

LESSON 5 - Components and Methods of Discipleship

There have been several methods used for spiritual growth:

I. New Christian Class or some other type of program

- A. This is the traditional way of trying to get a new Christian to mature
- B. The strength is that it covers a prescribed curriculum of information
- C. The weaknesses are as follows
 - 1. Typically focuses more on information rather than formation
 - 2. There are typically low expectations of participants
 - 3. Most of the work is done by teachers in preparation for the class
 - 4. Accountability, if there is any, is focused more on content and assignments rather than life change
 - 5. Can have a tendency to become "academic"
- D. Therefore a discipleship regimen cannot be limited to a class

II. Small Group

- A. The small group is modeled in scripture
 - 1. See it in the ministry of Christ
 - 2. See it in Paul, he traveled with a small group
- B. The strength of small groups:
 - 1. A greater level of intimacy which lends itself to exploring areas of needed growth and change
 - 2. Greater level of accountability and trust
 - 3. More personal sharing and encouragement and ministry can happen, promoting spiritual growth
 - 4. Greater focus on life change
- C. Weakness of small groups:
 - 1. In spite of the size, there still may not be the level of openness needed to promote the level of accountability and transformation needed in people's lives
 - 2. If they are mixed gender, there is a limitation on how deep the sharing of shortcoming and challenges will go
 - 3. It still may not be as sensitive as needed to an individual's stage in their spiritual growth, there is still a certain level of synchronization and regimentation

- D. Even though small groups are good, a discipleship regimen should still involve more than a class and small group.

III. Mentor/Student

- A. Paul-Timothy are the typical model for this
 - 1. Older person teaches a younger person
 - 2. More spiritually mature teaches one less spiritually mature
 - 3. More experienced with the less experienced
- B. Strengths
 - 1. Much greater level of accountability
 - 2. Custom tailored to the growth stage of the disciple
 - 3. Ability to debrief, ask questions, pose individual challenges, and engage in other tailor made growth activities
 - 4. The discipler/teacher's life becomes the basis for training, and not merely academic content
- C. Weaknesses
 - 1. Discipler carries the responsibility for the student
 - a. The discipler dispenses spiritual "food" for the infant
 - b. Inherently is the pressure to have reached a certain level of spiritual knowledge and perfection to be a discipler
 - c. Discipler becomes the focal point
 - d. Many would not feel they are qualified to be a discipler
 - 2. Hierarchal
 - a. The disciple is dependent on the discipler
 - b. The greater is teaching the lesser
 - c. This dependency can stifle growth that leads to the disciple doing what the discipler is doing
 - d. In this kind of relationship, many disciples cannot envision themselves being a teacher themselves
 - 3. Limited interchange or dialogue
 - a. It is usually more one-sided, the discipler to the student
 - b. New disciples, due to being new to the faith, may have trouble keeping a dynamic conversation going, and usually ask questions rather than contribute to dialogue.
 - 4. Limited influence
 - a. A disciple's primary influence can wind up being one single person, his discipler
 - b. His can therefore be limited by the weaknesses and strengths of his discipler
 - 5. Does not generally reproduce
 - a. Most disciples do not think it is possible to

- b. As long as there is a sense that one person is over another because of his spiritual authority, most will not feel themselves qualified to disciple another.
- D. The Paul/Timothy model may not have been as hierarchal as some people usually think
 - 1. We sometimes place our own pre-conceived notions over it
 - 2. In addition to his "child" in the faith, Paul also refers to Timothy and Titus as "partners," or "fellow workers" a peer term rather than hierarchal one (Rom 16:21; 2 Cor 8:23).

IV. Triads or Quads

- A. Idea from the Barnabas/S(P)aul or S(P)aul/Barnabas
 - 1. Barnabas apparently took Saul in as a new Christian
 - 2. Barnabas (the son of encouragement) did not have a hierarchal relationship with Saul
 - a. (Acts 11:19-30) - They were reunited in Antioch when Barnabas went to go get him
 - b. (Acts 13:1-2) - They labored side-by-side until the Spirit set them apart for the first missionary journey
 - c. This was clearly not a hierarchal relationship
 - 1) Sometimes it was Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:1-2, 7; 14:12, 14; 15:12)
 - 2) Other times it was Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:42, 46, 50; 14:1; 15:2, 22, 25)
 - 3. This is basically a "peer" mentoring model
 - 4. Placing the discipler in an authority position over the disciple is not necessary for discipleship to occur
- B. Strengths
 - 1. A shift from the discipler as the focal point to his participation
 - a. The discipler becomes a fellow participant
 - b. He and the other two become partners on the journey together
 - 2. Shift from hierarchal focus to a relational one
 - a. Focus can be more on Christ rather than discipler
 - b. The discipler is the convener of the triad, not the keeper of it
 - c. There is a shared responsibility for the triad
 - b. The partners see that the discipler is also having to deal with the real issues of life and is a real person
 - 3. Shift from dialogue to dynamic interchange
 - a. With only two people there is limited interchange
 - a. Addition of the third person makes nine possible

configurations of communication. Each person has three types of relationships, one with each of the other two, and then with the other two as a pair.

4. Shift from limited input to wisdom in numbers
 - a. (Prov 15:22) -Wisdom in the abundance of counselors
 - b. Sometimes the novice can provide great and refreshing wisdom or insight
 - c. Having people at various maturity levels can be a great benefit
5. Shift from addition to multiplication
 - a. Greg Ogden has observed a 75% reproduction rate through the triad model of discipleship
 - b. The peer modeling method empowers the members to begin their own triads

	Intimacy	Truth	Accountability
Preaching		✓	
Class		✓	
Small Group	✓	✓	
Triad	✓	✓	✓

V. All of these should have a place in a plan for discipleship.

- A. Should not be either-or, but both-and
- B. Each method has its strength, but should not be stand-alone
- C. By far, the method with the greatest potential for life change is the Triad