

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING TOOLS

In disciple-making, it is crucially important to have working tools. How many Christians on a given Sunday emerge from church equipped (through the church service) with working tools by which they can “make disciples”? In an average church service, the number would be – none, zero, zilch! Not one Christian emerges from a typical church service better equipped to make disciples! Why? Because there is *no intention, no vision, no concept, no idea, no strategy, for mastering and retaining the truth received and transferring it to a disciple with accountability to set in motion a chain of multiplication*. Though many Christians are motivated to know God better, honor and worship Him, and concentrate much mental energy in that church service, no viable outcome is expected that would enable him to assist in fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus in “all nations”. This is also true of Sunday School classes, Bible studies, teaching situations, etc., throughout the Christian community.

Let me pose this question to any pastor: *If you could know that the sermon you preach next Sunday morning could/would be used deliberately for multiplying disciples who would impact the world to the ends of the earth (distance) until the end of time (duration), would this not be far more satisfying than the mere momentary inspiration of a crowd of people (as important as that might be)? If you knew that the truth you preach next Sunday morning (that very truth repeated in the exact form in which it was delivered) would be powerfully and practically incarnated in a number of persons and repeated again and again through generations of disciples for the purpose of enlarging multiplication of reproducing disciples, would this not be far more gratifying than the relative (relative) “wasting” of that truth by wafting it into the air and (hopefully) into the hearing of an audience of people who will very quickly forget it and never use it for any strategic purpose past the moment of its delivery? It would essentially be the difference between Paul preaching three or four sermons in Thessalonica (Acts 17), and Paul later writing the two letters to the Thessalonians, which have been research territory ever since for sermons, Bible studies, discipling sessions, etc. Surely even Paul himself would prefer the latter result instead of the former.*

Many times, when Christians begin to hear and learn about Jesus’ specific strategy to “turn people into disciples,” with all that this mandate entails and implies, they often jump forth with the question, “How do you do this?” Invariably, they seem to be looking for a “quick-fix” strategy, or an “instant” working plan. This simply will not happen. Jesus spent approximately three years day and night in a close-up, “hands-on” relationship with His Twelve—and at the end of the training process, as He was moving toward the Cross, they were still arguing about “who is greatest in the Kingdom!”

The process of disciple-making requires: (1) *A clear and full understanding of the mandate of Jesus*; (2) *A clear strategy* for fulfilling the mandate; (3) *A steady commitment* to the fulfillment of the mandate; and (4) *Consistent curriculum* which may be used in building disciples. It is the fourth of these requirements that occupies us in this vignette. Systematic curriculum is a primary “working tool” for building disciples. I will frankly say that, without systematic curriculum that is deliberately and strategically

transferred through generations of disciples, you will never make disciples after the Jesus Standard. The Gospel records show every evidence that Jesus used such curriculum in building His Twelve.

When I began to see and realize the strategy Jesus modeled and mandated, I immediately looked for some man who was already pursuing that strategy, and any materials I could find to help me understand it. *I could not find a single such man* (what a tragedy!), but I managed to locate a few published documents on disciple-making. At the time, all I could find was Robert Coleman's The Master Plan of Evangelism, Leroy Eims' The Lost Art of Disciple-making, and Walter Henrichsen's Disciples Are Made, Not Born. I wore these books out, reading each work carefully and then re-reading parts of each over and over. Coleman's book was most instrumental in showing me the model of Jesus (I have re-read all or parts of it again and again, and have re-worked it in my mind many, many times). The other two books helped greatly concerning the method of disciple-making. As I began to re-read my Bible (the primary Textbook for disciple-making strategy and curriculum) through the lens of disciple-making, I found that it was *everywhere* on the pages of Scripture (in both the Old Testament and the New Testament). The concept of making disciples enlarged daily in my mind and heart, and I am still in hot pursuit of the concept, constantly reading and studying about it. "The final vote of things Christian is cast with the feet," and I began to implement the disclosures God was giving. My understanding was being steadily formed by reading, teaching, discussing, observing many varying ministries, and prayerfully turning all of this over and over in my mind daily.

I ransacked the Gospels, the Book of Acts, and the epistles of the New Testament, looking for the strategy of Jesus and His disciples. I now see that such strategy is everywhere, but I was handicapped by all of the traditional paradigms I had held previously and thus my investigation only slowly disclosed that which is now so very clear and apparent to me. It was only when I began to examine the New Testament emphasis on *transferred truth*, or doctrinal teaching, that I saw how absolutely indispensable systematic curriculum is in building disciples. Every document of the New Testament is laden with doctrinal truth and is incredibly clear in presentation of it. This is especially evident in Paul's epistles, *each one of which was written to build disciples*. The old clamor for "Christianity without doctrine" is a will-of-the-wisp. No such valid Christianity exists. As I close this brief vignette, let me encourage you to read and study Romans 6:16-18, particularly verse 17, noting the importance of an "exact form of doctrine" in securing victory over sin in daily life. Then read and study Acts 2:42, noting which discipline is recorded *first* ("the Apostle's *doctrine*"). Finally, read and study the great Gospel statement in I Timothy 2:3-6, especially noting these words, "God our Savior...desires all men to be saved *and to come to the knowledge of the truth*." Sadly, we have given all of our attention to getting people "saved" (who can fault this motive?) and have basically ignored God's intent that every saved person be brought to an enlarging and dominating awareness of *His truth* (who can *fail* to see the fault of this omission?) It is my earnest prayer that these studies will be useful in ministering to you personally, and will provide useable working tools to transfer to a disciple with the

discipline and accountability that comes through making disciples—so that he will become a link in the chain of multi-generational multiplication of other disciples.