

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 1 - Developing Champions for Jesus

Allow Jack Selcher to finish a story he began on p. 76 of his book, *Becoming an Enthusiastic Church*. Jack has coached the shot, discus, and javelin throwers at Middletown Area High School since 1999. In the spring of 2006 one of his throwers, Collin Ray, had a very successful season for a freshman. Jack saw great potential and cast a vision for future success thusly, "Collin, this is what I see. You have the potential to be a 3-time state champion in the discus if you work hard at it between seasons." That was an outrageously bold vision because male underclassmen rarely win state throwing championships.

Collin took Jack somewhat seriously and practiced in the off-season. Notice we said somewhat seriously. Well, okay, he wasn't state champion in 2007, and didn't even qualify to go to the State Championship meet. At the district qualifying meet, he had his worst performance of the season because of nerves and wasn't among the top nine finishers after being seeded second. Jack is glad false prophets don't receive the same treatment they did in the Old Testament!

Jack was disappointed...Collin, more so. That's when he really got serious about becoming a champion. He didn't give up, and Jack didn't give up on him. They met regularly over the summer, fall and winter for practice sessions. The last practice session before the season started in March, Jack told him, "If you throw at the State Championships the way you threw today, you could win it all." He did. In May he became a Pennsylvania state discus champion despite throwing with an injured back. The difference between 2007 and 2008 was confidence, increased strength, better technique, and most importantly, a big vision and a mountain of encouragement from his coaches without which he wouldn't have put in the necessary work.

We say "coaches" because Colin began to get additional help in the spring of 2008 from a very accomplished coach whom he saw weekly. Jack recommended that coach to him. Colin went on to become a state champion in both the shot put and the discus in 2009. He won the three state gold medals Jack predicted, but not the way he predicted. Jack didn't foresee a gold medal in the shot put. That other coach was responsible for that. That other coach was also the editor of the only magazine for throwers in the United States. He told the story of Colin's 2009 state championship weekend in his magazine.

Disciple-making is about building champions for Jesus in every walk of life, about transformation, not just information. It includes vision and encouragement. Champion athletes excel because someone convinced them they could. They've mastered the fundamentals of their sport. Champions for Jesus excel because someone convinced them they could, and they've mastered the fundamentals of the faith.

**Why do you think seeing in others what they can't yet see in themselves and encouragement are vital in making disciples?**

**Why is giving others permission to fail an important part of the discipleship process?**

**How is mastering the fundamentals of the faith connected to the fact that disciple-making is about transformation, not just information?**

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### Lesson 2 - What Is a Disciple?

Let's define a Christian disciple. In *The Message* Eugene Peterson translates Luke 14:25-27, "One day when large groups of people were walking along with him, Jesus turned and told them, "Anyone who comes to me but refuses to let go of father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters—yes, even one's own self!—can't be my disciple. Anyone who won't shoulder his own cross and follow behind me can't be my disciple." The disciple's love for Jesus must surpass every other love, including love for self. There can be no "Mom first!" or "Junior first!" or "Me first!" Disciples have only one Master. His directives take priority over all other relationship responsibilities. Jack Selcher is a son, father, husband, grandfather, brother, uncle, great-uncle, friend, neighbor, citizen, teacher, coach, secretary, pastor, commission member and DISCIPLE.

Following Jesus means denying our right to make our own independent decisions without consulting anyone. We are not free to do what we want when we want. Our plans are always tentative. His values and priorities supersede ours. His hands turn the steering wheel of our life. Jesus demands extreme personal sacrifice because disciples can't imitate His ways without giving up their own. For a while Jack's father taught others how to work on aircraft engines. After being instructed, one man who had previously worked on auto engines said, "That's not how I do it." His father's response was, "Not here."

Jesus' life on earth was a living demonstration of extreme personal sacrifice. He isn't asking us to do what He hasn't already done. He is the mold, we are the clay. The goal is to take on His "shape." When Jack was pastor at the Broad Top Church of God, one of the children told someone that he didn't see the Lord that day. He was referring to Jack! No one else has ever confused him with Jesus, but it would be great if that happened more often to all of us, wouldn't it?

Our love for Jesus can be measured by our obedient sacrifices for Him (John 14:21). Following Him means doing what He says. Galatians 5:6 says that the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. A Christian disciple is one who follows and imitates Jesus and expresses his/her faith through loving words and actions. Love has a four-fold focus – God, neighbor (Matt. 22:37-39); other believers (John 13:34-35), and enemies (Matt 5:44). Love requires extreme personal sacrifice. Jack's bathroom sink was backing up. The pipes were obstructed with hair and gunk that blocked the flow of water. An internet search revealed many suggestions for clearing the clog, but he didn't do the search until AFTER he used harsh chemicals. Those chemicals are not as environmentally friendly as other methods, but they illustrate a point. Self obstructs the flow of God's love through us to others. God's methods for removing self can be very harsh and painful at the moment, but they prepare us for ministry to others as nothing else could.

**How would you define a disciple in your own words?**

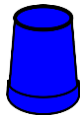
**Our task is to make disciples, not nice people. What's the difference?**

**How have harsh circumstances increased your ability to love others?**

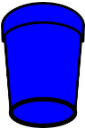
## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 3 – Lost Sheep Renovation Project

Let us illustrate God's lost sheep renovation project. Imagine the cup at left represents our life. It's inverted because we live with morally and spiritually upside down values. Instead of loving God and putting Him first, we think of ourselves first, last and always. We go our own way and do our own thing and live as if God doesn't exist. The orientation of the rim of the cup represents our downward focus on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Life is all about us. We're living in darkness and yet are fully convinced we can see. Our understanding of spiritual realities, be it great or non-existent, makes no difference in the way we live. Even if God tried to rain down his blessings on us, we are in no position to receive them.



God's work on our heart results in our coming to our senses (Luke 15:17) and deciding to flip our cup. It often occurs in an environment of desperation coupled with divine insight into where help can be found. We can't repent without God's enabling grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). We decide to go God's way instead of our own. Our first, last and always downward/inward focus slowly but progressively becomes upward and outward. Repentance is the necessary first step to be in a position to receive God's blessings and to bear spiritual fruit (Matthew 3:8, John 15:8). The process of conforming to the image of Jesus begins (Romans 8:29).



We become more like Jesus by thinking more like He does. We see the world with new eyes and love it with a new heart. God's renovation project continues as we fill our cup with His Son (Colossians 2:9-10), His word (Colossians 3:16), His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), faith (Acts 6:5) and fellowship (Hebrews 10:24-25). We begin to serve others and share with others what God is pouring into our lives. God's renovation project involves both a filling up and a pouring out process. Trials, disappointments, losses and heartaches shape us. Often we love best when God's love pours out of our own wounds as illustrated by water flowing from the holes of a punctured cup. We are cracked pots, wounded healers and limping lovers.

The purpose of God's renovation project is to equip us to love sacrificially (Matthew 20:28), bring good news (Luke 4:18-19), be good news (John 10:10) and explain His ways to others. God created us to serve Him, our neighbor, other believers and our enemies (Matthew 22:37-39; John 13:34-35), Matthew 5:44).

**What do you think is our part in God's lost sheep renovation project? God's part?**

**How do we provide an atmosphere in our church where love can flourish and where cup flipping, filling and outpouring regularly occur?**

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### Lesson 4 – Why Going to Church Isn't Enough

A Gallup Poll in 2006 asked more than 900 persons why they went to church. The reasons given were as follows: For spiritual growth, 23%; keeps me grounded/inspired – 20%; it's my faith, 15%; to worship God, 15%; the fellowship of other members/the community, 13%; believe in God/believe in religion, 12%; brought up that way/a family value/tradition, 12%. <sup>1</sup> Only 15% didn't give a self-centered reason (to worship God). Perhaps that's why sociologists assume non-spiritual reasons explain spiritual behavior. They suggest attending church helps meet social needs such as socializing with others, developing business contacts, making friends, and trying to project an image in the community. <sup>2</sup>

Attending church does provide social and personal benefits, but that's not the goal. The bigger reality is that God calls believers to BE the church, not just GO to church. Many who GO to church see their "boss" every day in the mirror and like his face and ways! BEING the church, on the other hand, requires submitting to God's ways. It calls for self-sacrifice, not self-indulgence, so the whole church can become mature and together reflect Jesus Christ. Every believer has something to give to make the whole church better and stronger. "Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!" (1 Peter 4:10-11, *The Message*).

The church is Christ's body on earth. Through it He draws people, teaches them His ways and deploys them in service to others. It is His instrument to continue the four purposes for which He came to earth -- to love sacrificially (Matthew 20:28), to bring good news (Luke 4:18-19), to be good news by demonstrating a better way of life (John 10:10) and to explain God's ways to others (Luke 4:43). That's the disciple's job description. It's what it means to BE the church after those who GO to church go home. The disciple's home IS the church. Through it ultimate purpose is discovered.

Making disciples is Jesus' idea: "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" (Matthew 28:18-20). We obey Jesus' commands because we love Him (John 14:21). He promises His authority and presence as we seek to multiply followers in His likeness.

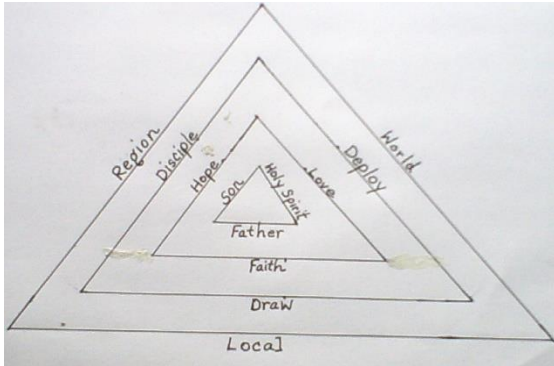
Too many of us are GOING to church while following our own will and ways. Becoming devoted to Jesus' four purposes and making disciples is a process. Sometimes breakthroughs occur only after God uses adverse circumstances to bring significant physical, emotional or psychological pain. We hurt. God's got our attention. We change our attitude. We grow. "Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want" (1 Peter 4:1-2, *The Message*). Our will is a wonderful servant but a terrible master.

#### Why isn't GOING to church enough?

1. (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/27124/just-why-americans-attend-church.aspx>)
2. Ibid.

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### Lesson 5 – 3-D Discipleship



Three is the discipleship number. Discipleship originates from the incomprehensible 3-D Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father sent the Son to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). The Son sent His followers (John 20:21), commissioned them to make disciples world-wide and promised His presence during the process (Matthew 28:18-20). The Holy Spirit provides the resources to complete the job (Acts 1:8). The goal is to make people all over the world like Jesus (Romans 8:29). Jesus Himself is like the Father (John 14:9) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). It's no surprise the fruit of the Spirit consists of Jesus-

like characteristics (Galatians 5:22-23). Discipleship starts with God. It shapes us to be like Jesus while retaining our uniqueness.

All Tiffany jewelry is stamped with the Tiffany and Co. mark. Every disciple is stamped with the 3-D faith, hope and love mark (1 Corinthians 13:13) that identifies authentic followers of Jesus. Disciples trust God. That's faith. They confidently expect He will do everything He promises. That's hope. They sacrifice their time, talents, money and energy for Him and others. That's love. Faith and hope are temporary, but love will continue forever. These three fuel the discipleship journey like liquid hydrogen powers the American space program.

The goals of discipleship are 3-D—to draw people to Jesus, disciple them and deploy them in ministry. Jesus multiplied workers for the discipleship task, and so should we. The best way to draw people to Jesus is to love them sacrificially in ways that meet their needs. Once they come to faith, the next step is telling and showing them how to live like Jesus did. We copy Jesus. They copy what's like Jesus in us. Eventually they become independently dependent on Jesus, and others can copy what's like Jesus in them.

Discipleship's field of operation is 3-D—local, region and world. That's the pattern in the Great Commission—beginning in Jerusalem (local), on to Judea and Samaria (region) and then to the ends of the world (Matthew 28:18-20). Discipleship starts in our own family and community. Howard Hendricks said that if Christianity doesn't work at home, don't export it. Our communities need to hear the good news and see us and our church live it. Salespeople who don't love their product don't make many sales. Our product is a life-changing relationship with the Lord of the universe. That's something about which we can get excited.

Discipleship is 3-D. It starts with the Triune God. It's His idea. It transforms self-indulgent people into self-sacrificing world-changers. The divine fuel of faith, hope and love power it. It reproduces disciples by drawing people to Jesus, shaping them to be like Him, and sending them out to serve others and reproduce the whole process. The process starts at home and in the community where our church ministers, ripples out to our region (county, state, regional conference) to the whole nation and wherever human beings live.

**How does "3-D discipleship" help you understand the big picture of God's calling on your life?**

**To be a 3-D disciple, what do you and your church need to do differently?**

**What's your plan to do it?**

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### Lesson 6 – Developing a Disciple-Making Plan

Attending worship services, Sunday school classes and prayer meetings isn't an escalator to spiritual maturity. The Great Commission is to teach them *to obey* everything Jesus commanded. (Matthew 28:19). Knowing the truth sets free only those who practice it (John 8:31-32). Physical and spiritual fitness require personal involvement. Christ-likeness is the measure of spiritual maturity. A disciple-making plan encourages obedient activity and accountability.

A disciple-making system is the engine of disciple-making success. In the mid-1960s Middletown Area High School won more than 50 consecutive league boys' basketball games. Their system included pressure defense. The system was more important to success than the individual players were. Companies like UPS have developed systems that make them successful. If your church develops an integrated disciple-making system, many resources can help you achieve your objective. You need spiritually mature leaders to administer it, and a system to develop spiritually mature leaders! The system helps people move toward spiritual maturity one step at a time, balancing theory and practice.

Struggling churches sometimes think replacing their pastor will fix their problems when the underlying issue is the need for an effective disciple-making system. Without such a system a new pastor might attract more people by force of personality, but the church will be no more effective in carrying out the Great Commission than it was under the previous pastor. The goal is to have an unbroken, well-marked, paved path that disciples can easily follow. You can explain this path from the pulpit, in newsletters, in a new members' class or some other venue. It must be communicated often and well. Following this plan must become the expected norm in the church.

The disciple-making task includes pre-evangelism, evangelism, assimilation, spiritual growth, ministry mobilization, leadership development and leadership mobilization strategies.

Meeting needs is the most effective pre-evangelism strategy worldwide. It builds bridges those outside the church can trust. If people don't trust the messenger, they won't trust the message. Identify community needs you can meet.

Decide what evangelism ministries your church will use and organize and evaluate them to maximize their effectiveness. Set free from other ministries those in your church with the gift of evangelism so they can focus on using their gift.

Assimilation includes following up and praying for visitors and new believers, assigning a spiritual parent for a year, enfolding people into small groups, and plugging as many as possible into appropriate ministry. To follow up new believers go to [www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org), click Discipleship Tools #1, download Follow-up Material.

Spiritual growth includes information and transformation. Consider using *Running Together to Win*. Go to [www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org), click Discipleship Tools #1, download *Running Together to Win*.

Plug persons into ministries based on their spiritual passion, spiritual gifts, temperament, and life experiences. Develop brief job descriptions for all your ministries to facilitate ministry placement. Email [johnselcher@gmail.com](mailto:johnselcher@gmail.com) for how to.

To train and mobilize leaders balance mentoring, lecturing and modeling to address character, knowledge and skills, respectively. Consider using *Learning to Lead*. Go to [www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org), click Discipleship Tools #2, download *Learning to Lead*. Mobilize leaders following the same process as ministry mobilization.

**What components of a disciple-making plan is your church missing? How can you fill the gaps?**

# Disciple-Making 101

## Lesson 7 - Interdependence and 3-D Discipleship

Excelling at throwing the shot, discus, javelin and hammer requires all the parts of the body to work together. Explosive strength, coordination and proper technique all play important roles. One can't predict whether an athlete will be a good thrower from outward appearance. Exceptional size isn't necessary to excel in the throwing events. A strong, quick, coordinated female can throw farther than a male who isn't explosive or coordinated and outweighs her by 100 pounds. The world record holder in the men's javelin throw during his prime was slightly over six feet tall and weighed about 180 pounds.

