**Disciple-Making is *NOT* an Add-On**

As Christians, we have access to a wonderful gift. The gift of eternal salvation, and a life set-apart from the rest of the world. Not that that means we are free from trouble and trials, certainly, but that they will not affect us in the long-term. We know that we can have freedom from the effects of life found in the salvation we receive from Jesus. As a result of this, or perhaps more so hand-in-hand with this, we are called to share that Good News, the very reason for our faith with those around us. We are all called to “make Disciples of all nations”. Disciple-making is the act of sharing your faith with others, to help them grow and to grow yourself along side them. This is not simply an optional act, but rather is a crucial part of our Christian walk. The very act of Disciple-making is an overflow of the Good News and salvation that we have been given. An overflow of that Love in our lives. We do not want to “keep our light under a bushel”, we want to set it high for all to see. Just as you would want to tell everyone about an exciting experience you had, why would you also not want to share your exciting God-experience? That is what we will be developing over this Disciple-making journey together. Welcome aboard!

**False Assumptions**

As the next step in our disciple-making process, let’s examine 2 false assumptions that are common within ‘church circles’, and why they matter in our Christian walk. The first assumption we will look at is that reading the Bible is enough. As with anything, there is a difference between hearing and knowing, and between knowing and doing. One can hear the words of Scripture, and can even quote them from memory, chapter and verse, but without going further, and applying them to daily life, there is no intrinsic benefit that is carried over to the hearer, let alone the opportunity to share the benefit of your newfound wisdom with others, and to help others grow. The Bible says that those who listen to the Word and apply it to our lives are like “the man who builds his house upon the Rock” (Matt 7) and that one who hears the Word and does not apply it to his life is like one who “looks in a mirror and immediately goes away and forgets what he looks like” (James 1). Application goes hand-in-hand with the hearing of the Word. Reading the Bible and saying :Oh, that’s a good point, I like that.”, closing the book and going about your day serves no beneficial purpose, and does not give you opportunity to embark on your own disciple-making journey.

The second false assumption we will explore is that interpretation of the Word is not necessary. I would argue that interpretation is the first step following the reading of the Word. We must be able to actively understand what the message is that the author (and God by extension) is trying to make, and how that applies to our current circumstances, and modern world. Not that the Word of God changes with the times, certainly, but that we need to be cognizant of how the audience the passage was originally presented to was to receive it, and the nuances surrounding their time and culture. Ultimately, the very act of reading the Word and thinking “How do I apply this to my life, what does it mean to me?” or even simply saying “What does this passage even mean?” is all the act of interpretation. Saying that interpretation of the Word is unnecessary (or is reserved for Clergymen, as is another common misconception) is not only harmful to yourself, but can also be harmful and a disservice to others as you progress in your disciple-making journey, if you are going in ‘unprepared’ with an improper understanding of the Word.

**First and Second Readings of Scripture**

Another crucial step in disciple-making (and also in all manners of Bible study) are to be able to effectively interpret the Word, as we discussed earlier. One way that this can be undertaken is through employing the first and second reading method, which we will explore further below. This method takes a twofold approach to reading and understanding/applying scripture, both of which are integral parts of the reading-understanding-application experience. The first portion, or first reading, is the initial point of contact with the Scripture (not necessarily the first time you have ever heard it, but in each scenario). This can be through your devotional readings, a sermon, a post on social media, etc. It is at this point that you read the Scripture and process it through a lens of “What does this mean to *me*?” It is an initial look at the scripture, and its consequence on your circumstances, and to invite “Christ and His Word into your heart”. Conversely, the second reading of scripture requires taking a different approach. After you have read through the passage, and taken time to meditate on the meaning you have extracted from the first reading, try and look at the passage through a different lens. Look deeper at the text, searching for the *original* meaning, and the context in which it was presented to the initial recipients. Look this time through a lens of “What did the text mean to them?” (Them being the original readers, in their 2000-year-ago culture. It is crucial to recognize the nuances of their time period, and to remove any 21st century ‘bias’ you may be (sub)consciously applying to your reading and interpretation of the Scripture. This is best done within the fellowship of others, where you can collectively learn the true meaning of the passage, and work on applying it to life *together*. As Dr Smith says in TrueNorth (p 30) “ In Bible study, it’s essential to keep in mind that personal opinions are not the primary outcomes of a Second Reading of Scripture. I want to know what Jesus, Paul, or John thinks since their words are inspired. My opinions are not. We need to discover what was on the authors’ minds as they experienced this truth embodied in Jesus and lived out in a first-century setting. Correct interpretation genuinely is a matter of life and death.”

