DESIGN for DISCIPLESHIP

A PRIMER FOR DISCIPLE MAKERS

BY KEITH DAVY
Disciple making is the work for which he promised his presence and in which he participates through the power of his Spirit. Disciple making is the work he has given us to do.

Disciple making is the work that Christ, with unrivaled authority, has commanded to be done.

Two thousand years later, individual believers and ministry leaders alike grapple with the responsibilities and implications of Jesus’ command. Questions arise like the following:

• Is discipleship for everyone?
• If so, what does it look like?
• Is there one approach to disciple making or many?
• Are some approaches more biblical or effective than others?
• Do I need to be in a discipleship program?
• Should we develop a discipleship strategy?
• What if there is no one to disciple me?
• Am I ready and able to disciple others?

Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) is a movement of spiritual multiplication whose DNA for reproduction has been distilled to “Win, Build, and Send in the Power of the Holy Spirit.” For decades, this distinctive approach has fueled the growth of CCC’s own ministries of evangelism and discipleship and has assisted many others in the body of Christ. Through the years, the adaptation and evolution of ministry methods and strategies has yielded many different approaches and emphases in disciple making. At times these innovations have led to great advances for the gospel. In other contexts, busyness and ministry activity have replaced the Spirit-empowered movement of the gospel. One factor in this ebb and flow of fruitfulness is the understanding and application of discipleship principles.

Your understanding of discipleship can profoundly alter your life and ministry. How you think about discipleship will dramatically shape what you do in discipleship. What you do, in the power of the Holy Spirit, will be what God uses to accomplish his desired ends through you. So it is critical to think biblically and to think well. There are three important questions to explore:

(1) What is a disciple?
(2) What does it mean to make disciples?
(3) What is spiritual multiplication?
1. WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Let’s start with the Bible. Suppose you read it—the whole thing, from beginning to end. In the Old Testament, the term “disciple” at all. But between, in that 15 percent known as the New Testament, you would find the word “disciple” only one or two times (depending on your version). For instance, Paul’s admonition “Follow my example” (1 Corinthians 11:1) has clear discipleship overtones. This should be expected, as the apostles used letter writing as one way to fulfill Christ’s commission to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). (Doesn’t it make you wonder what they could have done with e-mail?)

Here is the point. The language of discipleship is concentrated in the life and ministry of Jesus and in the Spirit-empowered life and work of his first followers as recorded in the book of Acts. To understand discipleship, you must begin there. This doesn’t mean there isn’t related material in the Old Testament. In fact, the relationship between God and his people in the Old Testament is brought to fulfillment in the relationship between Jesus and his followers in the New Testament. Likewise, the later parts of the New Testament provide valuable material for study of discipleship. Though the word “disciple” is not used in any of the letters of the apostles, nor in the book of Revelation, the concepts of true faith were exposed when they turned away and ceased to follow. This came as no surprise to Jesus. John wrote, “Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him” (John 6:64). Their lack of true faith was exposed when they turned back from following Jesus. Judas (the one “who would betray him”) stands as the most obvious example for whom this was true. Having followed Jesus throughout his ministry, even being numbered among the Twelve, Judas never genuinely believed. Apparently, when Jesus failed to be who Judas wanted him to be or to do what Judas hoped he would do, he turned against him. He betrayed Jesus. These examples stand as a warning for us. Discipleship isn’t a trial period, a test drive to see if we like this model of a Savior and Lord. No, true discipleship is a genuine and enduring trust in Christ. As Simon Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69).

Discipleship is thus primarily a relationship with Jesus Christ. It isn’t a static state. It is a dynamic, ongoing, faith-based relationship with Jesus. To the weary and heavy laden, Jesus said, “Come to me … and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). To the thirsty, he said, “Come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:38). To the fishermen, he said, “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). The first step
of discipleship is coming to Jesus in faith. The next steps involve following him.

