
THE ART OF
*Making
Disciples*

by Sean Keith

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Forward

The Bible clearly instructs every Christian to reproduce themselves... disciples reproducing disciples. To many Christians and churches this instruction appears vague and almost mystic. They engage in discipleship through studies and activities, but struggle with disciple making.

Sean Keith has clearly articulated an understandable disciple-making process for both individuals and churches to fulfill the Great Commission. This process will answer the questions and needs of churches around the world through its implementation. Sean has provided a needed help for today's church!

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Introduction

Thank you for being the kind of leader who desires to be used by God to make a difference in other people's lives. This resource is a simple tool to help you guide the people you lead in determining where they are in their spiritual pilgrimage and developing a plan to help them move forward. Maybe along the way, you will find a path for your journey that will move you forward as you continue to become the person God desires you to be.

As believers, our goal is to glorify God. Our mission is to make disciples. We glorify God when we help others establish a personal relationship with God and mature to the point where they begin to do the same with others. In other words, we make disciples that we pray one day will become disciple-makers themselves.

My prayer is that God uses this resource to help you fulfill your call as a leader and disciple-maker. No matter what role you may play in the church, you are an ambassador for Christ. May you be found faithful to do just as Paul did for young Timothy: *And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also* (2 Timothy 2:2).

CHAPTER 1

What Is A Disciple?

Were you discipled by someone? I was asked this question by a young adult while leading an adult Sunday School Ministry conference. The question took me back to Glendale Baptist Church where I made my profession of faith and was baptized at the age of 19. I was part of a college Sunday School class that taught me a lot about my faith. I also remember the Pastor and Minister of Education at that church who supervised and mentored me as I became their part-time Minister of Youth.

I also remembered being taught CWT (Continued Witness Training) by Dr. Roy Fish in seminary and taking a *MasterLife* class. I also thought about the first time I worked through the book *Experiencing God*.

The question also flooded my mind with the faces of people who have invested in my life like Ron Proctor, Dr. S.M. Henriques, Dennis Smith, Keith Wilkinson, Randy Tompkins, Keith Kline, Chuck Gartman, or Dr. Richard Ross. There are so many.

Which one of these discipled me? In many ways I have been discipled by many people using a variety of methods. Some people can point to a single person who has had great influence in their walk with Christ. Others may have gone through a process unique to them. Regardless of how you got to where you are, we must determine what we need to do to continue to grow while helping others grow in their spiritual life as well. All of us struggle to find the time, resources, and focus to be discipled. Discipling others involves even greater time, resources, and focus. What does it even mean to be discipled or to disciple others?

In Matthew 28:18-20, we see a clear picture of the disciple-making process.

We have the **POWER** - Verse 18 reminds us that the power and authority to do Kingdom work as a church, small group, or an individual is available through Jesus Christ.

We have a **PURPOSE** – Verse 19 states that we are to go and make disciples. Our purpose is to make disciples as we are going.

We have a **PROCESS** – these verses describe our method for making disciples: which is to baptize (connect people with God and a local body of believers), teach them to

observe (teaching believers how to live, act and worship like Christ), and to go (we are equipped to serve and minister as we go).

We have a PRESENCE – Jesus reminds us that He is with us—always. If He is with us, we are never alone. He is IN us and working THROUGH us..

Jesus' intent was for us to do more than make converts. He wants us to make disciples who will in turn also make disciples. In order to do that, we must lead them to Christ and make them a part of a vibrant community of believers who will assimilate and nurture them. Then we are to teach them to observe everything Jesus commanded. Put another way--we teach people the Bible so that they might love Christ and live like Christ. In today's world it is not enough to simply believe. It really has never been about just believing something to be a fact. We also have to live, be, and do as Christ commanded. Jesus didn't leave us on our own. He sent His Spirit to dwell in us. In the power of the Spirit, we represent Christ in this world. We are to be a city on a hill, a light in the darkness, and salt to season the earth that it might see Christ as Savior.

As leaders in this movement we call Christianity, we must examine what we are leading others to do. How is our disciple-making? Are the folks we are leading becoming more like Christ? What is expected of them? Do we anticipate or expect something to happen in their lives? If so, what is it and how do we describe it?

Disciple Defined

In an effort to be simple and clear, we need to understand what a disciple is and what the process of making a disciple involves. **A disciple is a fully functioning, fully devoted follower of Christ.** I know my definition is not unique. I have heard many others use something similar. Regardless, it is a great starting point.

A disciple is someone who follows. We have decided to follow Jesus. In other words, the standard for what a disciple wants to look like is Jesus. Thus, the reason we follow Jesus is so that we can be like Him. The attention of our life should be living as Jesus would live. Every choice, every action, every thought, and every desire should reflect what Jesus would do. Put another way, we will choose to be and do what He would want us to be and do.

Being a disciple is a lifelong process. This side of heaven we will never be perfect. We have a sinful nature and we will not be free of that nature until we enter heaven. Our goal every day should be to become more like Christ. Some days we will look more like Him than others. This is a lifelong pursuit—a challenge that we should never grow weary of seeking to achieve.

Don't overlook the great benefits to being a disciple of Jesus. We receive **forgiveness** of our sins; past, present and future. We have the **presence** of Christ in our life every day. We are **promised** a life with God throughout eternity. All of that for free but at a great cost to God. It cost Him the life of His only begotten Son, Jesus.

Being a disciple is a choice. At some point we chose to believe in the One we are following. Jesus is not just a great teacher or leader. He is the Messiah; our Savior. To really begin the journey, we must choose to become a Christian. We must **Admit** that we are sinners, **Believe** that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, ask for forgiveness of those sins, and **Confess** that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of our life. After that, our journey is a daily choice to choose to, deny ourselves daily, take up our cross and follow Him (see Luke 9:23).

The outcome of the disciple-making process is to become a disciple-maker.

We never stop being a disciple. But at some point, we begin to disciple others. As humans, we start off as babies and mature into adults. A baby needs constant attention and help, so does a new believer. As we age and mature, we depend less and less on the church and others to help us. As maturing believers, we begin to invest in others. One day we realize that instead of waiting for others to step forward as a leader, we are the one stepping forward. Everything else is preparation for accomplishing this goal. When we achieve it, we spend the rest of our life investing in others. The reason I am a disciple is so that one day I can be a disciple-maker.

Our Goal: Creating Disciple-Makers

Every believer should be seeking to progress to the point that he or she is giving more to their church, their community, and God's purpose than he or she is taking from their church and community.

In other words, a maturing believer:

Has a relationship with Christ and belongs to a local church.

They are an active part of the community of that church. They have joined a small group or Sunday School class. They are connecting with other people, building relationships with other believers.

They are involved in a consistent or ongoing means of exploring, understanding, and applying the truths of God's Word in their personal lives.

