

discipling CHURCH

FROM STRANGERS TO MISSIONARIES—A 4-STEP STRATEGY FOR CHURCH BOARDS



*"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."
Matthew 4:19 (NIV)*

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Overview

*"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."
Matthew 4:19 (NIV)*

The call of Jesus for disciples was not a call to become members but to become missionaries. Jesus was calling strangers into a process of transformation with the result that they become missionaries for the Kingdom of God.

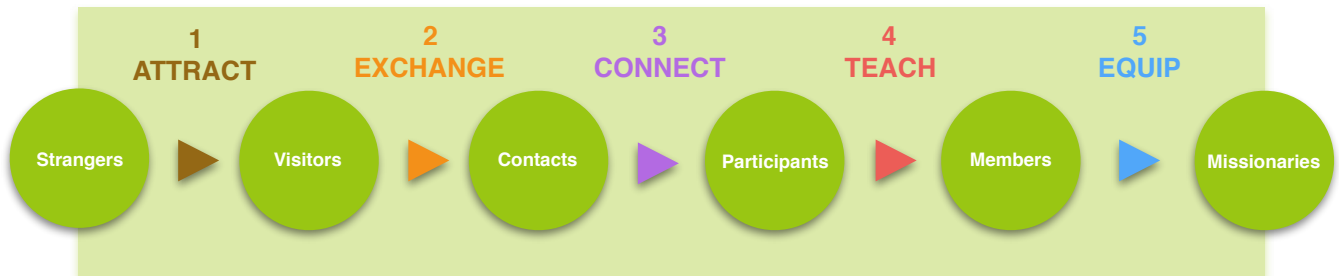
Nurturing missionary disciples does not happen by accident or with ease. It is a combination of the intentional work of the Holy Spirit in cooperation with the perseverance, boldness and tenacity of the local church as it fights against its own frailty and continuous, supernatural, opposition.

The disciplingCHURCH concept is designed to help your church board create a system across your church to prepare for this task. What follows is a 4-step process for your church to foster an environment where discipling is at the heart of everything you do, moving strangers all the way to becoming missionaries.

-  1 Understanding the 5 Discipling Actions to build a discipling organisation
-  2 Organising your database around the discipling process
-  3 Understanding how people grow—for Bible teachers and leaders
-  4 Creating a strategic plan

My prayer is that these tools will help to build a both a foundation and a culture for discipling in your church, that you will be successful in partnering Jesus to make missionary disciples when he declared, "Come follow me...and I will send you out to fish for people." (Matthew 4:19)

UNDERSTANDING THE 5 DISCIPLING ACTIONS



The discipling process above focuses on 5 Discipling Actions that enables your church board to create a coordinated strategy—moving an individual from being a stranger all the way through to becoming a missionary for Jesus Christ. Do note that these 5 Discipling Actions are not describing the spiritual journey of an individual (see step 3 for this), nor are they explaining the spiritual programmes a church may use (see step 4). Rather, this is an organisational framework that gives church decision-makers an overview of the stages required to build a discipling organisation.

Let's look at each of these five Discipling Actions in more detail.

1—**Attract** Overview



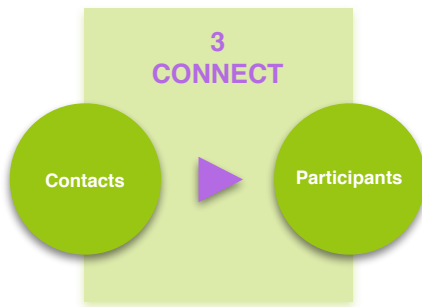
You want to attract people towards God and His church. You want people to say to themselves, "that looks interesting" or "this will really help me!" The result of attracting people is that they want to visit you with a sense that you can help them in the next step in their spiritual journey. This concept of attraction must permeate the entire discipling process. It is about providing valuable content to the visitor, not simply forcing on your visitor something you think they must need.

While we want to attract everyone to Christ, there are some people that God is already working with and are open to His leading. These are the people we want to reach out to with something that they will really appreciate.

