

A person with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and black leggings, is walking away from the camera on a dirt trail. They are holding a silver water bottle in their right hand. A small brown dog is walking ahead of them on the trail. The background shows rolling hills and a warm, orange-hued sky, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The entire scene is framed by a dark, semi-transparent rectangular overlay.

One Next Step

HELPING OTHERS MOVE
TOWARD CHRIST

One Next Step

HELPING OTHERS MOVE TOWARD CHRIST

Have you ever wondered, “What did Jesus mean by ‘making disciples?’” Or have you been tempted to think that “making disciples” is something only certain Christians can do in faraway places? Guess what? Discipleship happens organically as we intentionally help others take one next step towards Christ.

God has always been a disciple-making God who gives us the great privilege to unite with Him in reconciling people to a relationship with Him!

*Join us as we P-L-A-N, being reminded of how you can **Proclaim** the good news in appropriate ways at Home, Work, School, and around other Christians; **Lean** on God for strength and wisdom; and **Assist** one another in ministry so we **Never** stop moving closer to Jesus Christ.*

This booklet was developed by North Wake Church to support practical training in helping you personally grow as a disciple-maker.

The 4 E's of
ENGAGED >
EVANGELIZED >
ESTABLISHED >
EQUIPPED

<i>TYPE</i>	<i>DEFINITION</i>
<i>ENGAGED</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed little to no interest in Christianity. • Never or rarely attend church.
<i>EVANGELIZED</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-believer who in the last 12 months has heard the Gospel clearly explained and a call to repent, or someone expressing in knowing more.
<i>ESTABLISHED — NEW</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became a Christian in recent years. • Being established in the faith
<i>ESTABLISHED — STUCK OR STRUGGLING</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a recent convert but stagnating or struggling in their Christian life. • No obvious signs of growth in understanding, godliness, or fruit.
<i>ESTABLISHED — GROWING</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Christian of more than 2-3 years who has been established in the basics of the faith. • Showing signs of growth in understanding, godliness, and fruit.
<i>EQUIPPED — DORMAN</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A firmly established Christian trained in one or more Word and prayer ministry skills but not recently active.
<i>EQUIPPED TRAINED</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone trained in Word and prayer ministry skills and is actively helping other learners towards maturity/next step.

One Next Step

Helping Others Move
Toward Christ

One Next Step: Helping Others Move Toward Christ

Copyright © 2023 by North Wake Church

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Any emphasis added is at the

Scripture quotations marked “NIV” are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

The authors have special thanks to Suzi Brummett, Karen Grubb, Noah Joyner, and Jake Mason.

1st Edition, January 2023

Contents

1	God's Plan, our Obstacles, and Opportunities	1
2	Disciple-Making in the Workplace and School	21
3	Disciple-Making in the Home and Fun Places	43
4	Disciple-Making On Sundays	69

CHAPTER 1

God's Plan, Our Opportunities & Obstacles

Mark Lindsey

From the beginning, God made us to be close to Him, living with Him and doing the work He designed for us. Even after our sin damaged the relationship, God continued to draw people to Himself, choosing a family to receive His words and sending teachers, the prophets, all over the world to tell the nations. He commissioned people like Abraham, Moses, Elijah and Jonah to tell the world about Himself, so people could live in peace with God, walking in joyful obedience and relationship with him. God told His people early on that all the families and nations of the world would worship Him (Psalm 22:27; Isaiah 56:6-7).

Being Influenced, and Influencers

Jesus continued the work of drawing people near to Himself. When God came in human

form as Jesus, He commissioned representatives (Matthew 10:1-4). After His resurrection from the dead, He sent them to take His message into all the world so that all humanity could know Him, trust him, obey Him because of that trust, and enjoy friendship with Him. He personally called disciples.

The idea of influencing others isn't unique to worship of the one true God. All humans are constantly influencing and/or being influenced. If we have dessert at the table, we are encouraging others to have dessert as well. If we speak kindly about our spouse, we encourage love and respect in marriage. If we listen to a podcast, we're learning from the podcaster. If you ask your friend for coffee, you're trying to increase the unity between the two of you.

Discerning Influences On You

The whole world around us has a system of norms, and we are constantly being pulled or formed to be like it. Some influences of the world are innocuous: Do you like pesto? Do you like the outdoors? Do you enjoy building a successful business? On their own, these elements are both popular and point to things for which a Christian can thank God and see his kindness.

Other pulls of the world are dangerous because they're rebellious against God. Paul warns us against allowing ourselves to fit into the world system:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

Personal pleasure can be elevated above what is healthy; entertainment can become self-worship. Or our personal ambitions for success can push worship of God and love for others to the side. Marketing will tell you it's good for you to focus on yourself. Politicians can guide your mind to fear and loathing of those who disagree with you. We are constantly encountering influences that are not Godly; instead, they lead us to doubt God.

Question 1

Among my family, coworkers, and friends, what are some of the strongest values I hear? Are they about politics, work, our kids, or money? Which of those values tend to pull us toward God, and which are pulling us toward ourselves?

We were made to draw others toward God.

The work of reconciling people to God is one we were *all* made to join in – every man, woman, and child who trusts in Jesus. We get the privilege and the power from God to follow in His original work of helping others to draw closer to Him. This is the work for every human who has been rescued from slavery to sin; the Big Job for Jesus's People (also known as the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:16-20) started with the eleven disciples and extended to those they taught and then to the people they taught, so logically it extends to us.

God Himself causes Christians to grow more like him – using humans. God is making His people to be more like Jesus, transforming them step by step to see Him and reflect Him.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18

He does this by using people. Immediately after saying God is transforming us step by step to the glory of the Lord Jesus, Paul shows us that this is a result of the ministry given to himself and others to do through the power of God (2 Corinthians 4:1-7 and 5:11-21). The miracle is the transformation to be Christlike; the miracle-on-top-of-the-miracle is that God uses humans in the process of bringing it about.

Every Christian a Minister

You may ask, “Is it really my work too? Is *every* believer meant to do this?” Yes. One reason to think so is that God sent specific people to equip every believer for “the work of ministry.”

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, **for building up the body of Christ**, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Ephesians 4:11-14

Pastor John Piper says that church leaders like elders and other teachers “exist to equip and protect and to guide; but all of this is done to liberate and empower.”¹ God did not appoint leaders in the church to be the only representatives of God’s will for man. God has made every Christian a priest – his representative – for the specific purpose of both **speaking** and **living** lives that point others to God.

