

Introduction

A Journey with Jesus

The Discipleship Making Process

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Expressions Of Love

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach ...

So read the opening lines of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's love sonnet to her husband. People respond to love. The words of love are music to our ears. Receiving love brings joy to our lives. Human beings thrive on love because we are created in the image of God, who is love. And each of us was created to be an expression of love.

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

Jesus Christ, the Son of God spoke these words to His disciples on the night before He died. A few hours later Jesus would express His love for every man by becoming the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. On that night however, Jesus explained to His disciples that the way to express love towards Him; was the same way He expressed love to His Father in heaven during His lifetime. *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.*

“Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.”

These were the final words that Jesus spoke to His followers before ascending into heaven. Jesus chose His words carefully. They were important words, memorable and intended for lasting impact. Study them for just a moment!

Two questions come to mind immediately. What did Jesus command His disciples to do? Why is it so important to teach others to do as He commanded? The answers to these questions are the heart of the disciple making process used by Jesus.

During the three-year period of His ministry on earth, Jesus took ordinary men and women who followed Him and transformed them into powerful disciples. Within twenty years of His ascension into heaven they had become known throughout the Roman Empire as “those who have turned the world upside down.” They had truly become expressions of God's love on earth.

What happened to them to cause such a great impact on the world? It's simple. Jesus gave His disciples only one task; make more disciples. He told them exactly how to do it. They did what Jesus told them to do and He sent the Holy Spirit to help them do it! The rest is history.

Jesus' five-step disciple making process was simple. Go, preach, baptize, and teach.

1. **Wait** until you are clothed with power from on high.
2. **Go**, into the entire world.
3. **Preach**, the gospel to all creation.
4. **Baptize**, those who have believed, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
5. **Teach**, all those who have believed and are baptized, to do everything that I have told you to do.

I

Answers To Commonly Asked Questions

What are the purposes of this book?

1. To answer commonly asked questions about becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.
2. To establish the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church.
3. To give insights into the disciple making process.
4. Provide a teaching outline for everything Jesus asked His disciples to do.

What is a disciple?

By definition, a disciple is a learner; one who puts into practice what he or she has been taught. Jesus said it this way. *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher and the slave as his master."* In order to be a disciple of Jesus Christ you must be taught by Him. The goal is to become, as He was, an expression of God's love to this world.

What is discipleship?

Discipleship is the process of transformation from "learner" to "teacher." It involves changing the way the learner thinks and acts, so that he becomes conformed to the image of the teacher. The Apostle Paul said. *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

How many disciples did Jesus have?

Jesus had many disciples, both men and women. Of His disciples, He called twelve men to be His apostles (sent ones). Ten days after Jesus' ascension into heaven, the Bible records that 120 of His disciples gathered together on the Feast of Shavuot, which is known as Pentecost in the Church. On that day the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to speak in the languages of the people who had come to the feast from other lands. Then Peter preached the gospel to these people. Three thousand believed his message and were baptized. Then, the apostles started going from house to house (where believers were gathering in small groups), teaching them what Jesus had commanded them to do.

What is required to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

1. Believe the gospel message concerning Jesus, that He is both Lord and Savior. By believing, a person is “born again” into the family of God. This requires an act of repentance - a change from what was formerly believed.
2. Be baptized. By this act a person declares that he has been “born again by the Spirit of God” and is now “saved”. Jesus said, *“He who has believed and is baptized shall be saved.”*
3. Be willing to receive Jesus’ instructions.
4. Sacrifice time to be trained.
5. Learn the commands of Jesus.
6. Apply what He says to do.
7. Be led by the Spirit of God. According to the Apostle Paul, those who are being led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.

Can a person terminate or interrupt the process of becoming a disciple?

The answer to this question is yes. One example of this is in John 6:53-66. Many of Jesus’ disciples withdrew from Him. They simply could not believe that Jesus required them, to “eat His body and drink His blood” (In the Church today, this requirement is known as communion or the Lord’s Supper.)

How long does it take to become a disciple?

1. Jesus spent three years training His disciples before they were considered spiritually mature enough to “make disciples.”
2. In Acts 1:8; we discover that Jesus told His disciples that they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth. According to most historians, there was a ten-year period between Peter’s preaching the gospel on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem until he preached to Cornelius in Caesarea. From this, it can be deduced that the disciple making process took three years in each area: Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. The disciple making process started with the Gentiles, when Cornelius, a representative of Rome was baptized. His conversion marks the beginning of the spread of the gospel to the remotest ends of the earth.
3. In Galatians 1:15-18, the Apostle Paul states that he spent three years in Arabia and Damascus after his conversion before meeting with Peter in Jerusalem.
4. In Acts 20:28; the Apostle Paul reminds the elders of the church at Ephesus that he spent three years teaching them.