A FOLLOWER

The first disciples we meet in the Bible weren’t Jesus’ disciples at all—or at least not yet. They were actually disciples of John the Baptist, a colorful character dressed in camel hair, eating locusts and honey, and speaking as a prophet (John 1:5-9, see also Mark 1:4-8 and John 1:23-24). Elsewhere in the Gospels, we encounter disciples of Moses. This great leader had been dead a long time, so being a disciple in this case involved following his teaching, not his footsteps (John 2:23). We also find disciples of the Pharisees, a religious party (Matthew 12:16, Mark 3:18). These few examples illustrate that having disciples wasn’t unique to Jesus. Rather, “disciple” was to the one who leads; otherwise, you are not following at all. To be a disciple is to become. Fully conscious of his impending crucifixion, Jesus turned his love and attention toward his followers.

Mark 10:28-31...

These are powerful words. But Jesus made it clear that following him involves surrender—surrender of all one is, has, and loves. But in that surrender there is even greater gain, for the follower will receive far more than was ever given up. This was the issue Peter and Jesus got into one day.

Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. But many of those who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Mark 10:28-31)

A LEARNER

The root of the Greek word commonly translated “disciple” in the New Testament (mathetes) is related to the verb “to learn.” And there is certainly an element of learning involved in following Jesus.

When we think of a student or pupil today, we think of schools and classrooms, where we acquire (if it is hoped) knowledge of various subjects. Some of that knowledge can be practical. (I am always using subtraction in managing my finances.) Other parts are purely theoretical. (I’m not sure how I would ever have used those calculus formulas I never really learned.) But in Jesus’ day, learners (that is, pupils and students) didn’t generally attend a school or sit in a classroom. Rather, they found a teacher (for Jews, a rabbi) to whom they would attach themselves to learn, obey, and thus become like their master.

Slow down for a moment and reread that. The disciple (learner, pupil, or student) would both learn from and obey the teacher. In the same way, being a disciple of Jesus involves learning. But it isn’t learning simply to know; it is learning to do. Jesus continually emphasized this to his followers:

• Blessed rather are those who HEAR the word of God and OBEY IT. (Luke 11:28, emphasis added)

• Why do you call me, “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and HEARS my words and PUTS THEM INTO PRACTICE. (Luke 6:46-47, emphasis added)

• My mother and brothers are those who HEAR God’s word and PUT IT INTO PRACTICE. (Luke 8:21, emphasis added)

Even in the Great Commission, he made clear that disciple making involves “TEACHING them TO OBEY everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19, emphasis added).

So a disciple is a learner-doer and not simply a student acquiring knowledge. A disciple learns to obey all Jesus’ commands. And this obedience isn’t merely conforming to externals. It isn’t primarily about behavior; it is about life change. His teaching doesn’t impose a cold legalism. Jesus made it abundantly clear, over and over again, that he was transforming life from the inside out and that the change had to be more than the external forms that characterized the religious leaders of his day. (Consider the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7.) The obedience of discipleship is a matter of the heart, and so Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” (John 14:15, see also John 14:23, 15:14, 17:23; 16:9-10.) It is this obedience of love that brings the disciple real freedom. As Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32, emphasis added)

Jesus gave his disciples a living model of what they were to become. Imagine the scene on the last evening together before his crucifixion. Fully conscious of what was about to happen to him, Jesus turned his love and attention toward his followers (John 13:1). While they were busy postling for places at the table and claiming their share of dinner, Jesus arose, girded himself as a servant, and washed their feet. Then to ensure they had learned their lesson, he spoke these words:

“Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” (John 13:12-17, emphasis added)

Later in the same evening, during the after-dinner conversation, Jesus cemented in their minds forever the primary mark of his disciples: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you...” (John 15:12-17, emphasis added)

ONE WHO IS BECOMING LIKE JESUS

This faith-filled following, this love-induced obedience, this inside-out transformation has an end in view, a desired outcome. Through the process of believing, following, and learning to obey, the disciple increasingly becomes like the Master.

Notice Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:25: “It is enough for the student [or disciple] to be like his teacher.” Or, again, in Luke 6:40: “A student [or disciple] is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

Thomas 4
MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (JOHN 13:34-35, EMPHASIS ADDED. To make sure they didn’t miss the point, he repeated the command at least two more times. “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (JOHN 15:12). “This is my command: Love each other” (JOHN 15:17). Whether in loving one another, serving each other, humbling ourselves, forgiving others, praying, giving, doing good works, or bearing up under suffering, our ultimate example is always Jesus. We are to become like him in all things. That is the end goal of discipleship.