**Thinking Like a Pastor**

Even if you are not called to pulpit ministry, the mindset of a pastor can be described as that of a shepherd. One who leads and guides. That mindset can equally be applied on a smaller scale to the work of a disciple-maker, and that is, of course, what we are all called to be, in one way or another. It is important to understand the mindset of a pastor, so that you can begin to apply it to your disciple-making endeavours, whether in a formal capacity or not. Some key elements to keep in mind are:

* They want nothing more than for you to know, live in and experience the fullness of God’s love and plan for you and your life
* They want to equip you to go out and recruit others as a disciple-maker
* They want you (and other believers in the Church) to become united in “faith and the knowledge of the Son of God” (TrueNorth, p36 & Eph. 4:13)
* They long to “get people out into the community to represent Christ” (TrueNorth p38)

(If I may add a piece not from the TrueNorth readings:)

* They are oftentimes just as unsure of how to best express their thoughts for utmost effectiveness as you are about yours

**Conversion & Membership in the Local Church**

To better explore the concept of conversion and membership in a local church, the following points will be made from a viewpoint of our church. The ‘conversion journey’ in our church is simply to ensure that the individual has (or does, if they are ‘experiencing conversion’ in our church) affirmed their belief that they are a sinner in need of God’s grace, and that they make a decision to commit to follow God and His teachings to the best of their ability. That does not mean that they will always do it perfectly, and they will not stumble, but it is a conscious decision to earnestly, consistently and honestly *try.* Try to live out the Lord’s plan for their life, and accept His grace and forgiveness when they falter. There are no special programs or exact words that need to be spoken in a certain order (other than the generality in the above affirmation). If *church membership* is desired, there are explicit statement of faith/values and other questions (do you agree to pray for the church, contribute tithes etc) that must be answered. The next step is to grow in your faith, and to learn to share that with others (disciple-making). To better illustrate that point, I have taken the following excerpt from our church’s literature:

**Our Values**

**Jesus is our Center.**

We Follow Jesus’ Teaching + Example.

*Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”*

**John 14:1-7**

**Relationships Matter.**

We Live in Community to Share
the Love of God + Care for One Another .

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”*

**John 13:34-35**

**Open Doors.**

Relationship Over Religion,
Everyone Can Belong
Before They Believe.

*He said, “It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

**Matthew 9:9-13**

**Love in Action.**

We serve others through acts of kindness, love, prayer
+ encouragement.

*This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*

**1 John 3:16**

**Choose Grace.**

We Connect to God Through His Grace
+ Offer Grace to Others.

*Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

**1 Peter 4:8**

**Nothing to Hide.**

We Desire to be Authentic
About Who We Are;
Our Brokenness +
Need for God’s Love + Restoration.

*If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

**1 John 1:8-10**

**Our Discipleship Pathway**

**READ** *the* **BIBLE**

The choice of words here is intentional. Read the bible. Not a book on the bible, or a podcast, or sermon. Not someone else’s thoughts or experiences. Find a translation that works for you, NIRV is written at a grade 3 reading level; the Christian Standard Bible is college level. ESV, NLT, NIV all fit somewhere in between.

Any bible reading is better than no bible reading.

— *All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking,
for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete,
equipped for every good work.*

**2 Timothy 3:16**

**PRAY** *your* **HEART**

To be honest with God means we need to be honest with ourselves and that can be really really hard.

But honesty is always worth it. It allows you to live with nothing to hide, to unload the weight you carry, to find a place to rest and relax.

Skip the part where you get super formal by using words that you found in the christian dictionary.

— *When you pray, don’t babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they’ll be heard for their many words.
Don’t be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask him.*

**Matthew 6:7-8**

**LOVE** *His* **PEOPLE**

Love all the people. Find ways to do it.

If you aren’t sure, look at how you treat people, avoid people, distance yourself from people, then think of how you feel in times of hurt and need. A way we can practice this is by asking a friend. A close friend is usually really good at telling us how we can improve on loving.

— *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
This is the greatest and most important command.
The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself.
All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.*

**Matthew 22:37-40**

**SPEAK** *our* **FAITH**

You are not alone, but surrounded by a community
that believes the same thing.

We believe in a creator of the universe.

We believe that creator has a plan and a purpose for us.

We believe He came to Earth as the man Jesus of Nazareth.

We believe He died and came back to life.

We believe He is alive today…

We have to talk about faith outside of a church building, and outside of our homes. Faith needs to become a part of our identity and something we are proud of.

Not in a conformist judgmental way,
but in a “this is who I am” kind of way.

— *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* *teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.
I am with you always…*

**Matthew 28:18-20**