They understand and are using their God-given gifts and talents to serve the church and community for His purposes.

They have accepted responsibility for their spiritual lives and are looking for opportunities to invest in others.

Using Spiritual Markers to Define Progress



In the illustration above, five spiritual life markers are identified for the believer as they grow and mature. People achieve growth as they transition to each new marker. Maturity is measured by how many of these spiritual life markers we have begun and how we perceive we are doing in each of these areas.

For the sake of clarity, defining each of these markers is important. We need to make sure we are talking the same language.

Lost or Un-churched (Guest or Prospect) – Un-churched means not regularly connected to a local church. A lost person is defined as a person who does not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Many people want to belong before they believe.

Assimilation (New Member/New Believer) – Assimilation takes into account that a person needs to have a personal relationship with Christ to be a part of God’s family. For a person to be able to sustain and develop that relationship with God, he or she needs to connect with a local body of believers. That requires regular involvement and developing a personal, intimate relationship with God and other believers.

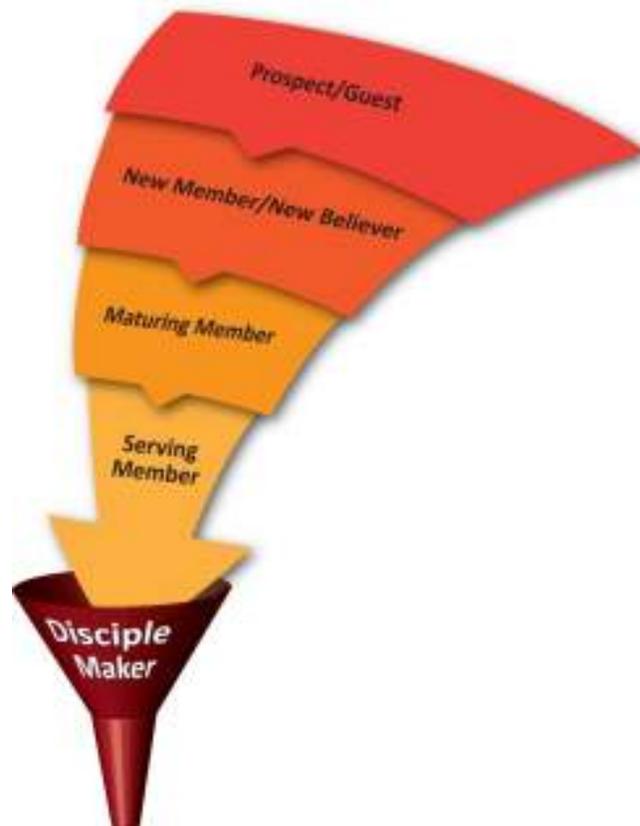
Maturity/Growth (Maturing Member) – Growth is necessary. When we stop growing we are dying. Maturity is about knowing God, knowing His Word, and applying His truth in our daily life. We personally need to read His Word regularly, pray regularly, and develop other personal habits that feed our soul. At the same time, we need to connect with God’s people so that we might discover truth and find encouragement and support. Attend worship. Join a small group. Read books that help you grow in your faith. Participate in ministry projects and events. Attend discipleship groups/classes, participate in online seminars, attend leadership seminars and so on.

Service and Ministry (Serving Member) – Each of us is gifted as a believer to serve God, His church, and others. Discover your gifts. Understand your gifts and the role it plays in your life of ministry in and through the church, your home, and your community. Get involved. Volunteer to serve in a variety of roles to give yourself an opportunity to discover how best to use your gifts.

Disciple Making (Reproducing Member) – Be a multiplier. Be a Missionary. Be a Minister. That doesn't mean you have to quit your job and head to Africa or China. God may want you to do that, but God calls you to be a multiplier, a missionary, or a minister where you are now. You are **called** to make disciples. At some point in your journey, you need to “wean” yourself off of the church and start to contribute more to the church than you receive from it. Although you will never achieve complete maturity this side of heaven – at some point you must grow up. Take responsibility for your own life and the lives of others. Be a leader. Sometimes that means on your own and sometimes it means within the structure and authority of the church.

The Disciple-Making Funnel

Picture a funnel used to pour liquids into a container. This funnel serves as a model of the disciple making process. The funnel itself represents the life of the believer. You enter the funnel by receiving the wonderful gift of salvation through faith in Christ. You join millions of others who are discovering, understanding, and living the Christian life. The Holy Spirit draws you into the funnel. He



is also the One who moves you to the bottom of the funnel as you are conformed into the image of Christ. Once you get to the Disciple-maker level, the Holy Spirit uses you to help

others navigate through the funnel until they become disciple-makers themselves. In the midst of the funnel are three key areas of focus for the believer: relationships with God and others; increasing your understanding and application of God's truth; and understanding and utilizing your gifts for ministry and service for the kingdom of God.

Every illustration has limits. I don't want to over-complicate this, but what happens inside the spiritual growth funnel is unique for every person. Everyone progresses in different ways and at different paces depending on their need, experiences, and calling. How each person achieves maturity and develops to the point of being a disciple-maker is unique to them.

In my personal story, I accepted Christ as my Savior when I was 19 years old. I was raised in a Catholic family and attended a Catholic Church. I even attended a Catholic school. I knew about God. I just didn't have a personal relationship with Him.

When I started college, I began to search for my purpose in life. I wanted to know why I was here. I started dating a Baptist girl and decided to go to church with her. Attending a Baptist church was a strange experience at first but I warmed up to those wonderful folks quickly.

Then, for the first time in my life, I learned about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by inviting Him to be my personal Lord and Savior. On March 15, 1981, I prayed to receive Christ as my Lord and Savior. In May, I was baptized as a member of God's family and joined the family of Glendale Baptist Church. I experienced my first transition, moving from being an unbeliever to a new believer.

I reached my next life marker when I joined the college Sunday School class. Here I made friends that will forever shape my life as a believer. We hung out together. We laughed together. We cried together. We served together. Not one person was perfect, but God provided the right people at the right time. They were perfect for me.

These people loved me for who I was and I loved being with them. I felt like a part of a family. I was connected to people in the church. Together, we connected to God. I learned how to read and study my Bible. I respected our leaders and listened to their wisdom and guidance. I was a part of this body of Christ. This was my spiritual family.

In the early days of my new found faith in Christ, I struggled with the "theology" of all the things I had learned growing up Catholic. Teachers, leaders, and friends began to help me look to God's Word for answers to my questions. God's Word became my source for truth. I was challenged to read it for myself. I began to attend a discipleship group. I came on Wednesday night. I was in worship on Sunday morning and Sunday night. I looked for every opportunity to learn more about God and how to live out my faith.

I even remember hearing that I was suppose to tithe. When I asked one of my leaders what that meant, he explained to me that every believer should give a tenth of their gross earnings. I began that week giving a tenth of my income to the church. Today, I wonder if I had asked someone else what answer they would have given me.

