

## A BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP

### God Reveals Himself

God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is the embodiment of love.<sup>1</sup> Even before Creation, God expressed love for humankind by working out the plan of salvation. Since the entrance of sin, however, humanity is separated from God and, on their own, cannot understand this kind of love. Therefore, God takes the initiative in self-revelation, wanting to restore the relationship with humanity and to save them from sin and its penalty.<sup>2</sup>

God's self-revelation is manifest through: (a) nature;<sup>3</sup> (b) prophecy;<sup>4</sup> (c) the life, death and resurrection of Jesus;<sup>5</sup> (d) the Holy Spirit;<sup>6</sup> (e) providential workings;<sup>7</sup> (f) miracles and other acts;<sup>8</sup> and (g) the Word.<sup>9</sup> God will continue to be revealed to those who obey His commands out of love.<sup>10</sup> In turn, the saved ones will be empowered to help reveal God's nature to others.<sup>11</sup>

### God Solves the Sin Problem

Humanity was created in the image of God, capable of love and fellowship with the Godhead and others, and with moral freedom to choose whether to obey and follow the Creator.<sup>12</sup> Adam and Eve were enjoying a daily relationship with God until sin (a distrust of God and obedience to the temptation of Satan) separated them from God and one another.<sup>13</sup> They exchanged their godly dignity and the truth about their Creator for the lies of a created being who has brought devastation and shame to all humanity.<sup>14</sup> Through Christ, God reconciled Himself with humanity and provided the way by which humanity could be restored to relationship with Himself and their fellow human beings.<sup>15</sup> Jesus revealed the deceptive, self-absorbed nature of Satan and all who follow him, while showing Himself to be a shepherd-Savior who died for His sheep to provide them with reconciliation and abundant life.<sup>16</sup>

### Jesus Calls Disciples to Follow Him and Abide in Him

Like sheep following a trusted voice, believers know the voice of their Shepherd and are called to follow.<sup>17</sup> They invite God's presence on a daily basis, and radical changes occur in the way they relate to the Creator and to others.<sup>18</sup> Through Christ's transforming grace, believers are called to imitate God "as dear children."<sup>19</sup> Through His Spirit they can come to a unique understanding of God's character and a relationship with God through a steadfast relationship of obedience.

Jesus commands us to abide in Him to receive life and to maintain a living relationship.<sup>20</sup> Abiding in Jesus means believing in Him as the Son of God, obeying what He says, loving one another within the community of God's people, extending that love by obeying Christ's command to bring the gospel to the world, and following His example to make disciples of all nations.<sup>21</sup>

### The Spirit Empowers New Birth, Growth, and Fruit

By accepting the influence of the Spirit, the sinner can experience new birth, and, through baptism, die and be resurrected with Christ.<sup>22</sup> A new life in Christ is characterized by spiritual growth that leads to unity with Jesus and others.<sup>23</sup> Like a baby who grows to adulthood and a

seed that develops into a tree, disciples will bear fruit through the Spirit as long as they stay connected to the Vine.<sup>24</sup>

Having spent three years discipling the Twelve, Jesus left them with the great gospel commission to follow His example in making disciples.<sup>25</sup> To empower them to accomplish that commission, He gave them His greatest gift, the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> They were to teach all things that Jesus taught.<sup>27</sup> Disciples today still grow and mature through the Spirit.<sup>28</sup> Like a farmer who prunes the plant in order to induce fruit bearing, the Holy Spirit, in harmony with the Word of God, “prunes” Christ’s disciples through conviction and correction.<sup>29</sup> Only a Spirit-led disciple can make another disciple for Jesus Christ.<sup>30</sup> Thus the life of a disciple extends the Master’s love and ministry to the world.

### **Jesus Calls Disciples to Love One Another and Build Up His Body**

God showed His love for the Church by sending His Son to die for her.<sup>31</sup> He also designed that His love for the Church manifest itself through His disciples. He calls them to the task of loving one another and of edifying and building up the Church.<sup>32</sup> The biblical teachings of the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit are the key to understanding how God loves and builds up the Church through His disciples. He provides every grace and ability that is needed to fulfill this commission.

