



## Part Two

I'll never forget the day a friend asked if he could come over to our house to do a Kirby vacuum cleaner demonstration. My friend was about twenty years old at the time and was the furthest thing from a salesman as you can get. He had just started with the company. Before they do official sales calls they are required to get so many practice sales calls—but they still try to sell you at the practice sessions, so there's not too much difference really. I told him before he came that we were not buying a vacuum cleaner. What was different was that he was really slow. He must have been at our house for at least three hours showing us every last attachment and doing multiple demonstrations. At the end he still had to give us a sales pitch. He kept calling his boss back with more offers that I kept rejecting. Poor guy. Selling vacuum cleaners door to door is a tough business.

But not as tough as selling disciple making. Disciple making is a hard sell. If you don't believe me, just ask the Thorsens. They have to sell the concept of disciple making to people and then convince you to support them financially so they can go and do disciple making in another culture. It's a tough sell and it will take some of you a long time to catch the vision for what we are talking about. But it's all worth it in the long run.

Let me quickly review the principles from last week and then keep moving through some new ones.

1. Disciple making is grounded in Jesus' authority.
2. Disciple making is commanded by Jesus.
3. Disciple making is simple, but it isn't easy.
4. Disciple making is the purpose of the church.
5. Disciple making is for ALL believers.
6. Disciple making is essential in order to be a maturing disciple.
7. Disciple making is impossible outside of the church.

Here's a brief summary of these seven principles. For many reasons, all of us must be engaged in making disciples and we can't do it alone. You can be a Christian and not make disciples but you cannot be a maturing believer and not make disciples. We don't want you to feel guilty if you are not yet engaged because we haven't articulated disciple making as clearly as we are doing now.

### **8. Disciple making is a living process.**

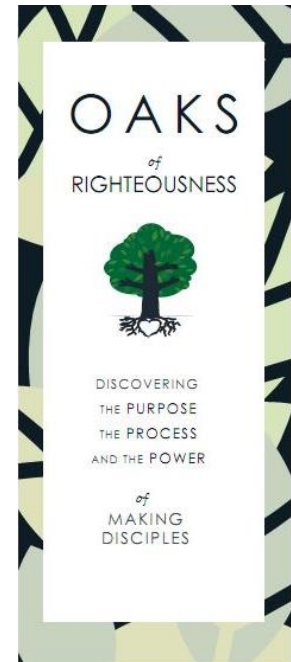
If you were here on Christmas Day, I preached from Isaiah 61 in a message called "Oaks of Righteousness." We have created a new disciple making brochure using the same title. Those who have been at LEAD know that we are using a tree to illustrate all aspects of making disciples. All of this is being done to fully illustrate the fact that disciple making is a living process. Jesus used agricultural examples to teach about the kingdom of God, not primarily because he lived in a first century agrarian society but because the kingdom of God is a living entity. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches." Jesus is very clear that unless we are united to the vine, we are not alive. We are not saved. We are not united with Christ.

The apostle Paul regularly used the body metaphor to describe the church. Christ is the head and we are the members of his body. Even Peter uses living illustrations but this one is fascinating.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-5).

Peter quoted from three different Old Testament passages referring to Christ as the Cornerstone, But it's interesting because he took a lifeless object like a stone and made it alive. Jesus is a "living stone" and we are living stones. Paul adds to this when he writes, "Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 4:20-21). So there is no way to escape the fact that the body of Christ and therefore disciple making is a living process. It's all about our relationship with Jesus and with other people. Relationships are the foundation of disciple making, the goal of disciple making and the means of disciple making.

