

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A PROPOSAL FOR CONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A FOCUSED  
APPROACH TO A NEW MEMBER DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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Lynchburg, Virginia

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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This thesis is dedicated to:

*My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who brought me into the light and glory of salvation through His example, sacrifice, death, and resurrection, and showed me the meaning of love.*

*My beautiful wife, Kaci, who loved and encouraged me through this process and gave me the strength to persevere. You are my best friend!*

*My children, Avery and Sam, for allowing daddy the time he needed to research and write.*

*My parents, Tommy and Resa, for raising me in a Christian home and showing me the importance of putting God first in my life, and for being my lifelong proofreaders!*

*The First Baptist Church of Timpson, Texas, who supported me financially, emotionally, and spiritually as I pursued a Doctor of Ministry degree.*

## ABSTRACT

### A PROPOSAL FOR CONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A FOCUSED APPROACH TO A NEW MEMBER DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011

Mentor: Dr. Charlie Davidson

The purpose of this project is to reveal the benefits of new member discipleship, for without this process there are many who do not follow through with their commitment to be an active part of that body of believers. This project shall: examine the purpose and history of discipleship, analyze surveyed responses from local pastors and new members, explore the results of new member discipleship in local churches, and conclude with a discipleship plan ready for implementation. This project seeks to show that through new member discipleship, the church can increase the understanding and dedication of their new members.

Abstract length: 99 words.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

On any given Sunday, there are churches all around the world that gather to worship and glorify God. After the pastor stands and proclaims a message from the Lord, he will often extend an invitation to any who would choose to come and accept God's gift of love and salvation. When the Spirit stirs the hearts of the lost, they will then take that long walk down the aisle of the church or meeting place to share their decision with the pastor, and there they will profess their faith in Jesus Christ. The church will roar with thunderous applause and proclaim "amen" or "praise God" in excitement as a soul is saved and a new family member welcomed.

The pastor will then introduce the babe in Christ or the new member to the congregation and will invite the church members to come and welcome that person into the great family of God. For that new believer, or new member, the hugs and handshakes are almost overwhelming as the congregation surrounds them with love and encouragement. Yet, as the last person comes through the greeting line, and as the pastor steps away to gather his things and leave the building, the new believer or member is left there at the altar, standing all alone, wondering to himself or herself, "What do I do now?" One of the great tragedies in churches today is the lack of discipleship for new members of the congregation. There is frequently a great and warm response to new believers as they take that step of faith to trust in Jesus, and every member of the church

and the pastor tell that new believer how proud they are of them and what a great decision that they have made. Yet, the new believer is never shown what it means to be a Christian. They have accepted the love and forgiveness of Christ, and they plan to be baptized, yet they have no idea what it means to follow Christ because they have never been taught.

Churches too often “mistakenly assume that once a person has received Christ, the sale has been consummated, and it is now up to the new believer to follow through with his commitment.”<sup>1</sup> Just as a baby must be taught how to live in the world, new Christians must be taught how to live in Christ. For without this knowledge and training, new believers recurrently become overwhelmed, discouraged, and confused because they have made a decision to embark on an eternal journey however they have no idea where they are going, how they are going to get there, or who is going to help them along the way. It is because of this lack of teaching and training that many new believers simply do not follow through with their public profession of faith in Jesus Christ and their intention to live for Him. The truth is that the church has become “good at teaching... [and] baptizing,” but somehow “we are not very good at making disciples as we are going.”<sup>2</sup> The process of making disciples is one that has been in the history of the church since the very beginning, yet as generations have passed this practice has somehow become less important.

As a result of the lack of new member training that is found in many

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<sup>1</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 310.

<sup>2</sup> W. Oscar Thompson Jr., *Concentric Circles of Concern* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishers, 1999), 190.

Churches today, congregations are filled with people who are documented members of the church but who are not active participants or fruitful servants of the kingdom. There is a generation of church members today whose faith is weak, commitment is frail, understanding is little, and service is non-existent. Some may say that the church is in this condition because it is simply an evolution of society or a sign of the times, and this may be partially true. In this author's opinion, one of the greatest reasons for the falling away of so many new believers, and the great decline of the church which is currently being experienced is because of the irresponsible actions of grounded believers in Christ not fulfilling their great calling to teach new believers how to truly become disciples of Christ. In order to change this attitude and undesirable weakness, the church must realize that it is not only their privilege to train believers, but also their responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

New member training is vital to the life of the church and the maturity of new believers because it sets the tone and the level of expectation for the growth of the disciple. The goal of the church should be to have "true disciples – men, women, boys and girls committed to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and growing daily in their knowledge, love, and service to Him,"<sup>4</sup> In order for many members to develop this level of commitment they must first be guided and directed into the process of becoming a true disciple. The process of discipleship should never be seen or even considered an option for the new believer, the church, or the disciple of Christ because it is a scriptural

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<sup>3</sup> Ken Hemphill, *Splash 2: Discipleship* (Tigerville, South Carolina: Auxano Press, 2009), x.

<sup>4</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 6.

mandate.<sup>5</sup>

### **Statement of the Problem**

The goal of this project is to reveal the true definition and purpose of discipleship as it pertains to new believers of the church. By discovering the true power and meaning of discipleship, pastors and churches should be convicted and encouraged to fulfill their calling in training and leading new members so that they may be the believers that God has called them to be: disciples that truly desire to learn to be like Christ.<sup>6</sup> This analysis will show the great need for discipleship that is missing from so many churches today and reveal many of the problems that result from this lack of training, such as a falling away from the study of Jesus' teaching and the emphasis of living one's faith through action.<sup>7</sup> Finally, this project will provide a plan for new member training that may be implemented into the local church in order to develop and increase the knowledge, understanding, commitment, and focus of new church members. For "All Christians are disciples or scholars of Christ, and the church is His school."<sup>8</sup>

### **Statement of Limitation**

This project is going to be focused on researching and designing a new member

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<sup>5</sup> Daryl Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 76.

<sup>6</sup> Dallas Willard, "How to be a Disciple," *The Christian Century* 115 no. 13 (1998): 8.

<sup>7</sup> Scot McKnight, "Jesus Creed: What is the Focus of Spiritual Life?" *The Christian Century* 121.18 (2004).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Baxter, *Watch Your Walk: Ministering from a Heart of Integrity* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor, 2005), 109.

training program for Southern Baptist churches in East Texas. This is the location of the author's current church and; therefore, this project will not be specifically directed to all denominations, or to Baptist churches located in other states, regions, or conventions. The project will also be utilizing surveyed answers from local churches that currently utilize some form of new member training. The number of churches that incorporate this type of training in East Texas is confined. Therefore, the number of responses may be limited as well as completely subjective.

This paper will also attempt to reveal the benefits of training new members, which will include both new believers in Christ as well as new members by transfer of letter. The focus of this report shall not be on the benefits or implementation of a training or discipleship program for current or long-standing members of the church, though the material provided at the end of this project could certainly benefit those members as well. Finally this proposal shall suggest a new member discipleship plan ready for implementation into the local Baptist churches in East Texas. Though the design of this plan is based on solid research and scriptural foundations, there is no guarantee that the application of this program will increase or improve the attendance, understanding, or devotion of those new church members who participate in the training.

### **Theoretical Basis**

The basis for this project is primarily biblical since this is the standard and guide for all things pursued and accomplished by disciples of Christ. This project will examine several key scriptures that will show the biblically designed purpose and benefit of discipleship and shall investigate the true meaning of the word as it was used and applied through the Bible in both the Old and the New Testament. In addition to specific biblical

references to the process of discipleship, this assessment shall also provide an examination of the discipleship process as revealed by several key figures in biblical history including: Moses, Paul, and Jesus Christ.

### **Statement of Methodology**

In order to show the absolute need and the great advantages that new member discipleship may bring to a church, this assessment shall first attempt to provide the reader with a strong biblical definition of discipleship. This is accomplished first by reviewing the various scriptures that reveal the meaning of discipleship. Through the use of original language tools and commentaries, this analysis shall examine the process of discipleship as modeled and described to believers in God's Holy Word.

Once the definition and understanding of discipleship has been established, this study shall then reflect upon that information in conjunction with data and knowledge received from various books, journals, theses, and articles on the purpose of biblical discipleship. This section of the paper shall reveal to the reader why it is that new member training is absolutely essential not only for the new believer, but also for the church and its leadership.

After the definition, biblical application, and purpose of discipleship have been established and presented, this proposal shall examine the process of new member training as it is utilized in several local Baptist churches in East Texas. In order to do this, a survey shall be sent to those churches that practice new member training in order to investigate their practices and results. There will be two surveys sent out. One survey shall be sent to the pastors or leaders of the program inquiring as to the nature of the program, details of its inception and application, and the benefits that have been recorded.

The other survey shall be sent to new members of those churches who have recently completed or are in the process of completing that particular church's new member training program. This survey shall examine the participant's view of that particular program, their feelings towards the leaders, curriculum, and program's successfulness, as well as any areas in which they would suggest altering the program.

The results of these surveys shall be reviewed and presented in this assessment in order to evaluate how these programs are currently succeeding and in what ways improvements need to be made. All of this information will be gathered and studied so that this thesis may provide an implementable plan for new member training. In light of the definition of discipleship and the purpose as seen in scripture, and with the knowledge gained through various books, articles, journals, and theses, this project shall suggest the most effective method for implementing a new member training program in the local East Texas Southern Baptist church.

This proposal shall contain what information should be included in the training program as well as how it should be taught and who should be involved in the process of training "authentic followers of Christ" rather than "cultural Christians."<sup>9</sup> This recommendation will focus on the role of the pastor and other leaders within the church, as well as the church's responsibility in the process of leading new believers and members to have the "same motivations, attitude, and behaviors" as Christ.<sup>10</sup>

This project will then review the effects and the cost of discipleship. Throughout

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<sup>9</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), 284.

<sup>10</sup> Ken Heer, *Your Next Step: Becoming the Person God Meant You to Be* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2003), 7.



scripture it is clear that becoming a disciple is not a decision that one should take lightly for the cost is great. In the same way, there will be challenges that churches will face when entering into a new member discipleship program, but the rewards will also come as a result of this step of faithfulness and dedication. This section of the paper shall reveal many of the positive and negative effects that may be experienced by both the church and the new members as they accept God's call to train and be trained.

This analysis concludes with a summary of the project and will include several appendices: the surveys to be sent to the pastors and new church members, and copies of the new member training guide for both the leaders and the participants.

### **Review of Related Literature**

A project such as this would be incomplete without the utilization of insights and works written by so many experienced leaders, pastors, and researchers who have spent years studying the process of discipleship, its definition, purpose, and benefits for the church as well as the new members.

Of the sources listed in the bibliography, there were several that were particularly beneficial to the research of this thesis. One text is George Barna's *Growing True Disciples*. This book reveals the need for change in the church's approach and attitude towards discipleship because instructing and training new believers has been forsaken. Barna states that each church must understand the mandated calling of Scripture to produce disciples by creating a customized plan of discipleship.<sup>11</sup> This plan should not be implemented and then simply remain unchanged. The church must continuously edit

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<sup>11</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 119.

and evaluate the program to meet the needs of the congregation and community. Boyd Luter's article, "Discipleship and the Church,"<sup>12</sup> addresses these same concerns about discipleship. He informs the reader of the definition of discipleship, and reveals that in order for the church to obey and fulfill Christ's Great Commission the congregation must understand and apply each portion of their calling. This includes sharing their faith, baptizing, and then teaching new believers to follow God and lead others into the kingdom.

Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* also focuses on the role discipleship plays within the body and structure of the church. Warren shows that congregations must seek to bring the lost into their church and into the kingdom by sharing the love of God. The church must then invest time in these new believers, building them up to spiritual maturity by training them and giving them the tools necessary to become devoted disciples of Christ who will not only fulfill the will of God in their own lives, but who will also lead others into the kingdom.<sup>13</sup> Ralph Hodge also addresses the great need for discipleship in his text *Taking the Next Step: A Guide for New Church Members*. This book shows that in order for a congregation to truly disciple new believers they must place emphasis on building strong relationships with those who have recently joined the fellowship of the church.<sup>14</sup> These relationships will often keep the new believers accountable and involved in active

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<sup>12</sup> Boyd Luter, "Discipleship and the Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 547 (1980).

<sup>13</sup> Warren, *Church*, 119.

<sup>14</sup> Ralph Hodge, *Taking the Next Step: A Guide for New Church Members* (Nashville, Tennessee: Leadership Adult Publishing, 2007).

participation and service while also lessening the likelihood of their falling away.

Robert Coleman's book *The Master Plan of Evangelism* is also beneficial in understanding the purpose and implementation of discipleship.<sup>15</sup> Coleman reveals that believers are responsible for leading others to the saving knowledge of Christ, yet their calling to make disciples does not end at this point; it simply begins. This text reminds the reader of the intimate time that Christ spent with His followers and the methods that He used to teach them about the kingdom and their obligation to obey God and follow His plan.

A source which also provides instruction and knowledge about the details of new member training is *Membership Matters* by Chuck Lawless.<sup>16</sup> This text reveals various facts and statistics about the process of training new believers and church members. These topics include who should teach the course, what material should be covered, and how the course may be formed and organized. In Elmer Towns' and Stan Toler's book *What Every Pastor Should Know About Sunday School* there is also a great amount of information on the process of discipleship training. This text offers several suggestions for choosing the most qualified and effective communicators of the church as teachers for these small group courses so that the students will be stimulated and encouraged.<sup>17</sup>

Howard Hendricks also addresses the need for competent teachers in his book *Teaching*

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming Revell, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Chuck Lawless, *Membership Matters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Elmer Towns, and Stan Toler, *What Every Pastor Should Know about Sunday School* (Ventura, California: Regal, 2002), 73.

*to Change Lives*. For a teacher to be effective in instructing new believers how to walk with God and grow spiritually, he or she must first be a devoted disciple of Christ.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the church must look for individuals who are truly following Christ and spending time with Him daily. Without intimacy and devotion, these leaders will not be able to instruct new followers on how to become disciples of Christ.

Another insightful source which addresses the topic of discipleship is *The Disciple-Making Church* by Bill Hull.<sup>19</sup> This text focuses on the process of making disciples as revealed by Jesus Christ. Hull shows that for churches to make disciples, the congregation must obey and understand each aspect of the Great Commission. This includes modeling the practices of Christ as He poured Himself into the lives of His followers while also remaining close to them until they were ready to begin serving the kingdom and making disciples on their own. Hull also authored *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker*, which reveals the various ways that Jesus led others into the kingdom by loving them unconditionally.<sup>20</sup> Once they accepted His love, He continued to show them how to faithfully live their lives bringing honor to God.

Other examples of discipleship were reviewed and studied by utilizing texts such as *Life Lessons from Paul* by Criswell Freeman and Heather Zempel's *Sacred Roads: Exploring the Historic Paths of Discipleship*. Freeman's text examines the discipleship

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<sup>18</sup> Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1987), 37.

<sup>19</sup> Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming Revell, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2009), 133.

methods that Paul used as he shared his testimony and life experiences with others while loving them as though they were his own family in the process.<sup>21</sup> Zempel reveals that the process of discipleship is not simply a program that can be universally designed or applied. She shows that in the same way that Moses disciplined Joshua based upon who Joshua was and the direction that he was headed in his journey with God, churches must also tailor their discipleship programs to fit the needs of the new believers in which they encounter.<sup>22</sup>

Several Scriptures were examined in order to provide a complete study of the process of discipleship as outlined in God's Word. This thesis focuses on four passages: Luke 14:25-33, 1 Tim. 4:1-7, Matt. 28:18-20, and Prov. 22:6. The study of Luke 14:25-33 focuses on the sacrifice and dedication that is required from one who desires to be a disciple of Christ which includes denying his or her desires and forsaking all things for the kingdom of God. An examination of 1 Tim. 4:1-7 reveals the challenges and temptations that new believers will face as they seek to glorify God in this lost and evil world. Matt. 28:18-20 shows that discipleship is not an option for believers in the world today, rather it is a command. A commission from Christ which instructs all Christians to not only spread the gospel of God's love but to also walk beside new believers and instruct them on how to honor God with their lives. Finally, an analysis of Prov. 22:6 shows that for new believers to know the path that leads to intimacy with God, they must be given direction, just as a child must be given instruction when they enter into the

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<sup>21</sup> Dr. Criswell Freeman, *Life Lessons from Paul* (Nashville, Tennessee: Freeman-Smith, LLC, 2007), 164.

<sup>22</sup> Heather Zempel, *Sacred Roads: Exploring the Historic Paths of Discipleship* (Nashville, Tennessee: Lifeway Church Resources, 2009), 62.

world. John MacArthur's *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*<sup>23</sup> and Warren Wiersbe's *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*<sup>24</sup> were both consulted in order to provide insightful exegesis of these texts.

Each of these sources, as well as the rest of the entries in the bibliography contributes information which led to the completion and formation of this thesis. Many of the texts and articles were competent in their coverage of material presented. However, they often only investigated a limited area or portion of the subject of discipleship. The goal of this thesis is to compile and examine the information available on discipleship in order to reveal the purpose and necessity of discipleship in the church today, as well as the details relating to the process of implementation and the positive effects which may be experienced.

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<sup>23</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Reference & Publishing, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David Cook, 2007).

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORY OF DISCIPLESHIP

#### **Definition of Discipleship**

In order to understand exactly what a word means, it is imperative that one go back to the origin of the word or process in order to see its original meaning and purpose. If a student of the Word wants to know the meaning of a verse or passage of Scripture, he or she must examine the original language as well as the content and historical conditions that influenced the writer and the audience. This process must also be followed in order to determine the true meaning of discipleship.

The original biblical texts used the term disciple to refer to “someone who is a learner or follower who serves as an apprentice under the tutelage of a master.”<sup>1</sup> The Greek word for disciple is μαθητής, which is “derived from the Latin term *discipulus* meaning ‘learner’ or ‘pupil.’”<sup>2</sup> This name or description was given to those whom were the first followers of Christ as He began His ministry upon the earth. He was their “teacher or master; they were His disciples.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, a disciple is one who is considered a follower of Christ that desires to learn from Him. This process is referred to

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<sup>1</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Luter, *Discipleship*, 268.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2001), 235.

as discipleship.<sup>4</sup>

It is imperative to understanding the dynamic meaning of being a disciple for one to grasp the fundamental truth that being a disciple is not simply a onetime event or a limited engagement. To be a disciple is to begin a committed process.<sup>5</sup> From the moment that a person accepts their call from the Lord unto eternal life, he/she also accepts a call to follow Him with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength until the day that God calls him/her home. Discipleship is a progression of faith and works that “begins after conversion and continues throughout a believer’s life.”<sup>6</sup> Becoming a disciple is a process because it is not something that happens overnight. Though the new believer is forgiven and freed from their sins immediately, the process of learning from the Savior is something that takes time and commitment.

Due to the fact that many believers are never shown how to become a disciple or exactly what it means to follow the Savior, they are left uneducated, unmotivated, and spiritually immature. Therefore, in the same way that Jesus was proactive in His instruction towards His followers, the church must also have a “purposeful program of teaching, fellowship, and accountability”<sup>7</sup> in order to show new believers and members how to follow the path of discipleship. The process that is often seen in the lives of believers today as well as those who first followed Jesus, consists of three steps:

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<sup>4</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, New York: Collier Books, 1963), 62.

<sup>5</sup> Billy Graham, *The Journey* (Nashville, Tennessee: W Publishing Group, 2006), 89.

<sup>6</sup> Hodge, *Guide*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Towns, *Sunday School*, 71.



deliverance, development, and deployment.<sup>8</sup>

As the Savior walked the earth, He looked for those who were hurting and were in need of salvation, and He offered them living water so that their spiritual thirst could be quenched forever. When those to whom He ministered, or those He called to follow Him chose to come and believe by their own will, they were delivered. At that point, they were released from their sins and from an eternal separation from God, and yet their journey to becoming a true disciple did not end there; it simply began. Jesus would then walk and live with His disciples, showing them what it meant to accomplish the will of the Father. As the Savior taught and instructed, it is important to recognize the disciple's willingness to submit to His authority and teaching. After one accepts His offer for eternal life and service, "He does not force anyone to follow, but those who follow fall under the force"<sup>9</sup> of His love and grace. In their willingness to learn and serve, the disciples would continue to develop their theology, faith, and practice and then they would minister and share their faith.

Billy Graham states that a disciple experiences three roles through the process of discipleship. They are to be a learner, follower, and a servant.<sup>10</sup> From the original word for disciple, μαθητής, it is understood that the believer is first called to learn from the teacher, and then they will be led to follow His teachings and obey His commands. Therefore, discipleship is the process by which the Christian learns from the Savior,

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<sup>8</sup> Hull, *Church*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Scott Spencer, "Follow Me: The Imperious Call of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels," *Interpretation* 2, no. 59 (April 2005): 142.

<sup>10</sup> Graham, *Journey*, 91-93.

follows His teachings and example, and then serves the Master by serving one another.

In the church today, believers are still called to be disciples of Christ by following these same steps of progression. Though the Savior is not physically walking with His disciples, they may still learn, follow, and serve through their knowledge gained through the Scriptures and by the prompting of the Spirit. The pattern that Jesus established was for believers to become mature in their faith so that they could then in turn disciple others. Therefore, it is up to the church and the established disciples of the world to make sure that the work of discipleship is still a priority in order to fulfill the will of the Father.

George Barna asked several church leaders what discipleship meant to them and to their churches, and he comprised a list of nine characteristics that indicate what it means to be a disciple and what the church's role is in discipleship. These include passion, depth, maturity, practice, process, interactive, multifaceted, lifelong, and Christ like.<sup>11</sup> First, there must be an undeniable passion in the heart of the believer. This passion should be seen as they seek God whole-heartedly, and there must be passion from the church to disciple those who meet the Savior. Barna says there should also be depth and maturity that spurs the disciple to practice what they learn at all costs. Discipleship should be a "journey" and not a "destination,"<sup>12</sup> as the believer continuously strives to interact and serve the world and the lost. Becoming a disciple, as shown by the examples of the Savior and the original church, is truly a lifelong process to become like Christ.

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<sup>11</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 108-110.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

### Scriptural Discipleship

To understand more about the process and purpose of discipleship, one must not only look at the original meaning and context of the word, but also the Scriptures which speak to this radical process. Through a study of key Scriptures in God's Holy Word, it is understood that "discipleship is the core of Christian spirituality,"<sup>13</sup> and without it the believer will never fulfill the will of the Father.

