

THE WAY OF MAKING A DISCIPLE

Bible based strategies
of Discipleship



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Introduction

The Way of Making a Disciple: Bible-based strategies for discipleship

Introduction: to those who coach a little league sport, or run a company, to parents who spend time raising children, or to women who head up a girl scout meeting, you have been in the role of the “mentor.” This term (mentor) holds great weight in its capabilities of molding lives and in instilling positive habits. Did you know the origin of mentorship is Biblical in principle?

God speaks of the virtues of mentorship in **Proverbs 27:17** when the passage states, as *“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”*

We think of a karate teacher being a mentor or an influential and caring high school teacher as a mentor. Many of us can look back at individuals in our lives who have helped us to become the people we are today. The word “mentor,” as we think of today was given a different name 2,000 years ago. The work of mentorship is the same NT ideal we can read in the Bible for discipleship.

Discipleship in NT Greek is mathētēs (μαθητής). This term means “one who engages in learning through instruction from another.” Other terms for disciple are “pupil” and “learner.” <https://biblehub.com/greek/3101.htm>

A cooking class can “disciple” you into a better cook. A personal fitness coach can “disciple” you in diet and the best workout routines and exercises. When we look at the storyline of Jesus, we read of a spiritual application to this term called “discipleship.”

To mentor or disciple, a person is to mold someone into a certain way of being. No one goes to one workshop and has all the answers in any given field nor does one immediately change into a better version of themselves in any area they are pursuing for self-development. Discipleship in any area is a **process**.



What is spiritual discipleship?

In matters of spirituality the Bible speaks of mentorship in two instances in the following passage... ***“But now, LORD, you are our father. We are the clay, and you are our potter. All of us are the work of your hand.”*** Isaiah 64:8

We are told God mentors us as a father does with his child. All parents know they have a special role in their children’s lives. They can teach, guide, and live as role models and as examples to their.... offspring. Mothers have a special role in working with and nurturing the family unit.

The father has the responsibility to lead and shows support for those family members in the house. Parents can form, (for better or worse) the character of their children that can last a lifetime. In this serious venue, let us look at the passage again.

What other discipleship traits do we read? God calls Himself the potter and us the clay. If we allow ourselves to be soft in our hearts and yielding to His will, the Master craftsman can mold us more into His likeness and image.

But how does God mentor us (as a father) and mold us (as clay)? Our Lord has given us the Word to disciple us as pupils and mold us into His image of holiness, **(2 Peter 1:3-4).**

Yet neither God nor His Son have come down from heaven to teach us. So, how can people learn the truth without being taught?

To find these answers we need to look to the Bible and its message. God's truth says, we are the teacher's that providence uses for God, **(Romans 10:14-17)**. A teacher or preacher is just one who proclaims the glad tidings. We all have that responsibility.

The Lord uses people (like you and me) as instruments of righteousness, (for His good works), **(Romans 6:13;18)** and as vessels of truth, **(2 Corinthians 4:5-7)**.

Once someone has taught us the truth, we are commanded to likewise teach others, **(2 Timothy 2:2)**. We are those who impart God's glory in what we teach to others, **(2 Corinthians 3:2-6;8-9;18)**.

We are God's hands for the molding of the clay, and we are those who share the means (through truth) of divine adoption, to those who are without a spiritual Father, in this world, **(Galatians 4:5-7)**.

This is what a true believer is supposed to be. We must share Jesus and impact others in how we live our lives. WE all must be disciples.

And a disciple is just another name for a "Christian." In the Bible, the term disciple, is used interchangeably with the term Christian, **(Acts 11:26)**.

Jesus expected a pupil of His, to follow Him and the truth He gave. A new disciple is more than just a baptized believer. Part of the saving process is in living a new and transformed life, after conversion, **(Romans 6:1-4)**.

This is what the Bible gives as a standard for us to know, whether we are God's disciples or not... "Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples," (John 8:31).

One of the aspects of truth, (that we must obey) is shown in how we disciple others through evangelism.

In the Great Commission, Christ tells the Christians too...

