



The Jesus Model of Discipling Others: 6 Principles

By Brian Childres

God's will for your life is straightforward: Go and make disciples. The church is in agreement with our primary mission. The confusion is about the "how". So, how do we make a disciple?

Well, believe it or not, this question is simple and straightforward. And it makes sense, doesn't it? If gave us a Great Commission, don't you think He would give us a simple game plan to make it happen? Of course, he would! And He did. He asked Jesus to model exactly "how to make a disciple". The authors of the Bible did an excellent job recording Jesus' strategy. I would strongly recommend that you read all four of the gospels to get the complete training manual. It is an exciting read and will get you moving in the right direction in discipling your "12". I've written an overview to give you a head start.

Principle #1: Making Disciples is 100% relational.

Relationships, relationships, relationships. I can't say it enough. This is the essence of making mature, fruitful followers of Christ. You can make an educated follower of Christ in a weekly Bible study, but you can only make a mature disciple through an intimate Christ-centered relationship.

Jesus made an obvious choice when he said yes to starting the largest and most powerful movement the world has ever seen. He said yes to relational disciple-



making and no to non-relational ministry. To put it another way, he rejected the 9-5 seminary professor job in order to live with twelve uneducated, clueless rascals. He chose relationships instead of having a ministry.

Why does the church struggle with this aspect of the Jesus Model? Much of the discipleship efforts today are event-focused (weekly meetings and services) and information-based. These methods produce little fruit. Why are they still so popular? I think it boils down to the monster that we all struggle with - selfishness. Committing to a weekly men's accountability group or a Bible study is much easier than committing to a man. In order to experience the joy of disciple-making, you get to deny yourself and take up your cross. Jesus made a huge commitment to the first wave of Christ-followers. He loved those men deeply. And now you and I get to do the same.

Principle #2: Making Disciples is strategic.

Jesus knew how many disciples he had and each one of their names. That sounds obvious until we ask the two basic questions:

How many disciples do you have?

What are their names?



Can you answer both of those questions quickly? Most Christians can answer the question, “What is your ministry?” Maybe you play guitar at your church, teach a Bible study, or serve as a deacon. But none of those answer the all-important question:

“WHO is your ministry?”

The who is always more important than the what. Ministry is about people not activities. There is nothing wrong with enjoying your talents and passions as you serve in your local church, just make sure they play second fiddle to the main thing- pouring your life and heart into your twelve. Now, you don’t need to have a literal 12 men you are discipling, you just need to know who they are- whether the number is 2, 4, or 7.

Principle #3: It takes a team.

You can’t disciple your twelve by yourself. God’s method of discipleship is the body of Christ. You are a unique member, and you are just a part of the body. Jesus assembled a discipling brotherhood so that each man could help disciple each man. I receive something uniquely powerful from each man in my SPAR group. In my life, I receive much needed encouragement from Paul, compassionate pastoring from Jonathan, and life-giving truth from Mark. I need it all. I need the fullness of the Body of Christ if I am to grow and bear much fruit.



So, what about one-on-one discipleship? It is a good supplement to team discipleship. The weakness of individual discipleship is that, a: you are getting only one perspective of Christ, and b: the relationship can morph into a counselor-counselee connection. The team approach is also powerful when one of the brothers hits a painful season of life. When David was going through his divorce, he needed a lot of brothers to help him wade through the unforgiveness, shame, and loneliness. If one or two brothers try to carry a wounded man by themselves, they will burn out. It takes a team!

Principle #4: Discipling others is about your own personal sanctification.

This is the most important principle I will share. Many men miss this one. God's primary reason to enroll you into his army of disciplemakers is for the primary purpose of your sanctification. Not theirs, but yours. Relational discipling is a messy, painful, emotionally challenging endeavor. Why? Because our selfishness, pride, and need for God is being exposed.

Some quit and give up. It is too hard to make disciples, some say. But it's really not. The hard and difficult part is the unbelief, selfishness, and judgements that are revealed in us as we disciple others. James 1:2-4 says that "we become mature, complete, and lacking nothing" as we allow God to refine us through hardship and trials.



If you sign up for making disciples Jesus' style, you are also signing up for hardship and trials! The question is this: Do you want to become a mature man of God? If so, there is a sure-fire way to make it happen: discipling your twelve.