#### Luke 14:25-33

In the book of Luke, there are three key verses that speak to what it means and what is required for a person to be a disciple of Christ. In Luke 14:26, Jesus says to the crowd, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple."<sup>14</sup> What Jesus is doing here is informing the crowd that there is a great difference between salvation and discipleship. Salvation is what occurs when a person trusts in Christ for their forgiveness and restoration, however discipleship is the process that new believers enter into once they have made that decision to follow through with their commitment. Jesus uses very harsh words here in order to ensure that there is no misunderstanding about the cost of discipleship. He states that if anyone believes in Him, trusts in Him, and genuinely desires to be a disciple, then they must hate all the members of their family. Truly, hate is not an emotion that Christ would ever suggest to His followers, but

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Frederick, "Discipleship and Spirituality from a Christian Perspective," *Pastoral Psychology*, July, 2008, 553.

<sup>14</sup> *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Nashville, Tennessee: Cornerstone Bible Publishers, 1999), 923.

rather He is showing them the level of priority that the Father and the kingdom must have in their life. When He tells the crowd that they must hate their family, He does “not suggest positive antagonism but rather ‘to love less,’”<sup>15</sup> showing that their love for Christ is so much stronger than all other loves they may have in their life. One’s love for God should be so far greater than a person’s love for anything else that when they are compared, one’s love for family is similar to hatred because it is so much less. According to this use of the word disciple, one must understand that following Christ and serving Him as Master is not a simple or easy task at all. In fact it will require the priorities and focus of the believer’s life to change from loving the things of the world the most, to loving God first and foremost.

The next statement that Jesus reveals about the cost of discipleship is found in Luke 14:27 where He says, “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”<sup>16</sup> As Christ came to earth and walked in the flesh as the incarnation of God Almighty, it is evident that He came for a reason and for a purpose, and that was to save the souls of mankind. This was not the plan of the Son, but the plan of the Father. Therefore, He humbled Himself to the Father’s will, and was willing to endure and sacrifice all that He had, even His own blood and life, for the purpose and plan of the Father. In this verse Christ is revealing to His followers that if they truly desire to be His disciples, they too must be willing to take up their own cross and follow Him. This would mean that their own desires and plans would no longer be the priority of their lives. It would mean “daily identification with Christ in shame, suffering, and

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<sup>15</sup> Wiersbe, *Commentary*, 186-187.

<sup>16</sup> NIV.

surrender to God's will."<sup>17</sup> In the same way that Christ gave His life on a cross, a believer must also be willing to sacrifice his/her life to the cause of the kingdom and the will of the Father. As Jesus began His ministry, the crowds were numerous and people came by the multitudes to hear Him speak or to watch Him perform miracles, yet most were uncommitted to follow His ways. As He spoke to this crowd, He "set the cost of discipleship as high as possible and encouraged them to do a careful inventory before declaring their willingness to follow."<sup>18</sup>

The third mention of discipleship is found in Luke 14:33, when Christ states "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."<sup>19</sup> Right before Jesus spoke these words, He spoke two parables to help them think about the cost of discipleship. First He states that when a man decides to build a tower, he must first determine how much the materials will cost so that in the middle of the project he does not run out of money and look foolish because he is unable to finish. Christ then says when a king is about to go to war, he will not first consider how many soldiers he has, and how many soldiers he is about to go to war against in order to determine if he even has a chance at victory, or should he ask for terms of peace. In both of these examples, Christ is revealing to the crowd that following the path of Christ is exactly what man is called to do, but it will not be easy. Therefore, instead of volunteering oneself for this act of service without first understanding what is involved, Christ tells the crowd to spend some time and think about their decision, because unless

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<sup>17</sup> Wiersbe, *Commentary*, 187.

<sup>18</sup> MacArthur, *Commentary*, 1309.

<sup>19</sup> NIV.

they are willing to give up absolutely everything in their life for the kingdom, they are not worthy to be His followers. The disciples were called to absolutely and unconditionally surrender themselves to the Father, and could “retain no privileges and make no demands.”<sup>20</sup> When Jesus began to speak about what it meant to be a disciple, He desired for there to be no “false expectance, no illusions, and no bargains,” because He needs followers that He can use as “stones for building His church,” and “soldiers for battling His enemies.”<sup>21</sup> Persons who have not considered the cost and accepted the challenge are unworthy of this sacrificial honor.

In these three verses in which Jesus speaks about what it means to be a disciple, He reveals that discipleship is “serious business,” and if we are not “true disciples, then Jesus cannot build the tower and fight the war.”<sup>22</sup> Unless a person is willing to sacrifice their own will for that of the Father, they are not ready to be a disciple. Unless one loves God more than anything else in this world, they will never become spiritually mature. Christ reveals to His people that until believers are willing to give up even their own life for the kingdom, they cannot be a disciple of Christ, for that is the sacrifice that is required by those who choose to serve and follow.

#### 1 Timothy 4:1-7

As Paul writes to Timothy, he begins to warn him of all the ways in which the world might tempt the disciples of Christ to fall away from the truth. He says that some

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<sup>20</sup> MacArthur, *Commentary*, 1309.

<sup>21</sup> Wiersbe, *Commentary*, 187.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

will abandon the faith and follow false religions and deception, and they will pursue their own will instead of that of the Father. So he encourages Timothy to be a good “minister of Christ Jesus,” and to hold on to the truths he has been taught in Scripture by having nothing to do with “godless myths and old wives’ tales,” but “rather, train yourself to be godly.”<sup>23</sup>

There are two points that must be understood from this verse that reveal additional aspects of discipleship. First, those who choose to be disciples must know that some of the challenges they will face in this world will be a sea of lies, deceit, and false teachings that try to cover their eyes from knowing the truth of the gospel. Therefore, the disciples of Christ must not only be willing to let go of their earthly pleasures and priorities, as stated by the Savior in Luke, they must also be willing to step forth into battle against the evil forces, which will taunt them and seduce them into falling away from the truth. The only way to be prepared for this is to remember the truths of God’s Word, and to train oneself for the journey. The call to discipleship will forever be an “ongoing commitment” for those who answer the call.<sup>24</sup>

In the same way that Paul describes the Christian journey as a race in 1 Cor. 9:24-25, so now Timothy is echoing this analogy. The process of discipleship is an exercise of faith and life that is continuous. Just as a person will train to run a race so that they are prepared and have a chance of victory, disciples must continuously be in training because the race in which they run is an everyday event and the race will not be complete until the

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Tim. 4:1-7.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Plevnik, "Your Father in Heaven: Discipleship in Matthew as a Process of Becoming Children of God," *Theological Studies*, April, 2010.

disciple takes his/her last breath upon the earth. In order to be a disciple of Christ, one must be prepared to run the race and fight the good fight. The only way a person is able to do so, and expect to be victorious, is if they spend their life training to be godly. This daily commitment involves knowing and trusting the Word of God, spending time alone with the Savior, and faithfully stepping out onto the battlefield, each day trusting not one's own knowledge or ability, but the Spirit and will of God.

#### Matthew 28:18-20

Undoubtedly one of the most well known discipleship verses is found in the book of Matthew. After the resurrection of the Savior, He appeared to His disciples and He gave them this command: "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."<sup>25</sup> This passage is known as the "Great Commission" and has within it the key to understanding discipleship and its purpose.<sup>26</sup> Bill Hull states, "Disciple making lies at the heart of the Great Commission and exists to create qualified personnel through whom church ministry can reproduce and multiply."<sup>27</sup>

When Jesus first began His ministry, He chose twelve disciples to follow Him. Christ's purpose for teaching and training these twelve was so that they then in turn, as mature servants of God, would be able to train and disciple other new believers. This is

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<sup>25</sup> Matt. 28:19-20.

<sup>26</sup> Hull, *Church*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 217.



God's plan for His disciples: to "develop other men and women into disciples!"<sup>28</sup> When Jesus gives the command to "go and make disciples," He is revealing to the twelve chosen disciples present with Him, and to all believers of the gospel that they are not only to follow Him in all that they do, they are also to lead "others to follow His way."<sup>29</sup> It is imperative for the disciple to understand that this is not simply a request from Christ; it is a command. Therefore, "discipleship and disciple-making are not an option, they are a clear command from Scripture."<sup>30</sup>

When looking closely at this verse, several key phrases must be examined in order to gain further understanding of discipleship. Not only does this verse clearly show that discipleship is mandatory for believers in Christ, it also reveals who is responsible for this call and shows how the believer is to accomplish this great task. Christ simply tells the disciples and the readers of Matthew to "Go," and by doing so, He does not limit this command to the disciples or a certain chosen few. This command applies to all believers and followers of God; therefore, no one is exempt. Those who claim to trust in the blood of the Lamb are to go and make disciples, and there is to be no hesitation upon their obedience to this call. Therefore, a disciple is one who "has believed on Jesus Christ and expressed this faith by being baptized...remains in the fellowship of the believers that he might be taught the truths of the faith...[and] is able to go out and win others and teach

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<sup>28</sup> Hull, *Disciplemaker*, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Coleman, *Evangelism*, 101.

<sup>30</sup> John MacArthur and The Master's Seminary Faculty, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 270.

them.”<sup>31</sup>

In order to go and make disciples, Christ instructs all believers to go into all the nations, baptizing new believers and “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”<sup>32</sup> Within this verse are two key steps that must be followed in order to become a disciple as well as to go and make disciples. First, a disciple is one who has accepted Christ as Lord and Savior of their life. Therefore, in order to fulfill this command, those who have trusted Him must go to the lost of the world and share with them the good news of salvation, and then lead them through the obedient act of baptism. They are then to teach the new believers what it means to be a follower and servant of the Master so that they will obey His commands and fulfill the Father’s will upon the earth. Baptizing and teaching “are not the means of making disciples, but they characterize the process” of leading and training others to be true disciples. The obedient act of “Christian instruction is to be a continuous process,” by which disciples lead the lost into the kingdom, baptize them in the Trinity, and then teach them the commands of Christ.<sup>33</sup>

#### Proverbs 22:6

Throughout the New Testament, it is revealed that when a person accepts the call from the Savior, they become a “new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!”<sup>34</sup> As a result of this new birth (Jn. 3:7, Jam. 1:18, 1 Pet. 1:3), believers become like

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<sup>31</sup> Wiersbe, *Commentary*, 87.

<sup>32</sup> Matt. 28:19-20.

<sup>33</sup> Luter, *Discipleship*, 269.

<sup>34</sup> 2 Cor. 5:17.

spiritual infants. When Paul addressed the Corinthians in his first letter, he said that he could “not address them as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ.”<sup>35</sup> Through an “event, a condition, or a status, that is initiated by Christ Himself,”<sup>36</sup> a person is called into a relationship with the Savior, and at that point, they become a babe in Christ. From that point forward, in the same way that babies are unable to care for themselves without aid, a new believer must be shown how to live for God. Spiritual growth is not an event or occurrence that naturally occurs in the life of the believer; it is a choice made by the disciples of Christ to fulfill their duty to the cross by training those new believers how to become the followers of Jesus that they are meant to be. If new believers are going to grow and mature spiritually and not remain on spiritual milk, as a baby must, they should be trained and taught about service to God from the very beginning of their journey.

Proverbs 22:6 states that if you “train a child in the way he should go,” then “when he is old he will not turn from it.”<sup>37</sup> One of the great tragedies in the church today is that so many persons claim to be disciples, and they obey the first part of God’s Great Commission by sharing the good news and baptizing new believers, yet they fail to follow through by teaching them the ways of God. Therefore, there are spiritual babes filling the churches who have no real commitment to God because they have never been disciplined. This proverb reveals that if a child is trained, molded, educated from a young

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<sup>35</sup> 1 Cor. 3:1.

<sup>36</sup> Demetrios Trakatellis, "Follow Me: Discipleship and Priesthood," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 30, no. 3 (1985): 271.

<sup>37</sup> Prov. 22:6.

age, then he will start out life “in the way he should go”<sup>38</sup> and this instruction will not leave him. In the same way, new believers, babes in Christ, should be shown the right path to follow from the very beginning of their journey so that as the temptations and trials of the world come upon them, they will have a solid foundation on which to stand.

Jesus says in Matt. 18:3, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” When a child is young, they are easily influenced because their minds are clear from the confusion and deception of the world. It is during this stage of their lives that they often develop “life-long habits.”<sup>39</sup> The reason why discipleship is so important at the very beginning of one’s walk with Christ is because the training and education they receive while still spiritual babes will determine the rate at which they grow and mature as believers. Therefore, disciples must know that when they lead a person to the cross of Calvary their journey has only begun with the new believer. They must not simply tell them how to accept Christ; they must educate them on how to live for Him as well. If this crucial step in the discipleship process is overlooked or forsaken, then the growth of the new believer will be directly affected.

### **Examples of Discipleship**

When considering the purpose, meaning, and history of discipleship, it is beneficial to observe this practice as recorded in Scripture. This analysis will review three specific persons in the Bible who modeled God’s plan for discipleship. The results

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<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Barker, and John Kohlenberger III, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 987.

<sup>39</sup> MacArthur, *Commentary*, 719.

of their dedication to training others are undeniable.

### Jesus the Master

As discussed earlier, the term disciple was given to those whom followed and served the Master. Truly He is not only the perfect example of a life lived to please God; He also provides believers with the greatest example of how to disciple others that is recorded in Scripture. When Christ began His public ministry He recruited twelve men to follow Him, and then He spent the “remainder of His time on earth pouring into them the key lessons required to understand life.”<sup>40</sup> Jesus was known as the Master Teacher, and His method of instruction was simply to call the disciples and have them follow Him as He ministered to the world. These simple two words, “Follow me” (Matt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 19:21; Mark 1:17; 2:14; John 1:43; 21:19), were His great invitation to the disciples to enroll “themselves in the Master’s school where their understanding could be enlarged and their faith established.”<sup>41</sup>

The apostles provide a great example of Jesus’ teaching method in that Jesus invited them to follow Him, and they learned from “His words and deeds,” and grew “through the practical hands-on training He facilitated.”<sup>42</sup> There is such a great contrast between the teaching methods of those considered to be educated and respected such as the scribes and Pharisees of the day compared to the teaching methods of the Savior. Christ’s method was naturally informal, while the scribes’ procedures were very formal

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<sup>40</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 24.

<sup>41</sup> Coleman, *Evangelism*, 43.

<sup>42</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 17.

and almost scholastic in nature.<sup>43</sup> The style that Christ used to develop and disciple His followers was based on His relationship with them. As He called the disciples to “be with Him (Mark 3:14),” He began to show them what it meant to live for the will of the Father and to deny oneself. He told them to love one another, in the way that He loved them. The majority of the knowledge that they gained from Christ was “gained by association before it was understood by explanation.”<sup>44</sup> Jesus taught them the truth and showed them the way not just by the words He spoke, but by the way that He lived.

Jesus spent more time with His disciples than anyone else during His life. Once He began His ministry upon the earth, Christ and the disciples ate, slept, walked, talked, visited, sailed, fished, prayed, and worshipped together.<sup>45</sup> He spent as much time as possible with these twelve men, because He was investing in the future of the kingdom. Christ knew that the only way to truly change a person’s heart and life is for them to see the power of God being lived out every day. Jesus desired nothing more than to let His life be the guiding light to direct the disciples’ lives and focus. It was the time that they spent in His presence that gave them the power to minister to the world. In over two-thousand years since His death, this fact has not changed. The only way that a believer is equipped to follow the will of the Father is to spend time with the Son. It is then and only then, that they will be prepared for the journey ahead of them.

When Christ called the twelve, He was very honest about His plan to send them forth to “preach, and to have authority to cast out devils,” and to minister to a lost and

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<sup>43</sup> Coleman, *Evangelism*, 41.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

forsaken world.<sup>46</sup> However, before they were ready to be sent out, before they were ready to make disciples themselves, Christ knew that first they must spend time with Him. During this process, He showed them how to love, how to serve, how to heal, how to share, and how to forgive. Without Christ taking this time to teach and mentor these men through an intimate relationship, the future of the church would be unknown. Christ devoted His life to fulfilling the will of the Father, and He did so by teaching others how to live in His very own image, the image of the Son of God.

### Paul the Transformed

Another great example of one who followed Christ's model of discipleship is the apostle Paul. In the life of Paul, we see a man who was the absolute enemy of Christ. He was a man who lived to persecute believers by having them killed or imprisoned, and yet all of that changed when He encountered the Savior. The transformation that Paul experienced was so drastic and sudden that many of his acquaintances including Jews and gentiles truly felt as though it was not authentic because it seemed almost overnight he became a devoted disciple (Acts 9:21). Once Paul had been "saved, and then discipled, he launched into a time of powerful, effective ministry" by demonstrating how to courageously share Christ with others, revealing the importance of mentoring others, and by showing "how indispensable theological knowledge and common sense are in working both inside and outside the church."<sup>47</sup>

After Paul's great conversion, he spent "several days with the disciples in

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>47</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 25.

Damascus.”<sup>48</sup> It was during this time that he learned how to be a follower of Christ and he discovered his role in the kingdom. Scripture records that after this time of discipleship, he immediately began his ministry by proclaiming that Jesus truly is the Son of the Most High God (Acts 9:20). During his ministry, he reveals that as he spent time with the disciples, he was not only enlightened as to how to live for Christ, he was also shown his great responsibility to disciple others just as he had been mentored.

Paul’s method of discipleship was just like that of Christ’s in that he mentored through relationships. Paul lived with those he mentored and disciple. They were able to see with their own eyes the genuine change that had occurred in his life.<sup>49</sup> The example that Paul displayed for his followers was one of “authentic, mature devotion to Christ in the midst of brokenness and suffering.”<sup>50</sup> Not only did Paul provide a great example for his students in that he portrayed what it means to come from the darkness and step into the light in a real and powerful way, he also experienced some of the worst physical harassment and torture of any Christian in history. Though his circumstances were downcast and depressing, he lifted up praises to God.

Part of the process of discipleship is to teach by being an example “which others can imitate.”<sup>51</sup> When one thinks about those that Paul influenced by his mentorship; men such as John Mark, Silas, Titus, Timothy, Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Justus,

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<sup>48</sup> Acts 9:19.

<sup>49</sup> Zempel, *Sacred*, 23.

<sup>50</sup> Dr. Daniel Egeler, *Mentoring Millenials* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 103.

<sup>51</sup> Luter, *Discipleship*, 270.



Epaphras, Luke, and Demas. These believers' lives were changed as a result of Paul's willingness to invest himself in their lives.<sup>52</sup> Paul was a busy man who was always working for the kingdom, and yet he saw the absolute necessity of sharing "wisdom with less experienced believers."<sup>53</sup> Paul taught by example: "in the synagogue, by the riverside, in prisons, in the marketplace, on a hilltop, in a school, from a staircase, in the courtroom,"<sup>54</sup> on a ship, in public and in private. Not only was his classroom unlimited because of the various places in which he taught, his audiences were also unlimited in variety because he taught "Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, barbarians, friends, enemies, strangers,"<sup>55</sup> philosophers, orators, jailers, prisoners, slaves, soldiers, rulers, governors. He taught all of these as well as his students by providing a genuine example of true faith and service to God.

Paul sought to develop his followers by bringing them from "spiritual immaturity...[to] spiritual maturity...disobedience to obedience...[and] faithlessness to fruitfulness."<sup>56</sup> His joy in life was "seeing those whom he led blossom into the people God wanted them to become."<sup>57</sup> As a result of his transformation, Paul provides a great example of how to disciple others, by showing them what can happen when a heart is

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<sup>52</sup> Eldridge, *Teaching*, 123.

<sup>53</sup> Freeman, *Paul*, 164.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 123

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

<sup>56</sup> Henry Blackaby, and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishers, 2001), 124.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 124.

touched by Jesus.

### Moses the Mentor

One last powerful example of discipleship can be seen in the relationship between Moses and Joshua. Moses was one of the original founders of the relational style of mentorship. He “instituted a discipling process between fathers and sons (and even grandsons) that would ensure godly leadership in the home and society for God’s people, both then and in the future.”<sup>58</sup> Moses believed in the power of discipleship. He invested his life into others so if he were no longer on this earth the work of the kingdom would continue through those whom he trained. He handed down an “administrative principle: reproduce yourself in others so that the leadership of God’s people will continue throughout your generations.”<sup>59</sup>

Moses knew that one day he would not be the leader of the Israelites. Therefore, he “discipled Joshua” so that he would “not leave Israel without leadership.”<sup>60</sup> He loved and treated Joshua as a son in the same way that Paul “saw Timothy as his ‘son’ in the ministry.”<sup>61</sup> For “40 years, Joshua stood by Moses’ side, and they experienced life and leadership together.”<sup>62</sup> During this time Joshua saw Moses spend time seeking the Lord, and he saw God’s great provision. Joshua learned how to depend on God during battle

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<sup>58</sup> MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry*, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 262.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 262.

<sup>61</sup> Freeman, *Paul*, 163.

<sup>62</sup> Zempel, *Sacred*, 19.

instead of depending on himself or others. Joshua learned what it meant to follow the will of God instead of the will of man. The things that Joshua learned changed the way that he thought, acted, lived, and served. The impact that Moses' example had upon Joshua resulted in him becoming a great and faithful servant of God.

This pattern was shown in other examples such as Elijah and Elisha or Naomi and Ruth, but the model is the same.<sup>63</sup> Whether one desires to look at the discipleship method of Moses, Christ, or Paul, they will find that in order to mentor a new believer, and train spiritual babes so that they may become spiritual giants, the mentor must invest their heart and life into the growth of the learner. In the same way that growing in spiritual maturity is a command that must be followed, so is the command for each believer in Christ to devote their life to expanding the kingdom by discipling others. This discipleship cannot simply be the handing out of a booklet or a single contact. It will require the mentor to not only ensure that they are walking rightly before God, but also to follow the words of Christ which instruct all believers to invest their lives into others. If mature believers will begin to take this charge seriously, then there will be a new generation of believers who arise which will be aware of their responsibility to the cross and are devoted to fulfilling God's plan and expanding His kingdom.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 20-21.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PURPOSE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is not an option for the church or for the mature believer in the world today because it is a necessary process which leads to the expansion of the kingdom and the fulfillment of God's ordained plan for believers. Yet, in order to know why discipleship is so vital to the life of the believer and the church it is imperative that one not only be aware of the definition and the history of this process, they must also know the purpose and the power of training new believers and members because the "way a congregation welcomes and assimilates new members has a direct relationship to its growth, vitality, and renewal."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this assessment shall now review several aspects which outline the purpose of discipleship as it pertains to the church, and to new believers.