Being an effective 3-D church requires all parts of the church to work together.

How can your church maximize 3-D discipleship? Fertile fields, abundant sunshine and sufficient moisture produce an abundant harvest of corn. If any one of these three is insufficient, corn production will suffer. Churches that produce multiplying disciples typically have healthy interdependent systems with no key part of church life seriously ill.

Christian Schwarz identified and verified statistically eight characteristics found in healthy, growing churches worldwide. They include *holistic* small groups, *empowering* leadership, *loving* relationships, *passionate* spirituality, *inspiring* worship services, *need-oriented* evangelism, *gift-oriented* ministry and *effective* organization. The adjective is more important than the noun. All eight affect your ability to make more and better followers of Jesus.

Let's define these eight interdependent characteristics. *Holistic* small groups minister to the needs of the whole person. Those in the group do life together. *Empowering* leadership means leaders equip those in the pews to be all God created them to be. *Loving* relationships are transparent, self-sacrificing and confrontational when necessary. *Passionate* spirituality is pedal to the metal, all out, white-hot, caring faith. In *Inspiring* worship services people consistently meet God in a life-transforming way. *Need-oriented* evangelism builds bridges of trust with unbelievers by meeting their needs and healing their hurts. *Gift-oriented* ministry means the congregation serves God based on spiritual giftedness. *Effective* structures mean a church is well organized to make more and better followers of Jesus.

**How would participation in a holistic small group help a disciple develop?**

**How would an empowering leader benefit one's spiritual development?**

**How would consistently experiencing the love of other believers prepare a disciple for works of service?**

**How would a disciple's development benefit from exposure to leaders and other believers who are passionately committed to Jesus?**

**How would participating in consistently inspiring worship services aid the development of a disciple?**

**How would a church that meets the needs outside its walls foster the growth of a disciple?**

**How would knowing and using his/her spiritual gifts in ministry help a disciple?**

**How would a church organized to make disciples enhance a disciple's maturity?**

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### Lesson 8 – Limiting Factors and 3-D Discipleship

What factor more than any other is limiting your church from drawing people to Jesus, discipling them and deploying them in ministry? Identifying it is important.

Doctors and dentists treat what is limiting good health. When I had back problems, my therapist suggested strengthening and flexibility exercises to treat the underlying issues. Dentists drill and fill decayed teeth and treat gum disease before teeth go AWOL. If persons are anemic, doctors try to find out why and then treat the underlying issue. The church, like the body, is a living system in which some parts work better than others. The heart might be working well, but the colon has a malignant tumor. Ten years from now the heart won't work at all if something isn't done about the tumor soon. Body parts are interdependent with strengths and weaknesses. The same is true of churches.

We serve best as a church and as individuals based on our gifts, passions and strengths. We grow in our love for God and others best as a church and as individuals when we strengthen our limiting factors or weaknesses.

Some parts of church life more than others, diminish our ability to draw people to Jesus, disciple them and deploy them in ministry. Following are the average results of more than 30 Natural Church Development surveys of churches in the ERC with the eight quality characteristics listed from strongest to weakest: holistic small groups, 45.9; need-oriented evangelism, 43.9; empowering leadership, 43.7; inspiring worship service, 41.3; passionate spirituality, 40.3; gift-oriented ministry, 39.4; loving relationships, 37.7 and functional structures, 37.3. These quality characteristics are defined in **Lesson 7 - Interdependence and 3-D Discipleship**. The average score for churches in the United States that took the same survey is 50 for all eight factors. All eight of our average scores are lower than the national average. Some churches in the ERC scored above 50, whereas others scored considerably lower than 50 in all eight areas. It is important to see ourselves as we are. Our goal isn't to be the best (that's pride), but to be healthier than we are now. To understand how your church can be healthier, see my book, *Becoming an Enthusiastic Church* (<https://www.tatepublishing.com/bookstore/search.php?search=Becoming+an+Enthusiastic+Church>).

Notice where ERC churches are usually most deficient. We aren't *organized* to draw people to Jesus, disciple them and deploy them in ministry. That isn't true for all ERC churches, but it is the overall trend. We're typically organized to maintain past church programs without evaluating their effectiveness. Focus your ministries on transforming people to become more like Jesus rather than informing or entertaining them. Growth in spiritual knowledge without changed behavior is just playing church.

Our second most common limiting factor is that our relationships are not as loving as they need to be. For most congregations that statement seems inaccurate. We think we're loving churches now when we're often not. It hurts our self concept more to hear that we're not loving than to hear we're not organized! Note the definition of loving relationships in lesson 7: *Loving* relationships are transparent, self-sacrificing and confrontational when necessary. The pattern I have seen repeatedly in our churches is that we're friendly with each other during services, but our lives aren't connected between services. We see one another on a once or twice a week schedule. Our relationships are often not close enough to trust each other to share what is really hurting us. We don't speak the truth in love but try to avoid conflict and quickly sweep controversial issues under the rug to maintain "peace." That's not what love does.

**How is your church organized to make more and better disciples? How can you become a more loving church?**



## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 9 – God’s Shaping Tools (Prayer)

The Pope visited Michelangelo, watched him sculpting his statue of David and asked how he knew what to cut away. The artist said, “I simply chip away anything that doesn’t look like David.” When God shapes us, the process can get a little ouchy! He molds us through prayer, Bible study, fellowship and circumstances. This lesson focuses on prayer.

Prayer demonstrates trust in and dependence on God. Gimme-focused prayers are the kindergarten of prayer school. Most of us start there. Asking God for things is good (Philippians 4:6), but wise requests are best. Do our culture’s values or God’s values drive our requests? Wisdom for God-pleasing requests is available for the asking (James 1:5).

Effective prayers are based on God’s words to us. Knowing God’s words helps us see the world from His point of view. The Bible tells us what God likes and doesn’t like. The better we know His words, the better we can ask for what pleases Him. When I turned 16, I didn’t ask my dad for a Corvette. He considers cars a practical way to get from point A to point B. Period. He wouldn’t buy a Corvette for himself and definitely wouldn’t buy one for me either. By knowing his values, I know what requests to make. We learn wisdom by hearing “no” when we ask for things. God says “no” to protect us from foolish whims. I’ve asked for things I’m now glad I didn’t get. How about you?

Prayer is two-way communication that deepens our relationship with God. We talk to Him, and He talks to us through persistent impressions consistent with His word and character. The goal of prayer is to become more like Jesus. Balanced **PRAYER** includes **Praise, Rely, Admit, Yield, Express thanks and Request.**

Praise is exalting God for who He is and what He’s done, e.g. for His grace (Ephesians 1:6). Praise is a pleasing sacrifice to God from those He has rescued (Hebrews 13:15). In heaven God’s servants shout Hallelujah (Revelation 19:6).

The Greek word translated “faith” means trust or reliance. It includes dependence on Jesus, His teachings and finished work on the cross. It is a commitment to believe God, no matter what. Such reliance is needed to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Reliance on God should permeate every part of our prayer, like water filling a sponge. Jesus told the centurion he’d receive what he believed (Matthew 8:13).

Prayer includes agreeing with God that specific things are wrong with our lives. Years ago I admitted I wasn’t flossing my teeth daily to my brother who is my dentist. That admission was the springboard for change. When we offend God, we need to confess it (Leviticus 5:5). When we offend another person, we need to confess it and make it up to the one we’ve offended (Luke 19:8). Confession is God’s bar of soap to take away our moral and spiritual dirt (1 John 1:9).

Yielding to God demonstrates our dependence on Him. We find peace and joy by surrendering to Him and His purposes for our life. If drivers don’t yield, pain isn’t far away. If we don’t yield to God, we might experience “wrecks” to get our attention. Surrender your will (Matthew 26:39), mind (Colossians 3:2), Kingdom (Matthew 6:33), body (Rom 12:1), understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6), ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9) and control of your life (Ephesians 5:18).

Our life should overflow with gratitude (Colossians 2:6-7). Enter God’s presence with thanksgiving (Psalm 100:4), thank Him for His goodness (Psalm 106:1), for everything (Ephesians 5:20), and in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Requesting is asking God to supply our needs and others’ needs with motives in harmony with His character and will. God won’t always grant our request. Sometimes He gives us something better. Our spiritual vision needs to improve before we can clearly see God’s answer was better than the one we expected. Sometimes we won’t understand His response this side of eternity. Trust Him anyway. Pray for everyone, especially for other believers (1 Timothy 2:1, Ephesians 6:18). **What’s the next step to balance your prayer life?**

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### Lesson 10 – God’s Shaping Tools (Bible Study)

Imagine a sealed box containing five unknown items each with a number between 1 and 100. Would you bet 5 million dollars you could guess all items and their numbers? That would be very foolish. You need inside information. Do you know what the President dreamed about last night? The story of Daniel shows God can reveal to people anything He wants. Daniel not only interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, he knew what the dream was without being told (Daniel 2). God reveals truth we can’t know any other way. The Bible reveals what’s in the box of life. It tells us truth about God, ourselves and our world.

We can learn a few things about God by looking into the starry night sky. How many stars are there? The answer is 10 to the 24<sup>th</sup> power<sup>1</sup>. That’s about the number of drops of water in all the world’s oceans. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1). From observing nature we can see God is wise and powerful, but not much more. “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Hebrews 11:3). God spoke the universe into existence. When He commanded, the universe appeared. A stupendously huge something sprung from nothing. The universe had no choice. It had to obey. YOU have a choice.

In John 14:1, Jesus said, “Trust in God; trust also in me.” You have the choice not to trust, but like all areas of life, your choices have consequences. What might be some consequences of not trusting God? Just as a beautiful, orderly universe emerged from God’s command, a beautiful, orderly life springs from your obedience. Do you take God’s word seriously? There’s no chance that disobeying Him will benefit you for the long haul. NONE.

The Bible reveals what’s in the box of life. It tells us what we need to know about God. He’s loving, compassionate and faithful (comforting). He’s holy, just and righteous (somewhat scary). Rebellion and stubbornness are serious offenses (very scary).

The Bible helps us understand life. We are sinners (Romans 3:23) and by grace through faith we are children of God (John 1:12). A healthy self-image requires balancing the two. Love summarizes right relationship with others. We are to love God (Matthew 22:37), our neighbor (Matthew 22:39), other believers (John 13:34-35) and our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Appearances often deceive. Our world tells us that we and society determine what truth is. That’s a lie. Our world tells us real life is found in possessions, power, fame, drugs, alcohol and sex with no boundaries. That’s also a lie. The Devil never tells us what’s at the end of the road he wants us to follow—heartache, disillusionment, and pain.

The Bible reveals what’s in the box of life. God speaks to you through it. Are you paying attention? A life built on God’s Word is like a house with a firm foundation (Matthew 7:21-27). According to verse 24 a wise person hears Jesus’ words, puts them into practice and experiences stability. A foolish person hears but doesn’t put them into practice and experiences instability (verse 26).

You need a regular time and place to read God’s word or you won’t read it regularly. I’ve read the Bible for at least the last thirty years with a bowl of cereal on the kitchen table in front of me and my Bible to my left. **Where is your designated place and when do you meet with God?** Begin reading at least a chapter a day in the New Testament and write down a life application in one to three sentences. If you want to write more you may, but please write something. Your thoughts disentangle when they pass over your fingertips. What you write remains a permanent record of your interaction with God in your becoming more like Jesus journey. The Bible reveals what’s in the box of life. It’s God’s gift to you. Read it. Think about it. Apply it. Share it.

1. <http://www.howitworksdaily.com/how-many-stars-are-there-in-the-universe/>

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 11 – God’s Shaping Tools (Fellowship)

God uses Christian fellowship to make us more like Jesus. Fellowship is not so much sharing a potluck dinner together as sharing Christ’s life together. Fellowship is a choice – “The early Christians devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). Fellowship brings both joy and pain -- “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15). Fellowship requires mutual self-denial (Luke 9:23) and receptivity as God uses our interactions with other believers to make us more like His Son.

Working together with other believers to further God’s Kingdom brings joy and pain. The Apostle John focuses on the joy side of the ledger -- “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete” (1 John 1:3-4). Sometimes only the pain side of the ledger seems complete. We inevitably let each other down and poke each other with our porcupine quills when we get close. That’s how God shapes us. We’re imperfect people learning to love other imperfect people. God provides enough grace to get the job done. Fellowship is God’s workshop to grind away pride, self-centeredness and self-importance and everything else that doesn’t look like Jesus. In the New Testament the command to love one another is often repeated. Many “one another” and “each other” verses that don’t command love portray some facet of love in action. Let’s mine these verses for Christ-like gold.

Be at peace with each other (Mark 9:50); wash one another’s feet (John 13:14); love one another (John 13:34; John 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 John 3:11, 23; 1 John 4:7, 11; 2 John 1:5; 1 Peter 1:22, 3:8, 4:8); be devoted to one another with mutual affection. Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10); live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16); stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13); accept one another, ... as Christ accepted you (Romans 15:7); agree with one another so that there be no divisions among you (1 Corinthians 1:10); when you come together to eat, wait for each other (1 Corinthians 11:33); have equal concern for each other (1 Corinthians 12:25); serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13); don’t be conceited or provoke and envy each other (Galatians 5:26); carry each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2); Be patient, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other... (Ephesians 4:32); speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19); submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21); do not lie to each other (Colossians 3:9); Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another (Colossians 3:13); teach and admonish one another with all wisdom (Colossians 3:16); encourage each other with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18); encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11); live in peace with each other (1 Thessalonians 5:13); always try to be kind to each other ... (1 Thessalonians 5:15); encourage one another daily (Hebrews 3:13); spur one another on toward love and good deeds ... encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25); do not slander or grumble against one another (James 4:11, 5:9); confess your sins to each other and pray for each other (James 5:16); live in harmony with one another...love one another (1 Peter 3:8); offer hospitality to one another without grumbling (1 Peter 4:9); clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5).

God has designed the church to feed, mature, shelter and reproduce the faith. We’re each sanding blocks and God is the builder. Christian fellowship is life rubbing against life to nurture what is Christ-like and remove what isn’t until every part of the church conforms to Christ’s image. **Describe how you’ve observed this process at work in yourself and others?**

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 12 – God’s Shaping Tools (Circumstances)

God uses adverse and favorable circumstances to test and strengthen our faith. Trusting God is an internal tug-of-war. During adversity faith and fear pull us in opposite directions. Will we trust God in the middle of a seemingly overwhelming problem or will fear make us feel helpless, hopeless and paralyzed? During those rare days when all seems right with the world, the tension is between trusting Him and relying on ourselves.

A faith test unfolds in Mark 4:35-41. Before Jesus calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee, He said to His disciples, “Let us go over to the other side” (verse 35). Now, if I’d say to someone on the east shore of the Susquehanna River, “Let’s go over to the west shore of the river,” for a variety of reasons, we might not get there that day. My outboard motor could stop working, the river could be too shallow to cross, the boat could start leaking badly, we could run out of gas, etc. When Jesus says, “Let’s go over to the other side,” it’s going to happen. Count on it.

The storm exploded with totally unexpected fury, and monstrous waves broke over and nearly filled the boat. Jesus’ disciples wondered why God was letting it happen. The storm seemed to be Lord. They rebuked Jesus in verse 38 for His apparent indifference—“Don’t you care if we drown?” To the panicky, those who trust appear apathetic. They’d forgotten Jesus had said “Let’s go to the other side,” and their doubts and fears displaced their trust. In verse 40 Jesus said, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” In crisis, we easily forget that Jesus is Lord and all things work together for our good (Romans 8:29). We don’t recall that if God didn’t spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us, every lesser gift needed for life and godliness is guaranteed (Romans 8:32). Some of God’s best gifts are camouflaged as a crisis.