The fruits of the Spirit<sup>33</sup> provide the graces through which God’s love is revealed in the relationships of disciples with one another. This fruit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The gifts of the Spirit, such as teaching, evangelizing, faith, and service, provide disciples with the ministries that build up the body of Christ.<sup>34</sup> God is responsible for the success of this work, only asking that His disciples serve as willing instruments in His hands.

### **Jesus Sends Disciples Into the World to Further His Kingdom**

Throughout history God has called men and women to testify of His goodness, share their faith, and invite those who did not know Him to follow.<sup>35</sup> As the first disciples of Christ were invited to follow and then were commissioned to “go and make disciples,” so each believer becomes part of a continuing line of witnesses who seek to expand the fellowship of believers.<sup>36</sup> In simple form Christian witness involves a passionate testimony of a personal encounter with Jesus and an invitation to follow Him.<sup>37</sup> Along with witnessing through preaching and proclamation, and seeking to model the exemplary life of Jesus, disciple-making also requires the support and mentoring of new followers and fellow believers.<sup>38</sup>

1. John 4:8.
2. Job 11:7, 8; Ps. 82:5; Prov. 4:19; Isa. 59:2, 9; 60:2, 3; Luke 1:76-79; John 1:5-9; 3:16-21; 8:12; 9:5; Acts 17:27; 1 Cor. 13:12; Eph. 2:4-9; 2 Pet. 1:19.
3. Ps. 8; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:20.
4. Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Heb 1:1.
5. John 1:14; Col. 1:21-23; Heb. 1:2, 3.
6. John 15:26; 16:14, 15.
7. Ps. 33:5; 107:43.
8. Matt. 12:11-13; John 11:14, 15, 38-44; 14:11.

9. Ex. 19; 20; Num. 12:7, 8; Deut. 8:3; Ps. 19:7-9; 119; Matt. 3:17; John 5:38, 39; Rom. 2:20; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:21.
10. Prov. 4:18; John 14:21; 15:15; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:12, 13.
11. Matt. 5:14-16.
12. Gen. 1:26, 27; Josh. 24:15; 1 John 4:12, 19.
13. Gen. 3:12; Isa. 53:6; 59:2.
14. Rom. 1:18-24.
15. 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:13-17.
16. John 8:44; 10:10-14.
17. John 10:14, 27.
18. Ezek. 36:26; Rom. 8:6; John 15:15.
19. Eph. 4:31&ndash;5:2.
20. John 15:4, 5.
21. Matt. 28:18-22; John 3: 16; 13:15; 1 John 3:24; 4:15.
22. Gal. 2:20.
23. John 17:23.
24. John 15:5; 1 Cor. 3:1, 2; Eph. 2:10; 4:13; 1 Pet 2:2; 2 Pet 1:4; 1 John 4:13.
25. Matt. 28:19, 20; John 13:15.
26. Matt. 28:20.
27. John 14:26.
28. Ps. 139:23, 24; Rom. 9:1; Phi. 3:15; James 1:2-5.
29. 2 Tim. 3:16.
30. John 20.
31. John 3:16.
32. John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 14:19; 1 Cor. 12:27; 14:12; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 11-16; Phil. 1:27; 1Thess. 3:12; 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:8; 3:11, 23; 4:11, 12; 2 John 1:5.
33. Gal. 5:22, 23.
34. 1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4; 1 John 4.
35. Gen. 18:18, 19; Deut. 4:9, 10; 6:4-9; 20-25; Ruth 1:2, 16; 1 Kings 17:7-24; 2 Kings 20:15; Esther 4:13-16; Prov. 6:20-23; 22:6; Isa. 49:6; Dan. 1:8; John 4:46-53; Acts 26:1-29; Eph. 6:4.
36. Matt. 4:19; 28:19, 20; John 20:21; 1 John 1:2-4.
37. John 1:40-42; 4:29.
38. Deut. 6:4-9; Isa. 58:6-12; 61:1-4; Matt. 25:34-40; Luke 1:36, 46; 4:18-21; Acts 8:35; 12:25; 15:36-39; Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Tim. 1:3&ndash;2:26: 4:11.

