

Do We Really Know How to Make Disciples?

Sometime ago, in one of my disciplermaking training events someone raised the question, “Do we really know what we are doing when it comes to disciplermaking?” No one thought that they had everything figured out, but even though everyone said they were doing their best, they all admitted there were big gaps in the way they were trying to do it.

One of the instructors illustrated the point this way: (*You may have heard this story before but it is helpful to provoke our thinking.*) Suppose you went into an elementary school and observed the way they set up their teaching structure each day and you observed the following.

Every child had the freedom to choose *any* classroom they wanted to start the day. Consequently, every classroom had a bizarre mix of students from first grade through fifth in the same room. Each teacher would draw out of hat a piece of paper that had a subject on it which indicated their subject for that particular day. The paper would also indicate what grade level they would focus their teaching on regardless if that was their specialty or not. So a teacher could pick room 101, for example, and she would teach grade four math regardless of who was in the room. Every six weeks they would go through the same routine and mix it up a bit. If this is how the school operated that you were planning on sending your kids to, you might reconsider your plan. The potential of that system actually working is pretty low and the success of truly educating the students is virtually non-existent except for a few eager beavers.



Sometimes (certainly not always of course) churches operate the same way. In fact, while most of us have some grasp of the obvious, often our schedules seem to wipe out our intentionality. We sometimes randomly choose topics based on curiosity or interest, not a strategic plan to equip our people for disciplermaking. We can have good teachers, but there is no clear thought why we are teaching subjects and how they fit a process of truly teaching the saints to be disciples.

On the other hand, honestly, that anecdotal school scenario often describes many churches because this is the way we have always done it. Certainly this describes some of my past and the current challenge of clarity with some of our leaders. While this struggle is understandable, it is not conducive for growth and health. One thing I have learned to do to counteract this convenient calcification begins with a few simply questions generally related to our ministry:

1. Why are we teaching this subject to these people?
2. How does this focus fit our picture of a disciple?
3. What do we hope will happen by exploring this subject?
4. What should change in us (our people) and why?

Sometimes we can overlook the simplest issues because we are in a hurry to do ministry. There is a real advantage to giving this some intentional thought.

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