As I write this I have a daughter who in the last week has had fifteen or more terrifying, seizure-like episodes. The seizures seemed to be in control. The challenge remains to believe that Jesus is Lord and seizures aren’t, and that we and our daughter will be better off as a result of them. Thinking like that helps us “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for us in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Giving thanks demonstrates trust in God’s sovereign control in our lives.

My daughter has her ancestors listed on a chart to six generations. There are 64 spaces on the chart six generations back of which she has filled 54. If circumstances had been slightly different for any one of those 64 ancestors, she wouldn’t have been born. If I had taken a job in Georgia in 1971, I wouldn’t have met her mother. It is no different for you. God uses circumstances to shape us. He closes some doors and opens others. He closed a door of effective ministry for Philip in Samaria and opened a door for him to share Christ with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26ff.). This resulted in the gospel going to Ethiopia, the first step beyond Samaria in its going to the end of the world (Acts 1:8). From our perspective, our choices shape our destiny, but God knew that destiny before the creation of the world. From our point of view certain circumstances that led to decision A, in turn led to decision B which led to C etc. Now we are at X, Y or Z in a place we’d have never imagined when we were twelve. God’s focus is less on how we got where we are and more on the people we’ve become along the way. The people we meet and the events of each day aren’t random. They’re part of God’s shaping us to be more like Jesus. God has used circumstances since the beginning of time to move history according to His purposes and graciously uses us in the process. That’s why we can give thanks to Him in all circumstances.

**How has God used specific circumstances in your life to make you more like Jesus?**

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 13 - Healthy Leaders, Healthy Churches (Part 1)

As leaders go, so goes the church. Healthy churches have spiritually healthy leaders; unhealthy churches don't. As one tumor can kill the whole body, a single spiritually immature leader can undermine a church's reputation. As a church's leaders become healthier, so does the church. Believers and unbelievers are watching leaders. Believers are looking for examples and unbelievers are looking for excuses to do their own thing. Leaders become healthier by personal growth in Christian Schwarz's eight quality characteristics and by wisely managing God's gifts of time, talents, treasures and energy.

In this and several subsequent lessons we'll consider how transformational connections to a small group, leaders, followers, neighbors, believers, and God Himself can help us become more like Jesus.

Are you now a member or leader of a small group of believers? If not, the first step is to join or form one. Don't delay. Why? When Christians gather together in Jesus' name, He shows up in a unique way (Matthew 18:20). Good things happen. Lives are transformed over time through life-on-life connection with other believers. We're obedient when we assemble together, but we don't meet just to meet. God's intended purpose for our gathering is to spur one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25). It's to be a divine "I double-dog-dare-you to be a blessing to others!"

If you're in a group, how healthy is it? Do you know what brings joy and pain to each member of the group? Are group members real and transparent with each other? Is your group growing spiritually and numerically (if it is an open group)? When you have a need, do you share it with the members of your group? If your answer to these questions is "no," group life needs a tune-up. God's idea of being the church includes doing life together. Embrace interdependent living. The leader of the group must set the pace by sharing personal joys and pain, being transparent and real and coming to the group with personal needs. The goal is interdependence so the body can be built up in love (Ephesians 4:16). **How can your small group foster whole life interdependence?**

We're all both followers and leaders in the body of Christ. We're leading whomever we're influencing. We start our discipleship journey as followers, and we never outgrow our need to follow. Jesus commanded us to follow Him (Matthew 4:19). Every effective Christian leader follows Jesus. Paul wrote, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). In healthy churches spiritual leaders empower those in the pews to be all God created them to be. We can't empower the people in the pews unless the people in the pews are following our leadership. They won't follow our leadership unless our words and actions are consistent. Followers need to obey those who are over them in the Lord (Hebrews 13:17). On the other hand, people won't follow those they don't respect. To empower others to be all they can be for Jesus, leaders need to be all they can be for Jesus.

If you're a leader in the local church, your job is to make the people in the pews successful in 3-D discipleship—drawing others to Jesus, discipling them to become more like Him and deploying them and their resources to minister to others based on how God has designed them. That's far more important than trying to recruit people to carry out your own programs and ideas. Preparing other believers for the work of ministry isn't just a good idea -- it's God's idea (Ephesians 4:12). Spiritual leaders lead best by serving (Luke 22:26). **How can your leadership become more serving, coaching and preparing than captaining and controlling?**

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 14 - Healthy Leaders, Healthy Churches (Part 2)

God's plan is that our love might abound more and more (Philippians 1:9). Some practical suggestions from my book, *Becoming an Enthusiastic Church*, include: lead with love; hemorrhage it; model it; lead with joy; cast a vision for love; help people find community; spend time with other leaders; celebrate victories; build loving traditions; let go of past hurts; fill up with God's love; wear others' glasses; be honest; be vulnerable; forgive; listen well; surprise with thoughtful gifts; lighten up; spend time together; identify and use your spiritual gifts; speak the right language; serve others; commit to a small group; reach out to the unchurched; develop prayer and mentoring connections; share your talents, time and money; tune up your obedience; visit the hospitalized and homebound; ask for advice; bear with one another; resolve conflict; encourage others and sow love extravagantly. See the book for details (<https://www.tatepublishing.com/bookstore/book.php?w=978-1-60462-227-0>).

Jesus demonstrated seven facets of love. Follow His example. Jesus' love is holistic. While on earth He met the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of people. He healed minds, bodies and hearts. He wants to do the same through us. Holistic love grows best in the garden of a small group.

Jesus' empowering love enabled His disciples to feed the 5,000 (Mark 6:30-44). He said, "You give them something to eat" (v. 37). Then He provided all the resources they needed to do it. He told Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17) and empowered him to be a spiritual shepherd. Church leaders are to equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Believers are to stir one another up to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24). Empower others to be all God intended.

Jesus' passionate love for us sparks our passionate love for Him and others (1 John 4:19). We demonstrate passionate love by loving God with all our heart, soul and mind and passionate love for our neighbor by loving him/her as ourselves (Matthew 22:37ff). Such love is accompanied by spiritual fire, commitment, enthusiasm and excitement. We love because we want to love, not because we have to love.

Jesus' love is inspiring. His self-emptying of His divine glory and power for us and his humbling Himself to become a man and to die a horrible death in our place inspires us to love Him and others in return. Louis Zamperini, after he came to know Jesus as his Forgiver and Leader, demonstrated his love for and forgiveness of the Japanese prison guards who had tortured him while he was a prisoner of war. His example inspires us to love and forgive those who have hurt us.

Jesus' love is need-oriented. The recipient defines the need. In Matthew 8:2 the leper said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus didn't give him a gift certificate to the city market or a brand new donkey. He met his expressed need. Meeting felt needs is the first step toward meeting spiritual needs.

Jesus' love is gift-oriented. God loved us enough to give us His Son (John 3:16) to save us, His word to guide us (Psalm 119:105) and His Spirit to guide and empower us (Galatians 5:22-23). Your spiritual gifts indicate how God designed you to love others. God gave me the gifts of teaching and writing to love and bless others.

Jesus' love is functional. When God sent Jesus to die on the cross, He gave us something we really need. We love others by giving them what they really need. We love God by obeying Him, that's what He wants from us.

- **How will applying each of these seven facets of love make you more effective and fruitful in Christ's service?**
- **On which of the seven will you focus?**

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 15 - Healthy Leaders, Healthy Churches (Part 3)

Healthy spiritual leaders are passionate about their relationship with God. “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11, NIV). You’re almost certainly fervent about something that excites you. If you can bubble up about something, you can do the same for Christ and His church.

Pentecost changed the apostles from fear-frozen followers into passionate evangelists. The Holy Spirit in their hearts made the difference. The smoke of the Spirit’s fire is spiritual passion. We’re naturally passionate about our own kingdom, not God’s.”The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14, NIV). Spiritual passion reveals the Holy Spirit at work. “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (1 Thessalonians 5:19, NIV). Healthy leaders and churches feed the fire. Unhealthy ones don’t. People everywhere are looking for something to get excited about and give their lives to. They’re influenced by spiritually passionate leaders whose faith brings them joy.

“Blahs-ianity” is the chief competitor of passionate spirituality. Doing and saying “right things” without passion angers God. “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Matthew 15:8, NIV). Rote prayers, unthinking singing, ministering to others to receive recognition, using positions in the church for personal power, decades of faithful Sunday school attendance without applying anything, 60 minute-per-week Christian commitment (worship or Sunday school, but not both) and tradition-driven ministry are ways we demonstrate far-away hearts.

When you open a cola, it fizzes immediately. Bubbles continue to rise. That’s a portrait of fervent, bubbling faith. You almost certainly experienced it as a new believer. If you allow the cola to sit for 24 hours in a glass, the fizz and bubbles disappear—flat city. Disappointing experiences, time and the grind of life can cause the bubbles to leak out of your spiritual cola. Unless you work hard to overcome your tendency to leak passion, you’ll become apathetic, lazy, indifferent and just go through spiritual motions without any heart. Do you still have the fizz? If you’re a church member and have lost it, you’re settling for too little. If you’re a church leader, you’re dealing a mortal blow to the future of the church. You’re setting the pace for many others who are watching you. You can choose your attitude. Choose to fizz and bubble. Don’t be satisfied with less.

Here are some practical suggestions to increase your spiritual passion taken from *Becoming an Enthusiastic Church* available at (<https://www.tatepublishing.com/bookstore/book.php?w=978-1-60462-227-0>) where you will find a more detailed description. Practicing spiritual disciplines provides an environment favorable for the growth of God’s life within you. This includes meditation, prayer, fasting, journaling, studying the Bible and other sources of wisdom, simplifying your life, getting alone with God, submitting to Him, obeying Him, serving Him, sharing your faith, using your spiritual gifts, confessing your sins and worshiping with others.

Additional suggestions include saturating every ministry and leader in the church with prayer, encouraging holistic small groups which minister to the whole person, including specific life applications in teaching/preaching and following through on them, planning church retreats to challenge people in their spiritual walk, renewing your thinking so you look for joy in God alone, helping persons find places of service that fit their divine design, helping people identify and use their evangelistic style to draw others toward Christ, helping people plug into compassion ministries, living out the “one anothers” of Scripture in the context of a small group, and developing and/or refining the church’s mission and vision.

**Give ten reasons you find joy in God.**

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 16 - Healthy Leaders, Healthy Churches (Part 4)

Church leaders should strive to create a worship atmosphere where God's Spirit moves unhindered. Watch people to gauge how they're being impacted. Are tears more common than yawns? Are people counting ceiling tiles? Are they hanging on every word during the message or preoccupied with their phones? Do nodding heads agreeing with the sermon significantly outnumber bobbing heads descending into dreamland? During one of my interactive sermons twenty years ago, one man mumbled loudly enough for the deaf in the next county to hear, "That ain't preachin'!" I didn't have to wonder whether he was inspired! At another service where I did a dramatic portrayal of Lazarus returning from the dead to tell his story, people afterwards told me they felt like Lazarus had visited them.

Inspiring worship services aren't quickly forgotten. An inspiring chorus becomes the following week's shower solo. The service is over but its impact remains. Evidences that worship services are inspiring include anticipation by the congregation, a feeling of closeness to God and other worshippers, a joyous atmosphere, excitement, life-changing commitments and increased faith, hope and love.

Inspiring services don't have to be entertaining, but boring services aren't inspiring. The goal isn't so much what people feel when the service is over as what they do after they exit the church. An inspired Robert Frost wrote poems. An inspired Rembrandt painted. Inspired believers live loving, obedient, fruitful lives and advance God's kingdom.

Let's consider some principles that will contribute to developing the kind of atmosphere where the Spirit moves freely.

1. Reach out to the segment of the population to which you're best equipped to minister and structure your ministry to meet their needs based on listening to the Lord, to members of your focus group and to others who are ministering to that same group elsewhere.
2. Select a worship style that will serve you best for the long haul for the health and growth of the church God has called you to be. Pursue excellence. Maximize the quality of your music and singing. Remove dead spaces from your service and transition between parts of the service as seamlessly as possible. You're competing with TV.
3. Messages must be applicable and understandable. Aim to make visitors feel welcome within the first ten minutes of their arrival. Make sure kids in your church receive quality care and instruction.
4. Develop a plan to involve and train laypersons in aspects of worship service leadership. The goal is a high quality worship experience while using as many persons as possible. Evaluate your worship services regularly. See <http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org/> Discipleship Tools #2, Ministry Inventories.
5. Develop a plan to feed yourself spiritually and stay informed about current events to be relevant. Focus preaching/teaching on life application and don't forget to practice it yourself. How people rate the sermon is closely related to their opinion of the pastor's spiritual health. NCD surveys I've taken reveal that congregations who don't think the pastor is a good spiritual example don't find the sermons very interesting or relevant.
6. Preaching for life change impacts the congregation positively in many ways, but not all. Use mentoring and small group discipleship to supplement the communication of the truth through preaching.

**What's your next step to make worship in your church more inspiring?**



## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 17 - Healthy Leaders, Healthy Churches (Part 5)

Effective evangelistic churches around the world excel at healing hurts, meeting felt needs and answering the real questions people have who don't yet know Jesus. Their leaders set the pace. Their focus isn't so much creating programs to attract the unbelieving as ministering to hurting people. That usually occurs more outside than inside church walls. If the sanctuary is the site of home games, most of their schedule is on the road sowing seeds of loving kindness that aren't easily forgotten. Your church can do it too!

How many are turning around as a result of your church's ministry? Healthy churches grow through conversions. Such churches teach new believers to follow Jesus. Evangelism flows imperceptibly into discipleship. Fully devoted disciples evangelize. As the Father sent Jesus into the world to seek and save the lost, Jesus sends you (Luke 19:10, John 17:18). If your church isn't seeing a steady stream of people turning to Jesus, it's probably too inwardly focused. You aren't sowing enough seeds where they're most likely to bear 30, 60 or 100 times as much as you've sown (Mark 4:20).



For the past several years I've grown Green Ice lettuce in cut down gallon milk jugs filled with topsoil. The plants take about 45 days to mature. I plant a total of 24 seeds in 8 to 10 additional containers about every two weeks a dozen times through the summer. In 2014 those 300 total seeds produce 100 lettuce plants which "went into the ministry" from mid-May through November! The more seeds I plant, the greater the harvest. Likewise, the evangelistic harvest is proportional to the gospel seeds you sow inside and outside your church walls. To draw more to Jesus, sow more seeds.

Seed sowing increases in proportion to your vision, passion, faith, prayer and preparation. Vision energizes. In my mind's eye I see mature lettuce plants 45 days into the future. That's how vision works. Your expectations are critical. If you expect people to respond positively to the gospel, you'll see many more respond than if you don't. Not all the lettuce seeds I sow germinate. Not all gospel seeds bear fruit immediately. Don't give up. At the right time you'll reap a crop if you keep on sowing seeds (Galatians 6:9).

Jesus gives passion. Paul's heart's desire was for all Israelites to be saved (Romans 10:1). He longed for the Philippian believers with the affection of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:8). May Christ's love for others grip and move you. That's best nurtured if you expose yourself to the hurts and needs of people who don't yet know Jesus. It's messy and often inconvenient, but it ignites love for them in your heart.

Sowing gospel seeds always seems risky. Don't wait to feel bold. Spread them in faith and obedience even when you're afraid. The fear you feel isn't from God (2 Timothy 1:7). Don't let it paralyze you. You can overcome it through Christ who strengthens you (Philippians 4:13). Apart from Him your best efforts will produce no fruit (John 15:5). Prayer demonstrates dependence and is the foundation for 30-60-100- evangelism.