What is the history of discipleship in the Church?

In the immediate years following the resurrection of Jesus, discipleship was the primary focus of the church. The gospel was preached, people repented and were baptized, and those who had been taught the Lord’s commands instructed others in the way of righteousness. Small groups of people were trained in homes and were then sent out to make more disciples.

These small groups of people were autonomous. They were linked to other groups through their common faith. The leadership of a group was invested in its elders. These were usually men who were at least thirty years of age and lived by Biblical standards of holy living. Some time later these elders became known as pastors - those who watched over and cared for the flock.

During the 2nd and 3rd centuries, when the number of groups multiplied in a specific area one elder would be chosen to coordinate activities between the groups. He was given the title of bishop and also served as a representative and spokesman for that area's groups. Discipleship methods changed little during this period of time even in the midst of extreme persecution.

In the beginning of the 4th century the Church began to bind itself to secular world power, thinking that this was the way the kingdom of God would be established in the earth. The focus of the Church began to shift from making disciples to developing an orthodox belief system. What a person believed overshadowed the One in whom he believed. Christianity became the official religion of the empire and individuals were forced to convert. Church buildings began to be constructed. The New Testament portion of Scripture was developed from various writings and then combined with the Old Testament. These writings became our Bible.

The struggle for political authority and orthodoxy (correct belief) continued to increase in scope. Bishops decided the issues of orthodoxy after much dispute among themselves. The bishops from the five major centers of Christianity (Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem) were viewed as having greater authority than other bishops because of their great number of followers. These powerful men coerced other bishops to join them in voting on issues of orthodoxy. The wrangling continued until there were only two main bishops who had their own followings. These two were the Bishop of Rome (who had political ties to the western portion of the Roman Empire) and the Bishop of Constantinople (who had political ties to the eastern portion of the Roman Empire). The infighting between these two groups lasted until 1054 AD when the Church suffered its first split into Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches.

In order to maintain orthodoxy and control of people's beliefs, the Church trained men to lead the individual churches. Eventually this group of educated men would become an elite class. They were known as the clergy. Latin and Greek had become the languages of the Bible and could only be understood by a properly trained member of the clergy. With the rise of the professional clergy, ordinary men and women in the Church no longer made disciples on their own. That job was left to the trained staff. Christians tended to be adherents to an orthodox system of beliefs rather than ardent followers of Jesus Christ.

The simple group gatherings of the early Church involving fellowship, communion, prayer and the apostles' teachings on the commands of Jesus gave way to elaborate ritual. The celebration of the Eucharist, also known as the Mass, became the focal point of these gatherings. During the "Middle Ages" the Church plunged into moral decay and its leadership became corrupt. Despite this turn of events, hope was on the horizon.

In the latter part of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century three major events occurred that would shape the Church's future. In 1454, John Guttenberg used the first movable-type printing press in Europe to print the Bible. This eventually led to widespread ownership of Bibles by individuals, printed in their own languages. In 1492, Columbus' discovery of America became a safe haven of migration for those who sought freedom from religious persecution. And in 1517, a German Catholic priest named Martin Luther ignited the fire of reformation that spread throughout all of Christendom.

Because of the reformation Christians began protesting many Church practices, wanting to return to a purer faith. These protesters were divided into two camps: those who remained in the Catholic Church and those who left. Those who remained tried to reform the Church from within but were killed or silenced. The other camp felt it was impossible to reconcile with the “Roman Catholic Church” and separated from it. The latter group has become known as Protestants.

Reformation took time. The transformation from man made tradition and ritual, back to the Bible and a simple faith in Jesus Christ, began to evolve slowly. However, orthodoxy still remained the focus of these new Protestant Churches, so much so that we now have hundreds of denominations and thousands of independent churches. “What a person believes” is still in ascendancy over “the One in whom a person believes.” Most of the Reformers believed it was necessary to exert control over the people in order to maintain orthodox belief, considering the laity to be ignorant. Therefore, the professional clergy remained and with it the expectation that they would do the work of ministry.