ONE WHO IS EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

In my early days of following Jesus, I would sometimes dream about what it would have been like to follow Jesus—to have seen him in action, to have heard him teach, to have enjoyed conversation together over meals, to have walked together on dusty roads, to have boated together on lakes, to have been with one another on the Sea of Galilee, even to have done a little fishing together. What a privilege it would have been and what a difference it would have made in the kind of follower I am. Or so I thought.

But then I was shown a startling statement by Jesus, and with it I was introduced to a new reality for Christ followers—discipleship in the post-resurrection period. On the last night with his followers, Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (JOHN 16:7).

There was something better for Christ followers than to be following Christ physically. At first, I didn’t know who this Counselor was and how it could be better to have him present than to have Jesus present. But then I began to discover the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Five times during that last night with his followers, Jesus promised that he would send the Holy Spirit as our Counselor-Helpress:

• To be in us (14:16-17) and with us forever (14:16)
• To teach us and remind us of everything Jesus had taught (14:25-26)
• To continue, along with us, in testifying to the truth about Jesus (15:26-27)
• To bring the world to understand the truth about sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:7-11)
• To guide us into truth, bringing glory to Jesus (16:12-15)

This is a mere sampling of the soul-satisfying work the Spirit began to do in people’s lives (JOHN 17:21-23) as he came bestowing power upon Christ’s disciples (ACTS 1:8). Apart from the Spirit’s work in our lives, discipleship (that is, following Christ) would be a hopeless, helpless, frustrating, failing proposition. But through the ongoing directing and empowering work of the Spirit in our lives, we increasingly experience the transforming life of Christ from the inside out. (ROMANS 8:1-17; GALATIANS 5:1-21; EPHESIANS 3:16-17).

To help us understand what this new post-resurrection relationship with him would be like, Jesus chose the word picture of a branch abiding, or remaining, in its vine (JOHN 15:1-8). Through staying in an ongoing dependent and obedient relationship with Jesus, the fruit of our lives brings glory to the Father, demonstrating that we are Christ’s disciples indeed. “This is my Father’s glory,” he said, “that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (JOHN 15:8).

So, what is a disciple? Here is the summary: To be a disciple is to be a true follower of Jesus Christ. A disciple is one who has come to Christ in faith and continues to follow him, learning to obey him and thus becoming like him in character, lifestyle, and service. Discipleship today is possible only through the presence, power, and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MAKE DISCIPLES?

If you have paid attention during the first section, the answer to the second question should be obvious. To make disciples is to help others become true followers of Jesus. For those who don’t know him, disciple making is helping them come to Christ in faith. For those who believe in Jesus, disciple making involves establishing them in their faith, connecting them with other believers, and encouraging their growth so that, through the transforming power of his Spirit, they increasingly become more like Christ. It isn’t primarily about a specific method, activity, or approach. Rather, disciple making is the work of enabling a relationship—the faith-filled following of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

DISCIPLE MAKING 101

In the Great Commission (MATTHEW 28:18-20), Jesus provided the basics of the disciple-making process. With three broad strokes, he painted a picture of what is involved, as we will see. Before examining that process, though, it is important to remember the context that Jesus placed it within. As he issued the directive, Jesus declared his authority: “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me” (VERSE 18).

There is no higher authority than Jesus. It was this reality that made his first followers unstoppable in their obedience to make disciples. (VERSE 19). Disciple making has always been the same—true for countless others in the centuries since. Then, in his conclusion, Jesus promised his presence: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (VERSE 20). Throughout the Bible, when God gave an assignment, he promised his presence to ensure the success of his obedient servants. Consider the examples of Moses (EXODOUS 3:1-4), Joshua (Joshua 1:8), Gideon (Judges 6:14), and Jeremiah (JEREMIAH 1:4-8). The implications of Jesus’ authority and promise are profound as we engage in disciple making. Because of his authority, nothing should stop us from doing our part. Because of his presence, we should have complete confidence in the outcome. Christ can and will work through our humble efforts to accomplish his magnificent purposes. Disciples will be made.