Preparation helps immensely. A sharp saw cuts more wood than a dull one. Prepare to share both the gospel and your personal faith story. For a summary of the gospel see 2 + 2, and for telling your story, Discipleship Tools #1, *Running Together to Win*, p. 97 on [www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org). Get to know your community and its needs to develop relevant need-meeting ministry. **How can you make evangelism at your church more effective by making it more need-meeting?**

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 18 - Healthy Leaders, Healthy Churches (Part 6)

Imagine going on the road with an animal act in which an eagle demonstrates his running ability, an ostrich flashes his swimming prowess and a seal shows off his climbing skills. Don't expect rave reviews! God wired the eagle to fly, the ostrich to run and the seal to swim. Too often church ministry looks like that pitiful animal act. Plugging persons into ministry we think someone has to do even though they aren't gifted for it results in fruitlessness and frustration. No one benefits.

God uniquely designed you to help build His church which Paul compared to the human body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Every part of the body and of the church has a specific purpose. Coordinated effort among the parts brings maximum results. One person can't lift an elephant, but 10,000 persons working together can.

Leaders can empower others by helping them find their place in ministry based on their gifts, skills, passion and temperament. For resources related to passion and temperament, go to [www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org), click Discipleship Resources, and then *Running Together to Win*, pages 110-113 (Passion) and 119-124 (Temperament).



Ministry is like a jigsaw puzzle. Your church's people are a picture of Jesus to the watching world. Healthy believers living in loving harmony represent Christ more accurately than any individual believer (including the pastor). Matthew 5:14 says, "You (plural) are the light of the world." Let me paraphrase, "You (plural) are a picture of Christ for the world to see." Jesus has all the gifts of the Spirit. Your pastor doesn't. Neither does anyone else in your church. You need one another's gifts to reflect Jesus as accurately as possible. When we put the pieces together in their proper places, the picture of Jesus might not be Michelangelo quality, but others will see Him. All churches are designed to be a picture of Jesus. God communicated who He is by sending His Son to earth as a man (John 1:14). In our time, He sends a church to accomplish the same purpose.

You are part of the "Christ puzzle" to communicate Him to the world. "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27). The picture won't be clear if only 25% of the pieces are deployed in the puzzle and 75% are criticizing, uninvolved pew-potatoes. Jesus died so you could serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14) who called and equipped you to play a significant role in advancing His rule on earth (1 Corinthians 12:7). Your mission in this life is to be a faithful steward of the gift(s) the Spirit has given you. Nothing more, less, or else. To help you identify your spiritual gifts, take the inventory at: <http://www.theparishpaper.com/files/resources/Church%20Effectiveness%20Nuggets-%20Volume%2024.pdf> (pages 11-14). It's free and very helpful.

In addition, I encourage church leaders to list all their ministries and to update the list annually. Job descriptions for each ministry help the uninvolved more readily become a part of the picture of Christ. This approach takes work, but it will substantially increase ministry deployment.

Another group of puzzle pieces represents those not yet attending any church. We've been commissioned to reach them through our ministry. Because they're absent, the picture of Christ isn't yet complete. They're in bed now during Sunday services, but five years hence they could be leaders in your church. We need prayer and intentional strategies to reach them. In five years they might be the strategizers!

**What's the first step you will take to maximize ministry fruit by deploying believers in ministries for which God has designed them? What's the next step?**

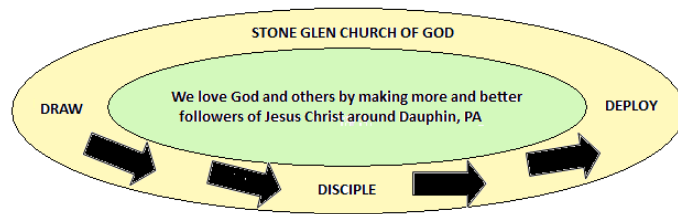
## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 19 - Healthy Leaders, Healthy Churches (Part 7)

Spiritual busyness doesn't please God. The parable of the talents should scare those who think it does. God expects a return on His investment in us (Matthew 25:14-30). Jesus wasn't religiously busy. He was about His Father's business (Luke 2:49). There's a difference. He had only critical words for those who honored religious tradition above obedience (Matthew 15:3).

Does obeying the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) drive your church? Do you have specific plans to accomplish both that you frequently evaluate and improve as you go? **To make your organizational structures more effective, consider this sequence** ( from *Becoming an Enthusiastic Church*):

1. Define your core values. Healthy churches worldwide value health in the following eight areas: small groups, leadership, relationships, spirituality, worship services, evangelism, ministry and organizational structures.
2. Define your mission. For example, the mission of the Stone Glen Church of God is to love God and others by making more and better followers of Jesus around Dauphin, Pennsylvania and beyond.
3. Define your vision. Your vision describes what your church will look like in the future (your destination) and how you will get there (your transportation).
4. Create a complete discipleship path (pre-evangelism, evangelism, assimilation, growth, ministry placement and leadership development). See Lesson 6 – Developing A Disciple-Making Plan.
5. Start new ministries, if necessary, so you have at least one or two for each portion of the discipleship path. For example, one or two ministries that focus on pre-evangelism, one or two on evangelism, etc.
6. Challenge each ministry to develop its own prayer support.
7. Write job descriptions for all ministry positions.
8. Place persons in ministry based on their spiritual passion, gifts, temperament and skills.
9. Encourage each ministry to develop at least two mission-centered, SMART goals per year and strategies to achieve them. SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented and time-bound.
10. Challenge ministries to evaluate their goals and strategies annually and make changes to improve effectiveness.
11. Establish lines of clear communication among ministry leaders.
12. Offer leadership training and coaching to all leaders who desire it.
13. Discontinue unfruitful ministries and assign their members to more fruitful places of service.
14. Multiply evangelists, disciples, leaders, small groups and churches using apprenticeship.



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## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 20 – How Discipleship Glorifies Jesus



Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12) and a light shining in the darkness (John 1:5). Empowered by the Spirit, He completed the work the Father gave Him to do (John 4:34). He said to his followers: “You are the light of the world. A town built 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 others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16, NIV). Your light shines by finishing the good works God gives you to do (Ephesians 2:10).



“You” and “your” in Matthew 5:14-16 are plural. Don’t think of Christians individually shining like fireflies on a summer night, here, there and everywhere. Picture the northern lights (left) where there is no obvious point source or New York City viewed from space at night (right). Matthew describes a “group shine.”



The source of Christians’ light is the Holy Spirit whose purpose is to glorify Jesus (John 16:14). He is your power supplier. You are a light bulb. From beginning to end, it’s a cooperative effort. As you do good deeds to bring glory to the Father and love other believers, the light beams. Like a town on a hill, obvious togetherness defines believers. Each one has unique gifts to contribute to increase the wattage of the group lighting project. The individual pieces of the puzzle (left) represent those unique contributions. When the church does good deeds, Jesus, the light of the world is glorified.

The volume of good deeds done and the measure of love among the members of the “village of light” determine the light’s brightness. The picture of Jesus His church composes is dynamic, not static. The faith and obedience of individual members affect the waxing and waning of its brilliance and the degree to which it “looks” like Jesus. The Stone Glen Church of God began more than 175 years ago. The puzzle parts were all different then, but the local community is always to see Jesus through it in every generation. The same is true of your church.



The parts of the puzzle keep changing. People die. Some move away. Some fall away. Some get weary of doing good. New believers join the congregation. Believers transfer to the church from other churches. Pieces of the puzzle, which represent those who minister, sooner or later have to be replaced if the church is going to continue to represent Jesus to its community generation after generation. We need to make more disciples and deploy them in ministry or the puzzle will look like the one at left. It doesn’t look a whole lot like Jesus. It happens when we don’t equip others to carry the baton of ministry after us. Ideally the number of puzzle pieces grows as the church grows. New pieces need to develop in their ability to bring glory to Jesus. They need to change the way they think, talk and behave. They must be deployed in ministries that fit their divine design to produce the big picture of “look like Jesus ministry.” We have to make better disciples or the light will dim.

The key question for a church isn’t, “How many of us are there?” It’s “How bright is our light?” How much is Jesus glorified through us? We shine brightest when our priorities are drawing people to faith in Christ, discipling them in Jesus’ ways, and deploying them in the ministry for which God designed them, all in a loving atmosphere.

**What will you do to draw people to Jesus, disciple them in the faith and deploy them in ministry to keep the light of Jesus shining through your church generation after generation?**

## Disciple-Making 101

Lesson 21 – Spiritual Journey Tracker - Check each statement that's true of you and work on the ones that aren't.



- I have assurance of salvation.
- I know how to deal with sin in my life.
- I've been baptized.
- I read the Scriptures and pray at least 5 days/week.
- I regularly participate in a small group meeting.
- I look forward to worshiping with my church family regularly.
- I know how to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- I show evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in my life.
- I demonstrate love for God and others by self-sacrificial service.
- I pray regularly for the salvation of unsaved friends and relatives.
- I forgive those who have hurt me.
- I've joined the church.
- I feel a deep need for God's grace daily.
- I serve God out of gratitude.
- I generously and cheerfully spend my time, talents and treasures for God.
- I help meet the needs of the poor.
- I speak the truth with love.
- I've shared my personal faith story with a non-Christian.
- I've read the entire New Testament.
- I've led another person to faith in Christ.
- I've followed up a brand new believer.
- I've read the entire Old Testament.
- I minister to others based on my passion, temperament, spiritual gifts and skills.
- I help others become more like Jesus.

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 22 – Your Following Jesus Encourages Your Pastor



Those who enter pastoral ministry without God's calling are oranges. Their ministry will be the juicer. It's pretty much the same for the called! A called pastor at least knows God has chosen him/her for this difficult role. With choosing comes grace. Satan repeatedly fires his arrows at pastors after tipping them with the poison of discouragement. "You aren't making any difference," he tells them. Much evidence suggests he's right. Discouragement is the #1 reason pastors leave their church. #2 is frustration over critics in and the direction of the church.<sup>1</sup> Pastors begin with vision and hope. After a few years, it becomes obvious their vision won't happen. Hope evaporates. About 70% of pastors constantly fight depression, and 50% of pastors would leave the ministry if they could make a living some other way.<sup>2</sup>

I recently read about a pastor's feeling a sense of fulfillment after doing a hands-on project around the house and actually seeing something accomplished. I've been there. I enjoy gardening because there's something to show for my efforts. Your agreeing to take risks, embracing change and doing new God-honoring things might keep your spiritual leader from joining the ranks of the 1700 terminally discouraged pastors that leave the ministry every month.<sup>3</sup>

Don't wait for someone else to help your church make more and better disciples. Pursue becoming more like Jesus every day, and your pastor won't experience a hope crisis. Pastors shouldn't have to turn to gardening or some other pastime for fulfillment. Encourage your pastor by:

1. Growing in grace and the knowledge of Jesus through a regular devotional life
  2. Volunteering to serve others based on how God designed you
  3. Sharing your insights from God's word
  4. Praying for him/her everyday
  5. Participating in, or better yet, leading a small group
  6. Leading some aspect of your church's ministry
  7. Regularly attending worship services
  8. Dealing with difficult people patiently and lovingly
  9. Forgiving those who have hurt you
  10. Showing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life
  11. Giving your time, talents and treasures eagerly and willingly
  12. Living by faith
  13. Passionately loving God and others
  14. Helping meet the needs of the poor
  15. Sharing your faith/faith story with others
  16. Drawing those outside the faith to Jesus by meeting their felt needs
  17. Warmly welcoming first-time visitors to your church
  18. Sending notes of encouragement to the pastor and others in the church
  19. Helping others grow toward spiritual maturity
1. <http://thomrainer.com/2012/12/15/eight-negative-reasons-pastors-leave-a-church/>
  2. <http://www.expastors.com/why-do-so-many-pastors-leave-the-ministry-the-facts-will-shock-you/>
  3. <http://www.expastors.com/why-do-so-many-pastors-leave-the-ministry-the-facts-will-shock-you/>



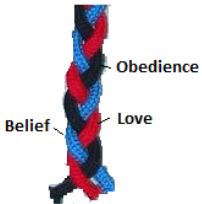
## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 23 – Discipleship’s Vital Signs



Your physician assesses your heart beat, breathing rate, temperature, and blood pressure. Jesus assesses your belief, obedience and love. They’re like three strands of a braided rope. Christians have all three strands, whereas unbelievers have none of them. Let’s observe how 1 John (NIV) reveals the interconnectedness of these three for those who know God.

“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands” (1 John 2:3). “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness” (1 John 2:9). “We know we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death” (1 John 3:14). “And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us” (1 John 3:23). “Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them...” (1 John 3:24a). “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7). “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:12). “And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:21). “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well” (1 John 5:1). “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). “Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 5:5).



Like living vines, belief, obedience and love grow and intertwine throughout our lives as believers. They describe a way of life with God at the center. We keep on believing, keep on loving and keep on obeying. Yesterday’s obedience, love and belief are locked away in the vault of time. Today’s opportunities to serve God and others require a fresh demonstration of all three. As the rope lengthens, it becomes increasingly useful in the hands of the Master.

When our vital signs indicate all isn’t well, our doctor prescribes a treatment plan. A fever suggests an infection which needs attention. High blood pressure might require some sort of pressure reducing medication. Our vital signs of belief, obedience and love are all relationship terms. We believe, obey and love SOMEONE. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15, NIV).

God’s and our efforts keep the three strands growing. “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13). God gives us the desire and ability to follow His ways, but we have to do the walking. We obey God because we love Him. We love Him and others because He commands it (Matthew 22:37-39). Faith without deeds is worthless (James 2:20). Abraham demonstrated his faith by his obedience and God credited it to him as righteousness (James 2:23).

Our belief, obedience and love aren’t yet fully formed, or what they will someday be, but they’re significant steering forces in our lives. How we live today is significantly different than when we walked in the darkness of unbelief, disobedience and preoccupation with ourselves. **List specific ways your belief, obedience and love have grown since you became a believer? What are you doing to provide an atmosphere conducive to their further growth?**

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 24 – People of the Truth



“Lies are the devil’s nuclear weapons. He has no truth in him and is the father of lies (John 8:44). He camouflages his untruths as half-truths and 90% truths to inject more poison than a pure lie could. Daily we swallow them like pills ground up and mixed with applesauce. They go down so easily. Few of them are obvious. Some of the things we believe aren’t true. God’s Word in us helps us detect lies and frustrate Satan’s destructive plans. **What lies from the devil have you detected since you became a believer?**”



Truth used to correspond to reality. Now it’s relative. Supposedly, it no longer applies to all people at all times and places. Like milk, it takes the shape of its human container. We’re told that one hundred different persons’ definitions of love are all true, even if they contradict one another. Truth is whatever we want it to be. Limits are out. ‘Freedom’ is in. Chaos rides freedom’s passenger seat! **How does the notion of ‘relative truth’ threaten God’s absolute moral standards?**

God hasn’t departed from the reality standard, and He’s the Judge Judy of the Universe! For now people can play word games and twist the truth into whatever shape is convenient. They can ignore or redefine reality, but they can’t escape it or the consequences of their actions. Calling black white and wrong right doesn’t make it so. On Judgment Day all will have to explain every careless word (Matthew 12:36). Everything hidden will be uncovered before God’s eyes to whom all must give account (Hebrews 4:13). No one will tell *Him* truth is relative! Abe Lincoln often asked audiences how many legs a dog had if one called its tail a leg. After most answered incorrectly (five), Abe told them it had four legs. He said, ‘Calling a tail a leg doesn’t make it one.’” Exactly!