Today, it appears that many within the Church are attempting to return to the fundamental roots of Christianity. People want to know Jesus! And discipleship has become the buzzword in many congregations. There is a hunger in Christians for fellowship with one another and a desire to serve their Lord. They want to be a holy people clothed with power from on high. They want to be Jesus’ disciples. And they want to participate in the transformation of the lives of others.

There is hope, but Christians must act. We need to be involved in small groups, loving one another and working together to effect transformation in the lives of people. We should celebrate the Lord’s Supper when we meet. Prayers need to be offered up to God as a sweet smelling aroma. And Christians must learn the things that Jesus commanded them to do, and then do them.

How is the disciple making process accomplished?

1. The disciple making process is divided into fifty eight teaching lessons.
2. In each lesson, one or more of the action commands that Jesus gave His disciples, will be featured. (There are a total of 263 individual commands.)
3. A short teaching will provide insight into understanding the command.
4. Group discussion questions are used for reflection on the lesson.
5. An activity is suggested to implement what has been learned in the lesson.

What format is best used to make disciples?

Family sized groups are ideal places to learn and grow. They provide the best opportunities for people to practice the one another’s, be accountable, learn and accomplish tasks.

II

The Mystery Of Relationship

The reason that making disciples is so important to Jesus is that it is born out of a love relationship with Him. In Ephesians 5:31-32 the Apostle Paul tells about the nature of that relationship. Paul quotes a Scripture passage from the book of Genesis and ties it directly to the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. The passage reads this way, *“FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”*

When the term “great mystery” is used in the Bible it does not mean that it is hard to discover or understand the mystery. Rather, it simply means that it is a marvelous truth, the nature of which should be carefully pondered and absorbed. The relationship of Jesus Christ to the Church is that of a husband to a wife. In this love relationship, both parties have roles to play and responsibilities to fulfill.

The love relationship between a husband and wife produces only one product, a child. This is the meaning of *“AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.”* During the intimacy of sexual relations the DNA makeup of husband and wife combine to form one new flesh, which becomes an expression of their love for one another. By comparison, the love relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church produces only one product - a disciple. This becomes their expression of love for one another.

The spiritual and the natural

Two pillars of a love relationship between a husband and wife exist; one is spiritual and the other is physical. The spiritual pillar consists of intangible or unseen things such as: love, attraction, emotions and commitment. The physical pillar consists of tangible or visible things such as sex, work, child bearing and child rearing.

In comparing the love relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church with natural relations, we see that these same two pillars are present. The spiritual, intangible or unseen pillar is “The Great Commandment” and is described in Matthew 22:36-39. *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And Jesus said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’*

The physical, tangible or visible pillar is “The Great Commission” and is described in Matthew 28:19-20. *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

The correlation between the natural and the spiritual is not coincidental. Human beings should discern spiritual truths through observation of the natural. The Apostle Paul makes this analogy in 1st Corinthians 15:46 saying, *“However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.”* Jesus continually told stories, used parables and made allusions to natural occurrences expecting people to discover spiritual truths. Several times Jesus chided the religious leaders of

His day for their lack of understanding concerning the connection between the natural and the spiritual. On one notable occasion, when the leaders asked Jesus to perform a sign from heaven, He challenged their power of observation and lack of wisdom. According to Matthew 16:2-3, Jesus responded to them this way, *"When it is evening, you say, 'it will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?"*

In order to gain depth of understanding, in the connection of the natural to the spiritual, take a moment or two to reflect on the following stories concerning spiritual birth. In the first story (Luke 1:26-38), God, the Father sent a message to the Virgin Mary via the angel Gabriel. When she heard the message, she believed it. This became a union of spirit and flesh; the word of God believed by human flesh. As a result of this union, Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit and produced a son, whom she called Jesus. He was a combination of both parents, spirit and flesh, God and man. He was an expression of His parent's love for one another and He expressed this love to his neighbors, even dying on a cross in their place.

Now consider the second story. God sends a message to all men. The message is called the gospel, God's news or good news. It concerns the salvation of men through His Son, Jesus. A messenger preaches the gospel. (The word angel means messenger.) The messenger's name may not be Gabriel, but those who preach the gospel are truly angels of mercy sent by God. And it can be said of them, *"HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"* When a person believes the gospel, a union of the spirit and the physical takes place. As a result of that union, the flesh becomes impregnated with the grace of God. The result of this love relationship will eventually produce other children, who are "born again" by the Spirit of God. The children are a combination of their parents, spirit and flesh, the Word of God and faith, created to be expressions of love towards their neighbors. They are able to be living sacrifices because they are created in the image of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. And they know that they will be raised up to heaven as He was, to live eternally.

