

discipleship



stepping stones to disciple making in your church

GROWING GREAT COMMISSION DISCIPLES THROUGH...

Starting an **intentional disciple making ministry** in your church is one of the most important decisions you can make! The major purpose of a **discipleship ministry** is to help people continue growing to become more like Jesus! The office of **Sunday School & Discipleship of the Alabama State Board of Missions** will assist you in this wonderful adventure with Christ. Contact us now for additional help for planning your strategy.



This book is a resource for you to use in helping disciples become transformed to become more like Christ! Check out the steps inside and begin planting, cultivating, maturing, harvesting . . . Great Commission Disciples.

**Planting,
Cultivating,
Maturing,
Harvesting**



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& DISCIPLESHIP
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GROWING GREAT COMMISSION DISCIPLES. . .

Dear Friend,

The very fact that you have begun reading this resource signals that you desire to help people grow –to help them become the productive, mature followers of Christ that God purposed them to be! What an awesome privilege; what an awesome responsibility!



Gardening has been my life-long past-time. I remember growing a peach tree--preparing the soil; planting a seed from a friend 's tree; fertilizing, watering, and cultivating the soil. As it blossomed, I was anticipating the results— the juicy, sweet peach—that I would harvest! But it did not stop there . . . Pruning was necessary for the next season, and the cycle began again—and sometimes I gave a seed to a friend who planted it . . .

Just as growing a fruit-bearing tree takes decided, deliberate, determined, disciplined work—sometimes disturbed by drought, storms or insects, growing disciples takes time and hard work. But you can anticipate the results! God will give you all of the strength and all of the resources for the results-- disciples who bring Him glory (Colossians 1:9-12) .

I hope that you have already begun thinking about your own personal discipleship. How are you growing? Are you more fruitful today than you were last year?

Please KNOW that I will be praying for you as you pray and involve others to develop a strategy to grow GREAT COMMISSION DISCIPLES in your church. Please KNOW that you can call on me and our wonderful Sunday School & Discipleship team. We pray with you that your disciple-making ministry will become more--

- **INTENTIONAL** – You and your church will develop a plan to *engage* and *equip* every person in your church (Ephesians 4:11-17) .
- **RELATIONAL** – You will *enlist*, *equip* and *encourage* disciplers who will build relationships as they coach, mentor and lead people to grow (2 Timothy 2:2) .
- **TRANSFORMATIONAL**—You will *expect* to see lives changed as the Holy Spirit works (2 Corinthians 3:18) .

. . .as your church engages more effectively in **PLANTING – CULTIVATING – MATURING – HARVESTING**
--GREAT COMMISSION DISCIPLES—to the glory of God.

Joy on the Journey,

Handwritten signature of Sonya Tucker in cursive script. The name 'Sonya' is written in a larger, more prominent font than 'Tucker'. The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

State Missionary Discipleship & Disciple-Making

How to Use This Resource

As you begin developing a strategy for discipleship, I encourage you to spend private time in prayer. Give praise to God for your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Ask Him to show you how you need to grow in your relationship with Him. Ask Him to show you who needs to serve with you on a team to develop your church's discipleship strategy. Ask Him to go before you and your team to prepare your church to make disciples.

This resource has two major sections that will guide you and your team to develop a discipleship strategy for your church.

Section 1: Focus on Your Current Discipleship Strategy

You and your team will discuss and respond to the following questions to gain an accurate view of your current discipleship strategy.

- What is your biblical understanding of discipleship?
- What does discipleship look like in your church?
- How does your church make disciples?
- Who does discipleship in your church?

Section 2: Focus on Your Future Discipleship Strategy

This section will guide you through a five-step process to develop your church's future strategy:

- Step 1: Conduct a prayer retreat with persons who will develop your church's discipleship strategy and process.
- Step 2: Craft your intentional discipleship strategy.
- Step 3: Establish guiding principles for developing your church's discipleship strategy.
- Step 4: Identify your church's life span spiritual-development process.
- Step 5: Develop your church's discipleship process.

The process of developing a discipleship strategy will not be completed overnight, but the time you invest will be worth the wait.

For more information on this process contact Sonya Tucker at 800-264-1225 ext. 271 or email stucker@alsbom.org.

DISCIPLESHIP STEPPING STONES is reprinted and re-edited by the Office of Sunday School & Discipleship of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions with permission from LifeWay Church Resources 2010.

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Disciple Making Process

Church Biblical Principles

- **Great Commission**
Matthew 28:19-20
- **Five Functions**
 1. **Evangelism**
2 Corinthians 5:17-21
 2. **Disciple Making**
Ephesians 2:8-10
 3. **Ministry**
Ephesians 4:11-15
 4. **Fellowship**
Acts 2:42, 46-47
 5. **Worship**
John 4:21-24
- **Leadership**
Colossians 1:28-29
- **Corporate Prayer**
Acts 4:23-31

