

Key Value # 2

Discipleship

A) Called by Him to Him

In the Greek world a disciple meant an apprentice or pupil, who would himself become a master one day. And the basic idea of discipleship was widely accepted by the time Jesus began His ministry. But Jesus created a radical & unique pattern of discipleship. The disciples of the Pharisees & of Moses¹ were preoccupied with gaining an accurate knowledge of Jewish traditions & laws, and the disciples of John followed John's teachings. But the disciples of Jesus were called to a radical wholehearted commitment to His Person, as well as His teaching. Also, rather than the usual pattern of disciples applying for membership of a "school" He took the initiative & called people by name to be His disciples. He called the most unlikely people to "**Come, follow me**"² to a new life as well as a new lifestyle, with new ambitions, goals, & relationships, marked out by the presence of love³. His call to the church of all ages is to:

Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

B) A definition of disciple making

"To disciple" means the process by which a person is encouraged to follow Jesus, to become mature in Him & so be in a position where they can disciple someone else".

The Great Commission is not merely to confront people with the Gospel but to bring anticipated converts to spiritual maturity. As well as bringing people to commitment to the person of Jesus, disciple making includes "**teaching them to obey....**" i.e. how to live daily under the Lordship of Christ, with practical moral obedience being the outcome of the teaching. It is learning what we ought to believe, how we ought to behave & how we can cultivate an integrated walk with Jesus, reproducing disciples who would make more disciples, ad infinitum.

Colossians 2:6-7 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, (7) rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

See also Colossians 1:28 where we find Paul's aim in ministry:

"...that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

C) In the Post Natal Ward

Nature shows us that after-care is as decisive as birth. This principle holds true in the spiritual realm also. It shapes our early years. But discipleship should not be restricted to the first few months after conversion. It is a lifelong process. We never graduate this side of heaven. There are two dimensions to the process – human & divine. God brings circumstances & experiences to bear on us, the struggles of life. Disciple makers are called to help make sense of God's ways & discover how they can help us mature in Christ. Jesus often had to correct the disciples' misunderstandings of discipleship in the gospels.⁴ These are worth studying.

D) How did Jesus make disciples?

1. By spending time with them & building relationships with them,
2. By instructing them when alone, and having them with him when He taught publicly.
3. By sending them out to minister in twos themselves & them reporting back.⁵
4. By using life events to teach an instant applied lesson
5. By being an example to them.

E) Areas for growth

- Equipping with doctrinal knowledge
- Equipping with scriptural knowledge
- Equipping with spiritual life skills - applied knowledge/ wisdom
- Enabling integration into body of the church - relational growth
- Enabling involvement in ministry of the church – growing in service/ gifts

F) The Benefits of discipleship

- Discipling provides the church with a stock of prepared leaders.
- Freshness in Ministry
- Expands the work of evangelism

“Few things keep us fresh in ministry as much as the ministry of discipling. It brings desperation into our prayer lives as we yearn for our disciples to do well in life. It brings deep perplexity over their failures, which drives us to our knees. It challenges us to find answers to the questions and problems that they are facing, and that helps us to learn much and grow in our knowledge of theology and ministry. Discipling also challenges us to be spiritually alert, for we know that we cannot help them to be holy unless we ourselves are holy.” Ajith Fernando, *Jesus-Driven Ministry*

G) How to be a disciple maker

1. Be available
2. Be alert to needs
3. Be adaptable
4. Be assured of God’s work, & patient

Questions for discussion

Examine how Paul disciplined.⁶

How can the church stimulate disciple making at every level of the Christian life – not only initially but improving what we do at the moment?

How do people learn best?

Is there a difference between adult’s & children’s education in spiritual matters?

Should discipleship be a part of the evangelistic message (see Sermon on the Mount)?

Why did Jesus choose 12 “senior” disciples?

What are the pitfalls in disciple making?

Involvement with people

“Christians are not called to be like the best fragile china cups but common chipped mugs – used often & involved with people; nor like supporters at a rugby club, wearing a nice clean rugby jersey, shouting encouragement from afar, but participators, with dirty jerseys & mud all over us”. W. Detzler

¹ John 9:28 “Then they reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples”.

² John 15:16 “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...”

³ John 13:35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

⁴ **Leadership.** The non-hierarchical structure of discipleship relationships – Matt 18:1-6; Mark 9:33-37. Jesus excludes the use of status building titles like “*Rabbi*” among them. Matt 23:8. The importance of service in ministry not self-serving ministry - Mark 10:45. **Persecution** – Matt 5:11; Mark 8:35. **Self denial** & carrying the cross.

⁵ Mark 6:30 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.

⁶ Acts 14:21 Visit them; Acts 17:11 Teach them; Acts 16:3-4 Take them with you; Learn to write letters/ e mail. Mark is a man who seemed a failure but look at the end – 2 Timothy 4:10-11 E.g. 1 Thess 2:7; Acts 16:1-3; Acts 20:2-4; 1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5. 1 Cor 4:16-17; Acts 20:17-21, Acts 20:26-27 & Acts 20:31-35.