¹ John Piper, “Measures of Faith, Gifts of Grace, Ministry in Small Groups”
<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/measures-of-faith-gifts-of-grace-ministry-in-small-groups>

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim **[there's the speaking!]** the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable **[there's the living!]**, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

1 Peter 2:9-12

The idea that all who trust Jesus are involved in helping folks know Him and grow in Him has been around from the beginning. In the New Testament, we can see God using all sorts of people in the work of reconciliation.

- **A Formerly Demon-Possessed Man Evangelizes:** We often think of Jesus

walking about Israel with a group of disciples, but let's not forget the demon-possessed man whom Jesus cleansed; he was immediately sent to tell others about God (Luke 8:26-39).

- **A Married Couple Helps to Teach a Bible Teacher:** We think of Paul teaching boldly and planting churches. But there was also the married couple, Priscilla and Aquila, who heard Apollos teaching the gospel incorrectly. Evidently, they gently took it upon themselves to teach him the message of Jesus clearly, and he was willing to learn from them. He then took what he learned and became a great public preacher (Acts 18:24-28). What a lesson we could learn from this Jewish couple about caring for the truth in this era of online public criticism!
- **Mothers and Grandmothers Evangelize and Train:** We think of churches meeting in homes and a pastor gathering worshippers. But before Timothy led the church in Ephesus, he learned the gospel from his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, right in his own home (2 Timothy 1:3-5).

Question 2

God uses some surprising people to do the work of reconciliation. What are some aspects from your own story that you think might be hindrances to your part in the story? Remember, you can turn that past over to God; He promises that He wants you to have a part in His story of salvation!

The Four E's

Engage Evangelize Establish Equip

We help others move closer to Christ in a number of ways, and I find it helpful to split them into four main ingredients. When we intentionally connect personally with someone who doesn't know Jesus, we can call that **engagement**. When we try to explain the message that Jesus came to save them from the punishment and slavery to sin, that's **evangelism**. When someone has placed their faith in Jesus and needs to learn to walk with Him, we can help **establish** them in the essentials. As they desire to grow in doing the work of ministry, they are **equipped** as they learn skills that free them and inspire them to do the work.²

Engaging can be anything we do intentionally to connect with someone who may not be trusting in God, when you do it for the purposes of knowing him better. They can be individual acts, or done as a group. In the United States, many people don't even know a single Christian. Engagement can happen when you intentionally

² These practices, Engagement, Evangelism, Establishing, and Equipping, are called the "Four Es" in the book *The Vine Project* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne (Matthias Media, 2016).

put down your phone and talk to other parents at your kids' sporting events, praying for God to open doors for opportunities to demonstrate and speak of His love. I once knew a group of ladies from a church who hosted a tea for newly-arrived international students at a university, specifically to connect them with a Christian. You might invite a neighbor over to grill hamburgers. You might ask a neighbor for help on a project. You could join some coworkers as they're going out to lunch – yes, for personal friendship, but also to extend the friendship of Christ. Your small group of friends from church may host a neighborhood event to get to know your neighbors better.

Evangelizing occurs when we speak of Christ's love, ideally making the message of the gospel clear: Jesus came to pay for our sins, and He offers us a new life. Clearly, **evangelism** normally follows **engagement**; often the best evangelism seems to happen when a Christian can have a conversation with someone who doesn't know God. Evangelism can happen on Christmas mornings as the gospel is shared with all the family gathered around the tree. It can happen in one-on-one conversations, over meals, on car rides, or while working together. It can happen as parents read Bible story books

that connect the stories of the Bible to the work of Christ.

One of the simplest ways to talk about the gospel is to begin to ask questions about serious things to really understand someone and where they're coming from. In his book *Questioning Evangelism*, Randy Newman makes a point that asking questions to genuinely understand someone else is often the door God uses to allow the gospel to be explained.³

God provides open doors for us to make the message clear, so we pray for Him to work and to give us boldness. Glenn Ansley, who works in Italy, tells a story of his regular coffee meetings with a friend who had immigrated to Italy from Africa. In these meetings, they read parts of the *Jesus Storybook Bible*⁴ together. Glenn had shared the gospel each time they met. One day, the friend finally said, “Glenn, this is amazing! Why haven’t you ever told me this before!?”

Once a person trusts in Christ, rejoicing happens in Heaven (Luke 15:7-10)! They then need to become **established** in trusting and walking with Christ. Everyone needs to know

³ Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism* (Kregel Publications, 2004).

⁴ Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Zonderkidz, 2006).

how to read the Bible, how to pray, and how to endure difficulties while hoping in God. There is a need to know the essential doctrines such as: *God gave his own son for you because he loves you, so you can be sure he will never leave you without what you truly need (Romans 8:32). And God is always eager to help you understand what you need for difficult situations (James 1:5-8).* We can help others to be established, so they can participate in the work. It's essential for a Christian to be established in the faith in order to be effective as a representative of God in the work of reconciliation; as Randy Newman writes, "Becoming people of wisdom and compassion is the prerequisite for any evangelism technique."

Paul says that believers need to be **equipped** to do the work of ministry – learning how to explain the gospel, apply it to life's situations, and help others walk with Christ (Ephesians 4:12). An ideal environment for doing this is in the local church in places where you get to be established by learning from other Christians and **equipped** by practicing working alongside other believers. Collectively, Engagement, Evangelism, Establishing, and Equipping are all elements of Discipleship and Disciple-Making.

Differing Gifts and Opportunities. God commissions all Christians to do this Work of Ministry, but He enables us to work in different ways with different gifts. This intrinsically means that you cannot do all the work of reconciliation, and you cannot do it alone! Some have the gift of hospitality, gladly welcoming others into their homes and gatherings. Others have a special strength of providing for the needs of others; others can cheerfully do acts of mercy (Romans 12:8). Some are strong in writing, while others are strong in public speaking, and yet others are gifted to explain the Bible clearly in a private setting.

Some can apply Scripture to specific situations of the day; while others are stronger in providing direction and leadership (1 Corinthians 12:27-31). And for all, the greatest gift is love – true care leading to self-sacrificing action because of a genuine desire for the best for others (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:1).

Our goal in the next three chapters of this book is to help you use your own gifts to help others to know Christ and grow in Him.

Question 3

What's one type of work you can do, with God's help, that could help someone take one next step closer to Christ?

This is not a work to be done in your own strength. Ask God to show you how you might engage with someone far from God, explain the gospel to someone, help someone to be established in the fundamentals of trusting Christ, and play a part in equipping someone for the work of ministry.

