



Discipleship Pathway
COACHING COHORT
WEEK THREE

 **CONVERGE**
MIDAMERICA | SOUTHEAST | CARIBBEAN

Evangelism and Your Discipleship Pathway

“Nondiscipleship is the elephant in the church.” – Dallas Willard

As God launched the church in Acts 2, Peter boldly responded to the question of the crowd:

“Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, *“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”* Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:39-47 NIV)

Peter’s words give us a beautiful picture of the “church.” The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* which in its base form means “to call out.” Isn’t this what Peter was doing? Calling them out to repent – changing their minds on who Jesus was and what He had done for them. He called them out to be baptized – to be dipped under water before the crowd, as a symbol of personal identification with Jesus and His followers. He called them out to be marked by forgiveness and to receive the promised Holy Spirit. He called them out from a corrupt generation that offered nothing but hopelessness. In response to his calling, they gathered together in complete devotion, filled with awe and wonder, sold out to the God that saved them and to each other. They had a clear sense of mission, seen in the Lord adding people to their number daily.

As church planters, we have the same wonderful privilege as Peter. We have an opportunity to call people to something greater than themselves: The Church, which is God’s chief vehicle for achieving His mission, revealing His glory and advancing His kingdom.

Too many times church planters take this stage too lightly and respond too slowly. Speed is of the essence in this matter of connecting new believers with the church.

Missiologist David Hesselgrave offers this encouragement:

“Perhaps the two things most needed by new believers immediately following their conversion (whether as individuals or in groups) are clear instruction as to what God expects of His family members and caring Christian friendships. It is the responsibility of the missionary–evangelist to see to it that these two essentials are supplied right away. New believers should receive instruction orally. They should also be given culturally appropriate written materials such as a bible, a brief manual for new believers...One of the most important things the Christian Worker can do for new converts (whether as individuals or in groups) is to introduce them...to mature believers who will act as counselors and friends while they are being established in the faith. It is imperative that this be done immediately, since the first forty–eight to seventy–two hours after professing faith are often absolutely crucial.”¹

Focusing on this topic during the preparation phase will save the church planter from losing converts and spending years catching up from the ground they lost.

In this next stage of establishing a faith community, the goal is to turn a collection of new and old disciples into a missional family. To do so we need to have a deeper grasp of biblical disciple-making.

Disciple-making

Jesus said to his disciples, *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:19–20, NIV)

There is a lot of confusion around the issue of disciple-making. If church planters can work through this early, I am convinced it will help them in establishing a foundation for assimilation, spiritual formation, and leadership development.

Nothing grates on our nerves more than hearing churches, pastors and laypeople say, “We are great at discipleship but terrible at evangelism.” I (Gary) remember hearing the following story first hand from a church planter who was experiencing great conversion growth. He was asked by an established church that was “great at discipleship” to come and consult with them on becoming more evangelistically effective. The church planter asked them, “If you are great at discipleship why do you need me?” They replied, “Because we are ineffective in reaching lost people yet strong in discipling believers.” The church planter responded, “I still don’t understand; if you are great at discipling believers why do you need me?” This frustrating exchange continued until the church leader realized he and his church had an inadequate view of discipleship and in reality, were terribly weak at discipleship. Many churches and leaders (and eventually church planters) drift into this mentality because they equate discipleship with the nifty teaching of facts and dispensing of information, which only reproduces the transfer of information.

¹ Hesselgrave, *Planting Cross Cultural Churches*, 297–298

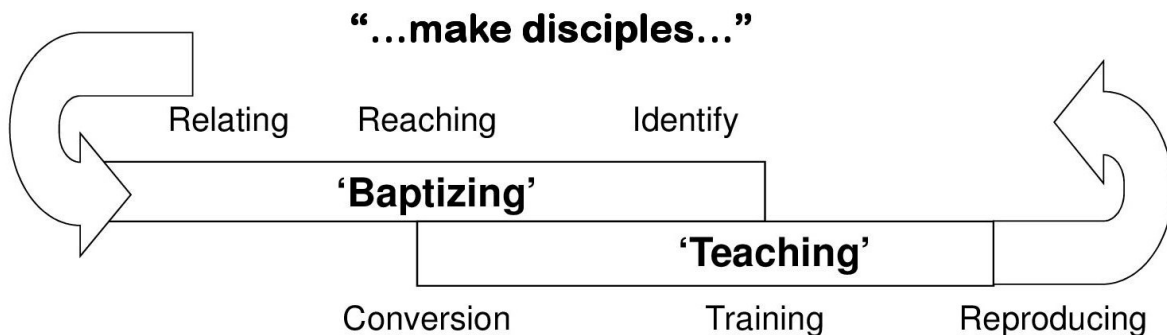
I would suggest the following definition of discipleship:

