



Discipleship Strategy

The church is an alternate community which embodies a new way of living under the reign of God in Jesus. In evangelism the church invites its friends and neighbors to participate in its shared life, recognize its fruit, and see that it is good. Thus, in turn, effective evangelism will require that the church disciple those who join its fellowship because salvation does not come apart from repentance and faith. Following Jesus demands nothing less than a radical personal conversion of thought, character, and practice (i.e. knowing, being, and doing).

Genuine conversion involves much more than the language of “accepting Christ as my personal Savior” would imply. Conversion should be seen more as a process than a crisis event, as Simon Chan explains: “The typical evangelical understanding of conversion could be pictured as the crossing of a fixed line, an experience sometimes described as ‘crisis conversion.’ (But) conversion is better conceived as a movement toward a center (the Christian faith), but it is a center with a porous rather than fixed boundary. In other words, becoming a Christian means a basic reorientation of life toward the center and a continuing movement into it.” As such, genuine conversion will look like a continual process, over a long period of time, of repentance and faith.

All of this makes discipleship absolutely necessary for the long-term success of the gospel in the lives of people who are coming into our church (from both religious and irreligious backgrounds). However, before we can describe what discipleship is and our unique strategy for accomplishing discipleship in our church, we must first describe the convictions, character and competencies of genuine disciples of Jesus.

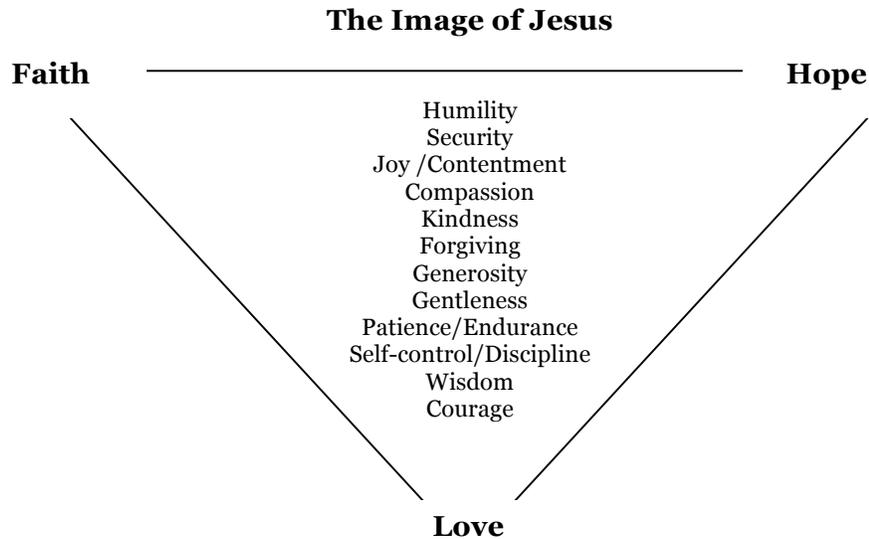
Describing a disciple of Jesus (knowing, being, doing):

The *convictions* we must possess in order to be and do what we have been called to are illustrated in the following diagram. This is *what disciples of Jesus believe!*

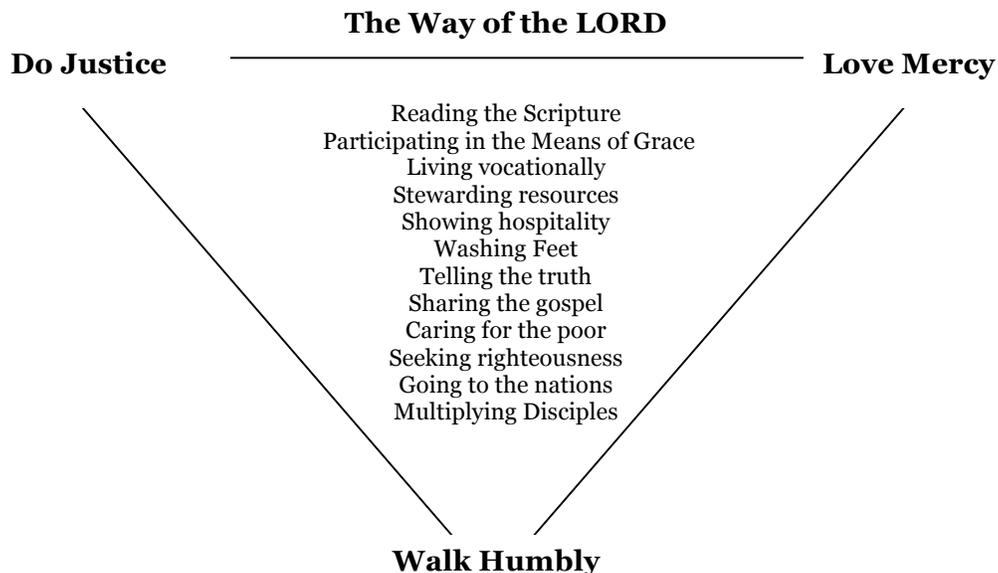
A Trinitarian Theology:



