

Patterns of a Fruitful Life [Following Christ]

(An adaptation of Robert Coleman's *The Masterplan of Evangelism and the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*)

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Introduction: This paper is designed to help prospective disciples think through the process of discipleship in a big picture kind of way. It seems that the concept of discipleship is often abstract to the prospective discipler and that they are confused about how to disciple and what to focus on when discipling. Each of the principles below are pulled directly from Jesus' ministry in the Gospels and adapted from Dr. Robert Coleman's *The Masterplan of Evangelism*. Use these principles to think through what to focus on in the life of a disciple and to determine what indicates whether or not they are actively following Christ. Participation in all nine principles is a good sign someone is actively following Christ.

1. Become a Servant – Incarnation

- a. Just as Jesus became an incarnate human being *to* serve others and not be served (Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:13-16; Luke 9:47-48; Luke 22:27) so we are to:
 - i. Become servants of others ourselves
 - ii. Help our disciples become servants
 1. In Matthew 20:26-27 Jesus exhorts His disciples to become servants of one another in order to become great – *greatness is achieved in Christ through sacrificially serving others.*

2. Look for Disciples – Selection

- a. In Matthew 4:18-22 Jesus calls His disciples by first making them an offer, 'Come and follow me *and you will become fishers of men.*' Jesus laid before anyone who wanted to be a disciple clear indication of what it *meant* to be a disciple *even before they started following Him.* The disciples left their lives behind *knowing* what being a disciple actually meant – *they counted the cost*
 - i. We are to seek out individuals to disciple who are willing to become fishers of men – those who are willing to drop everything for the sake of taking the gospel and unleashing it to all people groups as well as living an obedient life to and in Christ (see principle four). (Matthew 7:6; 8:19-22)
 - ii. Jesus had three disciples whom He relied on to see and do most of His ministry (Luke 9:28-36)
 - iii. By looking to Jesus' method of selection with disciples we can help them to learn what good selection looks like

3. Stay Together – Association

- a. Jesus lived with His disciples and stayed with them day and night (Matthew 8:23-25; Luke 6:12-13; Luke 8:1; Luke 22:14-15; Matthew 26:36-45)
 - i. Jesus' method of staying with His disciples was so that He could teach them day and night instead of as the situation permitted
 - ii. Living with disciples facilitates the disciples growth as they are able to watch a more mature believer model what it looks like to follow Christ
 - iii. Living with disciples encourages deep interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution (see: Luke 22:28-30; Luke 9:46-50)
 1. Instead of a ritualistic teacher/student relationship, Association also encourages deep friendships to be built based on common experiences together

4. Learn Obedience – Consecration

- a. Jesus declared to His disciples that following Him – and even just calling Him Lord – requires obedience (Luke 6:46-49; John 3:36; Luke 6:39-40; Mark 6:34; Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 9:12-17; John 12:48)
 - i. Giving our lives over to Christ to be 'lost' for His sake *is* declaring a desire to be obedient
 - ii. Our wants, our desires, our vision is to be cast aside for the sake of obeying Christ's commands → See principle five
 1. Obedience based on a natural response by one who has received the gift of Jesus' offer of salvation (not ritualistic legalism) (Luke 6:46-49)
 2. This principle must be taught to the disciple in order for them to understand the basis of living a life completely for Christ

5. Show How to Live – Demonstration

- a. (Matthew 5-7; Luke 6; Matthew 7:16,20; Luke 9:10-11; Luke 8:1; Luke 6:41-42; Luke 6:19-23)
 - i. Showing how to live required Jesus to associate with His disciples and teach them how to live out obedience to what He said

- ii. Jesus modeled to His disciples how to live as a servant of God through His actions, but He also taught His disciples what it meant to live life as a servant of God
 - 1. Jesus declared to His disciples that they should be able to discern who are His true followers based on the fruit they produce (character change, Godly living)
- iii. How to live (Matthew 5-7; Luke 6):
 - 1. Reading the Word of God day by day
 - 2. Constantly in prayer (for others, for God's will to be done – in all things)
 - 3. Cheerful giver of money to the local church and God's work (Matthew 6:3-4)
 - 4. Confessing sin and repentance (Luke 6:41-42; Matthew 7:5)
 - 5. As one who encourages, admonishes, and rebukes
 - 6. Giving up wants, needs, and desires for the sake of meeting other's needs - living without demand of return
 - 7. *Expecting* suffering and allowing it to run its course of producing character change
 - 8. Loving of those who are unlovely and who hate you
 - 9. Being merciful and forgiving
 - 10. Having a stable emotional life (biblical concept of sobriety)
 - 11. Diligent in work and ministry; not lazy
 - 12. Not lustful or covetous
 - 13. Preaching the gospel of Christ to those who do not know Him