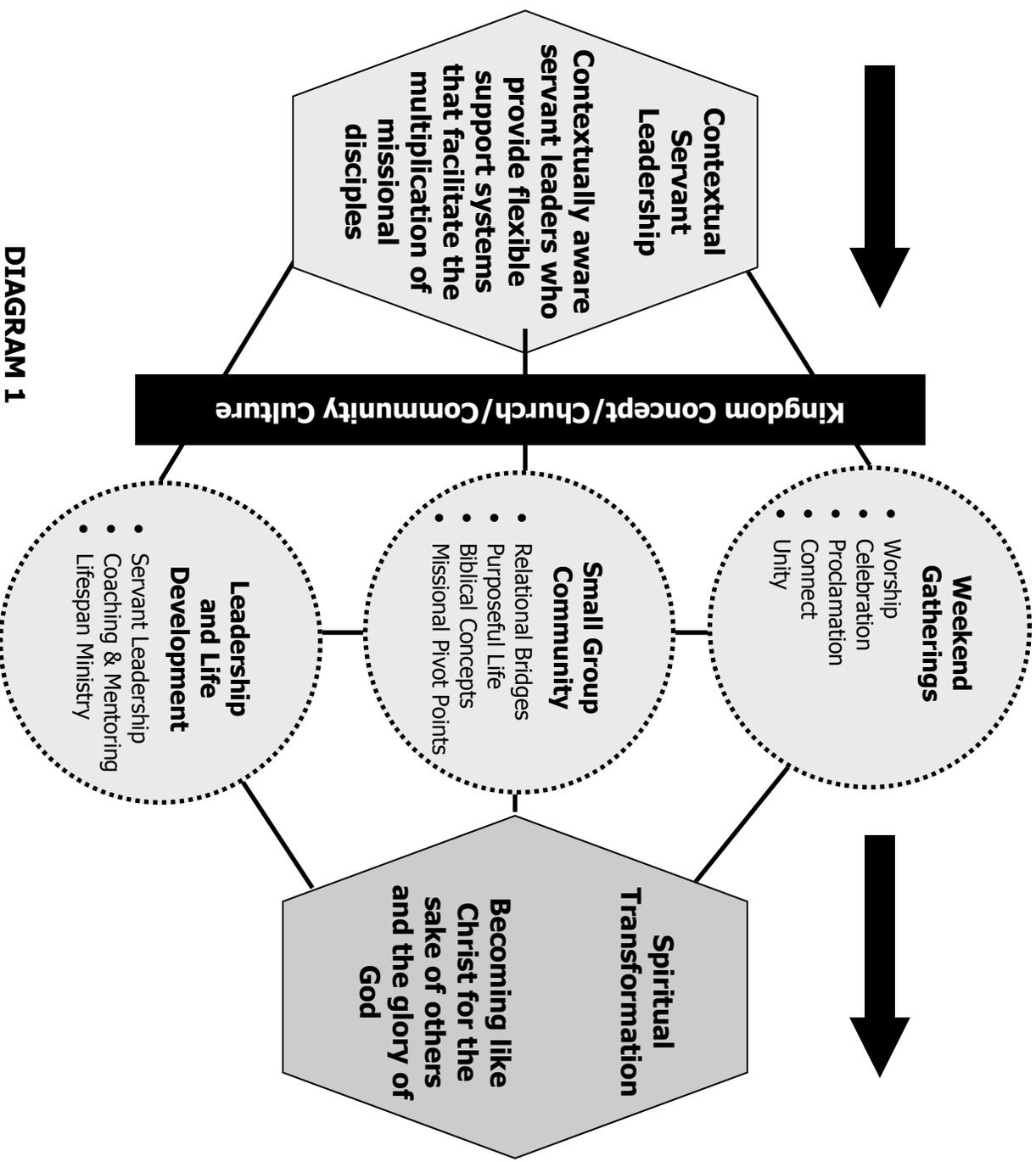
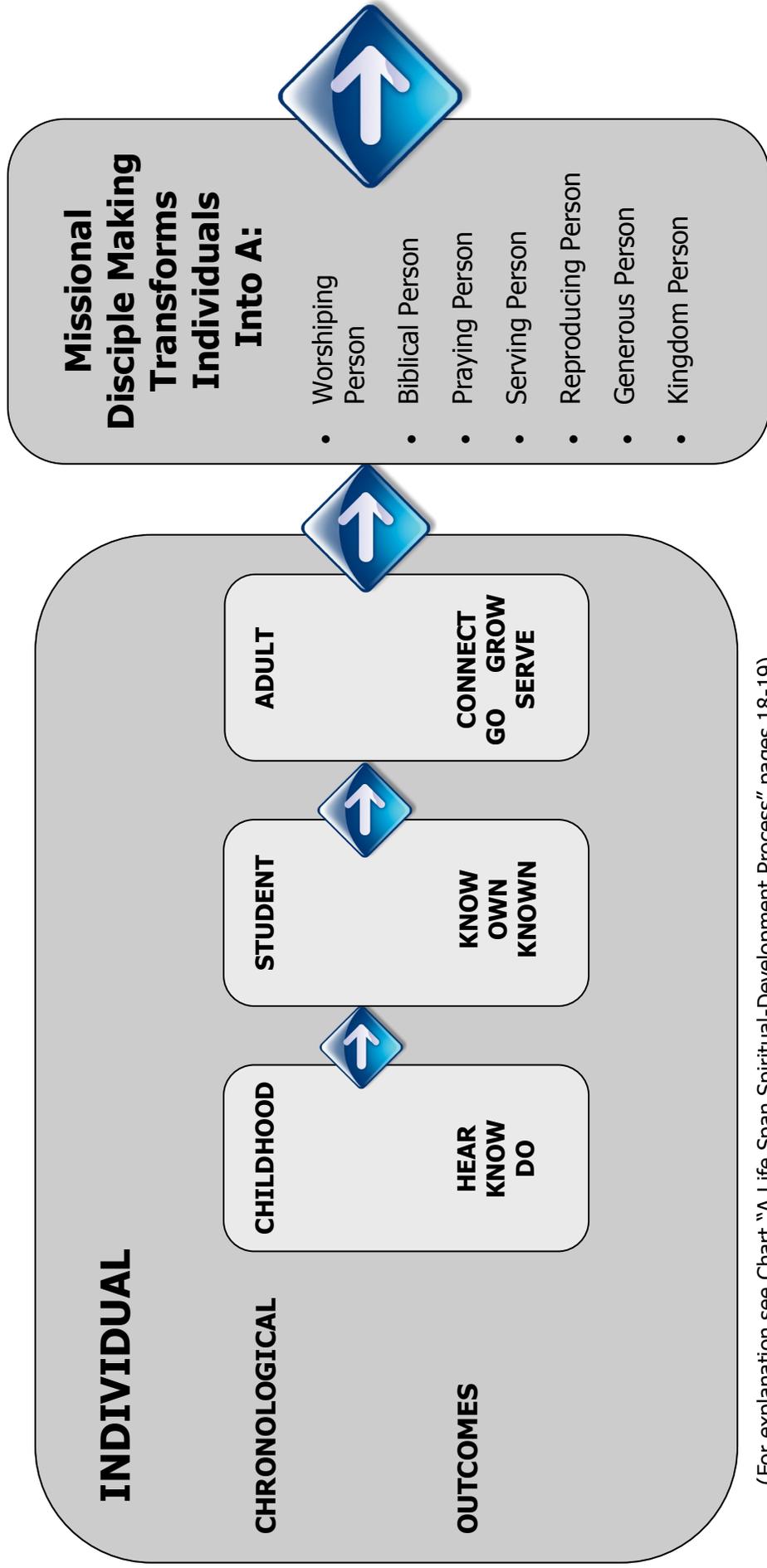


