

Guidelines for Discipling

1. What is the purpose of discipling? (See lesson 2-2)

Every person is born with a predisposition toward independence from God. That disposition tends to harden as the child grows into an adult. If the person accepts His gift of salvation, God then begins a process of inward transformation (sanctification). The pace and depth of that transformation process is affected by the understanding and openness of the new Christian. The intent of discipleship (mentoring, “spiritual parenting”) is to help the new Christian to understand **what** God is doing, in order to significantly influence and accelerate that process.

Romans 12:1-2 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your **mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Colossians 1:28-29 (Paul wrote) *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, **so that we may present every man complete (mature) in Christ. For this purpose** also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.*

2. Targeting (Seeking God's choices as to whom you should disciple)

A. If you want to be an effective spiritual parent (discipler), you need to prayerfully seek God's wisdom for discernment as to which Christian(s) will benefit from your investment of time, energy and possessions. Jesus let His Father make the decision.

Luke 6:12-16 ... *He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. ... And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: ...*

Note: Sadly, many Christians, especially those who have found a comfortable and acceptable Christian lifestyle, **are not overly interested in being mentored** on toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness. If you are considering mentoring a Christian, look for the characteristics in Point 3. If they are not evident, then prayerfully look to the Lord for His **confirmation**, or to provide you someone else who does have a hunger to grow spiritually. There are Christians who would love to have someone take them under their wing to help them grow. Trying to disciple a disinterested person will usually lead to frustration! If you spend your limited time with a disinterested person, you may be neglecting someone else who sincerely wants to grow.

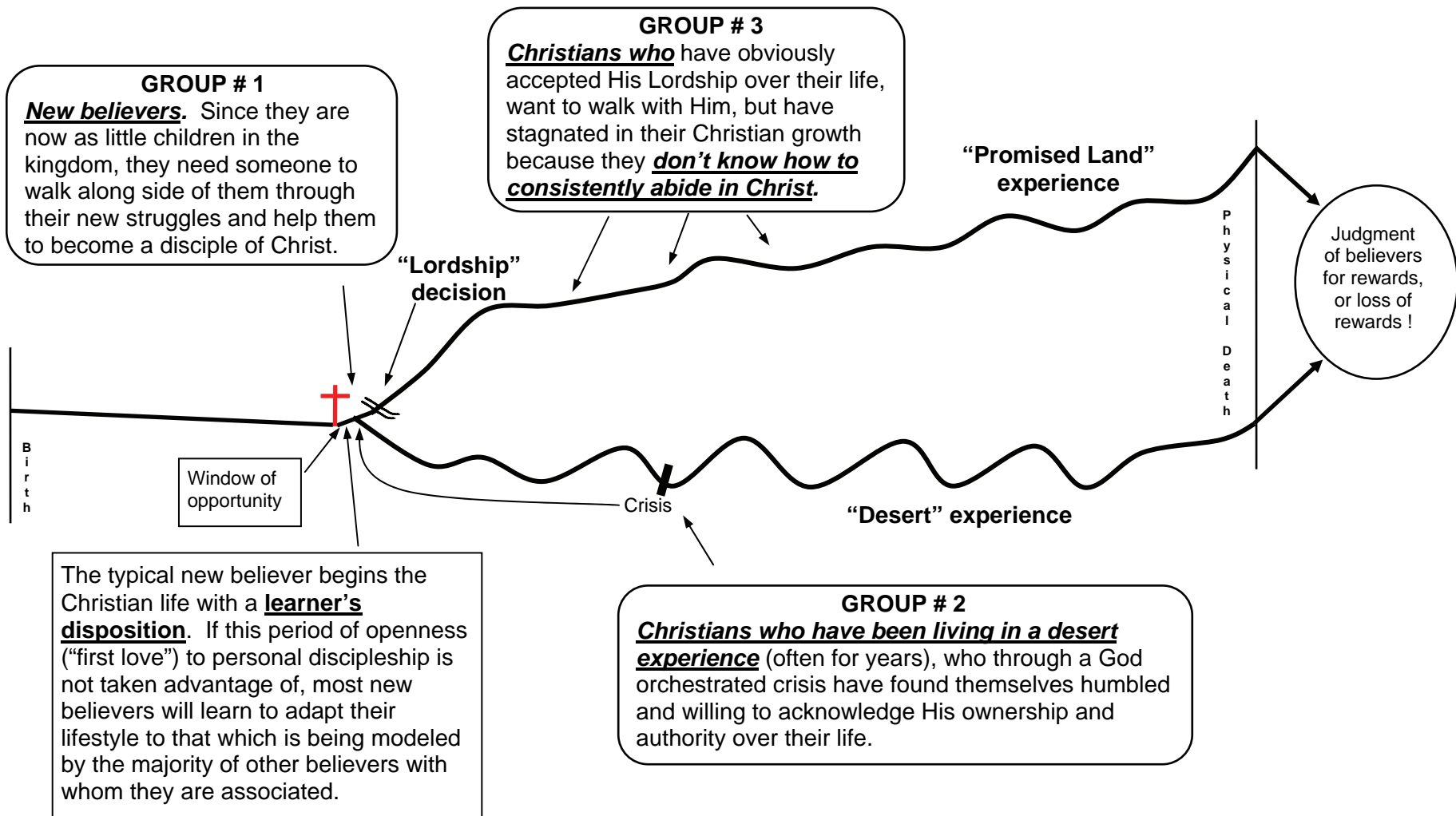
Note: Timing is very important. Someone not interested today may be interested at a later time.