The character the Holy Spirit must produce in us in order to make us faithful to our mission is illustrated in the following diagram. This is *what disciples of Jesus look like!*



The competencies we are praying that we will possess are illustrated in the following diagram. This is *what disciples of Jesus do!*



Discipleship strategy

This are the convictions, character qualities, and competencies that should be a part of the dNA of every genuine follower of Jesus. But what is discipleship and how do we do it? To answer these questions, we need to look at Jesus’ “philosophy of ministry.” Jesus’ model of discipleship follows a specific pattern. Jesus’ ministry gathered a crowd – curious onlookers, Messiah-

hunters, and sincere followers. From that crowd Jesus choose 12 men to be his disciples. Mark records his purpose in choosing the Twelve: “...he appointed twelve *so that they might be with him and he might send them out*” (Mark 3:14). Greg Ogden has said, “Jesus ministered to the crowd in order to call people out of it.”

The Word became flesh. That’s how the gospel came into the world. It was “in-fleshed.” All effective discipleship happens the same way – it must be “in-fleshed.” Teaching and instruction (i.e. “word”) is most effectively received, believed, applied, and passed on when it happens within the context of a friendship or relationship (i.e. “flesh”). Disciple-making is, by necessity, life-on-life.

Good parenting finds opportunity for training and instruction in the daily events of life - in the living room, as you walk through the events on the family schedule, during the bedtime routine at night and at the breakfast table in the morning.¹ This is the way children really learn how to live out their faith. It is the context of the parent-child relationship, in connection with the “curriculum” (i.e. the Scriptures), that makes the instruction effective. You can’t just tell children what they should and shouldn’t do. You have to show them. You have to practice with them. You have to watch them do it and then give them feedback.

Robert Coleman captures Jesus’ methodology of disciple-making brilliantly when he writes, “Jesus’ concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men the multitudes would follow.”² Jesus chose twelve men to carry on his ministry when he was gone. He lived with these men. He pulled them aside after speaking with the crowd to give them further instruction. He gave them assignments and critiqued them. This was his intentional methodology in ministry. He invested in a few in the hope that they would multiply themselves into the many.

The pastor of a church has a similar choice to make. The pastor can commit time and resources to the job of making disciples who can do the work of ministry or he can commit time and resources to doing ministry rather than reproducing it. However, the Biblical job description is clear: pastors and teachers are given to the church to equip the saints for ministry.³ But how? Paul’s words to the young pastor Timothy are helpful: ““what you (*Timothy*) have heard from me (*Paul*) in the presence of many witnesses entrust to *faithful me* who will be able to teach *others* also.”⁴ Paul instructs Timothy to put his life upon a group of men and to reproduce his life and teaching in them so that they, in turn, might reproduce themselves in other. This is the Biblical model for moral and theological training in the church. It is the most effective means of transference. And it creates a multiplication effect that greatly increases the churches ability to faithfully carry out the mission of Jesus: to go into all nations and make disciples!

