

Each local assembly of believers should seek to practice

Balanced Discipleship

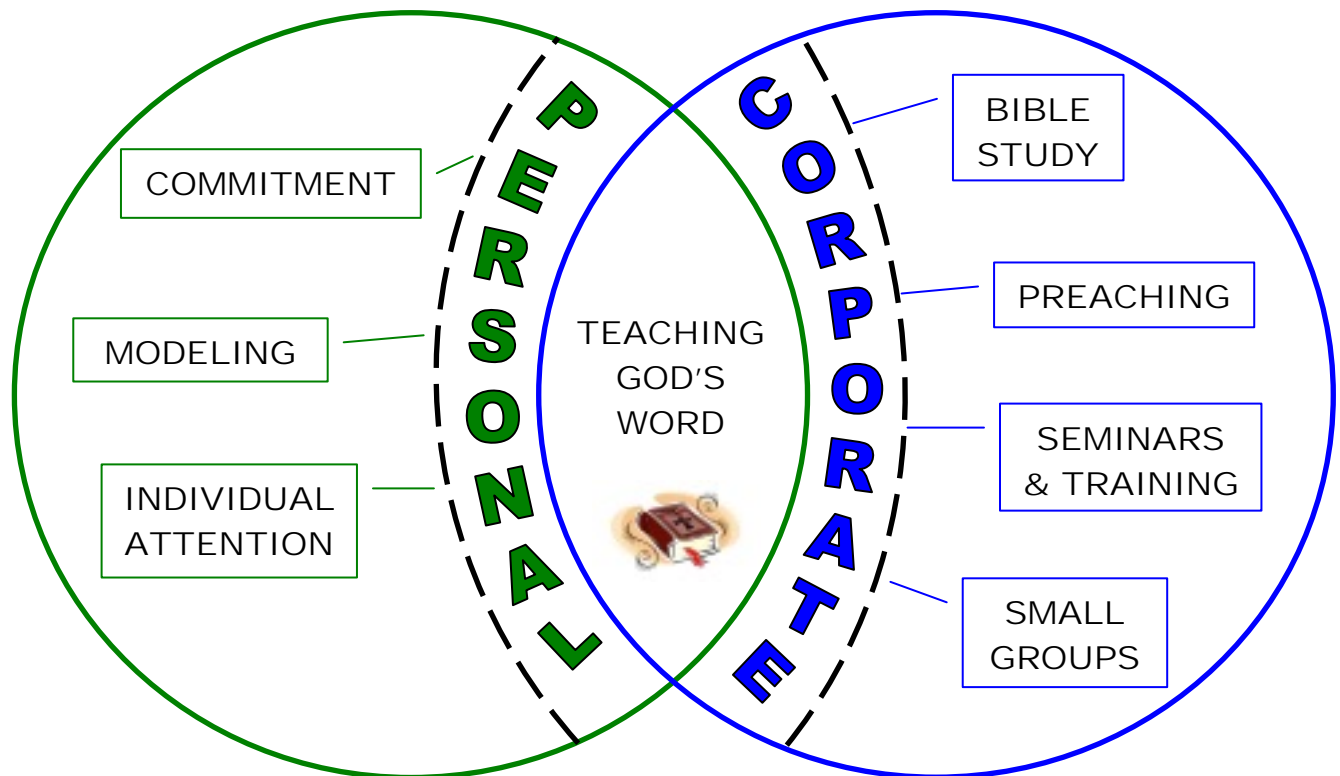
(**BOTH** Personal & Corporate discipleship are needed for healthy spiritual growth)

PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP

(Vitaly needed, but largely neglected)

CORPORATE DISCIPLESHIP

(Needed, but typically insufficient by itself to produce the best results)



Balanced Discipleship Diagram Explanation

OVERVIEW: We believe that wherever believers gather, “Balanced” Discipleship should be practiced. In other words, **both** “Corporate” and “Personal” discipleship are needed for healthy spiritual growth. The two types of discipleship each have their unique roles, and they complement each other.

A FREQUENT PROBLEM: Many churches are heavily weighted towards corporate discipleship, which often has the appearance of being more “efficient”. Personal discipleship is generally more resource intensive (time, energy, finances), but we believe it is more effective for accelerating a believer’s spiritual development. Many church leaders would like to be available to give each believer adequate individual attention, but that is usually impractical, due to their numerous other responsibilities, and lack of time.

IS THERE A SOLUTION? We believe an answer is for pastors and leaders to train “faithful” believers in the church body, who in turn can disciple (spiritually parent) newer believers. We are aware that many pastors and leaders need assistance in training disciplers, and one of the goals of DTI is to provide discipleship materials and assistance.

In many churches, discipleship has come to mean “the presentation of biblical truth”. Thus many leaders perceive that their responsibility is to present biblical truth, with the expectation that it is then the responsibility of each believer to allow the Holy Spirit to apply those truths to their own lives. However, since most newer believers are unfamiliar with the Holy Spirit, they need someone to personally help them to understand how to cooperate with Him in their personal spiritual development.

In many churches the idea is conveyed that to present God's Word correctly seminary or Bible school training is needed. Certainly Bible school or seminary training has been used by God in the spiritual development of many leaders, but is it realistic to expect the typical Christian to have such training? Does this idea not lead many believers to consider themselves to be under-qualified?

In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul says, *And He gave ... some as pastors and teachers, **for the equipping of the saints for the work of service**, to the building up of the body of Christ; ... the proper working of **each individual part**, **causes the growth of the body** for the building up of itself in love.*

Should it not be the goal of leaders to see that “personal discipleship” (spiritual reproduction) is the “norm” rather than the exception? Should we not expect every believer to be in the process of being disciplined, or to be actively involved in the spiritual growth of other believers?

Corporate Discipleship: The Corporate side of the model: Preaching, Conducting a Seminar or Training, etc. will often be led by a believer who has the gift of teaching. Bible school or seminary training would be helpful, but not essential.

Personal Discipleship: On the Personal side: the gift of teaching is not a biblical requirement for personally discipling (spiritually parenting) another believer. How many couples would have children if they had waited until they felt “qualified”?

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF THE PERSONAL MODEL: (See Lesson 2-2 for further details.)

God's Word: “Teaching God's Word” is an essential component common to both the Corporate and the Personal side of all discipleship. God does not want the Bible to be seen simply as an academic text, but rather as a revelation of His character. The Bible is a means by which humans can “know” Him. **This is eternal life, that they may know You**, ... (John 17:3). The Holy Spirit's guidance will always be in accordance with His Word.

Commitment: This has to do with the heart attitude of the discipler (spiritual parent) in regards to the spiritual welfare and development of the disciple. This is a commitment that goes beyond just presenting God's word. The biblical idea of a disciple is more of an “apprentice” than just a student.

Modeling: Hopefully the biblical disciple (apprentice) will end up with the passion of the discipler. The discipler is a model to the disciple, in ways that go beyond that of a teacher and student. How do you teach patience, or faithfulness, or passion? These things are seen more than heard.

Individual Attention: We are not interested in academically presenting points 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 to a disciple. The discipler should be prayerfully available to the Holy Spirit, to be used as an instrument as He develops the newer believer and addresses the particular needs of the disciple. The material from *A Tool For Personal Discipleship* is designed with the intent of stimulating questions and conversation that will lead to spiritual growth both in the discipler and the disciple. Each discipler will have unique and personal experiences that the Holy Spirit can bring to mind and use.