### **9. Disciple making is an intentional process of multiplication.**



In his second letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, “what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). It’s helpful to see this in picture form to see how it is supposed to look. First, Paul taught Timothy and “many witnesses.” Then Paul instructed Timothy to teach “reliable men” who will in turn be qualified to teach “others.” This is an intentional process of multiplication. It has to be

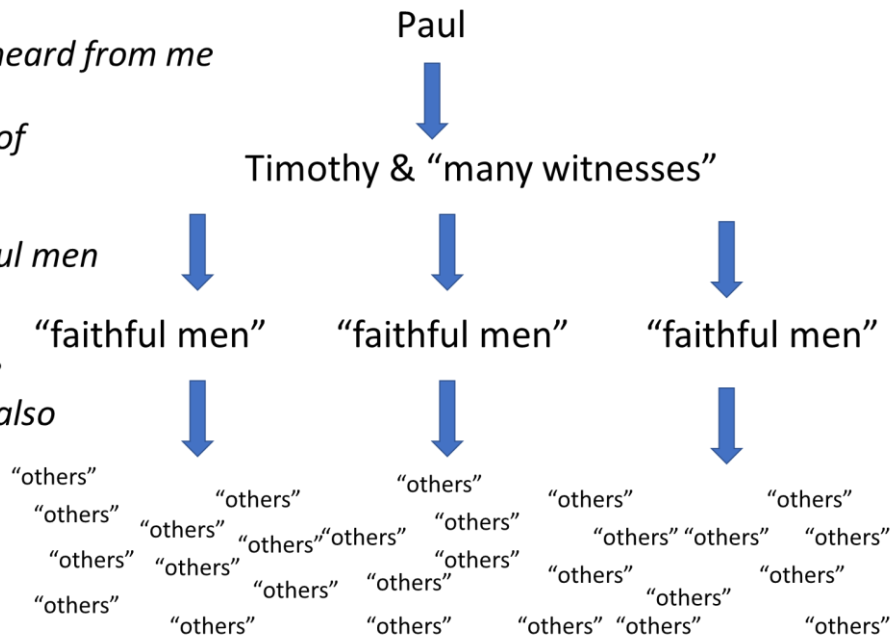
2 Timothy 2:2

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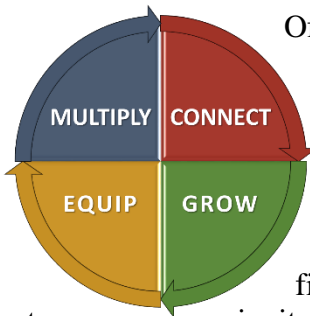
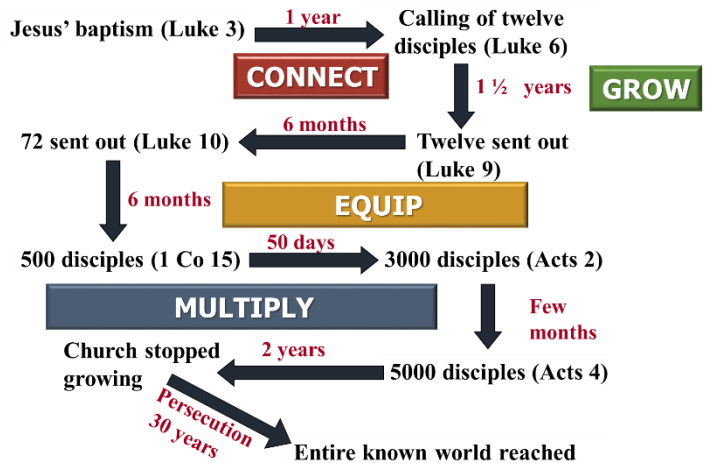


intentional because it will not happen on its own. This one verse alone demonstrates how intentional this must be. Paul laid out a very general plan, but it’s a great plan. This one verse alone would justify the need to have a series of sermons on disciple making and a ministry that we call LEAD. A church has to have an intentional plan of making disciples who in turn make disciples. There is no one right way to do it, but you must have a plan and work that plan out.

Make sure you understand that Paul did not merely want these men to learn to teach others. He wanted to replicate himself. These “faithful men” must become at least some of what Paul was. The intent was to make disciples who would in turn make more disciples. And of course, this is exactly what Jesus modeled for us in his three and a half years of public ministry.

