

Discipleship Skills

VISION: EMBRACING THE MISSION OF MAKING DISCIPLES

God has entrusted His disciples with the great responsibility of doing the work to make disciples of people throughout this world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Although Jesus is the One who has provided the way to salvation, this means that people like you and I play a role in the salvation of others by helping them hear and obey the gospel of Christ (Romans 10:13-18). This should be a sobering thought and should cause us to want to be as effective in this critical work as possible. To get started sharpening our skills, we must first have a clear vision to understand what discipleship is and to embrace it as the true mission Jesus has given us.

MATTHEW 28:18-20; MARK 16:15-16

Your mission is not to win religious arguments, baptize people, make church-goers, tell people what you believe, make this world a better place, etc. It is to make true disciples of Jesus Christ! Keeping this mission at the forefront of your mind should help you navigate the specific aspects and challenges of the work. Between both passages, there are four steps involved in this work. First, we must go into the world to find those we can help become disciples of Christ. Second, we must preach (proclaim) the good news about salvation in Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God to them. Third, we must baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so they will be saved. Fourth, we must continue teaching them to observe everything Christ has commanded. In these works, you should observe that sometimes discipleship involves leading someone to the point of salvation. Other times, it involves leading someone to spiritual maturity. In it all, we can learn a great deal from how Jesus accomplished this work.

MATTHEW 4:18-22

During Jesus's ministry, He called people to be His disciples. Verse 19 demonstrates three elements involved in being a disciple. First, discipleship involves a call to follow Jesus wherever He leads ("follow Me"). Second, discipleship involves being transformed into what Jesus desires to make you into ("and I will make you"). Third, discipleship involves being put to use in

Jesus's service ("fish for people"). Therefore, just as this was Jesus's focus, you must keep these same things as the vision for those you help lead spiritually – not just giving them Bible knowledge, being a friend, getting them to attend church, etc.!

MARK 4:10-12, 33-34

Jesus's work included speaking messages to the masses on various occasions. However, Jesus went deeper and more specific with His disciples. He spent time with them and gave them access to Him, allowing for many opportunities. Similarly, there may be various opportunities you have to share gospel messages with other people (Acts 20:20). In them, you should always try to point people to the truths that are revealed through Jesus and try to find people who would like to become a student of Jesus Christ (e.g., through private Bible studies). It is through such opportunities that you will often be able to help them understand the mysteries of God's kingdom deeper, and make more direct applications to their lives!

LUKE 8:22-25

One aspect you should constantly be impressed with is that Jesus spent time with His disciples. But, this was about much more than just teaching them additional information (though this was involved). Instead, passages like this one demonstrate what happens when you spend time with the people you are trying to help follow Jesus. For one, the situations that come up in life provide tests to see where people are in their faiths (as this storm exposed the reality of the disciples' faith). Then, they provide opportunities to teach real-life lessons about what discipleship looks like (e.g., during the "storms" of life). However, these tests and opportunities will often be missed if your interactions are limited to formal environments (e.g., a church building).

LUKE 11:1-4

One of Jesus's disciples evidently became aware that Jesus had been praying (as He often did, Luke 5:15-16; 6:12-13; Mark 1:35). This resulted in him asking Jesus for help in learning how to pray – and Jesus doing exactly that (Luke 11:5-13)! This was also said to have been the case with John the Baptist and his disciples. The familiarity this disciple had with Jesus surely helped him identify something that he needed to improve in his own life, and with the boldness to ask Jesus for help. Similarly, spending time near others should increase

their familiarity with your life and faith and provide opportunities for growth. However, implied in this is the need for your life to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to others (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Corinthians 11:1)!

MARK 9:33-37

As Jesus spent time with His disciples, he could see problems in their thinking as they emerged and would try to address them. He identified that they had been arguing during their journey and attempted to address the issue so it could be resolved (concerning humility). Similarly, discipleship does not occur just in classroom settings (though this kind of learning is an important component of discipleship, John 8:30-32). In fact, these deeper opportunities will rarely be seen when there is only an occasional interaction or in interactions that are limited to closely controlled environments (e.g., church assembly).

TITUS 2:1-8

God has demonstrated His desire for the spiritually older and more mature disciples to teach those who are younger and less mature in the faith (Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2). This kind of spiritual mentorship is focused on both communicating the truths about the Scriptures, as well as how these godly principles should be applied. Notice that this passage shows the older women teaching and encouraging the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, etc. Yet, they certainly were not just to be told to do these things. Instead, they were to both instruct and encourage regarding these things, helping them learn how to put them into practice in the contexts of their lives!

CONCLUSION

Those who embrace their need to get involved in gospel work must aim for the right target. Sadly, many mistake gospel work as being accomplished in ways that leave much undone or that place the target somewhere Jesus never intended. Instead, the vision you should develop in doing kingdom and gospel work with others is to aim for helping them be true disciples of Jesus Christ who choose to follow Christ, be transformed by Christ, and become useful in His service. This great work involves putting yourself around others so you can teach them what the gospel requires and help them know how to apply it to their lives.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What mission does Jesus give to His disciples?

How is someone made into a disciple of Christ?

What does it mean to be a true disciple of Christ?

How do both public and private settings have an important role in making disciples?

Why is it critical to spend time with the people you are trying to help become disciples of Christ?

What opportunities can come from spending time with those you are trying to help follow Christ?

What role has God given to those who are older and more spiritually mature in the faith?

What is involved in spiritual mentorship?

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