My next transition was rather interesting. Someone from the church nominating committee asked me if I would be willing to help with RA's (Royal Ambassadors) on Wednesday nights. The leader needed someone to help him with a group of rowdy boys. I didn't know better, so I said yes. That first Wednesday night included me and a group of energetic boys. Eventually, the leader showed up. My experience with RA's began my journey toward discovering how God wanted to use me.

I am grateful that someone thought enough of me to give me a chance to serve. I had no idea how God would use me. I simply wanted to know that He wanted to use me and someone in the church was willing to give me a chance. In too many churches today, we seem to be more focused on filling positions than on investing in people.

The last marker in my journey began in May of 1983. I had been a member of the church for 2 years. I had been hired as part-time custodian at the church while I completed my college education. When our Youth Minister left, I was asked to help out. Of course, I said yes. As summer approached, the church asked me to be their part-time summer Youth Minister. I said yes once again. That later turned into the role of part-time Youth Minister.

Every day, I continue in my journey to become all that God desires me to be. I seek to stay connected to God and a local body of believers. I continuously seek to connect with others in a small group. I am currently a member of a Sunday School class and attend every week that I am not out ministering in another church. I look for opportunities to grow in my understanding and application of God's truth in my life. I continue to understand and use my gifts. I constantly am looking for opportunities to pour into other people's lives just as many have poured into mine. My prayer is that your journey, although unique to you, will be as rewarding as mine.

Your journey is different from mine. I told my story to illustrate how I have seen God transition me in my journey. I prepared this resource to guide you in your own understanding of your journey with the hope that you will help others move forward in their spiritual walk as well.

What does the Disciple-Making Process Look Like?

As a disciple-maker, my goal is to help each person progress through the disciple-making process until they are ready to help others. There are steps in the process to

be monitored and to be used as a guide so that the individual stays on track. Four key phrases highlight my understanding of this process. Before we get there, we need to define some terms.

Spiritual Markers. In most people's lives, there are clearly defined moments that indicate progress. Even though these "markers" are based on one's own perceptions, they can be clear indicators of progression. We never stop maturing as a disciple but at some point we should be able to indicate a moment that causes us to focus on a new stage in our journey.

Target Group. As leaders, we need to identify where people are in their journey so we know how to guide them through the initial steps of each aspect of their journey. For example, Lost and/or un-churched people are the group that need to be targeted with the gospel. Their greatest need is not understanding their spiritual gift, they need to understand their need for a Savior.

Purpose of the Church. The church has five purposes--evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship. Each transition requires us to focus primarily on one specific purpose to help guide the person on their journey. Defining the primary purpose for each marker helps us understand how the church mainly relates to a person in that group.

Focus. God has provided everything a person needs at each point of their journey. The focus identifies specific tools or resources God has provided in order to help someone maneuver within a specific level. We must now explain how each of these spiritual markers relate to the target group, church purpose, and focus.

Spiritual Marker 1 - Lost and/or Un-churched

Target Group – Guest or Prospect

Purpose of the Church – Evangelism

Focus – The Gospel

First and foremost, a person must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is basic but it is the foundation of the whole process. We join the family of God (become a believer) before we become a member of a local body of believers (a church). Since a person can join Sunday School or a Small group without being a believer (Christian), some people in your class or group may have not made a profession of faith. Pray for them and invite them to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Prospects are those people in the life of your small group, class, or church that are not part of your group or church...YET. We know who they are and where they live, but at this point they have not made the decision to follow Christ. We call this

purpose of the church—evangelism. Our focus is to share the gospel. When they are ready, they will make the decision to join us on the Christian faith journey. Then, they are ready to move to the next step.

Spiritual Marker 2 - Assimilation/Connection

Target Group – New Believer

Purpose of the Church – Worship/Fellowship

Focus - Relationships/Fellowship

Connecting people to God and one another is the goal at this point. I am frustrated by the fact that for so long most classes or groups have measured their success by attendance. Don't get me wrong, attendance is important. But attendance is a result and not the goal. The goal is to connect people. That is why the responsibilities of leaders such as care group leaders and outreach leaders is so important. If we don't connect people with one another we lose a key ingredient to the disciple-making process...fellowship

You've most likely heard the phrase "people could care less how much you know until they know how much you care." Read that phrase again. An important aspect of making disciples is demonstrating that we CARE about them. Relationships take time. It is about making an intentional investment of your life into their life with love.

We have forgotten how to make friends. When I was a youth minister, I taught youth that in order to have friends you must first be a friend. As a leader, my responsibility is first and foremost to care about people. I need to put their needs before my own. I need to empathize with their pain. I need to know their story. I need to be a friend to them. I need to take the initiative by loving and caring for others.

Relationships are messy. I don't know about you, but I have been hurt by other people. I have poured myself into others and gotten slammed in return. I am not alone. God knows and understands our pain better than anyone else, but we can't give up. God never will. Jesus declared, "No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13, HCSB). Loving people is worth the frustration, the pain, the hurt, and the anger. Loving people is the right thing to do. That is what Jesus would do.

God's Word is about relationships: a relationship between Almighty God and His Creation: especially humanity. God did everything for us. Part of our nature is to love and care for others. Oddly enough, love is the one thing most of our churches, our Sunday School classes, or our Small Groups need today.

Spiritual Marker 3 - Maturity and Growth

Target Group – Maturing Believers

Purpose of the Church – Discipleship

Focus – Scripture/Bible Study

As teachers and leaders, we need to remind ourselves that we teach PEOPLE the Bible. Jesus called us to teach others to OBSERVE everything He has commanded (Matthew 28:19). Teaching implies more than just the dissemination of information. Learning takes place when a person understands and applies truth in their life. Some people use the word *transformation* to illustrate the goal of teaching. As leaders, we cannot separate relationships with those we lead from the teaching of God's truth.

Who were the teachers from your school days you remember best? How many specific lessons do you remember taught by that teacher? Can you separate the lesson remembered from the person who taught it? People learn (understand and apply truth) in the context of a relationship. Remember, people could care less how much you know until they know how much you care.

That being said, we have an awesome responsibility. Paul reminded Timothy to *be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15). Sunday School teachers and small group leaders have the privilege and honor of teaching God's Word regularly. What distinguishes the church from other non-profits, institutions, corporations, or businesses in our community is the Word of God. He has provided us with an owner's manual to understand His plan for this world and our place in that plan. It is our Source to know what to think, how to live, and what to do.