DIAGRAM 1

Disciple Making Process

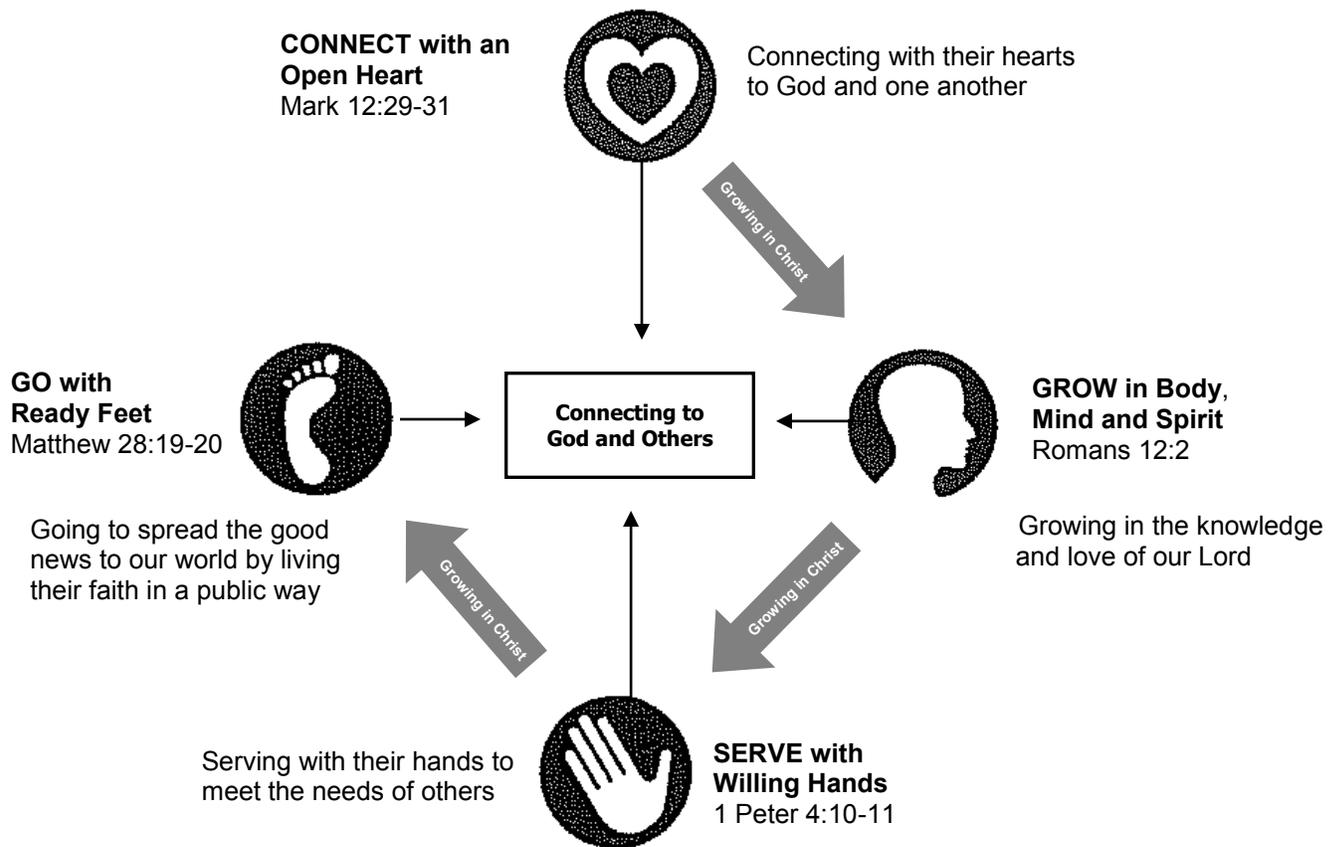
Disciple making guides people to be transformed in Christlikeness so they think and act like Christ.



(For explanation see Chart "A Life Span Spiritual-Development Process" pages 18-19)

DIAGRAM 2

Steps To Connecting Adult Believers To The Disciple Making Process For Your Church



A Life Span Spiritual-Development Process

- Childhood—hear, know, do
- Student (Youth)—know, own, known
- Adult—connect, grow, serve, go

Using this Adult model, you can identify your individual spiritual-development process from Childhood to Student (Youth) to Adult and you can create a Childhood or Student (Youth) process.

Section 1 Focus on Your Current Disciple Making Strategy

What is Your Understanding Of Biblical Discipleship?

*Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

When you hear the word *discipleship*, what thoughts come to your mind? Like other words, it may have lost the significance of its original meaning. In your church do believers tend to think of discipleship as knowing facts about Jesus or following Jesus in a personal, dependent, obedient relationship? Biblically, discipleship is not a program but a process of becoming Christlike and being zealous to see others become disciples also.¹

The Gospels and the Book of Acts include 260 references to the word *disciple*. Every time the word is used, it refers to a declared relationship with Jesus Christ, not a level of spiritual or religious achievement. Becoming a Christian, in New Testament understanding, was the same as becoming a disciple of Jesus. The word *disciple* in the New Testament, then, refers primarily to any Christian, not to a subdivision of the Christian community. According to Clarence Drummond, a Georgia pastor, to be a Christian is to be a disciple.²

Scripture teaches three stages in a Christian's life:

1. *Justification*. God initiates justification to bring a person into right standing with Him. The person becomes justified in God's sight (Rom. 5:1) by confession and repenting of his sin and asking God to atone for it through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Inherent in the person's declaration of need for God to redeem him from the penalty of sin is also a profession of his desire to follow Jesus as the Lord of his life. This profession begins the second stage.
2. *Sanctification*. This stage describes a believer's journey of faith from justification to the end of his earthly life. Sanctification is the process of becoming mature or more Christlike in one's faith. God wants Christians to learn how to live as He wants them to live (Phil. 2:12).
3. *Glorification*. One day when a believer's earthly life is over, he will be glorified, becoming like Jesus (1 John 3:2). The process of discipling will then be complete (Phil. 1:6).

Christian disciple making is a lifelong journey of obedience to Christ that spiritually transforms a person's values and behavior and results in ministry in one's home,

church, and the world. Dallas Willard, author, professor, and outspoken follower of Christ, said, “We progressively learn to lead our lives as he would if he were we.”³

After someone becomes a Christian, becoming like Jesus in character and being obedient to Him should be the main objectives in life (Gal. 5:22-23). John the apostle wrote, “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: the one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:4-6).⁴ The Christian life ought to be more distinctive than any other type of life.

Jesus Defined *Disciple Making*

Luke 14 records an encounter Jesus had with a crowd of people who were following Him. Perhaps this passage is the most definitive and clearest of Jesus’ teachings about disciple making.

Now great crowds were traveling with Him. So He turned and said to them: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

“For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn’t first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it, all the onlookers, will begin to make fun of him, saying, ‘This man started to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

“Or what king, going to war against another king, will not first sit down and decide if he is able with 10,000 to oppose the one who comes against him with 20,000? If not, while the other is still far off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not say good-bye to all his possessions cannot be My disciple.

“Now, salt is good, but if salt should lose its taste, how will it be made salty? It isn’t fit for the soil or for the manure pile; they throw it out. Anyone who has ears to hear should listen!” (Luke 14:25-35)

Jesus stated at least four conditions for becoming His disciple:

1. Jesus talked about the priority of a relationship with Him.
2. Jesus discussed having the right purpose.
3. Jesus told prospective disciples that their commitment must be long-term.
4. Jesus stated that disciples must be willing to give up material possessions.

Let’s look at each of these conditions and make application for followers of Jesus today.

Disciple Making is Rooted in Relationship

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26)

Jesus used strange language to describe the priority of a relationship with Him. Identifying the most intimate of human relationships, He told would-be followers they

must hate those people if they were to be His disciples. What did Jesus mean by that? It would be inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture if Jesus meant for His followers to despise their families. Jesus used the word *hate* to indicate a lesser degree of devotion. Disciples of Jesus must love Him more than they love any other person, including their immediate families. Disciples' love must be a passionate love that reveals itself in daily life. It is the kind of love that enables disciples to meet the other requirements of following Jesus.

How do we grow in our love for Christ so that it becomes passionate? That type of love is born from time spent together. Jesus modeled for us the intimacy He had with the Father while on earth by making time to be alone with Him. His days were full; yet time with His Father was the focal point of His life each day. For us, it means that our daily schedules will be centered on both planned and spontaneous times of prayer, meditation, and Bible study.

Time with God results in changed thinking and changed behavior. Jesus said His disciples were to be salt and light. Salt and light make a difference when they are applied. Disciples of Jesus are to be distinctive in the way they live. When circumstances are at their worst, Christians ought to be at their best. There is no substitute for time intentionally spent with Jesus to develop intimacy with Him as well as passion for Him.

Disciple Making Expresses Itself in Purpose

*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
(Luke 14:27)*

Jesus used this illustration before He experienced His physical death by being crucified on a cross, but He was aware that the Romans used the cross as a means of execution. He was also aware that the cross would be the means of His death in the near future. The cross for Jesus was the means for Him to accomplish the purpose for which He had been born. The purpose of His incarnation was to redeem humankind—to make possible the restoration of a relationship between God and His human creation. Although Jesus modeled such a life and taught His followers how to live in such a relationship, His overarching purpose was to redeem humankind by satisfying the penalty for rebellion against God.