Marital relationships

Having considered these thoughts let's return to the relationship of Jesus Christ and the Church. The relationship is a mystical one, involving both spirit and flesh, the unseen and the visible, the intangible and the tangible, the supernatural and the natural. Jesus Christ has the role of husband and father. He is spirit, unseen, intangible, and supernatural. The Church on the other hand fulfills the role of wife and mother. It has flesh and bones, is visible, tangible and natural.

By understanding the typical roles fulfilled by husband and wife or father and mother we are able to grasp the concepts of the roles of Jesus Christ and the Church in their relationship. The roles, of wife and mother, are the same for the Church, whether they are viewed corporately or individually for each member.

The love relationship between Jesus and an individual begins before they become part of the Church. Jesus Christ, as a lover pursues people, drawing them by the Holy Spirit. He sends them a proposal of marriage via a messenger. The proposal is the preaching of the gospel. An individual responds to His advances and either accepts or rejects the proposal. Once the proposal is accepted, Jesus Christ assumes His authority as husband and begins his role as leader of the family. The individual becomes part of the Church by believing the gospel, submits to Jesus' authority, calling Him Lord, and following Him.

In the intimacy of a natural marital relationship children are produced. The husband plants the seed and the wife bears the child. He takes a job and she maintains the home. In the spiritual marital relationship, Jesus plants the seed in the heart of an individual through the agency of the Holy Spirit and by the Word of God; the Church brings forth the child. Another way to think about it is: Jesus does the sowing and the Church does the reaping. Then Jesus goes off to His job of ruling and reigning the Kingdom of God and the Church remains to maintain a home for Him and His children.

Historically, the primary roles of parents have been viewed similarly in every society on the face of the earth since God created Adam and Eve. The primary roles of Jesus Christ and the Church, as spiritual parents are the same as their natural counterparts.

The father is viewed as the provider and the mother as the nurturer. The father is characterized by strength, the mother by gentleness. Most fathers appear somewhat distant and not talkative while mothers are close and constantly communicating with her children. Children respond to their father's voice and their mother's touch. They are expected to respond to their mother's merciful discipline instead of their father's fearful judgment and wrath when he gets home. Children are trained in their early years by their mothers and by their fathers in later years.

Children are born into a family and take their father's name immediately. However, it is not until they have matured through the child rearing process that they become as he is, with his nature and character. It is no different in the family of God.

The child rearing process in the natural is universally known and administered the same way by every society and Jesus used it to make His disciples while on earth. In a spiritual sense Jesus fed them when they were hungry, changed their diapers, and taught them to walk and talk. As they matured He gave them tasks. When they came of age Jesus released the disciples to reproduce themselves. It is this same task of child rearing or disciple making that He has commanded the Church to do.

III

Understanding The Process Of Making Disciples

I begin this section by asking a question, "When a baby is born, why don't we leave it alone?" The question is absurd but everyone knows the answer. The baby would die and never grow to reach its potential without someone caring for it. This very thing happens in the Church today! When someone is "born again", he may be set adrift in this thing called Church, with no one to care for him. Without a process in place to guard against this, a new believer may leave the church or fail to reach maturity.

Comparing processes

In this section, the spiritual process of making disciples will be compared to the natural process of child rearing. Both are growth processes based on training an individual to become mature within a specified amount of time. Both processes are systematic in that they build upon principles already learned. For example, a child does not compete in the 100-yard dash until he has learned to walk. Both require loving one another until the process is complete.

Training is an essential part of both processes. A child's training determines what he will become. Proverbs 22:6 states it this way, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.*" Training consists of two parts. In the child rearing process they are called **learning** and **application**. According to Matthew 7:24 and James 1:22 the two parts in the disciple making process are **hearing** and **doing**.

Our society recognizes three phases of life: childhood, youth and adulthood. An example of how phases are apparent on a spiritual level can be seen 1 John 2:12-14. The Apostle John writes to children, young men and fathers.

The separation points of these phases of life are obvious and usually marked by a celebration at the beginning of them. The first celebration point in the natural is birth; a separation from the womb and into a new life. The newly born infant is washed, enters the childhood phase and the child rearing process begins. In one's spiritual life, this celebration point is called water baptism, a separation from the old way of life into the new. The new believer enters into to the childhood phase and the disciple making process begins.