For a disciple to mature, we must study Scripture. *All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Spiritual Marker 4 – Service and Ministry

Target Group – Servants

Purpose of the Church – Ministry

Focus – Spiritual Gifts

Every believer has a spiritual gift. Peter stated *Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God* (1 Peter 4:10). **EVERYONE** has a gift. The purpose of that gift is to serve the church. God gifts each person uniquely so we can bring honor and glory to Him. In 1 Corinthians 12

and Romans 12, the body of Christ (the church) is illustrated as one body with many members. We are to work together using our unique talents, personalities, and gifts to become one body serving one another and our community. Each of us is important and valuable. Our churches depend upon us.

Too many believers are content with finding a spot to squat so they can sit and soak. Talk about a dysfunctional body. Imagine what a church could accomplish if all members served, if all members tithed and if all members loved each other. Talk about a miracle. Communities would be changed, lives would be changed, the lost would be saved, and needs would be met by the church.

Disciple-making is about helping people discover and understand their unique role in the church. The enemies are many: the status quo, the lack of understanding and knowledge, and the fear of failure. Satan has crippled the church because we don't understand that God uses His people to fulfill His purpose no matter who they are.

Spiritual Marker 5 – Disciple-Maker

Target Group – Leader

Purpose of the Church – Evangelism, Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship and Ministry

Focus – Developing people into Multipliers, Missionaries, and Ministers

God's desire is that we all become disciple-makers. When we do, we fulfill the Great Commission. As long as there is breath left in your body, it should be your mission too.

Being a disciple-maker doesn't mean we are perfect. We are far from it. It means we have reached a point where we can pour into other people's lives the same way others have poured into ours.

I don't know when you will be ready to be a disciple-maker. I don't know in every situation how to tell when someone is ready to take this step. I just know it needs to happen. Each person is unique and arrives at this spiritual marker in different ways and on different schedules.

For me, I realized shortly after my profession of faith that I was suppose to serve God in the local church. As I grew and matured, the church began to trust me and invest in me. The Pastor and staff encouraged me. The lay leadership invited me to serve in lots of ways. I was thrilled someone thought me valuable enough to ask. Eventually, I volunteered to help with the youth. In time, I became the Youth Minister. I don't know exactly when I went from being a disciple to becoming a disciple-maker, but two years after being baptized, I was making disciples.

How do we know when someone is ready to become a disciple-maker? The key is found in the answers to four questions.

Do they have a personal relationship with Christ as Lord and Savior?

Are they actively connected to God and the church?

Are they maturing in their faith in both knowledge and practice?

Do they understand and practice their spiritual gifts in the life of the church?

A disciple-maker serves in one of three ways. The first is **Multiplier**. A multiplier is someone who relates well to people. They love to invest in people's lives and help people develop as believers. They understand the relationship factor, the maturity factor, and the service/ministry factor. They are good at guiding people through a process and prepare others to become multipliers as well.

The second is **Missionary**. Some people have the self-initiative to GO and serve. They are willing to go anywhere at any time to help other communities, people groups, and cultures to spread the gospel and make disciples. These unique people may never leave the United States, may never leave their state, and may never leave their home to be a missionary.

The third is a **Minister**. These folks are gifted in leading ministries. They have the skill, knowledge, and experience to lead others to accomplish the goal of their ministry area.

Even if your gifts and abilities do not fit into these three common categories, you can still be a disciple-maker. Serve God, the best you can, with what you have, where you are.

I believe in the God-given potential of every human being. However, not everyone is meant to be a leader. Some people, by their own choice, will not choose to take the mantle of leadership and responsibility. We cannot **make** someone discover, understand, and utilize their God-given gifts. Some people will simply choose not to serve.

There are also many people who are not called to be a leader, but are willing to follow leaders and serve in lots of different ways. Choose to celebrate who people are and what God has gifted them to be and do. Spur them to grow and challenge them to seek new opportunities. At the same time, accept people's limitations which are placed on them by their own choices or because of who they uniquely are.

The question is and should always be are we more like Christ today than we were yesterday?

CHAPTER 2

Assessment

How do I assess where I am in my spiritual journey? How do I assess where others are in the process?

Assessment tools help us take a snapshot so that we can evaluate where we have been, where we are, and where we hope to go. Spiritual growth does not operate in a straight line. So why a standard assessment? The most significant reason is so we can establish a reference point. We do that by applying a value to our perceptions.

When you were in school, your performance was judged based on a criteria of expectations. Their primary method of evaluating your progress was by administering a test. They measured your knowledge and understanding of basic truths based on some agreed upon standards. If you answered a specific question with a specific answer, then you received credit for a right answer. As you advanced in school, the tests became more subjective. The answers to questions were not necessarily right or wrong but you earned credit for explaining how you obtained a specific viewpoint based on some recognized process.

In life, things are similar. We are a nation of laws. If we break one, we are subject to the consequences if we are caught. Today, things seem more and more fuzzy when it comes to what is right and wrong. Morals seem to be more subjective based on the values and character of the individual.

In reality, God's law is truth and has never changed. There are still consequences for sin. The Bible states clearly that the consequences for sin is death and Hell. BUT GOD, sent His Son to die on a cross for our sins so that we might be redeemed. Redemption is God's work and He chooses to do His work in different ways in each of us. We are all created in the image of God, but we are all unique to His purposes

Different purposes and paths means how we measure our spiritual development is unique for all of us. It is between us and God. The first step to measuring our spiritual development is prayer. Ask God to reveal where you are in the process of becoming like Him. No tests or tool can reveal the exact place where you are in your journey with Him. Only God can show you that.

But when we step into helping others discover where they are in their journey with Christ, that's a whole other story. We can pray for them, pray with them, and help them discover some markers they can place in their life to help evaluate their journey. Others can sometimes see our strengths and weaknesses better than we can. In other people's lives, we can be an extra set of eyes, ears, heart, and mind that can help them see their lives more clearly and articulate it more concisely.

With that in mind, I have developed 20 questions to help measure a person's perception of where they are in their journey. The questions are based on two elements: the spiritual markers and the purposes of the church. Some questions require a simple yes or no. Others are more subjective based on the perception of the person taking the assessment. Honesty is important. If a person evaluates themselves in light of others, the evaluation will be only as good as the person to whom they are compared. We must measure ourselves based on where we think we should be as a mature believer in Christ.

As you administer the assessment, encourage people to pray that God would reveal where they are in their journey. Challenge them to be honest. This is a spiritual exercise between them and God. The results are simply a way of quantifying a person's perception of where they are in their relationship with God and the things He desires for them. Nothing more, nothing less. This is not about getting beat up or earning slaps on the back. This is not about posting a grade on a bulletin board or taking a report card home to your parents. This is about setting spiritual markers to evaluate the past, define the present, and chart a course for the future. Then, use the insights gained to direct others how to pursue relationships, projects or learning experiences that will help them strengthen their weak areas, and confirm the strengths God has placed in them.

Assessment Types

There are three types of assessments suggested:

Self Assessment – my personal perspective on my journey and my progress.