The cross means the same thing for us today. It symbolizes our purpose as disciples of Jesus. Our purpose is not to die for humankind as Jesus did but to die to a self-centered agenda and live to lead people into right relationships with their Heavenly Father. No matter what our livelihood is, our purpose as a disciple of Jesus is to help people know God and to live in fellowship with Him through Christ. Christian disciples should be eager to share their faith experiences with others.

This discipline of the Christian life is perhaps the most difficult because it speaks to the core issue of lordship. We may be willing to do any number of things for Christ, even to sacrifice a great deal, but we want to do it on our own terms. When His purpose becomes our purpose, it means we are also willing to forgo personal freedoms to carry out God's purpose for our lives (John 3:30).

The Call to Follow Jesus is Lifelong

Which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it, all the onlookers will begin to make fun of him, saying, "This man started to build and wasn't able to finish."

"Or what King, going to war against another king, will not first sit down and decide if he is able with 10,000 to oppose the one who comes against him with 20,000? If not, while the other is still far off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace." (Luke 14:28-32)

Jesus' call to follow Him is never meant for an interim period of time. It is always an invitation for the person to commit the whole of life for all of life. Often someone fails to maintain the intimacy with Jesus that enables the commitment to continue. As Jesus said, we can lose our saltiness (Luke 14:34-35). Spiritual sensitivity can keep us from becoming ineffective in our faith practice.

We may be willing to follow Jesus, but we want to choose the conditions for doing so. We have secularized our faith, carving out specific times and places to practice it. It is far too dangerous to allow Jesus to set the parameters. He will ask for more of us and for a much longer period of time than we have in mind. In Luke 14 Jesus made it clear that He wanted prospective disciples not to make an emotional decision to follow Him that they might renounce after giving it thought. Rather, He wanted them first to consider the cost, then choose to follow Him even though they knew the cost was great and would extend for the rest of their earthly lives.

Following Jesus is More Important than Material Gain

Every one of you who does not say good-bye to all his possessions cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:33)

If we have made a relationship with Jesus a priority and have committed to His purpose for a lifetime, we must let go of material wealth. Jesus declared that nothing in life can take the place designed for Him. Things can become gods as easily as people can. If Jesus does not allow people to assume God's place, neither will He allow material possessions to do this (Matt. 6:24).

Scripture teaches that God is the owner of all possessions (Ps. 24:1) and that human-kind is only a steward charged with their care. Even the church's teaching on tithing is sometimes misunderstood. Some believe that if they give a tithe of their income back to God, the remaining 90 percent is available to be used any way they choose. The reality is that all belongs to God, and a Christian is responsible for using all 100 percent in a way that glorifies God. The tithe is just the prompter.

Biblical disciple making involves following Jesus rather than adhering to a moral code. Although the task seems daunting, it is life at its very finest. Jesus said, "A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance." (John 10:10). Jesus is not just the giver of abundant life. He desires that all people experience it (2 Pet. 3:9). However, it is found only in following Him. The good news is that Jesus enables even the following if someone in faith chooses to do so. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, who comes to indwell the believer at the moment of expressed trust in Jesus' atoning death for him. God

Himself is at work in the believer's life to manifest His grace and goodness (Phil. 2:13). He prompts someone and even arranges circumstances to enable the person to do what He desires, but He never forces or manipulates the person. He always allows the individual to make the decision to follow Him.

Foundational Tenets of Christian Disciple Making

Listed below are some core foundations of biblical disciple making. Though not exhaustive, this list highlights what Scripture teaches about what it means to be a follower of Christ.

1. Christian discipleship is the ongoing transformation of an individual's becoming like Jesus in character and purpose as he grows in intimacy with Him (Matt. 5:48; Eph. 4:13-15; Phil. 2:5).
2. Christian discipleship addresses every dimension of life. It is concerned not only with doing the right thing in every circumstance but also with doing the right thing for the right reason (Phil. 1:27).
3. Christian discipleship is progressive in nature. When someone stops growing in intimacy with Christ, he ceases to be healthy in his disciple making (John 15:4).
4. Christian discipleship is a work of grace. It is the Holy Spirit who transforms life, not someone who tries to be good. The term *disciplined grace* describes this process. While God transforms, a believer's spiritual practice creates the transforming environment in which the Holy Spirit works (Phil 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:7-8).
5. Christian discipleship always manifests itself in ministry to others. Every Christian has been spiritually gifted for the purpose of service (1 Pet. 4:10).
6. Christian discipleship was intended by Christ to be reproductive. Those who follow Jesus' life and teaching will be prepared to eagerly share their faith experiences and to invest themselves in the spiritual nurture of others (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2).
7. Christian discipleship is centered in the life of a local church, where the fellowship of other disciples encourages, teaches, and safeguards the believer's disciple making process (Heb. 10:24-25).

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1. Dennis Rogers, *Healthy Kingdom Discipleship* (Georgia Baptist Convention, 2004),
 2. Clarence Drummond, in remarks given during a Georgia Baptist Convention conference.
 3. Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 166.
 4. All Scripture quotations in this guide are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible, copyright 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.
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What Does Disciple Making Look Like in Your Church?

What does your church schedule and calendar say about your church's disciple making process? What takes place during each activity on the calendar?

- What do people get out of participating in each activity?
- Are people enjoying times of fellowship?
- Are people studying the Bible together?
- Are people learning from one another as they apply Bible truths to their everyday lives?
- Are parents using teachable moments to disciple their children?
- Are people serving God in meaningful ways in their church, workplace, schools, homes, and communities?
- Are people sharing their faith stories with those who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord?
- Are we developing a disciple making ministry process that fits the culture and needs of the people?

You will also consider other questions as you evaluate all your church is doing to make disciples.

How Does Your Church Make Disciples?

How would you describe the way your church makes disciples through spiritual transformation to become a Kingdom person? (Diagram 3, page 3)

- Life-application Bible study during Sunday School, through-the-week Bible studies, and other small groups
- Program on Sunday and/or Wednesday evenings
- Disciple making process
- Person-to-person process
- Missions
- Ministry opportunities
- Evangelism
- Other: _____

Describe the way your church makes disciples.

Who Does Disciple Making in Your Church?

Who are the individuals involved in your church's disciple making actions? Does the biblical view of discipleship affect whom you list as disciple makers? See Diagram 1, page 1 to understand the disciple making process for your church through spiritual transformation.

Section 2 Focus on Your Future Disciple Making Strategy

If you have answered the questions on page 9, you should have a basic understanding of your current disciple making actions. Now let's consider how you can develop an intentional disciple making strategy for your church. This tool is organized around five steps for developing your church's disciple making strategy. You and others in your church can use this tool to develop a unique disciple making strategy that meets the needs of your church family.

What are you willing to do now? You will want to organize a disciple making ministry team to develop a process that fits the culture and needs of your people. As you develop your disciple making ministry team remember to look for people who are faithful, growing, available, teachable, and have a disciple making mindset (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

The Office of Sunday School & Discipleship of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions can assist in training and assisting your team to develop your church disciple making strategy.