TOOL: Reflecting On Your Influences and Your Influence

To help you think about this idea of being an influence to help someone draw closer to Christ, ask yourself these three questions each day this week.

Choose something you see on the Internet or TV and ask, “How is this attempting to influence me? What is the next step they want me to take?”

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Who is one person or what is one resource in my life influencing me today to move closer to Christ, to know Him better, or to be more equipped to serve Him?

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Was there any person in my day today that I helped to move toward Christ? Or to move away from Him?

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

PRAYER

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:2

Father, help me to see how the world would like to conform me to its own system and expectations! Please show me how.

Jesus, thank you for drawing all people toward you. Please bring your Word and your people to my life to help me love you more, know you better, and serve you more joyfully.

Holy Spirit, please forgive me where I have tempted anyone away from Jesus. Reveal to me where I have failed to use my influence to help someone to see you better. Please give me words and opportunities to help the people I know to move toward you.

CHAPTER 2

Discipleship in the Workplace & School

Alicia Burgess

Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your
laws, we wait for you; your name and
renown are the desire of our hearts.

Isaiah 26:8 (NIV)

How do we live out the hope and truth of the
gospel in our school and occupational callings?

As disciples, we are followers of Jesus who are
being changed by Jesus and are committed to
the mission of Jesus. When we seek to make
disciples, we enter into relationships with
people to help them take the first step in
becoming a follower of Christ (evangelism)
and/or steps thereafter to become a mature and
ministering Christian (establishing).

In the field of nursing, new nurses spend at least
six to eight weeks with an experienced
advanced level nurse preceptor. They literally

follow that preceptor every minute of their 12+ hour shifts to master the practice of nursing. The amount of time the new nurse is with the advanced level nurse preceptor is roughly three hundred hours. There are daily plans, checklists, long discussions, treatment plans, perfecting assessment skills, calculating medication dosages, etc... When I transitioned from bedside nursing to clinical research, my preceptor was a delightful lady named Deb who was from England. She was kind, direct, and patient, and she believed in me. I loved her rich British accent. By the end of our time together, I was thinking my thoughts in a British accent! I can still hear Deb's instructions in my head. She was discipling me to master the field of clinical research nursing.

David Mathis that helped me think through a good definition of discipleship among Christ followers. Mathis explains:

Christians today often talk about 'discipleship,' and so it might be helpful to clarify what sort of action and process Jesus's disciples would have heard when their discipler said to 'make disciples.' Disciple-making, in this context, is the process in which a stable, mature believer invests himself, for a particular period of time, in one or a few younger

believers, in order to help their growth in the faith — including helping them also to invest in others who will invest in others. Disciple-making is both engineered and organic, involving both truth-speaking and life-sharing. Such disciple-making requires both structure (particular lessons and topics to work through) as well as margin that allows the discipler to speak into unplanned teachable moments as they arise. Quantity time is the soil in which quality time grows.⁵

Timothy Keller says this about evangelicalism in the workplace: “Faithful work indeed means some kind of public identification with Jesus, in such a way that a coworker might want to know more about him.”⁶ In fact, the church where Keller serves as pastor believed so strongly in this that they founded a center for faith and work to help believers better live out the hope and truth of the gospel in their vocational callings.⁷

⁵ David Mathis: “How Did Jesus ‘Make Disciples’?”
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-did-jesus-make-disciples>

⁶ Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor* (Penguin Book, 2014)

⁷ www.faithandwork.com

What does discipleship in the workplace look like? Is there a checklist? Five points on how to share Jesus without fear? Should I place a Bible or a Scripture verse on my desk? Abstain from certain behaviors? Get a cross tattoo on my wrist? Should I align my life with hot political topics that look Christian and advertise it on my car and social media?

Irritability, or Gentleness?

Unfortunately, as Christians, we can bring our discouragement to school and work, and communicate that Christianity is compatible with grumpiness or harshness. Pastor and business leader John Kyle writes:

In I Corinthians 13:5, the Apostle Paul challenges us with the truth that love is not irritable. Irritability comes in many forms at work: being short with others, lashing out, being impatient, being unreasonable. It is the outward expression of a lack of inner joy, contentment and peace. In some cases, it may also reveal our idols of jealousy, insecurity, or need for control.

It's tempting to blame our irritability on the pressures and stresses of work and life. We may even convince ourselves that our bitterness is the result of other people's shortcomings.

The reality is that irritability is a reflection of

our heart, not a reflection of our circumstances. Paul was joyful – and even sang – in a jail cell. In the hours before his death, Jesus prayed about his joy (John 17:13).

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. – Philippians 4:4-5

We are to be known for our joy and for our reasonableness. According to this model of love for one another, there should be no Christian curmudgeons.

How can we confront our own irritability? How can we be more Christ-like in the workplace?

The key is to focus on building others up rather than insisting on our own way.⁸

North American Mission Board Missionary Joshua Whetstines shares this:

Jesus is the one who brings the greatest joy in our lives, and that includes the times between 9 to 5. Living as a witness for him in the workplace means more

⁸ John Kyle, “The Challenge of the Christian Curmudgeon” <https://tifwe.org/the-challenge-of-the-christian-curmudgeon/>

than a few religious rituals scattered throughout the day. It means getting to know the people around you, and then being known by them.⁹

Do you believe that your work is a way in which God is caring for people, healing, renewing and redeeming? Or, do you see your job as just a means to your own advancement? When we believe the Lord is sovereign and has placed us exactly where we are for such a time as this, we become better observers and more curious about the people He has placed around us. We will look for ways to connect and have deeper conversations. We begin to pray to have the desire to make Him known and seek the welfare of those within our circles of influence. Katherine Leary Alsdorf, Executive Director, Redeemer's Center for Faith & Work says, "We're to express our relationship to God and his grace to others in the way we speak, work, and lead, not as perfect exemplars but as pointers to Christ."¹⁰

⁹ Joshua Whetstine, "How to Build a Faithful Witness in Your Workplace", <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-build-a-faithful-witness-in-your-workplace>

¹⁰ Keller, "Every Good Endeavor," Forward.

Many years ago, my husband, Jason, was discipled by a local missionary back home, Jack. He was home from Kazakhstan for a short season. The time Jason spent with Jack changed the trajectory of our lives and marriage. Jack simply asked Jason if he'd like to get together once a week to study the Bible. Jason has repeated that same model many times over in the last two decades. Most recently, he met with a few men for several months once a week at a local brewery. When I asked him how he moves beyond evangelism to discipleship, he said he often remembers something Jack said to him: "Pursue people who are faithful, available and teachable. Ask them if they'd like to get together outside of work for a cup of coffee or meal together. Share how the love of Jesus has changed your life and offer to study His Word together."