Group Assessment – my peer's perspective on my journey and my progress. (3 people)

Mentor Assessment – accountability with a leader who agrees to guide me in my faith journey. (1 person)

Self-Assessment

The self-assessment tool serves as the base for the other two types of assessments. It will take prayer, time, and honest reflection to complete.

As a leader, you need to complete a self-assessment first. You can't ask someone else to do something you are not willing to do yourself. Taking the assessment will help you gain a better understanding of your own progress and of what you are asking others to do.

When leading another person to evaluate their self, set an appointment to discuss the ideas behind the self-assessment. Use the content in Chapter One of this book to explain the disciple-making process, the spiritual markers, and the value of assessment. Explain that you are asking them to complete a self-assessment, secure three friends who will complete a peer assessment, and then you will work through the findings (using the mentor assessment). Tell them that the goal is to put together a plan that will move them toward being a disciple-maker.

Peer Assessment

After completing the self-assessment, challenge people to take the next step with a group or peer assessment. Oddly enough, all of us have blind spots. We perceive things about our life through a lens that can be counter-productive. For example, if we tend to be negative about ourselves then our self-assessment may tend to be negative as well. The peer assessment may then be more affirming and realistic about our journey. The opposite is true as well. We might sometimes tend to over-value aspects of our lives that others might see that we don't see. Good friends will offer constructive criticism. They are not judging us, but are offering an evaluation to help us better understand more thoroughly where we are.

Obviously, the people chosen to participate in a peer assessment need to be friends that care about the person and their spiritual walk. Remember, this is their perspective. It is neither right nor wrong. Involving three different people will give a better picture. Encourage the three people to be honest.

The peer assessments can be administered in a group or with individuals recording their responses. If the peer assessment is done in a group, it would be best for you to lead the discussion with the person being assessed present. Your presence will help minimize any apprehension participants may have.

If administered with written responses, you will want to evaluate the need for the assessments to be signed or to be submitted anonymously. Anonymous is difficult when only three people are asked to complete the peer assessment. Some may not

be as honest if they know they have to sign the peer assessment. You may want to leave this decision up to the person being assessed.

Mentor Assessment

The Mentor Assessment is a tool used by a mentor in further diagnosing where a person is in the spiritual journey. This tool helps in developing a strategy to improve in those challenging areas and to utilize their strengths in ministry to others. This assessment uses questions designed to guide you in a discussion about a person's spiritual life. There are no right or wrong answers. This assessment is only as good as the trust between the mentor and participant, and the level of honesty in the responses.

This is not about confession. This is not about doctrine or disciplines. It is about establishing markers and evaluating progress. When that is achieved, then we can provide suggestions for how to continue to grow as a believer and ultimately to become a disciple-maker.

When conducting a mentor assessment, you will want the self-assessment and peer assessments to be completed prior to the meeting. You may want to have access to all four assessments or encourage the person you are mentoring to use the completed assessments for reference. You may choose to use the assessments differently in different situations. How well you know the person you are mentoring will impact how you use the assessments. The better you know the person, the less you will need to depend upon the self-assessment and peer assessments.

As was stated earlier, you can't ask people to do something you are not willing to do. Prior to taking another person through these assessment steps, find a way to go through the process yourself. You may want to contact a mentor in the ministry or another minister in your area to lead you through the assessment process. After you have finished the mentoring assessment, review each step to refine the process when you lead others through it. Learn about yourself and the process at the same time.

Self-Assessment Tool - Personal Discipleship Assessment (PDA)

Check all boxes that indicate that you have begun and continue to develop on your journey.

I have a relationship with Christ and belong to a local church.

I am a part of the community of that church. I have friends in my church. I have joined and attending a small group or Sunday School class. I am connected with other people.

I am involved in a consistent or ongoing means of exploring, learning, understanding and applying the truths of God's Word into my personal life.

I understand and I am using my gifts and talents, given by God to serve the church and community for His purposes.

I have accepted responsibility for my spiritual life and I am looking for the opportunity to invest in others.

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

YES NO

Are you currently a member of a local congregation/church?

YES NO

I know of at least one family member, friend, or acquaintance in my life who is lost or un-churched.

YES NO

I am praying regularly for one or more people in my life that they might make a decision to follow Christ.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I am actively engaged in building a relationship with one or more people who are lost or un-churched.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I am a regular, active participant in a corporate worship experience in my local church.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I read my Bible on a regular basis.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I pray regularly.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I memorize Scripture regularly.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Are you currently a member of a small group, Sunday School class, or other Bible study group that meets regularly?

YES NO

*I attend a small group, Sunday School class or other **weekly** Bible study group.*

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I have at least one or two close friends in my church.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I have at least seven or more people in my church that I know by name and could easily strike up a conversation with them.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I regularly pray for my family, friends and members of my church, small group, Sunday School class or other weekly Bible study group.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I have at least one person in my life that is helping me or encouraging me in my personal spiritual life.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I have at least one person in my life that I am helping or encouraging in their personal spiritual life.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I regularly read Christian books, listen to sermons, attend leadership/Bible seminars, or frequently have discussions with other people about the Bible or my faith.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I know what my spiritual gift(s) is and understand how I uniquely have a role in the body of Christ.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I am using my spiritual gifts and abilities to serve God in the local church.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

I am using the opportunities God gives me to serve others in my family, my work place, school, or community.

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Below is the scorecard to use in evaluating your responses in the assessment.

Personal Discipleship Assessment Scorecard (NOTE: Questions 1-3 and 10 have yes or no answers. A yes answer scores as a 4; a no answer scores as a 0). Record your answers in the score column, then add your score to get a total for that area.

	Question Number	Score	Total
Evangelism	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	____ ____ ____ ____ ____	
Worship	1. 6. 7. 8. 9.	____ ____ ____ ____ ____	
Fellowship	10. 11. 12. 13. 14.	____ ____ ____ ____ ____	
Discipleship	7. 9. 15. 16. 17.	____ ____ ____ ____ ____	
Ministry	2. 8. 18. 19. 20.	____ ____ ____ ____ ____	

How to evaluate your score!

Score of 17-20 = STRONG

Score of 13-16 = GOOD

Score of 9-13 = FAIR

Score of 5-8 = POOR

Score of 1-4 = WEAK

Peer Assessment (PA)

Check all boxes that indicate that you believe your friend has begun and continues to develop in their journey.

Has a relationship with Christ and belongs to a local church.

They are part of the community of that church. They have friends in their church.
They have joined a small group or Sunday School class. They are connecting with other people.

They are involved in a consistent or ongoing means of exploring, learning, understanding and applying the truths of God's Word into their personal lives.

They understand and are using their gifts and talents, given by God to serve the church and community for His purposes.

They have accepted responsibility for their spiritual lives and are looking for the opportunity to invest in others.