## THE FOUR PROCESSES



Acknowledging that growing personally as a disciple and helping others to grow occurs in community, this discipleship model includes four cyclical processes.

Three processes describe the disciple's journey while following Jesus:

**Connecting:** GROWING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, SELF, AND OTHERS;

**Understanding:** GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS AND HIS TEACHINGS;

**Ministering:** GROWING IN PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S MISSION OF REVELATION, RECONCILIATION, AND RESTORATION.

The fourth process describes the disciple's journey while making disciples:

**Equipping:** GROWING THE BODY OF CHRIST BY WALKING ALONGSIDE OTHER DISCIPLES IN ORDER TO SUPPORT, NURTURE, AND STRENGTHEN OTHERS TO EXPERIENCE THE JOURNEY WITH JESUS OF CONNECTING, UNDERSTANDING, AND MINISTERING.

All four processes in the GROWING DISCIPLES model are centered on and accomplished through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Separating these processes is artificial, but it does allow us to bring clarity to vital aspects of discipleship that might otherwise be overlooked.

### Connecting

Christian discipleship occurs in relationships. It begins with responding to Jesus' call to connect with and abide in Him. Through this transforming connection with Him, we come to know ourselves as Jesus created us to be, we appreciate our infinite value to Him, and we grow in a more balanced view of our strengths and weaknesses. We are then able to connect with those around us in more healing and redeeming ways.

## Understanding

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Relationships grow through deepening our understanding of who each other is at their core. It's the same in our relationship with Jesus. Through Scripture we encounter God and come to understand more clearly the character and mission of Christ.

## Ministering

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In response to God's love, disciples minister to others by participating in God's mission of revelation, reconciliation, and restoration. As they connect with Jesus and learn of His unfailing love, they are eager to invite others to share in the joy that they experience as His followers.

## Equipping

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Christ described the church as His body to show the influence of the health of one part on the health of all other parts. This metaphor helps disciples understand their role to walk alongside one another to support, nurture, and strengthen one another.

*A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call of Christ to follow Him. (Ogden, 2007)*

Discipleship is a lifelong process of transformation and ever-deepening maturity through the work of the Holy Spirit that aims for the likeness of Jesus Christ to be reproduced in the life of the disciple.

Discipling occurs in relationship; it is not something we do alone. It is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to support, nurture, and strengthen one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ.

Even though discipleship can be described simply as "following Jesus," it is a complex combination of our entire experience as Christians. The **Growing Disciples** model is an effort to help us think more clearly and deeply about our growth as disciples.

## ABOUT THE GROWING DISCIPLES FRAMEWORK



Because discipleship is life, and occurs within the loving relationships in the body of Christ, the processes and content of discipleship cannot be reduced to statements in a grid. Thus, the GROWING DISCIPLES FRAMEWORK is designed to serve as a skeleton of basic characteristics of discipleship. It is a structure around which individuals, groups, and churches can organize experiences to edify the followers of Christ. Those who disciple others can use the framework to create learning events in any method of discipling such as parenting, mentoring, teaching, or facilitating small groups.

In the GROWING DISCIPLES FRAMEWORK, COMMITMENTS for the growing Christian are articulated for each of the individual processes. Within each process, COMMITMENTS are further divided into key aspects of spiritual growth called INDICATORS. These INDICATORS represent a lifetime of following Jesus.

This Framework of PROCESSES, COMMITMENTS, AND INDICATORS serves as a guide to outline the scope of discipling. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, current discipling can be evaluated using this FRAMEWORK. Some COMMITMENTS and INDICATORS may have been strongly addressed while others may have been overlooked. This evaluation will assist in making informed decisions for improving discipling.

Greg Ogden, DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007)

## CONNECTING

### GROWING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, SELF, AND OTHERS.

#### *As a growing disciple, I am:*

1. Developing a dynamic relationship with God.
2. Developing an identity that is complete in Christ.
3. Developing Christ-centered family relationships.
4. Developing Christ-centered relationships in the local and global church as a member of the body of Christ.
5. Developing positive relationships with those outside the church to fulfill the Gospel commission.