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” - Matthew 28:19-20

Discipleship is our duty and moral responsibility. From this Biblical commission, we read...that as Christians, we must **“go,” (search for opportunities to meet people)** then **“make,” (others into disciples)** then **“teach” (those saved to follow the same pattern)** as the commission has shown of us, **(that of going out, making disciples and mentoring them in the Word).**

That in a nutshell is the mentorship process.

- We need to be seeking for opportunities
- We need to try to bring others to the Lord as “disciples,” (pupils/followers of Jesus).
- We need to work with new Christians and help them in their new walk, (in learning and following God’s truth). This is what discipling and mentorship means for us.

Look out for the infants:

Remember we need to use our energies constructively to win in the spiritual challenges, we face (in our church and in our lives). To do this we must be unified, not only in our shared acceptance of His doctrine but in the practice of what it teaches, (examples such as love, selflessness, unity, peace and Bible-based service).

New infants are those “who crave the pure milk of the Word,” for growth, (1 Peter 2:2).

They need our help as babes in Christ. We are to be teachers and exemplars. in the Word. As the scriptures say, **“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers,” (1 Timothy**

4:16). As mentors, how we live as role models, towards the new converts, in word (teaching) and deed (example) matters.



It is about a sense of Family:

The Apostles, John (**3 John 4**) and Paul (**1 Timothy 1:2**) call new converts their “children.” Obviously, we are all sons and daughters of God, (**2 Corinthians 6:18**). Yet in this Holy Spirit inspired text, we see the implication of familiarity. Those who are taught and those who did the teaching (can and should) have a bond that feels paternal.

Do parents give up on their children or undermine them? Do fathers or mothers look out for their own interests first or their sons and daughters? Spiritually speaking we need to look out for the welfare of new infants and do what parents do for their children, (we need to be mentors). We need to spiritually mentor them through our guidance, (in teaching and in example).

What is salvation? Is it having someone come forward and do the things to die and join with Christ? Yes, but it is so much more. It is helping them walk in newness of life, (**Romans 6:1-4**).

Teaching truth does not end with their conversion, that is when it really starts fully. Now you introduce them to your example you lead in your Christian life. Now you have them integrated into the church's **culture of Bible-based work and service**.

Truth brings them and holds the new infant, yet love is foundational in joining them to a spiritual family of believers. We need to place ourselves in the lives of the new Christians. ***Remember discipleship is mentorship.*** No new baby should be left to fend against the wolves, alone. Examples of wolves can be false teachers undermining the Word, relatives applying peer pressure to leave the church, worldly friends tempting them to sin. No new baby should be ignored and left to die.

Yet when we do not work with the little infant, when we do not continue to teach and train the child, that is in fact what we are doing.

If you saw a baby alone in the woods on a cold night, crying and afraid, would you walk by? Would you let that child be torn apart by dogs or freeze to death? Would that not be the same as killing the child, through indifference? We must have the heart of Christ. We must show it in our lives, (compassion) in how we treat “the least of these,” **(Matthew 25:40)**.



The storyline of Jesus:

I am going to go into the Bible's narrative of the life of Christ. I will show from scripture how our Lord discipled others. From these points we can learn how to mentor people.

Jesus sought after the lost: Jesus searched for people to save and afterward to further disciple and mentor those people...in the Word. While by Galilee, Christ called Peter, James, and John, **(Luke 5:1- 11)**. When Jesus was walking throughout Israel, He called Matthew the tax collector to follow Him, **(Matthew 9:9)**.

Jesus looked for opportunities in matters of evangelism. A key phrase I think of when I work with new Christians or possible future saints is this, **“discipleship is mentorship.”** It reminds me of the (spiritual) role I must play in the lives of those I interact with. As a mentor I must instruct others and give an example for emulation and guidance, (in matters of the truth).

The goal is to **not make carbon copies of our likeness and create disciples after ourselves**. As a follower of Christ, we want to emulate our Lord. When we teach and guide others in matters of truth, we can help the new converts pursue this worthy cause too. Discipleship is simply shown in following the pattern of the Word.