Does this person have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior?

YES NO

Is this person currently a member of a local congregation/church?

YES NO

Does this person know of at least one family member, friend or acquaintance in their life who is lost or un-churched?

YES NO

Is this person praying regularly for one or more people in their life that they might make a decision to follow Christ?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Is this person actively engaged in building a relationship with one or more people who are lost or un-churched?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Is this person a regular, active participant in a corporate worship experience in their local church?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person read their Bible on a regular basis?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person pray regularly?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person memorize Scripture regularly?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Is this person currently a member of a small group, Sunday School class or other Bible study group that meets regularly?

YES NO

Does this person attend a small group, Sunday School class or other weekly Bible study group?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person have at least one or two close friends in their church?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person have at least seven or more people in their church that they know by name and could easily strike up a conversation with them?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person regularly pray for his or her family, friends and members of their church, small group, Sunday School class or other weekly Bible study group?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person have at least one person in their life that is helping them or encouraging them in their personal spiritual life?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person have at least one person in their life that they are helping or encouraging in their personal spiritual life?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person regularly read Christian books, listen to sermons, attend leadership/Bible seminars, or frequently have discussions with other people about the Bible or their faith?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Does this person know what their spiritual gift(s) is and understand how they uniquely have a role in the body of Christ?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Is this person using their spiritual gift(s) and abilities to serve God in the local church?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Is this person using the opportunities that God gives them to serve others in their family, work place, school or community?

4 – Always 3 – Most Often 2 – Sometimes 1 – Rarely 0 – Never

Below is the scorecard to use in evaluating your responses in the assessment.

Peer Discipleship Assessment Scorecard (NOTE: Questions 1-3 and 10 have yes or no answers. A yes answer scores as a 4; a no answer scores as a 0). Record your answers in the score column, then add your score to get a total for that area.

	Question Number	Score	Total
Evangelism	1.	___	
	2.	___	
	3.	___	
	4.	___	
	5.	___	
Worship	1.	___	
	6.	___	
	7.	___	
	8.	___	
	9.	___	
Fellowship	10.	___	
	11.	___	
	12.	___	
	13.	___	
	14.	___	
Discipleship	7.	___	
	9.	___	
	15.	___	
	16.	___	
	17.	___	
Ministry	2.	___	
	8.	___	
	18.	___	
	19.	___	
	20.	___	

How to evaluate your score!

Score of 17-20 = STRONG

Score of 13-16 = GOOD

Score of 9-13 = FAIR

Score of 5-8 = POOR

Score of 1-4 = WEAK

Mentor Discipleship Assessment (MDA)

Each of these questions are designed to guide you and the person you are discipling through a process of determining the spiritual life markers and then guiding them through an assessment of each marker. The purpose of this tool is to help others develop a strategy (plan) to move forward. I suggest that you determine a date six months later to repeat the assessment.

Check all boxes that indicate that you believe your friend has begun and continues to develop in their journey.

Has a relationship with Christ and belongs to a local church.

They are part of the community of that church. They have friends in their church.
They have joined a small group or Sunday School class. They are connecting with other people.

They are involved in a consistent or ongoing means of exploring, learning, understanding and applying the truths of God's Word into their personal lives.

They understand and are using their gifts and talents, given by God to serve the church and community for His purposes.

They have accepted responsibility for their spiritual lives and are looking for the opportunity to invest in others.

Spiritual Life Marker – Pre-believer (lost and/or un-churched) -- Conversation should lead to address the need to profess faith in Christ and be an active participant in a local church. *For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16)

Have you ever come to a point in your life when you realized you were a sinner; knew you could do nothing about your sin; and surrendered your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

YES – Tell me that story!

NO – Would you like to know how to receive this free gift?

How involved in a local church or congregation are you right now?

YES – Tell me about that!

NO – Tell me what it would take to get you involved in a local church? Where would you go?

Are you a praying person?

YES – What do you pray about mostly?

NO – What prevents you from talking with God?

Tell me about your relationships. Who in your life does God use to influence you most?

Are you involved in helping others in your community?

YES – Give me an example of one thing.

NO – What would it take to get you involved in helping others?

Are you active in discovering things about God?

YES – Tell me one thing you do regularly to learn more.

NO – What is one thing you wish you could understand right now?

Spiritual Life Marker - New Believer/New Member – (Assimilation/Making Connections) – Conversation should lead to helping them understand their role in the family of God. You should help them to answer the following questions: How do I relate to God? How do I connect with fellow members and believers? How do I connect with those who do not profess Christ and/or are outside of the family of God? *I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.* (John 13:34-35)

Are you a member of an ongoing (regular) bible study group or Sunday School class?

YES – Tell me about your group or class.

NO – Would you like me to help you join one?

Who are your friends in the church? If you had a problem or need, who in the church would you take that to?

Who are your friends or family members that are not believers or members of a church? How do you engage them in a conversation about spiritual things or about going to a church?

Are you or have you been involved in a mission project in your community or gone on a mission trip to another state or country?

YES – Tell me about your experience.

NO – If you had the opportunity, time and money; would you participate? Could I help you discover such an opportunity?

*Have you considered playing a more important role in your church and its ministry?
How do you see yourself involved in serving God in and through your church?*

Spiritual Life Marker - Spiritual Maturity/Spiritual Growth – Conversation should lead towards helping the believer to know how to study God’s Word, understand it and apply it to their personal life. *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15)

Do you have an active personal and corporate worship life?

YES – Tell me how you try to have a regular personal time alone with God. Tell me about a recent corporate worship experience that has impacted your life.

NO – What resources, tools or tips do you need in order to have a regular personal time with God. Do you understand your role in corporate worship? Would you like me to help you understand it better?

Do you read your Bible on a regular basis?

YES – What is the best way you have discovered to study God’s Word? What are you doing right now? Tell me something new that you have learned from God’s Word.

NO – Would you like me to help you know how to improve your study of God’s Word? Is there a resource that you need that would help you?

Do you memorize Scripture?

YES – What is one thing that has helped you to accomplish this task? Tell me a verse that you have learned in the last month?

NO – How can I help you develop a plan to memorize scripture? Tell me a verse that you have learned and memorized. How and when did you learn that?

When you have a question about the Bible or your faith, who do you talk to about it?

Who is someone that looks up to you that you might utilize your relationship with them to teach them about what God is teaching you?

Spiritual Life Marker - Service/Ministry – Conversation should lead to helping the believer to understand their spiritual gift and how best to use it in service to God in the church and in the community. *Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God.* (1 Peter 4:10)

Do you understand that the Bible says you are uniquely gifted to serve Him? (1 Peter 4:10)

Do you know what your spiritual gift is?

YES – How do you see yourself using that gift in your church?

