

The 4 Seasons of Discipleship”

Garry Miller 7/2/12

“Intro & Winter” Session 1 of 4

READ: Matthew 4:19 & 28:18-20

The Essence of Discipleship:

As you've probably figured out by now, Chi Alpha and discipleship are two inseparable ideas! (At least, that's how we want it to be in all of our ministries.)

It's not just one of the 5 elements to our Philosophy of Ministry, but it's the Primary Directive that Jesus left us as the "Church" or "Body of Christ." As "His Disciples" we are His servants and He commanded that we continue with His Mission, Matthew 28, which we just read.

How we tackle that task and accomplish our objective on a specific campus or with specific individuals is something that will depend on the people involved.

The "message" is unchangeable. It's the "methods" we have flexibility with. They are the “vehicle” to deliver the goods!

The bottom line is getting it to happen in the life of the disciple... the formation of the Christ-life! We must be INTENTIONAL if we are going to see this happen.

It's become one of the biggest shortfalls of our North American church in general today... delivery of intentional discipleship that works. We must be certain that we "major" in this area of our mission.

Discipleship has always been and must always remain a simple process, easily embraced by every believer, which stays clear of complexity and complication, and is not reliant on a select few, specially trained individuals.

Simply stated, a “Disciple” is a learner and follower of Jesus and His truths. Therefore, “Discipleship” is the process of a person receiving and implementing the teaching and truths of Jesus along with aligning ones lifestyle to reflect the nature of Jesus’ lifestyle, seeking to be “like” Him in character and behavior.

Discipleship is a process.

Discipleship is not something that is done in isolation.

Discipleship is not simply a 13-week course following conversion.

Nor is Discipleship simply the transferal of information.

If you know a Real Estate agent, or have ever had reason to be involved in buying homes or property, you will definitely have heard the old adage, “Real Estate is about 3 things: Location, Location, Location.” Discipleship is similar, just with a different word.

Relationship, Relationship, Relationship:

As you engage the Great Mission that Jesus gave to “us,” the mission He promises to do “with us”... thus, “The Great Co-Mission” of Matt. 28, to go and make disciples throughout our life, you will surely realize that it’s a “life journey.”

It begins before people get “saved” or “make a decision” to follow Jesus.

It’s “us” relationally engaging “them.”

It’s something intended to be experienced with others... even a team activity.

It’s something that needs “modeling” – that’s the great “show me how” element of learning. As well as needing the opportunity to “do it yourself” and together with others.”

I like how Steve Murrell describes discipleship in his book, “WikiChurch.” He says, (page 69)

“Discipleship is about building three key relationships: first with God (follow), then with nonbelievers (fish) and finally with God’s people (fellowship).”

3 Relational things: Follow, Fish, Fellowship. I love that! So simple. One thing I’ve seen proven time and again in the Kingdom as I’ve traveled far and wide and experienced the church in many continents... “simplicity” always beats “complexity.”

As we develop and experience those relationships, we should and will grow or mature. It’s the inevitable outcome of healthy relationships. No matter where you are in your growth and maturity in faith, you will still be focused on those 3 relationships. They are life long connections. Walking with God (Follow), Walking with non-Christians/Outsiders (Fish, as in “being a fisher of men”), and Walking with God’s people (Fellowship), and life of authentic Christian community. We are simply intended to grow in our understanding, depth and sense of responsibility regarding these relationships. To assist that growth we create systems or structures that aid the process.

Seasons:

A very important part of the whole concept of discipleship is that it has “seasons of growth,” in fact, “stages of development” that need different activity and training based on the maturing of their faith, which is meant to proceed forward like the seasons, Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.

We’re not looking to simply help more Christians, get more knowledge, learn more of the Bible, so we can get more people trained to keep teaching and preaching to us, for ongoing learning to keep us semi-entertained and inward focused. Imagine that... never. ☺ At some point, we need to evaluate “the point” of our activity in church life and mission. If we want to hear a, “Well done, my good and faithful servant...” kind-of-greeting in Heaven, then we really and

truly should want our “mission” to be characterized by the “mission” that Jesus gave us.

So, what we’re looking for is to take hold of a self-sustaining “concept” of discipleship that gets God’s people, all Believers, working together, day in and day out, in being authentic disciples and making disciples. So that it’s what we do! It’s what every one knows, “we’re in the business of” so-to-speak.

It’s Discipleship that:

1. **Engages** & reaches the unreached;
2. **Establishes** them in the foundations of following Jesus with authentic faith in God;
3. Then immediately moves them forward into **Equipping** for Faithful Living & Fruitful Living or Works of Service (that’s what “ministry” is) so that they take on responsibility for what we’re doing, get involved, and become self-motivated to give of themselves;
4. And it’s careful not to end there, but creates a culture of **“Empowerment”** where everyone knows that we aim to “put the keys in their hands” so-to-speak, as soon as possible! We want them to mature into responsibility where they are leading others in the mission, venturing out creatively and moving on faith to fulfill the things that God is leading them to do in furthering the “mission” of “making disciples of Jesus.”

Steve Murrell, in “WikiChurch” describes these 4 discipleship principles as the Ephesians 4:12 Strategy. Engage, Establish, Equip, Empower.

In 2001 we visited the MCI church in Bogota, Columbia for 2 weeks, observed their growing church of over 300,000 members at the time, and took in a special leadership training week they offered to church leaders on understanding their vision for ministry. It was the G12 Vision. Which is about everyone being engaged in Small Groups. There were 3 kinds of groups, which you were eventually meant to be in all 3. 1) Leading an open “outreach” type small group; 2) Belonging to someone’s G12 (or group of 12) so that you had someone pouring into you, discipling you, helping you to grow, mature and advance in your ministry calling; and 3) Creating or establishing your own G12 group over time, selecting individuals that you disciple ongoing, to develop and mature in life and ministry.

Now that model has been tweaked and reworked in multiple ways all over the planet, as it has great merit. The model is always adjustable to fit the situation or culture. It’s the Discipleship Principles that remain the same!

They (the G12 crowd) refer to the 4 stages or steps as: Win, Consolidate (or Establish), Disciple and Send.

