

ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM: BECOMING AND MAKING TRANSFORMED DISCIPLES

Introduction:

- Main thought: For believers to become mature in Christ and for God's Kingdom to advance, it's very important to become and make transformed disciples. We can never "make" what we don't "become."
- This study will be in two parts:
 - 1) **Becoming transformed disciples**
 - 2) **Making transformed disciples**
- This study on discipleship is by no means exhaustive. What I share comes out of life experiences and intentional Bible study and reading on this theme over the past several months. I believe the study and insights will continue to evolve.
- Clarify definitions:
 - 1) **Transform** - to change in form, appearance, or structure; to change in condition, nature, or character; convert.
 - 2) **Disciple** – a learner; one who follows the teachings of another (Vines Dictionary)
Therefore, a disciple is not only one who is a "learner" but one who adheres or follows the teaching of another. John 8:31-32
 - 3) **Discipling** – "The intentional training of disciples, with accountability, on the basis of loving relationship." (Bill Hull – The Disciple-Making Church)
-“Discipling is the process that takes place within accountable relationships over a period of time for the purpose of bringing believers to spiritual maturity in Christ.” (International Consultation on Discipleship)
- We are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ and not ourselves. When “discipling” we always point people to Jesus. We teach the disciple how to hear from God in making decisions. We can give counsel but do NOT make decisions for the disciple.
- Imagine with me congregations that are filled with believers who are continually experiencing spiritual transformation in their own lives and reaching out to disciple others! Here are several examples of what a congregation full of “**transformed disciples**” would look like in contrast to a congregation filled with “**complacent believers.**”

Transformed Disciple	Complacent Believer
Eager to grow spiritually	Lacks enthusiasm for spiritual growth
Live a disciplined life	Little motivation for discipline
Has a humble and teachable attitude	Wants to be in control of their own life
Willing to be accountable	Is not accountable
Has a hunger for God's Word	Little hunger for God's Word
Demonstrates Christ-like love to all	Generally loves those who are easy to love
Walking in consistent spiritual victory	Often experiences spiritual defeat
Most often has a positive attitude	Can be very negative at times
Forgives quickly	Has a difficult time forgiving – holds grudges
Actively involved in a local church	Attends church more out of obligation or when convenient
Builds others up – encourages other	Can be very critical at times
Fully surrendered to Jesus	Often living for self
Active and enthusiastic about prayer and intercession	Finds little enjoyment in prayer
Has a passionate love for God	Little passion for seeking God
Finds security in Christ	Lives with insecurity and fear

This list could go on and on. Later in the study, we'll look what the Scripture says about many of these themes. What are additional descriptions you could give?

Questions for reflection and action: Looking at the examples above, where would you place yourself in each of the categories as a "transformed disciple?" 1 = mostly complacent and 10 = living in victory as a transformed disciple. What area(s) do you need to grow in the most?

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BECOME AND MAKE TRANSFORMED DISCIPLES?

1. To **fulfill** the command of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20)
2. To demonstrate **authentic** Christian living (I John 2:6; I Peter 2:21)

"Cal Thomas, a Christian syndicated columnist and social commentator, calls Christians to look at the quality of our discipleship instead of directing our indignation at the moral decay. He writes, 'the problem in our culture.... isn't the abortionists. It isn't the pornographers or drug dealers or criminals. It is the undisciplined, undisciplined, disobedient, and Biblically ignorant Church of Jesus Christ.'" Gregg Ogden, Transforming Disciples, page 23.

3. To effectively **overcome** the power of the sinful nature and Satan's effect on the earth (I John 5:4)
4. To create an army of Kingdom warriors who will **effectively** advance God's Kingdom (II Corinthians 10:3-5)
5. To become **mature** in Christ (Ephesians 4:14-15)

6. To bear **spiritual fruit** (John 15:8)
7. To give and receive **encouragement** (Romans 1:11-12)
8. To give focus and **vision** to one's life (I Peter 4:7)

TEN BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR BECOMING AND MAKING TRANSFORMED DISCIPLES

1. One cannot make a transformed disciple until one **lives** a transformed life of discipleship. Titus 2:7 N.L.T. – *“And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.”*
2. Becoming a transformed disciple is a **life-long** process. II Corinthians 3:18: - *“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*
3. A transformed disciple will live a **disciplined** life. I Corinthians 9:24-27
4. Being **accountable** is a major key to transformational growth. Romans 14:12 - *“So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”* Ephesians 4:25 – *“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”* (Example of a broken key on a computer)
5. Be aware of fleshly **resistance** to transformational discipleship. Galatians 5:16-17 – *“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”*
6. The process of becoming a transformed disciple is developed and **maintained** by grace and not by law. Galatians 2:21 – *“I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”*
7. Having a **passionate** love for Jesus will enhance the transformational process. Colossians 3:1-4 – *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”*
8. Making transformational disciples **flows** out of relationship and friendship. Mark 3:13-15 – *“And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.”*
9. Process of making transformational disciples will **vary** from person to person. Be flexible.
10. **Commitment** to follow through in making transformational disciples is vital. Proverbs 16:3; II Timothy 4:7

There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses - only results. Ken Blanchard

For reflection and action: Looking at the Ten Basic Principles above, which ones are the most encouraging to me? Which ones are the most challenging?