When we seek to save souls, we need to understand our responsibility is to make disciples. A disciple spiritually means a “pupil” or “student,” in connection to the Word. We need to know the conversion process does not end after they come to the Lord. We need to know that is when mentorship really begins.

After Jesus made disciples, He continued to work with them, (guiding them in truth and example). Christ expects us to do likewise. We need to share not just the Gospel but our lives with those who heed its message. If we truly care about God's “little children,” we will show it, in how we live our lives towards them.

As Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 2:8**

“Having so fond an 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.”

Inclusion VS exclusion: The Lord walked along the roads with His disciples. He ate with them and spent time alone with His followers. (Mark 3:7; Mark 6:31-32; Luke 9:18).

Discipleship is about time investment. We need to be willing to look for spiritual opportunities to involve new converts in our lives. There are so many ways to connect with new Christians, (you can show them hospitality, involving them in a Bible class, inviting them to join in a church worship role, have them visit the sick and elderly with you, invite them to an outreach event with you, involve them in a Christian group devotional/singing, etc.)

The more they are included in events and are used in spiritual roles, (inside and outside of the church) the more they will feel loved and feel like they are apart of the church and that “they belong.”

Inclusion is important for new converts. We just need to take the time to include them in spiritual aspects of our life. Inclusion will also help new Christians develop and mature as servants (of the Word) and as future leaders.

Please understand I am not advocating the following...

- **Giving new converts money and earthly gifts/things.**
- **Driving them around town, (when they do not have a car) for social recreation or for chores they need done. They can take the bus.**
- **Involving them in every little thing you do.**

You don't want to make them feel entitled or feel they are owed things or money. I have helped people go to doctors' offices and grocery stores, weekly. When I stopped they got angry. The new converts began to think they were owed such help. Please don't misunderstand me.

On occasion, if there is a real need, helping someone new in the faith is fine.

But make sure it is something done rarely and with great need. Doing nice things too often, can manufacture feelings of entitlement and turn their interested away from spiritual things to secular in nature.

*Remember people followed Jesus for the loaves and the fishes, **(John 6:10-15;41-42;66)**. When Christ offered spiritual food (teachings) instead, they left Him. Make sure new converts are focused on the right things, (spiritual things). If you offer carnal gifts, they will focus on you for the wrong reasons.*

*Such (earthly) things can turn their perspective from the spiritual values to the values of this world. You can cause new converts to stop looking at you as a teacher and guide. They can instead begin to see you as a “meal ticket” if you’re not careful. Be careful... Wealth and the things (of this life) can choke out the Word, **(Mark 4:19)**.*

I’ve lost new converts (as have other evangelists), due to having done the mistakes I have mentioned above. Also, I encourage you to include the new converts in spiritual activities, but in measured proportions. You don’t need to interweave their lives into your own. Have balance in including them. You do not want to create a codependency in their relationship with you, by including them in everything you do each week.

Your example and words matter:

How did Christ plant the seed of truth in His follower’s hearts? Jesus spent time with His disciples in teaching them God’s message, **(Matthew 5:1-2)**. Jesus also showed them the example they should follow in how He lived among them.

When Jesus served the disciples, when He washed their feet, (as a sign of selflessness), He said... **“I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” John 13:15**

Christ showed the disciples His example and included them in His life.

- When our Lord taught the crowds, **(Matthew 23:1-4)**.
- When He prayed, **(Luke 11:1)**.
- When Jesus did evangelism work, **(Matthew 4:18-23)**.

Our Lord had the disciples with Him when He did such things for them to learn by watching His example. Christ told the disciples to likewise be leaders in how they live as examples.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
- Matthew 5:14-16

Our Lord taught His disciples and showed them how to live, through His example. We are to do the same...as followers of Christ, in our Christian example.

Please know I am not saying we should harvest disciples to follow after us for our own sakes. I am saying, if we follow Christ, in God’s (Bible based) teaching and in the Word’s example, we can disciple others for Jesus. That is the point of the theme I am outlining.

As Paul said in **1 Corinthians 11:1** *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”* We should live among the new converts in a positive way, to influence them in their walk with the Lord.