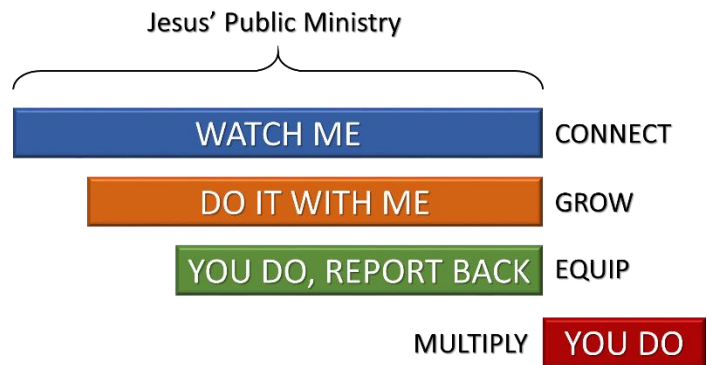
**10. Disciple making was modeled by Jesus.**

I showed you this process not that long ago. I hope I am not using too many powerpoint illustrations this morning, but I am a very visual person. As I lay these ideas out in visual form, it helps me understand them much better, so I hope it does the same for you. If you look at the overall model of Jesus' ministry, you can easily see this pattern emerge. It took him an entire year of hanging with many followers before he called the twelve disciples into deeper fellowship with him. This is what we call the "Connect" phase of his ministry. It was another eighteen months before he sent them out to do the ministry that he modeled for them. In our discipleship model, we call this the "Grow" phase. Then Jesus sent out the twelve and later he sent out 72 men into surrounding towns and villages. This is what we call the "Equip" phase. And it wasn't until after Jesus finished his work on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sent the Holy Spirit did the ministry finally begin to multiply.

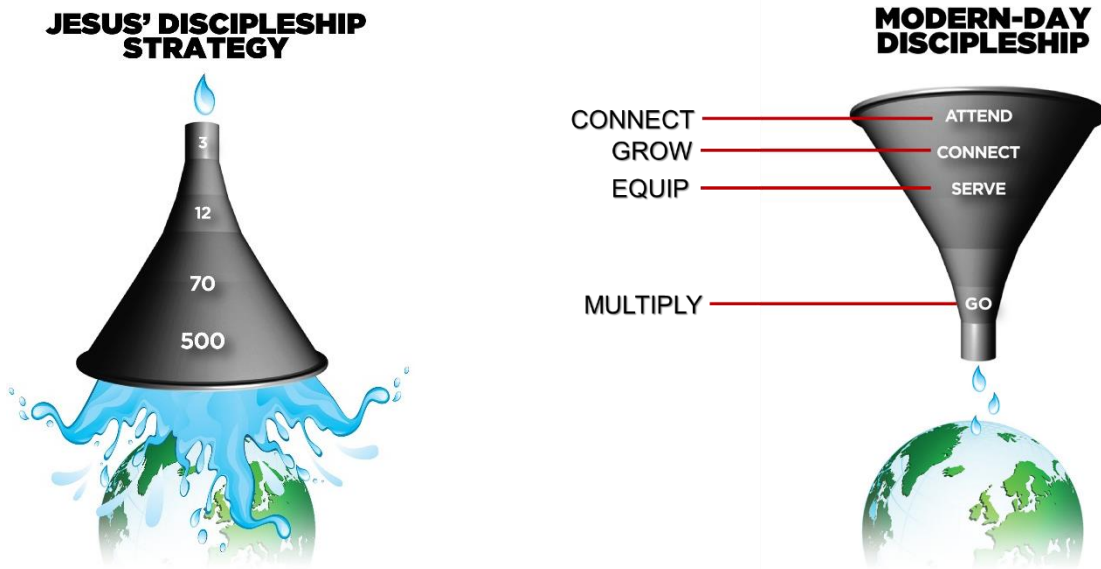


Of course this should look familiar to you. These four phases which Jesus modeled during his entire ministry is what we call a "discipleship circle." It's a process of making disciples, but it's also a repetitive or cyclical process, which is why we illustrate it using a circle.