2—**Exchange** Overview

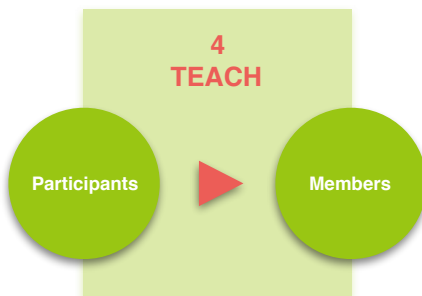


Once you have attracted visitors, the next step is to convert those visitors into contacts by obtaining their contact information. At the very least, you'll need an email address or a telephone number. Without this contact information you have nothing to work with. Contact information is extremely valuable currency, so in order for your visitors to offer up that currency willingly, you need to offer them something in return. This exchange comes in the form of providing excellent content, like books/eBooks, how-to articles, sermon notes etc. It needs to be content that is interesting and valuable to your visitors. It is content that the Holy Spirit will prompt them to request. You don't need to force it on them.



3—Connect Overview

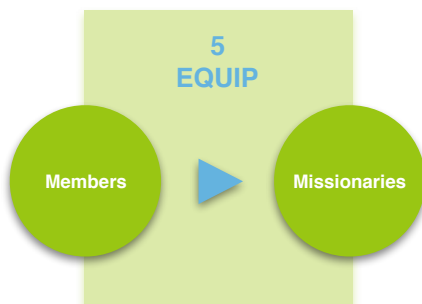
Once you have attracted visitors and have found a way to keep in contact with them by them requesting valuable content you are making available, the next step is to provide opportunities for them to participate in community life. This happens by providing different opportunities for them to establish and deepen their relationship with you. Again, the opportunities you provide to contacts for connection must be seen as valuable and useful, compelling and attractive.



4—Teach Overview

You see people are participating in community life and enjoying the resources you are providing that makes a difference in their lives. The next step is to move these participants to become members.

This happens when you provide meaningful and attractive teaching. This teaching should be compelling because it exalts the person of Jesus and everything that He stands for, with the result that your participants want to devote everything they are, and have, to God.



5—Equip Overview

Membership of a church is not a place of arrival for a participant. Jesus' call to the first disciples was not to remain with Him and listen to his teaching but to launch out into the world as missionaries. Becoming equipped as a missionary is the ultimate aim of your church attracting visitors. You only fulfil the Great Commission as a church board when you are intentionally nurturing missionaries. Equipping missionaries is perhaps the greatest measurement of success in the local church.

ORGANISING YOUR DATABASE AROUND THE 5 DISCIPLING ACTIONS

The Discipling Journey List is the official church database that is maintained by the Interest Coordinator who sits on your board. In this database people are listed according to where they are in the Discipling Journey. This enables the Church board to evaluate and plan programmes that are intentionally created to move individuals along the Discipling Journey to the ultimate goal of developing missionaries.

As the final stage of the process is to nurture missionaries, and being baptised does not mean someone is active in missions, the category of Member is subdivided into three, a) non-attending, b) attending but inactive, c) active internally. This list is confidential, both because it contains contact details, but also because it categorises people in a way that may be considered subjective. Do make sure you follow current privacy laws relating to databases.

Discipling Journey List for Interest Coordinators (CONFIDENTIAL)						
		Name	Surname	Mobile	Email	Address
ATTRACT	Strangers					
	Visitors					
EXCHANGE						
CONNECT	Contacts					
TEACH	Participants					
EQUIP	Members					
	Nonattending					
	Inactive					
	Active internally					
	Missionaries					

UNDERSTANDING HOW PEOPLE GROW

The 5 discipling actions provide an overview of how you will organise your church for creating disciples. Now we will look at a 5-stage model for transformation that will nurture the spiritual life of disciples for your teachers and leaders to work with.



This 5-stage model of spiritual transformation shows two things: Firstly, the core components of an individual's communion with God, and secondly, the sequential process that shows how these components fit together. This model can be used by teachers as they evaluate how they teach and look for evidence of spiritual maturity in the lives of their students. It can also be used by departmental leaders to direct the focus of their programming so that their programmes are intentionally moving people through this transformational process in their communion with God—which leads to their restoration in the image of God.

Here is a brief explanation of each of the five stages.

Openness

1 openness

As we see in the life of Pharaoh (Exodus 7:13) and even Jesus' own disciples (Mark 8:17), nothing can happen in an individual's life unless they are open to God. By nature, we do not desire openness with God (Romans 3:10-12). So from the beginning, God has always initiated communion (Genesis 3:8-9). People's spiritual journey begins as they open themselves to God's initiative for relationship. This enables them to move towards the place where they have the possibility to "contemplate the Lord's glory" (Psalm 27:4) and therefore become "transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

- What causes people to become closed to God—even as Christians, and what causes them to become open?