NO – Would you like to know what your gift is? www.LBC.org (then search for Spiritual Gifts Survey)

*Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 talk about the church as the “body of Christ”.
If you are a believer, you are a part of the body of Christ. Which part of the
body do you think best reflects your gifts or personality?*

*Who do you admire in your church? What type of gift do you think they have?
How do they use their gifts in service to God and the church?*

*Who are the people you know that need help discovering and using their gifts
in service and ministry for the Lord? Will you help them get involved?*

Spiritual Life Marker – Disciple Maker – Conversation should lead to understanding if they are ready to be a leader and step forward to begin discipling others. *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* (Matthew 28:19-20)

*What unique role or responsibility do you sense that God has called you to be
and do?*

What is one person that God has uniquely spoken to you about discipling?

Do you see yourself as a multiplier, missionary or minister?

Where do you want to start?

*What do you need to know, understand or apply in your life to make you a
better leader?*

CHAPTER 3

How to Make Disciples

You have administered the assessments, now what do you do? Our goal should be to reach the lost, develop them as believers, then send them out to serve, lead, and make disciples. There is no silver bullet. There is no one way to accomplish this. There is no “easy” path to making disciples. It is simply one person at a time, one day at a time.

However, I have found using the transitions in a person’s faith journey can help us to guide people along the way. The key is helping people know the next step. Imagine you are traveling on a road and you come to a fork in that road. You have to make a choice. There is no clear understanding of what is down each road and what hazards lie ahead, but you must decide. What people need is a clear process to help them make the choice. People are often paralyzed by their inability to make a decision. You can help them choose the right path.

When mentoring people on their journey, there are two key things to remember. The first is to **listen**. Often times, people know what they should be doing. They just need the opportunity to verbalize their feelings and talk through their options. Ask clarifying questions that includes a phrase such as “so what I hear you saying is...” These types of discussions are key to the disciple making process. If you tell someone what they should do, they may or may not do it. If they tell you what they should do, they are more likely to do it especially if you hold them accountable.

The second key is to help them identify their **next step**. After you have listened and clarified what their heart or their head says they should do, then ask them what their next step is going to be. If they are having trouble, offer a few ideas. Most of the challenge to seeing life transformation is just getting started. If you can clarify their next step, you have helped the individual immensely.

Professional life coaches use a similar approach to help people improve their life or get ahead in their field of work. The key step in a personal coaches’ approach is to help someone clarify the next step that the person needs to take so he or she can move in that direction.

Then what? Well, either they will follow through or they won’t. If you keep in touch with them and ask them how they are progressing, it helps them stay on track. But

remember, it is **their choice**. Love them. Encourage them. Support them. It can be messy when you are dealing with people. There is no secret formula for making disciples. Our job is to guide. Their job is to decide and do.

Below are 5 transitional questions related to five key spiritual forks in the road. Once a person makes a decision, it is simply a matter of helping them stay on the road they have chosen.

How do I connect a person who is un-churched and/or an unbeliever to the church?

How do I help new members and new believers make significant connections with God, other believers, and others without Christ for the sake of sharing the gospel with them?

How do I help people mature in their faith, while keeping them involved in significant relationships?

How do I develop in believers an understanding of their giftedness and engage them in utilizing those gifts in the church and community?

How do I continue to help them mature in their relationships, their application of truth to their life, and use their gifts and then send them out to develop their own disciple's and ministries?

Below is a chart that helps you visualize how these questions connect to the assessments and functions of a local church.

Progression of Individual	Lost Un-Churched	Guest/New Member	Maturing Member	Servant	Multiplier Missionary Minister
Role or Responsibility in the church	Prospect	Assimilation Connection	Maturity Growth	Gifts for Ministry Service	Leadership Multipliers Ministry Coordinators ETC.
Church Function or Purpose	Evangelism	Worship Fellowship	Discipleship	Ministry	Evangelism Worship Fellowship

					Discipleship Ministry/ Missions
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Let's get to the hard stuff.

How do I connect a person who is un-churched and/or an unbeliever to the church?

In the chart, we have identified the first transition as a lost person and/or a person who is un-churched. The transition for them is our awareness of their existence. In the church we call this person a prospect. A prospect is a person who we believe is either lost and/or un-churched but we know their name and have contact information about them. The function of the church that most relates to these people is evangelism. What a prospect needs more than anything is to have a personal relationship with Christ. But, they also need to know someone cares about them and wants them to be a part of a church family.

The disciple-making process **requires** this first step. You can't follow Jesus if you don't know Jesus. We are not teaching people to follow us. We are equipping people to follow Jesus. For the same reason we don't leave a brand new baby to live on its own, we don't take a new believer and not connect them to a local church. Our first job is to connect lost and/or un-churched people to God and then to a local church.

So how do you do that? Get to know them. Connect with them. I'm not saying they should be your best friend but I am saying we should get to know them and their story. Be a friend. That friendship could possibly lead to that person becoming a disciple of Christ.

Remember, our goal should be more than just getting people in church. Our goal is to make disciples. A person can be lost and attend church every week.

I am fortunate to be a member of a church that has an outreach program called FAITH. Every year, we have two 12-week semesters filled with opportunities to involve people in sharing their faith every Tuesday night. We are intentional about trying to accomplish two things when we make a contact. First, we want to share the gospel. We try to assess where each person is in their relationship with God and tell them about Jesus as often as we can. Secondly, we want to connect them to a Sunday School class. We know that if we can share the gospel and get them involved in a Sunday School class their chances of responding to the gospel and joining a church is much greater. Our goal is to make disciples.

How do I help new members and new believers make significant connections with God, other believers, and others without Christ for the sake of sharing the gospel with them?

The next major transition for a new member or new believer is to get connected. These connections should be both horizontal and vertical. That is what I love about Sunday School and/or small groups. It is a group of people connecting in a social environment with the primary focus on the study of the Bible and application of God's truth. Relationships are paramount to the successful assimilation of new members and new believers. What new members and new believers need are friends and you can find these in a regularly-meeting Bible study group.

You have seen it. Someone new visits a class or group and everyone is polite at first. After a while, the new person is in a chair by himself or herself with no one interacting with them. At the end of class time, they are thanked for attending and invited back. That class may be friendly but people are looking for friends. People need to know we care. People need to know that we genuinely want them to come back. Too many people enter our church through the front door, exit the back door, and stay away because no one connected with them. Don't misunderstand, we can put our best foot forward and people can reject our efforts. Our focus should be on being a friend regardless of whether or not they accept or reject our friendship.

This is why myself and others like me spend so much time talking about class organization. We need people who accept the responsibility of connecting our classes to those who don't know us **yet**. And we also need people who are willing to help those of us who are members of a class stay connected to one another. How often should we stay in touch with prospects and members of our class? Weekly! If not weekly, at least monthly. Every week, there are people on our Sunday School class rolls that are intentionally ignored. People don't just come because of the Bible study. They come because they get to be a part of a family that loves them and takes care of them.

