

BUILDING A DISCIPLING CULTURE

Much ink and many pages have been devoted to all of the missional issues facing the Western church today. As our culture becomes more post-Christian with each passing day, we are all realizing that what has worked in the past is no longer working. That we are far less effective for the Kingdom than we were even 10 years ago. But we would suggest it isn't because we don't know what the Great Commission states or the imperatives of the Gospel, or that our church services just aren't getting it done. It's because we are in the midst of a discipling crisis in the Western church. The people sitting in our pews are rarely becoming like the people we read about in Scripture. They may come to a worship service, join a small group or even live, but their lives just don't seem to look like Jesus' life.

The truth of the matter is that we don't have a missional problem or leadership problem in the Western church. We have a discipling problem. If we make disciples like Jesus made them, we'll never have a problem finding leaders or seeing new people coming to faith.

The central issue is that we have no idea how to make disciples who can do the things that Jesus did for the reasons Jesus did them. *Building a Discipling Culture* is the product of more than 25 years of hands-on discipling practice in a post-Christian context that has turned into a worldwide discipling movement, dealing specifically with how to make the types of missional disciples Jesus spoke of. We all want to make disciples. Most of us are unsure how to do it.

Dallas Willard put it this way: "Every church needs to be able to answer two questions. One, do we have a plan for making disciples? Two, does our plan work?"

For most of our church communities, we have a plan, but the plan isn't working. If you find yourself in this situation, this book is for you.

There is one key idea for this book. You don't build churches in order to make disciples. You make disciples and you get the church. If only the churches in the West and especially here in North America could grasp this concept, it would have a dynamic impact. Mike Breen not only saves the idea, he demonstrates in practical terms how to turn it into a harvest. It is the way of Jesus and is only possible through the impartation of His Spirit, through the forming of communities of apprentices of Jesus who are prepared to embark on a pilgrimage with him and engage in his ongoing mission in the world.

Mike Breen is one of the most effective leaders I know—not just because of his deeds, but because of the fruit he's born in our church and ministry. I highly recommend this book.



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MIKE BREEN AND STEVE COCHRAN

HOW TO RELEASE A MISSIONAL MOVEMENT
BY DISCIPLING PEOPLE LIKE JESUS DID

THE CHALLENGE

We live in a country where the Christian faith is usually discussed, experienced and observed through the things we don't agree about. And as you probably know, these places where we diverge often to lead to, shall we say, "heated" arguments.

Protestant. Conservative. Mainline. Evangelical. Post-modern. Emergent. Neo-Reformed. Neo-orthodox. Fundamentalists. Ancient Future. Neo-monastic. Seeker Sensitive. Seeker Aware. Bible-believing. Charismatic. Dispensationalist. We could go on and on.

There are endless things that divide us: theologically, philosophically, practically. Some of those divisions are very real and quite important.

For all of the things that divide us, we cannot deny that we are sensing and watching some pretty seismic shifts happening in the world in which we live. And for all that separates us, we are sharing that common experience.

Recently, we commissioned a study to get to the heart of this. Our goal wasn't to figure out what divided us. We wanted to figure out what we are all experiencing together as orthodox Christian leaders. What are the questions that unite us?

More specifically, apart from denomination, biblical hermeneutic, theological framework or practical application, what are the things that are keeping all orthodox Christian leaders awake at night?

We were not trying to find the Creedal statements that everyone agrees on. We were digging for something visceral, something deeply emotional. What were the questions that were so true, so deeply disturbing, so concerning, that they sliced through all of the things that would normally divide us?

What are the questions that keep *all of us* up at night?

What we found probably isn't that surprising, but the singular voice with which these questions were asked was nothing short of stunning. These were the questions:

- What does the church of the future look like?
- How do we reach people who don't know Jesus?

As we dug around, continued to ask questions, listened and pieced together what people were saying, another question surfaced.

It was a question that people danced through, tip-toed around, but never once articulated explicitly. Yet so many of their responses indicated this was a question that they desperately needed an answer to. It was the question that no one was actually asking or had the courage to ask out loud. It is the question people don't want to admit not having the answer to.

Yet it is the question that everything else hinges on.

The answer leads to the future of the church. The answer teaches us how to reach people who don't know Jesus. The answer is everything.

And yet, either we haven't realized we should be asking it or we can't seem to push ourselves to ask the question. It's as if it's embarrassing to even ask. Isn't this something we should have figured out by now? You could argue we are the most educated people who have ever lived. Why are we wrestling with this question, and why don't we have good answers for it?

This is *the* question.

How do we make disciples?

THERE IS NO "PLAN B"

The problem is that most of us have been educated and trained to build, serve and lead the organization of the church. Most of us have actually never been trained to make disciples. Seminary degrees, church classes and training seminars teach us to grow our volunteer base, form system and organizational structures or preach sermons on Sunday mornings and assimilate newcomers from the Sunday service. As we look around as Christendom is crumbling and the landscape of the church is forever changed, a stark revelation emerges: Most of us have been trained and educated for a world that no longer exists.