It's the same strategy we're discussing. It's simply what Jesus did. We'll look at this in much more detail shortly.

A Group Thing:

I want you to start thinking of Discipleship (this process) not as a private or one-to-one thing, but as a Group Activity, like something we do together with others, 2 or more, a small group, not 25 or congregational size.

We are trying to follow in the steps of what Jesus modeled for us. He made disciples within a small group context, not really a one-to-one model. Sure he had private times with them, but it was a group thing.

Brady Bobbink, veteran Chi Alpha Missionary at Western Washington University, with 40 plus years of campus ministry experience says, (from "Reach the U: A Handbook for Effective Campus Ministry" pg. 175)

"If the effectiveness of training increases with the concentration of the group's size, it seems logical to think that the most effective means of discipleship is in a one-to-one context. But is this really true? Again we must rely on the Master for our direction. It is interesting to not that we seldom see Jesus with just one person. We do see Jesus in some one-on-one situations occasionally, but these seem to be times of evangelism (the woman at the well) or correction (rebuking Peter), and even these times are rare. Part of the Master's method was to train a small band of followers in such a way that they learned not only from Him, but also from the actions and reactions of each other. We do not intend to preclude the one-to-one method entirely or to imply that it can't be used to disciple people to Christ, but our emphasis is on the gathered small group. We must use our gifts and time and the gifts and time of others effectively. A great amount of learning takes place as people grow together in Christ that would be missed on a one-to-one basis."

Understanding the Seasons:

Now, to help form the concept of these 4 stages in your thinking, so that you can embrace them and run with them, I prefer to liken them, as mentioned earlier, to the 4 Seasons.



(Draw diagram on board:
Winter on top – show cycle)

The 4 Seasons of Discipleship: “Engage, Establish, Equip & Empower” Cycle

- “Winter” – Engage
- “Spring” – Establish
- “Summer” – Equip
- “Fall” – Empower

Let’s look at each season, discuss its characteristics in nature, and likely activity on our end. This is a great way to evaluate our ministry for strengths and weaknesses by exploring these four stages and what we see happening, or would like to start seeing.

WINTER – The Season of Engagement – ENGAGE

Some would just say, “Evangelizing.” And yes, “Discipleship” is a “Journey” that begins prior to “Conversion” and evangelizing is a part of that journey. But we often have very limited ideas of what that looks like, and it’s all too often an awkward and confrontational thing. It doesn’t have to be, especially when we’ve done the hard work of becoming “engaged” rather than “disengaged” with the lost of our neighborhood and truly “love our neighbors as ourselves.”

Engaging your community & the culture is about being a “fisher of men.” It’s about engaging with the “lost or outsiders” where you live and do life.

The opposite end of the spectrum would be simply enjoying the benefits of our “members only club” that we have exclusive access to. Unfortunately, and undoubtedly very innocently, we all too often shape the culture of our Christian groups or churches into more of the latter than the former, and our interaction with the “lost or outsiders” (the non-Christians) becomes increasingly limited, until we simply have NO relationships with them. Our whole life is wrapped up “inside” our church world.

If we are trying to follow Jesus and walk in His steps to become “fishers of men,” as He describes the process of becoming a disciple-maker, then we simply have to stop talking about the importance of “fishing,” and... “go fishing!”

Imagine: Fisherman’s Club. All the gear, clothing, gadgets, bait imaginable. All the teaching on technics, understanding habitat & patterns of various fish types, weather influences, best locations & times. But, then we don’t actually have any time left in our lives to go fishing!

Only we can make sure that doesn’t happen in our own lives. We are responsible for what we do! We have to evaluate our time restraints, activities

and commitments, and be sure that we don't forget to prioritize the important things. In this case, making time and investing ourselves into relationships with those NOT already following Jesus.

Of course, balance and wisdom must play a role here. If you go running off on your own, "the lone ranger" off on your fearless quest to be an authentic "friend of sinners" (like Jesus was known as) but forget to have your own life on a solid footing, or have backup, as in other solid, dependable Disciples of Jesus who team up with you and go with you, then you run the risk of becoming the "influenced" rather than the "influencer." As in so much about the Kingdom of God, "RELATIONSHIPS" are crucial. We should have a partner(s), teaming up with us, as we "Engage" our community.

That's why we can't stress enough, the crucial necessity of creating SMALL GROUPS as the core of our campus ministries. The small groups, which serve as our "discipleship groups" are in fact, "OPEN" groups, and "OUTREACH-ORIENTED" in nature, and are perfect for inviting your friends and acquaintances to come with you to experience. Your small group may even plan special 'events' designed to "engage" those who we are all building friendships with, and they serve the whole group as a intermediate stepping stone, to move them one step closer to actually coming to your small group "Bible Study" or whatever you call it.

Engaging the community

What does that mean? ...Engaging our community.

If we are speaking of the context of campus ministry, we are not speaking of just our "Chi Alpha Community" – the people who are with us. Rather, we are speaking of the "community" in which we are living, experiencing the college life! That would mean our campus... students, staff, faculty and friends.

Here's the thing... if we are so busy with just doing things with our best friends who are in Chi Alpha and we go to Christian activities every spare chance we have, we will be right in the midst of the greatest opportunity of our life for experiencing amazing "fishing" but instead be occupied with fishing lessons.

We need a to create a Chi Alpha "Christian Community" that has an open door to outsiders, and simultaneously enter the "open doors" of social circles, students organizations, and the like, in our college community. The same is true for the church and disciples after college, engaging the community where our church lives.

One of my favorite pictures of what that "Christian Community" looks like, was modeled for us nearly 1600 years ago, starting in 432 A.D. by none other than St. Patrick and a small group of co-laboring disciples who engaged the Celtic

people of Ireland for Jesus. Their simple missional strategy got everyone involved, and in the 28 years before his death they saw spiritual transformation on a national scale. A great book that shares in depth what they experienced, and a recommended read, by George G. Hunter III is, "The Celtic Way of Evangelism."

