

Philosophy of Discipleship

PT 705: Discipleship & Leadership Development

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important questions a church can ask itself is, Why do we exist as church? This is a very vital question because once a church knows and embraces the final and highest reason for why it exists, then all thinking, feeling, and acting will be governed by that reason.¹ Jonathan Edwards helps in answering this question: “All that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God’s works, is included in that one phrase, the glory of God.”² All things are created from Christ, through Christ and to Christ (Rom 11:36; Col 1:16). Moreover, by Christ all things exist for the Lord has made all things for himself and his glory (Heb 2:10; Pr 16:4). The glory of God is “the infinite beauty and greatness of his many perfections” (Is 6:3; Ps 19:1).³ But there is a big problem as man has exchanged God’s glory for the glory of created things (Rom 1:22ff). God’s greatness is not admired, his power is not praised, his wisdom is not esteemed, his truth is not sought, his beauty is not treasured, his goodness is not savored. The Creator of the universe is disregarded, disbelieved, disobeyed, and dishonored among the peoples of the world. Consequently, those who exchanged the glory of God are worshiping things instead of worshiping God. Therefore, missions exists because worship doesn’t. Lost humanity does not treasure God above all the things of this world.

The great mission of the church, was therefore given in the great commission, by the head of the church Jesus Christ, so that the triune God would receive the glory he deserves through the worship of the redeemed (Matt 28:18–20; Phil 2:9–11; Jn 17:5). Natural revelation is

¹ Paraphrase of John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), kindle.

² John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, kindle.

³ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, kindle.

insufficient to save and therefore the gospel message must be proclaimed for the salvation of sinners (Rom 1:20–21; Rom 10:17). Discipleship is the process that takes place to accomplish the purposes of God. The agenda for the church is not decided by the church, but has already been decided by Christ. Matthew 28:18–20 proclaims loudly by Christ—here is what I say and you better listen. The greatest work of the church to fulfill the greatest need of men, for the glory of Christ, is commanded with two words—make disciples. The mission will be successful because Christ has all power — “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18). The extent of the command “to all nations” shows the extent of his power. And the very fact that Christ’s presence is with the church till the end of the age presupposes that this task is ongoing until Christ’s second advent. The One who is a light for the nations is also the One who conquers the darkness so that He may shine forth (Is 49:6). The church cannot fail and will not fail because Christ is all-powerful.

The making of disciples happens by the means of going, baptizing and teaching (Matt 28:19–20). A disciple is a follower of Christ who puts himself under the authority and teaching of Christ, because he has come to believe certain things about Christ. In essence a disciple is simply a true believer in Christ who is in the process of becoming more like Christ. Making disciples who behold the glory of Christ to the glory of God the Father by the power of the Spirit is the ultimate end of the church. All thinking, feeling, and acting must be governed by this main goal. Therefore, the purpose of this paper will outline how going, baptizing and teaching takes place at Mission Bible Church. The ongoing process of making disciples can be divided into four main sections which will be discussed in this philosophy of ministry. Practical implementation will be presented which grounded on biblical truth drives the church into its greatest reason for

existence. The four steps of disciple-making are: 1) Outreach; 2) Follow-up; 3) Growth; 4) Training.

OUTREACH

Outreach is defined as “people coming in contact with the word of truth for the first time.”⁴ The great evangelist George Whitefield could not go fifteen minutes with someone without sharing the gospel. Just as the Father has sent the Son into the world not to condemn it, but that by Him it might be saved, likewise Jesus says, “...so I send you.” (Jn 3:17; 20:21). The Christian without a missionary heart is an anomaly.⁵ As one atheist said

I’ve always said, you know, that I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize...If you believe that there’s a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell, or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that, well, it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward...how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize?⁶

The reason that the great commission is at times the great omission, is because “the church tends towards institutionalism and secularization. The focus shifts to preserving traditional programs and structures and the goal of discipleship is lost.”⁷ Therefore, the focus needs to return to making worshipers of Christ. As one author mentioned—just because we are doing something, does not necessarily mean that we are getting anything accomplished.⁸ Business does not breed success.

⁴ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: the Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Mathias Media, 2009), 84.

⁵ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 52.

⁶ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 53.