An excellent resource authored by fellow North Waker George Robinson, is his book *Generational Disciple-Making: How Ordinary Followers of Jesus Are Transformed into Extraordinary Fishers of Men*. George explains how Jesus's first disciples learned to do life and ministry by simply being with Him.

If you follow closely behind someone, the point is to be with him or her, both watching and learning how to see life

from their perspective. The disciples' worldview was transformed by virtue of their close association with Jesus. This association with Jesus in both the monumental and mundane moments made the difference in their lives and, subsequently, in the generations of disciples made after them.¹¹

Robinson also shares an excellent quote related to mentoring by John Maxwell, "Mentors do three things for you: they know the way, they show the way, and they go the way."¹² As disciples of Christ, we know the way. Are we willing to take the next steps to show the way and go the way in our areas of influence? The disciple John teaches us, "Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." (1 John 2:6)

Question 1

What effect have mentors had on you or on where you study or in your workplace? Can

¹¹ George Robinson, Matthew Hirt, *Generational Disciple-Making: How Ordinary Followers of Jesus Are Transformed into Extraordinary Fishers of Men*. (Rainer Publishing, 2022), 17.

¹²Ibid., 188.

you think of some who helped you grow? Did they have particular techniques?

But thanks be to God who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.”

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

These verses provide excellent prayers for ourselves, our church, and our far flung families. “Father, please use us to spread the fragrance of the knowledge of you wherever we go.” Do you find enjoyment in your work? Is your work life an extension of your life, not a separate entity? Being part of a community of believers that lives out the gospel in their daily lives motivates me to do the same. I believe I am deeply loved by the Lord and that compels me to share that with others around me. We live in a broken world, so seeing brokenness in the workplace is not hard. Seek ways to bring the hope that you have into the lives of your co-workers. Perhaps you could invite someone for coffee, out to lunch, into your home for a meal, or ask if there’s a specific way that you can pray for them and then take a moment to stop and do just that.

Hurry or rest?

Sometimes our attitude in work reveals what we truly believe. If we live stressed, hurried lives, acting as if the world depends on us, this may reveal a problem of self-reliance. We may believe, as Moses warned against, “My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.” (Deuteronomy 8:17)

But there is power in the good news that God grants rest to everyone He loves (Psalm 127). Jesus taught us that He created a pattern of weekly rest as a gift for us (Mark 2:27). When we live lives trusting God, we will be able to leave work undone and accept His gift of rest. We can do this because we’re trusting that He is the one running the world, not us. And when we work this way, our counter-cultural blend of diligence and trusting rest speaks to our co-workers and fellow students.

Our family is currently on a weekend retreat together. Our oldest son is in college, so we do not have many opportunities to spend quality time with one another in this season of life. We rented an Airbnb on a beautiful river in the

mountains. The cabin we're staying in is captivating with stone floors, real wood beams, and a large gorgeous fireplace. It is the perfect setting to spend time outdoors hiking and enjoying God's creation and sipping yummy hot drinks in front of the cozy fire. We've been exploring the interior of the cabin and have found numerous pieces of evidence that the owners are a family of believers. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is on display on a bookshelf. We have observed framed awards containing Scripture from a life of military service. There is a children's corner filled with activities, games, a children's Bible, and a coloring book. There are albums filled with pictures of how they are intentionally pouring into the lives of their grandchildren by hosting an annual summer camp at their cabin. There is a framed poem written by the husband to his wife expressing the blessing and joy she has brought to him in their decades of marriage and sharing in God's grace together. This prompted the question: if someone spent a weekend in our home or in our place of work, would they see evidence of our faith?

Question 2

Reflect on your normal workday or school experience, particularly when you've experienced difficulties and stress or huge success. How can your practices or words attract someone to Christ or potentially distract them from Christ?

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

1 Corinthians 7:17

Years ago, I returned to college. Amy and I became fast friends over one goal: we were desperate to survive school and reach our goal of becoming nurses. We spent two challenging years walking through all things school together. Because I'm a part of a church that teaches ways to love your neighbor better, I began to pray for Amy. I pursued conversations deeper than starting IVs, medications, treatment plans, and the dreaded NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination for Nurses). She lived with her boyfriend, so I invited her and her boyfriend over to our home several times for dinner. My husband pursued her boyfriend and boldly shared the gospel with him. I invited Amy to North Wake Women's Day, and she came! We do not get to see each other as often as we did in nursing school, but I believe my relationship with God had an impact on her life. Is this what discipleship in the school setting looks like? I didn't follow a three step plan or

open my Bible and take her down the Roman road. I simply cared about my new friend in college and invited her into my world with the desire to share about what God has done in my life.

One of my former supervisors, Jenn, noticed a devotion that I kept on my desk, *New Morning Mercies* by Paul Tripp. I enjoyed that devotion at work because it provided short, meaningful nuggets of truth that I could use during a lunch or tea break. She mentioned that she was raised in a Christian home and needed to get back to her roots. I later gave that devotional to Jenn with a note of encouragement.

It all started with a simple observation. My closest neighbor at work sat in a cubicle directly across the aisle from mine. We both worked quietly, but I noticed that she enjoyed a cup of tea in the afternoons. I am a connoisseur of good tea so that became the catalyst for conversation. Pretty soon we began enjoying tea time together. I noticed that she had a Bible verse on her desk and a definition of humility. This sparked internal questions, prayers, and conversations with my husband and small group. My colleague had committed her love and life to a woman and they were legally recognized as married. They also parent a daughter together.

How does this fit in my Christian worldview? What would my relationship with Christ look like in her life? Should I speak of the gospel to her? Where was she spiritually? Is it okay for me to become friends with her? Colleen became my “one” that I prayed for often.

Fast forward five years. Our desks are no longer beside each other. COVID happened and then around two years ago Colleen tragically lost the woman she had committed her life to. She is a grief stricken single mom raising an elementary aged daughter.

When her partner died, I attended the funeral. Our work team was devastated, and we all became closer. Colleen’s community is her work. We prepared and delivered meals, took shifts walking the family dog, spent time with her daughter, and wept together. Many times, I reached out via text to let Colleen know I was praying and to offer encouragement. It was easy to text a word of encouragement. But when she returned to the office, I sometimes avoided walking by her desk. Having tea time felt uncomfortable and vulnerable. Honestly, I didn’t want to do it. I asked God for courage to pursue Colleen in the midst of her grief.