So, what is the process? The main instruction is found in the clause “Go and make disciples.” It is a compound clause with two imperatives, or commands: “go” and “make disciples.” The two go hand in hand. We are under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his supreme command to go and make disciples. “Go” means (well, this seems obvious) to move from one place to another with the intent to engage in some specific activity. (“Let’s go and have coffee.” “Go and buy some milk.”) The activity won’t happen if you stay in the same place. There is an important implication to this—we, as believers, are people who are always moving into the spaces (whether geographic or relational) where we can engage in the activity of making disciples. We show up with a mission to accomplish, a purpose to fulfill, a kind of people to make—true followers of Jesus. Whatever else we do in life (whether we are a doctor, teacher, parent, student, missionary, or whatever), this is our assignment.

But the act of going and making disciples involves two related activities—found in the two subordinate phrases “teaching them” and “making disciples” and “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Both are important.

Baptism is the visible mark of a Christ follower. It is the means by which the new disciple expresses openly his or her faith in Christ. Of course, there is a wide range of views regarding baptism among believers today. (At what age can one be baptized? In what manner should one be baptized? And so on.) Whatever theological meaning is associated with this act, whatever method of application is used, it is clear that Christ’s expectation was that all disciples would be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is part of discipleship. This does not, however, mean that all involved in disciple making must do the baptizing. The apostle Paul himself chose to limit his personal practice of baptizing new believers, presumably entrusting that task to other leaders (see 1 Corinthians 1:14-17). Paul’s example suggests that it can be appropriate to focus on certain elements of the disciple-making process (in Paul’s case, communicating the gospel) without being the one person (or ministry) trying to do it all. This also highlights the importance of involving disciples in Christian community (that is, local churches), where the life and practice can be fully experienced through the ministry of the greater body of believers.

The second activity Jesus highlighted was “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Herein is the Great
Commission curriculum. As the Master Teacher, Jesus instructed his followers in his way of life—the kingdom lifestyle. The content of discipleship is always rooted in and centered upon Jesus’ teaching. Within that teaching is a goldmine of riches that can be explored, applied, and shared with others. All that the apostles preached in the book of Acts, and all they taught through their letters, are faithful expositions and extensions of Jesus’ teaching. But remember, Jesus isn’t interested in the mere transfer of knowledge. Rather, making disciples is about learning to apply his teaching, to live his way of living, to obey his instructions. This is following the Master today.

EVANGELISM

So, how do we put this process into practice? It begins with taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Witness is the cutting edge of disciple making. A person can’t follow Jesus as his or her disciple until that person first comes to Jesus in faith. It is through hearing and understanding the gospel that a person is able to do so (Romans 10:14-15).

But let’s get honest. When the subject of witnessing and evangelism is brought up, many of us shrink back. Fears and reservations begin to arise within. Perhaps it is the failed attempts of the past or the prospect of offending others in the future that begin to cloud our thinking. But before you attempt of the past or the prospect of offending others in the future that begin to cloud our thinking. But before you attempt to increase your fruitfulness as a witness.

When people come to Christ in faith, they have two primary needs: (1) the need to connect relationally with a community of believers who will help them grow; and (2) the need to learn the foundational truths of following Christ. Establishing new believers with these needs is a vital part of disciple making. (Cojourner role: The Mentor). Let’s look at each.

Providing relational connections

The first need is to provide the new Christian with the relational connections that encourage growth. There are three, first, is a one-on-one relationship. A new disciple will profit from a personal relationship with you or another believer who encourages and guides the new disciple through the early stages of growth. This takes time together, talking about life and the new disciple’s relationship with Christ. But if you are wise, you won’t try to do it all alone. It is important for the new believer to develop relationships with a small group of believing friends with whom he or she can grow and experience new life in Christ. This is the second relational connection. Finally, each Christ follower needs a community of faith with whom he or she can gather, worship, learn, fellowship, and pray (Acts 2:42-47). Together, these three connections provide a relational rich environment for spiritual growth, filled with grace and truth. Without them, growth is stunted. Usually it’s not hard to relationally establish a younger believer, but it is essential. Spend time with such a person sharing what has helped you follow Christ. Introduce this new disciple to your believing friends and invite him or her to come along with you to your community of faith.