In Chi Alpha's "Reach the U: Handbook for Effective Campus Ministry," Harv Herman includes a brief summary of their missionary strategy.

"First, he and his band evangelized as a team. They met and engaged people in conversation, prayed for the sick, mediated conflicts, and offered counsel. They did open-air speaking utilizing parables, poetry, songs, drama, and visual symbols. They accepted the people's questions, then spoke to those issues publicly. They encouraged the Celts to take voluntary periods of solitary isolation in a natural setting to discover God. (*God time*) Then a pre-Christian was assigned a soul friend (a peer with whom he or she could be vulnerable and confessional).

Second, the Celts were invited to join a small group of 10 or less with someone leading devotions. These spiritual disciplines were intended to help the individual experience the presence of God and comprehend the gospel in a relational context.

A third key to their strategy was hospitality. The Celtic guests were invited into community life where they were welcomed and prayed over, and had Scripture read to them. They were offered a guestroom, invited to the table, and in many ways served. This occurred before they made a commitment to Jesus."

They were "Served" before they were "Saved." What a Jesus-kind-of-thing to do!

So why the SEASON thing, and WINTER representing ENGAGE?

Winter is the season of cold, barren fields, frozen soil. Now, it doesn't mean there's nothing to do! There's plenty.

Think of the Parable of the Sower and the Seeds, it's actually a Parable about the Soils (4 different types). The seed is the life giving WORD of God. The Soil is the HEART of the person that has seed sown at them.

Soil readiness and quality is essential to the survival of the seed and growth of a crop.

So, applying this to our situation. We have to be doing all we can to plow up the field (the soil) to prepare it for reception of the seed during the winter months. Problem: Soil freezes solid like a rock in the cold North! Most of my teen years were spent on a dairy farm in northern Wisconsin... I know.

Proverbs: 20:4 *"The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing."* (NKJV)

If you want a harvest, you have to sow seeds. And, you can't sow seeds and have growth, if the soil is not prepared.

Ideally, you try to plow up the soil after the fall harvest, prior to the freeze. That way the plant debris is covered and it puts nutrients back into the soil. You can't sow seeds until the soil is plowed up, tilled, and dry enough for planting. So you take advantage of the opportunities and windows you have to work on the process.

One of the big objectives of ENGAGING with the lost or outsiders in your community is doing things with them, or for them that "help thaw the frozen ground." Your friendship, your kindness, your authenticity all should produce warmth that brings the thaw, enabling the soil of the heart to be receptive to "seed" being sown.

In our Chi Alpha culture we include in our 5-fold Philosophy of Ministry the word, "Mission" (a.k.a. Witness, Outreach, Evangelism or Missional Living).

It must not become something we relegate to the specialists in our midst (although, we thank God for the specialists, the Evangelist who knows how to truly equip the saints in this manner). Nor should we simply program it for a specific time and place of the month only (although, we thank God for Evangelistic "events" which stir the church and reach our community).

Rather, it's meant to be a natural part of the life of a disciple. It's the consequence or natural result of being an authentic disciple of Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit of God... the witness of our deeds and words glorifies Jesus and impacts the "outsiders" that we have relationship with. We should not try to prevent this natural flow, such as Jesus taught, Matthew 5:14-16, "not to hide it under a bushel, basket or bowl." Sometimes if we're not careful, our church building, or our Christian groups and activities actually become the "bushel" that hides "us" the "light of the world" from the very ones out there struggling in the dark!

And even though it's the natural flow of the supernatural presence of God in our lives, we ought not be passive regarding our witness. In other words, "really not that bothered, not making the most of opportunities." Rather, we should be very intentional, praying much, listening much, always ready.

Unfortunately, many have come to believe that True Evangelism is confrontational in nature, even predatory. I call it "ambush evangelism" and it does not require that the witness live a consistent holy life, build authentic relationships with "outsiders" and be listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Rather, it's about a plan, a script, a quick burst of questions designed to cleverly

“handle” a stranger and get them to agree with you, and do what you say, all in the span of about 2 minutes. One has to ask if our “ways” reflect His “ways.”

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” 1 John 2:6 (NKJV)

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Colossians 4:5,6 (NKJV)

Raising up mature disciples requires that we model for them and teach them to do the harder work, that of: living right; building friendships with “outsiders”; showing to others the love of Christ we have received; meeting practical needs; listening more than telling; answering their questions with grace and beneficial words (seasoned with salt); practicing patient endurance with people. This must become a way of living that is very intentional, very expectant, very full of faith. For the most part we are raising up disciples who will need to practice the skill of “response evangelism” because where they are planted as witnesses is a relational setting, rather than the apostolic type of evangelism for breaking new ground in unreached areas. A great resource book I recommend on this is ‘Response Evangelism’ by Randy Hurst.

(Cohort Group Time – use Cohort Handout, allow 30 minutes)

COHORT GROUP – Winter (30 minutes)

Once one of those “seeds” of God’s Word, that we or others have planted in the soil of the disciple’s heart, actually germinates and springs out of the ground, and we have a “seedling” all ½ inch of it’s wonderful stature, we must not neglect it and think our work is over. Far from it... it’s just begun! We must now “Spring” into action (like that? ... Spring...) and provide the Gardener’s thoughtful and reasonable care to assure that it establishes itself and doesn’t die and pre-mature death. We water, we carefully nourish or fertilize, and protect from insects or varmints! We weed, but have to be very careful not to disturb the tender roots.

To jump to another metaphor, it’s about laying “Good Foundations,” which we often hear spoken of in church life. If you build a house on a lousy foundation, or none at all, it won’t be long before the whole building is condemned to demolition or crumbles on it’s own!

When someone comes to this point of committing their lives to Jesus, and they have been “born-again” by faith, you don’t want to disconnect with them if they’ve been coming to our small group, and send them off to some other “specialized small group for beginners.”

Establishing new believers is something we provide in the context of the people in our small group. We are a missional group, together making disciples.

