

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 4: What is Discipleship? (2C)

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

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **John 15:8**

8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Step 3: *Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – **John 15***

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

1. Reproduction per Christ's command means to reproduce in others the fullness of God. What does that look like for the trainer? The trainee?
2. The Scriptures are clear what happens when a vine (or a disciple) does not bear fruit (reproduce other disciples). What happens differently to a vine that does bear fruit?
3. BiblicalMentoring.org is about "Training Reproducing Disciples" (training disciples to train others). Are you presently training someone to train another disciple-maker?
4. God chose the discipleship process as the preferred method to expand His Kingdom. Why do you think there are so few of us obeying this command / commission?
5. One-to-one discipleship training appears to be a slow method but wait until you see the proof that it produces major results within time.

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

Chapter 2c per the author – Keith Phillips:

Reproduction

Christ commanded His disciples to reproduce in others the fullness of life they found in Him (John 15:8). He warned that, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, [My Father] takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2).

A mature disciple must teach other believers how to live a life pleasing to God and must equip them to train others to teach others. No person is an end in himself. Every disciple is part of a process, part of God's chosen method for expanding His kingdom through reproduction. We know this because Christ disciplined men and commanded His disciples to make disciples (Matthew 28:19).

God could have selected any method He wanted to spread the gospel and build His kingdom. It was no accident that Greek was the world's common language long after that empire's demise. The Greek language has certain nuances that make it ideal for communicating truth.

Also, the imperial Roman highways that united the known world may have been intended to carry her chariots, but the Christian gospel was their most valuable commerce.

Just as God used Greece and Rome as unwitting instruments to spread the gospel, He could have caused the printing press, radio or even television to be invented before Christ's birth. Jesus could have been a renowned author, a radio Bible teacher or the first TV evangelist. God's options were not limited.

But instead of adopting any of these sophisticated methods, Jesus opted for discipleship. He personally trained a small band of men and equipped them to train others to teach others. He commanded them to make disciples.

I must confess that at first I questioned Christ's wisdom. On the surface this investment in individuals appeared to be too slow. It took Jesus three years to disciple twelve men, and one of them failed.

I thought I would be fortunate if in three years I could train one person so well that he could join me in training others and at that rate I would never be able to make a dent in the 2 million people in the Los Angeles ghetto. At best I could only expect to disciple sixteen people in my lifetime. And what good would that do? My sin was that I doubted the wisdom and sovereignty of God.

But when I studied discipleship, I discovered God had chosen a solid and effective way to build His kingdom. It would start small, like a mustard seed, but grow rapidly as it spread from person to person throughout the world. His Church would be a dynamic movement, rather than a static structure. Discipleship is the only way to produce both the quantity and quality of believers God desires.

The Mathematics Are Sound

Can you imagine reaching over 4 billion people with the gospel? This task of fulfilling the Great Commission seems so staggering that even visionaries might be overwhelmed and wind up doing nothing. But the Bible is a method book as well as a message book. And Christ's method is to make disciples.

When I came to the ghetto, I had a passion for evangelism. Suppose that on the first day I led one person to Christ. Subsequently, I led another individual to Christ every day for the rest of the year. By the end of the year I would have directed 365 people to the Lord. If I continued to do that for the next thirty-two years, I would have reached 11,680. Quite an accomplishment!

On the other hand, suppose that I reached only one person for Christ that first year. This time, however, I disciplined him for an entire year, so that he was thoroughly grounded in the Christian faith and became capable of reaching and discipling another. The next year the two of us each reached one additional person and trained those two to join us in training others. If we continued this for thirty-two years, there would be 4,294,967,296 disciples—the population of the world! (See table 1.)

I mentioned my original hesitancy. But let me share my excitement now. If each of our present staff members in Los Angeles disciplined one person every two years so well that their disciples could join us in training others, we could reach the entire Los Angeles ghetto—two million people—in thirty-two years. That means that I only have to invest in sixteen people in thirty-two years. And that is a manageable task.

Even though discipleship starts off slowly, in the long run spiritual multiplication reaches far more people in the same amount of time than addition.

The Great Commission is feasible!

(pp.20b-24a)

See Table 1 on next page

Table 1 A Comparison of Discipleship and Evangelism		
Year	Evangelist	Discipler
1	365	2
2	730	4
3	1,095	8
4	1,460	16
5	1,825	32
6	2,190	64
7	2,555	128
8	2,920	256
9	3,285	512
10	3,650	1,024
11	4,015	2,048
12	4,380	4,096
13	4,745	8,192
14	5,110	16,384
15	5,475	32,768
16	5,840	65,536
17	6,205	131,072
18	6,570	262,144
19	6,935	524,288
20	7,300	1,048,576
21	7,665	2,097,152
22	8,030	4,194,304
23	8,395	8,388,608
24	8,760	16,777,216
25	9,125	33,554,432
26	9,490	67,108,864
27	9,855	134,217,728
28	10,220	268,435,456
29	10,585	536,870,912
30	10,950	1,073,741,824
31	11,315	2,147,483,648
32	11,680	4,294,967,296

Step 6: Share personal prayer requests and each person pray 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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