## UNDERSTANDING

### GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS AND HIS TEACHINGS.

#### ***As a growing disciple, I am:***

1. Learning that Christ calls me to be His disciple.
2. Learning that God is the source of life.
3. Learning about the human fall from God's original plan, and its consequences.
4. Learning that God has provided everything that is needed for the redemption of human beings.
5. Learning that God has provided everything needed for the restoration of human beings into the image of God.

## MINISTERING

### GROWING IN PARTICIPATION IN GOD'S MISSION OF REVELATION, RECONCILIATION, AND RESTORATION

#### ***As a growing disciple, I am:***

1. Seeking opportunities in all daily activities to minister to others.
2. Investing myself in the discipleship of others.
3. Recognizing and responding to the needs of God's suffering children in the local community and around the world.
4. Supporting the ministries of the local and global church with personal resources.
5. Embracing the evangelistic mission of the church to tell the world the story of Jesus.

## EQUIPPING

### GROWING THE BODY OF CHRIST BY WALKING ALONGSIDE OTHER DISCIPLES IN ORDER TO SUPPORT, NURTURE, AND STRENGTHEN IN LOVE.

#### ***As a growing disciple, I am:***

1. Helping other disciples engage in a transformational devotional life.
2. Helping other disciples build Christ-like relationships.
3. Helping other disciples study and obey God's word.
4. Helping other disciples live a contagious, holistic Christian life.
5. Helping other disciples discern where God is working in His world and in their lives.
6. Helping other disciples use spiritual gifts in fulfilling a personal call to mission and ministry.

**Growing Disciple Inventory – Short Form**

**Christ calls us to follow Him as disciples.** Disciples are those who have come to Jesus for eternal life and are becoming like Him as they live in relationship with others. Discipleship is not something we do alone, only on Sabbath or during a five-week seminar. For the Christian, discipleship is life.

**Instructions:** Respond to the 20 statements below. Score your answers. Serve and equip others using strengths. Invite a Christian to help you grow in weaker areas. Learn more about the Growing Disciples Model at [inventory.growingdisciples.info](http://inventory.growingdisciples.info)

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How often is this true of you? Circle one number for each.	R	N	O	R	V
	a	o	u	e	r
	r	t	i	g	i
	e	t	t	u	t
	l	C	e	l	e
	y	f	a		
	/	t	O	r	c
	N	e	f	l	i
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	v	e	n	/	c
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I am deepening my relationship with God.	1	2	3	4
I keep learning more about what it means to be a growing Christian.	1	2	3	4
I am sharing my faith through my daily activities, eg. work, study, play.	1	2	3	4
I am encouraging	1	2	3	4

others to spend time with God daily.				
I am discovering who I am in relationship to Christ.	1	2	3	4
I keep learning more about who God is.	1	2	3	4
I am discipling one or more members of the body of Christ.	1	2	3	4

I am teaching others how to build Christ-like relationships.	1	2	3	4
I am developing Christ-centered family relationships.	1	2	3	4
I keep learning more about the human fall from God's original plan.	1	2	3	4
I volunteer to	1	2	3	4

serve in my community without reward, outside my family.				
I am helping others to study and obey God's Word.	1	2	3	4
I am developing Christ-like relationships with church members.	1	2	3	4
I keep learning more	1	2	3	4

e about God's grace and plan of salvation.				
I am supporting my church's ministries with my time and money.	1	2	3	4
I am showing others how to live as committed, healthy Christians.	1	2	3	4
I am developing	1	2	3	4

g posit ive relati onsh ips with thos e who are not part of my chur ch or famil y.				
I keep learn ing mor e abou t how God has provi ded ever ythin g need ed to resto re me to His imag e.	1	2	3	4
I am helpi ng	1	2	3	4

my church tell the story of Jesus .				
I am teaching others how to use spiritual gifts in God's work .	1	2	3	4
<b>TOTALS</b>	T	o	t	a
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	.	P	l	a
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