Step 1 Conduct a Prayer Retreat with Persons Who Will Develop Your Church's Disciple Making Strategy and Process

This retreat might take place on a day when the team gathers for focused prayer. If a retreat is not possible, schedule a period of time when the team prays for God's guidance in the development steps. Prayer preparation for the work to be done in developing your church's disciple making process will play a significant part in the results of your work.

Retreat planning team: _____

Location: _____

Retreat theme: _____

Retreat date: _____

Participants: _____

Location arrangements: _____

Meals: _____



Step 2

Craft Your Intentional Disciple Making Strategy

Let's get started! How would you explain the big picture of disciple making through your church? Does your explanation identify the range of choices that fall under the disciple making umbrella? In some ways the range is extensive, while in other ways it is limited. Your church's disciple making capacity totally depends on God's wisdom, guidance, and power. Prayerfully consider the following points as stepping-stones to crafting your church's intentional disciple making strategy.

What?

Disciple making is a partnership between God and the congregation, families, and individuals helping people become obedient followers of Jesus Christ.

- This partnership is driven by God's Holy Spirit, who empowers the congregation and individuals to carry out His Great Commission and Great Commandment.
- God wants His disciples to recognize that they are His followers and to help others become followers of Jesus Christ.
- The fruit of His followers' lives is seen in the way they live—loving, kind, peaceful, good, gentle, faithful, controlled, patient, and joyful (Gal. 5:22).

Why?

Jesus clearly explained what He wanted His followers to do when He left His earthly ministry to them. The Great Commission continues to be the hub of everything believers do today:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:19-20)

Jesus also challenged His followers to do everything through love for one another. The Great Commandment continues to set the environment for everything believers do today:

I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)

Who?

All disciples are disciple makers, including parents, Sunday School teachers, sports team coaches, choir leaders, small-group facilitators, and others.

- Disciples of Jesus Christ help others create a new identity in Christ (be); renew their minds to think like Jesus (know); and empower a lifelong relationship of love, trust and obedience (do) to glorify God (Prov. 3:5-6;

Matt. 22:37; 28:20; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:2).

- A disciple making ministry is recommended to coordinate and administer intentional discipleship actions. A ministry team representing the various age levels carries out the important roles of equipping disciples to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus and of equipping themselves to serve Him.

Where?

Discipleship takes place in the hearts and minds of believers as they live their lives in homes, schools, workplaces, communities, churches, and on the Internet. Discipling takes place in church buildings and beyond—wherever believers allow God to work in their lives.

When?

Discipleship happens every day—from the beginning of life through eternity, when disciples see Jesus in heaven. Disciple making is a lifelong endeavor for individual believers and churches.

Prayerfully answer each of the previous questions for your church's intentional disciple making strategy. Your answers to these questions will become an easy -to-understand description of your church's disciple making strategy. Record your description below.

Disciple Making Strategy Description

Name of your church _____

What? _____

Why? _____

Who? _____

Where? _____

When? _____



Step 3

Establish Guiding Principles for Developing Your Church's Disciple Making Strategy

As you answer the how question, consider the following suggested principles for developing a disciple making strategy for your church. These principles will serve as a foundation for your disciple making process or course of action.

Salvation assumes personal surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ and a transforming journey throughout life (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; Rom. 10:9). Have believers in your church had genuine experiences of surrendering their lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ? Are they on journeys with Jesus that are changing every part of their lives? As you develop your disciple making process, observe the lives of believers. Ask them questions about their journeys. Talk with them about their relationships with the Lord. Most likely, you will find that believers are maturing in their personal surrender to Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives, but their families or careers continue to be the center of their lives. Small-group studies and other discipleship experiences can be opportunities for God to draw individuals to an act of surrender and a process of transformation.

As you think about your future disciple making strategy, identify actions God could use to draw believers to surrender and transformation.

Disciple making is an intentional, observable process of changing lives through worship, evangelism, fellowship, ministry, service, Bible study, and prayer (Acts 2:42-47; 2 Cor. 5:17). The purpose of making disciples characterizes every action of your disciple making ministry, resulting in changed lives. To engage disciples in the process of changing their lives to become more like Christ, the following life span spiritual-development process is recommended.

- A Life Span Spiritual-Development Process**
- Childhood—hear, know, do
 - Student (Youth)—know, own, known
 - Adult—connect, grow, serve, go

This process is depicted in detail in the chart on pages 18-19. All of your disciple making ministry actions can be organized by the process you develop for your church family.

The resulting life changes can be observed. Behavioral changes in believers' lives may include—

- being prepared for genuine worship and Bible study;
- sharing their faith stories as they cultivate authentic relationships with nonbelievers;
- associating with people beyond their comfort zones or cliques;
- using their spiritual gifts, passions, and abilities in significant ways;
- sharing their prayer experiences with one another.

As you think about your future disciple making strategy, identify actions you could take to make discipleship an intentional, observable process in your church.

The Holy Spirit initiates and provides power for transformation as believers practice spiritual disciplines (John 6:63; 16:13; Eph. 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:7). When disciples practice spiritual disciplines, they open their lives to the work of the Holy Spirit, and the result is spiritual transformation. Transformation follows a biblical pattern that can be described in three simple words: *be*, *know*, and *do*.

The Biblical Pattern of Transformation	
Be	refers to who a disciple becomes at conversion as a child of God and who he or she is becoming through the indwelling Spirit's work of dynamic renewal. A disciple needs help to evaluate the progress of personal transformation. In attitudes of the heart and actions of daily living, does the disciple look more like Christ?
Know	focuses on what the disciple learns about God. This learning comes through studying His Word, seeing His Work and hearing His Voice. Knowing God more completely provides fuel for ongoing transformation. As the disciple studies God's Word, sees His Work and hears His Voice, is knowing God all there is to the experience of transformation?
Do	describes what the disciple does in response to what he knows about God and who He is. God expects obedient actions. As the disciple responds, is servanthood done with a serving heart?

These three transformational elements are interdependent actions. In isolation no single action has the ability to produce Christlikeness in a disciple. Together they serve as catalysts for a work of God that changes the disciple from the inside. The interaction of these transformational elements results in a world-changing mission.

Spiritual disciplines are actions that disciples take to grow in Christlikeness. Examine the following lists of disciplines.

Adult Spiritual Disciplines	Student (Youth) Spiritual Disciplines	Childhood Spiritual Disciplines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abide in Christ • Pray in faith • Live in the Word • Fellowship with believers • Minister to others • Witness to the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lordship • Disciplines • Character • Discernment • Relationships • Influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to love God’s Word • Live godly lives and grow as Christians • Prepare to lead in the next generation

By providing disciples with specific spiritual disciplines to focus on during their spiritual journeys, churches and families make discipleship concrete and possible. With their small disciple making groups and disciple making partners, disciples can both learn about and practice the disciplines.

As you think about your future disciple making strategy, identify actions you can take to engage believers in practicing spiritual disciplines.

Disciple making involves mutual accountability among disciples, encouraging a “Come go with me” attitude (Rom. 1:12). Do believers in your church need mutual accountability with others in order to move forward on their spiritual journeys? By having an individual or a small group along to make the journey, a disciple is challenged to stay the course and become more and more like Christ. Small disciple making groups play a major role in fostering mutual accountability among disciples of all ages. Life experiences reach deeper levels through a “Come go with me” attitude.

