

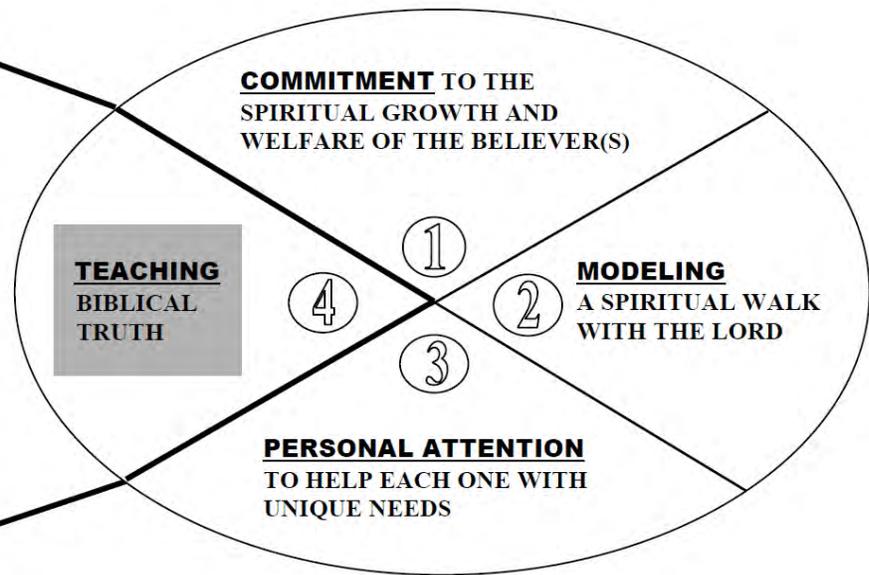
What Is Personal Discipleship

PARTIAL TRUTH:

To most Christians the term “**Discipleship**” simply equates to “Presenting Biblical Truth.”

MORE ACCURATELY:

We believe the concept of “**Spiritual Parenting**” more accurately reflects the Biblical meaning of discipleship.



A Biblical Model for “Spiritual Parenting”

1 Thessalonians 2:3-13 includes all the components of spiritual parenting.

(From Paul, with Silas and Timothy)

THEY WERE SINGLE-MINDED IN PURPOSE

:3-6 ... so we speak, **not to please men, but rather God**, who examines our hearts. For we never used flattering speech, as you know, or had greedy motives—God is our witness—and **we didn’t seek glory from people**, either from you or from others. Although we could have been a burden as Christ’s apostles,...

1. THEY CARED FOR THE BELIEVERS AS A MOTHER CARES FOR HER CHILDREN

:7-8 ... instead **we were gentle** among you, **as a nursing MOTHER nurtures** her own children. **We cared so much for you** that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also **our own lives**, because **you had become dear to us**.

2. THEY BECAME “ROLE MODELS” TO THE NEW BELIEVERS

:9-10 For you remember **our labor** and **hardship**, brothers. **Working night and day** so that we would not burden any of you, we preached God’s gospel to you. **You are witnesses**, and so is God, of how **devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we conducted ourselves** with you believers.

3. THEY GAVE INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION AND INSTRUCTION AS A FATHER

:11-12 As you know, **like a FATHER** with his own children, we **encouraged, comforted, and implored EACH ONE** of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

4. THE WORD OF GOD WAS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF DISCIPLESHIP

:13 This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, **the message of God**, which also **works effectively in you believers**.

- ① Paul's concern for the believers went beyond that of just "a teacher." He was committed to their spiritual welfare and growth.

2 Cor. 11:28-29 ... there is the **daily pressure** on me: my care for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?
2 Cor. 2:4 For I wrote to you **with many tears out of an extremely troubled and anguished heart**—not that you should be hurt, but that you should know **the abundant love I have for you.**
2 Cor. 12:15 **I will most gladly spend and be spent for you....**
Col. 1:28-29 ... so that we may present **everyone mature** in Christ. **I labor for this**, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.
2 Tim. 2:10 ... **I endure all things for the elect:...**

A goal of the discipler should be to help the disciple (apprentice learner) to mature, function, be fruitful, and to spiritually reproduce. The benefits to the discipler are secondary.

- ② A discipler is a "model" (real, transparent) for the disciple. The goal is for the disciple to emulate the convictions and passion of the discipler.

1 Cor. 4:15-16 (*Paul to the Corinthian believers*) For you can have 10,000 instructors in Christ, but you can't have many fathers. For **I became your father** in Christ Jesus through the gospel. **Therefore I urge you to imitate me.**
1 Cor. 11:1 **Imitate me, as I** also imitate Christ.
Phil. 3:17 (*Paul to the Philippians*) **Join in imitating me**, brothers, and **observe those who live according to the example you have in us.**
Phil. 4:9 **Do what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me**, and the God of peace will be with you.
1 Thess. 1:6-7 (*Paul to the Thessalonian believers*) And **you became imitators of us and of the Lord** when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit. As a result, **you became an example** to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.
2 Thess. 3:7-9 For you yourselves know how **you must imitate us**: We were not irresponsible among you; ... to make ourselves **an example** to you **so that you would imitate us.**
Heb. 13:7 Remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, **imitate their faith.**
1 Tim. 4:12 (*Paul to Timothy*) ... **you should be an example** to the believers in **speech**, in **conduct**, in **love**, in **faith**, in **purity.**
2 Tim. 3:10-11 But **you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance**, along with the **persecutions** and **sufferings** ...
Titus 2:7-8 (*Paul to Titus*) ... **Make yourself an example** of **good works** with **integrity and dignity** in your teaching. Your message is to be **sound beyond reproach**, so that the opponent will be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about us.
Luke 6:40 (*Jesus said*) A disciple (*apprentice*) is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained **will be like** his teacher.