Discipleship strategy at Redeemer

We recognize that discipleship (i.e. “training”) happens one all the different levels of a church’s life together. However, at Redeemer, it is a stated goal to intentionally move people from participation in large group settings like corporate worship services and Bible studies to relational, curriculum-driven meetings called “discipleship groups.” These groups are not Bible study groups. They’re not fellowship groups. They are discipleship groups which means they are #1- intentional (i.e. curriculum based); #2- relational or life-on-life; #3- have the goal of multiplication.

It is our goal that within 5 years of beginning to attend our church, a person would have progressed through the following training stages. (Note: each stage becomes progressively more

¹ Deuteronomy 6:6-9

² Robert Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, p. 21.

³ Ephesians 4:11ff.

⁴ Herb Hodges, *Fox Fever* (Spiritual Life Ministries, 2006). Hodges notes, “There are four generations of disciples in that one verse.

extensive and, at the same time, more personal. In other words, there is more work and the crowds become smaller). This list is not exhaustive.

Training Stages:

Stage 1: Worship and Community Group

Sermons
CBR/Journaling
Local & international mission pathway

Stage 2: Periodic training opportunities

Parenting & Marriage Seminars
Parenting classes
POJ studies
Women’s and Men’s Bible studies
Women’s and Men’s retreats (beginning in 2012)

Stage 3: Gospel Conferences (3 times a year)

Gospel & the Heart Conference (Spring)
Gospel & Community Conference (late Summer)
Gospel & the World Conference (Fall)

Stage 4: Fall/Spring Educational Modules

(Beginning in Fall of 2012?)

Stage 5: Membership

Gospel Course (Friday night)
Membership Course (Fri night/Sat morning)

Stage 6: Discipleship Curriculum

Intro: Vision for Discipleship (7 weeks)
Year 1- “What is the gospel?” (48 lessons)
Year 2- “Living in Line with the gospel” (48 lessons)

Stage 7: Leadership

Community Group leader training (10 weeks)
Community Group leader training (periodic)
Officer training- elders and deacons

Specific Content of training:

Private disciplines: Bible reading, Scripture reading, journaling, prayer, etc.
Sacraments: baptism & communion

Family gospel dynamics
Parenting skills
Compassion, speaking the truth, wisdom, relational dynamics, etc.

APL, “Gospel” Seminar, etc.
CBR training, gospel community, etc.

Gospel-orientation
Kingdom, ecclesiology,

Disciple-making
Scripture, doctrine of God, *DBG*
The Love Course, “Practical Grace”

Shepherding training, group dynamics
WCF, English Bible, *BCO*, leadership

We recognize that these stages are not necessarily linear. In other words, a person doesn’t have to finish one before moving on to another. (A couple of examples: a Community Group leader may have gone through Community Group leader training but not the discipleship curriculum... or someone might go through the POJ study at Wed lunch or in LifeRenewal before they become a member of Redeemer.) There is one notable exception to this: no one can be in officer training (elders and deacons) without having completed the membership process and discipleship curriculum.

This “structure” is not meant to be programmatic or rigorously applied. It is a tool, not an end in itself. It is nothing more than a roadmap for taking people to spiritual maturity. The Holy Spirit will do what he will apart from any plans we may make.

Discipleship Groups

Fundamental to Redeemer’s discipleship strategy are discipleship groups- groups of 3-8 men/women who meet together for accountability and to work through the discipleship curriculum. Discipleship groups may meet every week or every other week depending on the

schedule of those involved. However, we recommend that they meet as often as possible in order to foster the friendship and accountability that are necessary for genuine spiritual growth. Remember, relationships are the priority. The curriculum is just a tool for creating conversation that is a result of individual reflection on topics that are critical to spiritual maturity (knowing, being, and doing) as defined in Redeemer's disciple profile.

Discipleship groups operate on three principles: #1- they are *intentional* (i.e. they are curriculum-based); #2- They are *relational* (i.e. life-on-life); #3- they are *missional* (i.e. they are committed to multiplication).

The discipleship group meeting will take a minimum of 90 minutes but could be extended if necessary. The following is a general structure for discipleship group meeting itself.

15 min -	Accountability/Prayer
15 min-	Read CBR/Catechism (Q&A)
55 min-	Lesson
5 min-	Prayer/Reflection