#### **The Old is Gone**

As Paul writes to the Corinthians, he states if "anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."<sup>2</sup> This is a process that each new believer is called to accept and embrace, but help is needed to understand this spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Scannell, "Focus Groups Help Congregation Improve Its New Member Ministry," *Review of Religious Research* 1, no. 45 (2003): 68.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 5:17.

phenomenon. In the same way that many do not understand how they have been born again, because they think of birth as a physical act, many new believers do not comprehend what it means that their old self has died and they are now a new creation in Christ. Discipleship allows these new believers to gain a greater perspective and understanding of what has happened in their heart and life.

When new believers begin to embrace the fact that they are called to die to their old self; and no longer live as they once did, they are often overwhelmed with feelings of guilt and of shame because they fear that they are not strong enough to start a new life and overcome their past. Though they have confessed their sins before God, they believe that what they have done is who they are, and they are fearful that their past will determine their future. As a part of the discipleship process, the new believer must realize that the sins of his or her past and the priorities of the old self are now a part of their history, and they must embrace the fact that “God can change” their “future.”<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the process of discipleship requires “radical existential decisions,”<sup>4</sup> just like the decisions made by the disciples who chose to follow the Savior. They immediately were called to leave their old self behind. This decision included their friends, jobs, hobbies, families, and all things that were important to them.

As a new believer seeks to find the meaning of being a follower of Christ, he or she must be shown that the decision to imitate the Savior is a decision to let go of the

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<sup>3</sup> Craig Groeschel, *The Christian Atheist* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 49, 54.

<sup>4</sup> Trakatellis, *Follow*, 281.

“old, hard, protective shells” and to allow God to take them to a “new place in Him.”<sup>5</sup>

New believers often struggle to begin growing in Christ because they simply do not want to lose control of their life. Human beings are used to being able to make their own decisions and to follow their own path, yet when they make the decision to accept God’s offer of salvation everything changes. No longer will the new believer be able to live according to the sinful nature that pleases the flesh, they must now live as a new creation in Christ.

One of the greatest purposes of new believer training and discipleship is to make the person aware of the battle that they will fight for the rest of their days while living upon this earth. Spiritual warfare exists in the life of the believer because before one knows Christ he/she lives for pleasure and for selfish desires, and has no need or desire to choose righteousness. When salvation is experienced, though the believer is made new in Christ, the sinful nature is still present in their hearts and lives and will torment them in hopes of causing them to fall away. At this point, a battle begins between the nature of the Spirit and the nature of the flesh. Therefore, in the same way that the person chose to accept Christ’s offer for forgiveness, they must also choose “which nature will control” his/her life, and “which nature will be prevented”<sup>6</sup> from controlling his/her life. This decision to embrace one’s call of discipleship to “die to self,” is not merely a “big decision, it’s a terribly difficult one to follow through with, simply because of our selfish

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Scazzero, and Warren Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), 197.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Neighbour, and Bill Latham, *Survival Kit: Five Keys to Effective Spiritual Growth* (Nashville, Tennessee: Lifeway Press, 1996), 41.

human nature.”<sup>7</sup> The truth that new believers must embrace is that in order to grow as Christians, “we must die to the flesh, repeatedly, daily, until we’re home.”<sup>8</sup>

The essence of spiritual warfare is found in one’s decision to “serve God or self,”<sup>9</sup> and based upon that decision the believer will either draw closer towards God, or they will fall away from Him. This can be a very confusing matter for new believers because as they are ushered into the kingdom of God, they may have the misconception that surrendering to follow the Savior will be the answer to all their problems, and that temptations in their life will simply fall away, and this is not true. Christians experience two types of transformation: the first is when the believer accepts Christ as Savior and they are filled with the Spirit of God, and the second is “ongoing, and it happens only as we operate in the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>10</sup> This process of ongoing transformation is what must be taught to new believers as they seek to understand what it means to die to their old sinful selves; and live as new creations in Christ.

The purpose of discipleship is to train and encourage new believers to fight the good fight and to finish the race they have begun. From the very beginning they must understand their purpose in this world. They must be shown that they are called to experience the “glory of God” by living for Him and serving Him in obedience, however,

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<sup>7</sup> Tony Evans, *God, Do You Really Care?* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2006), 67.

<sup>8</sup> Larry Crabb, *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 96.

<sup>9</sup> John Franklin, Chuck Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Truth for Victory* (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Press, 2007), 182.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce Bickel, Stan Jantz, *I'm Fine with God – It's the Christians I Can't Stand* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 149-150.

when they attempt to exchange the “glory of God for other things,” such as their own selfish desires, they will find their lives “disordered” and “dysfunctional.”<sup>11</sup> The new believer must be taught that though their new life and challenge will be difficult, and though they will have to choose God before the world, he or she is not alone on this journey. After their “conversion, understood as the coming into being of a new nature,”<sup>12</sup> their obedience to Christ and will to live for Him will not only find strength in their joy of an intimate relationship with the Father, but they shall also find the strength to endure and overcome through the power of God’s Holy Spirit. One of the purposes of discipleship is to show new believers how to “learn ‘discipline’ by allowing their new nature to control their life.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Scriptural Expectations**

There are so many new believers in the world and in the church who do not grow in Christ or in their walk with God because they simply do not know what is expected of them. Another purpose of discipleship is to reveal to the new believer what the Bible requires of them as followers of Christ. One of the first requirements is to be baptized. Baptism is one of the few steps towards discipleship that churches often follow through with in accordance with Christ’s commands in the Great Commission. The ordinance of baptism is an “act of faith and a testimony that one has been united with Christ in His

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<sup>11</sup> John Piper, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004), 13.

<sup>12</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 2003), 68.

<sup>13</sup> Elmer Towns, *Core Christianity: What is Christianity All About?* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2007), 77.



death and resurrection.”<sup>14</sup> New believers should be shown that this act of obedience is one of the first steps that they are called to take to signify that they are no longer the person they used to be; they are now a disciple of Christ who seeks to bring glory and honor to the One who died for their sins. Yet, one of the great tragedies in the church today is that there are unlimited numbers of people who have been saved and baptized, but have never continued to seek after God or to make Him the Lord of their lives. Unfortunately, baptism is often the end of the Christian journey instead of the beginning.<sup>15</sup>

In order for new believers to understand what they have been called to do for the kingdom, they must be shown. After the person has been baptized in faith, the church should invest time in that believer to ensure they are educated about the knowledge of scriptural expectations for those who desire to follow Christ. They must be informed that this journey is more than simply saying a prayer of salvation, being baptized, and then sitting in a pew. The call to Christianity is a lifelong journey and commitment to service. God’s greatest command for believers is to love Him first and to love one another (Matthew 22:37-38). Both of these commands can only be fulfilled if believers choose to serve God and serve others with their lives.<sup>16</sup> The reason for this service is not to make a public spectacle or to draw attention to oneself; it is a natural consequence that results from intimacy with God.

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<sup>14</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academics, 2007), 1110.

<sup>15</sup> Karen Ward, "Making Adult Disciples: Rite for Our Times," *The Christian Century* 10, no. 116 (March 1999): 348.

<sup>16</sup> Trakatellis, *Follow*, 277.

In order for a new believer to grow in maturity, they must bear fruit in the world. This spiritual fruit will naturally grow as they begin to love God and love one another. This is one of the greatest purposes of the life of the Christian, to “enter into a relationship with our Creator and to bear fruit for Him.”<sup>17</sup> In the process of discipleship, churches should instruct their new believers that if they are going to live lives pleasing to God, Scripture states clearly that they must bear fruit for the kingdom, which means there is no place for complacency. A.W. Tozer states that the “stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire,” and as a result of this we find ourselves in complacency, which is a “deadly foe of all spiritual growth.”<sup>18</sup> A pattern has been emerging for many years in the church that persons claim to come into God’s saving grace and are baptized into His kingdom, and then they become “inactive and spiritually immature people who erroneously believe they may do as little as possible.”<sup>19</sup>

The power and purpose of discipleship is to spend time with new believers so that they fully understand the cost and expectation that Scripture places upon those who choose to follow Jesus Christ. They are entering a journey in which they place themselves in the hands of God in order to transform them into the likeness of His Son. In order for this to be accomplished, one must be willing to serve, love, obey, bear fruit, and suffer all costs of purification and preparation. Only then, the “Father can say

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<sup>17</sup> Greg Laurie, *Why Believe?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995), 167.

<sup>18</sup> A.W Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Wing Spread Publishers, 1993), 17.

<sup>19</sup> John Powers, *Redefining Church Membership* (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Press, 2001), 35.

without reservation that He is well pleased.”<sup>20</sup> The church should utilize the process of discipleship to call people to a “lofty commitment to Jesus,” as is described by Scriptures, because if the church refuses to do so, the new believers “will be marginal for Christ and thereby marginal members.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Intimacy with God**

In order for new believers to know who God is and what He has called them to do, they must be shown how to spend time with God. The process of discipleship should begin with instruction that reveals to the new Christian that “private spirituality demands nothing except intimacy with God.”<sup>22</sup> Babes in faith are too often never shown how to grow or how to spend time with God because it is just assumed that this is a process that everyone should know automatically upon salvation. The process of spending time alone with God in “silence and solitude,” where one talks with God and spends time in His Word, is a practice that is learned as one strives to “develop a life lived in a rhythm of daily prayer, study, work, and leisure.”<sup>23</sup>

There are two reasons why intimacy with God is often such an issue not only with new believers, but also with Christians in general. One problem that followers of Christ encounter is the busyness of life, which often overshadows one’s commitment to the

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<sup>20</sup> C.S Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, New York: HarperOne, 1980), 202.

<sup>21</sup> Powers, *Journey*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Ergun Caner, *Holier Than Thou* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abington Press, 2009), 29.

<sup>23</sup> John Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 67, 74.

cross and to knowing God more deeply. As new believers enter this journey called faith, they are called to die to their old selves because they have become a new creation, although they still have the same job, friends, family, hobby, and commitments. Therefore, the new believer must be shown the absolute importance of spending time alone with God in order to grow their faith and establish their walk with the Savior. Prayer is the “very breath of the Christian life and thus cannot be ignored if we are to follow Him.”<sup>24</sup> In the same way a human being cannot survive without breathing in air, the spiritual self cannot exist unless one spends time talking to God. Therefore, all Christians, and especially new believers, must be confronted with the fact that making time each day to be alone with God is simply not an option or a luxury; it is a necessity of the faith.

The second reason why intimacy with God is often overlooked or not sought with the intensity that it should by believers is because they have never been shown how to spend time with God. In the same way that a child is ignorant until he/she is taught how to accomplish certain tasks, new believers are ignorant to the means by which one communicates and develops a relationship with the Father until they are shown by someone who has that established and constant relationship with God. New believers must be taught that intimacy with God and communication in both speaking to Him and hearing from Him is found in two primary disciplines of the faith, prayer and Bible study.

Prayer is the most central of all spiritual disciplines because “it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father,” and genuine prayer is something that we learn.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hemphill, *Splash*, 28.

In the same way that the disciples asked Jesus to show them how to pray (Luke 11:1-4), new believers should be taught the purpose and practice of prayer, and they should also be encouraged to make prayer a priority in their lives because of the effects of what could happen when one is not in constant communication with the Father. Scripture tells believers that they are to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17), which means when one prays there is a “spirit of dependence that should permeate all we do,” in such a way that we “pray repeatedly and often.”<sup>26</sup> The reason that this discipline must be taught to the believer is because without prayer the person will never be able to grow in his or her faith or service to God. The discipline of prayer not only allows one to establish and develop a loving and fulfilling relationship with God through the Son He sent to die for mankind, but it also allows the believer to gain perspective and insight as to what God’s plans are for his or her life which is now dedicated to Him. The more time that a person spends with God, the greater that he or she will understand their role as a believer and servant, and the disciple will receive clear direction from God as to how they are to live and follow Him in obedience, because He is a “God of clarity, not confusion.”<sup>27</sup>

Another significant discipline that must be taught to new believers is how to study the Word of God, which is His great love letter to all whom follow Him. In the world today, “Biblical literacy is at an all-time low, even among churching people,” and the danger of this fact is that a “lack of biblical knowledge leaves Christ’s flock with no

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco, California: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 33, 36.

<sup>26</sup> John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004), 157.

<sup>27</sup> Adam Holz, *Beating Busyness* (Canada: NavPress, 1999), 66.

depth to their personal faith.”<sup>28</sup> Through the study of God’s Holy Word, believers develop their faith and understanding of their calling as Christians and God’s ultimate will for their trusting obedience. New believers must be taught that the living Word of God is “inspired, inerrant, and infallible,” because if one is “not clear on the understanding of what the Bible is, then they will not be clear on any other truth that is related to genuine Christianity.”<sup>29</sup>

In the world today, substitutes or replacements are not only readily available, but they are also quite acceptable. If one product or method is not satisfactory or convenient, another may be easily substituted, for much of the world believes that nothing is truly absolute or necessary. This mindset of post modernity has led many to believe that if a person seeks truth in the world or to hear from a higher being, there are many avenues by which he or she may travel in order to reach their destination. Followers of Christ know that there is only one source of truth in this world and it is absolutely vital to the life and growth of the believer, because there is “no substitute for reading the Scripture.”<sup>30</sup> This is a truth that applies not only to the new believer, but also to all followers of the Savior. Anyone who neglects “the steady diet of the Bible” will “become stunted in their spiritual growth.”<sup>31</sup>

Yet, reading the Word is not enough, because “reading without meditating is like

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<sup>28</sup> Towns, *Sunday School*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Glen Tropp, *Discipleship* (Pasadena, Texas: W Printing, 1993), 7.

<sup>30</sup> John MacArthur, *How to Study the Bible* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2009), 107.

<sup>31</sup> Mac Brunson, and Ergun Caner, *Why Churches Die: Diagnosing Lethal Poisons in the Body of Christ* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing, 2005), 176.

eating without digesting;” therefore, one must also “absorb the nutrients”<sup>32</sup> of God’s Word by metabolizing the Scriptures. Once again, the process of Bible study is not something inherently understood by baby Christians who recently came to Christ. Therefore, it is the role of those who led that person into the faith or the church that they choose to attend to disciple the new believer and show them how to study the Bible. They must impress upon them the dire necessity of spending time alone with God and speaking to Him in prayer, as well as listening to Him through His spoken and written Word. Believers should be given instruction on how to read through the Bible and the tools necessary to understand what God’s Word means for them, so that they can follow His will through the leadership of His Spirit.

### **The Body of Christ**

New believers must be taught the vital importance of dying to their old self and putting on the new self in Christ, as well as achieving intimacy with God through bible study and prayer. The disciple must also be shown the scriptural command and spiritual necessity of church attendance and involvement. Scripture is clear (Heb. 10:24-25) when it reveals that “one who professes faith in Jesus Christ and is baptized should be an active member of a local church.”<sup>33</sup> Though this is a command that comes from God’s great Word of instruction and should be a widely accepted practice and involvement amongst Christians and new believers, church attendance is not a priority for many whom claim to

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Batterson, *Primal: A Quest for the Lost Soul of Christianity* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Multnomah Press, 2009), 76.

<sup>33</sup> Chuck Kelley, *Learning to Share My Faith* (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Press, 2008), 66.

follow God.

One pastor reported that though his church had “led hundreds of people to Christ,” there were “so few of them”<sup>34</sup> who would stay in the church. A survey showed that “America is a very religious nation,” because of the fact that 85 percent of those surveyed considered themselves to be “Christians” and 83 percent stated that “religious faith is a very important part of their lives.”<sup>35</sup> During the time that these surveys were taken the number of Americans “attending church in a given week was up slightly to 41 percent,”<sup>36</sup> having been at 37 percent just three years before. In March of 2008, the Barna Research Group released some new statistics found in a survey in which they completed. The findings showed that 56 percent of those questioned reported attending at least one conventional church meeting within the last month.<sup>37</sup> Though this percentage is higher than that which was recorded several years ago, this statistic shows that there is a high percentage of persons in this country who claim to believe in God and consider themselves to be Christians, although church attendance is not a priority in their life.

Craig Groeschel has a term that he uses to describe those persons whom claim to believe in God yet live as though He does not exist; he calls them Christian atheists. He states “Many Christian Atheists today commit only halfheartedly to Christ’s church – if

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<sup>34</sup> Thom Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), 108.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>37</sup> *The Barna Research Group*, March 3, 2008, "New Statistics On Church Attendance and Avoidance," [www.barna.org/](http://www.barna.org/) (accessed October 7, 2010).



at all.”<sup>38</sup> For many persons who claim to be followers of the Way, there is very little or no commitment to the body of Christ though it is expected of them. This may be a result of a lack of love for God or not knowing Him as Savior, or it may be that when those persons were first converted they were never taught the importance of active participation within the body of Christ. In order to make a great impact upon the innocent and fresh spirits of those who have recently met the Savior, the church should seek to teach “churchmanship,” so the person can truly understand their call to the church, their devotion required and service needed, and the benefits that they will gain.<sup>39</sup>

The reason that church attendance and involvement should be taught and stressed during the discipleship process is not so that the new believer may be transformed by the power or influence of the church, because church attendance “does not transform lives; Jesus within their hearts is what changes people.”<sup>40</sup> The necessity of church involvement must be taught to new believers because even though “many believe one can be a ‘good Christian’ without joining (or even attending) a local church,” God would disagree for “the Bible offers many compelling reasons for being committed and active in a local fellowship.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Groeschel, *Atheist*, 222.

<sup>39</sup> Towns, *Sunday School*, 87.

<sup>40</sup> Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, *11 Innovations in the Local Church* (Ventura, California: Regal, 2007), 27.

<sup>41</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), 133.

## Accountability

In light of the great change that occurs in a person's life when they accept Christ and the new direction in which they are called to follow, believers need a strong sense of accountability in order to help them on their journey. Accountability is a part of life that most people are very familiar with in their lives. It is present in marriages, government, laws, schools, workplaces, and sports. Most life decisions come with some form of accountability.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it should be no surprise that when a person makes a life altering commitment to live for the Savior, they will also need accountability in their life in order to fulfill their commitment. This accountability should be found within the church, in a setting or environment of like-minded believers who truly desire to love and encourage one another to continue fighting the good fight.

One of the reasons that new believers should be instructed on the importance of church attendance is because it is within the body of believers that one finds other believers who can "see what we don't see," and who are "willing to educate us about ourselves in order that we might grow completely into the person God created us to be."<sup>43</sup> The process of accountability is not focused or designed in a way that the new believer is to stand before the church while the members and fellow Christians publicly point out the faults of the new believer. That would not encourage or benefit the disciple. The process of accountability is one in which "God convicts people in the context of community," yet uses a small group of individuals who genuinely care for the believer to help him or her

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<sup>42</sup> O.S Hawkins, *The Art of Connecting* (Dallas, Texas: Guidestone Financial Resources, 2004), 163-164.

<sup>43</sup> Zempel, *Sacred*, 35

acknowledge their weaknesses and then strive to embrace righteousness.<sup>44</sup>

Within the love of the fellowship of believers, the follower of Christ should be able to find a “community outside of oneself that may confront and support one to develop a deeper, more complete relationship with the Divine.”<sup>45</sup> Accountability should come from a “very select few trusted, loyal and committed friends who want only the best for us.”<sup>46</sup> These persons may be “wiser and more mature Christians” who can “regularly counsel us, mentor us, comfort us, and help us heal.”<sup>47</sup> This accountability is never to replace or substitute confession of sins before the Almighty God. It instead is a form of acknowledgement of struggles and encouragement from brothers and sisters of the body of Christ to remain in the right relationship with God.

As the new believer begins their journey to follow God’s will for their life as opposed to their own will, they are undoubtedly going to endure persecution, hardships, trials, and temptations. When a believer is left to fight these battles and overcome these temptations on his or her own it can be a very lonely and difficult path to tread. Sometimes the most effective way to “overcome persistent temptation” is to allow others to help you through the battle.<sup>48</sup> God designed the church as a safe haven for believers,

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<sup>44</sup> Jim Johnston, *Context: Engaging the Young Adults of Your Community* (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Press, 2009), 20.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Frederick, "Discipleship and Spirituality from a Christian Perspective," *Pastoral Psychology* 56, no. 6 (July 2008): 559.

<sup>46</sup> Hawkins, *Connecting*, 166.

<sup>47</sup> Groeschel, *Atheist*, 224.

<sup>48</sup> Jack Kuhatschek, *Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), 21.

and He ordained His followers to be a part of a body so that they could find support and encouragement when the seas become too rough to navigate alone.

Yet, there may be some churches or mature believers who are anxious about teaching or promoting accountability for the reason that they may not want to induce fear or reservations into the heart or mind of the new Christians coming into their fellowship. Some people may think that a call to accountability is too forward for a church to teach to its new members, and it will push them away instead of drawing them closer into the body and into their relationship with the Father. However, Thom Rainer's research shows just the opposite phenomenon. He completed a study with a church who holds their members accountable to their commitment to "live and minister in a way consistent with New Testament teachings" by ensuring that each member "attend worship and Sunday School or small groups regularly, adhere to doctrine, attend new member classes, and if they are new Christians, participate in some type of mentoring or discipleship relationship."<sup>49</sup> The results of this study revealed that this church had not only gained new members, but they also retained them as well.

Accountability is a principle that is taught in Scripture and is required of believers; therefore, the church must ensure that as they disciple new believers they must instruct them in the importance of involving themselves intentionally in a local body of believers so that they may have a source of instruction, conviction, and encouragement. This process should only increase the believer's willingness to step out in faith and strive to obey the will and ways of God above all else.

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<sup>49</sup> Rainer, *Unchurched*, 112.

