

MAKING DISCIPLES

The WIKI**CHURCH** Study Guide

Steve Murrell

MAKING DISCIPLES: THE WIKICHURCH STUDY GUIDE

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AFTERWORD



P R E F A C E

The “wiki” part of *Wikipedia* is from a Hawaiian word meaning “quick,” as *Wikipedia*’s format allows for the quick and widespread dissemination of information online. While it may be an imperfect source, *Wikipedia* has made information widely available by simply empowering volunteers. However, it did not begin this way. In 2000 Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger started an online encyclopedia called *Nupedia* whose contributions were written solely by experts. Before an article could be posted, it had to go through an extensive scholarly review process.

When *Nupedia* unplugged its servers in 2003, only twenty-four articles had been posted, with seventy-four still in the review process. In 2001, one year after *Nupedia* launched, Wales and Sanger started *Wikipedia* as a feeder system for *Nupedia*. The idea was to allow non-experts to write articles that the *Nupedia* scholars would review. By the end of the year, volunteers had submitted more than twenty thousand “wiki” articles. At the time of this writing (2012), contributors from around the world have submitted more than twenty-one million *Wikipedia* articles, and according to an independent survey, most are as accurate as traditional encyclopedia entries.

Unfortunately, many churches today function more like *Nupedia* than *Wikipedia*. They allow only credentialed professionals to lead evangelism and discipleship efforts while volunteers are expected to

show up and pay up but not engage in ministry. Imagine if the church functioned more like *Wikipedia*. Imagine if every believer, not just paid leaders, were empowered to minister. That's a WikiChurch.

This study will look at what makes a WikiChurch—one which engages culture and community, establishes biblical foundations, equips believers to minister, and empowers disciples to make disciples.

INTRODUCTION

BUILDING CHURCHES OR MAKING DISCIPLES?

*“ . . . on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades
will not overcome it.”*

Matthew 16:18

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .”*

Matthew 28:19

The most important thing to know about WikiChurches is that you can't build one.

Jesus told His followers that He would build His church. What He told them to do was make disciples. It's that simple. We do not build the church, and He no longer makes disciples. It is our job to make disciples, and He will build those disciples into His church.

WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

A clearly defined and commonly shared definition of discipleship is important because it is the starting point for creating an integrated, effective process of making disciples.

While some definitions of discipleship have complicated the idea in the minds of many believers, Jesus never intended for discipleship to be complicated. Difficult, yes. Complicated, no.

In fact, discipleship is so simple that two thousand years ago a carpenter explained it to uneducated fishermen in one sentence:

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I send you out to fish for people.”

Matthew 4:19

When Jesus calls someone to be His disciple, He makes a threefold call.

1. Discipleship is a call to _____.⁽¹⁾

The starting point of being a disciple is the decision to follow Jesus.

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I send you out to fish for people.”

Matthew 4:19

The original disciples were able to physically follow Jesus as He ministered around Galilee. During Paul’s time, Jesus was no longer walking the earth in flesh and blood. Paul taught the Corinthian believers to follow Jesus by imitating and following godly people.

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

2. Discipleship is a call to _____.(2)

Following Jesus does not mean we cut off all contact with non-Christians. Rather we should continue in our relationships so that Christ's love can flow through us to others. As soon as Matthew answered the call to follow Jesus, he threw a party at his house so all his old friends could meet Jesus and his new friends.

⁹As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" ¹²On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 9:9-13

3. Discipleship is a call to _____.(3)

When Jesus called Matthew to follow Him, Matthew had to follow along with Peter and John. He was not given the option of following Jesus alone. Contrary to Western evangelicalism's obsession with the individual, discipleship is and always has been a group project. Their faith was lived in community with other followers.

Biblical fellowship is more than greeting a few church members in the lobby before and after service. Real fellowship is intentional, Christ-centered relationship.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:42

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus,
his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

1 John 1:7

In summary, discipleship is relationship on three levels—with God, with nonbelievers, and with believers.

FOUNDATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLES

Before launching into discussions about process and strategy, first consider four foundational discipleship principles which undergird the rest of this study.