Disciple-making is communicating the gospel with clarity and conviction so a person can embrace Christ as Lord and Savior and become a reproducing follower serving within a healthy community of faith.

The following diagram helps leaders embrace disciple-making as both a decision and a process. People do not become followers of Christ through osmosis but through a decision – or a series of mini decisions that end with them acknowledging God for who He is; confessing their sinfulness and need for a Savior; believing Jesus is the risen Lord and only Savior; and publicly declaring alliance to Jesus and His Mission.

There is a tension between the decision and process of disciple-making. Those who are overly focused on decision and downplay process can produce false professions of faith. Those who overplay process and underplay decision can lead people to consume Christianity and not be consumed by Christ.

Defining Discipleship



Disciple-making is communicating the gospel with clarity and conviction, so a person can embrace Christ as Lord and Savior and become a reproducing follower serving within a healthy community of faith.

Relating – “go ... nations”

The text is better translated “as you go,” or “as you are going,” meaning wherever your travels take you in this life, even to the ends of the earth. This reveals the need to continually build genuine rapport and relate to our neighbors, our community and our world. It is critical to the process because it is here where we place ourselves in the flow of what God is doing. Each relationship takes special care and ongoing development.

Reaching/conversion – “make disciples”

A friend of mine once told me that if you truly see people embrace Christ as Lord and Savior it is the easiest thing in the world -- because it will be God’s work happening right before your eyes. I like the way Brian McLaren states it: “Count conversations, not just conversions.”² Do we really believe that “the Father is drawing people to himself?” Our work is in the conversations, God’s work is in the converting.

Identifying – “baptizing”

Elmer Towns writes, “Effective evangelism implies winning people in a community and into a community, not just winning them as isolated individuals.”³ Effectively calling people to publicly identify with Christ and with a community of Christ followers is essential to fulfilling the great commission. This is a critical step in spiritual formation and progress towards spiritual maturity.

Training – “teaching them to obey”

Dispensing information is easy. Training people is difficult. Imparting data is simple. Training people is messy. Jesus spent three years training his followers with a combination of sermons, private talks, special assignments, general tasks, observation, feedback, encouraging pep-talks, question-asking and modeling. During that time Jesus experienced the joy, pain and utter frustration of training and shaping the values of his disciples.

Reproducing – “all I have commanded you”

“All I have commanded you” includes this very command. Fulfilling this command will naturally result in others embracing the passion and the skills necessary to become effective disciple-makers. We see this in the disciples themselves. Compare the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20 to the disciples’ initial fulfillment in Acts 2:36-47. The end product was a reproducing community of faith that latched onto the great commission and experienced Jesus adding to its numbers on a daily basis (Acts 2:47).

We know that Brian McLaren can be a lightning-rod of controversy, but in his book *More Ready Than You Realize* we feel he was prophetic on this issue:

“I believe evangelism may be a less and less useful term in the future. I find myself replacing it more and more with the term disciple-making ... I have noticed a progression going on. In a paradigm that is event-focused, we have evangelism and follow-up. Then we begin to feel that follow-up is a rather thin description of spiritual growth; we speak of evangelism and discipleship, or evangelism and spiritual formation. But then when we see the dynamic, holistic and relations process overshadowing the single conversion event so that the event only has meaning for us within the larger process, we find ourselves speaking more and more in terms of disciple-making. And at that moment, something wonderful happens: We find ourselves transported out of stuffy classrooms and air-conditioned church halls, our meetings and committees and liturgies and Bible studies. And we find ourselves touching down, blinking and wide-eyed, inside the wild world of gospel stories with Jesus and his original disciples. The world desperately needs a fresh emphasis on the holistic discipleship process.” 4

² McLaren, Brian. *More Ready Than You Realize*, page 135

³ Towns, Elmer. *Evangelism in a Postmodern World*. (Pasadena, CA: The American Society for Church Growth Journal, v13, 2002) , 45

Embracing a holistic disciple-making process is essential for building and growing missional churches. I strongly encourage you to look at your assimilation or mobilization process from the perspective that it is all about the “spiritual formation” of the converts and believers that join your new church.

