

Introduction to “Duplicating Discipleship”

YouTube.com has become an indispensable resource in my life. I have used the website to find interesting clips for sermon illustrations and for hearing some excellent biblical teaching of other ministries. I have learned new Christian songs from various composers through their music videos. But, the greatest use of YouTube.com for me has been to help me figure out how to fix things in my world. I have an old house and old cars. Youtube.com has been an invaluable website in explaining and then demonstrating how to fix and repair various things that are in need of repair. I have watched knowledgeable men and women walk me through each and every detailed step I need to complete the task. After watching the videos I have sought to duplicate what they did in order to accomplish my task. They have been able to successfully model and mentor me through some difficult challenges. Models are important to me!

I started taking trumpet lessons when I was in the third grade. My uncle was a trumpet teacher who taught me and both of my older brothers. He was an excellent trumpet player and teacher. As my abilities began to develop I was exposed to other great trumpet players whose recordings filled my musical world. I would listen to recordings of Maurice André, Doc Severinson, and the Ohman Brass. I began to listen to players like Herb Albert, Maynard Ferguson, and Winton Marsalis. Their technique and sound amazed me. I wanted to play like them. I wanted to be able to squeal out the high and fast notes like they did with a big sound. These models inspired me to practice and practice. I wanted to try the best that I could to imitate the things they could do with the trumpet. I wanted to duplicate them and be just like them. Models are important to me!

After a number of years and a degree in music, my heart turned towards the pastoral ministry. As I started my first and only assignment of 30+ years, I recognized that there had been several mentoring men who had shaped me in the ministry. My father was an amazing “people” person. He knew and remembered people’s names from all across the country. He could remember which pastor was at which church and where they had been before that and who else had served at that church in the past. He believed it was important to remember names in building relationships and strengthening others. He was a great role model for me in trying to carefully and intentionally learn people’s names. Whether knowingly or unknowingly he has influenced my life and ministry and served as an example worth imitating.

Another role model in my life has been my older brother Don. We both started our current ministries in 1985 and have been serving with the same congregations since being called as pastors. He has served in the Chicago area and I have served in the Dallas area. In his ministry, he has been a constant example of love and leadership, strength, and wisdom that I have relied upon. He has served as a mentor and role model in tough pastoral situations that have challenged me. I have often called upon him for guidance and wisdom. He has a great family and marriage. He has demonstrated for me what a healthy

commitment to his family as well as a healthy commitment to the church and His Lord look like in harmony through his life. Whether knowingly or unknowingly he has influenced my life and ministry and served as an example worth imitating. Models are important to me!

Jesus commanded His closest followers in the Great Commission to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). The Great Commission was to be fulfilled by His disciples through practicing baptism and then teaching them to observe all the commandments which Jesus had taught. It is the focus of His church and for followers of Jesus Christ.

One of the major methods that Jesus used with His disciples was to “follow” Him as He ministered and cared for others. He clearly taught them to imitate Him – to duplicate what they saw in Him. One of the best examples of this method of discipleship is described for us in the upper room when Jesus taught his disciples how to serve and love others by washing the disciples’ feet. His ending instruction to his disciples at this scene was to follow his example.

John 13:12-15

¹²So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. “

One of Jesus closest disciples, Peter, also taught that “duplicating discipleship” was key for his readers in the midst of their suffering. They were to remember and reflect (i.e., observe) upon the responses of Jesus to His own suffering and then imitate His responses as they went through their own experience of suffering. In fact, a reason that Jesus went through His suffering, Peter states, was for believers to have an example of how to handle suffering. As Jesus walked, so were they. This is “duplicating discipleship.”

I Peter 2:21-23

²¹For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps**, ²²WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; ²³and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

“Duplicating discipleship” was also a key feature of the apostle Paul in his ministry. Paul challenged his readers to “follow” or imitate the example of Christ in His humility and serving (Philippians 2:5-11). Several times in his epistles to the various churches Paul called believers to follow his personal example (1 Corinthians. 4:16, I Corinthians 11:1, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9, 2 Timothy 3:10-15).

In Philippians 4:9 Paul writes,

⁹The things you have **learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul called upon the church at Philippi to put into practice what he had taught them, and what they had seen in him. This was to be the habit of their lives, it was to be practiced. What had they seen and heard of Paul's life?