Imparting foundational truths

Along with the relational connections, young disciples also need to be established in basic truths of the Christian life. These concepts provide a foundation for a lifetime of spiritual growth and genuine life change. It is important to help each young disciple understand, experience, and communicate life concepts like these:

- Assurance of salvation (1 John 5:1-13)
- God’s love and forgiveness (1 John 1:9–2:2)
- Filling of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25)
- Walking in Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25)
- Prayer (Luke 11:1-5)
- The Word (2 Timothy 1:16-17; Hebrews 4:12)
- Fellowship (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Witness (Colossians 4:2-4)
- Complete Surrender (Mark 8:34; Romans 12:2)

Life Concept guides are available from CruPress and can provide helpful tracks for establishing new believers.

ENCOURAGING CONTINUAL GROWTH

The concept of discipling has often become associated with an ongoing and intentional relationship in which a more mature believer helps a younger believer grow spiritually. Often, when used this way, the thought moves beyond evangelism or establishing new believers in their faith. Rather, its focus is the ongoing growth and maturity of the one being “discipling.” Paul expressed it this way: “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

When I first met Matt and Greg as freshmen football players, I discovered both to be young believers. We began to meet each week, individually and together, for Bible study. We talked about life, sports, school, relationships—you name it and we probably talked on it. We would go sharing Christ together, meet with other young believers, and even spoke together on occasion. I was “discipling” them and continued to do so throughout their five years of college. Now, more than a decade later, both continue to walk with Christ and are reproducing what they experienced with others. Matt claims to use the same diagrams and verses I drew on napkins with those he discipled. Investing time and energy in discipling relationships will yield great dividends, as you leave a legacy in the lives of others.

Some prefer to use a standardized curriculum for ongoing disciple-making relationships, while others work more from the needs or interests of the individuals involved. Either approach can be effective. What is important is that the one as well as the one being discipled, is grow spiritually. 

“We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.”
important is the quality of the relationship, the openness and transparency of the communication, the growing awareness of the unconditioned love of the Savior. It is within a believing community—that is, in a whole lot of interwoven relationships as people do life together—that transforming grace and truth can be best experienced. So, if you are willing and able (by the power of the Spirit) to love people and help them get involved in healthy Christian community, you’ve got the ability to become a first-rate disciple maker.

The other essential ingredient for a healthy growth environment is the gospel. In its simplest form, the gospel is the good news about Jesus—who he is and what he has done. (See, for instance, 1 Corinthians 3:1-6; Compare Luke 24:44-46.) It is through this gospel that you came to know and experience Jesus as your Savior and Lord by faith (Romans 10:9-11). But the Christian life doesn’t start with the gospel and then graduate to something else, to some deeper truth. No, you don’t move on; you go deeper and experience more. The gospel, in its fullness, is the whole truth about Jesus and all that his salvation and kingdom have for us. It is like a vein of gold: the deeper you go, the richer you become, not because you are finding something else, but because you are experiencing something more.

So, whether the gospel is summarized in its essence through a brief booklet like Would You Like to Know God Personally? or expounded in its fullness through Paul’s theological rich letter to the Romans, it is a transforming message through which we encounter Jesus Christ our Lord. In the gospel we find Christ to be the only solution for our fallen condition—our brokenness, sin, and shame. In the gospel we discover Christ to be our life and through his Spirit to be the power we need to live that life. Jesus transforms us, and he does so with his gospel. Therefore, making disciples means helping others to understand and experience the gospel.

When you provide this relationality rich and gospel-filled environment in your disciple making, you provide an ideal environment for God to cause genuine life change and growth (1 Corinthians 3:4b). This kind of environment enables other beneficial activities—such as worship services, small-group meetings, fellowship times, prayer gatherings, one-on-one times of encouragement, and equipping or counseling—to fuel and accelerate growth. But apart from this environment of grace and truth, good things can degenerate into stagnant activities that bring little or no true transformation.