Jesus created a sense of accountability:

Once the disciples had been shown the truth, and had accompanied Jesus (seeing His example) when He did outreach and other spiritual activities, Jesus encouraged them to go out and try these things themselves, **(Matthew 10:1-42; Luke 10:1-24)**. Our Lord even asks Peter to do step up and do spiritual things after the resurrection, **(John 21:15-19)**.

Discipleship is about fostering a sense of accountability in doing Christian work. It is about encouraging new Christians to step up and do more for the Lord, as they

grow and mature in the Word.

Paul encourages older ladies to guide the younger women in the faith, (**Titus 2:3-4**). The Apostle Paul also asked Timothy to guide the older men and younger in matters of the truth, (**Titus 2:2;6-8**).

Remember one of the guiding principles of our faith was taught by Jesus. Our Lord taught evangelism was a must to be His disciple, (pupil/follower). When Christ first called His disciples, He says in **Matthew 4:19-20** ***“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.”***

We need to do outreach work and encourage the new converts in this pursuit. We can invite them to join in (on non-Christian/other new convert Bible studies, or events like campus work or door knocking, etc.) We can also do Bible lessons with the new Christians that further ground them in this (evangelism) sense of responsibility and duty.

We need to add to the growth of the new converts in Bible study learning for their growth of righteousness. As the scriptures say, ***“Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.”*** - Proverbs 9:9



New Christians need other Christians as a support:

To many times people are converted and ignored. Instead they should be grounded, (in Bible truth) included in church work and personal Bible activities. Brethren should share with new infants' Christian hospitality and treat these babies in Christ, with affectionate love.

They need to be encouraged to join events that can help them develop spiritually. Especially in evangelism, (since this is the greatest principle the kingdom culture ignores in this day and age).

If a baby is left alone in the wilderness of life, with little too no help and support that "little one" will most likely die.

We need to be mentors. We need to include the new convert in our lives, to influence them in our Christian examples, to involve them in spiritual activities and to study with them in the core Bible concepts of the faith.

A mentor is a person who chooses to be a friend to a new convert. A mentor is someone who is there (spiritually) for the new convert.

If the babe in Christ falls, they can have support, if they are struggling, they can have a listening ear, if they need spiritual advice, they can have friends in the faith, who can give needed council.

Prayer matters:

As Christians we need to pray for soul seekers and encourage others to do this with us. Prayer groups in matters of evangelism (and for other spiritual things) are important and powerful in this endeavor to serve Christ.

We need to seek more workers for the harvest and pray for God's aid in this matter.

As Matthew 9:37-38 says... *"Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*



Details of discipleship/being a mentor:

- As in all aspects of the Christian life, a new convert should be...shown love and hospitality, (to be invited into the lives of others). - **1 Peter 4:8-9**
- Christians should work to Include new converts into the body as workers, (inside and outside of the church). - **Romans 12:3-8;11**
- They should be interacted with strong saints, to be given Bible based examples to emulate in life. - **Titus 2:7; 1 Timothy 4:12**
- New converts need to be taught accountability in matters of outreach. They need to know that evangelism must be done, to be saved. That this duty is as important as the Lord's Supper and church attendance. Because it is. This command is not a suggestion. – **Jude 23; Matthew. 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:11;14; 1 Peter 3:15**
- Saints should gradually and lovingly encourage new converts to do more and more for the Lord in matters of service, (especially in roles of outreach, like being at Bible studies, visiting new converts, doing an evangelism event, learning how to teach others, inviting friends to church, etc.) As new creations we were made to do good (Bible-based) works. - **Ephesians 2:10**
And as new creations we are called to share Jesus. - 1 Peter 2:9
- Discipleship does not end at baptism. Then they need to be grounded in the Bible teachings of maturity. I recommend doing at least 1 Bible study a week for a year with a new convert, (best done in someone's home). Bible study is a must for growth and development. – **2 Peter 1:3-4; Hebrews 5:12-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**
- We need to understand new converts are babes in the faith and be patient in working with them. They will take time to mature and learn the truths of the Word. We need to look out for their spiritual interests and be there for them. – **Romans 15:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:14**