Speaking the truth about God’s ways requires we not be swayed by what others might think (Matthew 22:16). Truth came to earth through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). When we live in it, we have nothing to hide (John 3:21). Knowing it sets us free (John 8:32). The Holy Spirit guides us on the path of truth (John 16:13). We are made more like Jesus through God’s word which is truth (John 17:17). Jesus came into the world to reveal the truth, but not everyone is a fan of it (John 18:37). False teachers distort it (Acts 20:30). Wicked people suppress it (Romans 1:18). God judges based on truth (Romans 2:2). Those who reject it are self-seeking and choose to follow evil rather than the truth (Romans 2:8). God’s word is a source of knowledge and truth (Romans 2:20). Love rejoices with it (1 Corinthians 13:6). Set forth the truth plainly (2 Corinthians 4:2). Speak truthfully (2 Corinthians 6:7). We are on truth’s side (2 Corinthians 13:8). The gospel is true (Galatians 2:5, 14). Obey the truth (Galatians 5:7). Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

The fruit of the light consists of goodness, righteousness and truth (Ephesians 5:9). Holding fast to it protects us from Satan’s attacks (Ephesians 6:14). Only those who love it will be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Those who delight in wickedness don’t believe it (2 Thessalonians 2:12). We’re saved through belief in (2 Thessalonians 2:14) and coming to a knowledge of it (1 Timothy 2:4). The church is the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Knowing it can’t be separated from believing it (1 Timothy 4:3). The truths of the faith nourish us (1 Timothy 4:6). Correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Stick with the truth (2 Timothy 2:18). God-granted repentance opens the door to knowing the truth -- mere learning doesn’t (2 Timothy 2:25, 3:7). We choose to move toward or away from it (2 Timothy 4:4). Knowing it leads to godliness (Titus 1:1). God’s word contains elementary and advanced truths (Hebrews 5:12). We were born again by the word of truth (James 1:18). We purify ourselves by obeying it (1 Peter 1:22). Root yourself in the truth (2 Peter 1:12). Live it out (1 John 1:6). Only those who obey truth are of it. (1 John 2:4). Love with actions and in truth (1 John 3:18). Belonging to Jesus is belonging to it (1 John 3:19). Walk in (3 John 4) and work together for it (3 John 8).

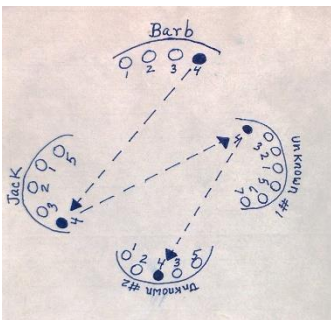


## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 25 – Disciple-Making Influences

**What traits do you admire in others and why?** It's a critical question. Those we admire shape us. When I was a kid, I admired Sandy Koufax, Orlando Cepeda, Hank Aaron and other baseball players. I wanted to be a superstar and dominate the competition. I spent hours batting stones, pretending I was first one and then another. In the moral and spiritual realm, the sum total of all we've imitated to date defines the people and churches we've become. Our values, priorities and dreams guide what we copy. Of multitudes we could imitate, we select only a few. We adopt some of their characteristics, not all. Like a coin collector, we pick up what we think will benefit us.

More than thirty years ago I observed how Barb Barlow of the Cherry Grove Church primed conversations by asking questions. Often she got conversations moving by saying, "Now" ... and then she would ask a question to get other persons talking about themselves. I've done exactly the same thing for years. That approach has been invaluable to me. I doubt she knows the extent of her influence on me. Thanks, Barb!



Perhaps others have imitated my asking conversation-starting questions without my knowing it, as I imitated Barb without her knowing it. Such influence could be illustrated by the diagram, where #4 represents developing relationships with others by asking questions. Barb had other qualities represented by the other numbers, but I imitated one particular characteristic. We're continuously influencing and being influenced as long as we live. While we imitate others, others are imitating us!

From God's perspective, some influencers are positive, some are negative and some neutral. Those who display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) influence us toward Christlikeness. Those who live out the traits of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21) pull us away from Christ. Those who influence our brand of deodorant are neutral influencers. Our unique team of secular and spiritual heroes makes us who we are. The new nature brings the desire to be like Jesus. God is working in us to make Him our preeminent hero (Philippians 2:13, Colossians 1:18).

Disciple-making influence involves conducting ourselves in a way that will influence others to think, feel and behave more like Jesus. To help others become more like Jesus requires relational closeness.

Influence never dies. It's a baton passing silently from person to person from generation to generation as people continue to react to words, attitudes and actions they observe in others who saw them in others... who saw them in us. Of course, godly traits they've seen in us originated in our Father in heaven, the source of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17).

God's character is influence's gold standard. Godly traits are right and good. Ungodly traits aren't. Believers have godly, ungodly and morally neutral bricks composing their character. Out of us flows both living and polluted water. Let's maximize the flow of the first and minimize the second.

Our thought-life determines to what extent our lives will be a blessing to others. Our words, feelings and actions play follow the leader with our thoughts. Let's think about what's true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). Out of us will flow rivers of living water that will bless our own generation and untold generations to come!

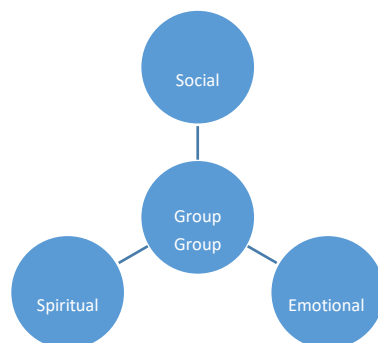
## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 26 – Healthy Small Group Checklist

Evaluate how well each statement describes your small group with 1 = “not at all”; 2 = “somewhat”; 3 = “great extent”; 4 = “very great extent.” Work on one or two areas you feel convicted to strengthen.

- The worship segment of our group meeting regularly draws me into God’s presence.
- I really feel connected to other persons in my group.
- I share areas of my life where I’m struggling and know group’s members will support and pray for me.
- My group nurtures a loving, accepting atmosphere.
- At least once a month I spend time with others in my group apart from meetings.
- I have a ministry in my group based on my spiritual gifts, spiritual passion, temperament and natural abilities.
- I find my ministry in my group very fulfilling.
- My group meets my needs.
- My group leader has an apprentice who is growing as a leader.
- My involvement in my group is helping me grow as a leader.
- My group is helping me grow in my ability to submit to Christ, feed myself spiritually and pray.
- I look forward to our group’s prayer time.
- At least 50% of the group’s teaching time is focused on life application.
- My group has a mission statement, vision, and goals that define and direct its ministry.
- I’m more passionate about God than I was a year ago because of my group’s influence.
- My group prods me to be honest with myself and others about my sins.
- My group members work together to serve others who aren’t part of our group.
- My group has specific strategies to grow.
- My group has a target date to multiply into two groups.
- My group considers how its decisions and actions will affect others before making them.
- I’m motivated to use my energy to serve the Lord through my group.
- My group does ministry in a way that helps continue and expand that ministry.
- My group works with other groups in ways that benefit us all.
- My group has a trained, quality leader.
- My church does regular training that benefits small group leaders.
- The members of my group support and are accountable to one another.

**Healthy groups meet the needs of the whole person.**



## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 27 – Bible Study Tips



For the first dozen years I was a Christian, my goal was to read through the Bible yearly. I did that like someone chewing highly nutritious broccoli while swallowing very little of it. My reading motivation was more “have to” than “want to.” God wants the Bible to get through and transform us more than our getting through it every year. Much “discipleship” is transmission of biblical information without transformation. It happens in pulpits and Sunday school classes. Been there. Done that. We naturally resist changing. Information has to transform the teacher’s mind and heart before it transforms anyone else (Romans 12:2). “Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1, NLT). Those who teach God’s word, can’t say, “I didn’t know!”

My reading motivation gradually became “want to.” Here’s how it happened. Beginning in December 1981 I read less and wrote more, but not much. It wasn’t hard to write more. I wasn’t writing *anything* down previously. Now it takes me three times as long to read through the Bible, but almost every day’s chapter speaks to my heart. I write down in one or two sentences what I hear God’s saying to me. I usually write those sentences as though God is speaking directly to me. Here are some entries:

12/10/15 - 1 Samuel 22 - Lying to protect yourself often puts others in danger. Speak the truth in love.

12/11/15 - 1 Samuel 23 - I am the God of all possibilities. Trust how I am working in and through you and find your strength in Me.

12/12/15 - 1 Samuel 24-25 - Following the voices of your anger and pride will lead you astray. Don't make knee-jerk decisions when you are hurting.

12/13/15 - 1 Samuel 26 - Repentance is first recognizing you've acted like a fool and erred greatly and then turning from your foolishness and error.

12/14/15 - 1 Samuel 27-28 - If you refuse to obey Me, don't expect Me to guide you.

12/15/15 - 1 Samuel 29 - My sovereign will is the needle that pulls the thread of your life through all circumstances' ups and downs.

12/16/15 - 1 Samuel 30 - Find strength in Me to overcome adversity (v. 6).



I have used the *Life Application Study Bible* for my reading for about the last thirty years. I highly recommend it. Often when nothing from the chapter itself speaks to my heart, the *Life Application Study Bible's* notes will. Begin to write down what you hear God say to you. Writing it down helps Velcro the truth to your heart. You don't have to write a lot. Less can be more if it helps you focus on God's word for the day for you.

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 28 – Scripture Memory

I know, I know—you *can't* memorize Scripture. I've heard it repeatedly. I'll be upfront. For many years I didn't *want* to put forth the necessary effort. When I was a new Christian, I memorized 75 verses through the encouragement and accountability of guys who belonged to the Navigators. I memorized Scripture while I was on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ. My goal was the book of James. I learned all the verses but didn't have the whole book memorized at any one time because I didn't review previously learned verses. Memorized Scripture leaks! I did all this during my first 10 years as a believer. Then a 25-year drought began. I felt guilty, but I was too lazy. Simple as that!

Dr. Waylon Moore developed a list of 100 verses to memorize. I was convicted I should be working on them, but I resisted. About 10 years ago conviction turned into action. I wrote a lesson on the importance of Scripture memory in *Running Together to Win* while I wasn't memorizing myself. I included a verse to memorize in each lesson, many of which I hadn't personally learned. God didn't let me get away with that! Finally, I got started, and it's been a struggle. I can't memorize nearly as easily as I could 35-years ago. It took 5-years to memorize those 100 verses. I carved out life space to review my verses. I go over three to nine verses every morning while I'm eating breakfast. It takes me three weeks to review the whole list. Then I start over. I added the verses to memorize in *Running Together to Win* to the list of 100 verses (Week 3, below). I include the first several words on my review card for about 10% of the verses to remind me how they start. The recipe is 1 teaspoon hard work and 10 teaspoons of persistent REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW! It's hard to overstate how vital memorized Scripture has become in my teaching and preaching today. I often quote the verses I've memorized. These verses make a much greater impact on me now than when I didn't know them nearly as well. You *can* memorize Scripture also. Doing so will add fuel injection to your spiritual life! It might even stave off dementia! I've included the verses I've memorized and challenge you to get started and stick with it!

**Week 1** – Sunday - Mt 4:4, Heb 4:12, Jer 15:16, Jn 16:24, Mt 21:22, Phil 4:6-7, Rom 12:1. Monday – Jn 14:21, Heb 5:8, Mt 4:19, Acts 1:8, Mt 28:19-20, Rom 3:23, Rom 6:23. Tuesday – Heb 9:27, Rom 5:8, Eph 2:8-9, Jn 5:24, Jn 1:12, Rev 3:20, 1 Jn 5:13. Wednesday – Jn 5:24, Js 1:5, Isa 30:18, Prov 3:5-6, 1 Cor 10:13, Rom 8:37, Jn 3:30. Thursday – Gal 2:20, 2 Cor 5:15, 1 Cor 6:19-20, Jn 14:26, Jn 4:23, Psa 103:13-14, Jn 3:16. Friday – Jer 31:3, Isa 49:15-16, Heb 13:5, Isa 26:3, Jn 14:2-3, Rom 8:32, Phil 4:19. Saturday – Luke 6:38, Psa 62:11, Mt 11:28-30, Psa 147:3-5, 1 Chron 29:11-12, Jn 1:14.

**Week 2** – Sunday – Dt 6:6-7, Gen 22:18, Isa 59:21, Ecc 10:1, Ecc 8:11, 1 Sam 15:22-23. Monday – Prov 17:27-28, Rom 4:17b, 20-21, Lk 9:23, Jn 8:31, Isa 32:17, Col 2:6-7. Tuesday - Psa 1, Psa 23, Psa 84:11, Psa 62:5, Psa 27:14, Isa 40:31, 2 Pet 3:14, 1 Thess 4:15-16, Rev 20:15. Wednesday – Psa 61:2, Isa 63:9, Psa 18:1-2, Psa 46:1,10, Isa 26:3, Jn 13:13-14, Phil 2:3-4, Prov 13:10, Col 3:23-24. Thursday – Phil 4:13, 2 Cor 12:9, Heb 4:15-16, 2 Pet 1:2-3, 2 Cor 9:8, 1 Cor 1:9, 2 Thess 3:3, Heb 1:9, Phil 4:8. Friday – Psa 27:4,8, Psa 107:9, Isa 43:4, Dt 1:11, Gal 6:7. Saturday – 1 Chron 16:10-12, Heb 11:6, Eph 4:29, Js 1:19-20, Heb 10:38.

**Week 3** – Sunday – Jn 15:5, Heb 10:25, Col 1:18, Jn 14:15. Monday – 1 Pet 2:2, Psa 119:9, 11, Eph 5:18, Gal 5:22-23. Tuesday – 1 Jn 2:16, Eph 10:11-12, Prov 3:34, 1 Cor 6:12. Wednesday – Psa 119:15-16, Mt 22:37-39, Jn 4:24, 1 Cor 10:14. Thursday – 1 Cor 11:26, Jn 15:8, Rom 1:16. Friday – 1 Tim 2:2, Rom 12:11, 1 Cor 12:7. Saturday – Isa 64:8, 1 Cor 4:2, Jn 13:34-35.

### Lesson 29 – The CARE Principle



When I was in third grade, I received some kind of shot while I was at school. I went back to the classroom, and a boy named Clarence, who lived at Emaus Orphan House, was the only one there. The next thing I remember was lying on the floor with people all around me. I had fainted. Clarence had gone for help. Going through a crisis or painful experience with someone develops special relational ties. Those ties are far stronger if that person helps us through the crisis or pain.

This is what I call the “CARE Principle.” The C stands for crisis, the A for assistance, the R for relationship and the E for enhancement. When we assist someone in a crisis, we enhance our relationship and earn the right to further influence their lives. The CARE Principle describes the most effective way worldwide to build relationships with those who don’t yet know Jesus and to lead them to him. Crisis intervention usually includes relieving some kind of pain. We do it because we care. Not everyone we assist will follow Jesus, but some will.

CARE is a summary of Jesus’ approach to ministry. He healed the sick, raised the dead, cast demons out of people, fed the hungry, calmed the sea and made water into wine. He intervened in crisis after crisis. He came to earth to assist in the greatest crisis of all—human sinfulness and its terrible eternal consequences apart from his intervention. He didn’t come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). He is our ministry model. CARE requires self-sacrificial giving to benefit others.

**What crisis and its underlying pain caused you to turn to Jesus?** Our natural sinful independence deceives us into thinking we don’t need Jesus. Normally, the path to him is paved with painful experiences that lead us to look for help somewhere other than where we’ve previously looked. We’re open to consider Jesus. A devastating death of a loved one, being diagnosed with a serious illness, breakups of significant relationships, financial crises, and pressure to produce at work can reduce us to a quivering mass of protoplasm. For those who grew up in the church, the conviction of sin is a painful experience. **What Christian(s) assisted you while you were hurting?**

The CARE principle can help us plan and evaluate our church’s outreach efforts. Many such efforts lack the critical element needed to move people toward seeking Jesus. We might provide free food and games for those in the neighborhood, and people will conclude we are a nice group of people, but they probably won’t start attending our church. They might come to our car show, but they won’t come to our church again until the next car show. We have fed and perhaps entertained them, but we haven’t developed a deep, caring relationship with them or helped them to find healing in their hurting places. Perhaps they are not yet hurting enough to feel any need for help. Many are. People have physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological and relational hurts. Most don’t know Jesus is the answer to their problem. Assisting in one of these areas pays the greatest dividends in influencing people to consider following Jesus wholeheartedly. Our outreach ministry should focus on reaching out to those who are experiencing some sort of crisis. As our light shines, we need to tell people that Jesus is the ultimate source of that light and how they can know him too. **In what crisis situations is your church best equipped to intervene?**

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 30 – Perseverance

Perseverance endures, whatever it takes. It refuses to slacken the pace, compromise obedience or turn back and no longer follow Jesus. “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him” (John 6:66). The world, the flesh and the devil repeatedly test and pressure us to conform to their standards. We walk against the current of “normal life.” Living for Jesus requires trusting and obeying despite perpetual resistance. Perseverance strains to finish the race despite exhaustion. It plods on despite voices within and without that scream, “Stop!”