## Fellowship

Often, when people think of the word fellowship, the first image that comes into their mind is a simple gathering of people for the purpose of visiting and enjoying refreshments. One of the purposes of intentional discipleship is to reveal to new believers the importance of fellowship within the body of Christ. The truth is that all people are created as “social beings who, by our very nature, are made to interact and relate with one another.”<sup>50</sup> When a person is introduced into the church as a new believer, they are being introduced to a new group of people that they do not know, but who they are told is their new family in God. These “newcomers especially are hungry for relationships.”<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the church must realize that as a part of their discipleship process for new believers, they need to encourage converts to embrace their need for interaction and friendship by investing their time forming relationships with other believers within the body of Christ. Everyone needs “a body of believers who understands how to care, heal, and restore.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, churches should do all they “can to help the new convert meet other Christians,” because it is through these relationships that they will find the “support and encouragement” they need to continue following Jesus, because without these relationships the “new Christian will have a difficult time developing a healthy relationship with God.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Hawkins, *Connecting*, 33.

<sup>51</sup> Towns, *Sunday School*, 76.

<sup>52</sup> Dave Burchett, *Bring 'Em Back Alive* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Waterbrook Press, 2004), 213.

<sup>53</sup> Kelley, *Share*, 63, 66.

The necessity for the new believer to develop strong relationships within the church cannot be stressed or emphasized enough as these relationships impact the probability that the new babe in Christ will remain an active part of the body of believers. Research shows that “one of the most frequently missing ingredients when a person drops out of church is a circle of friendships.”<sup>54</sup> This may be because they have not sought to find those other believers with whom they can build friendships, or it may be because they have sin in their lives, because when a “professing believer lacks obedience to God he finds fellowship in a community of other Christians impossible, but solid fellowship with Christ leads to solid fellowship with others.”<sup>55</sup>

Frequently people think of friendships as a social connection, when the truth is that these relationships not only bring accountability and encouragement into the life of the believer, but also reaffirm their purpose and belonging into the body of Christ which spurs them to remain active as they love their brothers and sisters in Christ and serve their church together. Therefore, the “fewer relationships a new convert has in a particular church, the more difficult the task of seeing the person develop spiritually.”<sup>56</sup> These relationships are so vital because it is through these friendships and respected unions that believers are led into their understanding of devotion and intimacy.

Because God’s greatest call in a believer’s life is to love Him, and to love others, there is a great correlation between a follower of Christ’s relationship with others, and

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<sup>54</sup> Hodge, *Guide*, 42.

<sup>55</sup> Bill Hull, *New Century Disciplemaking* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 119.

<sup>56</sup> Will McRaney Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Academic, 2003), 53.

with God Himself. It is impossible for a man to love God, if he does not love his neighbor, just as it is impossible for a man to love his neighbor if he does not first love God (1 John 4:19-21). Therefore, the “quality of your relationship with God determines the quality of every other relationship you have.”<sup>57</sup> As a result, the church should be a place “where members are proactive in creatively loving and encouraging one another,”<sup>58</sup> because of the love they have in their hearts which flows out of their relationship with the Father.

It is so important for churches to stress the vitality of fellowship amongst believers, especially between those who are infants in the faith with those mature in the faith. As the new believer is encouraged by the words and example of his or her mentors and friends, the disciple will continue to reach out and love his or her new family as an extension of God’s grace which the believer has experienced in their life. The description of an “effective fellowship is characterized by total acceptance.”<sup>59</sup> This acceptance does not mean that sin is unaccounted for or that anything is permissible. The type of acceptance that is found within the fellowship of the body of Christ is one that promotes unity and love because that was the message and the example of Christ as He walked the earth.

### Unity

New believers should be shown that church attendance and involvement in the

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<sup>57</sup> Rick Warren, *40 Days of Love* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009), 79.

<sup>58</sup> Freeman, *Paul*, 103.

<sup>59</sup> Hull, *Disciplemaker*, 133.

body of Christ is simply not a documented requirement or a formality, but a fulfillment of the will and purpose of God for their lives. If they are never taught that each believer is to be unified together with others in order to fulfill God's purposes, then they will not see the necessity or benefit of aligning their lives and hearts with those within the congregation.

Billy Graham states, "A solitary Christian is almost a contradiction, because we are part of a larger whole."<sup>60</sup> One of the greatest benefits of being involved in the body of Christ is the knowledge that no one is alone in this battle. Not only do they have the Spirit of God within them at all times, they are also aligned with other believers who are called to work with them to serve and love God as a "close knit community."<sup>61</sup> The problem is that many new believers are unaware of this inclusion in the body or see it as an option instead of a command and necessity. Not only does the Lord expect His children to be unified in purpose, ministry, and love, but He also commands them to because that is how the church is designed (1 Cor. 12). When "you are braided, woven, or knitted together with others in God's connective kingdom, you are not only in a place of sustaining strength and better equipped to relationally engage even the greatest of challenges," the believer is also actively involved in the "great narrative tapestry that God has been weaving since the dawn of creation."<sup>62</sup>

New believers must be shown that being a member of a church means being a

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<sup>60</sup> Graham, *Journey*, 127.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Novel Foster, "The Great Invitation: The Call to Discipleship" (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, Virginia, 2007), 66.

<sup>62</sup> Dwight Friesen, *Thy Kingdom Connected* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2009), 163.



“vital organ of a living body, an indispensable, interconnected part of the Body of Christ.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore, as a part of a living body as explained in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, in order for believers to accomplish God’s will for their lives they must embrace their role in the church and as a part of the body of Christ because God’s children are called to work together. The necessity of this unified service is twofold. First, the believer is called to work with other believers for the simple reason that when lives are woven together for one common purpose and goal, their strength is increased because of their ability to rely upon and support one another. Therefore, the new believers that embrace their role in the body of Christ will find that they have a support system that carries them through the trials that they suffer and endure. The second reason why a unified body of Christ is so important is the testimony that it provides to the outside world. It is the “reality of relationships that makes Christ believable to an unbelieving society,” because of the love that believers show to each other through a “community of love.”<sup>64</sup>

As believers unify and begin to love one another the outside world recognizes the power that is found in the love of God. Believers are called to “offer unsolicited encouragement or support in times of need,” as well as bear each other’s burdens (Gal. 6:2), and “celebrate victories”<sup>65</sup> that are experienced in each person’s life. New believers must be taught during the discipleship process that it is this unifying trust and support

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<sup>63</sup> Warren, *Life*, 130.

<sup>64</sup> Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes, *Lost and Found* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Groups, 2009), 76.

<sup>65</sup> Towns, *Sunday School*, 101.

that will not only enable them to fulfill God's plan for the kingdom collectively, it will also testify to the fact that God's grace is amazing and can truly change hearts and lives.

### **Evangelism**

Discipleship is such an important foundational requirement for the new believer because as they begin their journey of faith, God expects their obedience in fulfilling their call and commitment to Him by bringing others into the kingdom as well. Believers should be taught from the very beginning of their walk with God about their "opportunity and obligation to tell others about the Lord."<sup>66</sup> Evangelism was designed to be a process that grew out of one's love and devotion for the Lord. After the believer has accepted God's offer of forgiveness and made Him the Lord of his/her life, they are called to be trained in the ways of God so that they too may share with others the good news of God's salvation and can instruct those converts how to live a life that is pleasing to the Father.

It is vital that from the very beginning of the Christian's journey that they are "challenged to develop a consistent and ongoing walk with the Lord" because it is out of this "spiritual transformation that our members share the reason of the hope that is within them."<sup>67</sup> Therefore, new believers must be shown that as they grow in their relationship with Christ, they should have a desire to communicate the love of God with others because of the great change that has occurred in their lives. Yet, one of the great obstacles to this process is the fear that often overwhelms believers and causes them to default on their responsibility to share the good news.

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<sup>66</sup> Kelley, *Share*, 67.

<sup>67</sup> Powers, *Journey*, 129.

Many times believers desire to share Christ's love with others, however they simply do not know what to say in order to express their feelings or salvation, or whom to share with in order to spread the good news.<sup>68</sup> For this reason the church should ensure that all new believers are not only made aware of their responsibility to evangelize, but training for evangelism should also be provided to that person so that they may fulfill the Great Commission.<sup>69</sup> This training will be a vital part of the discipleship process because not only will it give the new believer the ability and confidence to know how to share their faith, it will also give them the ability to train others how to continue expanding the kingdom of God.

This is the pattern that has been established for thousands of years. The process of discipleship and evangelism that "reaches into the domain of darkness and brings people into the kingdom of light" as "God makes disciples who will in turn proclaim that same powerful gospel to others" and this "discipling chain continues unbroken until the day of Jesus Christ."<sup>70</sup> Yet, "actively sharing"<sup>71</sup> one's faith is not a normal and common practice in the world today. Though it is a privilege to know God's Son, many believers still refuse to share what they know and to produce new disciples. As a result, there is a great need for bold witnesses in the world today, and there is a large group of persons who have claimed Christ as Savior but who have never embraced their calling to spread

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<sup>68</sup> Jim Lo, *A Life that Matters: Making a Difference in a World Around You* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2004), 12.

<sup>69</sup> Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007), 93.

<sup>70</sup> MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry*, 270.

<sup>71</sup> McRaney, *Art*, 44.

the good news.

The danger of not following God's call to evangelize or to make disciples comes with disastrous results for the person refusing to be obedient. They may find that they begin to doubt their salvation, lose their joy, starve their soul, and cheat the Savior because of their disobedience.<sup>72</sup> Not only will this refusal of obedience be a detriment to the spiritual life of that believer, but it will also be a great sign to others of the authenticity of their faith in God whom they claim as real. Inauthenticity among those who "claim to be Christians can become an almost insurmountable barrier to belief."<sup>73</sup> Therefore, both churches and new believers must be aware of the danger of not emphasizing the Christian's calling to evangelize the world. If the church desires to make disciples, they must ensure that during the process of discipleship they provide their new believers and members with the tools necessary to share their new faith with a lost and dying world. If the new believers desire to fulfill the will of God in their lives then they must ensure that they obey God's Great Commission and walk rightly with Him so that they will be over-filled with His love and Spirit preparing them to share their transformation with a world waiting for a change.

### **Maturity**

As a person begins a journey, they often have a destination that they are trying to reach or a goal that they have set. A believer's goal is to become a mature Christian,

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<sup>72</sup> Herschel Ford, *Simple Sermons for a Sinful Age* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 38-39.

<sup>73</sup> Bill Hybels, Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 54.

which is shown in the example of the Savior (Col. 1:28). Even though complete spiritual maturity will be achieved one day; that day will not come while the believer is still on this earth. Therefore, new believers must be taught that discipleship is a journey and not a destination, because some “think and act as if they have arrived or achieved something.”<sup>74</sup> Becoming spiritually mature is an ongoing commitment to walk in the ways of Christ. New believers should be instructed that as they begin this life-long journey, if they are going to reflect the image of the Savior, then they must have no sin in their lives, and in order for this great task to be accomplished, they must actively be involved in a “process of maturation.”<sup>75</sup> The believer does have a goal and an aim, and their heart’s desire should be to achieve “maturity in Christ.”<sup>76</sup> This type of maturity can only be reached by the believer who is fully aware of the task to which they have been called and the mission by which they must live.

Discipleship is the first step in shedding light upon the heart and mind of the new believer as to the process of spiritual maturity by revealing to him or her the greatness of this call and the requirements that will be necessary. Believers must be shown that in order to strive for maturity they must be “consistent in doing what Jesus would do in every situation and courageous in doing what Jesus would do whatever the price.”<sup>77</sup>

They must also be willing to live their lives seeking wisdom from the Spirit and from the

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<sup>74</sup> Powers, *Journey*, 78.

<sup>75</sup> Jay Adams, *A Thirst for Wholeness: How to Gain Wisdom for the Book of James* (Woodruff, South Carolina: Timeless Texts, 1999), 12.

<sup>76</sup> Luter, *Discipleship*, 271.

<sup>77</sup> Hodge, *Guide*, 11.

Father in order to take righteous steps and make decisions that will lead to the glory of God and not the glory of man. Their journey must be guided as they “consciously and intentionally ask the Holy Spirit” to lead them into wisdom and then give them the boldness to step out in faith and trust.<sup>78</sup>

This process of maturity must be the focus of their lives as they obey God’s commands and invest their lives into fulfilling His will and not their own. As they begin to serve Him whole-heartedly and truly listen to His voice and discern His will, they will find themselves desiring to know Him deeper and to obey Him fuller and love Him completely.<sup>79</sup>

In order for believers to become the obedient servants and involved disciples that God has called them to be, they must know this journey will not be easy. They shall be called by God to accomplish tasks that are impossible, to overcome fears that cripple, and to endure trials and persecution that are far worse than anything they could have ever imagined. The hope that these new believers have is the fact that they are loved and cherished by God Almighty who desperately desires for them to mature and grow spiritually. This will never happen unless the church and those who are called of Christ fulfill their calling to train new believers and show them the absolute necessity of intimacy with God, the power and knowledge of Scripture, the benefit of uniting with the body of Christ, the great call to evangelize, and the ultimate goal to persevere until the end of the journey towards maturity in Christ.

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<sup>78</sup> Charles Stanley, *Walking Wisely: Real Guidance for Life's Journey* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 70.

<sup>79</sup> Thompson Jr., *Circles*, 196.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF LOCAL CHURCH DISCIPLESHIP

In order to understand how the discipleship process is being implemented in the church today, two surveys were completed and analyzed in order to provide detailed information. There are literally hundreds of Southern Baptist churches in the East Texas area yet there are very few that participate in active new member training.<sup>1</sup> When surveying these churches, seven churches were found that currently employ a discipleship program. A survey of ten questions, which inquired about the details of their program, was completed by either the senior pastor or the discipleship pastor of those seven congregations. Then another survey, also consisting of ten questions, was sent to some of the new members of those congregations who had completed the course.

The results of both of these surveys shall first be briefly reviewed in order to provide a framework and basis of what information was learned, while also revealing what methods and practices these local churches are utilizing as they work towards reaching and teaching their new members. The results of the new member surveys shall also be concisely explained, revealing whether or not they found the training to be spiritually effective. After the factual details of these surveys are documented, this assessment will then use the gathered data in order to provide further explanation and

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<sup>1</sup> "SBC Church Search," [www.sbc.net/](http://www.sbc.net/) (accessed October 8, 2010).

instruction on preparing and developing a new member training program.

### **Analysis of Pastor/Discipleship Leader Surveys**

When determining what questions should be asked in the surveys to be filled out by the pastors or discipleship leaders of the seven churches currently practicing new member discipleship, the subject and purpose of each question was to gain information about the logistics, content, and effects of the programs currently in place at each of these churches.

#### **Curriculum**

The first question that was asked on the survey focused on the type of curriculum that was used for this training. The purpose of this question was to determine whether these churches were using material that they developed themselves or if they were utilizing a product being produced that could be purchased by the public. From the seven churches that were surveyed, six of them developed their own material, while one church used a combination of purchased material as well as sources that were created or written by the staff of the church.

The fact that six out of the seven churches solely develop and use their own material shows that each of these churches has spent some time designing and creating an atmosphere for their training course. The formation of discipleship material is a process that is time consuming and can be very challenging; therefore, it is refreshing to know that these churches took the time to develop a curriculum that was not simply bought at the store and then made to fit their church's needs. Instead, it was created for the purpose of training new believers to understand and know the purpose of following Christ according to that church's understanding and practices.



### Teacher

One of the key elements to any discipleship program is the teacher or facilitator. The survey asked who the primary teacher of the discipleship course is for each of the churches in question. The results revealed the leader of this class was the senior pastor for two of the seven churches, while four of the churches utilized other staff members instead of the pastor, and one of the churches included all staff members in the discipleship process.

In the New Testament, the process of discipleship began as “new converts were incorporated into the church,” and then their training began as “they were instructed by the leadership of the church.”<sup>2</sup> In each of the seven churches, though it was not the senior pastor leading the course, it was always a leader within the church and was not a layperson or volunteer.

### Discipleship History

The third question on the survey asked about the length of time that the church had been practicing new member discipleship in their congregation. One of the churches has only been involved in this scriptural mandate for less than one year. Four of the churches have been training new believers for two to five years. One of the churches has been committed to a discipleship program for five to ten years, and the remaining church has been making new member training a priority for over ten years. From these statistics, it is easy to see that most of these churches have not been involved in the discipleship process for very long, considering that many of these churches have been established for

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Cosgrove, *Essentials of Discipleship: What it Takes to Follow Christ* (Dallas, Texas: Roper Press, 1988), 123.

well over fifty years.

### Required

Some churches believe so strongly in new member training as a commandment from the Lord and as an integral part of fulfilling the Great Commission that they do not request that their new members attend these classes. They actually require it before membership is approved. Of the seven churches surveyed, four of the churches have a mandatory stipulation that each new believer or new member must participate in the new member training course before they are allowed to become members of the congregation. The remaining three churches stated that though new members are highly encouraged to attend the training course, it is not a requirement for their membership.

### Time

For many churches, one of the greatest challenges to having new member training classes is finding the right time to offer the class so that the majority of the new members will be able to attend. Four of the churches surveyed offer their discipleship class during the Sunday School hour. This seems to be a logical choice since many believers make church attendance a priority; therefore, many of them will be able to attend and will not be deterred by having to cancel plans or responsibilities that they may have already scheduled during the weekdays. Two of the churches conducted their training course on Sunday afternoon immediately following the morning service and provided a meal for the new members. The final church surveyed did not have a certain time that the classes were scheduled. They found that the most effective way to disciple new believers was by changing the time and location of the meetings in hopes of reaching more people who have varying schedules and responsibilities.

### Length

The sixth and seventh questions are related in that the sixth question inquires about the length of each training session and the seventh question examines how many sessions the program is designed to require. Of the seven pastors or discipleship leaders that were surveyed, five of the churches conducted their new member training in one session that typically lasted between two and three hours. Some of these sessions were broken down into two or three parts with breaks in between each section, however they were all completed in one meeting or gathering. One of the other churches completes their new member training in one hour and they are only required to attend one meeting. The remaining church asks their members to attend five meetings, and each meeting consists of about one hour of training. It is not unusual for churches to have varying lengths when it comes to training programs. One study showed that some training courses may only last “an hour and a half,” however the “longest class met for a total of sixteen hours (one hour each week for sixteen weeks).”<sup>3</sup>

### Results

The eighth and ninth questions posed on the survey are aimed at evaluating how the pastor or discipleship leader feels towards the effectiveness of their current program and material being used. The eighth question asks the leaders if they feel as though the new member classes increase the knowledge, understanding, and commitment of the new members. All seven of the churches responded by stating that they absolutely felt their discipleship program accomplished this goal and purpose. The ninth question was a bit

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<sup>3</sup> Lawless, *Membership*, 37.

more difficult to gauge, as it questioned whether or not the training course increased the spiritual maturity and growth of those who chose to attend. Though spiritual maturity is a matter of the heart, there are physical signs such as attitude, fruit, and service that show whether or not a new believer or member is taking strides towards the kingdom or away from righteousness. Each of the seven churches surveyed felt as though they could see a difference between those who chose to participate in the new member training, and the ones who did not by their actions, spirits, and willingness to invest their time and life into the service of the church.

### Revisions

The final question of the survey asked the leaders if there was anything that they desired to change about their current program or material being used. Five of the leaders stated that there was nothing they would change about their present discipleship program because they felt that it was very effective. One of the leaders stated that they were in the process of attempting to shorten the program for they felt that it was too long for the members and had become a burden on their discipleship pastor because of all the extra hours that it was placing upon his work load. The final church surveyed stated that the only part of their program in which they would like to change is their follow up procedures. This leader stated that after the conclusion of the course the church was currently doing very little to follow up with their new members and encourage them in their service and dedication to God through their commitment to the church.

### **Analysis of New Member Surveys**

Of the seven churches that chose to participate in this survey, only three of the churches were willing to either survey their members who had gone through their new

member training program or to provide the contact information for those members so that they might be approached or called about filling out a survey. Therefore, the number of responses is limited to fifty surveys collected from those three church's new members. The results from these surveys are included in order to gather information on the methodology of these church's discipleship programs and the new member's opinions of the training course.

#### Length of Membership

The first question that is asked on this survey reveals how long the participant has been a member of their local congregation. Since many of these churches have only been practicing new member discipleship for a few years, most of the participants do not have lengthy tenures with the congregation. Fifty-two percent of those surveyed have been members less than six months. Thirty-six percent of the new members have been associated with their current congregation for a length of six months to a year, and twelve percent of those surveyed have been a member for one to three years.

#### Training Progress

The second question asked in this survey inquires about the number of sessions that the new believer attended. The purpose for this inquisition is to determine whether or not the participant has completed the entire discipleship process or if they have only attended some of the meetings or sessions. Because the majority of the churches surveyed offer their training in one session, one-hundred percent of those surveyed had completed the new member training in its entirety.

### Learning Outcome

The third and fourth questions on this survey address whether or not the participant benefited from the training class in terms of their knowledge of scriptural expectations and congregational requirements. The third question asks the believer if they felt as though they learned more about what is expected of them as Christians from the class. Eighty-eight percent stated that they did feel more informed as a follower of Christ. This means that twelve percent felt as though they did not learn anything new about their calling as Christians in this world from the new member training offered by that church.

The fourth question asked the new member if they felt as though they learned more about what is expected of them as a church member from the training class and ninety-six percent responded yes. This reveals that only four percent of those surveyed did not believe that they increased their understanding of what was required of them as members of that particular Baptist church.

### Learning Style

The fifth and sixth questions of the survey address the method of teaching used by the leaders and the effectiveness of techniques utilized to train these new believers. The fifth question asked what the primary method of teaching used during the training session had been. Seventy-six percent responded that lecture was the principle teaching technique, while twenty-four percent stated that small group discussion was the main approach to the sessions. This reveals that in many of these situations, the technique used could have very easily been lecture and small group discussion, however the surveyed members found one or the other to be most beneficial; therefore, they stated their

preference as the primary teaching procedure.

The sixth question asks the participant if the main teaching style was compatible with their learning preference, and an overwhelming ninety-two percent responded yes. This could be because of the proficiency of the teachers, the richness of the content, or the open heart and sincerity of the new believer in their eagerness to learn more about their calling as Christians.

#### Required

The next question on the survey polled the participants about the reason for their attendance to this training session. As was shown in the survey sent to the leaders of the churches, over half of the churches surveyed required their new believers to attend the training course before they were allowed to join the church; therefore, this mandate is certainly visible in the results of the new member survey. Sixty-eight percent of those surveyed were required to take the course, yet there was a section on the survey that encouraged them to comment on how they felt about this requirement and there were no additional comments made. In turn, thirty-two percent of those surveyed were not required to take the discipleship class. They chose to attend on their own accord.

