

DISCIPLE-MAKING STEPS

VISION

AND

SELECTION

David Kornfield, 2020

The first article in this series, **First Steps in Disciple-Making**, featured:

1. **Definitions – of a disciple and a discipler. This is foundational.**
2. **Multiple models, not falling into the tyranny of thinking there is one right model.**
3. **Selection and chemistry**

This article highlights two further areas: the underlying vision, philosophy, theology or presuppositions of a disciple-making vision and the selection processes. Without the first we can't issue a clear trumpet call to making disciples (1Co 14:8). Without the second, we can invest deeply with little results. Selection, be it for the World Cup, marriage, team or disciple-making, is crucial!

Future articles in this series of practical disciple-making steps will feature:

1. **Microgroups**
2. **Pruning your life to prepare for greater fruitfulness**
3. **Steps for finding a mentor/discipler**
4. **Practical disciple-making “how to’s”**

Let's begin by looking more carefully at our foundations – our underlying vision or presuppositions.

FIRST STEPS IN DISCIPLE- MAKING



[/ Click Here to Read
the First Article /](#)

/ UNDERLYING VISION AND THEOLOGY OF DISCIPLE-MAKING /

To develop a disciple's and disciple-maker's identity and calling, it helps to have a bigger picture of how the whole of life fits together. This can be pictured in five concentric circles that express the connection between commitment to Christ, disciple-making, healthy churches and the Kingdom of God ¹:



Being Christ-centered
(Jn 14:6; Eph 1:18-22; Cl 1:15-20;
Hb 1; Rev 1)



Being a disciple of Jesus
(Mt 16:24-28; Mc 1:15, 17; 3:13-15;
Lc 9:57-62)



Being a disciple-maker
(Mt 28:16-20; Jn 17:4, 6, 18-19)



Being a healthy church. A community of disciples and disciple-makers naturally result in healthy churches (Ac 2:42-47; Eph 4:11-16) that demonstrate the Kingdom of God



The Kingdom of God (Mt 6:33; Mt 13; Mk 1:15, 17)

¹ This is a helpful overarching vision. There are other good options. Any such vision can be adapted and modified or even articulated differently in each context. This vision has the power of explaining simply the connection between Christ, being a disciple, being a disciple-maker, being a healthy church and impacting society. Because the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and its 130 Evangelical Alliances members want to advance the Decade of Disciple-Making: 2020-2030, these connections need to be made.



/ CHRIST-CENTERED /

Connecting with Christ; helping others do the same. Nothing can substitute. This begins with our devotional time. We need to focus on connecting with God's heart and opening our own, having a divine encounter. The Psalmist shows us the way. We need to avoid falling into reading or even studying Scripture or a good devotional book without meeting with Jesus (Jn 5:39-40). As we move into our day, we then continue to walk with God; in Brother Lawrence's famous words, practice the presence of God. Bill Gothard posed two classic questions that can be very practical:

// As I go through my activities and interactions, what is God doing in the other person's life? And, how can I partner with Him? //

 / **A DISCIPLE OF JESUS** /
The background of the left page is a dark, blue-tinted photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer.

Being Christ-centered leads naturally to **being a disciple of Jesus**. This expresses itself holistically, both vertically with Jesus and horizontally with others. We seek to grow intentionally, becoming more like Jesus. This moves naturally from being with Him (Mk 3:14) to being sent out by Him (Mk 3:14). Being flows into doing which flows back into being. Next to a direct connection with Jesus, very little will help us grow as much as having a human discipler or mentor committed to helping us see our potential and our weaknesses more deeply than we otherwise would and helping us discern what God is doing in and through and around us.

 / **A DISCIPLE-MAKER** /

Being a disciple of Jesus leads naturally to **becoming a disciple-maker**. No one can make disciples who is not a disciple. Teachers make students. Pastors naturally make church members. But a teacher or a pastor who is not a disciple will not normally make disciples. Peter Wagner used to say that we can all choose whether we want to be a disciple or not. It's a matter of free will and conscious decision. He then would add, "But once you've decided to be a disciple, you have no choice about becoming a disciple-maker." You follow Jesus and you obey his supreme authority in calling you into making disciples (Mt 28:18-20). You invest purposefully in intentionally helping a small group of people become more like Christ and in their turn become disciple-makers.



/ A HEALTHY CHURCH /

Being a disciple and disciple-maker leads naturally into being part of a disciple-making culture, a **healthy church**. The word church shows up in only two verses in the Gospels (Mt 16:18; 18:17). The word disciple or disciples shows up 240 times. Jesus' focus was patently on disciple-making. He knew that genuine disciples and disciple-makers will result in healthy churches as naturally as newlyweds will result in families. Without any course on ecclesiology or any formal seminary training, the early church was born with the profile of a tremendously healthy church (Acts 2:42-47).