If your goal is to get members who serve the organization, your process will come across shallow and insincere. Yet, if your process is geared towards the spiritual development of people, it can be a rich and meaningful experience filled with joy, energy and fruitfulness.

Excerpt from: [First Steps to Planting a Missional Church](#)

Why and How to Train Your People in Evangelism

In Win Arn's '[Church Growth Ratio Book](#)', he states, "One of every three adults should receive evangelism training at least once a year."

Why?

In many churches the emphasis is on nurturing existing Christians and strengthening the faith of current members is a preoccupation. While this is important it is not the chief purpose. **If this training lacks any focus on reproduction it will lead to an inward mentality that will puff up the church instead of building up the church.** Churches that continually make it a goal to train a significant portion of the congregation in evangelism tend to be more outreach focused. If you have a church of 150 that means 50 people need to be trained in outreach. If you have a church of 1000 that means 333 people need to be trained. As your church grows bigger, I believe that achieving this ratio gets harder and needs for more focused attention by leaders.

How?

1. Develop a training rhythm that touches people weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually.

Weekly: by creating an investing, inviting and including culture.

Monthly: by providing entry-level immersion experiences (see the next lesson).

Quarterly: by offering full day equipping opportunities.

Annually: by offering Sunday morning/small group campaigns

21 Days to Increasing Your Spiritual Conversations Campaign

⁴ McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize*, 161

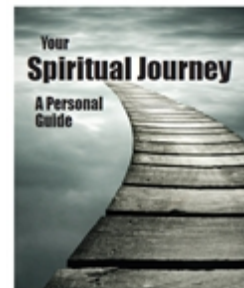
2. Start training trainers.

I have discovered that the faster I can get the training out of the professionals hands the quicker the lay leaders own the process.

- Which lay leaders can reinforce your investing, inviting and including culture?
- Which lay leaders can lead and promote your entry-level experiences?
- Which lay leaders can be mentored in training others in sharing their faith?
- How many leaders can you engage in an annual spiritual emphasis campaign?

3. Focus on one tool that will mark your church.

When you think of Campus Crusade (CRU) what evangelism tool comes to mind? Four Spiritual Laws! When you think of Navigators? The Bridge! The Billy Graham Association? Steps to Peace with God! What do people think of when it comes to your church? Anything? Find a tool and work the tool. If you can't find anything that fits your culture then create one. That's what we did 25 years ago with the [Spiritual Journey Guide](#) it shaped our church and is now shaping thousands of other churches.



4. Focus on disciples making disciples.

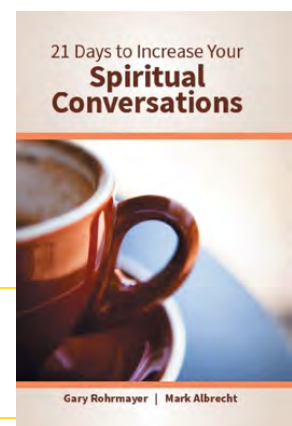
Evangelism must be key part of your holistic disciple-making process. If it is not. You will drift from reproduction and transformation to information exchange and life-less Christianity.

Action Steps

- Keep track...how many people are you training a year?
- Find trainers...who can help you?
- Find a tool...what works for you and your church culture?

Get Mark Albrecht & Gary Rohrmayer's new book
21 Days to Increasing your Spiritual Conversations.

Send your mailing address to Kirsten@convergemidamerica.org



Discipleship Pathway Week Three Worksheet

When it comes to evangelism training within your discipleship pathway:

What is working?	What can we build on?
What is missing?	Where are we stuck?

What is one thing you can do in the next month to build your evangelism training process?