However, the call to make disciples still remains. It never wavers and never changes. Make disciples.

Here's the thing that can be difficult to wrap our minds around: If you make

IF YOU MAKE DISCIPLES, YOU ALWAYS GET THE CHURCH. BUT IF YOU MAKE A CHURCH, YOU RARELY GET DISCIPLES.

disciples, you always get the church. But if you make a church, you rarely get disciples.

Most of us have become quite good at the church thing. And yet, disciples are the only thing that Jesus cares about, and it's the only number that Jesus is counting. Not our attendance or budget or buildings. He wants to know if we are "making disciples." Many of us serve in or lead churches where we have hundreds or even thousands of people showing up on Sunday. But we have to honestly answer this

question: Do their lives look like the lives of the people we see in Scripture? Are we just good at getting people together once a week and maybe into a small group, or are we actually good at producing the types of people we read about in the New Testament? Have we shifted our criteria for a good disciple as someone who shows up to our stuff, gives money and occasionally feeds poor people?

Effective discipleship builds the church, not the other way around. We need to understand the church as the *effect* of discipleship and not the *cause*. If you set out to build the church, there is no guarantee you will make disciples. It is far more likely that you will create consumers who depend on the spiritual services that religious professionals provide.

Now one of the buzzwords around today is the word "missional." People want to create missional churches or missional programs or missional small groups.

The problem is that we don't have a "missional" problem or a leadership

problem in the Western church. We have a discipleship problem. If you know how to disciple people well, you will always get mission. Always. You see, somewhere along the way we started separating being "missional" from being a disciple, as if somehow the two could be separated. Pastors started saying they didn't want to be inwardly-focused so they stopped investing in the people in their churches so they could focus on people outside their churches.

Granted, we should focus on people who don't know Jesus yet, but Jesus himself gave us the model for doing that: *Disciple people*. If you know how to actually make disciples, you'll reach people who don't know Jesus. Because that's simply what disciples do. That was Jesus' whole plan. If you disciple people, as these people do mission in their everyday comings and goings, with the work and shaping of the Spirit, the future of the church will emerge.

WE DON'T HAVE A "MISSIONAL" PROBLEM. WE HAVE A DISCIPLESHIP PROBLEM.

It all starts with making disciples.

Jesus has not called you to *build* his church. In fact, in all of the Gospels he mentions the church only two times. One time he mentions it, it's about conflict resolution. The other time? To say that *he will build his church*. Our job, our only job and the last instructions he gave us, was to *make* disciples. And out of this we will get the church. Out of this, the future will emerge, and out of this, there will be a missional wave the likes of which we have never seen.

What we want to do in this book is give you the basics of how we have learned to disciple people over the past twenty-five to thirty years. We learned to do this in the crucible of post-Christian Europe where, in the place where many of these

THE JESUS MODEL

ideas and practices sprung up, less than 1% of people were attending church, and a missional revolution began. What we have found, over and over again, is that if you disciple people it will always lead to mission. We've seen this in Europe. In Africa and South America, in Asia and yes...in the United States. Jesus' model for seeing heaven colliding into earth, for seeing the Kingdom of God advance in community, for seeing the world put to rights and people becoming Christians, was discipleship. Period. That was his whole deal. So if you're counting converts, budget or buildings first and foremost, you're not counting the things that Jesus counted, and you're not counting the thing that will change the world: Disciples.

We want to be clear: We are not saying this is the only way to disciple people or even the best way. This method has worked in shaping us, teaching us to be learners of Jesus, and has now successfully shaped and transformed communities all over the world. It isn't a perfect system because there are no perfect systems (which is particularly true when you realize discipleship is a relational endeavor depending on broken people living in the grace of God!). We humbly offer this book and our journey as a possible way of moving forward and once again taking seriously the Great Commission of *making disciples*.

Monty Roberts spent his youth in the high prairies of the United States rounding up wild mustangs. He'd watch his abusive father tie the new horses to a post with a bridle and rope, then frighten them with a blanket so they would attempt to run away. By repeating this process over and over, his father was eventually able to break the spirit of the horse and control it in any way he wanted. He observed another popular way to break a horse was to tie it to a tree or post and beat the horse until its will was broken and the horse would submit to its master.

Watching this happen, Monty began to think there had to be another way to train a horse, something that was more effective and more compassionate.

So he took to the plains.

Monty observed how the wild horses communicated with each other, particularly observing the position of the lead mare of the herd as a new horse attempted to join the herd. When a young stallion attempted to join the herd, the lead mare would turn toward him, flatten her ears and look directly into his eyes: the language and position of challenge. The stallion would stop his approach toward the mare, adopting the position of a juvenile horse, a foal, by pawing the ground and bowing in submission. The mare would then turn her flank toward the

new horse and lift her ears, the offer of invitation. This was a powerful position of vulnerability for the lead mare, as when she exposed her flank, she exposed the part of her body that predators would always attack. It was a body position of vulnerability and openness.