#### Recommendation

The eighth question posed to the new believer seeks to find out if they enjoyed or benefited from this course enough to recommend it to other new church members. Surprisingly, one hundred percent of the new believers would recommend this training session to other new members. Therefore, there is something that these three churches are doing correctly, whether it be in the atmosphere, content, or encouragement provided during these sessions if all the surveyed members would make a recommendation to

attend this class.

### Relationships

The next to last question on the survey examines the new believer's relationship with the staff and other new members of the church. This question asks if the training session helped the new believer form relationships with other new believers in the course or with the staff that helped lead the class. Eighty-eight percent of those surveyed felt that they were able to deepen or form relationships during this course, while twelve percent felt that they did not. This lack of relationship building may or may not be a reflection on the training course itself, but rather on the personality of the person as some are more open and successful at building friendships than others.

### Evaluation

The last question of the survey was open to the participant and asked if there was anything that they felt should be changed about the training course. The majority of the responses felt that the course was being taught effectively and should not be changed, but there were some comments with suggestions for improvement. A few of the participants felt that the training session was too long and would be more efficient if the time could be condensed without sacrificing the content of information or the quality of presentation. Others felt that the time in which the class was offered was inconvenient and asked if it could be altered or if it could fluctuate depending on the time of year it was offered.

There were also some comments made that even though the information was helpful, some new believers felt that they learned too much about the history of the church and not enough about how and where they could serve. Finally, a small portion of the new members found that the training was too much information and not enough



application thereby making the class somewhat uninteresting.

This is a brief description of the information gathered from the surveys sent to the leaders of these seven participating churches and the new members who attended their training course as a result of their choice to become members of these congregations. In order to more fully understand the process of discipleship and its place in the church today, the information of these surveys must be applied to the purpose and meaning of discipleship as it has been established by this analysis. These elements must all be fused together in order to confirm exactly how a new member training program should be taught and organized in order to maximize effectiveness and produce disciples for the kingdom.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PLANNING FOR DISCIPLESHIP

As a church plans to begin a discipleship program for their new believers or their new members, or if a church currently has a training course in place yet they would like to evaluate it in order to make sure they are approaching the new members in the most effective way by strategically presenting the most important information, they must focus their attention on three subjects: Content (what is going to be taught), Compass (how will they disciple), and Commitment (who is going to instruct). Identifying the details and strategies of these three questions is the first step in establishing an effective and well planned process for training babes in Christ.

#### **Content of Discipleship**

The very first question on the survey sent to pastors and discipleship leaders inquired about the type of material in which they used as a guide for their new member class. This is such an important issue because in order for a new member training class to be successful the leaders of the church must have “clarity” which leads to a good plan.<sup>1</sup> Trying to “produce disciples without first having a clear, crisp, compelling definition of discipleship,” and plan for what should be taught will fail to “produce the desired

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<sup>1</sup> Thom Rainer, *Simple Life* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Groups, 2009), 274.

results.”<sup>2</sup> The church must first decide what it is they want their new believers and new members to learn as a result of their attendance. Thom Rainer did a study of two thousand churches and found twenty-one different subject areas that were most often covered in new member classes. His statistics show the topic covered as well as what percentage of the churches included in his study addressed the subject listed. Here is the list of some of the popular new member class material: doctrine of the church (67%), polity of the church (66%), examination of the church constitution (64.6%), explanation of Lord’s Supper (63.5%), policies for church discipline (62.5%), expectation of members after joining (58.7%), history of the church (56.5%), how to become a Christian (49.1%), tithing to the church (47.4%) explanation of the church’s mission or vision (32.6%), and brief evangelism/witnessing training (18.6%).<sup>3</sup>

Another study shows many of the same topics being addressed in other churches’ new member training courses: doctrine of the church (100%), expectations of members after joining (96%), explanation of the church’s mission (92%), tithing (88%), plan of salvation (80%), examination of church covenant (57%), and policies for church discipline (25%).<sup>4</sup> Another survey shows that some churches also require their members to sign a covenant stating that they will read the Bible daily, pray with and for members of the family daily, attend all worship services, abstain from gossip and backbiting, respond to conflict biblically, share their faith regularly, participate in Bible study, tithe, be involved in at least one ministry of the church, abstain from alcohol and illegal drugs,

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<sup>2</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 119.

<sup>3</sup> Rainer, *Unchurched*, 113-114.

<sup>4</sup> Lawless, *Membership*, 65.

and remain sexually pure.<sup>5</sup>

From this list of topics and the provided participation percentages it is obvious that a wide variety of topics are covered, however they may be grouped into two very separate categories: church life and Christian life. In the surveys that were taken for this analysis, there were higher percentages of those new members who participated in the churches' new member program that felt they learned more about their obligation to the church (96%) than they did about their role as a Christian (88%). This is why it is so important for leaders to plan out exactly what they want to teach in their new member trainings, because they must address both the expectations of the church upon the life of the new believer and the expectations of God.

As the leaders of the church begin to decide what material and content should be included in their new member training, they should focus on who their target audience is going to be. In the churches that were surveyed for this analysis, the new member classes were primarily offered to new believers in the faith, yet the training was available to new members of the church as well, including those who had been members of other churches and simply transferred their membership. If the primary core of the new member class is new believers, then the leadership should develop or "choose a curriculum that is geared specifically to new believers."<sup>6</sup> This is one of the reasons why many of the surveyed churches chose to develop their own curriculum as opposed to purchasing material from a Christian distributor; because of the ability to tailor their information specifically to those new believers and their church's beliefs. When a church chooses to use "discipleship

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<sup>5</sup> Rainer, *Unchurched*, 113.

<sup>6</sup> Towns, *Sunday School*, 72-73.

curriculum developed by any of the large, highly regarded churches,”<sup>7</sup> they will often find what was effective for those churches may not work in their current congregation.

Churches that desire to train and disciple their new members should take the time and effort to create a program that explores the avenues of the Christian faith as well as the church’s requirements for its members in such a way that the new members will be able to engage and utilize the information as they grow in their faith. Because spiritual growth is a process, like faith and repentance, churches must also ensure that the information that they are teaching is true for the mission and values of their church.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, most of the churches surveyed had only been using their current training material for less than five years because they felt it necessary to continuously update and alter the material to fit the mission of the church or the needs of the new members.

This revising of material does not mean that the churches ever altered the Scriptures or changed God’s mandate for new believers. It simply means that if the vision of the church or the direction of their ministry had changed, they altered the teachings of the new members class to fit with their new practices, or perhaps if some of the information being shared during this time was found to be unbeneficial, such as ancient congregational history or staffing lists, this material too may be excluded from the training.

The key to choosing what material should be included is to find the right balance between information about what it means to be a Christian and what it means to be an

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<sup>7</sup> Barna, *Discipleship*, 119.

<sup>8</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), 717.

active and faithful church member. Obedience to God's laws and commandments comes through "good teaching"<sup>9</sup> that should be found in the church, especially in a new member training class. The life of the believer and how to persevere as a Christian and please God should be the basis for this class, if for no other reason than to ensure that each new member does know the Savior.<sup>10</sup> The teachings of this course should also include how to be an active servant and participant in the church for this is certainly a vital part of God's plan for all believers as well. If a church neglects to inform their new members of their responsibility to the church, then "you're asking for trouble."<sup>11</sup>

### Christian Instruction

In order to ensure that each new believer of the church is prepared for their spiritual journey upon this earth, the church must spend time instructing these babes in Christ on the basics of Christian faith and practice. It would be beneficial for churches who accept the task of discipling new believers to provide the disciples with a brief explanation of the overall beliefs of the church as it pertains to doctrinal issues. Many of the churches in the East Texas area have aligned their church covenants or faith decrees with the Baptist Faith and Message, which is a summary of faith that includes a description or explanation of God, Scripture, man, salvation, the Lord's Supper, the last things, stewardship, and evangelism, as well as many other areas.<sup>12</sup> This type of

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Dever, *Twelve Challenges Churches Face* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2008), 82.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson Jr., *Circles* 191.

<sup>11</sup> Warren, *Church*, 92.

<sup>12</sup> "The Baptist Faith and Message," [www.sbc.net/](http://www.sbc.net/) (accessed Oct. 11, 010).

statement or one that the church has established, which explains the basic beliefs of that congregation as understood through Scripture, should be explained to the new believers so that they have a general understanding of the faith that they now claim.

### **Silence and Solitude**

New disciples must also be taught how to walk with God. This new “love affair” with God can only grow “in depth, intensity, and beauty as we learn more about Him,”<sup>13</sup> and this is only possible if the new converts are taught how to spend time with God. Growing in faith is a “developmental process” where one grows spiritually, and the first step of this process is to spend time alone with God.<sup>14</sup> After a person accepts the Lord as Savior of his or her life, he or she will be told that His presence lives in them. Even though they have met Christ, they do not know Him. In the same way two persons on the street can meet one another for the first time, yet even though a relationship or a bond is formed, they will not truly know each other until they spend time together. Therefore, the new believer must be shown how to know God, because “for many people, the very idea that you could know God on a relational level seems unlikely, unrealistic, unattainable.”<sup>15</sup> This is truly God’s plan for His children, as was seen in the life of Christ as He walked the earth.

Time and time again Christ would withdraw from the crowds and He instructed the disciples to go to a solitary place and spend time alone with God. Solitude is when

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<sup>13</sup> Hemphill, *Splash*, 39.

<sup>14</sup> Hendricks, *Teaching*, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Groeschel, *Atheist*, 33.

“we purposefully abstain from interaction with other human beings, denying ourselves companionship and all that comes from our conscious interaction with others,”<sup>16</sup> to spend time alone with God. In order to form a strong foundation for one’s relationship with the Father, the new convert must change their lives and schedule so that this time in solitude and silence is not an addition to their day, but rather a priority or necessity of their life. Time alone with God, “in which we withdraw from the rush and bustle of daily”<sup>17</sup> life is an absolute necessity for the spiritual formation of the new believer. One of the great lessons that Jesus taught His disciples is that the key to truly knowing God is quite simple. It does not require great knowledge or wealth; it just requires the believer to simplify their life by seeking God before and above all things.<sup>18</sup> Richard Foster states that the “discipline of simplicity is to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness of His kingdom first and then everything necessary will come in its proper order,” yet “nothing must come before the kingdom of God.”<sup>19</sup> This journey to loving God and seeking His will above all else begins when the lost person accepts God’s love, but the true journey towards following His will starts when the new believer dedicates his time and life to knowing God by spending time in silence and solitude. Therefore, each new convert must be shown the importance and the dynamics of prayer.

In order to establish an intimate relationship with God, the new believer must

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<sup>16</sup> Willard, *Disciple*, 160.

<sup>17</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Facing Loneliness: The Starting Point of a New Journey* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Discovery House Publishers, 1988), 120.

<sup>18</sup> Gary Habermas, *Why is God Ignoring Me?* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2010), 95.

<sup>19</sup> Foster, *Celebration*, 86.



develop a quiet time which “provides the regular, continuing spiritual nourishment” in which they will need to complete their spiritual journey.<sup>20</sup> It is so important for the new believer to set a specific time and place that they meet each day with God so that they may speak with Him as well as listen to what the Lord has to say to them. The key to walking righteously in this life and becoming a disciple begins with the new believer’s commitment to spending time with God each and every day in order to gain strength, direction, encouragement, and peace.

### **Scriptural Commands**

The training for new disciples should be initiated as soon as physically possible, not only because that is the model that is shown in Scripture, but also because “long held habits do not die easily.”<sup>21</sup> The sooner the new convert is able to establish righteous habits and practices in their life, the stronger his or her faith will be and the less tempted he or she should be to fall away.

As a part of this daily routine, which includes the disciple’s quiet time with God, they must also spend time alone in His Holy Word. The importance of Scripture must be emphasized to the trainees in order for them to understand that if they are going to follow God’s will and love Him through obedience, they must first know what His will is and what He has commanded them to do and that all of this information can be found in His Word.

The practice of Bible study does not simply mean that the believer takes a few

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<sup>20</sup> Neighbour, *Survival*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Tozer, *Pursuit*, 116.

moments of each day to read over the verses and then simply put the Bible back on the shelf. Bible study is a process by which one should read the text, question the text, learn the text, reflect upon the text, engage others in the meaning of the text, and then apply that understanding which came through meditation and the Spirit of God unto their lives.<sup>22</sup> To remain committed to the will and way of God, new believers must be taught how to spend time alone with God in prayer and Bible study, because it is only through their “daily relationship with God”<sup>23</sup> that they will be able to persevere in this world.

### **Stewardship**

Another aspect of Christian instruction that should be a part of a church’s new member training program is a strong emphasis on stewardship, which is the acknowledgement of “God’s ownership of everything and His high regard for man whom He personally placed in charge of all He owns.”<sup>24</sup> Many persons feel or have been told that stewardship is primarily directed towards money or finances, however there are many areas that believers are called to be faithful stewards unto God’s kingdom.

There are five areas that God has called His followers to be good stewards: time, temple, talents, treasure, and testimony.<sup>25</sup> New believers must be instructed on how God has called them to give back to Him in each of these areas. They should be shown that time is an important asset in a person’s life, and they should not hesitate to evaluate or

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<sup>22</sup> Johnston, *Context*, 28-29.

<sup>23</sup> William Thrasher Jr., *Basics for Believers: Foundational Truths to Guide Your Life* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1998), 157.

<sup>24</sup> Hemphill, *Splash*, 65.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

change their schedule if they are not giving God enough of their time during the week. The believer should realize that God has also given him or her an earthly temple to cherish and care for while on this earth. If they are not being a good steward towards their bodies and caring for what God has provided, then they are sinning against Him.

New believers should also be made aware of the fact that God has given them many talents that He desires for them to use for His glory. Therefore, they should examine their lives, including their physical and spiritual gifts, in order to determine how they might use those gifts to enhance the kingdom. Each believer is also given a treasure upon this earth which includes their finances and possessions. This too should be a topic addressed to the new believers so that they are aware that though God is the giver of all gifts, He does require His children to give a portion back unto Himself.

Disciples have also been called to be good stewards of their testimony. They have been saved by grace, ushered into fellowship with God, and freed from slavery. As a result of their decision, new believers must embrace the fact that Scripture now requires them to share their testimony about God's saving grace with a lost and dying world. Since many believers simply do not know how to share their testimony or their faith, this should be an essential part of the new member training course.

### **Temptation and Repentance**

As the new believer steps out into a world of temptation and sin, he or she is going to find it much easier to follow God's will while still inside the walls of the church, because the moment the new disciple enters into a world which lives to please itself he or she is going to be bombarded by the sins of the past and the temptations of evil. The decision to be a follower of Christ is also a decision to live in continuous conflict,

because “you can expect Satan to use every means possible to block your growth,” including “the world, distraction, lack of faith, lack of knowledge, and your personal desires.” Therefore, one must be on “guard against unintentional drifting and deliberate rebellion.”<sup>26</sup> New believers should be taught that their goal as a Christian is to become the likeness of Christ, which is to live a life with no sin for that is what pleases the Father. In order to accomplish this mission, believers must be able to recognize particular temptations in which they find themselves weak or defeated so that they may avoid such circumstances or situations. Billy Graham states that the key to overcoming temptation is to recognize it, reject it, learn from it, and if you fail, repent and “immediately seek God’s forgiveness and restoration.”<sup>27</sup>

New members should not be misled into thinking they are going to live a perfect life from the point of their salvation until the day that God calls them home. Though this is a grand ambition, all those who walk this earth other than the Son of God shall fall short (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, new believers should be taught the power of grace and the process of repentance. Repentance involves three aspects: “sorrow for sin against God, confession of that sin, and the humbling of yourself before God.”<sup>28</sup>

As believers fall into temptation or simply choose to follow their own will as opposed to God’s will, they should be taught that the next step in this process will be conviction of the Holy Spirit which will cause them to evaluate their choices. Once

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<sup>26</sup> John Powers, *The BodyLife Journey: Guiding Believers into Ministry* (Nashville, Tennessee: LifeWay Press, 2006), 31.

<sup>27</sup> Graham, *Journey*, 161-163.

<sup>28</sup> Adams, *Thirst*, 113.

conviction has brought sorrow into their heart they should then confess their sins to God and then make a commitment to Him that they will no longer follow a path that leads them away from the cross. Another author describes repentance by stating that it is “a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Basics of Faith**

There are many areas of faith that new believers should be instructed in order to help them with their journey to fulfill God’s plan in their lives. Charles Stanley states that there are ten hallmarks of spiritual strength that should be found in mature believers: a great hunger for God, a desire to know God’s truth, no tolerance for evil, a desire for God’s will to be done, a growing love for others, quickness to forgive, quickness to obey, great faith, a soft heart, and a deep love for God.<sup>30</sup> For new believers to attain this level of maturity and faith, they must first be shown how to get to such a place of righteousness.

This process should include teaching new Christians how to grow as disciples by teaching them to pray, revealing how to study and meditate upon God’s Word, showing the importance of Bible memorization, emphasizing the necessity of obedience, revealing their great call to love God and to love others, and to instruct them on their need as disciples to share the good news and train others as they have been trained.<sup>31</sup> As the

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<sup>29</sup> Grudem, *Systematic*, 713.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Stanley, *Practicing Basic Spiritual Disciplines* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Impact, 2000), 97-107.

<sup>31</sup> Thompson Jr., *Circles*, 195.

church begins to decide what material should be included in their training program, it must ensure that the basic elements of the faith are presented to their new believers so that they have a firm foundation on which to base their life as a Christian.

### Congregational Instruction

When considering the information that should be taught to the new members of a congregation, not only should they be instructed on the basics of Christian living, they should also be made aware of the expectations and responsibilities that will be placed upon them, not only as members of the body of Christ, but also as members of the church. One of the great downfalls seen in the church today is individuals who come to know Christ within the walls of the church and then suddenly disappear and never reveal the fruit of their salvation. In the original church this was not the way that new believers were expected to behave, because “it was not enough just to add them to a church roll, each new convert had to obey what Jesus had taught them.”<sup>32</sup>

In the same way that there is a discrepancy in the number of churches that require their new members to attend a discipleship class and those who simply encourage participation in such a course, there is also an inconsistency in the level at which churches hold their new members accountable towards their commitment and involvement in the church. There are some churches who allow any person that claims to be a believer in Jesus Christ as a member of their church and then requires nothing else of them. Other churches require their members to not only attend a training course but to also sign a membership covenant stating that they will abide by the rules or requirements

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<sup>32</sup> Elmer Towns, *What's Right with the Church* (Ventura, California: Regal, 2009), 186.

that have been established by that congregation or they will no longer be considered an active part of that body of believers.

Regardless of the level of accountability held by the church towards their members, or the regiment by which they become a member, churches do have a responsibility to inform their members as to what the church expects from them as a part of that body of fellowship. These requirements may include baptism, faithful living, regular participation in worship and meetings, evangelism, service, and stewardship.<sup>33</sup> One church covenant that is used as a model for many other churches is that created by Rick Warren's Saddleback Church. This covenant is signed by the members of the congregation as a sign that they understand that by becoming a member of that church they are expected to protect the unity of the church by loving others, refusing to gossip, following the leaders, sharing the responsibility of the church by praying for growth, inviting un-churched to attend, and welcoming visitors, serving the ministry by discovering their gifts and talents, being equipped to serve, developing a servant's heart, supporting the testimony of the church by attending faithfully, living a godly life, and by giving regularly.<sup>34</sup>

Studies have shown that "growing churches tend to have high standards for members."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, as the church prepares their new members through discipleship, they should instruct these babes in Christ of their responsibility as members of the body of Christ. They should not be accepted into the family of God and then given no

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<sup>33</sup> Hodge, *Guide*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Lawless, *Membership*, 89.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

direction or guidance as to their role in the body. The new believers should rather be trained on what the church requires as deemed by Scripture so that each disciple may serve wholeheartedly and complete their role in the body of Christ in order to fulfill God's plan and increase the kingdom. This should involve not only a study of 1 Cor. 12 and Heb. 10:25, but the teachers should also focus on the great benefits which come from being actively involved in the body. These benefits were discussed in the previous portion of this analysis and included fellowship, accountability, unity and encouragement.

Too often new members are simply told that they need to partake in certain activities or fulfill certain roles within the church without ever being taught information about why they should be involved and the great benefits that will follow. As teachers begin to instruct new believers on their responsibility to be involved in the life of the church, they should emphasize the fact that "regardless of your 'spiritual age,' you never outgrow your need for the family of God for your survival in the world and for your continued spiritual growth."<sup>36</sup> The requirements of membership should be presented to new members, not only because God expects His children to be actively involved in the body, but also because without investing oneself fully by serving God through the church and bonding with one another because of God's great call to love, the new believer will never survive the danger or temptations of the world. Yet, when one is faithful to God by being faithful to their brothers and sisters in Christ, God can use that body to keep His children encouraged, accountable, and strengthened in unity.

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<sup>36</sup> Neighbor, *Survival*, 23.



## **Compass of Discipleship**

In order to design a new member training program, or to re-organize one that is currently being utilized in a church, the leaders must not only focus on the information in which they are going to be teaching, but also invest much time and strategy into the logistics of the course. These details will provide a plan by which the leaders are going to administrate and facilitate the learning environment developed to disciple new members.

### **Time and Location**

According to the surveys that were collected for this analysis, the majority of those churches surveyed currently provide training for their new members in one session. The benefit of this practice is that the church must only require or ask the new member to participate in one session, as opposed to multiple sessions which would be more difficult because people's lives are so busy in this day and time. There were two of the seven churches surveyed that chose to have their training span over five sessions, with each session being at least one hour in length, while those churches who conducted their meetings in one session would usually train their new members for roughly three hours.

The actual meeting time and location also varied from church to church. Some of the churches utilized their Sunday School hour as the time in which they disciplined new believers, while other churches would conduct their course after Sunday morning worship, or at alternating times during the week. The location for many of the classes was on site at the church, most often in a Sunday School room or fellowship hall, however some of the churches utilized public meeting places or members' homes.

Though the meeting times, locations, and lengths varied from church to church,

one factor remained constant in the surveys taken, and that was the opinion that all of those new members surveyed would recommend this training to other new members. This leads one to believe that the focus of the church and its leaders should not be upon the length of the course or the location, though these are important aspects, the “strength of the membership class is determined by its content and call for commitment, not its length.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the key to establishing an effective new member training course is certainly taking into consideration the impact and benefits of establishing a time and location for the class that is going to be appealing to the majority of the new members, but the primary focus should be on the content in which the course provides.