The newly forming believer needs some quality time in a one-to-one setting to learn the basics, to ask the questions on their mind, to have certain things modeled for them. Trying to make your whole small group go through this together, every time someone new gets saved, would make for frustration and hinder us. So, the leader of the small group makes sure that the new believer goes through some kind of foundational study in a one-to-one time with them or another equipped member of the small group. This study is additional for them. We still want them coming to the small group weekly gatherings, building relationship, and learning collectively.

So, what’s important in the Establishing Stage or Season?

There are so many things to know, so many things to learn. But, what’s the most important beginnings of getting one established?

You’ve likely used or seen books and materials that cover a wide variety of topics. Understanding the Eschatological ramifications of present day Israel, the forming and advancement of the European Union in view of end-times prophecies, and other intriguing things, however, is not really what I’d point them to.

Most “foundational” courses, or booklets cover things like: Salvation, Lordship, Repentance, Baptism, The Bible, Prayer, The Church, Serving & Giving.

Recommended resources to assist someone in getting established include:

- “One 2 One” a 6 lesson follow-up and discipleship guide by Steve Murrell, Every Nation Productions.
- “The Purple Book” also from Every Nation Productions.
- “The D-Book” by Great Lakes Chi Alpha, which serves as a great supplement to “The Purple Book.”
- Navigators produce a great 7 book series called, “Design for Discipleship” which can be used, especially if you are comfortable supplementing it with your own “Pentecostal” perspective.

That’s just a few that I know and have used. Use what you find helpful.

Garry’s Discipleship “Body Check”

As a simple guide for remembering what I might want to cover with a person, even if I don’t have a study course or booklet to go through, I’ve got a little rhyme the can help. Think of your body.

- Head, Heart, Hands, Feet, Twice Baptized, Wallet on your Seat
(as you say it, touch each, with Hands flowing down over body for Baptized, and Wallet-rear)

Head – **Renewing the mind** with new thinking; **God’s Word**; His Ways. We need to be sure they understand this Salvation they have received, and learn to submit to the Lordship of Jesus, or His headship over their life.

Heart – **Repentance** “changes” a person; a new heart, which represents the seat of our emotions. It’s not about simply knowing the truth, but embracing it Body, Heart and Soul. It’s about my “affections” for God. This includes my **prayer life & devotional life**, my “intimate life” with God that is my responsibility to develop and guard.

Hands – this represents what we do, our behaviors. We raise them to God – **Worship**. We use them to serve God, by **servicing** others. We are especially meant to do these things with other believers, which is what we mean when we say “church.” We are joining hands with God’s people to worship, serve and fellowship.

Feet – With our feet we walk. Our “Walk” depicts our **behavior**. We must learn to **walk in obedience** to the words and truths of Jesus, “keep his words.” We learn to stop “walking in our flesh” or according to the old sinful and selfish nature, and learn to start “walking in the Spirit” as a life of selflessness, service and sanctification (holiness – being set apart as belonging to God).

Twice Baptized – Not that you need dunking twice because once isn’t enough to get you clean! Rather, being sure that all Believers are **Baptized in Water** as soon as possible, after conversion. And, that all Believers have a clear explanation and prayer to become **Baptized with the Holy Spirit**. This should be done as soon as possible upon conversion as well. The first is obeying the command of Jesus to publically

identify with Him & His people, and symbolically demonstrates the reality of being dead to the old sinful life, and resurrected to the new life in Christ, with His Holy Spirit coming to live or dwell inside of us. The latter is about His very same Spirit 'coming upon us with power' to be His witnesses. It's about being 'clothed with power' as in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate God's presence through us, wherever we go!

Wallet on your seat – as in your back pocket for the guys... ladies it's your Purse on your seat. This is about **Giving**. Opening your grip on what's "yours" and realizing it's all God's. Christians bless God when they demonstrate His Heart, and God is a generous God! His Word reveals that one of the greatest ways to develop our **Trust in God**, is to begin giving what we have. Money is a main source of what we need to learn to give, through Tithes & Offerings and meeting needs of others we are in community with.

If you've walked with Jesus, you know this stuff. You can pass it on to someone else! I encourage you to work and practice at knowing the basics of what to share with someone to form these beginning truths into their Christian life, their discipleship. Create your own stories to share; look up and memorize the scriptures that you want to use, or write a list in your bible.

COHORT GROUP – Spring (30 minutes)

In your cohort group, have each person pick 1 of the 6 “Body Check” points, just discussed. (Details are listed below). Take a few minutes to think about what you would share to explain it so someone gets it. Find a scripture or several you would use. Try to use the analogy, like “hands” or “feet” to explain the different points.

5 minutes to prepare. Each person does 5 minutes to explain their bit.

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learn to give, through Tithes & Offerings and meeting needs of others we are in community with.

SUMMER – The Season of Equipping – EQUIP

We've thawed the frozen Winter soil through engaging our community in authentic, caring relationships and acts of kindness. Then when we see that one of those "seeds" we've planted has sprouted, we "spring" into action because it's Spring-time for that disciple. We've established them in the foundations they need for having a healthy relationship with God, the Lost, and God's People. (Follow, Fish, Fellowship)

Now, we must immediately move them forward into **Equipping** (which means to put the tools into the hands) for **Faithful Living & Fruitful Living**, or Works of Service (that's what "ministry" is) so that they take on responsibility for what we're doing, get involved, and become self-motivated to give of themselves.

So what happens in the Summer?

If you are a suburbanite or city-dweller, you probably think... "Go on Vacation," "Hit the beach!" Not so if you're a Farmer. I know. I was one. It's crunch time!

It's all about:

- Watering the crops – irrigation for when the rain isn't sufficient
- Spraying Insecticides or Pesticides – kill off or run off the bugs
- Applying Herbicides – to keep the weeds and such dying.
- Spreading Fertilizers – giving those plants some super-food. An organic smoothie!
- Repairing broken machinery and maintaining everything else so it works well.

It's all about "Building Up" your crops for healthy living and abundant results in fruitfulness!

Our small groups are always focused on being stronger, healthier disciples of Jesus! Always. And to do that, we want everyone to become "students" of the Word and "Doers" of the Word! Always the Word of God.