The young stallion, given this invitation, would inch closer to the lead mare.

Then the lead mare would turn towards the young stallion, flatten her ears and make direct eye contact: Challenge again.

This process of invitation and challenge would be repeated until the two would eventually touch (an exhilarating moment called *join-up*), and at that point, the young stallion would be admitted to the herd.

Monty began exploring whether he could replicate the process of alternating between invitation and challenge in training a horse. He found that when he acted like a lead horse, the other horses adopted a submissive posture. When he exposed his flank, the horse inched closer. He simply imitated what he saw the lead mare doing.

Today, Monty can fully train even the most abused horse in minutes, and when the horses are brought into the training ring, the process is deeply moving to observe. His gentle "horse-whispering" is in marked contrast to his father's harsh and abusive control.¹

INVITATION AND CHALLENGE

Perhaps we should take a step back at this point and consider what

Jesus was able to accomplish. In less than three years, he was able to disciple a group of men, most of whom no one else would have chosen, and taught them to DO and to BE like him in such a way that, when released, they would change the course of human history *forever*.

HOW DID THE CHALLENGE OF WHAT HE WAS ASKING THEM NOT ABSOLUTELY OVERWHELM THEM?

Now how was Jesus able to do that in such a way that he didn't break them and have them all running for the hills? How did the challenge of what he was asking them not absolutely overwhelm them?

Simply put, Jesus was the ultimate horse-whisperer when it came to discipleship. He was able to create a discipling culture in which there was an appropriate mix of invitation and challenge in the way he related to them. This is beautifully illustrated in Matthew 16 as Peter receives the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God:

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

—Matthew 16:17–18

In affirming Peter, Jesus is inviting him to draw closer. But Jesus takes it even further. Jesus gives him the name "little rock" (Peter, when translated from the Greek word *Petras*, means "little rock"). At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builder, Jesus refers to himself as the *Petra*...the "big rock." Jesus is the big rock; Peter is the little rock. Jesus is sharing his covenant identity with Peter as a partner with God.² The same relationship

that Jesus has with his Father, Peter now has with the Father. Peter is being invited into a deeper relationship with Jesus, so much so that Peter is also being offered the keys to the Kingdom and given access to Jesus' authority and power. It must have been an incredible moment for Peter.

Yet only a few verses later, after having taken Jesus aside to suggest that he stop speaking about dying in Jerusalem, Peter is massively challenged:

"You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

—Matthew 16:23

Time and time again in the Gospels, we see Jesus functioning as a classic horse-whisperer, inviting his followers into an intimate relationship with him while also initiating a direct challenge to behaviors he knew were either wrong or unhealthy. He drew his disciples closer, loved them, but also gave them the opportunity to accept the responsibilities of discipleship.

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

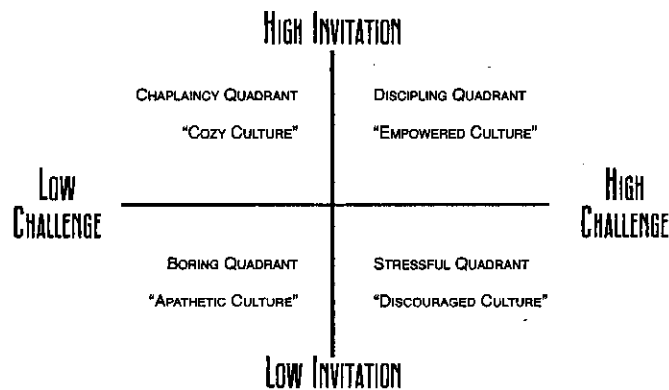
—Matthew 16:24–25

Invitation is about being invited into a relationship where you have access to a person's life and all the vibrancy, safety, love and encouragement that reside there. To learn from the places you clearly see Jesus at work in people's lives, which you can see only by having access to them. But by accepting that invitation, you also accept the challenge that comes with it: The challenge to live into your identity as a son or daughter of the King.

Jesus created a highly inviting but highly challenging culture for his disciples to function and grow within. If we are going to build a culture of discipleship, we will have to learn to balance invitation and challenge appropriately. Jesus horse-whispered to his disciples all the time, leading them around what we call the "Leadership Square" (see Chapter 8). Fundamentally, effective leadership is based upon an invitation to relationship and a challenge to change. A gifted discipler is someone who invites people into a covenantal relationship with him or her, but challenges that person to live into his or her true identity in very direct yet graceful ways. Without both dynamics working together, you will not see people grow into the people God has created them to be.

JESUS CREATED A HIGHLY SUPPORTIVE BUT HIGHLY CHALLENGING CULTURE.

