

Chapter 1

The Operating System: Disciple Making

The Multiplying Church Initiative is grounded in the strategy of Jesus to invest one's life in a relatively small group of people to whom the disciple maker can transfer life values with reasonable certainty and know that, in so doing, he has made a partner in ministry.

Five keys to disciple making have grounded this strategy. They may be found in Paul's instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." NIV

- 1) Key # 1: Disciple Making is Personal
 - a) The unnamed subject of this verse is the disciple of Paul named Timothy. Timothy is the "you" of the verse, i.e., Timothy, "the things which you have heard from me." The young man whom Paul called his "true child in the faith," and "my beloved son" was the intended recipient for this strategic initiative.
 - b) In fact, the strategy of the New Testament that dares to envision total world impact is a people strategy. It is all about people like Timothy, Titus, Priscilla and Aquilla, and the Bill's, and Bob's, and Sally's of our own day and YOU!
 - c) The implementation of the strategy occurs not on an institutional platform but in an individual person.
 - d) If you are pointing your finger at the church, take better aim. It is to Bill and Bob and Sally to whom this strategy belongs. To presume that the church of Bill and Bob and Sally will ever do anything to impact the world without the involvement of Bill and Bob and Sally is a ridiculous oversight.
 - e) This strategy is for you. The finger pointed accurately aims right at one's own chest
- 2) Key #2: Disciple Making is Biblical
 - a) A lengthy phrase at the beginning of the verse conveys that the message Timothy had received from Paul was itself crucial to his strategy: "the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses" is precisely what the strategy is all about.
 - b) What exactly then was the nature of "the things" which he had heard? The book of Acts tells us that Timothy lived in Lystra when Paul first showed up there on his missionary journey. Having already been run out of Iconium, where many believed in the Lord who "confirmed the message of his grace," Paul then made his way to the city of Lystra, the hometown of a young man named Timothy; there he "continued" what he had done earlier: preaching "the good news" (Acts 14:7).
 - c) It is not circumstantial that upon Paul's later return trip to the city, in chapter 16, that "a disciple named Timothy lived there." What Paul had presented in Lystra was the content which in part had turned a young man into a disciple, set in motion his experience of faith and launched the disciple making ministry of Timothy addressed in this letter from Paul.
 - d) Whatever else "the things" might have been besides simple gospel, we can be safe in applying the word biblical to describe it. Disciple making is fundamentally a Bible strategy. It is all about the book--- less about what people say or surmise about it. It is making the Word of God central to the lives of disciples.
 - e) "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." NIV Heb 4:12-13 "The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey." NIV Ps 19:9-10 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." NIV Psalm 119:105
 - f) Disciple making stands on the simple discovery of the Bible
- 3) Key #3: Disciple Making is Effectual
 - a) This format for dispensing the information follows a specific criterion summed up in one word in the text: "entrusting." The essence of "entrusting" is summed up in a couple of word pictures

- i) You put the first graders lunch money in a zipped pocket in the backpack; it is correct change. It is always in the same place. It is always accompanied with a reminder as the first grader goes out the door.
 - ii) You put a baby in the arms of a slightly older brother or sister who is carefully arranged in the corner of the couch. An elbow rests perfectly on a pillow to support the baby's head. Quiet but assertive language precedes the handoff. A question follows: "you got him?"
 - b) Entrusting establishes accountability and responsibility. It is a careful and deliberate method to insure success.
 - c) It is much needed: too many typical Bible hearing venues are completely "come what may." The best sermons in the world are often completely ignored. Teaching which "hits the spot" is considered to be for somebody else's spot. Communication goes in one ear and out the other; thus, the insured handoff, namely "entrusting," goes un-delivered.
 - d) But not in the total world impact strategy of the New Testament. "Entrusting" establishes the context in which the teacher can be assured the learner "gets it."
- 4) Key #4: Disciple Making is Relational
- a) Paul also focused on relationship: Paul to Timothy, Timothy to faithful men, and faithful men to others also.
 - b) Relational methodology stands in sharp contrast to mass methodology, viz. the preacher behind the pulpit with 400 sermon auditors in the pews. Relational disciple making is intentionally focused on a few, e.g., Jesus with one man and a few others walking down the road, sometimes in a boat, sometimes over a meal, sometimes in a crisis.
 - c) Relationships elevate people. Relationships instill quality. Relationships provide accountability and promote sincerity. Relationships offer individualized attention. Relationships provide natural patterns for ministry. Relationships are genuine and not manufactured. Relationships are the New Testament answer to the programming pattern of the modern church.
 - d) Disciple making is all about people, first, second, ... and last. It is not about checking off boxes and completing curriculum plans, it is building people.
 - e) In the total world impact strategy of the New Testament, there is always a Timothy for a Paul to shape and faithful men for a Timothy and others also for each of the faithful men because it is highly and intentionally relational.
- 5) Key #5: Disciple Making is Generational
- a) The disciple making strategy also involves a goal. New Testament strategists like Paul could point beyond the maturing of the saint to the reproduction of the saint. For example, he could see beyond himself, to Timothy, to faithful men, and to others also. He could see four generations deep.
 - b) Disciple making is vision enriched and fortified. Disciple makers dare to dream big --- not just to the end of the block but to the ends of the earth.
 - c) He works for and prays for a time that those he discipled will disciple others who will disciple others until the impact of his simple investment in a life is yielding transformed lives well beyond his ability to ever know, control, and even stop.
 - d) Disciple makers know that they are not the end product that some have made themselves out to be. Instead, they are the means by which the next generation can come to know about life in Christ for the glory of God. Their holiness (set apartness) is for a purpose. They realize that they are on mission with God. His purpose, "that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," becomes their purpose.
 - e) Diligent, intense, patient, and genuine effort results. No limp rag effort will ever achieve a global vision. It is not time to quit! There is much still to be done.

Go, make disciples! The natural outgrowth of making disciples in new people groups and new locations is that those same disciples will congregate and be church.