

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 17: Created to Reproduce (8b)

Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org (Studies)

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **Ecclesiastes 5:4-5**

4 "When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it,

for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow.

5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay."

Step 3: Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – **Ecclesiastes 5**

Step 4: Questions for Personal Applications and/or Group Discussions:

1. Phillips said God convicted he and his team of "spiritual child-abandonment". Imagine what he meant by this.
2. Consider this – "Intrinsic to spiritual parenting is an implied commitment to bring new believers to maturity".
3. Phillips writes that mission groups probably do more harm than good when invading urban America to practice evangelism skills in order to gain experience. Do you agree?
4. Can you agree that a discipleship trainer must focus all or their energy on leading a trainee to reproduce (what we call bearing fruit for God)?
5. The author says "we were created to reproduce" (title of a booklet by Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators). And that we do this by starting with one person (one-to-one training sessions).

Step 5: Read and discuss the Content from the book:

Chapter 8b per the author – Keith Phillips:

When our ministry began, the need in the ghetto was so overwhelming that virtually anyone who was willing to join us was accepted on our staff. Many left after several months "feeling" God was leading them elsewhere. But since we minister primarily to the unchurched and since our staff members work at full capacity, there was seldom anyone to care for the spiritual children of the departing workers. All too often I tried to explain to new believers that as soon as another missionary came, we would resume the personal attention their teacher had given them. But no matter what I said, these babes in Christ seemed to hear, "You don't care anymore. God doesn't love me anymore."

Too weak in the Lord to cope with a broken relationship, these new believers fell by the wayside. Some threatened suicide. Others reverted to stealing, drugs or prostitution. Some died. Each had seen his teacher as a reflection of God, and when he was abandoned, concluded that God Himself was unfaithful. In an unstable culture like the ghetto, nothing could be worse than desertion.

God convicted us of this spiritual child-abandonment. A God of excellence never wills for His work to be left unfinished. We recognized that we needed to care for these new believers until they were mature enough to feed themselves spiritually and were incorporated into a healthy, functioning body. This is God's standard. Christ's work was not finished until His men were trained.

Realizing the gravity of our responsibility and knowing the heart of God, we decided that each incoming staff member must make a commitment to God to minister with us at least until he disciples someone to take over the ministry he begins. There is no set time period. It might take five or ten years, or even a lifetime. Such an open-ended commitment seems unreasonable unless you are a dead man—living on borrowed time.

Since the cost of entering our discipling ministry is high, each potential staff member must carefully consider the implications. Ecclesiastes 5:4,5 (NIV) warns: "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it." If the applicant has any doubt, we suggest that he wait until God confirms his commitment to stick with it for the duration of the discipling process.

Recently a woman made this commitment to God in my presence and started to minister with us. Unfortunately, a year later she changed her mind. She explained that God had led her to break her commitment in order to get married. I understood her desire to marry, but I knew that God was not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). He does not "lie or change His mind..." (1 Samuel 15:29). A dead man knows that a commitment to God takes precedence over any subsequent opportunity. God would not call someone to lead people to Christ and then direct him to abandon these spiritual babes.

Intrinsic to spiritual parenting is an implied commitment to bring new believers to maturity. My heart grieves when Christian groups come to the ghetto, draw crowds through music, drama or token charity, and stimulate mass conversions—only to leave and have the audacity to expect that somehow these deserted converts will survive. I hurt when others invade urban America to practice their evangelistic skills in order to gain experience. They barrage entire communities with the spoken gospel, record numerous decisions and then retreat to the safety of their training camp to discuss their experiences. In one such blitz, their abandoned fruit was followed up by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Such "shotgun evangelism" displays contempt for the spiritual nurture which is the foremost concern of the New Testament epistles. To excite someone to become a believer without equipping him to lead the Christian life is cruel irresponsibility.

God will hold you accountable for the nurture of new believers over whom He has made you an overseer (Acts 20:28). You must focus all your energy on leading your disciples to reproduction.

Make a commitment in faith right now to obey Christ's command to make reproducing disciples. Then begin with one person. Christ's Church will be built through discipleship. Your personal investment will result in believers who are totally committed to serving God. And the explosive nature of spiritual multiplication makes fulfilling the Great Commission feasible. You were created to reproduce.

Discipler's Checklist – Created to Reproduce
___ Spiritual multiplication is my earnest desire.
___ I have a constant commitment to self-death.
___ I am committed to bring new believers to maturity.
___ I believe God will hold me accountable for the new believers over whom He has made me an overseer.

pp. 84-86

Step 6: Share personal prayer requests then each person prays for the other's requests.

Source: The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Philips. Pub. by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8007-1181-5. Introduction by Robert E. Coleman. Content (except study questions) is taken from the book without revisions.

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