/ THE KINGDOM OF GOD /

A healthy church expresses and extends the **Kingdom of God**, where Christ is Lord and King. We express the Kingdom of God in the simple joy of being his people (Rm 14:17; IPe 2:9). We extend the Kingdom in our lives, in our relationships and as we are salt and light in the world, bringing others to Jesus and nurturing disciples who reproduce. The local church should be the fullest expression of the Kingdom of God on earth. At the same time the Kingdom of God is larger than the church and reaches every sphere of society.

In this next section we look more carefully at a critical element for disciples and disciple-makers – how we discern those in whom God has called us to invest, through intimate committed relationships.

/ SELECTION PROCESSES AND CRITERIA /

Much of our success in disciple-making or mentoring will depend on how well we select those in whom to invest our lives. While this applies especially to discipling relationships with leaders and followers, it also applies in collegial disciple-making (described in the first article). When thinking of whom to invite into a discipling relationship, we would do well to learn from Jesus. He took eighteen months to know his people well before spending the night in prayer and selecting twelve to invest in more deeply. Looking at Jesus' selection process, we can discern and apply five keys.

5

**KEYS OF
SELECTING
DISCIPLES**

/ Divine encounters /

Personal meetings where a person's life is changed by receiving wisdom, direction or power from God through another person. Repeated divine encounters are a sign that God may be drawing people together.

1

/ Divine patterns /

When the vision, commitment, and life rhythm (availability) of another person coincides with yours. When people take the initiative to walk with you, God may be drawing you together.

2

/ High Standards /

Jesus never rejected anyone. He simply made clear the criteria for following him and from time to time raised those standards. While he truly did select the Twelve and even the Seventy, there was also a significant element of self-selection as people withdrew or were attracted when Jesus clarified the criteria for following him. Don't be afraid of high standards. It's much better to have a few highly committed people walking with you than a large lukewarm group.

3

/ Discerning who responds to our voice /

This person is responsive, not resistant. They do what we ask and even more. There is a spiritual connection, a resonance. They take our perspective more seriously than the many other voices around them. See John 10:3-5, 8; Hebrews 13:17.

4

/ Prayer /

Direction and confirmation from the Father. Remember Samuel's search for a successor to Saul (1Sm 16)? God wants to give us Davids. If we don't pray and hear from God, we often will end up with Eliabs.

5

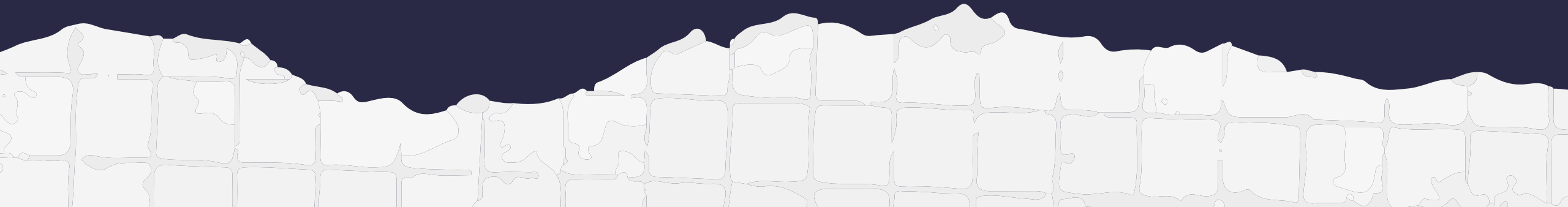
These same principles can be adapted to the other side of the coin: the perspective of someone looking for a discipler or mentor.



Along with using Jesus' selection processes, you will profit from listing the key criteria of what you are looking for in these disciples. Three classic criteria are being faithful, available and teachable (FAT). If you are looking for leaders who will multiply you might include other criteria like

- 1) leadership – has followers;
- 2) servanthood – facilitates others' growth and participation;
- 3) Emotional health.

If you have a good-sized group from which you want to choose, you could consider evaluating them on these criteria. At some point, you might ask them to evaluate themselves and use that as a basis for further processing who God might be calling to walk together.



/ DISCUSSION/APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS OR SMALL GROUPS /



Significant changes rarely take place without support. You will benefit from discussing these questions in a small group.

1. What caught your attention? (Is God saying anything to you?)²
2. What further questions or insights come to your mind?³
3. What will you do this week based on what you are learning?⁴

²This is one of the most powerful questions you can ask in studying Scripture or anything else. It focuses on what the Spirit is bringing to people's attention. It enables a real flow of Spirit-filled insights. Other more specific questions can draw away from what the Spirit may be saying to a given person, pushing them in one specific direction. Any discipler or small group leader would do well to make this their main question.

³This also is an unusually powerful question. True disciples ask questions. True disciplers do the same. This keeps pushing people to learn, to grow, to expand their thinking and perspective.

⁴Three is an excellent number of questions. With more questions, people can easily get lost and may not get to the last question which should normally be application. If we don't take substantive time on the application question, we may have largely wasted our time. As someone once said, impression without expression leads to depression. If not depression, at least lukewarmness, and the deception of thinking we're growing, though we're studying, rather than growing.

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