Last February, almost one year after she lost her partner, the women’s ministry team of North

Wake Church offered a Women Caring for Women evening. Liz Williams was set to lead the teaching on grieving with hope. The Lord spoke to my heart to invite Colleen. I discussed it with my husband and asked people to pray for me. I planned out what I would say during our tea time and was ready. I'm embarrassed to admit that I totally chickened out. My words felt dumb, and I didn't invite her that day. A few days later, God spoke to my heart again. I invited her via text and explained that it would be an evening on teaching about grief from a Biblical perspective. Colleen accepted the invitation! She asked about her daughter, Emma. So I invited her into our home for dinner with our family and offered for my daughter to hang out with Emma while we attended the Women Caring for Women event. It was a beautiful and emotional evening. The gospel was clearly communicated. Colleen met women from my small group and even asked to meet Liz.

Weekly tea time with Colleen continues to this day. We have a sweet friendship all because of making an observation and initiating a conversation about tea. The Lord continues to press on me to pursue Colleen. We talk about work, life, children, grief, hobbies, and family.

God comes up a lot when I am talking because He's a big part of my life.

Question 3

Is there anyone in your work or school God has put on your heart to whom you can demonstrate and speak the gospel? Pray and ask Him for ways to connect for redemptive purposes, whether it's a shared hobby, meal, or coffee on a regular basis.

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Jeremiah 29:7

In 2022, North Wake Church studied the book of Philippians together as a church. Our family is going back through these four chapters during our weekend retreat. Paul, in this short letter to the believers in Philippi, teaches them to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. In chapter two, verses 3-4, Paul shows what that looks like through Christ's example of humility: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." The Bible teaches us to view work as God's assignment to serve others. This gives our vocations meaning beyond personal advancement and selfish ambition. When we see our work in this way, we become lights in a dark world. Our work is part of a much bigger plan than we can ever fathom. We get to love as our Lord loves. We get to be his hands and feet. We get to spread everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him.

TOOL

Fill out the following questions with a couple of names of people you interact with from your workplace or school.

Name: *Mary Smith*

How do we influence each other? *I'm influenced by her - she's my boss*

Is our relationship moving either of us closer to Christ? *She is not a Christian and thinks mostly about work*

What's one step I can take that would help that person draw closer to Christ? *Talk about how God is helping me learn my new job, and ask how I can pray for her*

Name: _____

How do we influence each other?

•

Is our relationship moving either of us closer to Christ?

•

What's one step I can take that would help that person draw closer to Christ?

•

Name: _____

•

How do we influence each other?

•

Is our relationship moving either of us closer to Christ?

•

What's one step I can take that would help that person draw closer to Christ?

•

PRAYER

Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

Ephesians 6:18-19

Father in Heaven, you've put me in places of work and school. Connect me with someone there who I can help to see you better. Please give me opportunities custom made just for me to help others take a step toward you.

CHAPTER 3

Disciple-Making At Home and Fun Places

Marie Burrus

As we prayerfully follow the Spirit, every moment becomes an opportunity to show and share Christ with others.

It feels like another life since I was a missionary in West Africa. Today, my days are filled with questions about what I should make for dinner, whether or not my kids will make it to the bathroom in time, and when to publish which article for work.

Being a work-from-home mom of preschoolers makes going to Target difficult enough, let alone making disciples of all nations. So, how am I supposed to live out the Great Commission when we—and I mean *we*—can't get buckled in the car without someone having a meltdown?

Discipleship can feel complicated sometimes. We may hear the call of the Great Commission, but it seems too hard to be effective in a busy season. When our family and lifestyle logistics are complicated, I can't think about adding "one more thing" to my plate.

Not So Different After All

But to be completely honest, most of my days as a missionary were filled with similar questions—yes, even the questions concerning bathrooms. Most missionaries I knew struggled to discern in whom to invest and how. We constantly felt inadequate for the task at hand—because we were.

Eventually, I began to see that life “on mission” doesn't always look like you might think. My team often spent days trying to accomplish one menial task through language barriers and African red tape. We bought groceries, greeted neighbors, and snuggled babies. Our lives were weirdly ordinary.

We spent a lot of our time uncertain of how to make disciples where we were too. It's not that we weren't equipped; it's just that everyday life was complex and demanding.

So, it's really not a far cry from my life today. Though life now isn't hard in the same ways, discipleship can still feel daunting. I spend my day surrounded by people, from my kids to perfect strangers, who don't yet understand what it means to follow Jesus or could use encouragement in their walk with Christ.

So, what do we do?

Paul wrote the Book of Colossians to Christians who needed help figuring out what it looked like to follow Jesus in their day-to-day lives. It can help us as we seek to do the same.

Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, so that I may make it known as I should. Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.

Colossians 4:2-6

1. Open your heart and eyes through prayer.

Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:2

Unfortunately, when I think of ministry, my mind first goes into brainstorming how I will get it done. Maybe it's just me? Whether "at home" or "on the field," I can easily go through the motions of my day, missing the opportunities God places right in front of me. Prayer, especially small prayer reminders throughout the day, keep spiritual things in the foreground.

If I'm not constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit, I will speak and act from my default (flesh) and completely ignore the plans of God. Add small children to this mix, and it's easy to get distracted.

As a missionary, our best-laid plans and best-sown seeds often weren't the ones that produced fruit. Growth was usually more about walking through a door God opened rather than making a *perfect* plan.

- The Muslim women we shared with for a year weren't interested in Jesus. But their village uncle was excited to hear God's stories and eventually prayed to receive Christ.
- A devout Muslim friend who lived next to my pastor eventually became a Christian but not until after all the missionaries had left.

God has a way of surprising us with how He chooses to work or not yet work. As we try to figure these things out, prayer is essential to helping us trust in God's timing. It opens our eyes to see spiritual realities. If God's not in our discipleship, it's doomed before it starts.

Question 1

How is your prayer life—honestly? Does it regularly include praying for opportunities to share the gospel with someone? How can you “stay alert” in prayer this week?

2. Find opportunities where you are.

At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, so that I may make it known as I should.

Colossians 4:3-4

I'm slowly noticing all kinds of paths for discipleship both inside and outside my home. The people in my home and the places I naturally overlap with others are excellent opportunities. As Paul poetically puts it, God constantly brings people into our lives so that they might seek and find him.