The Word of God – The Scripture, is the "anchor" to all teaching, because it's the record of truth revealed. Any time you don't come from the Word, you will go adrift! As the Bible describes it, "being blown about by every wind of doctrine."

We must teach for Application; For Life-Change. Not to impress with all we know, or our scholarly mind!

The Evidence of Life-Change

Jesus reveals Himself as the “door” to God’s Kingdom (John 10:7), for He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

Once “in” or through the “door” we must learn to “obey” what Jesus spoke (His Words) and “follow” His example.

This is a clear evidence of “life-change” when we begin to “obey” Jesus in our daily living decisions, actions and even thoughts. In fact, this is a real sign of “being His disciple,” and it’s the genuine “fruits of repentance” (or product that grows out of our decision to change). We are different than before we had Jesus in our life. We “tick” with a different rhythm than the old crowd.

Obedience to Jesus is not more of the same old system of the Law. Rather than obedience to a system of rules, this is “life in Christ” the One who fulfilled the Law on our behalf and for us! You might say, as some have said before, we’re not living “by the book” (as in being legalistic about rules to gain righteousness) but we are called to a higher accountability, to live “by the cross!” And living by the cross, involves the “Helper” (The Holy Spirit) living in us and leading us in the way.

Jesus said in **John 14: 15**, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”*

“Loving Jesus” is demonstrated by “obedience to His words, life example, and listening and obeying the ongoing guidance of His Spirit living in us, “The Helper” as He calls the Holy Spirit here.

Well then, is the answer listing every commandment that Jesus ever spoke, and making sure we don’t violate a one them? Actually, that ends up taking us on a similar track to the legalists of the Old Testament Law, trying to appease God through perfect performance.

The Word is always central. We must never devalue it, or marginalize it. We must always remain “tethered” to it, when living life. I believe we should not ignore any part of God’s Word, but we have to keep in context, or in mind, the kind of obedient life we’ve been called to live in this New Testament age (New Covenant) of life “in Christ.”

Jesus once summed up “The Law and The Prophets” (Old Testament) when answering a question formed by the Pharisees and spoken to Him by a lawyer (now that sounds like a dangerous set up). They asked (Matthew 22:36), “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?” Jesus goes far beyond the question in His response, since they were trying to trap Him with legalistic arguments about the Law. Jesus said (Matthew 22:37-40), “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. (quoting from Deut. 6:5, which is not part of the 10 commandments) This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (quoting from Leviticus 19:18 dealing with moral laws) On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus effectively summed up the Law and the Prophets with 2 directives. Wow! Yet, if one were to use those 2 directives as a plan for obedience, what a different world this would be. What a great way to help the sincere person who is not a scholar, have confidence in knowing the way ahead.

And this same idea applies for us in this “age of Grace” (New Testament/Covenant). Even though we are not shown God’s favor or made righteous through the keeping of laws and rules, we are obedient to the words and heart of God as an expression of our love for Him. So we teach and instruct for life, using all the Scriptures, but we want to be sure they understand the heart of the scriptures, the core, the principles of how Jesus thought.

The Absolutes

I want to pass on a few thoughts I’ve picked up from a biography of a man named Frank Buchman, whom I admire, who was an early pioneer university campus missionary, at the beginning of the 1900’s (“On the Tail of a Comet” by Garth Lean). As a result of his life work, many lives have experienced true life-change through encountering the cross of Christ and learning to live life by the summed up principles, one may say, of Jesus’ teaching. Much like Jesus summing up the Law and the Prophets with 2 directives, one might sum up the words or commands of Jesus with 4 Moral Absolutes. Absolute HONESTY, PURITY, UNSELFISHNESS, and LOVE.

THE MORAL STANDARDS – “THE ABSOLUTES” – (“On the Tail of a Comet” pp 76-77). And, (Robert Speer – *The Principles of Jesus*) summarized by Henry Wright.

The standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love were something anyone, however simple or scholarly, could use to measure his life, and the addition of the prefix “absolute,” while setting an aim which no one could attain, had two obvious advantages. It stopped the honest seeker from letting himself off with a second or third best, or with the relativism which adjusts to the

standards of the society around him; and it set so high a goal that anyone attempting to live by these standards would constantly be turning back to God for forgiveness, grace and strength. (This is the moral back-bone of Christianity.) These “standards” do not equate to “rules.” F.B. would say, “Do anything God lets you.” “Stop living by rules and live by the Cross.” – meaning, the voluntary laying down of anything in one’s personal life which did not match Christ’s standards, the abandoning of one’s own will to do the will of God, and the daily experience of Christ’s own cleansing and healing power. The “standards” in fact, were to be interpreted to the individual by the Holy Spirit. “The Cross is an alternative to living by the book.” F.B. – his own criterion was to do nothing which robbed him of the power to help other people spiritually. C.H. Dodd wrote concerning “bringing the mind of Christ to bear” ... The moral demand of letting Christ’s Spirit rule you in everything is far more searching than the demand of any code, and at the same time it carries with it the promise of indefinite growth and development. D.L. Moody, “ The world has yet to see what God can do in, for, by and through a man whose will is wholly given up to Him.”

Now, equally as important, we have not only the “words of Jesus” (found in the New Testament) but we also have His presence living with us, wanting to speak to us, comfort us, empower us, and guide us daily!

John 14:26 (Jesus said) *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

The Holy Spirit is God, just as much as Jesus or the Father is God. The 3 are actually so interlinked, so unified, that they are just ONE. Three persons, One Essence – One God – “The Trinity.” As St. Patrick taught, “3 folds of the napkin, but 1 napkin. 3 joints in the finger, but 1 finger. 3 leaves to the clover, but 1 clover.” So, God comes to live with you and help you! His Holy Spirit coming to us is His actual presence living with us!

Experiencing the revelation of God’s Word is something that is made possible by the living presence of His Holy Spirit living in you. Otherwise, it’s just pages and chapters of a book you find distant and lacking relevance.