- If God initiates communion with people, how can you as a teacher or leader foster environments where people will become open to God?
- What evidence indicates that people you work with are open or closed to God?

Faith

2 faith

Faith can only take root once people are open to God. A growing faith indicates a growing commitment to Jesus. Broken people cannot change themselves. Only God can transform. So learning to trust God—believing what He has promised—is foundational to all transformation. Without faith we cannot be transformed (Matthew 13:58), nor can we please God (Hebrews 11:6).

- Everything comes from God, even faith (Romans 12:3). Therefore, how can you as a teacher or leader foster growing faith through what you are planning?
- What evidence indicates that people you are working with are growing in faith?

Dying to self

3 dying to self

Without faith, people will not be willing to devote everything they have and are to God and commit to putting to death their sinful nature (Romans 6:3-7). Yet total abandonment, becoming a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) is unavoidable if we are “to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2) Indeed, Jesus’ call to die daily is the doorway into a life of missionary discipleship (Luke 9:23).

- How would you explain how people die to self?
- How can you as a teacher or leader model being “a living sacrifice” to those you lead?
- What evidence indicates that people you work with are increasingly dying to the sinful self?

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

4 baptism of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit fills the space that is created by the death of the sinful nature. Divine fire fell on sacrifices in the tabernacle and temple (Leviticus 9:24, 2 Chronicles 7:1). The Holy Spirit fell upon Jesus after he came up out of His watery grave at His baptism and upon the disciples humbling themselves in the upper room (Acts 2:1-4). So as people learn to become “living sacrifices”, devoting themselves utterly to God, Jesus will baptise them with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33). This baptism of the Holy Spirit is critical if we are to have a ministry and influence that reveals supernatural power.

- As a teacher or leader, how would you explain how one of your students can become baptised by the Holy Spirit? How would you illustrate this from your own experience?
- What evidence indicates that people you work with are baptised by the Holy Spirit?

- What problems would your students and church face if those who are committing themselves to Jesus are not baptised by the Holy Spirit every day?

Mission



When you and the people you serve are baptised by the Holy Spirit, the mission you pursue for God will be characterised by His supernatural power (see Jesus' example in Luke 3:21-4:19). Your efforts will not simply be the sum of what you can do, but of what God can do (Zechariah 4:6). God will send people to your church because He knows the people there are trustworthy—people who are truly working in harmony with Him and His character as they depend on His power to serve.

- It is too easy to teach about God in a way that your content remains only as information in people's minds without re-shaping their practice. How will you teach in so that mission with divine power will actually be accomplished?
- What evidence will you look for that reveals that mission is happening in the lives of those you are leading, and that this mission reveals supernatural power rather than simply human activity?

Applying the transformational model for Bible teachers

To be answered before teaching a lesson

1. How is my lesson designed to foster maturity in one or more of these areas?
2. How is my lesson designed to move a person to the next stage?

To be answered after teaching a lesson

3. What evidence did I see of
 - a. People maturing in one or more of these areas?
 - b. People moving to the next stage?

Applying the transformational model for departmental leaders

To be answered satisfactorily before your church board votes a programme

1. How is your programme designed to foster maturity in one of these areas?
2. How is your programme designed to move a person to the next stage?

Assessment by departmental leader before your church board (after/during programmes)

3. What evidence did you see of
 - a. People maturing in one or more of these areas?
 - b. People moving to the next stage?

CREATING A STRATEGIC PLAN

The discipling initiatives you plan on your board will be shaped by the information you have gathered from the previous 3 steps. This is how you could put your strategy together.

1. Use the 5 discipling actions to direct and focus the key initiatives of your board.
2. Once all your contacts and members are placed within the stages of the Discipling Journey, your leaders will be able to see which of the 5 discipling actions need to be emphasised depending on who, and how many people, are at each stage of the Discipling Journey.
3. The 5 stages of communion with God will give your leaders insight into the spiritual dynamics that need to be included into your initiatives in order to foster internal transformation.
4. Use a planning sheet (see on the following page) so your leaders can get an overview of your disciplingCHURCH strategy. This sheet includes a) the name of your initiative, b) which stages of communion with God are focused on, c) the months the initiative will be implemented, and d) the department responsible. Having such an overview gives you the ability to spot weaknesses and provides a tool for evaluating your progress.
5. A final question your board needs to address is how you will keep yourselves as leaders and teachers accountable to following through and assessing your disciplingCHURCH strategy.