The second transformation point of one's natural life is puberty. It is marked by sexual changes in children that make them capable of reproduction, but at this stage they lack the maturity to raise their own children. As they enter their teenage years, children become known as youth or young men and women. At this time, the training of the children takes on a different dimension as the father often takes a more active role in the process. In Judaism this transformation celebration is a Bar Mitzvah for a boy and a Bat Mitzvah for a girl. In the Christian church there might be a confirmation celebration. Spiritual puberty can also be observed in a Christian's life. It occurs when Christians actively begin preaching the gospel. Although these spiritually young Christians are capable of producing new birth through preaching the gospel, they are not mature enough at this stage of their development to make disciples. More mature believers in the Church can assist in completing the discipleship process.

The celebration marking the end of youth and the beginning of adulthood is marriage. A young man and woman leave their parents' home, commit to love one another unconditionally and begin to raise their own families. In the Church, this celebration of leaving is "the laying on of hands". Many times it is used to empower a member of a local church who is leaving to begin his first pastorate. At His ascension into heaven, Jesus released his disciples to make other disciples and ten days later empowered them for service by sending the Holy Spirit to assist in the task.

Once in the third phase of life, the title of adult remains with an individual until the fourth separation point occurs which is death. That separation takes an individual from life to the grave. It is marked by a service called a funeral, in which the individual is eulogized, his reward for life in the flesh. For a follower of Christ, death separates him from this life, to life everlasting with Jesus Christ. Even though a funeral is conducted for him, a believer knows he will receive his true reward for life in the flesh from his Father who has it stored up for him in heaven.

Similarities in natural and spiritual conception

Comparing the natural and spiritual conception processes is exciting. The Passover of the Israelites, which is itself a conception process, will be the framework for the comparison. Jesus' connections with the processes are explained. Graphic details and explicit language are needed to make the comparisons.

At the first Passover the blood of the slain lamb was smeared on the lintel and doorposts of each house of the Israelites. The Israelites then entered their homes through the bloody doorway and their lives were spared. In John 10:7-9, Jesus declares that He is the door and anyone entering through Him would be saved. When we picture Jesus, as the Lamb of God, hanging on the cross we notice this same bloody doorway. Some of Jesus' blood is smeared on the lintel where the crown of thorns was placed on His head and some on the doorposts where the nails were driven through His hands. In the natural this occurs when the woman's hymen is broken during sexual intercourse. Blood is smeared on the sides of the doorway of her house, the womb. If the man's sperm does not enter the womb it will die, but by entering it can be saved by creating a new life within.

In the natural, the seed of man is implanted in the woman and enters the womb via the narrow way of the birth canal. In a spiritual sense, the seed, which is the Word of God, is implanted in the ear and enters the mind and heart via the narrow way of the ear canal.

A period of unseen growth takes place before the new child is birthed. In the natural it takes nine months, for the nation of Israel the process took from the time they entered their bloody doorways until they walked through the Red Sea and for spiritual birth it is the moment that God's word is believed.

In natural conception, new life issues forth from the womb via the narrow way of the birth canal. A sign of live birth is when the baby makes its first sound, a cry. In spiritual conception, new life issues forth from the heart via the narrow way of the vocal cords resulting in a sound, the confession of the heart's belief. In the epistle to the Romans chapter 10 verse 9, the Apostle Paul writes, *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."*

Immediately after a baby is born, it is washed. Those who are "born again" by the Spirit of God are washed through baptism. And the Israelites were baptized in water when Moses parted the Red Sea and they traveled through the narrow way. They were born a new nation when they reached the other side began crying out their praises to God. (Exodus 15)

By now we have made sufficient connections between natural things and spiritual things, so there is no need for great detail on each part of the disciple making process at this point. A brief outline of that process follows on the next few pages. Study the outline and your mind will grasp the conceptual contents.

The outline contains four columns: **Natural Growth**, **Spiritual Growth**, **Instruction Given**, and **Activities Undertaken**. The entries in each column reflect what should be occurring at any particular stage of training. The **Natural Growth** column is the systematic child rearing process as administered throughout the world. The **Spiritual Growth** column contains the same information but adds spiritual language for the same event. The **Instruction Given** column contains the lessons to be taught for the appropriate age of the disciple. Lessons marked #1 - #58 are the ones Jesus taught His disciples in chronological order and contain His 263 individual commands. Other basic lessons are included in this column to assist the disciple in building a framework for his understanding since he is coming from an increasingly more secular background. The **Activities Undertaken** column assigns responsibility to the disciple based on his spiritual age.