#### Method

Not only were the meeting times and locations varied in the churches that were surveyed, but also the method by which the course was taught. Seventy-six percent of those surveyed felt that the primary teaching method being used was lecture, while twenty-four percent felt that small group discussion was the means by which they were being taught. These differences could be due to the size of the class that was being held, or the strategies of the church which was offering the course. Although the methods were different, ninety-two percent of those surveyed felt as though the method used was appealing to their style of learning, and one hundred percent of the pastors surveyed felt that their training course, regardless of the method being used to teach, increased the understanding, knowledge, and involvement of their new members as a result of their participation in the class.

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<sup>37</sup> Warren, *Church*, 316.

Obviously each person who goes through a course will have a different opinion as to what form of teaching is most effective for their style of learning; but once again, it seems that the method being used is not as primarily important as the environment being created or the content being provided. Even in the surveys of those whom felt lecture was the primary teaching method, there was still an essence of small group mentality and interaction developed within the course. The size of these classes ranged from three to seventeen participants, but in both of these settings the class was allowed time to discuss various aspects of what they had learned from the course or questions that they had about being a church member or Christian.

Within these small groups, the new believers are given a “greater opportunity for personal discovery,” because in these groups the members will be able to develop deeper friendships and accountability relationships, create an environment for spiritual growth, increase the rate of participation and sharing, and deliver missional opportunities.<sup>38</sup> Whenever a participant is encouraged to participate, there will always be some who are hesitant because of fearfulness or shyness, however if the church or leader can create an environment which promotes participant interaction and discussion, it will increase the effectiveness of the program.<sup>39</sup> These discipleship courses, though they are short classes, should be arranged in such a way that community is developed amongst the participants. This element of community will allow the new believer to find courtesy, honesty, and

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<sup>38</sup> Ed Stetzer, Thom Rainer, *Transformational Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 178-189.

<sup>39</sup> Kuhatschek, *Fruit*, 48.

confidentiality.<sup>40</sup>

In this setting, the teacher should be a “stimulator,” while the learner is “an investigator, discoverer, and a doer.”<sup>41</sup> One of the best ways to introduce this practice is for the teacher to supply the learners with information, and then allow them time to process that information and to discuss the various ways that it should be applied to their lives. This will allow the teacher and the students to share personal stories and testimonies which will allow the learners to take the information that they have heard, and begin to understand how to live for God in their everyday lives.<sup>42</sup> In order for the discipleship class to make an impact on the new believer’s behavior, “something more is required than a mere presentation:” the pupil must consider what they heard and then be shown how to apply that “knowledge to some of the practical purposes of life and of thought.”<sup>43</sup>

### Process

As the church and leaders determine the compass or direction of their discipleship program, they must understand that there is no “one size fits all” program in which they can develop and then leave in place until the return of the Lord. Three of the seven churches surveyed were in the process of currently revamping their discipleship course and training program because they recognize that in the same way that culture and society

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<sup>40</sup> Warren, *Life*, 146-150.

<sup>41</sup> Hendricks, *Teaching*, 56.

<sup>42</sup> Warren, *Church*, 317.

<sup>43</sup> John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 2003), 43,109.

change, their new members are changing as well. Therefore, churches must understand that as they develop their program, they must be willing to continually evaluate their methods and their effectiveness, and then be willing to make changes that will improve the training and then in turn become more effective in their disciple making. These changes that are being made should be done slowly. In the same way the information provided to the learner from the teacher should be revealed in “small progressive, steady steps,” churches should also change their programs slowly in order to obtain maximum insight.<sup>44</sup> If a church makes too many changes to their program at one time, it will make it very difficult for them to evaluate which aspects of their program have made an improvement, and which were more effective as they were before.

Some of the changes that the churches surveyed were making were results of comments made by new members who went through the course. According to the survey, some of these complaints were that the class was too long or even boring. Others felt that the time should be changed, or that there was a greater need for follow-up after the course. All of these comments or suggestions made by the members should be taken into consideration by the leadership of the church, as well as their own thoughts or complaints about the program, and should be prayerfully considered to determine whether or not changes need to be made to the discipleship process so that it is as effectively and positively received as possible.

### **Commitment of Discipleship**

The third aspect of an effective discipleship program is the selection of a teacher

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<sup>44</sup> Steve Sjogren, *101 Ways to Reach Your Community* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2001), 14.

or teachers for this great ministry. If “Christian educators and church leaders desire to produce disciples whom are effective,”<sup>45</sup> the teachers must be committed to the process of discipleship. The person or leaders who are going to be actively involved in this process must understand that their dedication must be sincere, just as the commitment of a disciple must be sincere as they choose to follow the Savior. This is not a role for a person who is only somewhat invested in this process, because the leader’s position is of utmost importance to the efficiency and effectiveness of the discipleship program.

The facilitator of the new member training should be a believer who is a gifted teacher. Churches should seek to use their “best teacher for this class.”<sup>46</sup> This means the leader is not only an effective communicator, but also a master on the subjects to be taught. This is vital because “if you hear somebody speak and you don’t understand anything he says, then he probably doesn’t understand his subject.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the teacher of the class must be one who is dedicated and educated on the subjects to be covered in the course, and they must also know who they are as a person and as a Christian. John Maxwell states that to “effectively connect with people on an intellectual level, you must know two things: your subject and yourself.”<sup>48</sup>

If the leader of the class is not knowledgeable on the Christian faith or the roles of church members, or if he is unsure about his own significance in the kingdom or the

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<sup>45</sup> Steven Hugh Mathews, "A Spiritual Disciplines-Based Discipleship" (DMin diss., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, VA, 2005), 93.

<sup>46</sup> Lawless, *Membership*, 69.

<sup>47</sup> MacArthur, *Study*, 135.

<sup>48</sup> John Maxwell, *Everyone Communicates Few Connect* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 62.

church, the new members will be able to recognize this immediately. For the teacher to be effective in discipling new believers, this person must realize that “substance is everything,” and the learners have the “uncanny ability to sniff out what is real and what isn’t.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it is not only imperative that the leader be a good teacher who knows their information, they must also be one who truly believes what they are teaching and shows it in their lives. If their faith or service to God is not genuine, then they will not be able to effectively describe to others how to serve God. If their relationship with the Lord is not intimate and stable, then they will be unable to share with the new believers the power of prayer and Bible study. Teachers must understand that if a person “stop[s] growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow,” because he or she “cannot impart what you do not possess.”<sup>50</sup> If the love of God is not in them, the teacher will not be able to share the influence that God’s presence has on one’s life and the changes that should occur as a result of this miraculous relationship. Therefore, the teacher must be authentic in his or her faith and commitment to teach others how to live for God, because to be “an effective connector over the long haul, you have to establish credibility by living what you communicate.”<sup>51</sup>

Once the church is certain of the leader’s genuineness in their love for God and desire to teach others, the church should also invest in their leaders by providing them with training. Even if the person is a gifted and experienced teacher, they will only benefit from additional training on how to reach and embrace new members. The aspects

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<sup>49</sup> Hybels, *Church*, 53.

<sup>50</sup> Hendricks, *Teaching*, 27.

<sup>51</sup> Maxwell, *Connect*, 231.

of training may improve not only their ability to communicate, but also to encourage or to uplift these new members.<sup>52</sup> This training process may also include showing the teacher the importance of being a faithful and loving example, ensuring that they know how to teach effectively and minister in Christ's name, and how to prepare their hearts and allow the Spirit to lead them as they instruct.<sup>53</sup>

### Communication

As the leaders seek to communicate the vital information to the new believers, they must be very careful with the way in which they provide the material. The teacher will want to ensure that they are talking to the students and “not above them.”<sup>54</sup> One of the most effective ways to fail at communicating with the audience is to speak in such a way that no one is able to understand or connect with the information that is being shared. Therefore, the instructor will want to take the information that he or she knows, and share it using “common language,” because without it the participants will “simply not connect.”<sup>55</sup>

Teachers connect with their students in at least three different ways: visually by giving attention, intellectually by asking questions and listening, and emotionally through touch and care.<sup>56</sup> One of the great pitfalls of instructors is once they master the art of

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<sup>52</sup> Towns, *Sunday School*, 73.

<sup>53</sup> Eldridge, *Teaching*, 298-300.

<sup>54</sup> Maxwell, *Connect*, 155.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Davenport, and Laurence Prusak, *Working Knowledge* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 1998), 98.

<sup>56</sup> Maxwell, *Connect*, 70.



teaching and connecting with their students on various levels, they begin to feel as though the discipleship process of the church would be unable to continue without their involvement or expertise. Since it is man's natural tendency to lean towards pride, it is vital that the teacher be aware that "one of the most tragic mistakes leaders commit is to make themselves indispensable."<sup>57</sup> For this reason, the church should seek to find leaders who are humble and full of humility. This character trait will enable them to be actively involved in the discipleship process without developing the feelings that they are leading others to follow themselves, instead of the Savior.<sup>58</sup>

There are many aspects that must be considered when appointing the appropriate teacher or teachers to disciple the new believers of the church, because there are at least three questions that the learners are going to desire to be answered by the leader: do you care for me, can you help me, and can I trust you?<sup>59</sup> As the instructor begins working with the new believers, they are first going to question the instructor's motives for leading the class. In hopes of assuring that their reasons are genuine, the teacher must be able to show the class that their intentions are pure and come from a source of love and devotion to God. The next question that the learner will seek to answer is whether or not the teacher can actually help them. This is why it is so important that the facilitator be an effective communicator and must also be a master of the subject in which they are teaching. The new believer must be assured that the teacher is fully capable of relating new information to them about Christ and the church in a way that he or she will be able

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<sup>57</sup> Blackaby, *Leadership*, 134.

<sup>58</sup> Thompson Jr., *Circles*, 191.

<sup>59</sup> Maxwell, *Connect*, 38-41.

to understand and apply to his or her life. Finally, the new believer also wants to know if the teacher can be trusted. For this reason, the church must ensure that the life of the instructor is one of faith and works, showing that their relationship with God is true and viable, because if the members of the class do not see that their mentor is trustworthy, then the information presented will also be seen as questionable.

### Role of the Pastor

Pastors have a mandate to be directly involved in the disciple making process because “any pastor who is not discipling others is abdicating a primary responsibility of his calling.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the question is not whether or not the pastor should be involved in the new member training, but to what extent he should be involved and exactly what role he should fulfill. For a church’s discipleship program to be successful, the senior pastor must motivate “widespread and diligent participation” by showing his “commitment to personal spiritual growth.”<sup>61</sup> If the church or the new members do not believe that the program is supported and affirmed by the pastor of the church, it is unlikely that it will ever be an effective source for making disciples. Therefore, the pastor must be involved in the discipling process by showing his commitment to the program and his expectation for new believers to attend so that they may increase their knowledge and understanding of what it means to follow Christ.

The role that pastors often fulfill in the training program is teacher or lecturer. One study showed that thirty-eight percent of new member classes were taught by the

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<sup>60</sup> MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry*, 263, 271.

<sup>61</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 127-128.

pastor; thirty-two percent of the courses were taught by various pastors and leaders, fifteen percent were taught by a single staff member, and thirteen percent were taught by a layperson.<sup>62</sup> In the surveys completed for this analysis, the figures were slightly different. Twenty-nine percent of the new member classes were taught by the senior pastor, fifty-seven percent were taught by the senior pastor as well as other pastors on staff, and fourteen percent were taught by a lay person. In the majority of these classes, the senior pastor was either the primary teacher or he was involved in the teaching process in some way. The senior pastor should be involved in the teaching of the class. If he is not the sole teacher, he should at least teach a portion so that the new members have the “opportunity to see the pastor’s vision for the church, feel his love for the members, and hear his personal commitment to care, feed, and lead them.”<sup>63</sup>

One of the greatest benefits that will come from the pastor’s involvement in this course is the opportunity for the pastor and the new members to begin to form a more intimate relationship with one another. If the pastor is not willing to truly get close with his flock, especially those new babes in Christ, then the church will not experience the “full impact that is vital to discipleship.”<sup>64</sup> This is such an important step in training new members because the pastor must understand that “the ultimate goal of spiritual leadership is not to achieve numerical results alone, or to do things with perfection, or even to grow for the sake of growth.” Rather, it is to take “their people from where they

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<sup>62</sup> Lawless, *Membership*, 55.

<sup>63</sup> Warren, *Church*, 316.

<sup>64</sup> Hull, *Church*, 74.

are to where God wants them to be,”<sup>65</sup> and this is accomplished through relationships.

Therefore, the senior pastor must be involved in the discipleship process for it to be effective, yet it is not necessary for him to be the primary teacher, though this is perfectly acceptable and in many cases beneficial. The majority of the churches surveyed for this analysis used a blended method of teaching, utilizing various members of the staff as well as the senior pastor. One of the churches that conducted five meetings, each lasting for approximately one hour each, would allow each of the five staff members to teach one session. They stated the new members really appreciated this aspect of their program because it allowed them to know more about the members of the staff. In the surveys completed by the members of these churches, eighty-seven percent felt that because of this class they were able to develop relationships with other new members as well as the staff.

It would be very beneficial if churches would involve those staff persons who are able and committed to participate in the new member training, even if for a small section, so they may show their support for the program and allow the new members to learn more about their heart’s desire. Not only is the relationship building aspect vitally important to the discipleship process, but also Scripture is very clear when it reveals that each person is gifted in different ways (Rom. 12:6); therefore, by including more than one staff member or leader, the church will be able to utilize the various gifts of each of their teachers so that the trainers may “balance each other’s weaknesses (which all leaders have.)”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Blackaby, *Leadership*, 127.

<sup>66</sup> Luter, *Discipleship*, 272.

## Follow Up

A new member training program is a great start for churches and believers to mentor and instruct those new believers within their congregation, yet this class should be the beginning of the discipleship process and not the end. The original church and the first Christians met daily (Acts 2:46) in order to worship God and keep one another aligned with the path of righteousness, and God intends for the “church to be filled with mature, full-orbed mothers and fathers in the faith who are able to mentor and grow people in all of life – spiritually, physically, emotionally, and socially.”<sup>67</sup> This process is a continuation of the discipleship training that begins in the course, which will allow other mature leaders and believers to walk alongside those new Christians and to help them along their journey of faith. This type of accountability will involve personal openness to evaluation, willingness to consistently work on areas of weakness, and submission to the guidance of someone else.<sup>68</sup> Though this may seem to be a frightening or embarrassing situation for some, Scripture is very clear on the “benefits that come by associating with wise people” (Prov. 13:20).<sup>69</sup> According to the surveys completed by the members of the seven churches, and the ones filled out by the pastors of those churches, this is the one area on which both the new members and pastors agreed that the course should improve upon; providing more follow up after the completion of the training.

The mentoring process is certainly beneficial for all believers, however the church

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<sup>67</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally*, 198.

<sup>68</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 51.

<sup>69</sup> Stanley, *Wisely*, 101.

must be especially careful whom they place as an accountability partner and spiritual leader in the life of the new believer. Some churches choose to allow their staff members to mentor “a half-dozen laypeople” and then “each of those people mentor from two to six other congregants, and each of those people does the same.”<sup>70</sup> This is one method in which mentors may be trained or chosen, but regardless of the practice there are certain characteristics that must be present in a person’s life for them to mentor another believer: genuine maturity in their faith, ability to be unmoved by the fluctuations of the times, able to absorb the “selfishness and mediocrity and apathy around them and transform it.”<sup>71</sup> These persons should be unjudging and unshakable, compassionate and committed, and they must be prepared to take on certain parental responsibilities with their spiritual children.

The reason why the choice of mentors must be so selective is because if the new believer is not able to share their feelings or struggles openly with their mentor, then they are much more likely to fall away from the path than to continue in the light. The new believer must be comfortable enough with their mentor to trust them with their burdens by sharing their “feelings and failures,” their “struggles and fears,”<sup>72</sup> and their joys as well. The disciple should be able to benefit from “wise counsel that is couched in love, forgiveness, and confidentiality.”<sup>73</sup> If the mentor is not a person of mature faith, who is grounded in the Word and filled with the Spirit, the new believer will not be able to

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<sup>70</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 123.

<sup>71</sup> Foster, *Celebration*, 186.

<sup>72</sup> Sanders, *Loneliness*, 139.

<sup>73</sup> Stanley, *Disciplines*, 89.

experience the joy and relief that comes through true and righteous accountability and encouragement.

If the church does not currently have any persons in place to mentor new believers, one avenue of follow-up that could be very enlightening would be to use the church's Sunday School program.<sup>74</sup> Sunday School is already established in most churches today, and hopefully those persons entrusted to teach Bible study would be worthy of mentoring new believers. This will enable those Sunday School teachers to not only reach out to those new babes in Christ, but also to allow them to invite that new believer to come into the fellowship of that Sunday School class so that they may find other believers to encourage them in their walk with God.

No matter what avenue a church uses to mentor their new believers, they must ensure that this step is not overlooked. The material covered in the new believers' class will give the new followers of Christ a great foundation for the beginning of their journey, yet they will still need help along the way. This was the method used by Jesus Christ as He walked the earth. He continually "checked up on the actions and reactions of His disciples as they faced various difficult situations," and He "kept after them constantly," refusing to "let them rest in success or in failure."<sup>75</sup> If the Savior knew the importance of holding His followers accountable, and the necessity of constantly showing them encouragement and hope, then the church must also heed this call to not simply train new believers, but to continuously mentor them as well.

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<sup>74</sup> Towns, *Sunday School*, 74.

<sup>75</sup> Coleman, *Evangelism*, 93.

### **Effects and Cost of Discipleship**

After the church has decided to follow God's Great Commission and fulfill their duty to new believers by showing them how to love God and serve Him faithfully, they must embark on a journey to establish the most effective discipleship program to the best of their ability and knowledge. This will include determining what material to teach, deciding how the course should be instructed, and then assigning teachers and mentors to follow up with the new believers. Once the new membership plan is in place, the church should be made aware of the benefits that they will experience as a result of their obedience, as well as the cost that they may endure as they seek to disciple their new members.

### **Effects of Discipleship**

One of the greatest challenges that pastors face is the quest to incorporate and acclimatize new members into the flock. Many times leaders spend countless hours searching in "vain for a way to assimilate new members."<sup>76</sup> One of the effects of new member training is that churches will no longer have to question how they are going to introduce their new members to the church or involve them in the ministry of God's kingdom, because their training course will be the means by which this goal is accomplished.

Research also shows that the "way a congregation welcomes and assimilates new members has a direct relationship to its growth, vitality, and renewal."<sup>77</sup> New believers

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<sup>76</sup> Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishers, 1993), 294.

<sup>77</sup> Scannell, *Focus*, 68.



are often lost when they become members of a church and have no idea what their next step is as a Christian, nor as a church member. In the same way, pastors and churches are often excited to have new members, but they are simply unsure of how to get them plugged into the church. When congregations begin training their new members and instructing them as believers in Christ, they are meeting the needs of the new believers to be informed, and they are also fulfilling the desire and purpose of the church by implementing the new members of that body. By introducing the new disciples to the purpose of the church and the plans that God has for His children, the church will not only grow stronger in their service to God but also see the members attain higher levels of intimacy and devotion as a result of the fulfillment of God's call for the church to disciple.

As the church begins to teach and train new members, the current members will also be affected by the drive that these new believers have towards their focus on loving God and serving Him fully. By "explaining your church's purposes"<sup>78</sup> to new members, the result will be a reduction of conflict and an increase in unity. Too many believers are simply accepted into a new church or decide to join a congregation because of social reasons or geographical locations, and then once they have committed to the church they find that the purpose or direction of that body of believers does not fit with their own personal convictions. However, they often do not choose to go to another church. They simply decide to remain within that fellowship and this causes distractions and disturbances because of their difference in opinion. If the new believer would have known that the church was being led in a direction that differed from their own theology

or preference before they had joined or shortly thereafter, perhaps they could have made the decision to go to a church in which they could serve more freely. When new members are never shown what is expected of them or instructed on the aim or objective of that congregation, they may find themselves in a church where they do not belong, and the church may find themselves with new members who do not desire to bring unity to the fellowship.

Another way that conflict is reduced and unity is promoted is by teaching new members what God expects from His children. Members of the church are too often ignorant to God's call for unity within the body and the power and purpose of a church that works together for the good of the kingdom. New member courses allow the church to ensure that each new member is completely aware of their duty to fulfill the will of God by being actively involved in the body of Christ and pursuing unity and harmony, because the church has one purpose: one Spirit, and one Savior.

The church should also see an increased emphasis on evangelism. The new believers are often the “most passionate about God” and they often have a “ready-made audience of nonbelievers with whom to disclose how God changed their lives.”<sup>79</sup> As a result of the church showing their new members how to share their faith, other members will also be revived in their quest to share the good news and convicted by their lack of evangelism.

The benefits and results of new member training have been disclosed through the entirety of this analysis, yet one area that churches and leaders must be aware of that is

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<sup>78</sup> Warren, *Church*, 93.

<sup>79</sup> Lawless, *Membership*, 120.

often not discussed or comprehended is the cost of this great process.

### **Cost of Discipleship**

Too often the popular and last words of a dying church are, “Well that’s the way we’ve always done it!” If churches today are going to reach and impact their new believers they are going to have to realize the necessity of changing the way that discipleship is viewed and administered by the church. No longer is it acceptable for the church to add a new member training program “onto our existing structure as a subordinate program;” instead, it must be the “primary thrust of the commission we have been given.”<sup>80</sup> Though discipleship principles have remained the same for thousands of years, the methods by which churches have instituted and practiced discipleship have certainly changed and have taken this great command from a place of priority to a place of convenience. Churches and their leaders must be willing to understand that “the things that got us to where we are today will not get us to where we need to be tomorrow;”<sup>81</sup> therefore, change is necessary.

### **Changing the Focus**

To change the church’s focus, and to make discipleship a priority, it will require focus, commitment, time, and work.<sup>82</sup> These are all a part of the cost of discipleship. First, it will be a struggle for the church to change the way that it has been doing discipleship or to create a new program that becomes the focus or center of the church’s

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<sup>80</sup> Hull, *Church*, 24.