Jesus stated *I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13:33-34). Love is an action verb. It's not just how I feel; it's what I do. As a matter of fact, unless your love is expressed in action your love will be questioned.

Paul put it this way: *If I speak human or angelic languages but do not have love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have [the gift of] prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I donate all my goods*

to feed the poor, and if I give my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

How do I help people mature in their faith, while keeping them involved in significant relationships?

Again, this is why I love Sunday School and/or Small Groups. We connect people to one another in a social environment around the study of God's Word. We get to study God's Word every week with people who genuinely care about one another. The disciple-making process is stalled if all we focus on is fellowship. Our class or group exists for both reasons. We want to be connected to one another but we also need to learn, grow, and apply God's truth. We study God's Word together knowing that everyone in that room or home is not perfect. We are all sinners desperately trying to discover God's love, forgiveness, and path for each of us.

The Bible is the tool that God has given us to understand Him and His purposes. The Bible describes itself as food for the soul. *Brothers, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, because you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still fleshly (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).* We need a steady diet of God's Word. In our corporate worship experiences, we are taught God's Word by our best teacher. In Sunday School or small group, we learn, discover, share, and discuss the truths of God's Word together. We also need to study, discover, and apply the truths from God's Word in our own daily Bible reading and prayer time.

Just like a baby needs to be fed so does a new believer. But as we mature, we learn how to feed ourselves. The more mature we are, the richer the truths we learn. It amazes me how God's Word continues to teach me new insights to my relationship with Him and in my mission and purpose on this earth. It is dynamic. I'm growing older and each day the Bible helps me discover new applications to my life. I will never be perfect this side of heaven. I am challenged by the fact that there is still so much more I can learn from God through reading His Word. *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).*

As I mature, I must at some point begin to take responsibility for my own personal growth. Just like a baby matures into an adult, a new believer must grow into a mature adult spiritually. Each day, we should learn how to feed ourselves spiritually so that we can become what God desires us to be.

How do I develop in believers an understanding of their giftedness and engage them in utilizing those gifts in the church and community?

Earlier, I shared my story of becoming a leader in the RA (Royal Ambassador) program in my church. As a new believer and new member of my church, I didn't fully understand my role as a believer or a member. I trusted people to show me what I needed to know and do. I was a baby Christian even though I was 19 years old. One of the first Bible verses I memorized was 1 Peter 4:10 while working through *The Survival Kit for New Christians*. That verse and book taught me I had a gift. The purpose of that gift was to be used in service and ministry in the church as a part of the body of Christ. Even though I didn't fully understand it at the time, I knew I needed to serve.

To be quite honest, I think we have gotten lazy in the recruitment of leaders. We focus on filling positions and not on helping people find their place. In my last church staff role, one of my primary responsibilities was recruiting new leaders. When I started the conversation with a potential leader, I wanted to know more about their story and their journey. That is the way it should be in every church. Every leader should be on the lookout for new leaders who are ready to step up.

Just like me when I was younger, I depended on others to help me navigate the different ways I could serve God in the church. There are people in your class, your group, and your church who are waiting on someone to ask them. When people who are not serving are asked why they are not serving, the number one reason given is because no one asked them. People have potential. What they need is someone to help them get started.

One time, I asked a man if he would be interested in serving in a specific position at our church. He responded by telling me he didn't think it was right for him. Then I asked him what he thought would be the right role for him. He surprised me by telling me exactly what he felt God wanted him to do. After conferring with other leaders, we created a new position that perfectly fit his desires and an undiscovered need was met in our church. Maybe God knows what He is doing and we are just fumbling around trying to figure out exactly what that is.

Give people a chance. They don't have to accept a major responsibility in your church in their first role. But they can certainly start somewhere. Peter stated: *Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God* (1 Peter 4:10).

How do I continue to help them mature in their relationships, their application of truth to their life and use their gifts and then send them out to develop their own disciple's and ministries?

On this journey, there are twists and turns, hazards, hidden paths, disappointments, and so much more. By managing and understanding our transitions, we not only help ourselves but those we lead to enjoy the journey of becoming all that God desires us to be. When we begin this journey of discipleship (following Christ), we learn that we need God and we need each other. We learn that we need to constantly discover truth from God's Word so we can live the life God has for us. We learn that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves and that we have a role to play.

At some point in this journey, we recognize that we know we need to continue to mature in our faith and that we can also help others enjoy the journey. That doesn't mean we know it all. It just means we have enough experience to help others navigate the process as well. Paul mentored Timothy. He did so not just because Timothy needed Paul, but because Paul needed Timothy too. By helping others, we learn too.

There comes a point when we have to just give an unconditional yes to God. We don't know what's going to happen next. We just need to go. We don't want to be the one holding them back.

Isaiah came to understand this when he was given a glimpse of God's throne. *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Who should I send? Who will go for Us? I said: Here I am. Send me* (Isaiah 6:8). Isaiah approached the throne of God and heard a plea for someone to go. Isaiah responds by requesting to be sent. Does that scare you? Go and do what Lord? What about all of the stuff I have in my life? What do I do with that? Do I go alone? What about the others who depend on me?

One day I was recruiting a new leader and the teacher of the class saw me from a distance. She knew what I was doing. Afterwards, the teacher caught me to let me know how much this potential new leader was needed in her class. I just simply affirmed her for preparing this group member to serve. It was time for her to find her own place of service and leadership. We didn't want the least prepared leader. We need the best. We need leaders who are willing to help people surrender their lives to God. We need leaders who are willing to let them go.

Alarm bells will not go off when a person is ready to become a disciple-maker. Most often it happens very subtly. It doesn't require a press release. Just celebrate each step of the journey. With your encouragement, people will rise up and take their place. Not everyone. But you just might be surprised who and how many God is calling.

Conclusion

Jesus called twelve disciples. What a group! He recruited fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, etc. These disciples were not the pick of the liter. They didn't sign up to be the best of the best. These guys were ordinary people. What makes them different is not what they brought to their relationship with Jesus. What makes them different is Jesus!

I don't know God's plan for your life. Nor can I speak to God's plan for each individual that God will place in your life. But I do know God can take anyone who is willing to deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Him and use them to do extraordinary things in His Kingdom.

The illustration of the potter and the clay in Jeremiah 18:1-4 reminds us that we are in God's hands. God is the one who made us. He is the one who has formed us. Not for our purposes, but for His purposes. In His hands, He can accomplish anything He wants to.

I count it a privilege to be on this journey with you. I have never known a love like the one my Heavenly Father has for me. It is the tie that binds us together. I know this, God choosing to use someone like me is nothing short of a miracle. He can use someone like you too.

Join me.