⁷ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 14.

⁸ Robert, Coleman. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 13.

Christ himself continuously emphasized working with people. He ministered to the unbelieving crowds who were in need of help because they were as sheep without a shepherd (Matt 9:36). He spent time with tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners. He made an effort to go out of his way to share the news of the kingdom. And seeing the great need he said, “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Matt 9:37). Therefore the great commission is not an option. Just as dogs bark, and shark swim, so Christians make disciples. Disciple-making should be the normal agenda and priority of every church and every Christian.

Who is to do this work?

Now, the question arises, Who is to do this work? Is this the work of the pastor and church leaders? At times there is a misconception that a spiritual gift of evangelism or teaching is needed to do the work of discipleship. But as already stated—discipleship is the process of a true believer becoming more like Christ. And the first step to get there is first for them to become a believer—a Christ-follower.

As disciples, we are not in two separate classes, “those who abandon their lives to his service and those who don’t.”⁹ To be a disciple is to be a disciple-maker. Every believer in the church is called to this task as the commission was given to the church and born-again believers comprise the church (Matt 28:19–20; Phil 2:14–15). Elton Trueblood shared the reality of the American church, “Millions of supposed members are not really involved at all, and what is worse, do not think it strange that they are not.”¹⁰ There ought to be a “ministry mind-shift” in

⁹ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 42.

¹⁰ Elton Trueblood in Bill, Hull. *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith*. (Baker Books, 2007), 20.

understanding that disciple-making is a lifestyle. Evangelism is not done by something, but by someone.¹¹

Jesus is commissioning the church in Matthew 28 as a king sending out his workers to expand his kingdom. If you are part of the kingdom, then you are part of the work. The idea is expanded even further when Jesus speaks of the parable of the treasure in the field as an analogy of what a believer experiences when he comes into contact with Christ. In his joy he goes and sells and he has and buys that field (Matt 13:44). Such a response is only proper when someone finds a treasure. Additionally, being a believer underscores the idea of a worshiper. Therefore it is imperative that believers live a Christ-centered lifestyle so that “the wandering masses of the world must have a demonstration of what to believe,” and I would add—who to believe. Someone who can say “Follow me, I know the way.”¹²

Therefore, as you worship God—reveling in his the beauty of his manifold perfections—you call people to gaze upon the glorious Christ.

Where is this work to be done?

If following Christ is a lifestyle, then outreach can and will occur at any time and in any place. Jesus did this always. Either with the unsatisfied woman at the well, the ill-motivated crowd that followed him, or his disciples, he was constantly sharing the gospel (Jn 4; Jn 6). If this is the focus of each individual member of the church, then like Christ the word of truth can be shared at any time and in any circumstances. There is a not a place that Christ exists where he is not present to help us fulfill his command.

¹¹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 97.

¹² Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 100.

The idea of “going” in Matthew 28:19 is exactly this. It could be stated better “as you go” make disciples. So what does this look like? You are proclaiming the gospel and sharing Christ at every step and turn. Whether it is in a class in school, at the cubicle at work, having coffee with friends, taking a stroll with your wife, or having dinner with unsaved family, the goal is always to share the gospel message. The conversation can start as easily as asking, Have you heard the good news? The work is not hindered by location because every individual believer carries this message of hope. And even bad circumstances cannot dictate not sharing—Paul is in jail and he is still excited that the gospel is being shared (Phil 1:13–14). Outreach is not part of your lifestyle, it is your lifestyle.

How can you do this work?

Lifestyle evangelism sound dandy, but how am I supposed to do this practically? Where do I start? What do I say? In a sense, there are a few prerequisites, both in character and in knowledge that must be known as you go.

First, you must go with the gospel message. We do not invite people to church because it is fun, or we have a good continental breakfast before service begins. We do not even invite people because of the community aspect that so many people long for. The message we bring is the gospel message. The good news always starts with the bad news. Therefore, revealing the current status of the person we are sharing the gospel with is imperative. It can be done through sharing the biblical theme beginning with Adam and Eve, or using the ten commandments and letting the conscience work alongside the Spirit of truth who convicts the world of sin (Jn 16:8). Then we share that the sins can be forgiven in Christ (Lk 24:47; Rom 6:23). Bringing the gospel is of utmost importance because most people don’t fully know it, and they might not always

attend a church service to hear it. Faith comes through hearing of the word of Christ (Rom 10:17).