PART 1 - BECOMING A TRANSFORMED DISCIPLE

What does Jesus say about discipleship?

1. Matthew 5-7, called the Sermon on the Mount, describes how every transformed disciple should act. All godly actions will flow out of a transformed heart and not out of religious **obligation**.
2. Matthew 8:18-22 – There is a cost in following Jesus, including inconveniences and sacrifice.
3. Matthew 10:1 – A disciple is given **authority**.
(10:22) A disciple will stand firm in their **commitment** to Christ.
(10:37) A disciple will have right **priorities**.
(10:38) A disciple must take up his cross **daily**.
(10:39) A disciple will put Christ above **possessions**. (Luke 12:15 – Message) *Speaking to the people, he went on, "Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot."*
-True life is NOT in WHAT we have. True life is IN WHO we have---Jesus!
(10:42) – Discipleship involves **rewards** for even the smallest or little seen acts of kindness.
4. Matthew 18:3 – **Humility** is foundational to the life of a disciple.
5. Mark 3:13-15 – Jesus called disciples to be with him and send them out to preach and have authority over demons. Spiritual authority and anointing is necessary for every disciple in order to have a successful ministry. Spending time with Jesus gives the authority and anointing. Spending time with those whom we disciple enables friendship and spiritual development.
6. Mark 9:35 – A disciple is first of all a **servant** to all.
7. Luke 12:35-37 – A disciple will be **watchful** at all times.
8. Luke 18:1 – A disciple will always **pray** and never give up.
9. John 6:38 – A disciple will always **seek** to do God's will.
10. John 10:27 – A disciple will listen to the Lord's voice and follow him. (John 12:26)
11. John 15:4 – A disciple will have continual **fellowship** with the Father resulting in fruit bearing.
(15:8) – A disciple will "bear much fruit."
(15:18) – A disciple will sometimes be **hated**.
12. John 16:33 – A disciple takes **comfort** in knowing being "in Christ" brings peace in troubled times.

For reflection and action: When I look at some of the examples of how Jesus defined discipleship, where do I need to grow? List a few specific areas. What steps am I willing to take in order to grow in discipleship as defined by Jesus?

What does Paul say about discipleship?

1. Paul does not talk about “making disciples” or “being a disciple.” Paul does not mention having “disciples.” He does talk about “imitating” him as he does Christ. (I Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9)
2. Paul’s focus was helping the church understand that Christians are about being “in Christ” or “Christ in you.” (Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 1:27)
3. The concept of being a disciple is very clear throughout all of Paul’s letters. For Paul, the process of making disciples is compared to a parenting role. He uses images of spiritual father (Philemon 1:10; I Corinthians 4:15) and mother (I Thessalonians 2:7); children (I Corinthians 14:20) and infants (I Corinthians 3:1). The goal is to grow into mature adulthood.
4. Colossians 1:28-29 – Paul’s example of discipleship. (“Struggle = agonize)
5. I Corinthians 9:24-27 – A disciple will go into strict **training**.
6. Ephesians 4:13 – The goal of every disciple is to “*become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*”
7. Romans 8:29 – A disciple will be **conformed** to the image of Christ.

For reflection and action: When I look at some of the examples of how Paul defined discipleship, where do I need to grow? List a few specific areas. What steps am I willing to take in order to grow in discipleship as defined by Jesus?

PART 2 – MAKING TRANSFORMED DISCIPLES

Who needs to be disciplined?

(Suggestions below are by no means exhaustive)

1. Children

- Proverbs 22:6 NLT – “*Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.*”
- Parents are responsible to disciple their children, but when parents are not Christians, the church carries responsibility for those entrusted to their care.
- Teach them how to obey, show respect and honor, share, ---
- Help them to memorize Scripture as early as possible.
- Guard what they watch on TV and how much TV; Video games, and all media.
- Parents or leaders must be an example to them in words, attitudes and actions.