1. Every church, campus ministry, and discipleship group can _____.⁽⁴⁾

⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.

⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

1 Corinthians 3:6-8

The one purpose of planting and watering is growth. When discussing growth, I believe that every church, ministry, and discipleship group can grow in three ways. They can all grow:

- Larger
- Stronger
- More influential

2. Every disciple should _____.⁽⁵⁾

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .”

Matthew 28:18,19

Too often we act like only full-time ministers or people who have been Christians for a long time can make disciples. Jesus’ command to make disciples in Matthew 28 was given to fishermen and tax collectors who questioned, doubted, and even denied Jesus. Spiritual progress, not perfection, qualifies a person to make disciples.

- No matter where you work.
- No matter what your age.
- No matter when you started following.

3. Every minister should _____.⁽⁶⁾

¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God’s people to works of service . . .

Ephesians 4:11,12, NIV (1984)

The Protestant Reformation emphasized the priesthood of all believers, restoring the biblical pattern of relating to God. The modern church needs a “Discipleship Reformation” that will emphasize the ministry of all believers, restoring the biblical pattern of ministry. The job of the “minister” is to prepare others to minister, not to do all the ministry. The goal of this study is to get ministry out of the hands of experts and into the hands of every believer.

4. Every person is _____.⁽⁷⁾

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 3:16

Value is determined by the price one is willing to pay. God paid the ultimate price to redeem the lost. Since God places such a high value on lost people, we must learn to see them the way He sees them.

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them,
because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Matthew 9:36

THE POWER OF PROCESS

Every one wants to make disciples, but many try, fail, then quit. Why? I think the easiest and most common way to fail at discipleship is to import a model or copy a method that worked somewhere else without first understanding the values that create a healthy discipleship culture. In the rest of this study, we will take a look at the discipleship process and the values they are based upon, exploring how to:

- _____⁽⁸⁾ culture and community
- _____⁽⁹⁾ biblical foundations
- _____⁽¹⁰⁾ believers to minister
- _____⁽¹¹⁾ disciples to make disciples



CHURCH CULTURE	DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE	BASIC GOAL
Relational	Engage culture and community	Share the gospel
Spiritual	Establish biblical foundations	Strong foundations
Intentional	Equip believers to minister	Basic ministry skills
Missional	Empower disciples to make disciples	Ministry confidence and competence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is your experience of church and ministry more like *Wikipedia* or *Nupedia*? Why?

- What would happen if the church functioned more like *Wikipedia*?

- Does your church have a clearly defined discipleship process? Describe that process.

NINETY-NINE OR ONE?

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .”*

Matthew 28:19

The first step in the discipleship process is to ENGAGE your culture and community.

When Jesus told His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, none of them thought He meant for them to gather up all those who already followed Jesus and help them do it better. They were under no illusion that they could obey Jesus’ command without actively engaging nonbelievers.

ENGAGE



In Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables which help us understand what it looks like to engage the lost. In order to effectively engage the lost, we must understand four key concepts:

1. Be a _____.(1)

“Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. ²But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Luke 15:1,2

Setting up the context for the parables, Luke describes a situation that occurred rather frequently in Jesus’ life and ministry—Jesus was found spending time with religious outsiders—tax collectors, prostitutes, Samaritans, and lepers. This intentional engagement with lost people earned Him the pejorative label—“friend of sinners.”

*The Son of Man came eating and drinking,
and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard,
a friend of tax collectors and “sinners.”’*

-Luke 7:34

2. Leave the _____.(2)

³Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’”

Luke 15:3-6

Engaging the lost usually involves moving out of our comfort zones. Why? Because lost people generally don’t hang out in the same places that Christians do. Hoping that unbelievers will randomly walk into our church is naïve and lazy.

Jesus gave the greatest demonstration of engaging culture and community when He left the streets of gold in heaven to walk the dirt roads of the Roman Empire. Showing up on earth was just the beginning. While here, He was the expert at engaging all types of

cultures and communities that were traditionally disenfranchised by the religious elite.

