

I. REVIEW – MAKE DISCIPLES

- A. There are five common contexts for disciple making that Jesus himself interacted in. The Public, Social, Personal, Transparent, Divine contexts all have various attributes that make them unique while all being connected to the work and ministry of Jesus in disciple making.
1. **Public Context** (Matt. 5-7; Mark 6:34; Jn. 6:1-2) - exists where people gather in the hundreds around a shared outside resource. Using a local church as an example, this gathering would be found in the church's large corporate gatherings like Sunday morning.
 2. **Social Context** (Matt. 9:9-13; Luke 10:1; Luke 19) - is the range between twenty and seventy people, where we share snapshots of who we are and thereby seek to build affinity with others.
 3. **Personal Context** (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 8:27-33; Jn. 13) - formed in groups of four to twelve, where we feel able to share private information. Think, for instance, of good friends talking over drinks, revealing personal thoughts and feelings about their ongoing lives and relationships.
 4. **Transparent Context** (Matt. 26:36-38; Mark 10: 35-45; Luke 9:28-36) - is when you are with just one or two others, making a group of two to four people, your closest of relationships. In the Transparent Context, characterized by complete openness and candor, nothing is held back. This echoes the biblical ideal of being "naked and yet unashamed..." (Gen. 2:25)
 5. **Divine Context** (Mark 1:35; Luke 6: 12; John 5:19) – represents God's direct interactions with us, his people, at a one-on-one level. Our focus shifts from cultivating relationships with others to being alone with our Creator and Redeemer as he encounters us in our inner world.
- B. In all five of the contexts of discipleship, the essence of our transformation is always our relationship with God, lived out through relationship with others. This means that if you are not in relationship with God and in relationship with others, you are not making disciples.
- C. I am convinced that a major primary place God makes us disciples is in our acts of service. We grow as disciples and are transformed as we obey the leadership of Holy Spirit and serve others. As we serve:
1. We gain personal confidence as we develop our gifts and hone our skills.
 2. We learn to manage pushback and stand our ground under attack.
 3. We cultivate "lifestyle evangelism"¹ as faithful witnesses of Jesus.

¹ **Lifestyle Evangelism** – the understanding that all believers are to share their faith as Holy Spirit gives them opportunity. Evangelism is not a series of events a church schedules, nor for the select bold few who participate. All believers are 'faithful witnesses' of Jesus.

II. OUR DISCIPLE MAKING PURPOSE

18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Matt. 4:18-20

- A. Jesus’ initiated his discipleship group with two fishermen. He called them from their primary source of employment and shifted their focus. Jesus followed this pattern to establish his first set of disciples who would then in turn establish his global church.
- B. The original 12 disciples, later established as apostolic leaders had no idea what Jesus would do with them and neither did they know the scope of their new ministry focus.
- C. Jesus established a clear primary focus for disciple making. Making disciples is not always accomplished unless intentional focus is part of the overall plan.
- D. Our common key goals, expectations and objectives for our groups is found in Jesus’ original statement given to Peter and Andrew. There are three key elements of Jesus’ original call.

Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. Matt. 4:19

- 1. ***Follow Me***...Following Jesus.
- 2. ***...I will make you***...Being changed by Jesus through Holy Spirit.
- 3. ***...fishers of men***...Committing to the mission of Christ.
- 4. Therefore, we define a “disciple of Jesus” as one who *is following Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus.*
- 5. If we use this statement as our guiding influence for our groups then:
We are here to learn to trust and follow Jesus, and make disciples who make disciples.
- E. Presently our common approach to the main key elements of our groups is to:
 - 1. Provide fellowship
 - 2. Grow in the knowledge of God through Bible study
 - 3. Cultivate a life of prayer
 - 4. Provide relational support when needed
- F. These four common elements are not wrong in and of themselves but we notice in Jesus’ focus that they followed Him, learned from Him and developed their own disciples as their main goal. Did Jesus teach his disciples to pray? Yes. Did he provide fellowship and relational support? Yes. Did their gifts and skills grow? Yes. Did they have Bible studies? Yes. However, Jesus’ main focus was to use these elements to disciple his 12 and call them to do the same for others.