We use the following matrix to help leaders understand the reality of the types of cultures we create in our churches:



When looking at this matrix, we begin to understand why we've had such a

difficult time discipling people in our churches. For many churches, as they seek to create comfortable environments in the form of worship services or small groups, have lost their ability to challenge people in meaningful ways. Challenge may be given from the pulpit or stage on Sunday mornings, but challenge is always given best in the context of personal relationships.

We have the ability to hear a difficult sermon and decide not to do anything about it. Just because someone preached or taught on forgiveness doesn't mean anyone is holding us accountable to forgive people in the next week. If I don't want to do it, no one will know or say anything. The space is comfortable, inviting and, by-and-large, anonymous. We can take what is said or leave it.

The same thing is true of most small groups. While small groups are excellent at creating community and a warm, comfortable environment, they are not built to also offer challenge. Small group leaders are supposed to be facilitators of discussion and conversation, creating a culture where people who are new (and perhaps not Christians yet) can immediately come in and feel safe. What new person would feel safe coming into a group where the leader challenges them regularly? The new person didn't agree to that kind of relationship. So while many churches say, "We do discipleship in our small groups," the fact of the matter is that their small groups are missing one of the main ingredients of a discipling culture: Challenge. We aren't saying that having environmental spaces like small groups aren't important; we're simply saying discipleship as Scripture defines it doesn't happen particularly well there.

Now here's the thing.

If we have churches with warm, cozy, comfortable, inviting environments, *some-*

one is paying the price to make sure that happens. That means for all of the invitation that is offered to a large portion of the people in a church, there is another group that is shouldering all of the expectations and challenge of producing that kind of atmosphere: Church leaders. Pastors. Staff. Elders. Deacons. Board members. Volunteers. Whatever your church has. Usually 15–20% of the people are doing almost all of the work. Because of that, their experience is extremely high on the challenge side of things but very low on invitation. What space is there for these people to receive encouragement, rest, downtime and investment? Every week has to be bigger and better than the last! So these people are constantly discouraged, frustrated and stressed. Burnout is normal. There is a high degree of turnover.

It doesn't really matter which one of these two quadrants you are currently functioning in. Neither is the ideal way Jesus wants you to lead others. From working with thousands of church leaders from all over the world, we have observed one certainty—*no one creates a discipling culture, modeled on the life and ministry of Jesus, by accident.*

No one accidentally creates disciples. Discipleship is an intentional pursuit.

Learning how to balance invitation and challenge appropriately in the lives of those we are actively discipling will be a difficult task, but it will also be extremely rewarding. If you want to free people from the captivity of the client/provider relationship we've seen emerge in the church and create an "empowered/discipling culture," it must be viewed as a must-win battle. We should expect and appropriately plan for some degree of failure, aim for "low control, high accountability" and invest all we have in creating empowered leaders who can function as producers rather than consumers.

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As G.K. Chesterton once said, "If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly."³ No one was born great at discipling people. It takes time and practice. You are, right from the start, going to be better at either invitation or challenge and will need to learn how to do the other well. But because discipleship is worth it, it's worth not being great at it from the start so we can learn to do it well over the long haul.

Put simply, building a culture of discipleship is the only way that you will produce the kind of community that Jesus and the New Testament writers would recognize as church. A dynamic living organism with sufficient organization to enable it to function effectively, yet remaining an authentic community that is full of the life of God. A community where hearts are open to the Lord, to one another and to a world in need.

WHAT IT MEANS TO LEARN

What has really captivated us in this discussion of discipleship is the Greek word for "disciple": *mathetes*. When directly translated, it means *learner*. Scripture really seems to be getting at something here, something about orienting our lives around becoming *lifelong learners of Jesus*. It is liberating to think that, with God's Spirit, over time, we can learn the ways of Jesus, doing the things that he did while becoming the same type of person. It doesn't happen overnight, and the expectation of Scripture isn't that it happens overnight.

Now what's fascinating is when you really start to dig into the subject of learning theory on how we as humans are hard-wired to learn to do things. What's of particular interest is how we see these things playing out in the Gospels over and over again.

There seem to be three different ways that we learn, but unequivocally, we learn best when there is a dynamic interplay between all three at one time:

- 1) Classroom/Lecture passing on of information
- 2) Apprenticeship
- 3) Immersion

Classroom learning is when information, processes and facts are taught from teacher to student in the classic lecture setting. Apprenticeship is when someone learns a certain set of skills by apprenticing himself or herself to someone who has already learned the skills. Immersion is when someone is put into an environment, setting or culture and learns by intuitively picking up what he or she sees and experiences.

- **The classroom experience is based on passing on facts, thoughts, processes and information.**

A teacher in a high-school English literature class wants people to understand James Joyce when they read *Ulysses*, so the instructor teaches on Joyce's standard kind of writing: Stream of Consciousness. A biology teacher wants his or her students to understand how energy is manufactured on a cellular level so the instructor teaches the different parts of the cell, spending a special amount of time on the mitochondria.

