



DISCIPLESHIP: PASSING THE BATON • Eric Silverman

Christianity has always been one generation away from dying out. When a church closes its doors, you can usually trace its demise back to a simple problem: one generation of Christians failed to reproduce another generation of Christians. The same is true on the college campus. When a campus ministry stops serving on a campus, it is usually because the outgoing set of Christians did not reproduce another generation of Christians to replace them. While this process takes several decades to destroy a church, a campus ministry can be wiped out in a mere 2-3 years.

Discipleship is God's answer to this problem. The Apostle Paul instructed his disciple Timothy saying, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). Paul's command is clear: equipping the next generation of Christians is of the highest priority. In fact, Paul's command even implies that a central concern when choosing and training the next generation of Christian leaders is making sure that they will be able to train and equip the following generation.

Understanding Discipleship

Discipleship is helping someone else develop their relationship with God and ministry skills in the context of a mutually encouraging Christian friendship. Each of these 3 areas are vital to a discipling relationship: friendship, helping develop a relationship with God, and ministry training.

What Happens in Discipleship?

- 1) A friendship is developed. You know what's involved in a friendship.... fun activities, sharing life together, sharing hard times, and generally just being a real part of each other's life.
- 2) There is the intentional development of the disciple's relationship with God. A series of character traits and spiritual disciplines are passed on through a variety of methods. Some topics that you may want to cover include: personal discipline, the importance of Christian fellowship and being involved in a Bible believing church, the lordship of Christ, how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, developing knowledge of the Bible, effective Bible study methods, how to develop Biblical conviction and live them out, how to have a quiet time, submission to God ordained authorities, the importance of the Great Commission, continual desire to seek God, and the importance of an integrated Christian worldview. Remember that no one can "make" another Christian grow. In discipleship, the discipler's responsibility is to provide opportunities, information, and an atmosphere which encourages growth; he cannot force decisions on another person.
- 3) Ministry training is passed on. There are lots of important practical ministry skills that need to be developed in future Christian leaders. These skills include: how to share your faith, how to lead a Bible study, how to encourage others to pray, how to encourage others, how to disciple a younger Christian, the importance of delegation in Christian ministry, how to build community with other Christians, and lots of other "how to's."

Why Be Involved in Discipleship?

Discipleship is a process that benefits everyone involved. Christians who have someone invest in their lives are much more likely to walk with God long term. The older Christians who do the discipling get a new challenge that will help them grow as they think through many issues more deeply. The ministry on your campus, and the kingdom of God, benefit, as more mature Christians are available to serve as leaders.



Where and When Does Discipleship Take Place?

Discipleship should take place in everyday life. Just as Jesus trained His disciples by involving them in His everyday life and ministry, we should seek to involve those we disciple in our daily lives. The more life you share together, the more opportunities there are to teach by example. Sharing meals, exercising together, even something as mundane as running errands together, can provide venues for discipleship SO LONG AS you are committed to INTENTIONALLY building your life into his through these venues. Of course, there should be times where you plan to share ministry activities together too.

Who Should Be Discipled?

Everyone can benefit greatly from discipleship, but two groups of people that are especially important to disciple are potential future leaders and new Christians. Potential future leaders need discipleship to prepare them for the important responsibilities that lie ahead for them. New Christians need discipleship to make sure they get the solid grounding in Christianity that will prepare them for a life long walk with God.

Three Important Relationships:

It has been said that every Christian needs 3 kinds of spiritual relationships in their lives. A Paul, a Barnabas, and a Timothy.

Paul – The apostle Paul founded many ministries and helped many Christians grow in their walk with God. Each of us needs at least one person (if not several people) to learn from. This has to be someone we trust, someone who we will give permission to ask us the hard questions about our lives, and someone whose guidance we are willing to give strong weight. This “Paul-figure” is committed to help us grow, to “disciple” us, and to prepare us for the challenges the lie ahead in our lives. The Paul in our lives will be someone who is more spiritually mature and probably a little older than ourself.

Barnabas – Barnabas was a Christian who often ministered along side of Paul. As we face the challenges of our day-to-day life, we need to surround ourselves with others who are at similar places in their walk with God. We need to have mutually encouraging relationships with these “Barnabas-figures.” These are the close friends that we can share our struggles with and pray easily with, as they are facing many of the same issues. While this is not technically “discipleship,” these relationships are instrumental in our Christian growth.

Timothy - Timothy was a younger Christian than Paul both, physically and spiritually. Yet Timothy would make a huge difference in the church as a pastor in Ephesus. Similarly, we should all seek to build up other believers. Even if we are relatively new in our Christian faith, God may put people in our lives that we are uniquely qualified to minister to, especially if we have an older “Paul” figure available to advise us. There are unique ways that we are blessed as we seek to pour our life into someone else. In fact, we should not be surprised if we are the ones who are blessed more by the relationship.

Where Do We Start?

We should start by taking an honest assessment of our relationships. If we prayerfully meditate on a few simple questions, we will probably find that we already have relationships that will tend toward the above categories:

To Find a Paul, ask:

Who do I learn from?

Who do I respect?

Who do I trust?

Who would I want to be more like (spiritually speaking)?



To Find a Barnabas, ask:
Who do I identify with?
Is there anyone I have a sense of camaraderie with?
Who encourages me to walk with God?

To Find a Timothy, ask:
Is there anyone who seeks me out for advice and usually follows it?
Who is dealing with questions, situations, or issues that God has brought me through?
Do I know someone who really seems to trust me?

If you don't have a Paul or Barnabas already in your life, you probably need to develop more Christian relationships.
If you don't have a Timothy in your life, start praying for God to use you in the lives of others.

End

The Compass is the discipleship curriculum for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this lesson. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org