As you think about your future disciple making strategy, identify actions you can take to involve disciples in mutual accountability.

Disciple making with children and students (youth) is primarily a responsibility of parents as churches purposefully equip them to disciple their children (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:19). Are parents in your church taking responsibility to disciple their children, or do they bring them to the church for you to disciple? Biblically, both parents and teachers need your church to equip them to disciple children and students (youth). Both parents and teachers need to understand the learning styles, characteristics, and needs of today's children and students (youth). Teaching methods for church and for home are important tools for all teachers and parents to master. Some equipping actions might bring parents and teachers together in church and home partnerships; other equipping actions target parents only or teachers only. Both parents and teachers need to observe effective models as they develop their disciple making approaches with children and students (youth).

As you think about your future disciple making strategy, identify actions you can take to equip parents and teachers to disciple children and students (youth).

Discipleship intersects all of life, applying to every experience in every context—personal and corporate. In your church are families and individuals experiencing personal difficulties? God has wired human beings of all ages with a desire to learn throughout life. This desire is manifested when they face a life crisis or have a need. The intersection of God's love and everyday life is the context for personal and corporate disciple making.

Church leaders and parents can capitalize on these teachable moments with all age levels. For example, emerging adults are establishing their personal identities. They are drawn to church opportunities that guide them in setting this identity. The same sort of teachable moments can be identified for each age level.

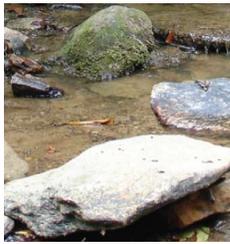
As you think about your future disciple making strategy, identify the teachable moments in the lives of families, adults, students (youth), and children, along with ways your church can facilitate their spiritual maturity through these experiences.

Discipleship results in new disciples, transformed lives, and new disciple makers (Acts 11:19-30). The salvation experience is a new birth by which a seeker becomes a new disciple of Jesus Christ. Therefore, evangelism plays a strategic role in making new disciples. In addition, God uses disciple making processes and strategies to transform the lives of His disciples throughout their lives. Each step and each experience on the journey brings His disciples closer to Him until the day when they fully know Him and see Him in heaven. Only at that point are Jesus' disciples fully mature in Him.

As you think about your future disciple making strategy, seek and listen to faith stories of ways God has transformed the lives of people in your church. Identify names of disciples you will ask to tell their stories.

These suggested principles and the description of your disciple making strategy are designed to help you and your team set the stage for an intentional disciple making process. All of the suggested principles may not fit the needs of your church family. You may also wish to add other principles.

What basic principles will your church include in your disciple making strategy?



Step 4

Identify Your Church's Life Span Spiritual-Development Process

As mentioned in Step 3 (Disciple making is an intentional, observable process of changing lives through worship, evangelism, fellowship, ministry, service, Bible study, and prayer), a process for individuals to follow is important to your disciple making strategy. This process engages individuals in actively changing their lives to be more like Christ. Adults are encouraged to connect, grow, serve, and go. Your disciple making team will need to evaluate your children and student (youth) areas as well. Students (youth) are involved in the process of know, own, and known. Children learn how to actively hear, know, and do. Use the ideas in the following chart as stepping-stones to a process you can use to involve your church family in life-changing spiritual disciplines.

A Life Span Spiritual-Development Process

Age Level	Spiritual Development	Spiritual Disciplines
Childhood	 HEAR God's Word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning opportunities that help boys and girls live godly lives and grow as Christians
	 KNOW God's Word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning opportunities that help boys and girls learn and love God's Word
	 DO God's Word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning opportunities that help boys and girls prepare to lead in the next generation
Student (Youth)	 KNOW Jesus: Upward Development Matthew 22:37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lordship: Learning opportunities that help students recognize and respond to the lordship of Christ Disciplines: Learning opportunities that help students practice spiritual disciplines
	 OWN Their Faith: Inward Development Matthew 22:37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character: Learning opportunities that help students develop and demonstrate Christ's character Discernment: Learning opportunities that help students make wise decisions
	 Make Their Faith KNOWN: Outward Development Matthew 22:39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships: Learning opportunities that help students develop godly relationships Influence: Learning opportunities that help students make an intentional impact on others

Age Level	Spiritual Development	Spiritual Disciplines
Adult	 <p>CONNECT with An Open Heart Mark 12:29-31</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fellowship with Believers: Learning opportunities that help adults understand the nature of the church as the body of Christ, build effective relationships, and understand themselves and others • Pray in Faith: Learning opportunities that help adults learn about biblical prayer, develop an effective prayer life, and build a ministry of prayer
	 <p>GROW in Body, Mind and Spirit Romans 12:2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live in the Word: Learning opportunities that help adults learn to study God's Word, understand how the Bible came to be, explore biblical truth for life issues, and apply biblical truth to daily life • Abide in Christ: Learning opportunities that help adults learn about the nature of the Christian's relationship with Christ, the character of Christ, the adult's identity in Christ, what it means to abide in Christ, and how to have a personal quiet time
	 <p>SERVE with Willing Hands 1 Peter 4:10-11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister to Others: Learning opportunities that help adults identify personal spiritual gifts, interests, and natural abilities; grow in leadership ability; build effective skills for ministry; facilitate small groups for ministry care; and learn to disciple others
	 <p>GO with Ready Feet Matthew 28:19-20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Witness to the World: Learning opportunities that help disciples share their faith stories, witness in a variety of situations, develop a mission worldview, and lead others to share the good news

NOTE: The Sunday School & Discipleship staff of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and LifeWay Church Resources provides a variety of resources for children, students (youth) and adults to use in the disciple making process. These resources are organized by a suggested life span spiritual-development plan—for adults (connect, grow, serve, go); for students (youth) (know, own, known); and for children (hear, know, do). Use Diagram 2 on page 2 to develop a process for disciple making in your church.



Step 5

Develop Your Church's Disciple Making Process

Now what about your church's process for making disciples? Based on your disciple making strategy description, the principles for your strategy, and your life span spiritual-development plan, you are ready to put together your church's disciple making process. The following suggested process is merely a stepping-stone to discussion as you and your team develop a process that your disciple making ministry will align to and focus on as your church sets the stage for individuals to grow spiritually.

This suggested process framework involves six elements that you can use to bring the strategic principles to life and set the stage for spiritual growth. These elements serve as stepping-stones on your discipleship path that you can use to construct your own disciple making process. This can allow your church to intentionally make new disciples and equip disciples to become followers of Jesus Christ. Your church will craft its own way to assemble these elements and plan these actions. These elements are not linear; they do not have to be done in a certain order. Use them in ways that will be effective for your church family; utilize language that will communicate with your believers. As always, pray that God will be the draftsman and the power behind your process.

Suggested ways to construct your disciple making process:

NOTE: It is here that the Sunday School & Discipleship staff of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions can help your team in a process that allows your team to design, prepare and implement a results-based disciple making process for your church.