We get this. We know this. We grew up in this. Information is passed on in a rather didactic manner, from the lecturer to the students who are learning this information.

However, we do recognize the limitations of this way of learning.

For instance, if you are learning to become a plumber, you can take hours upon hours of classes, with scads of information on how plumbing systems work, how to deal with leaky sinks and blocked pipes. There is a huge difference between knowing about how to fix a pipe and *actually* fixing a pipe. At a certain point, the head knowledge from the classroom isn't enough.

- **This is why apprenticeship is so important for the process of learning.**

You don't simply learn to fix a sink by reading about it; you actually go out and do it. Inevitably, however, you probably won't be able to fix everything on your own or figure everything else out. That is why many professions have apprenticeship programs as part of their process for employment. Essentially, an apprenticeship is stating, "If you want to learn how to do this, you're going to need someone to show you how to do it. Information is good, abstract theory and concepts are incredibly helpful, but this actually has to work in the real world."

So we have Master Plumbers. Master Electricians. We have developed a whole medical learning experience where students don't simply go to medical school and learn about surgery; they have residencies during which they apprentice themselves to someone to learn to do what they do. I don't know about you, but I don't want someone operating on me who has only head knowledge.

We have a friend who is a creative at an ad agency and had to go to film school out in Los Angeles. The way he learned to shoot and edit video well was by working with someone who already knew how. Sure, he could have holed up in a room with Final Cut Pro, a case of Red Bull and an instruction manual for six months, but ultimately, the best way for him to learn how to do it was to apprentice himself to someone else.

In life, when we want to learn how to do something, we find someone with real flesh and blood and have that person teach us how to do what they do.

In many ways, the practice of apprenticeship is about investment. Someone

invests their time, energy, skills and life into ours, teaching us to do what they do.

• **The last way educators and sociologists say we learn is through immersion.**

If you want to understand this, just watch toddlers learn to talk. Exactly how did they go from babbling nonsensical phrases to stringing together words and sentences, asking questions and conveying thoughts and feelings?

There wasn't a class.

They really didn't apprentice themselves to anyone.

Over time...it just...happened.

Suddenly they can talk!

This process is called immersion and is the most subtle way of learning and is obviously where our learning environments and personalities are powerfully shaped. If you're a foreign exchange student, it is perfectly normal to tell hilarious stories when you are back at the dorm with the other students. You're learning by immersion.

"You'll never believe what I accidentally said today."

"Are you serious? You really called them that?!"

"Yeah, well at least it wasn't as bad as that thing that happened a month ago. I had no idea what that woman was saying, but she looked like she wanted to kill me."

But slowly, over time, those students become fluent in the language. This is the power of immersion.

In gathering together a group of people who are competent at their craft or skill, people in the process of learning the skill slowly learn simply by being immersed in the culture. It happens slowly, subtly, almost under the radar. But it is happening. You learn things, pick up tricks of the trade, learn the language of that culture simply by being in the middle of it. Immersion teaches and shapes in powerful ways that are sometimes hard to even see.

The key to immersion is *having access to the culture you are hoping to shape you.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer has probably written more to help us understand the nature of discipleship than anyone in the past few hundred years, particularly in his book *The Cost of Discipleship* and his short, but brilliant, book *Life Together*. However, it is in studying Bonhoeffer's actual life that much of his writings come alive. Recently, Eric Metaxas released a new biography on Bonhoeffer. Consider this quote by Otto Dudzus, one of the men Bonhoeffer was discipling:

Whatever he had and whatever he was, he made that accessible to others. The great treasure he possessed was the cultivated, elegant, highly educated, open-minded home of his parents, to which he introduced us. The open evenings [his house was open for his disciples and family to come, eat, play music and sing together, discuss, laugh, tell stories on Friday nights] which took place every week had such an atmosphere that they became a piece of home for us, as well.⁴

Then, Metaxas notes:

Even when Bonhoeffer went to London in 1944, his parents continued to treat these students like family, including them in the larger circle of their society and home. Bonhoeffer did not separate his Christian life from his family life. His parents were exposed to other bright students of theology, and his students were exposed to the extraordinary Bonhoeffer family.⁵

This is what access looks like. This is how people learn, through immersion, the nuances of being a disciple. People are given access to a discipling culture.

Sociologists and education experts agree that learning best happens when there is interplay between all ways of learning. You have to learn the cold, hard facts because they actually mean something and have practical implications. By apprenticing yourself to someone, he or she teaches you how to take things that are only in your head and put them into practice in a way that produces something. You can go from poorly skilled to quite skilled fairly quickly by having an excellent apprenticeship. And if you are able to combine those two things with an immersion experience where the language, the nuances and the everyday uses are learned intuitively...well, that is a powerful combination.

