



The Four Failures that Undermine Deep Discipleship

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- Shallow discipleship and spiritual immaturity are largely considered normal.
- Too many people accept without question a faith that promises freedom and abundance in Jesus, and yet never seem to notice how they remain imprisoned, especially in unbiblical ways of relating to themselves and others.
- There are four fundamental failures that undermine deep discipleship and keep people spiritually immature.
 1. We tolerate emotional immaturity. We do so because we no longer measure our love for God by the degree to which we love others, and because we elevate the spiritual and distrust the emotional.
 2. We emphasize *doing for* God over *being with* God. In our efforts to serve God, most of us actually end up skimping on our relationship with God.
 3. We ignore the treasures of church history. The church has been shaped by misconceptions and ignorance about its own larger history.
 4. We define success wrongly. We define our success by the numbers, and bigger is always the goal. However, according to Scripture, success is becoming the person God calls you to become and doing what God calls you to do—in his way, and according to his timetable.

DISCUSSION

Before beginning, read aloud “Discussion Guidelines for the Group” (page 6).

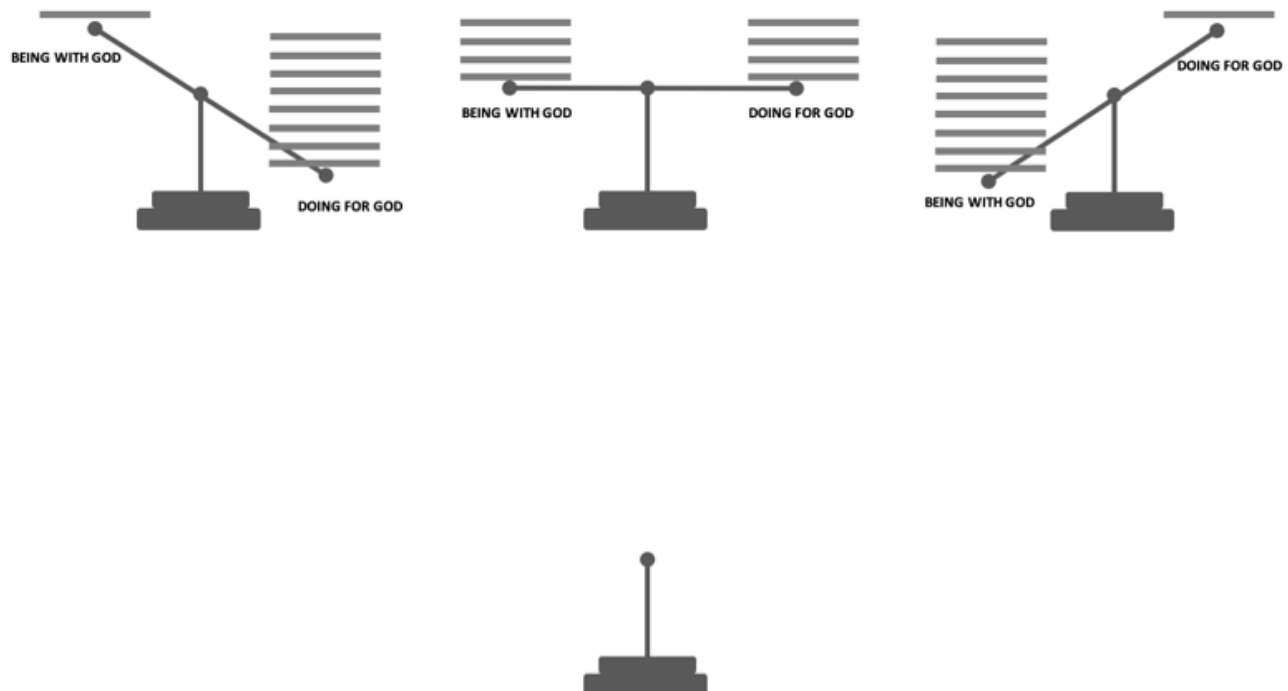
1. What stood out most to you from this chapter on “The Four Failures that Undermine Deep Discipleship”?

2. Failure 1: We tolerate emotional immaturity.

- In the book, briefly review the bullet list examples of emotional immaturity in action (page 6). In what ways, if any, have you been blind to such inconsistencies—in others as well as in yourself? In other words, what emotional immaturities have you come to see as normal?
- If the only measure of spiritual growth were the degree to which a person loves God by loving others, what, if anything, would need to change about your current discipleship model?
- In what ways is your leadership an ally in helping you to become more loving with each passing year? In what ways is it an adversary, making it more difficult for you to become more loving?

3. Failure 2: We emphasize *doing for* God over *being with* God.

- One of the greatest challenges for every ministry leader is how to balance our *being with* God and our *doing for* God. Using the lopsided and balanced scales as references, complete the blank scale by drawing a crossbeam to represent the current balance between your being with God and your doing for God. For example, are you somewhat lopsided, very lopsided, balanced?



- When we disciple or lead others, we essentially give away who we are—specifically, who we are in God. This means we can give away only what we possess, which is the life and faith we actually live each day. Based on the scale you just drew, how would you describe what it is you have to give away?

4. Failure 3: We ignore the treasures of church history.

- Overall, how have churches and Christian organizations shaped your understanding of larger church history? (For example, have they promoted learning more about it, ignored it, considered it irrelevant?)
- What gaps, misinformation, or misconceptions, if any, did this create in your understanding of the church? Of discipleship?

5. Failure 4: We define success wrongly.

- Complete the following sentences:

I feel like a success in leadership or ministry when . . .

I feel like a failure in leadership or ministry when . . .

- What, if anything, might change if the first priority on your official job description were something like this: “To grow and mature as a disciple of Jesus, leading others out of a deep inner life with Jesus”?



READING ASSIGNMENT

Before your next meeting, read Chapter 2, “The Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Personal Assessment.” Allow sufficient time to complete the assessment without rushing.

GOING DEEPER

Do a high level assessment of the current state of discipleship in your context by considering it through the lens of the four failures. Using the descriptions in the book as a reference, ask, “To what degree is this failure evident in our people and organization?” For each failure, circle the number on the continuum below that best describes your response, noting it as “Failure 1,” “Failure 2,” etc.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all true of us					Completely true of us				

What do the four numbers you circled reveal about the current state of discipleship in your church or organization?

Repeat the process again, this time to assess these same dynamics in yourself. Ask, “To what degree is this failure evident in my life and leadership?”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all true of us					Completely true of us				

What do the four numbers you circled reveal about the current state of your discipleship?

What similarities and differences are there between the two assessments?