- ③ A newborn child requires an extra amount of individual attention. As the child matures guidance can increasingly take place in a group setting. Since each child is unique, it should be expected that both group and personal attention would be needed on the road to maturity.

When you bring a newborn baby home from the hospital, you don't just set them down and say, "Welcome to the family, Johnny. Make yourself at home. The towels are in the hall closet upstairs, the pantry is right here, the can opener is in this drawer. No crying after 10 p.m. If you have any questions there are lots of people in the family who would love to help you so don't be afraid to ask." You laugh and say that is ridiculous, but that is what usually happens to new Christians. Someone gets saved and starts going to church services, but never gets much personal attention. We devote 18 years to raising our children, but don't even spend six months helping a new Christian get started in understanding the spiritual world. As a result, many people have been Christians for many years, but have not grown very much. Hebrews 5:12 refers to this phenomenon. So, new believers need someone to give them guidance and help them grow.

(Above excerpt from <http://bible.org/seriespage/stewardship-god's-truth-through-discipleship>)

"Until others learn to draw on the life of the Lord Jesus directly, they will have to draw on His life through you. You must literally be their source of supply, until they learn to take their nourishment from God." (Taken from My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers – Feb. 9 (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

Notice what Paul states in 1 Thess. 2:7 ... we were gentle among you, **as a nursing mother** nurtures her own children.

Some believe that a **new** Christian is not in need of **individual special** attention. If the Holy Spirit had not led Paul to include the idea of *nursing* it could be argued that this Scripture was referring to spiritual toddlers or even older spiritual children. But one must honestly ask, "How soon after birth does a typical baby need to be nursed?" When a baby nurses, as Oswald Chambers has correctly expressed, it is drawing nourishment **through its mother**. This would normally be expected to continue until which time it is weaned.

Paul recognized that each believer is unique and needs individual attention.

Acts 20:31 (*Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus.*) Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for **three years** I did not stop warning **each one** of you with tears.

Col. 1:28-29 We proclaim Him, warning and teaching **everyone** with all wisdom, so that we may present **everyone** mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.

1 Thess. 2:11-12 As you know, like a father with his own children, we encouraged, comforted, and implored **each one** of you ...

*Jesus commanded us to make "disciples," not just converts.
In the Christian community there are many immature "converts,"
but very few disciples. (See also Lesson 2-4)*

4

Biblical truth is an essential component of Biblical discipleship.

- A. A Christian cannot be spiritually mature without Biblical understanding, but a Christian may have much Biblical knowledge and yet not be spiritually mature.

1 Cor. 8:1-2 ... **Knowledge inflates with pride**, but love builds up. If anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it.
Eph. 4:11-16 ... for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the **knowledge of God's Son**, growing into a **mature** man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. **Then we will no longer be little children**,...

Col. 1:28-29 We proclaim Him, **warning** and **teaching** everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone **mature** in Christ.

1 Thess. 2:13 This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, **the message of God**, which also **works effectively in you** believers.

- B. There are inherent problems with the commonly held belief that "presenting Biblical knowledge" equates to discipleship, and that the other components are "optional." If the other components are not given proper importance in the nurturing process, the Christian being mentored will typically have a difficult time growing to a reproductive spiritual maturity.
1. If **Biblical knowledge** by itself were the key to spirituality, we should have the most spiritual generation of Christians in history. Christian Book Stores are filled with books on every Biblical subject imaginable.
 2. To propose that **Biblical knowledge** alone is the key to spirituality is akin to saying that "**food**" alone is the most important need of a child. Undeniably food is essential, but would it be accurate to convey to potential parents that **love, commitment, nurturing, modeling, personal attention**, etc., are somehow **optional**? Has God given us the process of raising a physical child as a **model** for raising a spiritual child? If so, should I not then ask, "How would a physical infant fare if left to tend for itself as the typical new spiritual child is?"
 3. Most Christians would agree that as the Holy Spirit draws unbelievers to Himself, **He typically uses Christians** somewhere in the birthing process. How can the same Christians then conclude that their primary involvement in the new baby Christian's growth is mostly limited to **setting spiritual food on the table**, and that the Holy Spirit **now** prefers **to work alone** in the other areas where the new believer needs help to grow?