<sup>81</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 10.

<sup>82</sup> Thrasher, *Basics*, 98.

mission. Many people will resist simply because they are unfamiliar with the new methods being used or because they simply do not like to see or be involved in change. There will have to be much time and energy put into the process of creating the program and implementing and training the leaders and facilitators. Those who are directly involved will have to sacrifice their own time and life in order for this process to be successful.

If one considers the life of Jesus, he had “virtually no time to call His own,” because the “disciples were always under the foot of the Master.”<sup>83</sup> The church that chooses to invest in the lives of new believers must be willing to set their own agendas and priorities aside for the sake of working with and guiding new believers so that they can become the followers that God has called them to be. These workers will also have to continuously evaluate the means by which they are teaching and training new believers in order to ensure that their strategy is being effective. This is not an easy calling, rather it is a call from God that must be obeyed.

### Motivation

Another challenge that pastors, leaders, and churches will face is to keep their teachers and workers motivated. Churches today frequently begin a new program, and their workers are involved and excited, and then after a few weeks or months the happiness fades and the frustration comes and many will desire to simply stop this new ministry. In essentially every church, there is a struggle to motivate the people to “get

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<sup>83</sup> Coleman, *Evangelism*, 46.

involved and to stay involved in discipleship.”<sup>84</sup> Though this may be a painful and time consuming process, the leaders of the church must work towards encouraging the church to continue supporting new member discipleship.

#### Mandatory or Encouraged

Another battle that will be experienced by many churches when instituting a new member class is the decision to classify attendance to this training as mandatory or volunteer. In the surveys completed for this analysis, sixty-eight percent of those surveyed were required to participate in a new member training class before they could join the church, while thirty-two percent were just encouraged to attend but it was not mandatory. Four out of the seven churches surveyed required their new members to attend a training class, which is roughly fifty-seven percent.

Though not all churches will decide or desire to require new believers to attend a course such as this, research shows that “churches that require persons to enter membership through a new members’ class have a much higher retention rate than those that do not.”<sup>85</sup> There may be some members or leaders who are uncomfortable requiring new believers to attend a training class because they feel it is intrusive or may be offensive to that person, but “opposition to required new member classes seems to be decreasing.”<sup>86</sup> Rick Warren unashamedly requires new members to participate in new member training as well as sign a member covenant because he feels that “[i]f you don’t

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<sup>84</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 124.

<sup>85</sup> Rainer, *Unchurched*, 114.

<sup>86</sup> Lawless, *Membership*, 22.

ask people for a commitment, you won't get it," but the truth is that "[p]eople want to be committed to something that gives significance to their lives."<sup>87</sup> The decision to require new members to attend a discipleship course before they are allowed to become members of the church may very well cause some members to leave the church, or cause others to decide not to attend. If a church is focused on the intensive process of making true disciples of Christ, they must be willing to "shrink" before they grow.<sup>88</sup>

The cost of discipleship is something that must be considered before a church decides if they truly are focused on investing themselves into training and leading new believers into becoming followers of Jesus Christ. This decision will require change, demand more time from the leaders and workers, be frustrating and painful, possibly bring about a "temporary plateau or decline in new members," and will require the church and leaders to make some very tough decisions. But it is "well worth the cost."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Warren, *Church*, 345.

<sup>88</sup> "Holy Subversion: Allegiance to Christ in an Age of Rivals," *Christianity Today*, March, 2010, 62.

<sup>89</sup> Lawless, *Membership*, 110.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION AND FINAL CHARGE

One of the greatest tragedies in the church today is the church's neglect of their biblical mandate to train and disciple their new members and believers. Many congregations have done a "good job of promoting the importance of spiritual maturity, but they have mostly failed to provide an environment in which spiritual growth is a lifestyle."<sup>1</sup> The lost are often led into the light of the gospel, and then as newborn babies in Christ, they are left to discover what it means to be a Christian by their own accord.

In order to change this unholy trend in the church today, there must be a great awakening to the power and purpose of discipleship. Churches and leaders must once again be reminded of the necessity of training their new believers. They must be shown that a disciple is one who follows Christ and continuously serves Him by denying himself or herself. This is not a process that is inherently known, it must be taught. The measure of a "true disciple is the degree to which you are like Jesus,"<sup>2</sup> yet a babe in Christ cannot reflect the image of the Savior unless they are first instructed to who He is and how He loves.

Leaders and believers alike must both be revived and exposed to their great

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<sup>1</sup> Barna, *Disciples*, 55.

<sup>2</sup> Powers, *Bodylife*, 30.

calling from God to make disciples amongst the nations, which not only includes their responsibility to share their faith with others but also to walk alongside the immature in faith in order to provide them with the tools and information they need to complete their journey of faith. This practice of discipleship is not one that should be foreign to anyone in the church, for it was shown to all believers in the practice of the saints of the Old Testament, and in the lives of Christ and His followers. Therefore, the problem that is present in the world today comes not from a lack of understanding or knowledge about the discipline of discipleship, but from a shortage of implementation and commitment.

Many churches and pastors ask the question, “Why are there so many church members who claim to be Christians and yet rarely attend church or get involved in ministry?”<sup>3</sup> The simple answer to this profound question is this: those Christians were never properly educated on what it means to accept and follow the Savior. These babes in Christ must be taught that they are called to die to their old selves and desires, obey the commands of God and Scripture, devote their time to seek intimacy with God, fulfill their calling to unify with the body of Christ in order to maintain Christian fellowship and accountability, evangelize and disciple others, and to attain maturity in their faith by serving God wholeheartedly through the storms and trials of life. Unless new believers are instructed and shown how to be disciples, they will have a “minimal, nominal-commitment, consumer-driven standard of American approach to their faith.”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, leaders and churches must respond to God’s call for discipleship by actively participating in this life changing process. Programs must be designed that

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<sup>3</sup> Towns, *Core*, 199.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 199.



include material and teachings on the calling of a Christian as outlined in Scripture. This will provide a basic outline of their faith, instruction on what it means to live for God, and how to be a member of His church. The details of this program cannot be simply compiled or decided without prayerful and thoughtful consideration, because too often discipleship is reduced to a “one-size-fits-all program of do’s, don’ts, and meetings.”<sup>5</sup>

When a church begins a discipleship program in order to train their new members and believers they must ensure that their commitment is long-lasting and their hearts are focused on providing the most effective discipleship course that their church and resources may offer. This will include much time and effort as the church decides on the time and location, methods to be used, leaders and facilitators, involvement of the pastors, ways to follow up with trainees, techniques to analyze effectiveness and provide continuous improvements and alterations, and the effects and costs of this program.

In Paul’s second letter to his spiritual child, one whom he disciplined in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he gives Timothy this challenge.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Zempel, *Sacred*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible - English Standard Version* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2342.

The church today is in a state where people no longer desire to hear the truth, but would rather be entertained by words which tickle their ears and bring pleasure to their mind because they support the quest for sinful and selfish desires. Paul shares with Timothy that it is his duty to share the Word of truth and to tell others about Christ's sacrifice and resurrection. It is his responsibility to pour himself out like a drink offering so that he may one day stand before the Great Judge and receive the crown of life.

In the same way, a charge has been given to pastors, leaders, churches, and believers today: a charge not from Paul, but from God Almighty. This challenge and command is for the mature in faith to train those who are infants, for they cannot walk the path of righteousness unless they are shown the Way and the Truth. Therefore, if the body of Christ desires to fight the good fight and finish the race while keeping the faith, they must accept God's great charge to disciple new believers in order to bring them into the fellowship as believers, build them up into maturity, train them for ministry, and then "send them out on mission," while bringing glory to God.<sup>7</sup>

In conclusion, to be the church that God desires, the believers that He inspires, and the followers He yearns for, discipleship is key. For through this process God's children show obedience to His Word. Spiritual infants become spiritual servants. The kingdom is increased in great anticipation of the return of the Savior. The life of Christ is reflected in the image of His followers and the glory of God is spread throughout the world. Discipleship is not an option; it is the way of God, the truth of life, and the responsibility of the believer and the church.

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<sup>7</sup> Warren, *Church*, 109.

## APPENDIX A

## SURVEY FOR PASTORS/DISCIPLESHIP LEADERS

1. What type of curriculum do you currently use for new member training and discipleship? **(Mark all that apply)**

- Material purchased from a Christian source
- Material developed by staff of our church
- Other

2. Who teaches the new member discipleship courses? **(Mark all that apply)**

- Senior Pastor
- Member of the church staff
- Lay leader

3. How long has the church been utilizing new member discipleship?

- Less than one year
- Two to five years
- Five to ten years
- More than ten years

4. Are new members required to take classes as a part of their membership?

- Yes
- No

5. When do you offer these training courses? **(Mark all that apply)**

- During Sunday school
- Sunday afternoon before worship
- Sunday night after worship
- Wednesday night
- Other

6. How long does each training session last?

- 20 minutes
- 40 minutes
- 1 hour
- 2 hours
- More than 2 hours
- Other

7. How many sessions is the program designed for new members to attend?

- 1
- 2
- 4
- 6
- Other

8. Do you feel that the new member training classes increase the knowledge, understanding, and commitment of the new members?

- Yes
- No

9. Can you tell a difference in the spiritual maturity and growth between those new members who attend training classes and those who do not?

- Yes
- No

10. Is there anything about your current program that you feel should be changed?

## APPENDIX B

### SURVEY FOR NEW MEMBERS

#### Survey for New Members

1. How long have you been a member of your church?
  - Less than 6 months
  - 6 months to a year
  - 1-3 years
  - 3-5 years
  - More than 5 years
  
2. How many new member training sessions have you attended?
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - All
  - Other
  
3. Do you feel that you learned more about what is expected of you as a Christian from this training?
  - Yes
  - No

4. Do you feel that you learned more about what is expected of you as a church member from this training?

- Yes
- No

5. What was the primary method of teaching used in this training? (**Mark all that apply**)

- Lecture
- Video
- Small group discussion
- Large group discussion
- Independent study
- Other - \_\_\_\_\_

6. Did this method of teaching appeal to your learning style?

- Yes
- No

7. Were you required to take this discipleship course?

- Yes
  - If yes, how did you feel about this requirement for membership?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- No

8. Would you recommend this course to other new church members?

- Yes
- No

9. Has this training helped you form relationships with other new members or with staff?

- Yes
- No

10. Is there anything about this program that you would like to see changed?

APPENDIX C  
TRAINING MANUAL FOR PASTOR/INSTRUCTOR

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN:**

The following manual is a discipleship training guide to be used by pastors or leaders when discipling the new members or new believers of their congregation.

Though each church is different and instructors should customize their discipleship program to best meet the needs of their new members, the following recommendations are based upon the research of this analysis and surveys, and should be considered when implementing or designing a new member training program. Throughout this manual, there will be helpful suggestions made to you as the leader. Do not feel as though everything in this manual must be followed exactly as it is written. This is simply a guide to help you in the discipleship process. Feel free to tailor the points, instructions, or material so that it is most beneficial towards your style of teaching and so that it is specifically focused on reaching your group of new believers.

The new member program should be an integral part of the mission of the church. Attendance should be required before a person is allowed to join the fellowship of believers. Two effective times to conduct this training are either during the Sunday School hour or immediately following Sunday morning worship. The discipleship course may be held for several sessions, but for ease and efficiency it is recommended that the course only have one session, lasting between two and three hours. The church must



ensure that only gifted, trained, and committed teachers lead this class, as it is a vital part of the new believer's development. The primary methods of teaching should be lecture and small group discussion; the participants must be given time to interact with what they are being taught. Finally the church must also continuously work to adapt and improve their discipleship program so that it is as effective as possible in showing new believers how to be faithful servants in the kingdom.

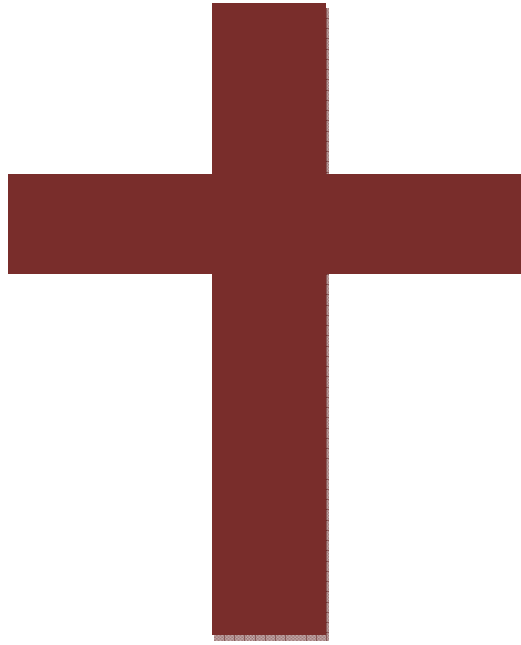
**FOR THE LEADER:**

As you prepare to train the new members or believers in your congregation, spend a few minutes at the beginning of the session introducing yourself to the group. Let them know about your history, upbringing, family, hobbies, and most importantly, how you met the Lord. This will help you develop a trusting relationship with them as you seek to enlighten them on how they can truly give all of their hearts and souls to God. Before you begin the first session, it would be a good idea to give the group of disciples a general oral outline that will be followed for the program. This particular discipleship plan has eight different categories, which lead the learners through the acronym D.I.S.C.I.P.L.E. Inform the learners if you would like for them to interject comments throughout the presentation of material or save their questions for the end of each section. Regardless of your preference, make sure that you do allow plenty of time for questions so that they can truly interact with the material that you have presented. The instructor should allow breaks periodically, and during one of these recesses it would be beneficial for the instructor to give the new members a tour of the church's facilities so that they are familiarized with the various buildings and resources.

The learner's guide is a skeleton outline of the leader's guide; therefore, the majority of the information presented in the leader's guide is for the benefit of the instructor. The learner's guide is primarily principles, statements, and sentences, with intentional blanks left within the key phrases, and plenty of space for the learner to write in the information in which you are teaching them, or key thoughts that they may have during the session. Due to the vastness of material and the limited time of this training session, it would be beneficial if the church would utilize the learner's guide during the sessions, yet also make the leader's guide available to the new believers if they so desire to obtain a copy of the complete lessons and information contained within them.

All words that are underlined in the leader's guide are the key words to be filled in by the learners in their learning manual. Paragraphs or sentences that appear in *italics* are directed for the information or benefit of the instructor and are not necessarily designed to be read or shared with the learner. Paragraphs and statements in regular typeface are most often provided for the leader to speak to the learners, and these sections are often phrased in such a way that they may be used as a script for the training session.

May this material aid the instructor as they follow Christ's example and heed His command by making disciples for the kingdom.



# **D.I.S.C.I.P.L.E.**

*Leader's Guide*

# Doctrine of Beliefs

*-The information contained within the first section of this training comes from the Baptist Faith and Message adopted in the year 2000. This document is a basic statement of faith in which many southern Baptist churches support and use as their basis of beliefs. If your church currently has its own statement of beliefs and faith contained within a church covenant or documented manual, then feel free to substitute that information for this section. Whether using your own material, or the Baptist Faith and Message, please provide a full copy with scriptural references attached for the new believer to take home with them in addition to this manual.*

## 1. God

-“There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.”

### *-God the Father*

-“ God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.”

*Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.*

## **-God the Son**

-“Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.”

*Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.*

## **-God the Spirit**

-“The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.”

*Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark*

*1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.*

## 2. The Scriptures

-“The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”

*Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.*

## 3. Man

- Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

*Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19;*

6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

#### 4. Salvation

-“Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.”

*Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.*

## 5. **The Church**

-“A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

*Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.*

## 6. **Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

-“Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”

*Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.*

## **Questions/Comments**



# **Inside the Church**

## **1. History**

*-In this section of the training, give the new believer a summary of the church's history. This will include information such as how the church began, when was it founded, who were the founding members or parties, and details about the progression of the church, or any major changes or happenings that have occurred since the beginning which may be significant. It may be helpful to include a copy of this information with the learner's guide.*

## **2. Purpose and Mission**

*-Once again this portion of the training is subjective to the purpose and mission of the church. The leader should take the time needed to explain why the church exists and what their goal is as a body of believers. The purpose and mission may include glorifying God, reaching the lost, promoting the kingdom, preparing for the return of the Savior, seeking spiritual maturity, teaching sound doctrine, serving Christ, etc. Once again, it may be beneficial to include a copy of these statements with the learner's guide.*

## **3. Operating Manual**

*-The purpose of reviewing the operating manual is to allow the new believer to understand the procedures by which the church follows as they serve God. This section should instruct the believers on how the church is organized and structured; conducts business meetings; forms and utilizes committees; elects and supports pastors, elders, and deacons; determines who is qualified for membership; administers the ordinances, views church discipline, etc. This will inform the new believers on the basics of church operation.*

## **4. Leadership**

*-It is key for the new believers to know who leads their new church. This portion of the training should be used to introduce the new believers to the hierarchy of the church: pastors, elders, staff, volunteers, lay leaders, etc. This will inform the new believer as to which person in the church is in charge of the various ministerial aspects and responsibilities.*

## **5. Expectations of Church Members**

*-There are many new members who join churches and are never shown exactly what is expected of them as members of that congregation. This section of the training is focused on providing the new believer or member with a general explanation of the type of commitment and behaviors that the church desires from those who show interest in becoming a part of that body of believers. The following are just a few of the expectations that should be explained, but there are many others which should be determined by the leadership of the church. Some congregations even choose to develop a church covenant, in which all new members must sign. This shows that they commit to fulfilling the requirements set forth by that congregation.*

### **-Intimacy**

- Spending time with God and learning who He is and what He desires.
- Studying and absorbing His Word through its truth and by the Spirit.
- Loving one another in the way God shows His love; through patience, kindness, goodness, sacrifice, and grace.

### **-Participation**

- Actively participating in all services through attendance and involvement.
- Spending time in prayer asking God to bless the leaders and the church.
- Seeking to serve where needed with the body of Christ.

### **-Stewardship**

- Recognizing that God is the giver of all things and returning to Him a portion of what He has so generously given.
- Serving God and promoting His plan by generously and cheerfully giving one's time, energy, talents, and monies.
- Recognizing the gift that God gave through eternal life and each believer's responsibility to share that same gift with others.

## **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

# **Scripture and Prayer**

*As the leader begins this new section, they should take the time to explain that many of the expectations that a church has of its members, may require aspects of faith and discipline in which the new members are not familiar with or simply do not know how to complete or obey because they have never been shown what it means to follow Christ. The remainder of the training program focuses on showing new believers how to live as disciples of Christ, and faithful servants to the King of Kings.*

## **1. Quiet Time**

*-In order for a new believer to establish a solid relationship with God, they must master two physical and spiritual disciplines in their life. These are silence and solitude. The new believer must learn how to have a quiet time with God and to begin studying and learning His Word in order to become the disciple that God has called them to be. As the instructor, you may want to include in this section a study of Matthew 6:1-13, which provides an outline of the Lord's prayer as explained by Christ to the disciples, as well as an examination of prayer motives.*

### **-Talking with God**

-Prayer is a believer's lifeline to God. As a new believer, it must be your priority to spend time with God and talk with Him. By doing so you are connecting with the One who made you, and you are able to share with Him the feelings you experience and the challenges you are facing.

### **-Listening to God**

-Prayer is not only talking with God, it is listening to Him. God speaks to His children through His Spirit. Therefore, when you stop and take time out of your life to talk with God and spend time with Him, you should begin to listen for His voice.

### **-Giving thanks to God**

-As a believer in Christ you have much to be thankful for today. During times of prayer you can voice thanks to God and tell Him just how much you love Him for dying for you, providing for your life, and listening when you need to talk to someone (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

### ***-Developing intimacy with God***

-In the same way that two persons on earth must spend time together and talk with one another to develop a deep relationship, so it is with believers and God. We must spend time with Him in order to know Him, His will, and His voice. The more time we spend in His presence, the more we will recognize His omnipresence. We will then begin to understand that God is always there for us, protecting us and loving us. As we begin to trust Him wholeheartedly we will find ourselves in an intimate relationship with our Creator.

### ***-Planning time with God***

-For most people in the world, time is not a luxury, and spiritual growth is not something that happens automatically when a person accepts Christ as Savior. Therefore, in order to make sure that your quiet time is a priority in your life, you must have a plan. Decide what time of day you are going to get away from the world and spend time alone with God. Try and find a specific place that you meet with Him every day and then commit to having that time alone with God no matter how busy life may get.

## ***2. Bible Study***

### ***-Reading and understanding the Words***

-God's Holy Word is His love letter to His children on this earth. It contains every piece of knowledge and wisdom that we could ever desire to know or learn. In order to live our lives as the Christians that God has called us to be, we must read His Word, and we must understand what He is saying to us through it. This is accomplished in two different ways. First we rely on the Spirit of God to reveal to us what God is saying to us through the verses that we read. Secondly, we must not simply read through the words quickly and then move on to another chapter. We must spend time meditating on those words in order to allow their true meaning to resonate through our minds and hearts (Deuteronomy 11:18-23).

### ***-Applying the Words***

-Once God reveals the meaning of His Word to us, we must be willing to apply it to our lives. This means that if God gives us a rule to obey, we become obedient. If He gives us a rule of instruction, we follow. If He convicts us of something that we are doing wrong, we should stop that practice immediately. In order for us to walk with God and know His will, we must not only read and understand His will, we must apply it to our lives everyday (Psalm 119:105, James 1:22).

### ***-Utilizing the Spirit***

-At this point, some of the new believers may be thinking that this is going to be very hard. How are they supposed to know when God is speaking to them? How are they to know exactly what God wants them to do, or what He is showing them not to do? The greatness of God's plan is that He did not leave us alone! He sent us the Holy Spirit which comes into our hearts at the moment of our acceptance of Jesus Christ, and God promises that the Spirit will guide us on this journey. The Spirit will convict when we are wrong, encourage when we are right, and guide when we are lost. So we must be encouraged, God has sent us a helper (Romans 8:26-27)!

### ***-Reading plan and Journaling***

-If reading and studying the Bible is a new practice for you in your life, here are two basic words of instruction that may help you through the process. It is a good idea for you to find a Bible reading plan which will lead you to read through the entire Bible in the time span of a year, these types of plans are available readily online or in local Christian bookstores. If a reading plan is not available to you, then begin reading one of the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), or read the book of James. Perhaps just start by reading one chapter a day. The gospels will lead you through the stories of Jesus' ministry and healings on the earth, and the book of James will show you how to live as a disciple of Christ with perseverance and patience. As you begin to read through God's Words, write down those passages or thoughts which speak to you from His Holy book, and then look back over those notes at the end of your time of reading and reflect on what they mean for you and how you can apply them to your life.

