

Encouraging a Disciple-making Culture for the Church

Since the church's mission is to make disciples, we need to foster a culture Disciple-making

Aim: To show discipling as a culture of deliberate love and spiritual care for one another where God's Word builds up the church, making the gospel more visible to all.

What is meant by "discipling?"

- Everything a local church does should be about being and making disciples--including songs, prayers, sermons
- Lets consider "discipling" particularly about individual relationships.
- ...the intentional encouragement and training of disciples on the basis of deliberate, loving relationships.
- These loving relationships between Christians are mentioned in John 15.

John 15:9-17 - Jesus describes how he has loved us, implying how we should love one another as his disciples.

- Notice KEY COMPONENTS about His love toward us, & our reflection of that love toward one another.
- Christ's love for his people is intentional, relational, purposeful, and normal.
- These characterize a culture of disciple-making:

1. Discipling-making is Intentional -

"You did not choose me, but I chose you..." (John 15:16a).

Jesus did not merely stumble across his disciples - he took loving initiative. He chose them.

Christ-like love is not passive...it takes initiative.

And so if we seek to love others it means we will take some kind of similar initiative, too.

2. Discipling-making is Relational –

"As the father has loved me, so have I loved you" (John 15:9)

and, **"I have called you friends..."** (John 15:15b).

Jesus' discipling became loving friendships.

Like the pattern of Christ's love for us, disciple-making is relating to others as loving friends.

We must not treat them merely as projects, nor only as master and student.

We should pour out our very lives for one another's good in Christ-like, loving relationships.

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1 John 3:16... **"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."**

3. Discipling-making is Purposeful –

1. *Disciple-making seeks their joy in the gospel.*

...that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (15:11b).

Jesus' purpose in his instruction to love one another is that we would know his joy.

Caring for others & purposefully helping them to grow in grace may be very hard work.

But it is wonderful work. According to Christ, it is joy-producing work.

2. *Disciple-making seeks the spiritual good of our friend*

"and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (Jn 15:16b).

Christ has something else in mind; *that they would bear fruit for God's glory.*

So His love is not merely sentimental. It has a God-glorifying agenda.

If we love one another as Christ has loved we will at least have an agenda of similar intent—

4. Discipling-making is Normal –

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Jesus makes this kind of loving discipling his basic command to all his people.

Meaning, this should be normal for all Christians. Basic Christian discipleship is normal.

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Hebrews 3:13).

"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." (Romans 12:10).

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 Thess. 5: 11).

A main concern in the NT is that all the Christians in the various churches would be active in encouraging one another in the faith.

Shawn Bergen Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters August 22, 2015
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So a culture of discipling takes members letting other members get to know them and by working to get to know members.

And this happens with the aim of encouraging and being encouraged by one another.

The church has been characterized by a culture of discipling for two millennium

What is a "culture of discipling?"

"culture" = *"the shared values, goals and practices that characterize a group."*

Work to see discipling one another as an obvious characteristic of our church—not merely as a program as a basic part of the fabric of our community, part of our church culture.

We should want a culture where it is simply normal for members, out of love for Christ and one another, to take the initiative to build relationships with other members with the deliberate aim of doing them spiritual good.

Where member initiative, not a staff-sustained effort, keep deliberate, loving relationships going. This is the culture of a Biblically healthy church.

What should I do in a discipling relationship?

The most significant aspects of discipling is not what you do or when you meet but THAT you do something and that you have Biblical truth at its core. Here are some examples...

- Get together once a week and talk about the prior Sunday's sermon;
- Read a book (often recommended by an elder or teacher of the church) a chapter at a time and meet up to talk about it;
- Outline a book of the Bible and meet to compare outlines;
- Attend a Bible study together and meet up to talk about application to their lives;
- Regularly invite an unmarried member to sit in on their family devotions;
- Schedule "play dates" for their kids and talk about the Sunday night talk.

It's not so important exactly what you do but that you simply decide to relate to another member with the intentional aim of encouraging them with truth from God's Word.

Be creative and flexible! But be intentional about loving one another—by deliberately setting out to relate to one another with the aim of doing the other person spiritual good.