From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Acts 17:26-27

Consider: Who can you disciple in your daily life to help them take one step forward in their relationship with Christ?

LILY Moms a weekly gathering at North Wake Church supporting Moms of small children, was a great place for me to engage and grow with other moms while enjoying the rare luxury of

hot coffee.¹³ Now, I naturally overlap with other parents at my kids' preschool, and I try to engage them however I can. I hang out after school while my kids play on the grass. We try to attend birthday parties even if the only other person I know is a 4-year-old.

In these situations, strangers and friends alike have opened up about mental health struggles, discussed deep worries and fears, and asked questions only the gospel can answer. These sacred moments are ripe for gospel conversations. (But not Jesus jukes)!

Avoiding Jesus Jukes

A “Jesus Juke” is a term coined by author Jon Acuff, borrowing a sports term. He said it happens “when someone takes what is clearly a joke filled conversation and completely reverses direction into something serious and holy.”

- “What’s your favorite movie?” “Star Wars!” “Star Trek!” “Princess Bride!” “Christmas Vacation...on Vidangel of course” *“Well, I don’t have time for that*

¹³Learn more about LILY Moms
<https://northwake.com/lilymoms/>

kind. My favorite is the Jesus film because of the millions who have been touched and learned of Christ."

- "Look at that guy doing pushups outside the coffee shop!" "Let's challenge Jake to a competition with that guy!" "My money's on Jake." *"Imagine if we put that kind of effort into our walk with Christ."*¹⁴
- "I've got so much work...deadlines on deadlines. Clients that won't reply to email. And car problems on top of it! I'm just stressed and exhausted. And I haven't exercised in weeks." *"Exercise isn't the answer – you need Jesus."*¹⁵

Acuff suggests three big reasons to avoid this kind of abrupt insertion of the gospel. He writes: "It generates shame. It never leads to a good conversation. I've never met someone who was 'juke'd to Jesus'."

The Apostle Peter calls us to always be ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within us – with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). The Apostle Paul instructs us to be gracious – kind, gentle – and appropriate to the situation

¹⁴ <https://stuffchristianslike.net/2010/11/16/the-jesus-juke/>

¹⁵

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/seven-obnoxious-jesus-juke_b_3793045

(Colossians 4:6). So what if we desperately do want to bring the conversation to Jesus? Trust that God can open doors to make the mystery of Christ clear while we still follow his Word in how we do so.

Though I like engaging and evangelizing, establishing and equipping women is really my sweet spot. I love inviting ladies into our home and try not to stress about its condition. While my kids play, we share tea or a simple meal, discuss Scripture, and consider how we'll use it. Even though I might be "the equipper" here, I'm constantly encouraged. Like Paul says in Romans 1:

For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Romans 1:11-12

Question 2

Where do your everyday rhythms take you? Who in your life can you engage? Evangelize? Establish in their faith? Equip? Name one way you can do that this week.

3. Go out of your way for gospel fun.

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Colossians 4:6

In our busy, disconnected society, real community is hard. It's even more challenging for the unchurched. People are looking for connection through fun.

Do you have a hobby? Skill set? Niche interest? These outlets can be ways to meet people, intentionally engage them with the gospel, and do things you enjoy anyway.

Technology can be especially helpful for connecting with others you don't know. Start a French Conversation Meetup at Meetup.¹⁶ Play pickup soccer through the Plei app.¹⁷ Organize a book club through a Facebook group. Attend a yoga class at the YMCA. Start a neighborhood

¹⁶ <https://www.meetup.com/>

¹⁷ <https://www.plei.app/>

walking group on NextDoor¹⁸. The opportunities are endless!

As you meet people, tell them about yourself, how you live, and what you believe about the world. Feel free to talk about how you spend Sunday morning, and why it's important. Don't hold back if your friends from church mean a lot to you because our church relationships are a fruit of the gospel as well. Share the gospel in its entirety or drip in bits as you can.

Evangelism doesn't have to be awkward either. Start a conversation. Share something you've been thinking about or noticed from a Christian perspective. As the conversation goes on, ask open-ended questions about what they believe. For example:

- How do you think everything got here?
- What went wrong with the world?
- What, if anything, will fix the world?
- What do you think happens when it's all over?

These worldview questions cut to the heart of what people believe, regardless of what religion they claim. And most of the time, rich

¹⁸ <https://nextdoor.com/>

conversations follow. When my heart is right and my eyes are open, I can see all kinds of opportunities around me.

Question 3

What do you do for fun? How could you connect with others and make it a gospel opportunity?

4. Start small to make a big impact.

Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:16-17

Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.

Colossians 4:5-6

Sometimes the Protestant Work Ethic, mom guilt, and even missional zeal make me adopt an all-or-nothing discipleship approach. If I can't evangelize crowds or have the best, most consistent devotional time with my family, I'm tempted to give up on the small steps needed to get there.

Instead of trying to force sacred occasions, discipleship brings the sacred into the everyday.

Establish whatever gospel reminders you can and talk about them as you live life because adults and children alike are prone to forget.

Opening Your Home

Many families give out candy at Halloween. Many of those who come by your house may not know a single Christian. Have you thought about how you can use that time to engage with your neighbors?

Every year at Halloween, North Wakers George and Catherine Robinson put substantial effort into meeting their neighbors. By making a tradition of being one of the best place to stop for Trick-or-Treating, they're using the event for disciple-making through simple greetings, leading to more extended conversations. They share the love of Christ with hundreds of people every year.

When it comes to household discipleship, don't over-complicate it! Start with the natural rhythms you already have. Consider how these habits may encourage (or discourage) the people in your home to step closer to Christ.

For example, we read books with our kids before bedtime. This pattern makes it super easy to fit in (and remember to do) family devotionals. We read a daily devotional, tuck the kid in bed, ask them about highs and lows of their day, and pray. Full disclosure: it's messy! Though our kids often don't seem to be listening, I'm amazed by what they later recall, so we keep trying.

My kids also love listening to stories in the car, so we play the Jesus Storybook Bible, Lamplighter Kids¹⁹ Podcast and fun Scripture-filled songs like Songs for Saplings²⁰. As they learn Bible stories, they ask questions about the world, God, and people, and we do our best to answer. Sometimes we have to find answers later or teach them about trusting God for the things we can't know.