Take learning a foreign language, for example. What's the best way to learn it? More than likely, it's going to be a combination of all three. You'll want to learn the basics in a classroom setting before moving to Barcelona. Take Spanish 101, 102 and 201. Hire a tutor who is fluent and can work with you on the nuance of the language. Finally, move to a culture where the language is fluently spoken, and over time, probably over a two-year period, you yourself will become fluent. It takes all three methods of learning.

It is probably fairly obvious to see where all of this is leading, right?

As we know it today, discipleship is *mostly* about that first kind of learning: the classroom experience. And really, that's about it.

We learn from the pastor's teaching on Sunday. We learn from Bible studies. We go to Sunday School. We learn from small group discussion guides and DVDs. We learn from reading books. We learn from taking classes at church.

Notice that all of this is completely information driven, in some sort of classroom-esque experience. There is virtually no apprenticing happening in our churches.

But shouldn't there at least be immersion happening? After all, we have millions of Christians in the United States regularly gathering together. They come to a worship service on Sundays. They gather as small groups, hopefully they are actually friends outside the small group, and maybe they take a class every once in a while. How is that not immersion in a community? We tell people to join a small group because that's where discipleship happens and where they can find community. We're at least expecting some immersion to happen, right?

The hard reality is that immersion works only when people are actually fluent in something.

For instance, a toddler is never going to learn English if she's hanging out only with people who don't know English themselves or if she hangs out only with other toddlers. In other words, because most churches have so few actual

disciples running around, there simply aren't enough disciples at churches to create a quality immersion experience.

The way most churches have structured the discipleship process, it is as if we are saying, "If I can just get the right information into their heads, if they can just think about it the right way, then they will become more like Jesus."

Right information/teaching=right behavior=disciple.

So let's think about it practically: How successful has that been for us?

Or think about it like this: Would you trust a doctor to perform open heart surgery on you who has had only classroom experience and no residency? *Yet that is how we have structured our discipleship processes!*

Most church leaders we know, after hearing this, usually say the following: "Well, we can't be responsible for feeding them. They need to learn to be self-feeders. They have to be responsible for being disciples. I can't will it for them." There's a little truth in that, but we think it fails to acknowledge the complexity of the problem.

Getting people to a place where they can nourish themselves with the Bible, through prayer, community and other spiritual disciplines doesn't happen just because we tell people that's how they can nourish themselves spiritually. That's like telling third graders that in order to function in school they need to learn to write in cursive but offer no in-depth way of teaching them to do this. And to be clear, kids don't learn to write in cursive because the teacher gives a 30-minute lecture on how to do it. One of the problems that occur when people become

Christians is that we either explicitly or implicitly give them a list of things to do that we think will help them become "self feeders" (admittedly, we believe "self-feeders" is a terribly unhelpful term):

- 1) Read your Bible
- 2) Pray
- 3) Tithe
- 4) Go to church services each week
- 5) Find a small group (or whatever your church does)
- 6) Tell your friends about Jesus

Think about it. Aren't we making some pretty gross assumptions here?

Why do we assume that by telling people to read the Bible that if they do it, people know how to read Scripture well? Why do we think they know what in the world to do with this gigantic book that somehow brings us to the "Living Word"?

We tell people to pray. We teach sermon series on prayer. Maybe we teach classes on prayer. But we forget that Jesus' own disciples had no clue how to pray like Jesus and they *grew up in an incredibly immersive culture that was focused on prayer*. Something about the way Jesus prayed was so profound, was so connective, visceral and life-giving that they said, "Please, please teach us to pray like you!" Prayer should be the easiest example for us to understand (Luke 11:1-2). We are asking people to talk to an inanimate object as if he were right there! People really need help with this, and more than just a sermon, class or book.

Why are we assuming that simply by giving people information (pray, read the Bible, read doctrinal statements, be a part of a small group) they actually know how to do it or can figure it out by themselves? I can read a book on how to

perform open heart surgery. If you go into cardiac arrest, do you want me to operate on you?

We have become so acculturated in our Cartesian, Western world that we believe knowing *about* something and *knowing* something are the same thing. What we have managed to do is teach people *about* God. Teach them *about* prayer. Teach them *about* mission. The point isn't that they would just know *about* it but to *know* it.

We don't want to just know *about* God; we want to *know* God. In the same way that we don't want to collect random facts and nuances about our spouses, we want to know them through and through. That's why Paul seems to give this guttural cry: "I want to *know* Christ and the power of his resurrection and fellowship of *sharing* in his sufferings."

Discipleship isn't a random assortment of facts and propositions and behaviors, discipleship is something that is you to the core and is completely incarnated in you. If it is information, it is information that has worked its way into you and is now part of you, in the same way that John talks about the *logos* being wrapped up in the person of Jesus: "The Word became flesh." It goes from being information to being knowledge.