Paul had spent time with them and Paul had been instrumental in the founding of the church. Acts 16 describes some of the early experiences Paul had in Philippi. The church was born through Paul's witness at the river as God opened the heart of Lydia, the first convert in Europe through Paul as the Lord "opened her heart." Paul and Silas were then harassed by a demon-possessed slave girl who was being used by rich men in the city to make money by the telling of fortunes (this was human trafficking). Paul confronted the demon in the slave-girl and she was set free. The men of the city who had been using her were upset and furious with Paul for interrupting their business, so had Paul and Silas arrested. While in prison Paul and Silas were praying and singing, rejoicing in the Lord with verbalized praise leading to the salvation of the prison guard and his entire household. Undoubtedly Paul had other experiences with the Philippians which are not recorded in the Scriptures, but Paul led an exemplary life among them during that time, that he could unreservedly say, "practice what you have seen in me." It was not enough to just have heard the things to be done, it was not enough to have learned what Paul was doing, it was not enough to have just seen what Paul was doing in his life, the Philippian church was now being called to do it themselves. This is "duplicating discipleship."

In another text in Philippians (3:17) Paul told the church at Philippi to follow his example. They were to be imitators (*mimeo*), mimics of Paul. Wherever they saw Christ imprinted (typos = struck with a mallet) on Paul's life, it was something to be followed.

But Paul also called them to observe ("scopus"), keep their eye upon, scope out, others who were also following and walking as the Lord would have them to do. The church needed to see people who were truly living out the call to discipleship. They needed to see real people in their midst who were living out the values and practices of their Lord Jesus Christ. It was duplicating, replicating, imitating discipleship!

(For further study on the significance of "duplicating discipleship" in the church study 1 Peter 5:3, 1 Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:7)

Models are important to the church of Jesus Christ!

Where can disciples and mentors look for worthy models to imitate? What does a disciple really look like anyway? The models and mentors for today's church are given to us in the Scriptures. The men's ministry leadership team of Waxahachie Bible Church, under the leadership of Frank Vanasco, has sought to put together a series of lessons on "duplicating discipleship." George Barna's book *Growing Disciples* includes a list of biblical characters that displayed a specific characteristic of what it meant to be a disciple. That list has formed the basis for this series of lessons for a small group or one on one discipleship. The lessons were prepared by a number of people in the family of Waxahachie Bible Church. No elders or staff persons were solicited to prepare the lessons. Each lesson reflects the heart and style of different writers and personalities within the family of God. I am grateful to John Luther who served as the editor of each of the lessons to bring them into some uniformity and consistency among so many different authors. The goal is to set before the church biblical models which can by the power of God's Spirit be duplicated in the life of every individual.

There is great flexibility in the way the lessons can be used. The lessons are in no particular order (except as listed by Barna) and can be done in any order to meet the most felt needs. The lessons can be utilized in small group studies, in home groups, in Sunday school classes. Another important but often overlooked approach would be to utilize these lessons through one-on-one discipleship. The lessons can be given out beforehand for people to prepare during a week and then come together to discuss and share what they have learned and to share the changes that the study is producing. The lessons could also just be gone through each meeting time for “on the spot” learning.

While biblical characters are the core of the lessons, there are modern day examples which you know who have exhibited these discipleship traits before you. They are modern real world, tangible, disciples of Christ who are living out the call of Jesus upon their lives and are living out a powerful example. Those would be valuable stories to relate throughout each of the lessons. If you have such stories that you know of I would love to hear of them. Write them out and email them to me (bruce.zimmerman@waxahachiebible.org). We will review the examples and possibly include them as this organic and developing study takes shape.

Our discipleship is only truly duplicated when it passes many tests, similar to what is described by Paul above. What are the toughest tests of whether or not you have actually duplicated discipleship? Does our discipleship reach into those times when we are severely tempted? Or when we are very tired? Or in compromising situations? Could you be a truly duplicated disciple for one continuous 24 hour period like Paul in prison? These are important matters to think through.

I have included with this study a self-evaluation page for people to use before undertaking this study and then a self-evaluation sheet for after the lessons have been completed. It is intended to show through a measurable tool the benefits of this study and to measure in some capacity if spiritual growth has taken place as a result of it.

As a follow up to this study I want to challenge everyone to invite another person to go through the study with you. Reviewing the lessons again with another person will further cement the truths and changes that God is doing in your life as you share it with someone else. The call of discipleship is to pass on the things that we have learned to others so that they will be able to pass it on to others as well (2 Timothy 2:2). When each person who goes through the study continues to reach out to another person and lead them through the study then exponential discipling, like envisioned and commanded in 2 Timothy 2:2, will bolster the ministry of the church.

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