2. Youth

- I Timothy 4:12 NLT – “*Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.*”

- Parents are responsible, but when parents are not Christians, the church carries responsibility for those entrusted to their care.
- Need teaching on showing respect, honor and obedience.
- Standards must be set for all media input.
- Need training on how to handle money.
- Need training on how to relate to persons of the opposite sex.

3. **Parents**

- Proverbs 29:17 – *“Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire.”*
- Need guidance on how to train and discipline children with wisdom and consistency.
- Need to be parent to child and not their friend on a peer level.
- A lot of discipleship will take place by what children observe. They learn by example.

4. **Marriages**

- Ephesians 5:22-23
- What does Christian submission look like?
- How can a man love and cherish his wife as Christ loved the church?
- Marriages must be continually nurtured.
- It’s God’s will for every Christian marriage to minister to each other, to their family, and to the world. How is this done?

5. **Pastors/Leaders**

- I Peter 5:3 N.L.T. – *“Don’t lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example.”*
- Leadership requires life-long learning.
- Leaders need accountability.
- “Leadership is action, not position.” Donald H. McGannon. “Leadership is action, not position.” Robert Townsend
- Coaching is a form of discipleship.

6. **New Believers**

- II Peter 3:18 – *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”*
- New believers, like newborn infants cannot be abandoned. They must be nurtured.
- They must be pursued and given a lot of encouragement.
- Foundational biblical truths, doctrines and principles must be taught in ways that bring clear instruction.
- Giving clear guidelines and helps on how to grow in spiritual disciplines are so important.

7. **Elderly** -I Timothy 5:1-2 – *“Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.”*

- Elderly need to be viewed with respect and honor.
- They must be nurtured how to mature in age with hope, faith, confidence, and how to face trials in life.
- Receive from their wisdom while giving encouragement.

8. **Every believer**

-Ephesians 4:15-16 – *“but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

- Every believer must be disciplined for spiritual maturity to take place.
- Every believer must seek ways personally to grow in their Christian life.
- Pastors and leaders must constantly seek ways to effectively nurture believers.
- Believers need to be disciplined on how to disciple others.

-There are so many resources available Online and through books and other materials that will enable the discipling process.

-Congregations and individual members can share with one another resources they found helpful.

-Discipleship is effective one on one. However, there are often occasions where group discipleship is possible and also effective. This can be a small group or fellowship group.

-Remember, discipleship is more than having a Bible study. Effective discipleship will flow out of relationships and being a godly example.

For reflection and action: To whom may the Holy Spirit be guiding me to disciple? Am I willing to make an adjustment in my schedule to disciple this person? How much time?

Suggested steps/methods to making transformed disciples

(Not exhaustive)

For pastors and leaders, there are clear situations where discipleship must take place such as new believers and other leaders in your church. Resources should be considered for other categories listed above. However, individuals in our congregations need to be disciplined. It cannot be dependent only on the pastor.

1. Ask God whom He wants you to disciple.
2. Ask God to touch their heart to be open.
3. Arrange to meet with the person.
4. Explain to the person the meaning of a “transformed disciple.”
5. If the person is open to be disciplined, make a plan of action for the next steps.
 - a) What will you study? What will be the focus of your discussion?
 - b) How often will you meet?
 - c) How long will the meeting be?
 - d) Set a time limit (6 to 10 weeks) and evaluate if you continue the discipling relationship?

6. Seek additional ways to informally build the relationship.
7. Pray for the person every day.
8. Be sensitive to their needs. Do not become their “savior.”
9. Evaluate process and progress as you proceed.
10. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide and empower you.

What suggestions, out of your experience, would you like to offer?

Hindrances to becoming or making transformed disciples

1. Spiritual apathy
2. Discouragement
3. Spiritual opposition
4. Fleshly desires
5. Busyness
6. Fear of surrendering one’s entire life to God
7. Lack of knowledge of God’s Word
8. Lack of discipline
9. Not wanting accountability
10. Lack of commitment
11. Negative criticism or experiences from the past
12. Procrastination – “Some day I will do it.”

For reflection and action: What hindrances do I deal with when I think about making disciples?
Place a check mark on the ones that apply to you. Are there other reasons?

Conclusion:

- Making disciples is not an option---it’s a command!
- The Bible gives warning that the “last days” will be very evil and difficult. To stand firm in the face of these challenges, we must be firmly rooted in Christ. Becoming and making transformed disciples enables individual believers and the church to stand strong.
- “Live in such a way that those who know you but don’t know God will come to know God because they know you!
- For Christians and congregations to grow spiritually and FOR God’s Kingdom to advance, DISCIPLESHIP IS A NECESSITY!!
- Remember, there is always a cost to discipleship. Those things we highly value, we are willing to pay a high price. What price am I willing to pay to “become and make transformed disciples?”