Here's yet another way of explaining what Jesus modeled. During his public ministry, the first thing he did was to invite the disciple to watch him do the work of ministry. During the next phase, the disciples did ministry with him. During the third phase, he sent them out on their own to do ministry and reported back to Jesus. After his earthly ministry was complete, the disciples began to multiply ministry.



Are you starting to see it? If not, here's one more illustration for you. Jesus centered on the three disciples among the twelve disciples, sent out the 72, which grew to 500 and then spread over the known world. The entire thing looks like a giant inverted funnel which pours out the gospel over the whole world. Now at this point there is a criticism of modern day discipleship that looks like this. The church attracts large crowds who attend. Many of them eventually get connected to the church and some begin to serve but in the end, very few actually go and do real ministry. Let me tell you why I like and why I don't like this criticism.



First of all, I like it because it quickly points out the imbalance of the way churches tend to do ministry. You have probably heard of seeker targeted churches like Willow Creek. They intentionally target unbelievers by creating a church service that is extremely “friendly” and non-confrontational to the unbeliever. Their main goal is to bring more attenders into their worship services. About fifteen years ago I went to Willow Creek’s leadership conference. I will never forget listening to Bill Hybels describe that their number one goal as a church was to get the maximum number of people in Sunday morning worship services. So guess what they did to meet that goal? Their 3,000-4,000 seat auditorium was not large enough so they spent \$60 million to build one twice as big. Ideas have consequences and that was a really expensive idea! To their credit, Willow Creek has since become a bit more balanced in their disciple making efforts.

These seeker-targeted churches would never have a message like this on discipleship in the morning service. Many of these churches don’t even talk about sin and hell very much. They do some things very well, but they tend to water down the message of the gospel and they end up with a very imbalanced ministry with an over emphasis on getting more attenders into their worship services.

The other imbalance is when churches emphasize the “growth” phase too much. This is core problem with most evangelical churches. They have great preachers and great teachers in enormous Sunday School programs and small groups. Now there’s absolutely nothing wrong with Sunday Scholl and small groups because you learn a lot and you get connected with other believers. But typically, there is not very much equipping and multiplying happening in these churches.

Every church has all four of these phases to some degree, but the challenge is to have a good balance of all four phases. Your ability to make disciples is conditioned upon how good of a balance you strike with these four phases.

Now here's why I don't like this criticism. It implies that bringing attenders into your church is a bad thing. The way this funnel looks is simply the way every church will always look. The inverted funnel could only happen at one time in history—during the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. From that point forward, as people gathered into local churches, the funnel would always and forever look like this. So the shape of the funnel is not the issue, but the most important thing is the balance among the four parts.

The other reason I don't care for this criticism is because, according to this diagram, the final goal is what? To "go," presumably out into the world as a missionary. But that is not the end goal, is it? Remember from last week when we looked at Matthew 28. When Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations," the core command is not to 'go' but rather to 'make disciples.' Some, like the Green family, the Seeley family and the Thorsen family will actually go to another culture and another language to make disciples, and that is awesome. Not all believers are commanded to go, but every believer is commanded to make disciples.

Our church has been using the Discipleship Circle model of making disciples for about the past fourteen years, to a greater or lesser degrees of success. But it was just in the last few months I finally realized that this model is not a complete model. It is an *accurate* model. When you look at the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, that ought to hit you right between the eyes. It's accurate, but it's not complete. In other words, the discipleship circle shows the *process* but not the *end goal*.

Now that might sound confusing because we do have a stated end goal, which is this. "Making more disciples and making better disciples by nurturing all believers toward the stage of multiplication." That is an excellent goal, but it is just too vague. What does that look like? We have a process for moving forward through stages but the specific goal of what a mature disciple is supposed to look like has not been part of our disciple making as a church.