Yet almost all churches have built a whole discipleship process on that first style: classroom teaching. Hear the sermon. Join the small group. Go to the membership class. Read your Bible (hopefully you figure out how to do it). Go to class 201 or 301, and "yes, we have classes for that."

Of course our churches aren't seeing the life, vibrancy and power we read in the

Gospels or in Acts. No one has a clue how to do the things that Jesus taught his disciples to do! Most people know they should be doing these things. Most people know these things are important. We would even guess that most want to know how. But knowing I have a broken carburetor and need a new one isn't the same as knowing how to put a new one in! In the same way, there's a big difference between knowing forgiveness is central to Jesus' message and actually going out and forgiving your dad for what he did to you when you were a kid. Knowing something in your head alone is never what Jesus was after. The truth of Scripture is meant to be worked out in us, not something that we hold as an abstract reality.

We don't want people to understand forgiveness or prayer or mission or justice only intellectually. We want people who can forgive, who can hear and respond to God, who actually know Him. We want people who have hearts that break for our world and the people in it and do something about it. We want the kind of people in our communities who resemble the people we see in Scripture.

Seriously, just look at what Jesus did.

He called twelve guys to follow him and be his *mathetes*...his disciples...to be learners of him. People who would learn to do all of the things he does and somehow learn to carry his very essence through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

Now many of our sources for rabbinical practices don't really start to concretize until the end of the first century, but it seems fairly reasonable to assume many of these things were happening when Jesus was discipling his guys, so we know disciples learned to do *every last thing* that their Rabbi (teacher) did.

How many steps did he take on the Sabbath? That's how many they would take.

How many hours did they memorize, ponder and meditate on Scripture each day? That's how many hours they would and it's how they would interact with the sacred text.

How did they treat their wives? That's how they would treat their wives.

How did they raise their kids? That's how they would raise their kids.

You get the picture. They were very detail oriented and quite precise, right down to the length of their hair, prayer shawls, eating, sleeping and "bathroom" habits. In almost every way that we can imagine, the life of the Rabbi was transferred into their lives. Obviously, these disciples had their own personalities that shone through, but this was the way it was done.

So when Jesus is asked by his disciples in Luke 11 to teach them how to pray as he prays, this is not a strange request. In fact, their comment was, "Teach us to pray like you do; after all, John taught his disciples to pray like he did." Jesus didn't give them another sermon on prayer. He taught them to pray like he did.

This probably happened quite a lot.

They saw a life in Jesus that they wanted for themselves (even if at first they didn't know this) and by their behavior seemed to say this: "If I do the things that he does, I can feel fairly certain I'm going to have a good outcome and my life may actually look more and more like his."

Obviously, apprenticeship is happening here. You want to learn to be a plumber? Find a Master Plumber and do what he does. You want to learn to be a disciple? Find someone with the life that resembles the life of Jesus and do what he does. This is what the disciples were doing.

We think Jesus understood what he was doing as well, and Matthew 11 indicates this: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

If you know first-century Palestine at all, you know that at least 80% of the people were involved in farming. This was an agrarian-based economy, and Jesus regularly uses stories and metaphors that are drawn from this culture. This passage is no different as he references a yoke in a way that people would easily understand, as it was their normative experience.

When it was time to plant the crops, you had to make sure the fields were plowed. The massive, wooden plows were quite heavy, and usually only a team of oxen was able to drag the plow through the field, tilling and preparing the soil for the seed that would come next. Obviously, the team of oxen was pulling the plow together and was held together by a yoke that bridled them.

What these farmers did was partner a young, very energetic ox with a much older, seasoned ox that had plowed the fields for many seasons. The farmers found that the younger ox would push quite hard at the beginning of the day, using up all of his energy and would have nothing left for the second half of the day. Remember, we're talking eleven- to twelve-hour work days. However, when bridled with an older, more experienced ox, the younger ox would be forced to

learn the rhythm and pace of the day. He couldn't run ahead because he was bridled to the older ox. And so, eventually, the young ox learned the best rhythm from the older ox so he could last for the whole day and was able to keep an even, sustained pace. The rhythms of life were passed from one to the other.

Eventually, the younger ox would grow older, have more seasons under his metaphorical belt and would then be paired with a new, younger ox, and the cycle would continue.

Eugene Peterson's translation really lifts off the page, as it taps into this word picture:

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

—Luke 11:28–30 MSG

When you see this picture that Jesus is referencing and then see how Jesus was constantly teaching and showing his disciples how he lived, very clearly a high level of apprenticing was going on.

Jesus preaches the Good News, heals the sick, cleanses the lepers and drives out demons. In Luke 9, he sends out the twelve to do the same. They've seen him do this for months now. In Luke 10, he then sends out the seventy-two. And now there's even coaching involved. The disciples almost seem astounded that this stuff is working! "We know Jesus can do this, but seriously...us too?"