Principle #5: Guaranteed fruit in 3 years.

It takes big faith to disciple men. Sometimes you see quick spiritual growth in a man. But sometimes you do not. Oftentimes God will call us to believe and love a man for several years before he begins to show fruit in his life. We never give up on a man.

Why? Because God never gives up on us.

Also, keeping a long-term perspective is what Jesus modeled. Can you imagine how immature and ill-equipped the 12 disciples were on day one of their adventure with Jesus? But it did not matter. Jesus knew that discipling is a long-term endeavour with guaranteed results.

And he was right. In three years, those unschooled dozen were transformed into the most powerful ministry team the world has ever witnessed. Couldn't Jesus have produced this band of world-changers in 6 months or less? Probably not. God's work of sanctification in the life of a man takes time. But the wait is worth it.



Three years. It is really not a lot of time when you have an eternal perspective. I can think of a dozen East Texas men who stumbled into our movement with all kinds of addictions, unbelief, shame, and perversion. None of them were free from their self-induced pain in a short period of time. But at the three-year mark? All of them had a remarkable testimony and an effective ministry to others.

Keep your hand to the plow. As Winston Churchill said, “Never, never, never give up.” You are guaranteed a harvest. 100% guaranteed. If you are humbling yourself and deeply loving your twelve day after day after day, there is a day of celebration coming. I love the promise found in Galatians 6:9: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Will you commit to your twelve for 36 months? This can be a challenge for those that have served in the traditional church where one commits to leading a Bible Study for 12 weeks or a ministry team for 12 months.

If you choose to make this bold of a commitment, something will happen inside of you. You will receive the gift of becoming free from your selfishness. This is a wonderful gift. In order to truly commit to loving your twelve for the long haul, you must die to your stinking self. And that, my friend, may be the greatest part of



making disciples like Jesus did. The fruit of your efforts is simply a bonus.

Principle #6: Make disciplemakers, not disciples.

I love the Great Commission. It is simple and clear about our mission as believers: we are to go and make disciples of others. Simple, right? Not really, because Christians that are making disciples have forgotten that the Great Commandment also applies to the ones they are discipling. Are you following me?

Let me put it another way. In the same way that Jesus is commanding you and I to go and make disciples, He is also commanding those that we are discipling to go and make disciples. Because of this, I think it can be healthy to paraphrase Matthew like this:

“Go therefore and make disciples that make disciples, in all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

This is the innocent mistake of many disciplemakers in the church today: not asking our twelve to go and find their 12. The great joy of making disciples is watching them experience the joy of making disciples. What if we refused to disciple someone who refused to disciple at least one other person?



The next time you meet with one of your twelve, ask him these questions:

*Who are your twelve? (remember, the number of people is irrelevant)

*What is the fruit and challenges you are seeing as you make disciples?

*How can I help you disciple your twelve?

If you are struggling in your discipling efforts, it may be because you are producing a selfish consumer Christian. Look your disciples in the eyes and tell them the good news: “Your Christian life is NOT about you! It is about others. I will commit to doing all I can to help you find your twelve, and disciple your twelve to disciple their twelve. It won’t be easy, but it will be the most exciting thing you have ever done!” Remember the call of Jesus? “Come and follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Jesus disciplined the twelve so that they could disciple their twelve. I love the ripple effect of discipling disciplers. It is the only way we will transform our communities.

2 Timothy 2:2 lays it out plain and simple. Here is my paraphrase:



As I am discipling you,

Go and disciple faithful men,

Who will then go and disciple others?

The greater joy in the kingdom is having spiritual grandchildren and great-grandchildren just like Paul and Timothy. This is God's will for your life. There truly is no greater joy. Come join in us changing the world- one disciplemaker at a time!



We have discovered that men can only be spiritually healthy when they are intimately connected with other men. Once this connection takes place, spiritual growth accelerates. Husbands begin to love and serve their wives. Dads begin to spend more time with their children. The local church benefits greatly: more mature and committed leaders.

We have witnessed many churches be greatly impacted by men relationally discipling other men. The ripple effect can be huge. Whether you choose to host a Men's Bootcamp or start a new SPAR Group, spiritual renewal is just waiting to happen. Men are hungry for discipleship opportunities that make them come alive. Let us serve you!

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