So what we needed to do was to go back to a very simple question: What is a disciple? This is a simple question but it is also an intensely relevant question. By asking "What is a disciple?" you are asking what God requires of you. You are asking about how to parent your children, how to love your husband and love your wife, how to be a good employee. This fundamental question impacts everything you think, say and do. It'

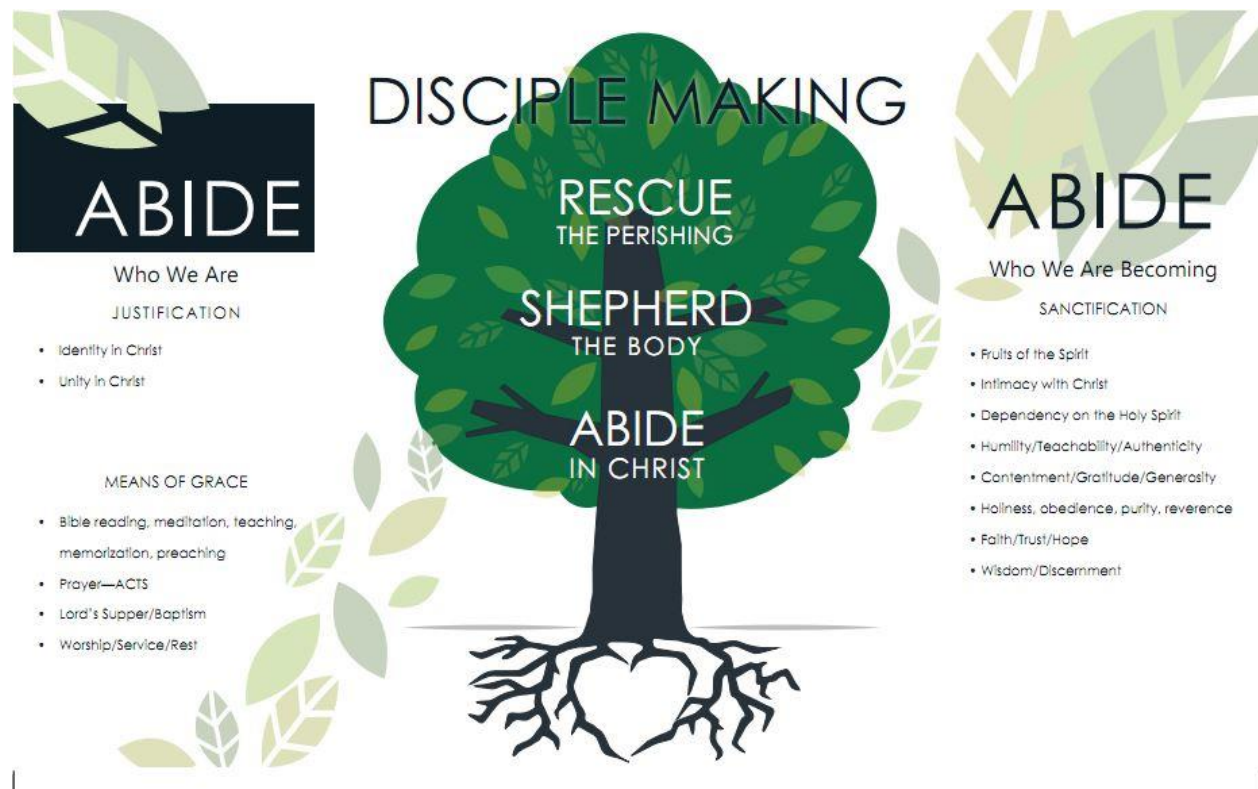
Last Sunday I told you that there was a very simple answer to this question. A disciple is anyone who actively follows Jesus and a disciple maker is anyone who actively follows Jesus and helps others do the same. That's fairly simple but it's really vague, isn't it?

So fundamentally what we did was to begin with the end in mind. At the first LEAD session last Fall, we listed all of the possible character qualities of a disciple. We asked the participants to write down all of the character and priorities of Christ. We poured through the Scriptures and listed as many Biblical ideas and commands as we could. If these were put all of these things into one person, what would he or she look like? We are calling this list a 'Description of a Discipled Person', or DDP for short. It was a long list with lots of overlap, but it was an excellent start.

The next LEAD session the following month, we took that enormous list and divided it into categories of similar kinds of qualities. One massive list is a bit overwhelming. We thought it would be easier to understand and teach these discipleship qualities as a few large categories instead of as dozens of individual qualities.