A second important principle is going with kindness. Just as Jesus saw the crowds in their distress, so we must see lost souls, not the external body of sin. It is going with the heart of Christ, thus fulfilling our calling to be the salt and the light to the world (Matt 5:13–16). We are among the world, but not of the world to be able to shine to the world (Jn 17; Phil 2:15). The heart with which we reach the world is the heart of Christ. We must be aware of not being religious like the Pharisees who did not like Christ spending time with sinners (Matt 9:9–13). Accompanied then, are good deeds and compassion on people (Mark 1:40–41; Matt 9:35–38).

Third, we must go as witnesses. Just as witnesses are brought to court to testify to what they have seen, so the church testifies to the world that they have experienced the glorious and transforming work of Christ. The emphasis on being a witness is that it is a personal matter—which again underlines the fact that disciple-making is for every individual member of the church, for every individual has experienced Christ (Jn 4:28–29; Mark 5:19–20). It is as easy as following the template that Paul left in Acts 26. He began with sharing his life before, his conversion story, and his current life now.

Carrying the gospel message, having compassion and witnessing of Christ's work are important components of the evangelism as a lifestyle.

How does this look like?

There are three specific ways that Mission Bible Church seeks to fulfill outreach. The doctrine of making disciples leads us to share the gospel, applied in various methodologies.

Sports outreach, street evangelism and campus outreach are three ways aside from each individual member's participation of outreach that we seek to implement.

First, sports outreach. The goal here is to be able to invite members of the community, friends from school, and unbelieving family members to a place which gives a platform for sharing the gospel. People might not always come to church, or a small group, but through sports relationships can be built and people can be known on a more personal level. Again, the components of the gospel message, compassion and witness are vital to be shared here. Before every game a five minute message on the gospel would be shared for the weekly activity.

Second, street evangelism. This might reach a separate demographic than the sports. If sports might reach a younger generation who have more time, street evangelism will reach a broader audience. Families who are out and about can be touched as well. Now, one form of doing this is called "Free Prayer" where a couple people hold up a sign on a street corner, allowing those with burdens to come to them with prayer requests. As needs are shared, the gospel is shared, a testimony is given, and a connection is established. This will lead to further follow-up. Of course this is not the only method, but a practical one.

Third, campus outreach. Fishing in the streets is at times hard, but setting up a booth or table on a campus is another great way to share. Since CSU East Bay is within a five minute vicinity from our church, this is a great opportunity to touch base with many young lives who are seeking purpose in career or money.

In summary, outreach is a vital beginning to discipleship. Apart from the gospel going forth, disciples are not made. Yet, at times the process is not usually a one-time bullseye

experience. Some are saved in the moment, but some are not. Therefore, the next section will discuss the second step in disciple-making called “follow-up.”

FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up is a step for both believers and unbelievers. Those who have come to the faith need to get established in the basics of Christianity. Yet, those who have not received Christ need to be continually worked with until they come to a realization of their need. The process for establishing a believer could take from a few months to several years, and the process for an unbeliever is likewise—even up to a lifetime.

First, let’s think about unbelievers. Steve Sjogren brings out a great flaw in thinking about evangelism: “American Christians tend to view evangelism as a one-time deal—a ‘let ‘em have it a while we’ve got their attention’ blast from both barrels of a shotgun loaded with Scripture. Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with our neighbors is a *process* rather a *project*.”¹³ The process could be a lengthy one at times, but how else can the compassion and care of souls be displayed? If heaven and hell are truly eternal, then we must spend our lives in the task of winning souls for Christ. One author wrote that “a large percentage of those who decide to stay in a church have been the recipients of someone’s personal interest and initiative.”¹⁴ Therefore, the follow-up aspect is imperative. As we begin sharing the gospel with the neighbors in our community we will follow-up with those who are interested and continue praying for those who did not receive the gospel truth so that the seed may take root. Dill Hull hits the nail on the head when he writes: “The test of a congregation, apart from personal

¹³ Steve Sjogren. *Conspiracy of Kindness: a Unique Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus*. (Bethany House, 2014), 24.