3. Don't quit _____.(3)

*⁸“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully **until** she finds it? ⁹And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’”*

Luke 15:8,9

Just like the woman who searched her house until she found the lost coin, so we should persistently pray for and engage the lost until they are found in Christ. This often involves building long-term relational bridges with lost people.

4. Celebrate _____.(4)

*⁵And when he finds it, he **joyfully** puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’*

Luke 15:5,6

*⁹And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘**Rejoice** with me; I have found my lost coin.’*

*¹⁰In the same way, I tell you, there is **rejoicing** in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*

Luke 15:9,10

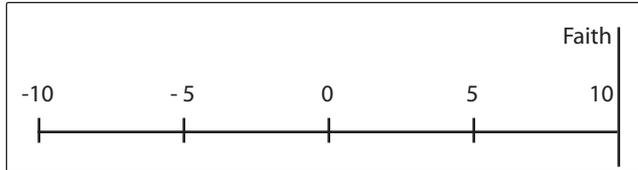
*²⁰So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him... ²³‘Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to **celebrate**.*

-Luke 15:20, 23,24

Ninety-nine or One? 13

All three parables have this in common—there is great rejoicing when the lost are found.

The parable of the lost son gives us the fullest insight into how our Father responds when sinners repent. He throws a party. Do we respond like our Father when lost sons and daughters come home or do we respond like the self-righteous elder brother?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the best ENGAGE attempt you've ever seen?

- What is the worst ENGAGE attempt you've ever seen?

- How are you actively and intentionally engaging your culture and community?

- Would anyone accuse you of being a friend of sinners? Why or why not?

ESTABLISH

FACADES OR FOUNDATIONS?

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Matthew 7:24-27

ESTABLISH



It is not enough to engage the lost. If we want to make disciples we must ESTABLISH biblical foundations.

Foundations are not the most exciting part of a building project, nor are they the most attractive part of the finished building. Yet they are vitally

important, determining both the strength and the ultimate size of the building.

The same is true with spiritual foundations. These often unseen foundations predict future growth and determine the potential for spiritual life.

If we want to make strong disciples, we must establish them in the faith, the Word, and the church community.

1. Establish in the _____.⁽¹⁾

The starting point for any disciple is building their life on Jesus—the ultimate foundation upon which everything else is built.

¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

-1 Corinthians 3:10,11

Establishing someone in the faith looks different with different people in different contexts—but it always involves repentance of sin, faith in Jesus, and baptism in water and the Holy Spirit.

2. Establish in the _____.⁽²⁾

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.”

Matthew 7:24,25

*As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word,
that you may grow...*

1 Peter 2:2, NKJV

After a person is established in the faith, the next step is to start a personal habit of daily Bible reading and prayer. No one can survive the storms of life without deep roots in God's Word.

3. Establish in the _____.⁽³⁾

When Jesus called His first disciples to follow Him, they had to follow along with other disciples. They were added to the group, to His small community of cross-carrying disciples.

When Jesus ascended to heaven, His disciples continued to meet together—understanding that living in community was essential for enduring persecution and for obeying Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations.

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

Acts 2:42

STORMS, FACADES, AND FOUNDATIONS

Too many Christians are leaning and falling, not because of the intensity of the storms, but because of weak foundations. It is not enough to have a good façade; we must build strong foundations by establishing believers in the faith, in the Word, and in the church community.

Once the foundations are in place, it is time to be equipped.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who helped you establish foundations when you first started following Jesus? How did they help establish foundations?

- What is the most effective way to establish foundations in your ministry context?

- What foundations need to be emphasized in your context?

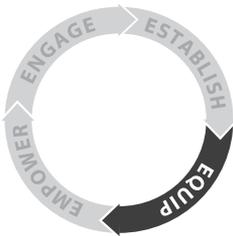
EQUIP

MATURITY OR MINISTRY?

¹¹So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

Ephesians 4:11,12

EQUIP



We hear the phrase all the time: “Every member a minister.” Yet because of our performance-driven culture, we often have little tolerance for the messiness of the equipping process. We do church as if only professional ministers should do ministry.