Just this morning I realized something very cool about this process. What we have been doing was both highly collaborative and it was a process. This is exactly how discipleship in general works, isn't it? You must work together and it is a process. So I defining the definition of a disciple we inadvertently utilized key discipleship principles.

Ryan and I took the work of those two LEAD sessions and the following two months, we further refined them into a brochure. The brochure is our best attempt to take all of the best and relevant discipleship principles and distill them into a 2-page document. This is the main guts of the brochure. (The brochure was not back from the printer yet so we will get one to you next Sunday.)



The next four messages in this discipleship series we will be digging into this in greater detail. It's not perfect and will no doubt be refined more as we move forward, but we like what we have so far.

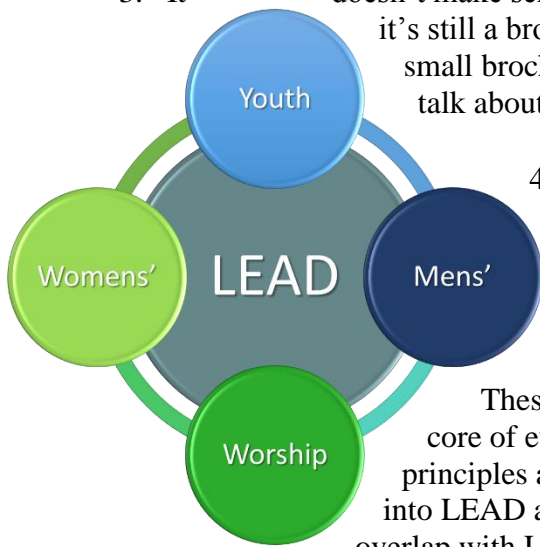
Let me give you an overview of it.

1. It begins and ends with Jesus. This is by far my favorite part and where we I will start next Sunday. There are three main categories: Abide in Christ, Shepherd the Body and

rescue the Perishing. We believe that everything we need to know about discipleship can be fit into one of these three categories. The next 2 messages will be focus on the area of Abide and the last two messages will cover Shepherd and Rescue. But out of these three categories, abiding in Christ is both the foundation—the starting point and also the main goal.

2. It is a systematic theology of disciple making. A doctrinal statement is also a systematic theology of sorts. Any time you take one subject and search the entire Bible for relevant Scriptures, so you systematizing that subject. So for a doctrinal statement, you don't want to just know what Paul taught about Jesus, you want to know what the entire Bible taught about Jesus. You list the Scriptures and ideas, put them into categories. In other words, you systematize them. This is what we have done with the subject of disciple making.

3. It doesn't make sense all by itself. We feel that it is conceptually complete, but it's still a brochure. You can't cram six messages on discipleship into a small brochure. This is why we will be using it the next four weeks to talk about discipleship.



4. Like all attempts at understanding God's word, it is not 100% accurate. There are shortcomings and we will correct them when necessary. This is not the last or best word on the subject but it's a really good place to begin.

5. We will use it to continually evaluate all ministries. These are not just words a page. We intend for this to be at the core of everything we do as a church. Picture it this way. All of these principles are being poured into LEAD and all ministries overlap with LEAD. Lord willing, each of these ministries will become better at disciple making as a result and all of that will be an ongoing process.

This is Cory. He's the one who tried to sell me a Kirby vacuum cleaner. Sadly, he never sold a single vacuum cleaner. One could say he is a washed up Kirby vacuum cleaner salesman. But he has been a missionary for over fifteen years. How did that happen? Cory has exemplified one who continually takes the next step of faith. He went to Guatemala for two weeks with me in 1996. God got such a hold of him that he was asked to go back for two years. After that he continued to ask what God wanted him to do next and he continued to take just one more step of faith.





That's all God requires. He's not asking you to do fifty things this week from our big list of being a disciple. But he's surely asking you to do one thing. What is that one thing? What is it that for you?

**Rich Maurer**  
**January 15, 2017**