- Smaller churches should have one team to develop the six process elements.
- Larger churches can enlist a team to be responsible for each process element, for a total of six teams. A seventh team made up of the six leaders would bring the six strategies into an overall process.
- Each team builds a strategy for its assigned elements, including a variety of approaches—for example, conferences, ongoing classes, and other learning opportunities.
- Each team studies all the principles as well as the elements to understand the process as a whole before beginning its work.
- Each team considers the following questions: What is the current status of our disciple making process in regard to our assigned element? What do we need to do to make progress? What resources do we need? How inclusive should our promotion be to continually inform the church about the disciple making process?
- To test your disciple making process, develop a way to target the elements toward individuals.
- Annually review where your disciple making process is taking your church.

Following are the six suggested process elements for implementing a life span spiritual-development plan.

1. Evaluate the Spiritual Environment for Supporting Life Transformation and Disciple Making (Luke 4:28-30; 4:44; 5:17; 5:27; 6:1, 6, 12; 7:11-12, 36; 8:1, 4, 26; 9:51; 10:1; 15:1; 17:11; 18:9, 15, 18, 35; 19:45; 20:27). For many church families, life transformation and disciple making are hindered by unspoken and ignored church issues as well as by open conflict in the fellowship of believers. You may want to assign a special task force to conduct the evaluation and assessment. The following actions are suggested to help your church family identify barriers to life transformation and disciple making and deal with them through God's grace. These actions include internal and external investigations.

The internal investigation begins with corporate prayer. The entire church family will participate in the internal actions, so everyone will need to be informed about the assessment that will be conducted over a period of time. Ask them to pray for God's guidance in the assessment. The internal investigation may include the following suggested areas of assessment and questions:

Assessing the Internal Spiritual Environment

1. Assess the spiritual maturity of church members.
 - Where is character shaped and correction given?
 - What are the expectations of new members—for the church and from the church?
 - How do you hold people accountable for their spiritual growth?
2. Evaluate the church's mission, vision, and goals.
 - How do we reach people for Christ?
 - How do we develop people spiritually?
 - What is the primary purpose of small groups?
 - How is our disciple making process clearly defined by leaders and members of the church?
 - Does our disciple making process have sequential steps that cause people to move to greater areas of commitment?
 - Are all the ministries and staff members aligned with our disciple making process?
 - What is God calling us to do?
 - How do we plan to get there (vision)?
3. Analyze the spiritual lives of church leaders.
4. Assess the spiritual strongholds in the church family.

The internal analysis may reveal the need to heal the heart of your church through relationship-building actions. You may discover barriers that are keeping your church from effectively making disciples.

The internal investigation analyzes the culture of your church, which is your unique identity and style for being God's family in your community. An external investigation will reveal what people outside your church think about your church. Your church family needs to bathe the external investigation in prayer. The same task force or a related task force might carry out these investigative actions. These include identifying demographics, geocoding (Mickey Crawford: mcrawford@alsbom.org can assist you with this study by generating a report for your church), assessing your

church's reputation in the community, and acquiring other information. Possible questions include:

2. Understanding Your Unique Kingdom and Concept of Church/Community Culture (See Diagram 1 page 1.)

- How do we equip disciples for ministry inside and outside the walls of our building?
- How do we relate to and multiply our influence in our community and in the world?
- What specific forms of social and spiritual darkness seem to be strongholds in our community?
- What conditions contribute to spiritual darkness in our community?
- What truth unlocks and frees people who exist in spiritual darkness in our community?

The combined results of the internal and external investigations will give your church family a comprehensive view of its spiritual condition. To avoid overwhelming your church leaders and members, gradually interpret the assessment results by reporting useful bits of information over a period of time.

As conclusions are drawn about your church's spiritual environment, encourage your church family to accept the realities about your church. To act on what is learned, your pastor and ministry leaders must examine their own hearts to determine whether they are ready to lead the church from its current state to future growth. Through sermons and church-family gatherings, paint the positives and the negatives. With these realities and the spiritual environment of the church in mind, involve various teams in defining and interpreting anticipated ministry results, including people coming to Christ and serving Him. Most likely, you will find that various ministries need retooling to implement your intentional disciple making strategy.

3. Create Environments for Nonbelievers to Understand and Respond to Truth That Will Change Their Lives (Matt 9:13; John 14:6; 8:31-32; Rom. 5:8). What are the entry points into the life of your church for the lost and unchurched? Do your worship services, Sunday School classes and departments, and small groups play strategic roles in creating an environment that enables nonbelievers to understand and respond to the truth about Jesus Christ? Are they open for unchurched persons to participate at any time? Is an accepting and loving environment evident that is attractive to those who are unchurched and those who are far from God? A church has many touch points, places to connect with unsaved persons. Do all of these touch points lead people to opportunities to accept Christ and to enter the disciple making process? Are the church's efforts intended to get people to come to the church or to reach out and connect with them where they live? A suggested second element for your disciple making process is found in the answers to these questions. That element is evangelism. Here are a few suggestions for creating an environment in which nonbelievers can understand and respond to Jesus Christ.

- **Demonstrate loving, nurturing, and accepting attitudes.** Your church may already have an environment that welcomes and encourages nonbelievers to experience the good news and to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. Does this environment demonstrate loving, nurturing, and accepting relationships and attitudes? Lost people will be drawn to Jesus and your church family because of believers' love for one another and God's eternal love expressed

through Jesus Christ. When believers are growing in their faith in Jesus Christ, they will have a loving, nurturing, and accepting attitude toward nonbelievers. Everything you do to disciple believers will draw nonbelievers to Jesus and your church family.

- **Employ evangelism tools and venues.** Churches use a variety of evangelism tools and venues to attract unchurched people to their loving, nurturing, and accepting environments. Does every event and activity that your church family conducts through the year offer open, ongoing opportunities to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior?
- **Reach church members' children.** Churches have a responsibility to love, nurture, and accept children and students (youth) who are members of families in the church. Parents and age-level ministry leaders play important roles in reaching children and students in your church. The role of teachers at church must be focused by encouraging and equipping parents to create the same kind of environment in the home—one that nurtures loving, accepting relationships and attitudes. Does your church spend equal energy and effort on training both teachers and parents of preschoolers, children and students (youth)? As age-level ministries develop their ministry strategies, create age-appropriate and family-friendly disciple making opportunities.
- **Equip parents as disciple makers.** Age-level ministries need to work together to support and train parents as disciple makers. Together encourage and develop strong emphases on family devotional time, training, worship, and ministry involvement. Through your church's equipping actions, parents learn and understand how their preschoolers, children, and students develop spiritually. They observe the way an age-level ministry provides spiritual instruction and makes a transition to the next age level. They should see continuity between church actions and the spiritual instruction they are providing at home.