6. Involve in Ministry – Delegation

- a. Jesus spent most of His life modeling for His disciples what it means to live as a servant of God and training them in the Scriptures, but all throughout His ministry he delegated ministry tasks to them – Jesus' plan all along was to train men who could take on His ministry and continue it on Earth to *personally* meet the needs of every *individual* (Luke 9:1-3; Luke 9:12-17; Luke 10:17-22; John 21:15-18; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 6:35-40)
 - i. Jesus delegated ministry on an ascending scale – as His disciples matured in their obedience to Him and His commands He delegated more ministry to them; and more difficult ministries
 - ii. As disciples mature in their walk with Christ, ministry should be delegated on a greater scale for 'those who are faithful with few will be given many.'
 - iii. Jesus did not simply send out His disciples to do ministry tasks, he also *involved* them in His ministry
 - 1. Disciples are to be involved in the ministry of the discipler

7. Keep them Growing – Supervision

- a. Jesus is often seen coaching His disciples through varied situations in ministry and life (Mark 8:27-29, 36-37, Luke 12:25, Luke 11:13; John 21:16)
 - i. Jesus goal was to coach His disciples to redirect their thoughts and actions; He asked His disciples questions that were supposed to lead them to stop and think about decisions that had life changing implications
 - 1. This is different from direct teaching as pointed questions are asked to the disciple which lead the disciple to discover the answer on their own
 - 2. Coaching in this manner should always be directed towards helping the disciple continue their growth in Christ and focused on helping them help others do the same
 - a. The discipler – or coach, at this stage – should be more focused on overseeing the disciple in their ministry (Matthew 28:20); a discipler at this stage should not ignore the disciple or their ministry

8. Expect Reproduction – Multiplication

- a. Jesus expected His disciples to disciple others and reproduce the life, obedience, and ministry He imparted to them in other, less mature believers, lives (Matthew 13:23, Matthew 28:18-20, John 8:31, John 15:8-10, 2 Timothy 2:2-3)
- b. Disciples are supposed to, in effect, become like their leaders
 - i. Disciples will naturally start to take after their disciplers
 - 1. Effective modeling is extremely important, both in ministry and in personal sanctification.
 - 2. Disciplers can have both a positive and negative influence
 - ii. The discipler must have an awareness of both their own life, as well as their disciples, to ensure that the right knowledge/modeling/etc. is being passed on
- c. Develop a vision of multiplication for your disciple

- i. Positive vision casting
 - 1. Give priority to those who want to run
 - a. Loss aversion is unbiblical, we will naturally lose those who do not want to run
 - i. This requires disciples to maintain an ethos of discipline and commitment otherwise disciples will think it is okay to coast (Revelation 3:16)
 - b. There might be cases where time can be better spent on those who are responding to obedience to Christ
 - i. Obtaining as objective of a view as possible of your ministry can help clarify this
 - ii. Seek counsel from other – more mature – disciplers
 - 2. Laying out of goals
 - a. Ministry (follow-up, personal time, group engagement, equipping, etc.)
 - b. Personally (tackling sin issues, correcting false attitudes, “taking thoughts captive,” character growth)
 - i. In some cases, pastoral counseling may be necessary
 - 3. Dream with them about their role in the harvest
 - a. The young and immature have trouble seeing their role in a group
 - i. This is especially true if the group is large
 - b. Identifying gifting and personality strengths can be a motivation to get involved
 - c. Ministry coaching and role playing can be extremely helpful to those who are engaged

9. Rest in the Spirit – Impartation

- a. Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, Matthew 10:20, Luke 11:13, John 3:34, John 7:39, Romans 1:11, 2 Timothy 1:6)
 - i. We must let the Spirit of Christ have his way
 - 1. God's work can only be done in and by His power; after all, it is He who began the work (John 16:13, Philippians 1:6 ff)
 - 2. Cherish for every disciple the fullness of the Holy Spirit
 - 3. Trust them to His leadership
 - ii. The presence of Christ is not solely a reward of heaven; it is the joyous experience of every disciple fulfilling the Great Commission.
 - iii. The Holy Spirit *will* continue the work the rest of the way (John 16:13, Philippians 1:6)

The 'how to' of discipleship: Become a servant → Find a disciple → Stay together with the disciple → Teach the disciple obedience to Christ → Teach the disciple how to live out that obedience to Christ → Involve the disciple in ministry → Help them continue to grow as a coach and not direct teacher → Expect them to disciple others and reproduce what has been produced in them → Rest in knowing that the Holy Spirit will continue the work.

To judge yourself: If you are becoming a servant of others, finding disciples, staying together with disciplined believers, learning and practicing obedience to Christ, participating in ministry, being disciplined (or overseen by a coach), expecting your disciples to disciple others, and resting in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is continually at work growing disciples, your life is more than likely fully committed to Christ.

Stages of Discipleship