And as your kids enter new life phases, your approach to discipling will need to adjust. I won't pretend to have experience discipling older kids or teenagers, so I did the only thing I would recommend to you: I asked people I trust. Kelly Cissell, North Wake's Children's Ministry Director, uses time in the car for intentional conversations with her kids. She asks them to

¹⁹ <https://lamplighterkids.com/>

²⁰ <https://www.songsforsaplings.com/>

“be in the car with me,” put away devices, and talk.

Paul Tripp warns us against treating the teenage years as something to be survived:

A parent recently rejoiced to me that her son had turned twenty, as if he had passed through some magic portal from danger into safety. “We made it!” she said. This survival mentality exposes the poverty of this view of teenagers. Many parents who talk to me about their teenagers talk without hope; they see them as victims of hormones that drive them to do crazy things. Although they would never say this, the working theology that hides behind this view is that the truths of Scripture, the power of the Gospel, biblical communication, and godly relationship are no match for the teen years. Yes, we believe that God’s Word is powerful and effective—except if some poor soul is trying to apply it to a child between the years of thirteen and nineteen!²¹

²¹ Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity* (P & R Publishing, 2022). Kindle Location 112.

You don't need to reinvent the wheel either. Each week, North Wake Children's Ministry sends out specific curriculum that the kids are learning on Sundays. Our small group takes those videos, songs, and stories to use with the kids while the adults meet. The children's ministry office also has a whole library of resources you can peruse or borrow.

Question 4

How can the Word of Christ dwell richly among your community—family, friends, small group, etc? Who can you ask for resources to help you?

5. Live out Jesus alongside the saints.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16-17

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:15-21

In all of this, we must never forget the power of God's people working together in the Spirit. Colossians wasn't written to an individual, but to a congregation living life together. Though no church is perfect, the Body of Christ should serve and encourage one another with all the different kinds of work, gifts, and life stages we have.

Though the responsibility of discipling our kids ultimately falls on my husband, Gene, and me, I'm indebted to Kelly Cissell, Suzi Brummet, and other North Wakers who invest in my kids through Children's Ministry. Instead of just keeping them alive while *I* worship, they're partnering with us in discipleship, and I see my kids growing toward Christ!

Beyond Your Doors

Our church also has Harvest Teams, groups of people who actively dream and pray and visit to engage with folks who don't know Christians, and explain the gospel (Evangelize) to those who don't yet trust Jesus as their savior. They're a wealth of ideas for praying, meeting, and sharing the love of Christ with folks who live close to you.

Dawn Sundstrom works with Cru at Penn state University. She writes:²²

When Florida fishing guide Phil Anthony (Tony to his friends) showed up at the local school to shoot hoops with the guys, he was looking for a good workout, not necessarily a place to share Christ with others. But he found both.

While playing evening pickup games, his excitement for both his church and his Lord bounced around on the basketball court.

"I started playing basketball at the school just after my father died," says Dave Turnbeaugh. "Tony became one of my friends and told me that Christ was important to him. He'd invite me and the other players to dinners or musical programs at the church. He told us that Christ died for our sins and one day He was coming back to gather

²² Dawn Sundstrom, Those In Your Own Backyard. <https://www.cru.org/us/en/blog/share-the-gospel/evangelism/neighborhood-evangelism.html>

His people, so we'd better be prepared for that day."

"It didn't turn me off when Tony talked to me about Christ, because that was his way of life," says Dave. "I knew his personality -- he enjoyed fishing, basketball and Jesus. Those were the 3 things that he liked to talk about."

Doing something you enjoy with your neighbors helps them see Christ in you.

Every local church is built by Christ with the gifts it needs (1 Corinthians 12:7-11. Ephesians 4:7,16. Colossians 2:19). North Wake has a wealth of wisdom in our community, so use it. Find a North Waker you respect and ask how they disciple their kids, pray consistently as a couple, connect with neighbors, or anything else you're trying to figure out. They have way more – and better – ideas that I could list here.

When I'm in community with other believers, I find the compounding effects of the Spirit at work among us to stir up all kinds of encouragement, awareness, truth, and thankfulness in my heart. These patterns make it so much easier to live a life for Christ.

Question 5

How can the church partner with you to engage, evangelize, establish, and equip people in your circles? How can you partner with the church to do the same for others?

TOOL: In Your Home

Over the next week, test out one of these methods for Bible Reading in Your Home. Find out if one works for you.

- **Adults or Married Couple:** Consider starting the same Bible reading plan together so that each day both of you are reading the same text. Then, as God highlights a passage, bring it up in meals together.
- **Family with Small Kids:** (Usually before bed in the evenings) For the youngest, the *Read-Aloud Bible Stories* by Ella Lindvall are a great resource. Check out “Songs for Saplings,” which includes scripture passages set to songs and the Youtube channel for “Saddleback Kids” which has “Stories of the Bible.”
- **Family with Elementary and High School Kids:** Read the Bible passage together for the upcoming week’s sermon. Use videos from MrPhil.tv, such as the “What is a Christian” verse-by-verse study of 1 John. And choose a couple of passages from a chapter of J.I. Packer’s *Concise Theology*, then read them as a family.

TOOL: Beyond Your Doors

You have some neighbors who know you well, and others you don't. Look at these ideas and choose one to try to connect to those close to your home.

- **Praying For Neighbors.** The “Bless Every Home”²³ helps you discover the names of your neighbors and encourages you to pray for them regularly.
- **Neighborhood Rhythms.** Some communities have a Homeowners Association with routine board meetings, an active walking area, or meal events. Find out when those events occur and join in to see who you can get to know, or how you can help.
- **Block Party.** Some North Wake small groups have hosted small parties to invite their neighbors. One group had a Fire Truck come for all the kids in the neighborhood to see up close. Could your small group host a cookout or another fun event for your neighbors? These create opportunities to meet and care for those living nearby.

²³ <https://blesseveryhome.com/>

PRAYER

...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:18-20

Holy Spirit, Please let me show and explain Christ in my own home and among my neighbors, explaining clearly what the news of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection means, and how it matters everyday life.

CHAPTER 4

Disciple-Making on Sundays

Carson Cobb

**How to move from passive attender to
active disciple-maker on Sunday morning
during worship.**

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16-17

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

1 Corinthians 14:26

Rather, speaking the truth in love,
we are to grow up in every way
into him who is the head, into
Christ, from whom the whole
body, joined and held together by
every joint with which it is
equipped, when each part is
working properly, makes the body
grow so that it builds itself up in
love.

Ephesians 4:15-16

“I didn’t get much out of church today.”

“I liked the illustration that the pastor used.”

“I wish we sang more songs like _____.”