¹⁴ C. J. Mahaney. *Why Small Groups?: Together toward Maturity*. (PDI Communications, 1996), 90.

holiness, is how effectively members penetrate the world.”¹⁵ Calvin diagnoses the issue as being laziness, “The decline of the church is more due to laziness than wickedness.”¹⁶ The church is not a place for spiritual schizophrenics whose belief and behavior are incongruent. If we work on outreach, we must step into follow-up.

The second group that needs follow-up are new believers. The disciple-making process does not stop at conversion but is only taking it’s initial baby steps at conversion. Making disciples involves baptism. Is baptism just an outdated ritual of the church? What is its significance? Baptism follows the profession of the new believer and is important because it gives opportunity for the believer to show allegiance to Christ. Jesus demands public confession of himself (Matt 10:32–39). This shows where the person stands and why they are truly following Christ. A second reason is that a disciple cannot stay a private one. A private profession is confirmed with a public confession.

The new believer must be taught all that Christ commanded (Matt 28:19). The easiest way to begin this is by using a fundamentals of faith manual that teaches the foundational truths of Christianity: the Godhead, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, salvation, sanctification, spiritual gifts, evangelism, and so forth. This gives the new believer an understanding of their riches in Christ, their position in Christ, and their relationship with Christ. This process could be done one-on-one or in a classroom setting. The follow-up stage must always occur for right doctrine will lead to right living (Eph 1–6).

¹⁵ Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor*, 20.

¹⁶ John Calvin, *The Crossway Classic Commentaries*, 50.

GROWTH

The third step in the disciple-making process is growth. The call of the great commission calls not only for a response to the gospel but also application of truth to the lives of disciples: “make disciples...teaching them to *observe* all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19–20). The question becomes, How long will it take to observe all that Jesus commands? The answer is—your whole life. Therefore, the growth process is a lifelong process of growing in knowledge of God and godly character.¹⁷ The follow-up stage with a believer overlaps with the beginning of the growth stage. The purpose is always to be growing, for the moment you stop developing is the moment you’ll start degrading.

There is a simple illustration to emphasize what is meant by growth. When speaking of growth, we are not talking about the growth of numbers in the church or the multiplication of programs. Growth could be illustrated with a trellis and a vine. The purpose of a trellis is only there to support the growth of the vine.¹⁸ The trellis represents the structure within the church and the vine represents the people. The problem is that vine work is typically neglected because it is harder, and therefore at times vine growth is very slow and incremental if it is happening at all. Yet, Christ said make disciples by teaching them to observe all that is commanded. Colin Marshall explains vine growth as, “growing in their knowledge of God’s will so that they walk ever more worthily of the Lord, seeking to please him in all things and bearing fruit in every good work.”¹⁹ So, how does vine growth look? Before we dive into the practical implementation, it is important to answer a few questions to explain the context where growth occurs.

¹⁷ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 84.

¹⁸ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 9.

¹⁹ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 82.

What is fellowship?

Fellowship does not occur simply when believers are hanging out, having coffee, playing sports, or talking. Jerry Bridges writes that “those first Christians of Acts 2 were not devoting themselves to social activities but to a relationship”²⁰ This could be the cause of why so many Christians complain that relationships seem superficial and they don’t know why.²¹ It is because fellowship is sharing of the deepest thing about us, and the deepest thing about us is our relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. J. I. Packer adds, “Fellowship is a sharing with our fellow-believers the things that God has made known to us about himself, in hope that we may thus help them to know him better and so enrich their fellowship with him.”²² Therefore, the common denominator in fellowship is Jesus Christ (Jn 1:3). “Union with Christ necessarily involves union with his people.”²³ Ultimately, fellowship then is not a spiritual luxury but an important component to a Christian’s spiritual health (Acts 2:42, 2:46; Eph 4:25).

Why fellowship?

The greatest lie that the church buys into is that Christianity is a solo matter. Christianity is a not a solo, it is a choir where everyone sings their part. This is because growth involves sanctification—a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives—which cannot be accomplished in isolation.²⁴ The Christian life is inescapably corporate for all major imperatives (commands) to holy living are plural (Rom

²⁰ Jerry, Bridges. *True Fellowship*. (Navigators, 1986), 16–17.