However, the biblical job description for professional ministers—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—is to EQUIP believers to minister, then get out of their way.

DISCIPLESHIP MYTHS

Here are three popular discipleship myths—propagated by thousands of well-meaning pastors and professional religious leaders—that have paralyzed and imprisoned millions of believers all over the world.

1. The Myth of _____:⁽¹⁾ **My pastors primary role is to minister to me.**

This myth causes church people to demand that pastors spoon-feed them and meet all their spiritual needs, turning pastors into spiritual pseudo-superheroes and regular Christians into passive spectators at religious shows.

2. The Myth of _____:⁽²⁾ **I am not yet ready to be used by God.**

This myth convinces people they don't pray enough, aren't mature enough, don't know enough Bible verses, have too many past sins, and are too young (or old) to engage in ministry.

3. The Myth of _____:⁽³⁾ **No one should minister until he or she is mature.**

This myth convinces believers that before they even attempt to minister to others, they need at least ten years of experience and a framed certificate on their wall. Only then would they possibly be mature enough to be used by God.

THREE DISCIPLESHIP TRUTHS

¹¹So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13

Paul, who started ministering to others as soon as he had his life-changing encounter with Jesus, wrote about the link between ministry and maturity in his letter to the Ephesians.

1. The Truth of _____ (4)

A pastor's job is not primarily to minister to people but to equip people to minister to others. Life, church, and ministry are not primarily about the people in the pews. They are about God and others (Ephesians 4:11).

2. The Truth of _____ (5)

While some members may not feel ready yet, God is ready to use them now. Even if they're too young or have lost their temper yesterday and used a word the pastor would never use on Sunday, God wants to use them (Ephesians 4:12).

3. The Truth of _____ (6)

We can't wait until every believer feels mature enough to minister because no one will mature until they minister. This is one of those chicken and egg conundrums. Which comes first—ministry or maturity? When we look at the Bible, it seems that ministry does (Ephesians 4:13).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What excuses have you used in the past to prove that you weren't yet ready to minister?

- Which discipleship myths have you believed in the past? Why?

- How can you do a better job of equipping in your ministry context?

EMPOWER

PROFESSIONALS OR VOLUNTEERS?

*¹When Jesus had called the Twelve together, He gave them power
and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases,
²and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God
and to heal the sick.*

Luke 9:1,2

EMPOWER



Jesus modeled an empowering leadership style. He was never content for the disciples to simply follow Him as spectators but was intent on empowering them to do what He had been doing. He went so far as to say that they would do even greater works after He had gone back to the Father (John 14:12).

In order for us to EMPOWER disciples to make disciples, we must understand four principles about empowering:

1. Empower as _____⁽¹⁾ as possible.

Acts 9 tells the story of a man who in a matter of days went from Saul the persecutor to Paul the preacher. Imagine if Ananias, who first disciples Paul, had told Paul that he needed to wait several years to mature before he could preach the gospel. How different would the story of the church in Acts be?

¹Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.... ¹³He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

Acts 9:1-2;18-20

2. Equipping precedes _____⁽²⁾.

Empowering people to take ministry responsibility without proper training and a well-established foundation is both unwise and unfair because it sets them up to fail. So while we want to empower quickly, we must never empower someone before they are equipped.

Though Paul began to preach almost immediately after his conversion, he did spend several days with the believers in Damascus being established and equipped before he began to preach.

¹⁸... He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

Acts 9:18-20

3. Equipping follows _____.(3)

¹When Jesus had called the Twelve together, He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. . . . ¹⁰When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida . . .

Luke 9:1-2,10

After equipping, empowering, and sending them out, Jesus always had debriefing sessions when His disciples returned. They reported victories and defeats. They asked questions. Jesus corrected their lack of faith and their selfish attitudes.

The equipping process did not end when they were empowered; it continued and intensified after they were empowered.

4. Empowering is _____(4) but _____.(5)

Often the underlying fear behind our hesitancy to empower disciples is the fear that they will make mistakes in ministry. Of course they will. Didn't Peter? Didn't John? Didn't Paul? Didn't you?