Most of us have had thoughts and feelings along these lines regarding church. As people who have been formed by years of a well-crafted entertainment industry and a professionalized

approach to Sunday ministry, we tend to assess the value of Sunday worship through the lens of our individual, personal experience in church services. I promise that your pastors really do want you to “get something” out of our times of preaching and worship; we spend a lot of time working on that and praying that you will genuinely encounter God as we gather under His word! But the New Testament emphasis on church gatherings is even richer than this.

As evidenced by the three passages above, Paul instructed and anticipated that church gatherings would be marked by believers showing up ready to minister to one another in song and speech—not merely waiting on a spiritual high to be provided by professionals.

So, how can we embrace the Scriptural vision of church gatherings that moves us from being a passive attender to joining God’s work as an active “builder” or “disciple-maker” on Sunday? Here are three basic starting points.

1. Building Up The Body - Before Church.

How do you normally walk into church (or jog or crawl, whatever the case may be)? While simply arriving on Sundays may be a true struggle (especially for those of us dragging along young children or dragging ourselves after working late-night Saturday shifts or just staying up way too late!), the New Testament passages above seem to anticipate that Christians will show up ready to minister to one another in some way. While I don't think this means you necessarily need to have a "pop-up" Bible study ready to go on Sunday morning, I do think it means we must show up ready to engage with one another in meaningful ways on Sunday.

Question 1

What sorts of things do you normally think about as you walk into church?

What difference might it make if you were to pray as you walk into church?

How can you remind yourself to adopt this habit?

2. Building up the Body - During Church.

What would your body language say about you during the service? Have you ever considered that the way you engage in worship or ingest a sermon could serve as an encouragement to others? The worship service isn't intended to be a time where you go into "autopilot," reading the lyrics on the screen like a teleprompter and pretending to read your Bible on your phone whilst slaying some emails. This isn't a guilt trip; your beloved author is often as distracted as anyone during these times. "But He gives more grace!" (James 4:6) But, haven't you been helped before by seeing a fellow believer lift their voice or raise their hands in worship when you haven't had the heart to sing aloud? Your hearty singing and prayerful engagement in God's word helps others during the service!

One practice I've recently undertaken when sitting in church is to (stealthily) look around and pray for those I see as God's word is being preached. I pray that the good news of Jesus will

be clear and will penetrate the hearts of those sitting there who do not believe. Did you know we often have many non-Christian friends and family members present?! I pray that the good news of Jesus will revive the weary disciples among us once again. I pray that the speaker would be filled with the Holy Spirit, fully given to shepherd the flock and faithfully represent the heart of God.

Question 2

A screensaver is what your computer does when nothing else is happening. What is your “facial screensaver” during the sermon? Worship?

What are one or two other practical ideas you can come up with to be a better “builder” during our services?

3. Building up the Body - After Church.

What do you do after the service ends? Many of us have to scurry off to our places of service (kid's classes, youth ministry, etc.) – which is great! But most of us have a few precious minutes in-between or after the services. How will we spend them? In the grand scheme of things, we do not get much time together as a church family in a given week, and these moments should be valuable to us.

Do you immediately look around for someone you know and make a beeline for your buddies so as to avoid the awkwardness of just standing there? Or do you “pull a Batman” and quickly disappear from the scene altogether? What if, instead, you took a prayerful panorama of the room, looking for new faces, lonely faces, or tearful faces and engage them in prayer and perhaps conversation?

Or what about those dear small groupies that you do talk with each week? How could you make those conversations less perfunctory? The church is “built up in love” when Christians come ready to “speak the truth in love” to one another (Ephesians 4:15-16). This doesn't have to be as “super-spiritual” as it sounds. It could

be as simple as asking, “How was your week?” and “Anything I can be praying for you this week?”

This challenge isn’t intended to exacerbate anyone’s social anxiety, but rather to challenge us to take one small step towards true relationship, fellowship, and Christian brotherhood.

Question 3

What tends to happen in the time after the formal part of church is over? What’s good and not so good? Do you find it difficult to talk about spiritual matters? If so, why is that, do you think?

TOOL: Before Church

Being a builder before church might motivate you to:

1. Briefly pray on Saturday evening for our gathering as you go to bed or in the car on Sunday on your way over. Pray that God will use His people to build one another up in love.
2. Have a quick look over the passage to be preached that morning and pray for the preacher (Lord knows, we need it!).
3. Keep an eye out for newcomers or people who are alone when you arrive. Think “there you are!” rather than “here I am” when you enter a room. Be mindful and prayerful about where you sit in the worship center! You don’t have to sit in the same place each week [audible gasp] but if you do, could you “own that zone” of the worship center and be on the lookout for how you can minister in that zone?

TOOL: During Church Service

“Building up the body” during the service might prompt you to:

1. Sing heartily! It at least encourages the socks off of the worship team when they see this!
2. Actively ingest the Word as it is being preached. Maybe you’re a notetaker, maybe not. What matters is that you carefully and prayerfully consider the passage as it is being expounded. You might have to bring your Bible! Or use the electronic thingy—just try to keep it on point.
3. Pray continually during the service that the preached word would have its intended effect.
4. In Equip Courses for discipleship training, take the opportunity to listen closely to one another, and to offer the words of scripture and wisdom to others in your discussion groups.

TOOL: After Church Service

Building up the body after church might encourage you to:

1. Prayerfully scan the room for someone who might be alone, new, or seems to not have anyone to talk with. Say hello and have some conversation!
2. Consider how to take surface level conversations with fellow believers one step further. While small talk can be a very helpful thing, consider adding a couple of basic questions like “Is there anything going on that I can pray for you about this week?” or “Did anything strike you today from the worship service?” Be ready to offer up some of your own reflections on what God was teaching you during our gathering.
3. Invite someone out to lunch (restaurant or your home!) to carry on further conversation and fellowship.

PRAYER

Father, As I enter worship today, please let me be part of your great work.

- *Jesus, Just like you washed our feet, let me help someone else in practical, or even invisible ways.*
- *Jesus, you sat at the well to help to the Samaritan woman. Please show me where to sit so I can also do the work of the Father for someone else.*
- *Savior, Just like you came to care for me and show us the Father, let me find someone to meet, to show your love, and introduce the Father.*
- *Spirit, just as you brought us the Words of life through the apostles and prophets, help the preachers and teachers to bring us your words faithfully and clearly. And help me to understand, and keep in step with you through obedience.*
- *Father, Just as you patiently hear me when I pray, let me listen patiently to someone today, and bring them to you in prayer.*