²¹ Mahaney, *Why Small Groups*, 21.

²² Mahaney, *Why Small Groups*, 23.

²³ Bruce Milne. *Know the Truth*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 249.

²⁴ Wayne Grudem, *systematic theology*, 723

6:1–23; Gal 5:13–6:10; Eph 4:17–6:18). This is where the rubber meets the road. Justification takes off into sanctification. Therefore, as one author wrote, “Don’t try this alone.”²⁵ Growth involves sanctification and it is a community project.

Where to fellowship?

Although vine growth can be happening in any organized activity in the church, it is best applied in fellowship groups. Fellowship groups are implemented in our church for the purpose of applying biblical truth to life. These fellowship groups consist of age-segregated groups (teen, college, family) as well as multi-age groups (men’s, ladies, one-on-one, 3–4, prayer). The Sunday service is predominantly for corporate worship and the preaching of the word. Growth occurs, but it is not the only place it does. The New Testament teaches that the church gathered both for corporate worship and home groups (Acts 14:26–28; 1 Cor 14:23). Therefore, the Sunday service is not the final performance of the week, but only the opening act of worship as the body of Christ continues to edify each other and exalt God through the power of the Spirit (Acts 2:42).

Goals of Fellowship Groups

There are multiple goals for the fellowship. The first goal which promotes the third step of growth in disciple-making is the application of Scripture. “Nothing changes us more effectively than the application of Scripture.”²⁶ James 1:22ff teaches us that the purpose of the mirror is to provoke adjustment. It would be concerning if someone looked into a mirror every day and didn’t make any adjustment. Fellowship groups are places where believers can pass the

²⁵ Mahaney, *Why Small Groups*, 6.

²⁶ Mahaney, *Why Small Groups*, 9.

comb to fix the hair, a toothbrush to freshen breath, or some face wash to remove dried skin.

Peter David said, “It is not what one knows, but what one does that counts.”

A corroborative principle is mutual care. This second goal gives each member the opportunity to care for each other. Comfort, counsel, encourage, and help are all present to attain the adjustment in life that is necessary to produce Christ-likeness. Commands such as carrying each other’s burdens and correcting, along with many more New Testament “one another’s” leads to fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal 6:1–2; Jas 5:16; Rom 14:19, 15:14). This can occur by simply asking: (1) How is your walk with the Lord?; (2) What has the Lord been teaching you recently? (3) Is there anything I can pray for you? These questions give opportunity for the believer to observe all that Christ has commanded them because it gives opportunity for the hearer to use the word of God to encourage, reprove, or correct. We cannot see outside ourselves from a side-perspective, therefore it is important that others help us in our sanctification. These are the “House Rules for God’s Family.” Since typically more correction has to occur alongside encouragement, Swinnock so properly adds “The reprover should have a lion’s stout heart, or he will not be faithful, and a lady’s soft hand, or he is not likely to be successful.”²⁷

Now, the third goal of fellowship groups is tied in with the first two. For the believer to mature by applying Scripture, and for mutual care to occur, then inevitably each member in the body should be using their spiritual gift. The analogy of the body to depict the church is only found in the New Testament and displays immense intimacy (Eph 4:16). Each individual member cannot function properly and thrive spiritually apart from one another, and therefore the goal of fellowship groups is to unify the body of Christ as we seek to attain unity of faith, grow

²⁷ Mahaney, *Why Small Groups*, 37.

in the knowledge of Christ, and reach the full stature of Christ (Eph 4:13). One person is an encourager, another is hospitable, a third is good at praying for people's burdens—each do their part. The opportunity that is not always there on Sunday service to use the spiritual gifts is given primarily at fellowship groups.

Now just to be aware, true fellowship in the context of home fellowship groups is a work of the Spirit by grace. First, it involves the participation of each individual. Just like Tango: it takes two to fellowship, yet not everyone wants to dance. Second, fellowship groups must not miss the view of the local church and become isolated and ingrown. Outreach should always dominate the mind.

The growth stage in the disciple is once again a lifelong stage. It takes patience, love, and care, and because it is God's design, it is the best thing that a church could have happening for the benefit and growth of the body.