Like cake, perseverance needs heat to rise to its intended level. It doesn't come in pill form! “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4). Paul commended the Thessalonians for their perseverance and faith through persecutions and trials (2 Thessalonians 1:4). The testing of our faith produces perseverance (James 1:3). God uses the world, flesh and devil's opposition to form Christ-like completeness and maturity (James 1:4) in us. The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. We must “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1).

In college I got a 51 on my first organic chemistry test. I thought I had done okay on it! I learned how to study for the course based on that experience. I studied about 50 hours for the final exam because my goal was to get a B in the course. I did. My “successes” have been more about perseverance than natural ability. Whatever it takes, get it done!

Perseverance is mental toughness' offspring. Let's consider seven words beginning with “un” that cloud our thinking and make us want to throw in the towel. We're tempted to give up because we're uncomfortable, unappreciated, unrecognized, unproductive, unsafe, unrewarded or our efforts seem unsustainable. The self-seeking mind desires comfort through pleasant circumstances. God comforts us in the midst of adversity in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4) through his promises (Psalm 119:50) and unfailing love (Psalm 119:76). “For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:5). Feeling unrewarded tempts us to quit serving. We need to remember whom we're serving! “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23-24).

We sometimes feel those we serve don't appreciate our sacrifices. It can make us want to quit. God cares about both how we serve him and why. One “Well done” from him makes a lifetime of unnoticed service worth it (Matthew 25:21). Only his appreciation ultimately matters. We might want to quit because our service brings no recognition. Jesus' recognizes humble servants. “...Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28). Some stop living for Jesus because it's unsafe. Here and now, it is, but it's the safest thing we can do for the long haul. “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:36-38). We might want to give up because we aren't making any difference. “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9). We're responsible to sow, and God is responsible for the harvest. We might feel like quitting because we can't sustain a life of self-sacrifice indefinitely. Not only can we (Philippians 4:13), it's the only life worth living (John 10:10)!

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 31 – Spiritual Health Index



If doctors didn't know normal adult body temperature ranges between 98 and 99F, they might not prescribe antibiotics for patients with infections and elevated temperatures. If they didn't know normal blood pressure ranges of adults at various ages, they might leave dangerously high blood pressure untreated. Physical exams measure our physical health.

Measuring our spiritual health is just as important. Often pastors say the following about their churches, "We aren't growing numerically, but we're growing spiritually." How do we measure spiritual health? Let me suggest taking the following inventory which measures the health of our spiritual **attitudes** and **behavior**, not what we know.

0 = rarely/not at all; 1 = sometimes; 2 = usually; 3 = almost always/always

Please respond to each statement **honestly** with the number that best describes you (0, 1, 2, or 3)

\_\_\_ I look forward to reading the Bible daily.

\_\_\_ I look forward to spending time with God in prayer daily.

\_\_\_ I daily deny myself by offering God my body to use as He desires.

\_\_\_ I forgive, pray for, and ask God to bless those who have hurt me.

\_\_\_ I spend at least four hours each week feeding my spiritual life and serving God by serving others.

\_\_\_ Using my gifts and abilities to serve God through a specific ministry in my church gives me joy.

\_\_\_ I generously and cheerfully support the Lord's work financially.

\_\_\_ I daily allow God to love others through me.

\_\_\_ Each week I could write at least one way I loved my neighbor as myself.

\_\_\_ Each week I could write at least one way I loved another believer as Jesus loves me.

\_\_\_ I promote the gospel by praying for the salvation

*of lost persons by name, living a Christ-centered life, praising God enthusiastically in our worship service, giving financially to support evangelism, and being prepared to share my hope in Christ with others who ask about it.*

\_\_\_ I look forward to and attend the worship service every week.

\_\_\_ Weekly, I actively participate in at least 1 small group (includes Sunday school)

\_\_\_ Gratitude motivates me to serve God.

\_\_\_ I feel a deep need for God's grace every day.

\_\_\_ I balance speaking the truth and speaking it with love.

\_\_\_ I give regularly to meet the needs of the poor.

\_\_\_ I am helping one or more other people become more like Jesus.

\_\_\_ Total score

Spiritual Health Index = total score divided by 18

Spiritual Health Index =

Work first on improving the one or two areas with the lowest scores. The health score of mature disciples should be 2 or 3 for all 18 items. The italicized statement is the best single indicator of spiritual maturity. Pursue continual improvement.



## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 32 – Improving Your Spiritual Health (Part 1)

**I look forward to reading the Bible daily** – 1. Make room in your daily schedule for Bible reading in a quiet place. 2. Complete the New Testament first, reading at least a chapter/day. Then complete the Old Testament, then the New Testament again etc. using a translation you can understand with helps (e.g. Life Application Study Bible). 3. Daily **write down** in 1-3 sentences at least one life application. See [www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org), More, Whispers.

**I look forward to spending time with God in prayer daily** - 1. Make room in your daily schedule for at least 10 minutes/day of prayer in a quiet place. 2. Balance prayer time among praise, expressing trust, confession, yielding to God, giving thanks and requests. 3. As needed, verbalize your prayers to keep your mind from wandering.

**I daily deny myself by offering God my body to use as He desires.** 1. Memorize Romans 12:1, NIV: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.” 2. Daily ask God’s Spirit to control and empower you --e.g. “Lord, I yield to your control right now. Apart from your life flowing through me, I can do nothing that will make any difference for your Kingdom. Bless me to be a blessing. May rivers of living water flow from my innermost being today for your glory.”

**I forgive, pray for, and ask God to bless those who have hurt me.** 1. Identify everyone whose name can’t pass through your mind without causing a ruckus. 2. Pray for God to bless each one specifically by name every day. 3. Do for them whatever love requires, not what your emotions suggest. Love chooses to bless.

**I spend at least four hours each week feeding my spiritual life and serving God by serving others.** 1. You can feed your spiritual life through Bible reading, listening to Christian radio, prayer, reading Christian books, small groups/worship services, preparing to teach Bible lessons, etc. 2. You serve God by serving others such as ministry at the food bank, helping your neighbor clean up after a snowstorm, preparing for teaching Sunday school, etc. 3. What changes in your priorities do you need to make so your life reflects God’s priorities? 4. Feeding your own spiritual life and serving others are equally important.

**Using my gifts and abilities to serve God through a specific ministry in my church gives me joy.** 1. Who in your church can help connect you with a ministry for which you have passion? 2. If you’re ministry is joyless, who can help you find one that’s a better fit? 3. Your team needs you. Don’t put it off!

**I generously and cheerfully support the Lord’s work financially.** 1. Memorize 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (NIV): “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2. What percentage of your income did you give to God last year? 3. How can your generosity and cheer grow this year?

**I daily allow God to love others through me.** 1. Recognize your inability on your own to love God and others as you ought (John 15:5). 2. Say NO to your own selfish desires and agenda so you can say YES to loving others by meeting their needs. 3. When the Holy Spirit controls you, He loves others through you (Galatians 5:22-23).

**Each week I could write at least one way I loved my neighbor as myself.** 1. Allow God to bless at least one other person through you daily. Pray for the ability to discern who they are. 2. At the end of each day, review whom you blessed and how or how you could have been a blessing but weren’t. 3. Becoming a more loving person requires dying to yourself so you can live in the land of love, joy and peace.

**Each week I could write at least one way I loved another believer as Jesus loves me.** 1. Use your gifts and abilities to serve God through a specific ministry in your church that gives you joy. 2. “From him [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:16, NIV). Using your gifts to bless other believers is the best way to love them.



## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 33 – Improving Your Spiritual Health (Part 2)

**I promote the gospel by praying for the salvation of lost persons I know, living a Christ-centered life, praising God enthusiastically in our worship service, giving financially to support evangelism, and being prepared to share my hope in Christ with others who ask about it.** 1. Develop a list of at least six unsaved persons and pray daily for their salvation. 2. Following Jesus is an assignment with no vacation time! 3. If you're more committed to Jesus than your favorite sports teams, show it inside and outside the sanctuary. 4. Give to at least one organization (hopefully, your own local church!) that's effectively reaching people for Christ. 5. Write your personal journey to faith focusing on what your life was like before following Jesus, how you decided to follow him, and the difference following him has made. Look for open doors to share your story with others.

**I look forward to and attend the worship service every week.** 1. To experience inspiring worship every week, come inspired! 2. To come inspired, worship God privately and publicly every day by living for him in all you say and do. 3. If you show up inspired, you'll probably leave inspired and look forward to doing it all over again next week!

**Weekly, I actively participate in at least one small group (includes Sunday school)** 1. Believers need one another as much as the parts of the human body need each other (1 Corinthians 12:21). 2. Start attending a small group in your church and soak and participate in the Jesus-life you find there. 3. Don't put it off! Not being part of a small group is hazardous to your spiritual health.

**Gratitude motivates me to serve God.** 1. Meditate on the hopeless forever you deserve from God and on Jesus' taking your sin-penalty on himself. 2. Count the ways God has blessed you today, and give thanks. 3. Give thanks for his blessings in the endless eternity ahead (Romans 8:17, NIV). 4. Choose to overflow with thankfulness (Colossians 2:7).

**I feel a deep need for God's grace every day.** 1. You need God's grace more than your next breath. God doesn't expect you to serve him apart from his grace. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NIV). 2. His grace enables you to do everything God has appointed for you to do for him (Philippians 4:13, NIV).

**I balance speaking the truth and speaking it with love.** 1. Speaking the truth in love is necessary for the body of Christ to become mature (Ephesians 4:15). 2. It's more important that people be like Christ than that they like you. 3. Wanting people to like us more than we want them to be transformed is selfish. 4. Brutalizing others with the truth is equally self-centered. 5. Jesus was full of grace and truth (John 1:14), and he wants to be that in you. 6. God uses the truth as a surgical scalpel to cut away what's not Christ-like in his church – but you need to deliver that truth under the warm, bright operating room light of love.

**I give regularly to meet the needs of the poor.** 1. Jesus loved the poor and equated your treatment of them with your treatment of him (Matthew 25:31-46). 2. Jesus is your life (Philippians 1:21), so his concern for the poor should be yours as well. 3. Demonstrate consistent concern for the plight of the poor. For example, donate items to or volunteer at the food bank, minister to the homeless, give to organizations such as World Vision to minister to the poor, sponsor orphans, transport needy people, build houses for the needy through Habitat for Humanity, provide gift cards for the needy, deliver meals on wheels to senior citizens, do chores for a needy person, send cards to nursing home residents, donate your good used shoes and clothing. 4. Commit yourself to doing one or two things regularly that minister to the poor and needy.

**I'm helping one or more other people become more like Jesus.** 1. You're born spiritually to reproduce. You don't have to be perfect to do it. Not everything in your life is worth imitating. The part that's like Jesus is the part that others can copy. 2. Helping others become more like Jesus is God's Miracle Grow in your own spiritual development. 3. Use reproducible materials that others can use to help others who can help others such as the Running Together to Win ([www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org), click More, Discipleship Tools #1, and Running Together to Win).

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 34 – Stewardship (Part 1)



Many think stewardship applies only to how we spend our money. The truth is we'll have to give an account to God of the A to Z of how we spent our lives. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV). Stewardship is glorifying God with our entire life. Let's consider eight ways to do that.

God expects our lives to overflow with thankfulness (Colossians 2:7). My thankfulness is increasing with time. It's intentional. God's gracious work is invisible to the self-absorbed but is everywhere to the admiring worshipper. We replaced our roof in 2013. I picked up untold hundreds of

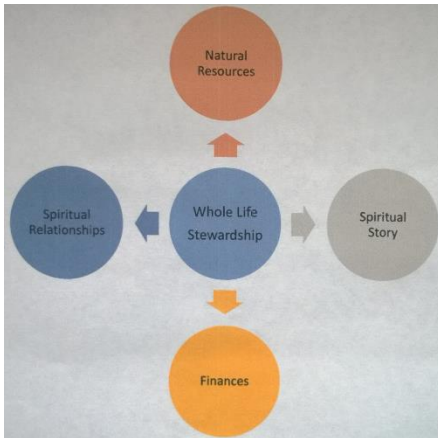
nails around the house with a magnet and none with my feet! I'm thankful for that! While using the magnet I heard the click...click...click of nails hitting it. That illustrates how words of thanksgiving should flow from our lips as we observe God's abundant goodness everywhere around us. "Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song" (Psalm 95:2). Giving thanks in all circumstances glorifies him by demonstrating we trust him even when we don't understand his actions or timing. (1 Thessalonians 5:18). **Review each day at its conclusion and give thanks for at least five of its blessings. Send thank you notes to individuals who have blessed you.**

We'll have to give an account of how we use the talents and spiritual gifts God has given us. Every believer is either a minister or an equipper of ministers (Ephesians 4:11-12). Every believer has at least one gift to be used to minister to others (1 Peter 4:10). Equippers help us identify our spiritual gifts, temperament and spiritual passion and deploy them in fruitful ministry. My spiritual gifts include teaching, writing, pastor, and administration. Check "Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 24" for a spiritual gifts inventory. Equippers and ministers work together to build up the church. "We are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace God has given us" (Romans 12:6, NIV). If we don't, the church suffers, and we're partly responsible. **What gifts are you presently using to build up the church?**

We'll have to give an account of how we use our time. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time" (Colossians 4:5). Redeeming the time doesn't mean driving 75 in a 25 mph zone! We use our time wisely when we work on overcoming what isn't like Christ in us, love God with all of our being and love our neighbor as ourselves. Our time to serve God on earth is limited. Our energy diminishes as we age. **How are you taking advantage of the opportunities your church provides to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? What daily time slot do you devote to God's word and prayer? How are you using your time to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness?** Refuse to be a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God (2 Timothy 3:4).

We'll have to give an account of how we used all the resources God has entrusted to us. Everything we have we've received from him (1 Corinthians 4:7). Faithful stewards manage their resources to benefit God and others. Everything we do is to focus on bringing glory to God, not ourselves (1 Corinthians 10:31). Our resources include our body, training, positions, skills, wisdom, the Holy Spirit, God's word, our family, our possessions, our influence, our knowledge, our words, our relationships and our freedom. God is the pie plate of our life, not just a single slice of pie. All of life, not just part of it, is about glorifying him.

### Lesson 35 – Stewardship (Part 2)



We'll have to give an account of how we share with others the story of God's work in our life. Be prepared to answer everyone who asks the reason for your hope in Jesus (1 Peter 3:15). your unique story is a significant way you share your faith with others. Think about and write it down to communicate it effectively. Be able to share in about three minutes what your life was like before you met Christ, how you came to know him, and the difference he has made. **Have you thought about and written down your spiritual story? If not, when will you?**

We'll have to give an account of how we use the earth and its natural resources. The earth and everything in it belongs to God (Psalm 24:1). We're to manage it responsibly. God created it to glorify himself (Psalm 19:1-6), and he greatly values

it. The Great Commandment is to love God and what he loves. Caring for the earth helps the poor, because air and water pollution hurt them most. Earth-stewardship is part of loving our neighbor as ourselves. **How can you minimize your energy footprint and your negative effect on others by your pollution?**

"We, being many, are one" (Romans 12:5, NIV). We'll have to give an account of our stewardship of that oneness. How do we promote oneness with other believers? The "one another" and "each other" of Scripture direct those relationships. They include: wash one another's feet (John 13:14); love one another (John 13:34-35); be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10); honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10); live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16); stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13); accept one another as Christ accepted you (Romans 15:7); instruct one another (Romans 15:14); agree with one another (1 Corinthians 1:10); serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13); be patient, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2); be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32); forgiving each other as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32); speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19); submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21); bear with each other (Colossians 3:13); teach & admonish one another (Colossians 3:16); encourage one another & build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11); spur one another on to love & good deeds (Hebrews 10:24). **Which "one another" or "each other" relational skills need immediate attention in your life?**

We'll have to give an account of how we use our material resources. Seeking wealth as an end is a dead end. The rich fool sought wealth, but his checkout time arrived unexpectedly. Money is a cruel master, but a wonderful servant. Don't let it keep you from loving God and others. Commit to godly values, regardless how much or little money you have. Material resources can further God's kingdom now and after we die. We can do much good through our will. A Churches of God layman left money to both the Church of God Home and Doubling Gap Center which helped remodel the chapel at the Home and build the Gymnatorium at the Camp.