Remember, disciple making is less about a certain methodology and more about providing the right environment for growth to occur.

**PITFALLS IN DISCIPLE MAKING**

There are some common dangers in disciple making. Guard against these, for they will make disciple-making relationships and efforts toxic. Here are a few examples of toxic relationships:

- **When disciple making becomes more about the method and less about the Master**
- **When the program becomes more important than the people**
- **When the focus of disciple making is on external behavior rather than internal transformation**
- **When we are more concerned with what we are doing for someone than what God is doing in someone**

Our conclusion: Disciple making is first and foremost a work of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. People can come to Christ only through the work of God and will grow in Christ only through the work of God. Yet, for some magnificent reason, we have been invited into this disciple-making process as God’s fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:9). It is one of life’s greatest privileges, and our participation is possible only by God’s power.

### 3. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MULTIPLICATION?

Search the Bible for the phrase “spiritual multiplication” and you won’t find it. The phrase is not there, but the idea is. In fact, it is associated with two different phenomena.

**THE PRODUCT OF INCREASING NUMBERS OF REPRODUCING DISCIPLES**

On a basic level, spiritual multiplication refers to the rapid numerical growth of believers. In Acts 6, when the number of believers in Jerusalem had reached a significant size, problems started to crop up. (Is that a surprise? Lots of people equal lots of problems.) The chapter begins, “In those days when the number of disciples was increasing...” (Acts 6:7). Six verses later, after the believers had selected and deployed seven Spirit-filled servants of Christ, it concludes, “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly...” (6:7). Older translations use the phrase “the number of disciples multiplied” (KJV; see also ASV, Darby, and more). As noted earlier, commentators concur that Luke was using “disciples” here and throughout the book of Acts as a referent for believers. So this was a season of significant growth in church in Jerusalem. Lots of people were coming to Christ. The numbers of disciples were multiplying.

In this sense, spiritual multiplication is the cumulative effect of a rapidly expanding community or movement of Spirit-filled witnesses. Increasing the number of Spirit-empowered witnesses multiplies the numbers who have the opportunity to come to faith. This phenomenon has significant implications for movement building, that is, for starting, growing, and leading groups of believers actively engaged in evangelism and discipleship. Unfortunately, in many groups of believers, only a small percentage engages in Spirit-filled witness. But when a culture of evangelism takes hold and everyone becomes involved, spiritual multiplication occurs and the number of disciples increases rapidly.

This multiplying effect does not necessarily require significant maturity or training, as new believers often
spread what they have experienced to others. When Andrew encountered Jesus, as told in John 1:35-42, the first thing he did was to go and find his brother, Simon Peter. Likewise, Philip brought his friend Nathanael to Jesus (John 1:43-50). Jesus’ influence in the formerly immoral Samaritan woman’s life was multiplied as she returned to her village, sharing her experience and becoming one of the first Christians (John 4:1-16). At times initial reproduction will need to be encouraged before it will occur. The former demoniac wanted to stay with Jesus after experiencing deliverance from the spirits known as Legion. But Jesus sent him home to tell his people the great things God had done for him (Mark 5:15-16). None of these examples had known Jesus longer than a day, yet each passed on what he or she had learned and experienced to others. Each reproduced his or her own faith. When Jesus said that “spiritual multiplication is intended for every believer. We are born to reproduce spiritually, even as we are physically. It can be expected with healthy spiritual life and growth.

Christ called me personally to follow him through the influence of a couple of coaches and the ministry of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. At the time, I lacked an understanding of all Christ had accomplished in my salvation, but I knew he had changed my life and I intended to follow him for a lifetime. One night I sat on the porch with a good friend who asked me what I wanted to do with my life. Without even thinking about being a “witness” (I was simply answering her question), I shared my desire to follow Christ and do what he wanted me to do and how I thought it may involve some form of ministry. Somehow the Spirit used that simple testimony to pierce deep in her heart. Two nights later she placed her faith in Christ. When a Jewish friend saw the change occurring in my life, it spurred her personal exploration, leading her to believe in Jesus as her Messiah. Even when I was a new believer, my life in Christ was reproducing in the lives of friends. Many other believers can tell similar stories. But as indicated earlier, sometimes we need encouragement to reproduce and a little equipping can always help. Ultimately, we are born to reproduce.