TRAINING

Is this the end? Does discipleship stop at the stage of growth? Typically the third stage of growth is like third base in baseball—it doesn't reach home. A disciple is a disciple-maker, just as Apple users are Apple evangelists. The purpose is duplication. Now, to be clear, the training aspect happens as part of Christian growth. To give a clear definition, training is, "is that stage of Christian growth in which people are equipped and mobilized and resourced and encouraged to do that work."²⁸ It is movement from running programs to building people, running events to training people, using people to growing people, and filling gaps to training new workers.²⁹

²⁸ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 85.

²⁹ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 18.

The time of training is when believers take off their bibs and put on their aprons. It is a time when believers are sent out into the field just as doctors are sent to practice on cadavers. Just because you learn the Warriors playbook, does not mean you will play like Stephen Curry. There is training involved—eating right, working out, listening to the coach. Likewise in spiritual training. This process is likened to parenthood where it is long term and loving, a passing on of knowledge and practical instruction, and involves modeling and imitation.³⁰ The question must be asked, Well how does this practically look like?

How?

First, training begins with a few. Just like Jesus began his ministry, being concerned with men whom the multitudes would follow, so must we.³¹ We must believe that Christ's works were just as perfect as his words. The more concentrated the group, the greater opportunity for instruction. This is the first priority of the church but is at times neglected.

Second, the training happens via demonstration. Class is always in session.³² It is not enough to teach—there must be a modeling, a showing people of how to live. Christ did this perfectly as his disciples watched him for more than a year as they saw what loving people, having compassion, and counseling was all about. One writer said that “An example can accomplish more than a month's worth of teaching and exhortations from the leader.”³³ Such an openness of life also makes the leader vulnerable. In training the teacher cannot ask the disciple

³⁰ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 75.

³¹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 21.

³² Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 67.

³³ Mahaney, *Why Small Groups*, 39.

anything they themselves are not willing to do.³⁴ Jesus was imparting a way of life. Paul imparted a way of life and even boasted of the Thessalonians “you became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1 Tim 4:12; Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 10:32–11:1; 1 Thess 1:4–7). We must remember that “knowledge was not communicated by the Master in terms of laws and dogmas, but in the living personality of One who walked among them.”³⁵

Third, the heart of the training is to move from the inside out. Training in godliness precedes training in preaching (1 Tim 4:7). It is the heart before the hands. This was Jesus’ method—you must experience God before you go to work.³⁶ Just as Peter was asked by the Lord three times if he loved him, likewise we must love Christ before we feed his sheep. The training must begin by teaching to love God with the whole heart, soul, mind and strength. Orthodoxy apart from personal experience of the Godhead is dead. It is not a building of competency but of character; not of skill but of lifestyle.

Therefore training can be summarized in three steps: conviction, character and competency.³⁷ Conviction—which is a knowledge of God and understanding of the Bible. Character—a godly character and life that accords with sound doctrine. And lastly, competency—the ability to prayerfully speak God’s word to others in a variety of ways. A proper conviction and character will make competency Spirit-empowered and humble.

As training occurs, more trained men and women are enrolled into the work of training men and women. Such a paradigm builds a strong foundation of mature men and women who

³⁴ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 68.

³⁵ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 34.

³⁶ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 71.

³⁷ Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 86.

comprise the church, therefore presenting a powerful gospel witness and building intimate relationships within the church. Coleman makes a great point about how we should measure success in the church: “Similarly the criteria on which a church should measure success is not how many new names are added to the role nor how much the budget is increased, but rather how many Christians are actively winning souls and training them to win the multitudes.”³⁸

CONCLUSION

Discipleship shortcuts have failed. Jesus’ plan has been ignored.³⁹ Therefore, the church must go back to the blueprint that the Designer of the church has given. He has clearly laid it all out in Matthew 28:18–20. The mission will not fail for he is all powerful. Making disciples is the core and sole work of the church. It begins with outreach, moves to follow-up, matures through growth and training. If the church exists for the glory of the triune God and the model has been presented by the head of the church, then all thinking, feeling, and acting must be governed for this sole reason—to make disciples in the power of the Spirit, for the exaltation of Christ, to the glory of the Father.

³⁸ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 95.

³⁹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 96.

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