

# GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

## Making Disciples: Part Two

### Private Discipleship

The *Peanuts* comic strip is read by millions of people every day. In one *Peanuts* strip, Charlie Brown visits his psychiatrist Lucy and confesses, “Sometimes I think I don’t know anything about life. I need help. Tell me a great truth!”

Lucy replies, “Did you ever wake up at night and want a drink of water?”

“Sure,” says Charlie, “quite often.”

“When you are getting a drink of water in the dark,” Lucy goes on, “always rinse out the glass because there might be a bug in it! Five cents, please.”

“Great truths,” comments Charlie, “are even more simple than I thought they were.”

I suggest that they really are. One great truth about disciple making is *God’s method is people*. Jesus’s plan to change the world was not complex: “He appointed twelve to be with Him and to send them out” (Mark 3:14). The tendency of pastors—perhaps you?—is to make disciple making difficult. Jesus’ approach, though, was profoundly simple: companionship and commission. One invigorates the other.

Private discipleship, like raising children, is impossible by proxy.

If you desire to build up a team of leaders to accomplish God’s purposes in your church, you must spend time with a few people. Jesus’ disciples ate with him, talked with him, fished with him, prayed with him, and in doing so, became like him. Later when people observed the power of the disciples, they recognized that “they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

It’s a scary thought, but in time, people in your church will become like you. You can’t stop it from happening any more than you can stop children from becoming like their parents. Paul recognized this and lived it. Three times Paul exhorted his followers to “be imitators of me” (1 Corinthians 4:16), “be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). “Brethren, join in following my example” (Philippians 3:17). The following principles are essential.

Are you searching for a leadership coach? Email Dr. Gary L. McIntosh at [cgnet@earthlink.net](mailto:cgnet@earthlink.net) for full details.

First, discipleship involves investing in the lives of future generations. When Jesus gathered his band of twelve disciples, he started a chain of multiplication. He discipled Andrew, who reached his brother Peter, who reached some 3,000 people on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-41). Barnabas discipled Saul (Paul) and John Mark. Priscilla and Aquila discipled Apollos, and Paul discipled Timothy, Titus, and others.

Second, discipleship involves training a few to reach the many. The purpose of discipleship is not selfish. Rather it is to train a few people who will ultimately take the Gospel of salvation to countless others. Disciples are to be witnesses to Christ's work (Acts 1:8), to go preaching the Word (Acts 8:4-14), and to plant churches in all ethnic groups (Acts 8:26-40).

Third, discipleship involves a lifestyle that must be developed. Those who are discipled are to develop a lifestyle whereby they teach what they know to others (2 Timothy 2:2), which is a process that never ends ("what you have heard from me entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.")

Fourth, discipleship involves seeing potential in others. A good example is Barnabas who was the first to see

potential in the person of Saul (eventually Paul, Acts 9:27). After Saul's conversion, it was Barnabas who encouraged the disciples at Damascus to accept him.

Fifth, discipleship involves selecting people to disciple. When Barnabas was faced with a challenging ministry in Antioch, he immediately "left for Tarsus to look for Saul" (Acts 11:25).

Sixth, discipleship involves sharing ministry with others. After Barnabas found Saul, "he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers" (Acts 11:26). Serving together is the primary way to train disciples. It is the method used by Jesus, Barnabas, and eventually Paul.

Seventh, discipleship involves letting disciples go. Eventually, Barnabas and Paul went their separate ways in ministry (Acts 15:36-40, which may not be as bad as some have thought, as ministry was multiplied).

As you observe the people around you, whom do you think has potential? Are you meeting with them? Conversations before, during, and after serving together are the times when disciples are most teachable. When was the last time you met with him or her? It takes time to build a trusting relationship to disciple others. Regular times together are important.

So, who are you discipling?

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