Remember, when those attending your group make a decision to follow Jesus, we ESTABLISH them in the Foundations of Faith, usually in a one-to-one setting using a booklet for that purpose (i.e. “One2One” and “The Purple Book”). This way they are getting personal and direct explanation about the basics, including The Holy Spirit’s presence and provision in our life. We also cover Baptism with the Holy Spirit with them and have times of prayer with them in those one-to-ones. So, no matter where a person is in their journey, it’s not a problem.

ALL of our Small Groups (Discipleship Groups) are focused on these basic principles of “Building up God’s people for faithful living and fruitful living.” That’s about living by the cross, in the Spirit, and serving.

Even though you are always inviting and bringing non-Christians into your small group meetings, (because they are OPEN groups, OUTREACH groups in nature) that’s fine! Hearing about the teachings of Jesus, and the blessing of living for Him in His Kingdom is what they need to hear. It’s the ‘salt’ that makes them want to drink, the ‘light’ that illuminates their path!

The Work of Ministry

You are created for “good works.” Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (NIV)

Ephesians 4:12,13 reminds us that God’s apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are suppose to, “...**prepare God’s people for works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be **built up**, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

As we’ve said before the goal is not to get more information or knowledge in your “noggin.” It’s to “Build Up” and “Mature” the person works of service and Christ-likeness.

The King James uses the word “Edification” or “Edify” when it speaks about “building up.” So, Equipping will Edify. But, edification is not just to make me feel good. It’s to make me ready to live and serve in His name!

Getting you and everybody in your group Serving (or Ministering, means the same) is something we want to happen ASAP!

You know there are lots of crops that get harvested in the Summer months. There’s nothing quite as amazing as having a great vegetable garden! On the farm, there’s haying that seems to never stop.

And a characteristic that I loved was how “everybody works” and “everybody helps on another.” No free-loaders on a farm. And if you had a lull in work, you helped your neighbors with bringing in their hay or whatever needed harvesting.

I’m not saying that the new guy needs to preach on Sunday! But, the sooner we find people involved in serving, embracing the mission, the quicker we see them GROW and MATURE!

I hear it so many times from people in ministry, that when they were teaching a small group or Sunday School group they seemed to be doing so great with Jesus, but when they stopped serving, got too busy with work or whatever, it's like they went through stagnation, a "dead zone" in their reception. But, as soon as they connected into meaningful serving again they started to grow and feel healthy.

It's appropriate works of service for what you are equipped for. Greater levels of responsibility are given to those who have proven themselves "faithful in the smaller things." (Parable of the Talents)

Since they are already involved in your Small Group, get them "serving" in what you're doing.

They are intended to engage and bring their friends to gatherings that your Small Group is hosting. Maybe a BBQ, backwoods hike or bike outing, or simply the weekly Bible Study, it's all good. All are ways for the outsiders to "taste and see" so-to-speak, and discover that it really is "good."

The Small Group is such a great place for connection, for getting to know people and being known, for asking questions that matter to you. It's all the stuff that would just not happen for a new comer on a Sunday morning service.

It needs to become your group members' responsibility to do the "Works of Service" that make your group and ENGAGING bunch of folks! Some of them can help you with ESTABLISHING new believers once they experience New Birth in Jesus. That's especially a great thing for someone to do one-to-one with their friend that they are responsible for bringing, if they are ready for that.

Of course, you might have a brand new believer bring 3 friends their 2nd week after becoming saved, and then you just have all 4 go through the "Establish" materials with you or another you trust from your group.

With everybody realizing you want them to help, get involved, and "own it" so-to-speak, they will become motivated to do more and more. When we place strict control over everything, and the leader thinks they have to do it all, we don't create a culture of "empowerment."

The natural momentum for your small group members is to eventually desire to start a small group themselves and pick a few friends to help them. You don't want your small group growing to 30 people. It's meant to "send out" and launch its members into ministry... the ministry of "Making Disciples."

Part of Summer is preparing people to do what you do! Making apprentices. Taking them through materials like we are going through together is an

important step to getting them ready for starting their own group and expanding the mission. You can use these materials. You can use whatever your Campus Director/Missionary wants to use. You can go through a simple booklet, like “Making Disciples” by Every Nation Productions. This is the responsibility of the Primary leader of the Campus Ministry to determine and provide. That way you have quality control... that’s a great kind of control to have. This may be a special weekly group that meets for several weeks with numerous individuals ready to start building their own small group.

Once you have a person launching a group, they are entering the Season of Empowerment, and an important part of enabling them is to have them become a part of a “LEADERSHIP GROUP.” That’s a special kind of group, designed and dedicated to helping develop and resource all small group leaders in an ongoing way. It’s usually something led by staff or mature, experienced leaders.

This means, they would stop going to their old (outreach oriented) small group regularly, start their new (outreach oriented) small group, and attend a 2nd Group for ongoing development as a leader, their Leadership Group. That’s a system that is simple and helps assure ongoing growth, which are the aims we’ve set out for.

(Cohort group)

COHORT GROUP: Summer – EQUIP (30 min.)

As a group brainstorm and discuss ideas for what kind of things would be appropriate in your mind for SMALL GROUP topics of study. Make a list and we will compare notes later.

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Consider the 4 Moral Absolutes observed in the life and teaching of Jesus. Put them to the test. Take some time and reflect on how these can serve you and your disciples as a personal guideline for “walking even as He walked.”

Absolute HONESTY, PURITY, UNSELFISHNESS, and LOVE.

Read through this quote again. Share who this impacts you personally.

THE MORAL STANDARDS – “THE ABSOLUTES” – (“On the Tail of a Comet” pp 76-77). And, (Robert Speer – *The Principles of Jesus*) summarized by Henry Wright.

The standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love were something anyone, however simple or scholarly, could use to measure his life, and the addition of the prefix “absolute,” while setting an aim which no one could attain, had two obvious advantages. It stopped the honest seeker from letting himself off with a second or third best, or with the relativism which adjusts to the standards of the society around him; and it set so high a goal that anyone attempting to live by these standards would constantly be turning back to God for forgiveness, grace and strength. (This is the moral back-bone of Christianity.) These “standards” do not equate to “rules.” F.B. would say, “Do anything God lets you.” “Stop living by rules and live by the Cross.” – meaning, the voluntary laying down of anything in one’s personal life which did not match Christ’s standards, the abandoning of one’s own will to do the will of God, and the daily experience of Christ’s own cleansing and healing power. The “standards” in fact, were to be interpreted to the individual by the Holy Spirit. “The Cross is an alternative to living by the book.” F.B. – his own criterion was to do nothing which robbed him of the power to help other people spiritually. C.H. Dodd wrote concerning “bringing the mind of Christ to bear” ... The moral demand of letting Christ’s Spirit rule you in everything is far more searching than the demand of any code, and at the same time it carries with it the promise

of indefinite growth and development. D.L. Moody, "The world has yet to see what God can do in, for, by and through a man whose will is wholly given up to Him."

FALL (Autumn) – The Season to Empower – EMPOWER

Getting everyone into a small group is great, but not the end-all. We must create a culture of "**Empowerment**" where everyone knows that we aim to "put the keys in their hands" so-to-speak, as soon as possible! We want them to mature into responsibility where they are leading others in the mission, venturing out creatively and moving on faith to fulfill the things that God is leading them to do in furthering the "mission" of "making disciples of Jesus."

We can only reach more people, if we raise up more leaders (small group leaders) who will go out and engage the community, establish the new believers they reach, and equip them for faithful and fruitful living. We must raise everyone up to become "Disciple-Makers."

As mentioned earlier, to move a person into this season of development, they will also move into some kind of "Leadership Group" – basically a small group that is only for Leaders of Small Groups (closed group, leader-development oriented), while at the same time they are leading their own small group, which is outreach-oriented and open to all.

Helping you get your head around good principles for leading a small group and creating a healthy place for growth, is what we want to accomplish in this stage.

I love the way it's described in the booklet "Making Disciples" (Every Nation Productions). Here's what a Discipleship Group (your Small Group) is NOT:

- "Need-focused care group where each person comes to talk about problems and receive personal pastoral care.
- Leader-centered Bible study where each person comes to listen to and learn from a Bible expert.
- Fellowship-based social time where each person comes to meet Christian friends.
- Spiritual gift experiment group where people can try out spiritual gifts on each other.
- Accountability group where everyone goes through a spiritual checklist.
- Home group where food is served and whole families gather for fellowship.
- Mini-Church service complete with worship, offerings, and preaching.

People in a healthy small group may meet needs, study the Bible and fellowship with each other, but the primary purpose is to make disciples."

Now that covers it pretty well. The point is: Let's not forget the point! None of the things mentioned are wrong or evil. It's simply that we don't want to let our groups get "hi-jacked" and morph into something they are not intended to be, resulting in a breakdown for our discipleship ministry. There's a time and place

for all those things in some form, but that's up to the ministry leadership to make room for them at the right places and times.

For this we will look at what we do to "facilitate" growth.

Leadership for Small Groups – Being a Facilitator

Having a Healthy Image of Yourself

Look in the mirror...what do you see? (Superman or Clark Kent?)

- Israel's first King – 1 Samuel 9:1-2, "...Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites; a head taller than any of the others." (NIV) A True Superman!
- Israel's second King – 1 Samuel 16:6-7, The Lord instructs Samuel as he is looking for the next King to anoint, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (NIV) After going down the line of Jesse's sons, the oldest 7, he was only left with the young kid, 16 year old, and he was out with the sheep. No body in the family even bothered to call him, until Samuel insisted, because David, that boy, was the man! (Your "mild-mannered reporter", or shepherd).

Both were made leaders, both had the potential to be great leaders. Only one was. The difference that mattered was being a person "after God's own heart." Because of that, every one of us has the potential to become a great leader.

What kind of image does that evoke in your mind? "Great" doesn't always mean large, but also "effective" as well.

Leadership is influence! And it's about using influence to move people toward healthy growth and goals. We have many spheres of influence, sometimes it's structured, other times it's not. Anyone who is traveling the same way as you, and is one step behind, you have the potential of leading. It's not about "title," but about "influence."

God has called you to be good leaders, effective and fruitful.

Hebrews 12:12-13 "So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong." (NLT)

What's a Facilitator?

To *facilitate* a group is to *further, to help, to make easy, or to promote* the objectives or aim of the group. (Not doing it all, but influence that delivers the objectives.)

What's the aim of the small group?

- Godliness (vertical) – healthy relationship with God.
- Righteousness (horizontal) – healthy relationships with people, both Christian and non-Christian (or Outsiders).

As a Leader (facilitator) you must recognize your responsibility. Creating a place, to promote the fruitful aim in the lives of your group members.

Genesis 2:15... It's the oldest job in the book! "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (NIV)

The "Gardening" Picture

1. Preparing Good Soil
2. Seed Planting
3. Watering
4. Fruitfulness & Harvest

1. **Preparing Good Soil** (The work of the facilitator)
 - **Praying for your group**
 - **Tending for your own health**

Use your influence to promote...

- An **Atmosphere** that is healthy for growth!
 - Positive/Encouraging
 - Friendly/Welcoming
 - Sensitive/Caring
 - Enjoyable/Not Boring
 - Inviting/Not controlling or dominated
- An **Attention** focused on the individuals of your group!
 - Embrace people (make them the object of your attention – value)
 - Focus on their needs, not just your agenda
 - Remember the aim is fruitfulness in their lives
 - Nervousness/Anxiety is a sign of being focused on myself
- An **Acceptance** of one another!
 - model it
 - nurture individuals to embrace each other
 - spark interaction/be a catalyst
- An **Attitude** of openness!

- Model honesty, transparency; best done by not putting on any false pretenses. Be real.
- Genuineness invites openness
- Keep confidences (no talking to others about what people share concerning private matters.)
- Be realistic of your expectations. Trust is the product of a relationship that's been tested.

2. **Seed Planting**

- You don't have to do it all, but choose "good seed." Don't expect to see a harvest of good fruit, if you haven't planted any good seed.
- "If you want to grow it, you gotta plant it!"
- Remember that God's Word is the Seed! Always use His Word. Have reverence for its importance, and point them to His Word, no matter what book or approach of study you engage. Down the road, when your lives are long parted, their connection to the source of good seed (God's Word) should still be strong, if you've taught them to go there.