B. Where should we look for Christians to disciple?

- 1. New believers** Since they are now as **little children** in the kingdom, they tend to be spiritually hungry, and need someone to walk alongside of them.
- 2. Christians who have been living in a desert experience** (often for years), who through a God orchestrated **crisis** have found themselves humbled and finally willing to acknowledge that He can manage their life better than they can.
- 3. Christians who** have obviously accepted His Lordship over their life, want to walk with Him, but have either stagnated (or plateaued) in their Christian growth or **don't understand how to consistently abide in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.**

THE 3 TARGET GROUPS IN WHICH TO FIND POTENTIAL DISCIPLES

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:2)



3. What characteristics should we look for in a disciple-to-be?

- A. A spiritual hunger.** Are they hungering and seeking after God? Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*" (Matt. 5:6)
- B. A teachable attitude.** Do they have an openness to Him? Do they see themselves as a learner, apprentice?
- C. A reliability (dependability).** Paul told Timothy - *The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* (2 Tim. 2:2) Do they want to apply His truth to their life? Is spiritual growth a priority?
Caution: It is not good if they think they're doing you a favor.

4. Suggested guidelines for discipling another person.

- A.**
- Arrange to meet together at least once each week for about 1½ hours or so.
 - Plan on spending at least 3 to 9 months with a disciple, meeting regularly.
 - The purpose of the meetings is to explain Biblical truth and principles, and to give the disciple opportunity to ask questions, share spiritual struggles, and discuss related topics.
 - It is important for you to be a thoughtful listener; it's the best way to identify gaps in their spiritual understanding.
 - Be flexible enough to allow the Holy Spirit to change the direction of the study or conversation, yet orderly enough so the time is not squandered on less significant matters.
 - Teach at the disciple's pace.
 - The disciple should be encouraged to look to the Holy Spirit to apply Biblical principles to his life.
 - A goal is for the disciple to increasingly understand and be able to clearly explain those Biblical principles to others. At some point the disciple should be ready to start mentoring another person, with your assistance.

NOTE: We don't want to imply that these lessons are the only valid ones. Christians have been disciplined over the centuries using different portions of Scriptures. The mentoring and nurturing aspects are crucial. We believe the concepts presented in these discipleship lessons need to be understood by the disciple if you expect healthy growth and maturity.

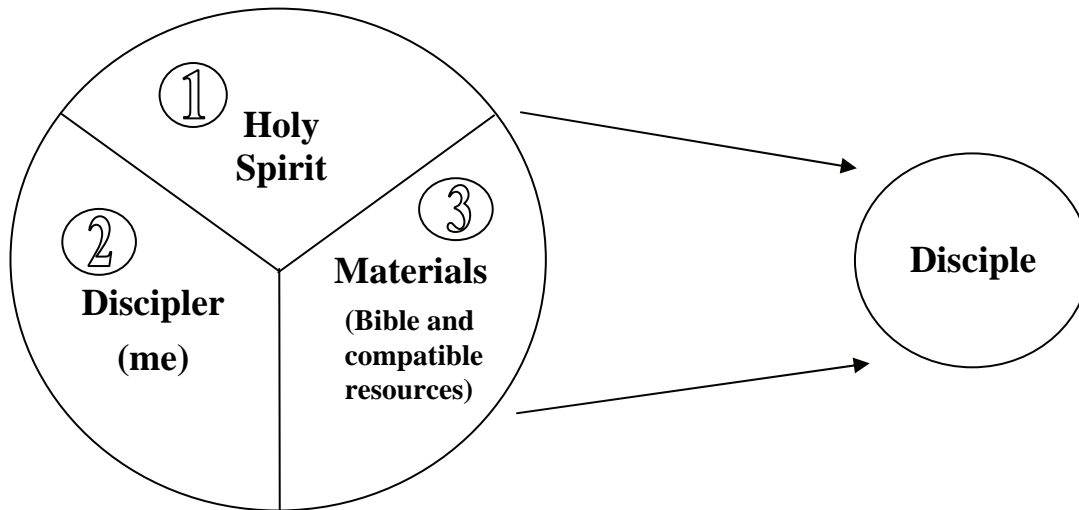
- B.** Seek to teach them Biblical principles to live by, not just Biblical knowledge.
- C.** Make sure the disciple understands that you are available through the week. Even after your formal discipleship time is completed, you should plan to continue being available for the disciple, as you regularly monitor their spiritual growth.
- D.** Regularly pray for the disciple, and with the disciple.
- E.** Remember you are a role model for the disciple. Include the disciple in your spiritual life when appropriate.
- F.** Your goal is to lead them into dependence on the Holy Spirit, and independence from you. We should expect the typical Christian, if correctly disciplined, to become a "spiritual reproducer".

