



We are called to disciple the peoples of the earth and as many individuals as possible within each people group.

Rick Wood



Dear Reader,

It is the greatest need in the world today. It is the most fundamental command that Jesus ever gave us. Yet the Church as a whole is not doing it. The Church and the world are suffering greatly today for our disobedience to His command *to make disciples*. Jesus said in Matt. 28:19, “Therefore, go and *make disciples of all nations*.” This verse has been widely misunderstood only to mean evangelizing individuals in countries.

In the Greek it is calling us to “disciple the nations.” The word translated “nations” is *ethne* from which we get the term ethnic group or peoples. This is not a term of political boundaries but of ethnic diversity within the various countries of the world. We are called to disciple the peoples of the earth and as many individuals as possible within each people group. We are called to disciple both peoples and persons.

But what does it mean to, “disciple a people?”

Discipling peoples involves far more than just evangelizing or “getting people saved.” This is an essential first step but it involves so much more. It is not just about planting churches, as critical as this is to the overall process. It involves developing specific strategies and approaches for each people group that will take into consideration their specific cultural and historical backgrounds and the environment in which they live so that believers within that people are disciplined in a culturally relevant way. A one size fits all approach to discipleship will not work.



However, there are

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some common elements that must characterize all effective discipleship efforts within a people.

1. Discipleship must be **biblical**. God wants us to develop disciples who will think and live out of a biblical worldview. He does not want people to simply give intellectual assent to the truths of the Gospel and place their “Christian beliefs and practices” on top of an underlying worldview that is left largely unchanged. Every people on earth creates a worldview for themselves that enables them to make sense of the world in which they live. Discipleship that results in both radical and social transformation requires a change at the worldview level. biblical discipleship results in elements of their worldview, that are inconsistent with the Bible, being changed over time. Shallow discipleship leads to syncretism, the mixing of some biblical elements with aspects of culture that are incompatible with the Bible.
2. Discipleship must be **intentional and intensive**. Just *attending church on Sunday is not discipleship*. It must be a deliberate effort to teach sound doctrine and encourage the believer to live out an intimate relationship with God in the context of daily life. It cannot be a passive process if it is to be effective. It must be a comprehensive life-long process in order to prepare people to confront their surrounding culture and worldviews with the claims of Jesus Christ.
3. Discipleship must be **interpersonal**. Some call it mentoring, but whatever the label, discipleship must be the personal sharing of spiritual life from one person to another. The classroom lecture style, so popular in the West, can pass on information.

But the application and internalization of biblical truth, values and behaviors that lead to the development of a wholly biblical worldview is intended to take place in the context of Godly relationships. At first the pastor or missionary must do this work, but with time and the multiplication of believers, every believer can become involved in the discipleship process. We cannot make the pastors the only ones responsible for discipleship.

4. Discipleship must be **self-reproducible**, not dependant on outside funds or professional clergy in order to multiply and grow the Church within each people. We must commit ourselves to this process of discipleship within each people if we are to see the unreached peoples reached and the stagnant churches in reached peoples revitalized.

The Disaster of Disobedience

The evidence of looming danger is growing around us daily. Surveys and polls by many organizations paint a picture of growing unbelief and decline in the Church of the West. At the present time, the Church of the so called “Global South” is growing rapidly, but not so in Europe and North America. In the United States we see over half of our young people who go away to college claiming to be “born again” Evangelicals lose their faith by the time they graduate. We address this problem in the two articles from Summit Ministries that start on page 37. The statistics on the beliefs of the next generation are scary. Just 9 percent of our “born again” teens believe in moral absolutes and an astounding 63 percent of teens in Christian schools do not believe Jesus is the Son of God. See the article on page 34. Even if these statistics are only half accurate, we still have a very big problem that must be dealt with if we are to see the next generation of young people be a powerful mission force and not a mission field. Because of the impact of Western culture on the rest of the world, the health of the church in the West must be taken seriously.

I believe the problem is the failure of the Church in the West to adequately disciple its people both young and old. The unbelief we see in the younger generation is also present in the Church

as a whole. It is only becoming more pronounced in each succeeding generation. We must seek to obey the command of Christ to make disciples if we are to succeed in reversing this ominous trend.

Every week our people are being bombarded with the anti-biblical worldviews of Humanism, Marxism and Postmodernism, promoted by the academic, media, entertainment and cultural institutions of the West. These institutions have become tenacious adversaries to biblical faith and values. Ninety-nine percent of the Hollywood elites that produce the entertainment our kids and the world watch believe that it is their job to undermine biblical values. Our kids are literally being entertained to death. Based on the statistics, the Hollywood elites and their accomplices in the culture are succeeding in their goal of destroying the biblical faith of our young people. Our people spend 109 waking hours a week outside of church and just 2 to 4 hours inside the church. We must disciple our people so that they not only can defend their faith, but also become

cultural change agents as they follow Christ and seek to make disciples of the people around them.

The purpose of discipleship is not just to get people saved and going to heaven. It is to glorify God in all that we do and to show to the world what God is like. Our job as followers of Christ is to be agents of change within our respective cultures. Every people group and every culture on Earth has been impacted by the forces of evil and needs to be transformed by the power of Christ. This societal transformation takes place as people come to faith in Christ and begin to obey His commands to love their neighbors as themselves by meeting the real needs of people who are suffering and by standing for biblical values as representatives of the King of righteousness.

William Carey, the pioneer of the modern Protestant missionary movement did just this as he served the people of India in the 1790s. He translated the Bible into dozens of different language, started schools, led people to Christ and challenged the practices within

the Indian culture that were unbiblical, such as widow-burning. As a result, he helped to bring societal transformation and is greatly honored by the people of India. We can and must do the same today within every people group through effective discipleship.

For those in the West, we must be willing and able to confront the dark forces in our own culture and the worldviews that they promote. We must prepare our people to do so. Some recent efforts are noteworthy. The courses provided by Summit Ministries, The Truth Project sponsored by Focus on the Family, and the INSIGHT course provided by our ministry (See p. 44) are all good options to start with. Discipleship will involve more than these courses, but courses like these are a great help for those serious about deep level discipleship. Unless we are developing young people of sound doctrine and solid spiritual disciplines, who are able to defend a biblical worldview and its values and beliefs, we will have nothing to offer the world as missionaries. Effective discipleship is the essential element in the future of world evangelization. f

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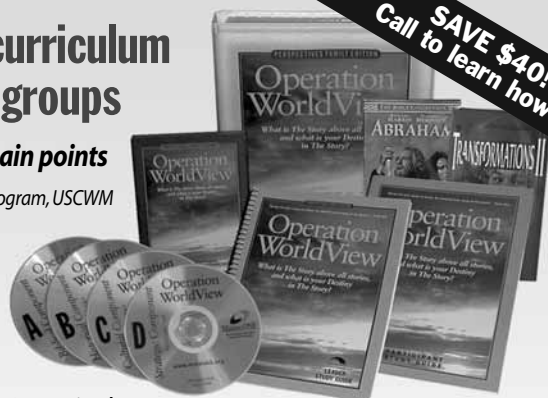
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