Jesus said, "The foolish man builds his house upon the sand..." (Matthew 7:26). He wants us to manage our financial resources wisely. Dave Ramsey's Seven Baby Steps have helped many get control of their financial resources and build wealth so they can give. Giving brings joy. The rich fool never discovered the joy of using money to help others. **Have you discovered the joy of generosity?** Many people need our help. We give for our own good because giving is the drain plug of our greed. Jesus affirmed that one who gains the whole world but loses his soul loses (Mark 8:36). It's easier to put three dollars in the offering plate when that's all we have than to put 3 million in the plate when that's all we have. Money can quickly stop serving us and become our master. Seek more than wealth. Manage your money wisely. Discover the joy of giving. Remember your responsibility to God.

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 36 – Conformity



We all conform. We match how we think, feel and behave to some norm. Alumni are expected to cheer for their alma mater at the homecoming game. United States citizens are expected to pay taxes. Motorists in the United States are expected to drive on the right side of the road, to stop when school buses display flashing red lights, to drive no faster than the speed limit, to use turn signals before turning and to stop at stop signs and red lights. Okay, maybe we don't all conform!

Another kind of conformity takes place with no exceptions. We begin life conforming to the world's deceptive definition of real life. Two would-be-life-shapers battle through the ages—God and the world. Both seek to influence how we think, feel and behave. To be a friend of one is to be an enemy of the other (James 4:4). Driving north excludes simultaneously driving south. God must intervene in our lives for us to conform to his ways rather than the world's. Otherwise, we're like fish who get their oxygen from the water without realizing it. We get our values from our culture and go the world's way instinctively. Christians must choose to conform to the life of Jesus. Those who profess to be Christians but choose to love and conform to the world demonstrate where their real loyalties lie.

1 John 2:15-16 explain the world's ways, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world." (NIV). What we love shapes us! How we think molds our destiny. The world shapes those who love it, and they embrace its values. God shapes those who love him, embrace his values and seek to be like him. We have a choice, and he commands us to choose wisely, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2, NIV). God's will and the world's will are mutually exclusive.

We're born lovers of this world and naturally wired to follow the lusts of the flesh and eyes and the pride of life, wherever they lead. It's the most natural thing "in the world." The world encourages us like a demonic cheerleader. Satisfy your own desires and make your own name great. Go after the girls/guys, gold and glory. Get as much as you can, as long as you can wherever you can. Meet your own needs. Seek first your own kingdom and glory and aggressively pursue the things you want. It's the American way. But it's not God's way.

His way is to reprogram our minds with the truth and thereby change the way we think. Our assumptions change. Our values change. Our behavior changes. His word and Spirit set us free from the dark dungeon of foolish thinking created by believing lies (John 8:32). This reprogramming requires our cooperation and discipline. I've spent more than 4,000 hours reading and studying God's word in my personal devotions since I received Christ in 1968. That mind renewing has helped me see the world much differently than I did before 1968. Hardly an area of my life remains untouched. Life isn't about us, but about him. It's about seeking his kingdom and righteousness, not our own kingdom and glory. It's about loving and obeying him, loving our neighbor as ourselves and loving other believers as Jesus has loved us. It's about using our resources to bring God glory. Loving him shapes us. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Romans 8:29, NIV). The inevitable ocean toward which the rivers of all our lives flow is being like Jesus. Our blessed destination is to be like him and to see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

Joshua wrote, "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NIV). Choose wisely.

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 37 – Grace and Gratitude



Scottish theologian Thomas Erskine said, "In the New Testament, religion **is grace and ethics is gratitude.**"<sup>1</sup> Grace is often defined as **God's riches at Christ's expense.** Let's explore what that means. Imagine a family riding in a boat driven by an outboard motor. That's a picture of the church. The boat (grace) keeps the family afloat, and the motor (gratitude) powers them across the water. If our church isn't going anywhere, lack of gratitude to God for all He's done is likely a significant part of the problem. Let's first reflect on grace.

Grace is undeserved favor with a transforming purpose. Suppose I dump my garbage on my neighbor's front porch every week for months on end. He doesn't have to be a genius to figure out who's dumping on him. The garbage itself provides all the clues he needs. Suppose I find myself in a financial bind and knock on that same neighbor's door to see if he can loan me one hundred dollars. He has already been gracious in not calling the police to report me. After I make my irrational request, he pulls five twenties from his wallet and says, "I'm not going to loan you the money. I'm going to give it to you." That's grace in twenties! If I have any sense at all, the garbage dumping will cease.

We've dumped our spiritual garbage on God's porch, and instead of commanding us to go away forever, He actively pursues blessing us through His Son, Jesus Christ (Luke 15:1-7). By God's undeserved favor through our trust in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross in our place, He forgives our sins. He expects we will forgive others who have offended us (Matthew 6:14-15) and live for Jesus who died for us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). If transformation in the direction of becoming more like Jesus isn't happening, we should rightly question whether we are under God's grace or His judgment.

Grace is the ultimate shape-shifter. It takes the form of whatever the need is. I emailed a friend and asked if he could get a rototiller working that has been sitting outside for a couple years. He said, "Yep, I can fix anything." God's grace fixes everything, but it functions in harmony with His sovereign will, not independently. It was on display through Jesus' life. Emotional, physical and spiritual problems dissolved as grace flowed through Him. Grace is more about fixing us than fixing our problems. Our biggest problem is the gap between our character and Jesus. Fixing us means making us more like Him (Romans 8:29). Whatever you need today consistent with God's will, His grace will supply. Do you need the right words to speak to someone who is hurting? Do you need wisdom to make an important decision? Do you need courage to live against the prevailing ungodly current of life? Whatever you need, God's grace will provide.

Gratitude changes how we think, feel and behave. TV commercials tell us a certain lawyer will get us what we deserve. The very uncomfortable biblical truth is that we deserve hell. I definitely don't want what I deserve. Gratitude springs from recognizing that God gives us what we don't deserve. I recently read of a Chambersburg, PA wrestler who volunteered to forfeit a wrestling match to an injured opponent so the latter could win his 100<sup>th</sup> career match instead of graduating from high school with 99 wins. The wrestler who received that gift should have overflowed with gratitude. Gratitude is like an outboard motor that powers the Christian life. More is better. My boat is rated for a 35 horsepower motor, but I run it with a 9.9 horsepower. I could go much faster with a larger motor. If you're just putting along in the Christian life, your gratitude motor probably needs adjusted!

1. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/t/thomasersk184402.html>



## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 38 – Pray-giarism



One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’ (Matthew 22:35-37, NIV). The picture is from the Hebrew Old Testament. The text of Psalm 100 isn’t clear, but unless you’re a better Hebrew scholar than I, you couldn’t read it even if it were! Jesus’ Old Testament summary takes 22 words in the Greek New Testament and 19 in the NIV text.

I’m focusing on the last part of Jesus’ summary. What does it mean to love God with all your mind? It includes being “prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,” (1 Peter 3:15). Preparing to defend your faith is vital, but I’m going a different direction with this lesson. Another part of loving God with all your mind is praying intelligently. Plagiarism is taking someone else's work or ideas & passing them off as yours. Pray-giarism is taking God’s ideas, words and will and turning them into your prayers. That’s a life-quake-proof foundation on which to build your life. That’s important because God promises that if you ask anything in harmony with his will, he hears you and your prayers will be answered (1 John 5:14-15).

I’ll illustrate pray-giarism by showing how Psalm 100 can direct your prayers. “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth” (v. 1, NIV). Here are some examples of shouting for joy to the Lord prayers – “Lord, I’m yours! I’m a sheep in your flock! You’re my shepherd. I shall not want (Psalm 23)! You’ve forgiven my sins (1 John 2:12)! You credited Christ’s righteousness to my account (2 Corinthians 5:21)! I’m your heir and a co-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17)! Nothing can separate me from your love (Romans 8:38-39)! You’ve given me the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16)! You are my refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1)! Jesus is to me the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24)!

“Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs” (v. 2, NIV). Prayer includes singing. The Psalms were Israel’s hymn book and prayer book. Spiritual passion indicates spiritual health. True worship isn’t given grudgingly or of necessity, but happily and cheerfully. A joyful song from my childhood was, *I’ve Got That Joy*. Sing it wholeheartedly to the Lord. Sing it twice. “I’ve got that joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart. I’ve got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart to stay. And I’m so happy, so very happy. I’ve got the love of Jesus in my heart. And I’m so happy so very happy. I’ve got the love of Jesus in my heart.” That lifted your spirit, didn’t it?

“Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture” (v. 3, NIV). We sometimes live as if someone or something other than God were God. Confess that. Lord, Sometimes I treat other people & things as if they were God. I value them more than I value you. I confess my foolishness. May you alone be my defining passion. As a work of art belongs to the artist, I belong to you. Every cell in my body carries your design. Lord, I’m part of your family and dear to your heart. I’m your sheep. I need your constant attention and supervision. You have taken responsibility for my welfare. Thank you!

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name” (v. 4, NIV). I thank you for your overflowing goodness. As I focus on that goodness, may I overflow with gratitude-driven thanksgiving. Thank you for... (Name at least ten things for which you are thankful). Lord, You’re worthy of honor and glory forever!

“For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” (v. 5, NIV). You are good and your love prevails from vanishing point past to vanishing point future. Your faithfulness never takes a vacation. I can’t escape it and don’t want to. When seas and mountains pass away, your faithfulness will endure. You don’t have to pray-giarize all the time, but your prayers are probably most intelligent when you do!

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 39 – Broadway Mickey



Joe Namath was known for his indulgence in the nightlife in New York City and was dubbed Broadway Joe. Broadway isn't the best way. The Bible warns about the dangers of living on the broad, easy way. "Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention" (Matthew 7:13-14, The Message).

Have you heard of Broadway Mickey? I didn't think so. Broadway Mickey was a mouse who lived in my basement. Broadway Joe indulged in the "Big Apple's" nightlife. Broadway Mickey indulged in the nightlife of my basement. He "partied" with fellow revelers who were brothers, sisters and cousins. He worked the nightshift and ate whatever he could find. He left dark brown calling cards to advertise his presence. He was known among his acquaintances for his love of peanut butter. That was his defining passion. It led him to make a foolish choice that ended his earthly existence. It was all part of a sinister plot against him he never saw coming. To him his passion was completely innocent. It was just who he was. He didn't see how it could possibly lead to his undoing. He'd been instructed in the finer points of avoiding mousetraps of various sorts since he was only two eyes and a squeak.

On the picture on the left you see the broad way that led to Mickey's destruction. It was a simple wooden ramp leading to the top of a bucket. From Mickey's perspective, it led upwards toward the beckoning smell of peanut butter smeared on the inside of the bucket. He paid no attention to the three inches of water in the bottom of the bucket. His focus was entirely on getting some of that peanut butter for himself. He stretched to the limit. Then he extended himself a little farther and lost his balance and fell to the bottom of the bucket and his death. Walking the plank was one of the easiest things Mickey ever did. It was also the last thing he ever did. He does not appear in the picture on the right because his next of kin have not yet been notified of his demise! Now you have another strategy to deal with the Mickeys in your life, but that's not really the point.

What's the peanut butter in your life? That's the point. What distracts you from loving and serving God and others wholeheartedly? What competes with God to be the reference point and defining passion of your life? What do you think about when you are free to think about anything? For what do others know you? What is the first thing that pops into their minds when they think of you? What tempts you to walk on the broad way that leads to destruction? It probably seems as innocent and unthreatening to your long-term well-being as Mickey's passion for peanut butter did to his. And it's so very exciting, isn't it? It energizes you. It also distracts you from God's purpose for your life. That's all that matters to the Enemy. All the better if others consider your passion praiseworthy. That provides powerful motivation to walk the broad way that isn't God-ordained. Our defining passions often become our addictions. They become idols that promise much but inevitably disappoint. They are substitutes for God. For some of them, others will praise us. That praise can blind us. Beware! What's the peanut butter in your life?

There is a sinister plot against you. You've probably been instructed in how to avoid many of life's traps, but probably, not this one. As a young person, I was taught things to avoid that weren't good for me. They included alcohol, tobacco, girls with loose morals, etc. Never was I warned to guard my defining passion. Your defining passion, if it is something other than loving and serving God and others wholeheartedly, has put you firmly on the broad path that leads to destruction. You're living in the darkness. Turn from that darkness to the Jesus-centered light. Don't be a Broadway Mickey.

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 40 – Dying to Live



Some effective life strategies seem contrary to common sense. One might think throwing a shot put, discus or javelin as far as possible takes all-out muscular effort. The truth is the best throwers are very relaxed. Trying too hard tenses up muscles and results in shorter throws. More effort without relaxation translates into less distance. The same principle applied when I helped my Uncle Bill plant celery. We were both sitting on seats on a celery planter slowly moving through the field. We both had a handful of celery plants in our left hands. We both put those plants one at a time in designated slots connected to a rotating wheel. He did it way better than I did. Trying to move my right hand as fast as possible wasn't working. I was trying too hard and tight as a piano wire. I frequently stopped the machine so I wouldn't miss a slot.

Uncle Bill, a seasoned veteran, told me that to go faster, I had to relax more. He was right.

James Calvert, a missionary to the cannibals of the Fiji Islands, spoke truth contrary to common sense. When Calvert and his fellow-missionaries arrived at the Islands the ship's captain tried to talk him out of his missionary commitment, saying, *"You will lose your life and the life of those with you if you go among such savages."* Calvert replied *"We died before we came here."*<sup>1</sup> James and his missionary friends had to keep dying every day thereafter as well. That's precisely what Jesus told him and us to do. *"And he [Jesus] died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again"* (2 Corinthians 5:15, NIV).

That one must die to live is contrary to common sense. The last thing we want to do is die. It's the first thing we need to do to live life to the full. Every Christian who bears much fruit has died to self-centered living. *"Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds"* (John 12:24, NIV). A planted kernel of wheat produces about 60 to 100 kernels. That's consistent with the return of those who are good soil of 30, 60 and 100-fold (Mark 4:8). Joy doesn't come from living it up but from dying to self-centered living for the benefit of God and others. The most satisfying moments of my life are when I make a difference in others' lives for Jesus. Before that could happen, I had to die to what I wanted to do with my life (work in fisheries biology) and agree to take the first step on a significantly different path (vocational Christian service). The commitment to die to self-centered living and live for God's purposes must be renewed daily. Paul wrote that he died daily (1 Corinthians 15:31). William Jones, a free black man, was buried in what is now our backyard in 1853 (picture). For us, every day needs its own tombstone. Then he said to them all: *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me"* (Luke 9:23, NIV). Yesterday's sacrifices are no substitute for today's, nor can they fill today with joy. Joy can't be canned, frozen, dried, or freeze-dried and enjoyed tomorrow, next week or next month. It must be harvested fresh every day by my yielding myself to the control of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). He produces the fruit of joy.

Baptism pictures this biblical truth. *"We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"*<sup>3</sup> Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?<sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life....<sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we no longer be slaves to sin—<sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been set free from sin (Romans 6:2-5, 7, NIV). Our tombstone's inscription is the same as our Savior's — *"Not my will but yours be done"* (Luke 22:42, NIV).