THE PRODUCT OF SEVERAL GENERATIONS OF REPRODUCING DISCIPLES

A second (and more mathematically powerful) multiplication occurs when generations of believers reproduce. I first heard it presented with an illustration in which addition was contrasted with multiplication. It went something like this: Suppose you led 50 people a day to Christ. At the end of the week, you would reach 350 people; in a month, 1500 people; in a year, 18,250. Continue to do that for 16.5 years and (besides being utterly exhausted) you would reach 301,125 people. Not bad for a personal witness. This is the result of addition—adding fifty more each day. But then came the contract. Suppose instead you began by leading two people to Christ and helping them grow over a six-month period. At the end of that time, each leads two other people to Christ and helps them grow over the next six months. These go out and do the same, and the chain continues unabroken every six months. At the end of the first year there would be 4. (Did you come up with the same answer? 2 \times 2 = 4.) After the second year, there would be 16 (two more generations added); after three years, 64; after four years, 256. From there the pace builds rapidly as the numbers increase exponentially, so that by the 33rd generation (a mere 16.5 years later), the total would have multiplied to 8,589,934,592 people reached for Christ—more than the entire population of the world.

This doesn’t mean that, if you start the multiplication process now, the world will be reached in less than two decades. Disciple makers have been using this approach (and illustration) for at least the thirty-plus years I have been in ministry, and the world still hasn’t been fully reached. There are other factors involved, including the unfortunate one that believers are human, and thus breakdowns in the process occur. But the illustration still highlights the power of multiplication numerically. The lesson to be learned for the disciple maker is that your long-term impact can be multiplied many times over if you encourage and equip the reproduction of multiple generations of disciples rather than trying to do it all yourself.

When used in this sense, spiritual multiplication is often associated with the equipping of selected individual for service, leadership, or ministry with the intent that they will do the same with others, becoming part of the never-ending chain of spiritual multipliers. This kind of spiritual multiplication is modeled (loosely) after Jesus’ ministry with the Twelve. He was far more intentional and intensely involved than we are when using our modern approaches. He actually spent all day with his disciples for a training period of almost three years. It began when Jesus “called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them” (Luke 6:12-16). Mark indicates that the Twelve were chosen to “be with him and that he might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). This “training of the Twelve,” as it has been described, involved an intense Master-disciple relationship and focused upon preparing them for leadership after Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension. Even before his crucifixion, Jesus confidently prayed, not only for the Twelve, but also for “those who will believe in me through their message” (John 17:21). When he rose from the dead, he commissioned them to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). They went forth and initiated the never-ending chain of spiritual multiplication that continues until this day. This relationship between Jesus and the Twelve has been the inspiration and model for many disciple makers since.

A second, similar example involves the apostle Paul and Timothy. Timothy was a young believer who apparently had been raised by a God-fearing Jewish mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). His upbringing prepared him to receive the gospel when Paul’s first missionary journey brought him to Lystra, located in modern Turkey (2 Timothy 1:20). On his second journey, Paul returned through the area, recognized Timothy’s potential (based upon his reputation), and selected him as a ministry companion (Acts 16:1-5). Under Paul’s tutelage, Timothy flourished in his faith, becoming one of the primary young leaders in the early church. In the midst of Timothy’s ministry, Paul charged him to continue to multiply spiritually. “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

In college I became involved with Campus Crusade for Christ and spiritual multiplication in a similar way. Our strategy involved reproducing generations of multiplying disciples. Bob (a staff member) met with me in the first couple of weeks of my freshman year. After discerning that I was a true Christ follower, he challenged me to join his “action group,” a discipleship group based upon the principle of spiritual multiplication. He focused on my growth and on training me in ministry skills with the expectation that I would do the same for others, starting my own “action group” as soon as possible. I attended his small group, and he met with me individually each week to help me grow and learn to share my faith. (Notice the three key relationships of disciple making—one-on-one, small group, and the involvement with CCC as a larger community of believers.) I was to turn around and pass on the same lessons and experiences to a group of three guys on my dorm floor. I didn’t have much to offer at that time, but what I received I passed on to them. Years later, each of these three men continue to walk with Christ and have reproduced in the context of their churches. During my sophomore year, Will heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (2 Timothy 2:2). Notice the four generations of this spiritual multiplication reflected in this verse: (1) Paul; (2) Timothy (along with other witnesses); (3) reliable (or faithful) men; (4) others. Four generations of spiritual multiplication—that is multiplying the impact!

