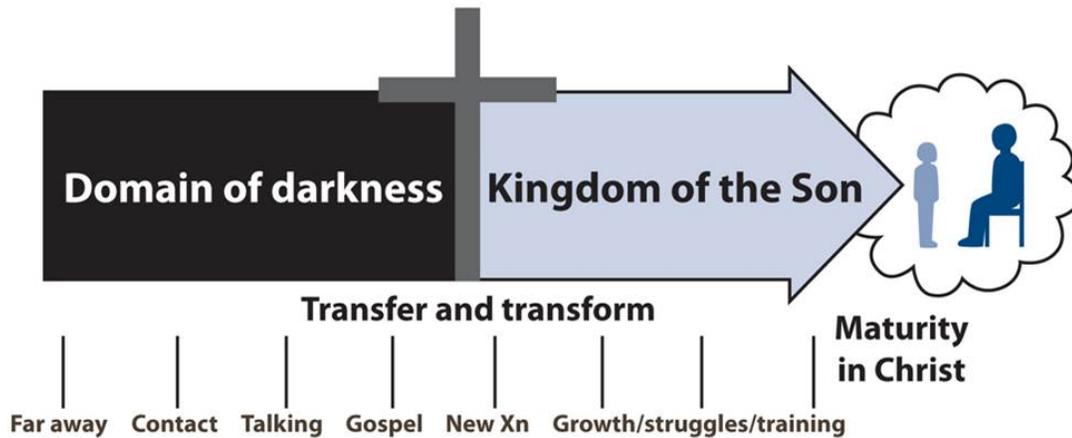


Figure from *The Trellis and the Vine*

Broad categories as people move to the right:

- **Engage** those who are far away from Christ
- **Evangelize** those who are engaged and willing to hear the gospel
- **Establish** those who have been evangelized and have come to faith in Christ
- **Equip** those who are established to be able to disciple others

Discipleship often involves small steps

- Matt 13:31-32

Discipleship not just teaching, but also people imitating us

- 1 Corinthians 11:1: *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*
 - o Note limitations of imitation—only to the extent Paul (or anyone else) is an imitator of Christ
- Hebrews 13:7: *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.*
- See example from p. 41 of book *Discipling* by Dever (quote at end of handout)

Examples of “moving people to the right”

- In a corporate (church) context
 - o Regular preaching ministry
 - o Sunday School
 - o Small groups
 - o Christianity Explored
 - o Informal conversations after church
 - o Various groups that meet regularly for prayer, Bible study, and/or fellowship
 - o Hospitality
 - o Etc.
- Individually
 - o Interacting with family (including in your own household)
 - o Hospitality
 - o Interacting with people at work or other places where you get to know people
 - o Etc.

Are You Discipling or Being Discipled?

- Most believers should be involved with both to an appropriate extent
- Emphasis will likely vary as we become mature, but even those who are mature can benefit from discipleship inputs from others

Basic Motivations for Discipleship:

- A. Love of God
 - a. We want to see God magnified by more people becoming worshippers of him
 - b. Our love for God and his Spirit causes us to want to obey his commands to use our gifts to disciple others
- B. Love of people
 - a. A genuine love for other people will cause us to want to move them “to the right” (conceptually).
 - b. It is in their best interest to come to Christ and grow in maturity.
 - c. It is the loving thing to do to encourage people to come to faith and grow in their faith.

Five Things Love Does (with respect to discipleship)

From article by Marshall Segal (based on *Discipling* by Mark Dever)

1. “Love initiates a discipling relationship.”
 - Am I willing to initiate intentional time together with this person?
 - Beyond starting the relationship, will I bring up the hard conversation we need to have?
 - Am I bold enough to consistently move our conversation to spiritual things?

2. “Love perseveres in a discipling relationship.”
 - Am I ready to keep calling after months of seeing little fruit or progress?
 - Will I give up if this person falls back into an old pattern of sin?
 - How will I respond to the inconveniences in this relationship?

3. “Love humbly receives criticism that often comes in a discipling relationship.”
 - How do I respond to criticism or opposition in general — with humility or pride?
 - Specifically, what will I feel or say when this person pushes back on what I’m teaching them?
 - What healthy ways am I encouraging give-and-take in this relationship?

4. “Love humbly gives of itself in a discipling relationship.”
 - What sacrifices am I making to spend time discipling this person?
 - Do I tend to feel bitter or prideful about the sacrifices I make for others?
 - Jesus says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Can I say the same?

5. “Love allows us to end discipling relationships.”
 - Dever helpfully unpacks this last statement about love, “We need a love that humbles us enough to recognize that what they need is not us, but God, and that God can use us for a while, and then use someone else” (91).
 - Do I think of myself as savior or as one instrument among many in the Savior’s hands?
 - How do I think about my role in this particular person’s life — as essential and irreplaceable, or as complementary and temporary?
 - Am I willing to help move this person on to other disciplers when their needs or circumstances suggest it’s time? To that end, it may be wise to establish a clear time frame up front (e.g. a month, a year, two years), so that neither person assumes the discipling relationship is indefinite.

So What?

Quote from Dever: For me, discipling is the only way I can evangelize non-Christians and equip Christians in that one place where I can never travel—the future beyond my life. Discipling others now is how I try to leave time-bombs of grace.

A healthy culture of discipleship in a church will enable vibrant growth and be welcoming to people at all levels of spiritual maturity.

We need the body of Christ in order to grow into maturity!

For Further Study

Mark Dever, *Discipling*

Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*

Quote from p. 41 of *Discipling* (relates to being imitated)

Erin Wheeler, wife to Brad who pastored with me in Washington, DC, before taking a church elsewhere, reflected in a 9Marks article how she had to learn these lessons during their time in DC. Another woman in the church showed up at Erin’s house expecting to be disciplined. Erin welcomed her inside, closed the door behind her, and thought to herself,

I am a mess. I have no idea what I’m doing here. There certainly isn’t any “teaching” going on today with my crazy hooligan children and my heart in a bad place toward my husband. I shouldn’t be teaching anyone. I’m the one who needs discipling! God, what would you have me do?

Yet God would soon teach Erin through situations like these that he would use her weakness as much as her strength. These younger women in the faith needed someone to teach them what it looks like to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength not just in the good times, but in the challenging times. Erin explains,

In discipling these women I tried to instruct and question them, discuss books together, and pray, but they would tell me later that often the best teaching came from simply watching me. They watched God use my weakness in fighting for patience when the day had long since worn me thin. They watched me struggle to love my husband after sharing my struggles with the competing demands of ministry.

These women got a front-row seat, she observes, to seeing the true jar of clay that she is (2 Cor. 4:7). But learning this gospel perspective encouraged her to keep pouring herself out like a drink offering (Phil. 2:17), knowing that God would use her frailty as a platform to display his strength.