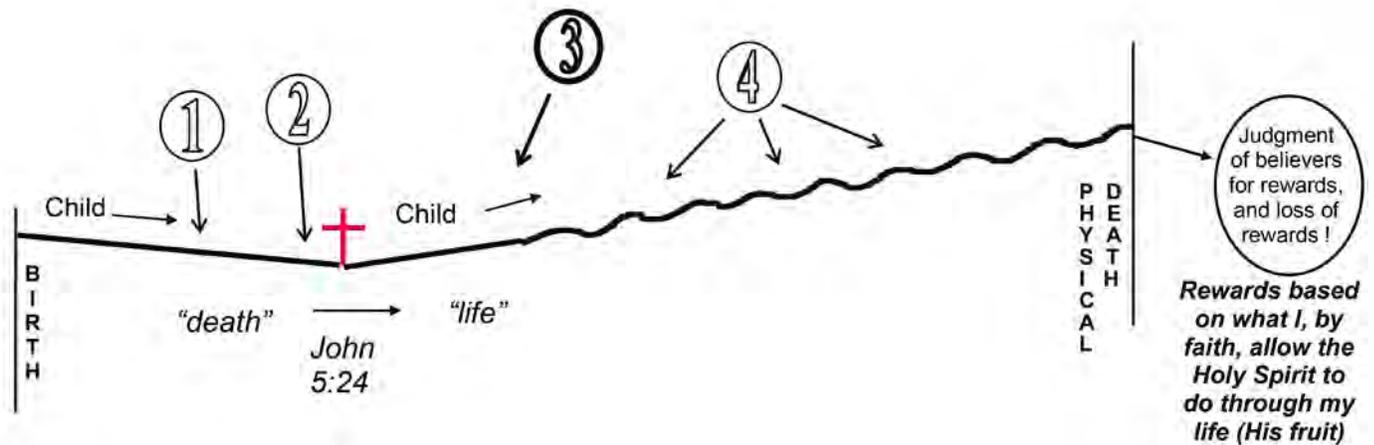
To love to teach is good, but to love those you teach is better !

To know the Bible is good, but to intimately know and understand the One who the Bible reveals is better ! (Jer. 9:23-24; John 17:3)

The Goal of Personal Discipleship (*Spiritual Parenting*)

To help a believer through the transition from the habit of daily living in “self-dependence” to the habit of daily living in “God-dependence.”

In other words, to make the transition from “**relying on his/her own understanding**” to “**trusting in the LORD with all his/her heart, and thinking about (acknowledging) Him in all his/her ways.**”

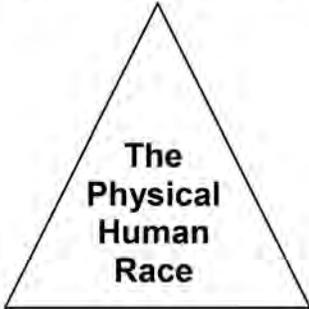


- ① Represents the “unsaved” period of time (spiritually dead to God) in a person’s life, from physical birth to spiritual birth. During this period “self-dependence” becomes a habit of everyday living, a way of life.
- ② Represents the “Evangelism” stage, culminating in the event of salvation, at which time a person passes from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive to God.
- ③ Represents the “Spiritual Parenting” stage, that is, the critical formative period of time in which a believer needs to be “spiritually parented” (discipled) through the first steps of learning to increasingly live in dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- ④ Represents the process of “sanctification,” i.e., having been discipled, the believer now has a basic understanding of the master-servant relationship and the need to follow the Holy Spirit, to continue being led and transformed by Him.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS OF DISCIPLESHIP ARE:

- SPIRITUAL MATURITY
- SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS
- SPIRITUAL REPRODUCTION

Physical & Spiritual Multiplication

HUMAN RACE
<p>Genesis 1:26-28</p> <p>:26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”</p> <p>:27 So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.</p> <p>:28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “<u>Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth,</u> and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”</p>
<p>Adam (1st) & Eve</p> 
<p>A medical doctor stated that about 90% of normal healthy couples should be able to physically reproduce children.</p> <p>We have sympathy for a couple that is unable to have children, because having children is considered <u>normal</u>.</p>
<p><u>Obstacles to Physical Reproduction:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical Immaturity 2. A Physical Health Problem 3. Lack of Physical Intimacy

SPIRITUAL RACE
<p>Matthew 28:18-20</p> <p>Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and <u>make disciples of all nations,</u> baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <u>teaching them to observe everything</u> I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”</p> <p>1 Cor. 15:45-46</p> <p>:45 ... The <u>first man Adam</u> became a living being; the <u>last Adam (Jesus)</u> became a life-giving Spirit.</p> <p>46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the <u>natural</u>, then the <u>spiritual</u>.</p>
<p>Jesus (2nd Adam)</p> 
<p>Should we not expect the <u>majority</u> of normal healthy Christians to be able to reproduce <u>spiritually</u>?</p> <p>Do we have sympathy for the Christian who is not spiritually reproducing? If not, <u>why not</u>?</p>
<p><u>Obstacles to Spiritual Reproduction:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spiritual Immaturity 2. A Spiritual Health Problem 3. Lack of Spiritual Intimacy