1. <http://www.afaithtoliveby.com/2001/08/29/we-died-before-we-came>.



## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 41 - Special Delivery



My family is making more purchases online and fewer in stores. Delivery people come to our house frequently, bringing things we value. Salvation is God's delivery service. Shipping is always free! It's far more than delivery from hell. God's business is exalting Jesus. It has a predictable pattern. God delivers us from all in us that is not like Jesus and its consequences and makes us like his Son with all its rewards (Romans 8:29). Extraordinary grace lies behind this indescribable gift (2 Corinthians 9:14-15).

Let's consider, from a very long list, a few things from which God delivers us. He delivers us from melanoma of the heart. Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV) states, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Recently I've had an ongoing theological e-mail exchange with a friend who professes to be an atheist. He passionately believes the world is corrupt, but is totally blind to the corruption of his own heart. In November, 2015, I heard my dermatologist point to a mole on my cheek and say, "It's a melanoma." The mole had been growing but caused me no pain at all. I didn't know I had a problem. I took his word for it. God says we have a heart problem. We can see clearly that others have a heart problem, but we must take God's word for it that we do. God doesn't use stents or medication. He does heart transplants that turn deceitful hearts into ones fully devoted to him.

Jesus came to deliver us out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). When we're living in darkness we're driving 90 mph in a torrential downpour at night without headlights or windshield wipers. We can't see where we're going. We get hurt. We hurt others. Jesus came to deliver us from hurtful ways to healing ways.

Jesus delivers us from entrapping lies -- ours, others, and Satan's. Sir Walter Scott wrote, "Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive." Abraham Lincoln insisted no man's memory is good enough to lie successfully. According to a 2002 study conducted by the University of Massachusetts, 60% of adults can't have a ten minute conversation without lying at least once.<sup>1</sup> Jesus is delivering us from lying lips to lips full of grace and truth. The devil's lies are the most serious. He suggests we have plenty of time to get serious about walking with God. He tells us God loves people too much to send anyone to hell. He insists the Bible is an old book that doesn't apply to life today. Those are just his tip of the iceberg lies. Jesus came that we would know the truth and be set free from entrapping lies (John 8:32).

Jesus came to earth to deliver us from God-substitutes which let us down and are unworthy of our trust. Our defining passions often point directly at our idols, our God-substitutes. Misdirected love of these idols leads to bondage. "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything'—but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12). If God isn't our defining passion, we're guilty of idolatry.

Jesus came to earth to deliver us from an apathetic "who cares?" attitude to an "I care!" attitude. He came to deliver us from fear to trust and peace. He came to deliver us from being promise-breakers to being promise-keepers. He came to turn our lives from harshness to gentleness, from crookedness to overflowing goodness and from arrogance to humility. He came to make us like himself. In 1992 Gatorade tried to convince us to be like Mike [Michael Jordan]. There's no substitute for being like Jesus! It all happens special delivery!

1. [mentalfloss.com/.../30609/60-people-cant-go-10-minutes-without-lying](http://mentalfloss.com/.../30609/60-people-cant-go-10-minutes-without-lying)

## Disciple-Making 101



### Lesson 42 – Biblical Stewardship's Foundation

My best deal, next to my wife's consent to marry me, was paying \$0.98 for a pair of lined jeans and a belt from Aramark in 2016. My worst was selling an ice-fishing shelter for \$10.00 in 1995.

Antiques Roadshow features people who often purchase for a few dollars objects worth thousands.

Biblical stewardship's foundation is an incomparably greater deal than any on Antiques Roadshow. Paul describes it in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. Jesus sacrificed his life to delete our sins from and add his righteousness to our accounts. We need both transactions. The value of his sacrifice is beyond calculation. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19, NIV). God's deal is the best we're ever going to get. A trillion dollars for your used toilet paper pales in comparison.

It's wrong to think Jesus expects nothing in return for all he has done for us. "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15, NIV). He expects us to wholeheartedly follow and live for him on earth from new birth to death.

Why would anyone live for another person? In December 2016, two young men were pulled out of a burning car near Middletown, Pennsylvania. Both suffered serious burns. Without their rescuers, their lives would have ended in that car. Can you imagine how indebted they must feel to their rescuers? Nevertheless, their "salvation" has an expiration date. Someday the two who were rescued from the flames will die. Those Jesus rescues from the flames of hell will never die. His salvation has no expiration date!

We deserve death, judgment and flames. Do you live like you *deserve* this greatest of all deals? You don't. I don't need to know you to know that. You don't need to know me to know I don't either. Gratitude is the foundation of biblical whole-life stewardship. The motivation to live for Jesus is his love for us. It uncontrollably carries us as a wave pushes a surfer. Jesus' sacrifice won't be very motivating if we don't reflect on it! Start every day thinking how much Jesus has done *for* you. Close every day thanking him for all he has done *through* you. Gratitude is the only gushing spring from which wholehearted, whole-life stewardship can flow indefinitely. Ride the wave of grace 24/7. Expect it to carry you through all life's ups and downs.

Jesus asks something in return for rescuing us from death, judgment and flames. He has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation is what we do. Faithful whole-life stewardship is how we do it. Reconciliation means turning God's enemies into his friends. We were all offenders. We were God's enemies. Sin was a Mount Everest Barrier between God and us. We were guilty of treason. We rebelled against our Creator and the Captain of our ship. We insisted on living for ourselves rather than for him. By the cross God reconciled us to himself and removed the barrier that separated him from us. God unloaded our sins on Jesus on the cross. He was buried under a Mount Manure of our sins. Its peak is far above the clouds. His righteousness is credited to the accounts of all who turn from their rebellion and receive Jesus as Savior and Lord. The way of reconciliation is open. Those reconciled by God's undeserved favor through faith are recruited to reconcile rebels and build them up in the faith to reconcile others. Doctrine is grace and ethics is gratitude. Whole-life stewardship is the intended result.

How should we then live? Live like those who have been pulled from the flames. Let gratitude to your Rescuer unendingly fill the sails of your life. Make him your organizing center every day. Use all the resources he has given you for his glory. You are not your own, you have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19). Faithfulness is required of stewards (1 Corinthians 4:2). Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else.

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 43 – Expect Opposition



Vegetable gardens need a lot of help to be productive. Like political kingpins, they have many enemies. Around 2000 I expanded my garden from 40 to 850 square feet. I removed at least 1000 pounds of rocks to give vegetable roots more room to roam. Equal parts rock and dirt became mostly dirt. I removed roots from a Lilac bush which competed with my plants. I hoed the garden weekly to remove weeds which continually emerged and sucked up valuable water and nutrients. I battled cucumber bugs, squash bugs, aphids, cabbage worms, harlequin bugs, zucchini worms, tomato horn worms, carrot weevils

and carrot root flies. I fought tomato blight, powdery mildew, brown spots, blossom end rot, sunscald, and anthracnose. Drought conditions some years significantly decreased productivity. Deer, groundhogs, squirrels and rabbits came uninvited to my garden table. Wind storms pushed over some of my plants. Freezing temperatures killed most of my transplants one early April night. I've added lime, wood ash, fertilizers and 1000 pounds of chopped leaves since 2000 to replenish nutrients. Vegetable gardens need a lot of help to be productive.

Producing spiritual fruit is far more challenging than growing blue ribbon tomatoes. Spiritual opposition is like hurricane force winds compared to the gentle breezes of disease, weeds, rocks, or drought that threaten a garden's wellbeing. The parable of the sower describes several fruit-preventing forces (Matthew 13:1-23). Without them, God's word naturally produces spiritual fruit as zucchini seeds yield zucchinis in an ideal environment. Like a tourniquet, these opposing forces cut off the flow of love toward God and others, like zucchini worms cut off the flow of water and nutrients to zucchini leaves. These limiting factors explain why relatively few professing Christians remind anyone of Jesus.

In Matthew 13:18-23 Jesus explains the deeper meaning of the birds eating up the seed sown along the path. The evil one snatches away God's word sown in hearts (v. 19). That word makes no more sense to them than a foreign language and leaves no tracks in their hearts. They hear it on May 29<sup>th</sup>. By May 30<sup>th</sup> it's long gone. The devil makes it disappear, like water evaporating from a hot plate. No comprehension. No obedience. No fruit.

God's word falling on rocky soil illustrates those who joyfully receive the word initially but then turn back and go their own way when they encounter trouble or persecution (v. 21). The seed is sown May 29<sup>th</sup>. It germinates in a few days, looks healthy for a while, but never even blossoms. Partial comprehension. Conditional following. No fruit.

God's word falling among thorns refers to those who don't bear fruit because the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth distract and preoccupy them. They never get around to the main things of loving God and others (v. 22). Self-deception blocks self-sacrifice. Worries and wealth squeeze the life out of self. The seed is sown May 29<sup>th</sup>, but a frenetic life and misdirected energy utterly crush any chance of its bearing fruit.

The devil has designed the world system to provide whatever the flesh wants and to resist what the Holy Spirit wants. It caters to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Pursuing pleasure in the forms of sex, wealth and glory derail people from bearing fruit for God's kingdom. Following Jesus is, thanks to world system organization, like driving west in the east bound lane of the expressway during rush hour traffic. Many will curse us, make rude gestures, call us stupid and stubbornly try to turn us around to join them as they speed toward meaningless oblivion. Let's make God's word, not popular opinion, our GPS.

Another persistent source of opposition is inside us. The sinful nature loves to have its own way in everything. It pridefully preens in front of the mirror. It's self-sufficient, self-seeking, self-satisfied, self-directed, and ultimately, self-destructive. The most dangerous opposition disguises itself as a helping breeze while pushing us toward the falls.

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 44 – Coaching (Part 1)



Coaching is helping believers achieve their maximum spiritual potential. Some life coaches primarily ask questions to spur others on to become all they were meant to be. My approach is based on coaching throwing events at Middletown Area High School for 18 seasons. My eight principles use “coaching” as an acrostic. They include: **C**are, **O**bserve, **A**plaud, **C**onfidence-build, **H**elp Succeed, **I**nspire, **N**itty-Gritty and **G**oal-set.

**Care** is the first principle. For whose benefit are you coaching? Is it mostly about you or about those you coach? Coaching effectiveness is built on trust and respect. It won’t take those you coach long to conclude whether coaching is about their success or yours. Caring is about keeping the spotlight on others rather than yourself. For several seasons, I gave a “High Five Award.” It included (while all the throwers were assembled) flipping a nickel high in the air to a person I was honoring for their hard work at practice or for some achievement. One day I said, “This isn’t going to make anybody rich.” A girl mumbled aloud, “I don’t know about that.” The positive recognition in the group setting was worth much more than a nickel. In 2011 one girl shared in a newspaper article written about her that I had called and offered to coach her discus practice on December 24<sup>th</sup>. We practiced about once a week in the off-season, but that’s the one she remembered.

**Observe** is the second principle. Earl Bell coaches world-class pole vaulters. He repeatedly identifies and removes the flaw in technique that is hurting the athlete’s performance most. It is successive approximation toward good technique, mastering one key fundamental at a time. I discovered Jerry, a 62-year-old javelin thrower, hadn’t learned to hold the javelin correctly. In 2002 I observed a girl releasing the discus improperly. In 2005 she was a state medalist. Today she is the throws coach at Kutztown University. In 2016 I observed a girl throwing the discus with her arm alone instead of her whole body. About six weeks later her throws had improved 30 feet. So, what is most limiting the spiritual growth of those you help? Do they have a daily time in God’s word and in prayer? Do they harbor bitterness against someone who has offended them? Identify the greatest limiting factor. Consult [www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglenchurchofgod.org) and click More, Becoming a Healthier Church, Underlying Issues Inventories, Healthy Spirituality, for possible limiting factors.

**Applaud** improvement is the third principle. The day after every track meet, I award Hershey Kisses® to throwers. They receive two Hershey Kisses® for every personal best performance at the meet, whether they scored any points for the team or not. Their performances in the first meet of the season are automatically deemed a personal best. Additional awards in subsequent meets require throwing at least a fraction of an inch farther than those initial marks. Athletes also get one Hershey Kiss® for every team point they score in the meet. The maximum award for a meet is five Hershey Kisses®. How can you applaud spiritual growth in those you coach? Recognizing their progress releases energy for more growth.

**Confidence-build** is the fourth principle. I’ve had four athletes win at least one state championship medal. Before that happened, every one of them performed very poorly in at least one big meet. It takes strength, good technique *and* confidence to perform at the highest level. Without confidence, strength and technique collapse under pressure. Other things being equal, at the state championship level, confidence separates those who medal from those who don’t. How can you build confidence in the speaking, writing, serving skills of those you coach? Help them own Philippians 4:13: “I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (NIV).

## Disciple-Making 101

### Lesson 45 – Coaching (Part 2)



Coaching helps believers achieve their maximum spiritual potential. My eight coaching principles use “coaching” as an acrostic. They include: **Care, Observe, Applaud, Confidence-build, Help Succeed, Inspire, Nitty-Gritty** and **Goal-set**. Lesson 44 looked at the first four. Let’s consider the rest now.

**Help Succeed** is the fifth coaching principle. In track and field, matching events with individual ability is vital. In 2000 and 2001 a Middletown girl focused on the hurdles. She was mediocre. In 2002 she tried javelin throwing. She set the girls’ javelin throw school record in 2003 which still stood after the 2016 season. A Middletown boy who graduated in 2012 was the track team’s best male athlete. He could have been good in many events, but he excelled in the javelin throw, partially because of his unusual flexibility. He placed first in District 3 among about 350 district javelin throwers. Helping others succeed in carrying out God’s purpose begins with helping them identify that purpose. It is closely connected to their spiritual gifts, spiritual passion and temperament. For helpful resources, see [www.stoneglchurchofgod.org](http://www.stoneglchurchofgod.org), Click More, Discipleship Tools #1, Running Together to Win or click More, Becoming a Healthier Church, Healthy Ministry.

**Inspire** is the sixth coaching principle. In 2008 the mother of one of my athletes made a shadow box for me that contained the following words from William Arthur Ward: “Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you.” Inspired throwers work on their events in the off-season. All four of my state medalists did that. From where does inspiration come? The coach usually sees farther than athletes can to cast a realistic vision of what they can become through hard work. The vision, often repeated, inspires them to accomplish far more than they could without it. Casting an inspiring spiritual vision unlocks energy to make an eternal difference in others’ lives. Help others see the difference they can make in this world through God who can “do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20, NIV).

**Nitty-Gritty** is the seventh coaching principle. It refers to working on the details necessary to excel. In the throws, hitting strong throwing positions with momentum is critical to throwing far. Getting there is a long, difficult process. Most aspiring discus throwers don’t have the necessary strength, flexibility, coordination and balance to hit those positions no matter how many hours they practice. My discus-teaching progressions include mastering the grip, proper release, standing throws, half-turns, South African throws, and full throws with 1.5 revolutions. I recommend overall body strength-building and strengthening the specific muscles most used in discus throwing. To coach other believers, we need a planned path to move them toward spiritual maturity. Let’s call it a discipleship track. That’s our teaching progression. See lessons 6 and 21 in this series.

**Goal-set** is the eighth coaching principle. The beginning of March, 2012, one of my javelin throwers announced his goal was to place in the top 5 at the PIAA championships (out of about 1,750 AAA Pennsylvania throwers). He finished sixth. In 2011 one girl’s goal was winning the PIAA AA discus championship. She finished second. Depending on ability and throwing experience, realistic goals for throwers can range from being content with setting personal bests to accomplishments at dual meets, invitationals, the Mid-Penn Championships, Districts or the PIAA Championships. Setting goals stretches athletes to accomplish more than they could without them. For many years, I didn’t memorize Scripture. See lesson 28. Setting a goal to learn 100 Scripture passages made the difference. It took me several years, but without the goal, it wouldn’t have happened. Help those you coach to set specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented and time-bound spiritual goals. Coaching eliminates one by one all obstacles that hinder their achievement.