

# THE DISCIPLING PRINCIPLE – PART 1

Introduction - Our society's educational model is based on classroom lectures and individual reading and study. This is good for developing the life of the mind. The discipling approach depends on modeling behavior, attitudes, and thinking in an accountable, small group. It has more in common with modern counseling and mentoring.

- A. At the conclusion of Jesus' ministry, after His resurrection, He gave His disciples their mission.

Matthew 28:16-20

1. The imperative was to make disciples of all ethnic groups.
2. This included baptism in the name of the triune God and teaching them to obey everything commanded, not just lecture them.
3. The way Jesus modeled disciple-making for them as recorded in the gospels is more like an intense mentorship rather than a classroom education.
4. The strength of the classroom educational model is in disseminating information to a large group quickly. While the discipling approach passes on a way of life of the disciple-maker in a slower more intensive process.

- B. Discipling is four generational in nature.

2 Timothy 2:1-2

1. The four generations in this passage are Paul, Timothy, reliable men, and others.
2. It requires different equipping at each stage.
3. The first generation is a mature disciple willing to commit to an intense spiritual relationship.
4. The second generation is an intimate spiritual relationship like we see between Paul and Timothy where the disciple (Paul) seeks to reproduce his own spiritual life.
5. The third generation focuses on Paul training Timothy to reach and mature new converts (reliable men).
6. The fourth generation sees Timothy taking the role of his mentor with the reliable men, while they convert and mature other converts.

C. Let us contrast two disciple-making approaches.

1. Let us assume you could create a gospel meeting format every night in different locations where you can reach 1,000 converts every day. This would result in 365,000 converts in one year and 36,500,000 converts in a hundred years assuming everyone remained faithful. This leaves billions of the world population untouched.
2. Let's assume you convert three people every year and equip each convert to convert three a year. At the end of the third year you would have only 16 disciples. If everyone remained faithful and continued to reach three a year in less than 17 years everyone on the planet would be converted.
3. This is the difference between arithmetic and geometric progression. The discipling approach is a dynamic multiplying ministry. If you only converted one a year instead of three, then you would convert everyone in the world in about 33 years. None of us can hope to convert 1,000 people in a large group repeatedly, but converting one to three is reasonable.

Matthew 13:31-32

Conclusion – The discipling model is clearly superior to the large group method. Starting small and concentrating on a few converts is an attainable goal for most disciples. We must get a vision for disciple-making in the example of Jesus and the church of the first century. If we are going to follow the pattern of the New Testament church then we must refocus our energies.