***THE DISCIPLE WON'T CARE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW, UNTIL
THEY KNOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE!***

***A MEASURE OF SUCCESS IS INDICATED WHEN THE BELIEVER YOU ARE
DISCIPLING IS FUNCTIONING AS A DISCIPLER.***

ESSENTIALS FOR DISCIPLING

(Role descriptions)



- ① **The discipler needs to count on the HOLY SPIRIT to:**
 - a. Orchestrate encounters with others who need to be disciplined.
 - b. Create spiritual hunger in the person to be disciplined.
 - c. Guide the discipleship process.
 - d. Give wisdom, discernment and clarity to you as a discipler.
 - ② **The DISCIPLER is responsible to:**
 - a. Pray and look to the Holy Spirit with expectation.
 - b. Continue in fellowship (abide) with the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Study the Word and seek to be prepared as a usable vessel. (2 Tim. 2:15)
 - d. Be available to be used as a vessel by the Holy Spirit.
 - e. Cooperate with the Holy Spirit as a partner in His work.
 - ③ **The MATERIAL that is used should:**
 - a. Emphasize the disciple's need to be looking to the Lord to reveal Himself through His Word, the Bible.
 - b. Progressively address the needs of a new Christian (as in building a house). (See 2-1 Point 10)
 - c. Focus the disciple's attention on his/her relationship with the Holy Spirit, rather than on external behavior.
- **In the human physical realm there are three OBSTACLES TO REPRODUCTION:**
- a) physical immaturity,
 - b) a health problem, and
 - c) lack of physical intimacy.
- **Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, has suggested that the same three obstacles can hinder spiritual reproduction.**
- a) Spiritual immaturity – Due to being a newer Christian, or due to lack of spiritual growth.
 - b) Spiritual health problems – Due to unresolved issues between the Christian and the Lord, and/or lack of correct spiritual understanding.
 - c) Lack of spiritual intimacy – Due to busyness and/or other activities or things that infringe on the Christian's intimacy with the Lord.

Recommendations for Effective Discipleship

A disciple has the goal of becoming like the teacher.

(Jesus said) “A *pupil* (apprentice learner) *is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.* (Luke 6:40)

1. For the newer believer there is usually significant pressure toward **behavior modification**. Therefore, we should focus the believer’s attention on his relationship with the Lord, since **inward transformation** will produce the behavior that pleases the Lord. Our goal is for him to learn **to habitually seek God’s approval**, rather than man’s approval. (Rom. 12:1-2) (John 12:42-43)
2. As a spiritual baby, every new believer should be given personalized individual attention during the **critical formative period** of their new life with the Lord. **CAUTION:** Be careful **to not interpret the new believer’s enthusiasm as an accurate indicator of spiritual well being**, since this initial openness and hunger has a tendency to fade if not developed during this window of opportunity.
3. Biblical training should be **orderly and progressive** in nature, rather than random. Due to the new believer’s unfamiliarity with the Christian life, random information tends to be archived rather than applied. It is also very easy for the newer believer to unknowingly have gaps in their understanding of essential concepts. (Illustration: steps in building a house) (1 Cor. 3:10-15)
4. Disciples should be treated as **apprentices**, rather than as students simply seeking biblical knowledge. As in any purposeful apprenticeship, there is a need for a significant amount of committed time and energy. **Individual training is slower but tends to be deeper.**
5. One-on-one training (spiritual parenting) should be **balanced** with corporate training, just as in any normal family. **Neither one should be considered optional.** One weakness of corporate settings is many times there is **no requirement** for serious interaction or dialog that addresses the individual spiritual needs of the disciple.
6. Serious consideration should be given to the inclusion of the following major components of discipleship, namely: **1) Commitment, 2) Modeling, 3) Individual Attention, and 4) Teaching**. Use **1 Thess. 2:3-13** as the model for biblical discipleship. It incorporates all the components of spiritual parenting.
7. Every believer should be seen as a **potential discipler**, and trained toward that end. There is no special spiritual gift for discipling, just as there is no special gift for witnessing. The command to make disciples was given to the universal church, not just to a few specially trained or gifted individuals. If human couples raised offspring at the same ratio as Christians spiritually parent new believers, the human race would probably be considered an endangered species.
8. At minimum, the disciple should **understand** and **be able to explain** to others an Overview of the Christian life, as well as the concepts of “lordship”, “sanctification”, “abiding” (walking in the Spirit), the “Judgment seat of Christ”, etc.
9. The spiritual health of a Christian church should not be measured primarily by the activity of its leadership. A better indicator is the **spiritual reproduction** and **growth** that is occurring as a result of the main body of believers being equipped for the work of service. One should ask, “if the leader(s) were removed, **would the body of believers be spiritually mature enough to continue to grow and spiritually reproduce?**” (Eph. 4:11-16)