4. Welcome and Nurture New Believers (Eph. 4:14-16; Phil. 3:15; Heb. 6:1). Do new believers in your church family find the help they need to begin their spiritual journeys with Jesus Christ? Do they have opportunities to study the Bible with mature believers in Sunday School and small groups? Do they have the opportunity to be mentored by a mature disciple? Are they able to use their spiritual gifts, passions, talents, and abilities in meaningful ways to minister and grow? These questions and others can help you evaluate your new-believer strategies. Here are a few suggestions to help your church welcome and nurture new believers:

- **Give new believers a good start.** When lost people make professions of faith, immediately begin the process of welcoming and nurturing new believers in their new relationship with Jesus Christ and their new church family. Individual actions, including mentoring, spiritual direction, and one-to-one study, provide tools for shaping new believers. A mentoring relationship between a new believer and an experienced believer is an excellent way to immediately meet the needs of a new believer and begin the journey of spiritual transformation. Just as the first months of life for a newborn are crucial to the rest of his development, the first few months of the spiritual journey are vital to the growth of a healthy disciple of Jesus Christ.
- **Provide new-member orientation.** New believers greatly benefit from a church's new-member-orientation process. Here the church engages new

believers with mentors, Sunday School classes, and small groups. New believers gain a biblical understanding of basic Christian beliefs and spiritual disciplines that equip them to begin living and growing as Christians. They also identify their spiritual gifts, experiences, relationships, vocational skills, and enthusiasm for specific areas of ministry in which the Lord may want them to be involved.

- **Provide small-group learning opportunities for new believers.** In addition to relating to a mentor, new believers need to build relationships with other believers in a group setting. Small-group learning opportunities that involve new believers and experienced believers can set the stage for these nurturing relationships. Together they can study the Bible in Sunday School classes and enjoy fellowship with growing believers. Encourage new believers to participate in through-the-week small groups that enrich their journey of spiritual transformation. These small groups intentionally deepen new members' understanding of God's Word and give them opportunities to hold one another accountable for surrendering their lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ in their everyday lives.
- **Equip new believers to share their faith.** Because most new believers have many relationships with nonbelievers, they need opportunities to learn how to tell their personal faith stories with their friends and family members who have not been saved. Their enthusiasm for their new Savior and Lord will drive their desire for their friends and family to know Jesus too. Your church family will want to prayerfully encourage them as they share what Jesus has done in their lives.

Through new-member orientation, mentoring, Sunday School, and small-group experiences, the goal is 100 percent involvement of new believers in the ministry of your church and beyond.

5. Encourage a Lifestyle of Servanthood (Matt. 20:26; Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 4:10).

Are you challenging both new believers and growing believers to think of themselves as servants of Jesus Christ and other people? Do believers have opportunities to grow and become followers of Jesus Christ through a sense of servanthood in every component of their lives? How do you hold yourself accountable for servanthood? How have you used your spiritual gifts, talents, passions? Here are some suggestions for encouraging servanthood in your church members.

- **Teach the biblical mandate of servanthood and character.** One form of encouragement comes by fostering an understanding of the biblical mandate of servanthood and character. Repeated studies of Galatians 5 and 2 Peter 1:5-9 in sermons, Sunday School curriculum, and small-group equipping studies will deepen this understanding and lead believers to apply this mandate to their everyday lives.
- **Develop a vision statement.** A strategic way to teach believers to be intentional about serving Christ is to develop a God-given vision for your church family. This vision reflects movement toward deeper levels of commitment to God.
- **Encourage growth through spiritual disciplines.** When disciples are engaged and challenged to be servants, they have opportunities to practice spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines help disciples grow in Christlikeness. By providing disciples with specific spiritual disciplines to focus on during their

journeys of spiritual transformation, your church can make discipling concrete and doable. When disciples practice spiritual disciplines, they open their lives to spiritual transformation.

Identify spiritual gifts, passions, skills and abilities. Servanthood also involves disciples in identifying their spiritual gifts, passions, skills, and abilities. Small group learning opportunities guide them to discover and foster a sense of accountability for all God has given them. An assessment of spiritual gifts, passions, skills, and abilities can help individual disciples understand themselves and can help your church understand how God has gifted your church family for ministry. To download a spiritual gifts inventory or a passions and calling assessment, go to www.alsbom.org/discipleship.

6. Guide Believers to Find Focus in Life, Indicated by a Whole Person Who is Growing as a Kingdom Person (Ps. 139:23-24; Eph. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:6-8; Heb. 12:1-2). Are believers in your church participating in closed groups in which they participate with other believers to learn biblical truths for their lives and deepen their lives of spiritual maturity? Do they have daily quiet times or devotional times when they read the Bible and pray? Are they balancing their lives by studying the Bible, praying, and serving God in meaningful ways? As followers of Christ, are they observably moving closer to being like Christ?

Speaking of focus, is your church providing a focused disciple making process for all age groups? Ask yourself these questions.

- Is your church focusing actions that connect adults to God and other people; help them grow in biblical understanding; help them serve by using their God-given spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, and skills; and help them go beyond the church in sharing their faith stories with the lost and unchurched?
- Are you focusing your actions with students (youth) to help them know God, own their relationship with Christ, and be known by others?
- Are you helping children hear foundational Bible truths, know foundational biblical concepts, and become spiritually transformed?

Here are a few suggestions for guiding believers to find focus and wholeness.

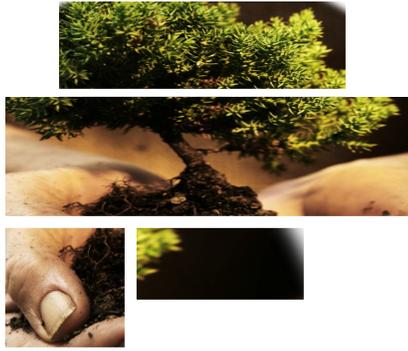
- **Help believers start the journey.** Guiding believers on a journey to spiritual focus and wholeness is an important element of your disciple making strategy. That journey is a process of maturing until the day when each believer meets Jesus Christ in heaven. Spiritual markers to the journey become the stories believers tell when sharing their faith or describing experiences they had during their quiet times. Consider ways believers can tell their stories with one another as well as with those who have not yet started their journeys with Jesus.
- **Use a spiritual assessment.** To help believers get started on their journeys, provide them with spiritual-assessment tools. These tools help believers identify where they are on the journeys, not necessarily how mature they are at certain points. This information about spiritual status can be useful in developing a set of spiritual goals that determine what disciple making actions are needed—a resource to study or an act of service in your church, in the community, or on the mission field. Spiritual Growth Assessment Tools are available free at www.alsbom.org/spiritualgrowth.

- **Hold members accountable.** To promote focused growth, church members must hold one another accountable for lives that are moving in the right direction. Some churches use a cyclical disciple making process to involve members in accountability relationships.
- **Provide focused small group and mentoring/coaching opportunities.** Through these opportunities believers engage in relationships that help them find focus and live holistically for Christ. As you plan and organize small groups, consider the focus in the types of studies you offer. Encourage people to participate in a variety of studies.
- **Promote focus through the practice of spiritual disciplines.** Focus and wholeness can result when believers practice spiritual disciplines. Guide believers to practice a variety of disciplines. To engage believers in new disciplines, consider asking church members who are practicing those disciplines to share their experiences. Small-group studies of the disciplines also encourage the practice of the many spiritual disciplines that are mentioned in the Bible.
- **Emphasize spiritual transformation.** The ultimate goal of a focused, intentional disciple making strategy is changed lives. Spiritual transformation is God at work in the lives of His followers. Challenge disciples to let God guide them to grow in their understanding of who they are and who they are becoming in Christ (be), expand their knowledge of biblical truth (know), and apply daily what they learn (do). In addition, involve believers in significant acts of service that glorify God and transform the lives of people. Your church can encourage believers of all ages to invite God to work in their lives through spiritual transformation.

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NOTES

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