Mistakes in ministry are not optional—they are required. As leaders, it is important to create empowering environments where believers are encouraged to take risks and make mistakes in an effort to make disciples. In these kind of environments, disciples can learn from their mistakes, be equipped and encouraged, and try again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you have an empowering discipleship philosophy?
Why or why not?

- How effective are you at equipping disciples so that they can succeed when they are empowered?

- Are you okay with mistakes? Why or why not?

CONCLUSION

EASY OR SIMPLE?

*“ . . . on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades
will not overcome it.”*

Matthew 16:18

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you;
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea
and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 1:8

Jesus will build His church. And He will empower us to make disciples.

As you begin to obey Jesus' call to make disciples, here are a few important things to remember:

**1. Principles and Process not _____⁽¹⁾
and _____⁽²⁾**

Don't take the easy route and copy a model that seems to be working somewhere else. Do the hard work of discovering principles and applying them in your own culture and in your own community. A model that works somewhere else probably will not work for you, but principles are universal and timeless.

2. Less is _____.(3)

Everything you do as a church will either underline or undermine the disciple-making process. If what you are doing does not help you engage your community, establish foundations, equip believers, and empower disciples, then eliminate it. Commit yourself to mastering just one move—making disciples. Do less and accomplish more.

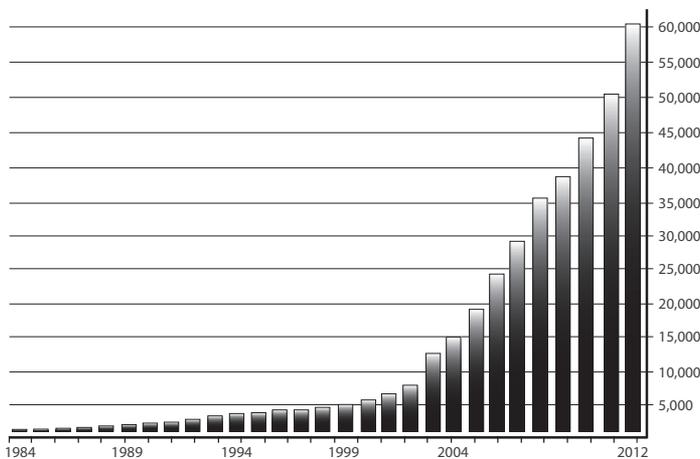
VICTORY GROWTH CHART

Victory Metro Manila	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Manila congregations	8	9	9	10	10	10	11	12	13	13	15	15	15
Worship services	16	20	23	31	32	40	52	59	62	73	81	91	94
Small groups	518	637	913	1,270	2,578	3,072	3,334	3,443	3,657	3,573	3,482	5,009	4,853
Weekend attendance	4,900	5,700	7,100	11,500	14,100	18,600	23,900	28,358	34,877	37,200	44,275	50,603	60,236

3. Slow is _____.(4)

Making disciples is simple but it's not easy. Many people commit to a discipleship process only to grow tired and frustrated when they don't see instant growth. Unfortunately, most quit too soon. It is God who makes things grow. It is our job to faithfully make disciples and see what He does with them.

VICTORY GROWTH GRAPH



4. Discipleship is _____.⁽⁵⁾

Discipleship is about people. Jesus did not die for a program, a ministry, or a building—He died for people. What matters to you most—people or programs? Do you spend more time preparing to minister or preparing people to minister? Are you building a church or building people?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is there anything you do that undermines discipleship?

- In seeking to make disciples, what frustrations have made you want to quit?

- What is your motive for making disciples?

AFTERWORD

Whether you have followed Jesus for decades or for just a few weeks, I hope this book has provoked and inspired you to follow Jesus with greater intensity and to make disciples with greater intentionality. How? By engaging your culture and community, establishing biblical foundations, equipping believers to minister, and empowering disciples to make disciples—making His last command your first priority.

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6. Prepare others to minister
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9. Establish
10. Equip
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