### **Questions/Comments**

## Christian Insights

*The purpose of this section of the training is for the leader to show the new believers some of the basic principles in which they will learn as they begin to study their Bible which will drastically change the way they live. These are practical insights into the life of a disciple, and some events or occurrences in which they need to be prepared for if they are going to persevere.*

### **1. The Old is Gone**

-2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

-Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

-As believers in a Risen Savior, we are no longer the persons that we once were. We have been made into a new creation, which means that we no longer serve the world or ourselves, we serve God alone. For we have died to our old ways and our old practices, and now we live for God’s ways and God’s plans. Yet as we strive to live as a new being in Christ, though we have changed, the world has not, and it is full of evil, deception, and temptation. Therefore, we must be prepared for what is to come!

### **2. Temptation is Coming**

-Ephesians 6:10-18 – “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

-Being a disciple of Christ means that you are entering into a battlefield where good and evil are constantly at war with one another. This battle is not fought with weapons of mass destruction or physical armor, for this battle is spiritual. It is a battle that is fought with spiritual weapons and protection as you fight the forces of evil and battle the urges of the flesh. Satan is the great enemy upon this earth and has servants who are willing to do anything to get you to fall away from God by choosing sin over righteousness; therefore, you must be prepared by putting on the armor of God. The reason that this is so important, is because if you choose to live in sin or lose the battle and give in to the temptations of the flesh, then your actions show that you are not truly a disciple of Christ.

-Romans 8:5-9 – “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

-As new believers you must set your mind on the things of God and the ways of righteousness so that you do not fall into temptation.

### ***3. Repentance is necessary***

-Romans 3:23 – “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

-There will be times when all lose the battle and fall short of the glory of God. When this happens in our spiritual walk, we must immediately repent and turn from our sins and seek God’s forgiveness.

-1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

-To repent means to turn away from with no desire or plan to ever return. By God’s great plan, when we do stumble and fall the Spirit of God convicts our hearts so that we are fully aware of our mistake. This sin in our life separates us from God because He is Holy and perfect and we cannot have intimacy with God if we have sin in our life. Therefore, we must confess and seek forgiveness so that we can restore communion with God (Psalm 24:3-4).

### **Questions/Comments**

## **Involvement with the Body**

*Though participation and involvement in church functions and missions was mentioned in a previous portion of this training material, it is imperative for new believers to understand exactly why they need to be actively involved and in intimate relationships with other believers. This section will cover three main reasons why it is vital for new members to be an active part of a body of believers.*

-One of the lies that this world has often tried to spread and promote is that when it comes to life, we don't really need anyone, and we should always take care of ourselves first. In the life of a Christian, the Bible is very clear that we are not to embrace this journey on our own, because if we do we are not going to make it. Therefore, there are at least three very important reasons why we all need each other as we seek to follow Christ in a world filled with sin, evil, and selfishness.

### **1. Unity**

-1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don't need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don't need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

-As a new believer, you must understand that you are now a part of the body of Christ, which is designed to expand the kingdom of God and fulfill His will. As a part of that body, you have special gifts and abilities which are designed to be



used as a part of a whole. In the same way that a hand or a foot can do certain things that an eye or a rib may not be able to do, each of the parts of the body need each other to fulfill God's will on this earth. If you are not doing your part, then the body will suffer as a whole, and if the body is not working together, then the members are not unifying in the way that God expects. Therefore, you must seek God's face and find your part of the body in which you are to serve and the gifts that you are to use for His kingdom, and then get involved with other believers and make a difference for the kingdom that you could never make if you were alone.

## **2. Fellowship**

-Hebrews 10:25 – “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

-As a part of this journey of faith, we are going to experience some very hard times when we simply do not want to go on or continue being a disciple of Christ because it can be so painful and demanding. It is during those times that we need fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who we can go to, share our problems and hurts, and then find encouragement in the fact that they too are experiencing the same types of spiritual and physical calamities in their lives as well. We are not designed or created to walk this path of righteousness alone, and that is why God says that we are to be unified as one body, so that when we are hurting the other parts can care for us and can help us to heal so that we may regain our strength and become a useful part of the body again. Yet, if we neglect becoming an active part of the body of Christ, the fellowship of believers, then when those hard times come into our lives we may find that we have no one who understands or no one to turn to in order to find encouragement. Therefore, we must regularly meet with other disciples of Christ so that we can continue to persevere until the day the Lord returns.

## **3. Accountability**

-Hebrews 10:24 – “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

-Proverbs 27:17 – “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

-When we are children, if we do something that we are not supposed to do, our parents, guardians, or teachers often punish us so that we learn to be accountable for our actions. In the workplace, if we are late to work or begin performing lazily, then we will be reprimanded for our behavior. In life, if we participate in illegal activities, the representatives for law enforcement will hold us accountable for our actions or for our lack of obedience to the law and they will place us under

arrest. In our Christian walk, we often do not have people in places of authority who will hold us accountable, even though that is exactly what we need. There are many requirements that God has laid out for us as believers and followers of Christ in which we are expected to follow. While we are on this earth God's Spirit holds us accountable through conviction and encouragement, but we also need each other to make sure that our decisions and behaviors are in line with the truth of God's Word. Therefore, we place ourselves in intimate and accountable relationships with other believers who are striving to do God's will on this earth so that they can lovingly remind us when we begin to stray, and so that we too can help them see whether or not their life is bringing glory to God (James 5:19-20).

### **Questions/Comments**

## *P*actical Applications

*The new believers in your group must be shown that their new life in Christ is not something that will simply change their schedule on Sundays or Wednesday nights, it is a life altering decision that will change everything about their priorities, practices, and the power by which they have the strength to continue on the journey. During this section of the training, truly focus on giving the disciple the tools and information in which they need to apply what they have learned to their everyday life which is no longer lived for themselves or for the world, but for God and the kingdom!*

### 1. Priorities of Life

-There was an expert of the law who questioned Jesus one day and asked Him what the greatest commandment was that God had given to man. Jesus' answer is found in the book of Matthew.

-Matthew 22:37-38 – “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

-In this verse, Jesus tells us what the priorities of our lives are supposed to be. No longer do we live to make money or to succeed in the world. We are called to have two goals in our life; to love God more than all things, and to love one another. As you seek to find God's will for your life, know that there are very few things that do not change in this world, but one of those is God's will for your life. He has always and will always desire for you to love Him more than you love anything else, and to prove that you love Him by loving others in the world. This can't be just any kind of love, it must be the greatest love.

-Luke 14:26-27 - “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”

We need to be very clear here on what Jesus is saying. Surely He does not desire for us to hate our family or ourselves, because hate is not a characteristic of God. Jesus is showing us here that if we truly want to love Him with our life, then we must love Him so desperately and compassionately that when we compare our love for God to our love for our parents, family, or even ourselves, it would seem that our worldly love is so much less, it should be compared to hate. We are not simply to love God on Sundays or only when we are in the church. We must love Him with every ounce of our being and every moment of every day. We accomplish this by placing His will above our own, fulfilling His plan instead of

following the ways of man, obeying His commands, and showering Him with praise and adoration as we allow His great love to flow through us and out into a lost and dying world.

## **2. Practices that promote perseverance**

-Too often in our lives we begin to understand what we are supposed to do. We just simply do not know how to do it. This is often true for the believer; we may know what God expects of us, that He wants us to live for Him first and foremost, but we simply don't know how to accomplish that in our lives. We have to find the answer to the question, "How do we love God and others in everyday life?"

### **-Obedience**

-John 14:23-24 – "Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.'"

-1 John 2:3-6 – "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."

-If you truly want to show God how much you love Him, then dig deep into His Word, learn, listen and follow His commands. This is what we saw in the life of Christ; a life of total submission to the will of the Father. Our goal as believers should also be to obey the will of God in every aspect of our lives: home, church, family, work, free time, etc.

### **-Forgiveness**

-As we saw in an earlier section, in order for our relationship with God to remain pure and intimate, we must turn away from sin and seek forgiveness from God so that our communication with Him is restored. Now we see that there is a direct relationship with our willingness to forgive others, and God's willingness to forgive us. In the same way that by showing others love and kindness because we have been shown love and kindness by God, we too must show forgiveness to others because we have been shown forgiveness by God.

-Matthew 6:14-15 – “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

-Mark 11:25 – “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

-There are some people on this earth who are easy to forgive, because their actions towards you were misdirected or accidental. There are other persons whom you would consider to be evil to the core and you might feel as though they don't desire your forgiveness. God says that to live as a disciple of Christ, we must forgive everyone an unlimited amount of times, and remember the example of the Savior, who forgave the people and the soldiers who beat Him, tortured Him, and put Him to death on a cross.

### ***-Bearing Fruit***

-Another aspect of serving God in our everyday life is to understand that as a part of God's great plan we are to be busy working for His kingdom and bearing fruit. The term bearing fruit comes from the image that God is the vine and we are the branches, and as long as we remain attached to Him through prayer and an intimate relationship, then we will bear fruit.

-John 15:5-8 – “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

-Galatians 5:22-23 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

-When we begin to put God first in our lives, then we will start to see the effects of the Holy Spirit working in us and through us. We will start to experience the fruits of the Spirit as described above, and we will feel a sense of love and encouragement that we have never felt before as we begin to live as a reflection of Christ.

## ***-Spiritual Maturity***

-When we first become Christians, we are a new creation, just like a baby is a new creation. As babies in Christ, we often don't know what to do, how to act, or how to live for God. Through the advice and guidance of others who are grounded in their walk with God, and through intimacy with the Father through prayer, obedience, and Bible study, we will begin to grow in our faith. Our level of trust with dependence upon God will grow dramatically. The goal of the Christian life is to imitate the Savior, which means that we will reach a point of maturity in our faith. Therefore, we must strive to no longer be babies in Christ, but mature believers who can stand strong.

-Ephesians 4:11-15 – “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

-Hebrews 5:11-14 – “We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

-In the same way that babies need milk to survive and to grow, we as babies in Christ need to crave the pure spiritual milk (1 Peter 2:2), but it is not God's plan for us to stay in this infant state. As we begin to obtain and understand the basics of our faith and then step out to trust in the will of God we are called to progress to the more solid foods, in the same way that a child must progress to solid foods. This process will lead us deeper into our relationship with God as we serve Him in everyday life learning to trust Him and depend on Him even when we are confused and do not understand.

### **3. Power that endures and outlasts**

-As we begin to experience trials and temptations in our lives, there will be times that this journey seems as though it is too much to bear, and we simply cannot continue by our own strength. You need to understand today that there is nothing wrong with those feelings, because they are absolutely right! We cannot fight this battle on our own. We will never survive if we depend on our own strength. That is why we must realize that in all that we do, say, act, and live in this world, we must rely on the power of God and not our own strength.

-2 Chronicles 20:15 – “This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s.’”

-Colossians 1:10-12 – “And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.”

1 Peter 4:10-11 – “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

-To make a change in the way that we live, we must understand that we are called to put God first in our lives and love Him by doing His will and loving others. There will be times that life is very hard. God never promises us that the journey will be easy, but He does promise that He will be there for us all along the way (Hebrews 13:5)! What we must remember is that we have the power of God with us. His presence surrounds us and the troubles that we endure upon this earth are pale in comparison with what God has in store for us if we remain faithful to Him.

-Romans 8:18 – “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

-2 Corinthians 4:17 – “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

### **Questions/Comments**

## *Learning to Share Your Testimony*

*The importance of showing the new believer how to share their testimony is absolutely vital to the discipleship process. It gives them a tool that they may use to fulfill their call to make disciples amongst the earth. Do your best not to make sharing your testimony a difficult or challenging process. Present this information in such a way that the new believer will understand that because of what has happened in their hearts they truly have no other option than to tell the whole world! There are three steps to sharing one's testimony that are shared in this section of the training. If your church has a specific witnessing technique or method in which they use, this would be an excellent time to train your new members how to be effective evangelists by teaching them those methods as well as how to share their testimony with others.*

-When Jesus was speaking to the crowd that had gathered around Him, he began to share with them that as followers of Christ they were called to make a difference in the world. He told them that they were to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. This means that they were to stand out in such a way that people would ask them what was so different about them, and then when people begin to inquire, new believers are called to tell them that the reason they are not like the world is because they have met the Savior.

-Matthew 5:14-16 – “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

-Jesus tells us that our light, which comes from the saving knowledge of His death, burial, and resurrection, is not to be put under a bowl. This means that we are not to keep the great change that has happened in our lives a secret from the world; instead we are to share it with everyone so that they too can know about eternal salvation through Christ the Lord. Not only is this our privilege, it is also our duty.

-Matthew 28: 18-20 – “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.’”

-Before Jesus left the earth and went back to heaven to be with the Father, He gave us this charge and command; to go and make disciples of all nations, leading them into a relationship with God by telling them about His sacrifice on the cross and changes that have occurred in us since we made Him the Lord of our lives.



Therefore, you must be willing to step out in faith and tell others about this great love, and you must allow the light of God's gospel to shine through you into a dark and lost world pointing them to the cross of Calvary. There are three easy steps that will help you share your testimony with another person.

### ***1. Before I met God***

-When sharing your testimony with others, you will want to describe to them how your life was before you met God. Many people say that they felt lost, hopeless, lonely, angry, incomplete, sinful, unrighteous, etc. You may have had some of these feelings, or you may have not felt any of those feelings. This is a time for you just to inform the person of who you were before God came into your life and caused a great change. You could talk about your past priorities, practices, powers, motivations, and life-style.

### ***2. How I met God***

-Once you have given the person that you are sharing your testimony with some background into your life, and how it was before choosing to follow Christ, you are now ready to tell them how you met the Savior: where you were, how it happened, who was involved, what you were feeling, what you did, what you said, why you felt that it was the right decision to make. This does not have to be a testimony of complicated words, just tell them the truth.

### ***3. Since I met God***

-Now this is when the testifying process really gets good! You now get to tell them what you have experienced since accepting Christ as Lord and Savior. This will include new feelings, desires, priorities, spiritual gifts, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, God's presence in your heart, fruits of the Spirit, completeness and wholeness, and all the other great things that have occurred since you surrendered to God, confessed your sins, and accepted His Lordship over your life.

-The power in sharing your testimony with others, is that if you are truly saved by God, then you are no longer going to be the person that you once were. People in your life are going to notice a change, and when they ask what is different about you, you need to tell them! Tell them about God's grace and love! Tell them about His forgiveness and joy! Tell them about how your life has changed since you started to serve God fully! This is how we fulfill Christ's Great Commission; by telling others about the gospel of Christ! There is no limit as to who you should share your salvation with. Start with your family and friends, neighbors and co-workers, and do not stop until every person in the world knows who God is and what He has done so that man could be freed from their spiritual chains!

### **Questions/Comments**

## **Encourage Follow Up**

*Training new believers is an honor and a responsibility of Christians and of churches. It is not enough to simply show them and tell them what is expected of them as church members and as followers of Christ. We also have a responsibility to give them that extra encouragement and accountability as they begin this journey. Too often we fail in this part of the discipleship process by handing new believers a packet of information and then allowing them to figure out the rest of the process of becoming like Christ on their own. In order to help them stay on the right path, you must encourage them to find several sources of accountability in their new walk with the Savior.*

-In one of our earlier sessions, we talked about the power and the importance of accountability in the life of a follower of Christ. I want you to know today as you leave this place, you are going to be going back into a world that does not want you to be a successful Christian. A world that will persecute you and tempt you and try to do anything that it can to get you to fall away from Christ. If you are going to persevere, you must find mature believers in the faith who can walk alongside you on this journey and help you to stay encouraged and accountable. Today I am going to provide you with some tools to help you start this process.

### **1. Contact Information**

*-Hopefully throughout this process you have built some relationships with the new members that you have been training. Before they leave, provide them with some specific contact information so that they can reach either you or another staff member if they find themselves having questions or concerns about their new found faith in Christ.*

-Here is a list of contact information of individuals who would be willing to answer any questions that you might have about today's session, or any concerns that may arise in your new life as a follower of Christ. Please do not take this journey alone, we are here to help each other along the way!

### **2. Mentors and Encouragers**

*-This will be a list of predetermined and trained mentors who are spiritually mature and faithful followers of Christ who are willing to spend time with new believers in order to help them as they seek to learn more about loving God and loving others.*

-I am also including a list of mentors and encouragers within our church. These are people who have been walking with God for some time now, and one of them will be contacting you shortly to begin establishing a relationship with you in

order to help as you seek to serve and follow God's will for your life. Once again, these are people who care about you and only want to help, please let them!

### ***3. Times and Locations***

-The third list that I am providing you with today is a summary of all of the service and meeting times for our church with the corresponding locations. This list includes all of our worship services, ministry opportunities, Bible studies, and Sunday School classes. If you want to keep your fire burning for God, then you need to immerse yourself into this body of believers by serving God faithfully.

### **Questions/Comments**

#### **Closing Prayer**

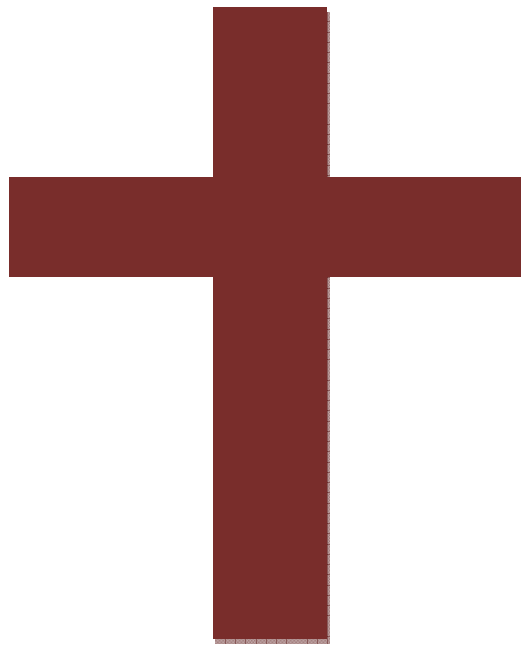
*Lord, today we fall before Your throne of grace and thank You for dying on the cross for our sins, for showing us mercy when we deserved death, and for loving us beyond measure. Today we pray for these new believers and new members of the body of Christ, that You will guide their every step, show them the path, and reveal Yourself to them in a way in which they have never experienced before. Convict our hearts today that we cannot do this on our own, and we desperately need Your intervention, and we need each other. Help us to serve You before we serve the world, to love You more than we love anything else, and to bring glory to Your name. Show us how to live in the reflection of Your Son, in Jesus name we do pray, AMEN.*

## APPENDIX D

### TRAINING MANUAL FOR LEARNER

The following material is a discipleship handout to be given to new members of the church during their training class. This material is broken down into eight sections and should be used along with the Pastor/Instructor guide which is located in Appendix C. This packet should be given to each new member, with a copy of the church's operating manual or covenant attached, as well as a document of complete doctrinal beliefs of the church. These items will be covered somewhat in the training, however a full explanation with scriptural references would be very beneficial to the new believer. As a part of the follow up process as described in session eight of this manual, the church should also provide a list of pastoral or staff contact numbers, a compilation of mentors and encouragers whom may contact them shortly after the completion of the course, and details about the various meeting times, services, and Bible studies held during the week.

In each of the sections there are blanks purposefully placed with the key statements and phrases for the new believer to fill in as they attend the class, and there is also blank space provided on each page so that the new disciple may take notes or write down questions that they would like to ask at the end of the session. May this material guide the learner through the wisdom of the Spirit and the direction of the instructor towards the path that God has created for them to follow.



# **D.I.S.C.I.P.L.E.**

*Learner's Guide*

# *D*octrine of Beliefs

## *1. God*

*-God the \_\_\_\_\_*

*-God the \_\_\_\_\_*

*-God the \_\_\_\_\_*

## *2. The \_\_\_\_\_*

## *3. M \_\_\_\_\_*

## *4. S \_\_\_\_\_*

## *5. The \_\_\_\_\_*

## *6. B \_\_\_\_\_ and the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_*

*Questions/Comments*

## **Inside the Church**

1. H \_\_\_\_\_

2. Purpose and \_\_\_\_\_

3. Operating \_\_\_\_\_

4. L \_\_\_\_\_

5. Expectations of Church \_\_\_\_\_

-I \_\_\_\_\_

-P \_\_\_\_\_

-S \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions/Comments**

## *Scripture and Prayer*

### 1. Quiet \_\_\_\_\_

-T\_\_\_\_\_ with God

-L\_\_\_\_\_ to God

-Giving \_\_\_\_\_ to God

-Developing \_\_\_\_\_ with God

-Planning \_\_\_\_\_ with God

### 2. Bible \_\_\_\_\_

-Reading and \_\_\_\_\_ the Words

-A\_\_\_\_\_ the Words

-Utilizing the \_\_\_\_\_

-Reading \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions/Comments



## *Christian Insights*

### *1. The Old is \_\_\_\_\_*

**-Galatians 2:20** – “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

### *2. Temptation is \_\_\_\_\_*

**-Ephesians 6:12-13** – “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

### *3. Repentance is \_\_\_\_\_*

**-1 John 1:9** – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

### *Questions/Comments*

## *Involvement in the Body*

### 1. U \_\_\_\_\_

**-1 Corinthians 12:24-27** – “But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

### 2. F \_\_\_\_\_

**-Hebrews 10:25** – “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

### 3. A \_\_\_\_\_

**-Hebrews 10:24** – “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

## Questions/Comments

## *P*actical Applications

1. P \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

-Matthew 22:37-39 – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

2. P \_\_\_\_\_ that promote \_\_\_\_\_.

-O \_\_\_\_\_

-F \_\_\_\_\_

-Bearing \_\_\_\_\_

-Spiritual \_\_\_\_\_

3. P \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

-2 Chronicles 20:15 – “This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s.’”

Questions/Comments

## **Learning to Share Your Testimony**

1. B \_\_\_\_\_ I met God

2. H \_\_\_\_\_ I met God

3. S \_\_\_\_\_ I met God

**Questions/Comments**

# **Encourage Follow Up**

## **1. Contact Information**

## **2. Mentors and Encouragers**

## **3. Times and Locations**

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