III. BUILDING UP OUR RELATIONAL GROUP SYSTEMS

- A. For 2024, we want to set a focus on building up groups that would represent the categories of Personal and Transparent types of contexts while maintaining and encouraging our other gatherings.
1. **Personal Context** (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 8:27-33; Jn. 13) - formed in groups of four to twelve, where we feel able to share private information. Think, for instance, of good friends talking over drinks, revealing personal thoughts and feelings about their ongoing lives and relationships.
 2. **Transparent Context** (Matt. 26:36-38; Mark 10: 35-45; Luke 9:28-36) - is when you are with just one or two others, making a group of two to four people, your closest of relationships. In the Transparent Context, characterized by complete openness and candor, nothing is held back. This echoes the biblical ideal of being "naked and yet unashamed..." (Gen. 2:25)
- B. We already have many types of groups functioning at CFG and want to establish our leadership corps while building and strengthening multiple pathways in our group contexts.
1. Community (Disciple Making) Groups – gathering of 7-15 people for the purpose of walking with God, and developing relationships with one another.
 2. Ministry Groups – Specific ministry focus to a target demographic. (i.e. – women’s ministry, youth ministry, worship ministry, young adult, prayer ministry, etc.)
- C. I want to establish goals and objectives for our groups so that our leaders can function with confidence and set vision within their sphere of influence.
1. Personal Context: Key goals for our groups. Sharing our lives with others.
 - a. *Closeness* – cultivating spiritual connectedness that develops our spiritual lives. Physical proximity. Frequency and nearness.
 - b. *Support* – having a support net with which we share our hopes, fears, and concerns gives us the safety to risk, to dream, and to grow.

Are we willing to commit to family style relationships that include a growing number of singles as our brothers and sisters in Christ? We will need to give careful thought, for example, to how we can offer spiritual friendship to those [fighting] the loneliness of never being married or of being divorced...while seeking to trust and follow Jesus in a celibate lifestyle. I bring up such a controversial issue because so many singles are struggling to live in a way that is consistent with the call to follow Jesus; they need the encouragement and closeness of other faithful Christians in a small group. The old idea, in many places, that a small group is just a group of friends at a similar stage of life will not be sufficient (Harrington and Absalom, p. 141).

- c. *Challenge* – Within a place where we experience closeness and support, we also need a healthy dose of challenge! Following Jesus is not always easy or comfortable, and there are times when each of us needs to be called to account for our words or deeds; or encouraged to break through the fear levels that create ceilings over us or barriers in front of us.
 - 2. Transparent Context – Key goals for our groups. Closest people, raw life on life connections. We see one another, the real person, blemishes and all as our sin, selfishness and shallowness cannot be hidden.
 - a. *Intimacy* – Up close, heart to heart. Gen. 2:25 – the principle of being “...naked and not ashamed.” The call to vulnerability and transparency.
 - b. *Openness* – Possessing the comfort level to boldly ask regarding our needs without fear. Consider Luke 11:5-13 – The story of the persistent neighbor who asks for bread at midnight. The feeling that you can “presume to impose” and not feel judged or afraid of the consequences.
 - c. *Impact* – Discipleship is helping people trust and follow Jesus as Lord, and it requires that we both understand the truth (God’s word) and obey it. What we know matters only if it translates into how we live.
- D. Key goals are achieved at various depths of relationship. However, holding these goals and intentionally seeking to develop them within a disciple making group keeps the life of the group fresh and vibrant.
 - 1. Closeness
 - 2. Support
 - 3. Challenge
 - 4. Intimacy
 - 5. Openness
 - 6. Impact.
- E. Questions for group discussion:
 - 1. Has there ever been a time that your request seemed to presume or impose? What happened?
 - 2. Discuss 2-3 ways you can cultivate an atmosphere of closeness and openness while at the same time the ability to challenge in a group.
 - 3. Discuss why application and impact of God’s word in disciple making is so critical.