The twelve disciples went forth and initiated the never-ending chain of spiritual multiplication that continues until this day.

Jesus was for more intentional and intensely involved than we are when using our modern approaches.
(a second staff member) began to disciple me. Through his influence I continued to grow as a leader and disciple maker. By the time I graduated, eight men had been a part of my discipleship group. All eight have continued to walk with the Lord and serve him. I can’t imagine all the lives that have been touched, not just by them, but by those they have influenced for Christ.

Spiritual multiplication maximizes your impact for Christ. Spiritual multiplication is not what you do in others’ lives but rather what others do because of you. It isn’t the only way to serve Christ and others, but when it is included with other forms of ministry, it has the potential to multiply the impact exponentially. It is the accelerator of disciple-making movements.

**SUMMARY: THE DESIGN OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Let’s put it all together now.

What is a disciple?
- A disciple is a true follower of Jesus.
- A disciple comes to Jesus in faith, continues to follow him, learning to obey and becoming more and more like him, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to make disciples? Making disciples is helping others become and live as true followers of Jesus.
- Disciple making begins with evangelism.
- Disciple making establishes younger believers.
- Disciple making encourages growth to maturity.
- Disciple making provides a healthy growth environment.

What is spiritual multiplication?
- Spiritual multiplication is the product of increasing numbers of reproducing disciples.
- Spiritual multiplication is the product of multiple generations of reproducing disciples.

What is Jesus calling you to be? His disciple. What is he assigning you to do? Make other disciples. How can you accomplish the most? Through spiritual multiplication. This is the design for discipleship.

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION**

1. Why was disciple making given such importance by Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20)?
2. What is the relationship between making disciples and the local church?
3. When did you first come to Jesus and begin to follow him?
4. Why is following Jesus so difficult today?
5. What role does the Holy Spirit play in the life of a disciple?
6. What is the connection between love and obedience in the life of a disciple?
7. List different ways we are to become like Jesus.
8. Summarize in your own words what a disciple is.
9. What effect should Christ’s authority have on our disciple-making activity (Matthew 28:18-20)?
10. How does the promise of his presence transform the disciple-making experience (Matthew 28:19)?
11. What are the essentials of disciple making as given in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)?
12. What is the relationship between witnessing and disciple making?
13. What fears or obstacles hinder your witness? How do Jesus’ command (Matthew 28:18-20) and promise (Acts 1:8) relate to your hesitancies?
14. What are the two primary needs of young believers, and how can we meet them?
15. What are the essential ingredients for a healthy growth environment?
16. What are some of the pitfalls in disciple making?
17. Who are you helping to become or grow as Christ’s disciple? Who else could you engage in a disciple-making relationship?
18. What are the two aspects of spiritual multiplication?
19. How are you engaged in each aspect of spiritual multiplication?
20. What steps can you take to accelerate spiritual multiplication through the lives of others?

GROWING MOVEMENT SERIES

The Growing Movement Series contains the Campus Ministry resources for accomplishing the Build, or discipleship, component of our mission. Every tool serves a specific function in the process of personal discipleship process.

While there is no shortage of other resources, we strongly urge our staff and student leaders to use the resources in this series and we stress it for several reasons:

**FIRST**, these resources carry Campus Crusade’s core teaching and training—they distinctly express who and what we are as a ministry.

**SECOND**, each resource builds on the next, referencing and reinforcing one another.

**THIRD**, as our ministry is broad and international, use of the same materials ensures that areas of discipleship are not overlooked and that we are all being trained and taught similar content. They also ensure that we are speaking a common language on projects, overseas, and from campus to campus, which is the reason for Crusade’s high value on transferability of materials.

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