3. **Watering / Tending**

- A job for all! (*1 Corinthians 3:6,7 – Paul planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.*) This includes, "Nourishment" much like the watering of a plant. The water allows the nutrients of the soil to be drawn out and carried into the plants roots, then carried up the stem into the rest of the plant. It's transference of good things.
- It also includes, "Weeding" that is, weeding out the consequences of 'bad seed' sown earlier in their lives, sometimes even from well meaning gardeners!

4. **Fruitfulness & Harvest**

- This is "our aim." Expect it (set faith goals), but don't take credit for it! Remember, "one plants, another waters, but God brings the increase!"
- We may be the gardener, but never forget its HIS GARDEN.
- Bring in the harvest when you see its ready! Don't be shy about it, or timid. If we wait we may see spoilage.
- What do you do with "Barrenness?" (No Growth, No Fruitfulness)
 1. Let it die off? Abandon? Forget about it? (NO)
 2. Blame the plant? (NO)
 3. Consecrate the Garden? (YES)
HOW?

- Prayer & Fasting
- Set it apart for renewing (every member), and renew the soil!
- “Lift up” the fallen branches (John 15:1-8; especially vs. 2) like the Gardener (our Father) does if we are barren. “Takes away” in KJV is literally “to lift up”. The branches are precious to the gardener. A fallen branch is vulnerable to predators, pests, and rot. It needs restoration by being lifted up again and placed back into the web of branches, which are all connected to the vine. There is where it finds protection and its place for fruit bearing. “Barrenness” is not the same as “lifeless.”

Structure of a Small Group Gathering

There are of course many ways to structure a meeting, but structure is good as it helps us stay on course and purpose. If we want to accomplish something we need to be intentional about it. Just showing up and hoping God drops something on your heart is not good enough. That doesn't mean you don't have room and expectation for leading by the Holy Spirit as you gather. Of course you should. Sometimes it's very clear that God is re-directing your time, and that's a call you have to make. I will say that praying about your gathering, waiting on God, and listening to His Spirit PRIOR to your meeting, as in all week and especially that day, or very important. God guides us and leads us in ways that will help the individuals in our group. Just following a script, the booklet, never guiding the group with the leading you have from the Spirit of God, is to rob them of an important part of “gathering together in His Name.”

You may have learned specifics about structure that's healthy already. But, you will find that most have a similar rhythm.

“Fusion” which is a small group movement out of the U.K. that was semi-adopted by Chi Alpha a few years ago, had a simple structure.

- Welcome – connecting with one another
- Worship – connecting with God
- Word – connecting with His Word
- Witness – connecting with the Lost, what can we do to engage?
(this included prayer)

Then, when it was Americanized, we added...

- What's Next? – making sense of what we've discussed, identifying our application and action.

“Discipleship By Design” by Harv Herman, which has been a Chi Alpha staple for years has:

- Worship

- Content
- Sharing
- Prayer

We will give you a resource supplement created by Harv to summarize the “D by D” small group concept. He has published “Discipleship By Design” as a book, which is a great training tool for those wanting to lead small groups to make disciples.

The structure shared by Steve Murrell, “WikiChurch” author, along with other Every Nation materials, suggests a similar concept:

- Warm-Up
- Word
- Application
- Prayer

Again, this is something we recommend that the Primary Leader or Missionary in charge of the Campus Ministry you are a part of will determine the basic structure.

Of course, since it involves “PEOPLE” nothing works as smoothly or ideal as these simple plans! Ministry would be easy without people! ☺

We have to learn how to accomplish our objectives and not be ruled by a time regime that cannot be adjusted occasionally when it seems appropriate.

Small groups should run 60-90 minutes in most peoples’ minds. At least we end the structured part, but often make space and room for prolonged hang-out and fellowship for those who desire it.

“Empowerment” is helping you get on with the mission, and putting in your hands the things you need to “make disciples” that will in turn, make disciples.

COHORT GROUP – Fall (30 minutes)

Role Playing:

Take turns as group leader and have each person field a challenging situation that needs a thoughtful response to keep your group on track and maintain a healthy atmosphere. Respond in a way that promotes the principles we've discussed.

Then, after each scenario, discuss among your group who their handling of the situation made them feel. Have others freely offer suggestions about other ways they might have responded. This is a learning experience, so learn from one another all you can.

Scenario: in each situation, have one group member demonstrate the following...

(each one takes turns being demonstrating the scenario, and also being the responding leader). Play with it. Have fun!

- 1) Therapy-Session: "My dog died today, my girlfriend just left me, I am probably going to fail 4 or my 5 classes this semester, and I'm broke. Let me tell you about my girlfriend."
- 2) Fellowship gone amuck: "Hey, I am so tired of this study! I know Bob is too. Aren't you Bob? I've brought my Xbox 360 with 4 controllers and "Call of Duty"... so who's in?"
- 3) Mystics-Anonymous: "Hey, I've been reading a book about 'How to get Prophecies and Words of Knowledge' for other people. Let me try it out on you guys. Here hold your hands with your palms up, and I'll lay my hands on them to connect."
- 4) Heavy-Accountability Time: "So, I think that some of us are struggling with some serious sin and we need to get it out on the table. As we go around the circle, I want each of us to confess our current secret sin, and then we will all hold one another accountable. We should do this like every week. And don't be embarrassed even though this is a coed group."
- 5) Got My Preach On! : "Well, I happen to have been studying this subject for some time now. I have a 90-minute sermon I've been working on and think it's ready to roll. So, here it goes!"
- 6) Bizarro-Guy: "Hey, I've been watching a lot of videos on Netflix about UFO's lately. And I saw some wild stuff on YouTube. And just last week I had this dream about aliens and I'm not sure it was a dream..."

- 7) Alternate World-View Guy: “You know you Christians are very narrow-minded and egotistical. In my religion we don’t claim to be exclusive owners of the Truth. We don’t judge everyone else, like you guys!”