They report back to Jesus that there was one spirit they were having issues with, that wouldn't leave (Mark 9:17–29). You can almost see Jesus casually shrug his shoulders and saying, "Oh yeah, that one...well, with that one you need fasting and prayer before you deal with it."

This is what apprenticeship looks and feels like.

And of course there is classroom learning. Remember, the Sermon on the Mount (which is basically Jesus' Teaching 101 on the Kingdom of God) is *directed to his disciples*.

"Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him (some translations actually say, "those apprenticed to him came to him") and he began to teach them."

—Matthew 5:1

Jesus is constantly teaching his disciples. Always giving penetrating insights from Scripture, thoughts on reality and the world we live in and speaking to the character of his Father.

Teaching is incredibly important. Theology is incredibly important. Doctrine is incredibly important.

But Jesus wasn't able to compartmentalize teaching, theology, and doctrine into ethereal, cognitive realities. Teaching and theology were ways of describing reality, and then he showed his disciples how to live in that reality. "What is reality? The Kingdom of God! And if you do what I do, you can live fully in that reality."

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So how was immersion happening?

The better question might be to ask when wasn't it happening. The disciples were almost always with Jesus. But even the way in which Jesus allocated his time gives us an important insight. Jesus had what many scholars call his "Retreat Ministry," a period of time that was dedicated completely to the disciples, when he retreated to places the crowds would never follow, when the disciples could be immersed in relationship and have complete access to him. Here's the interesting thing: Most people think that at least eighteen months of Jesus' public ministry was this time.

That means at least *half* of his time was spent with these twelve guys.

He believed so powerfully in discipleship that he basically put all of his eggs into that basket. (It's worth noting that it paid off.)

Often, immersion is about learning the nuances and finer points of something. You learn big chunks of information in the classroom experience and you learn how to develop specific skills in an apprenticing relationship, but with immersion, you see how all of these things start to connect together in even the smallest things.

There is an incredible example of immersion at work in the book of Mark, as Jesus enters into his first week of ministry. He drops by Capernaum and does things that seem normal to Jesus but extraordinary to everyone else: teaching with confidence and authority they hadn't witnessed before, healing everyone who asked, casting out evil spirits, healing Peter's mother-in-law. Just an average day at the office for Jesus. And by the end of the day, word has gotten out

into all of Galilee, and the house is flooded with every sick, battered and broken person in the vicinity. And Scripture says, even as the sun was now down... he healed them all. Not a bad first day of ministry, to say the least. One might say revival had just broken out in Capernaum. Then something very interesting happens.

Before the sun has come up, before it's even dawn, Jesus gets up early and goes to a spot by himself to grab some time resting and talking with his Father. Apparently Peter and the rest of the guys get up, can't find Jesus (chances are pretty good more people have arrived at Peter's in-laws' place, waiting for Jesus to do more teaching and healing), so they go to find him. They finally find him, and Peter, probably pretty excited about his second day (what might Jesus do for an encore?) says, "So, ummm, yeah...everybody is looking for you. Probably might want to make our way back to the house now."

And amazingly, Jesus's response is, "Hmmm. Yeah, I don't think so. Let's leave. We've got other places to go."

Seriously?

Now let's be honest here. If we had started something and there were *thousands* of people who just showed up out of nowhere (on the first day!), wanting more and more of our time, if we had seen the things that Capernaum had seen the day before, it's safe to assume we'd start a building campaign. A podcast. A newsletter. A Twitter feed and a Facebook page. A blog. A new website.

And. Jesus. Leaves.

How did he know he was supposed to leave?

Well, early in the morning, before dawn, he got up and spent time with his Father and then does something *contrary to what seems like the reasonable course of action*. When we think about it like this, it's kind of baffling that he does this. What we see from Jesus is that success isn't thousands of people and an ever-expanding church. Success is obedience to what the Father asks. Sometimes it comes with bigger churches, buildings and popularity. Often times it doesn't. It's about obedience. We don't decide what the Father does.

Clearly, Jesus saw Capernaum differently than we probably would have.

Notice we don't have any indication that Jesus says he got the instructions from his Father; we can really only deduce this. Our guess is, as the disciples were in an immersion experience with Jesus, they picked up on this, too. It was probably small at the time, very subtle, but we're guessing they noticed. We're guessing it further locked in their minds and their spirits what it meant to live in the Kingdom of God.

Peter, in Acts 10, up on a rooftop resting and praying, receives very specific instructions about bringing the news of Jesus and his Kingdom to the Gentiles: a man named Cornelius. Since Peter was an orthodox Jew, this had to go against every rationale and cultural fiber of his being. And yet...he went.

Paul, in Acts 16, is stuck in his journey to the Gentiles. Luke tells us:

They went to Phrygia, and then on through the region of Galatia. Their plan was to turn west into Asia province, but the Holy Spirit blocked that route. So they

went to Mysia and tried to go north to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn't let them go there either. Proceeding on through Mysia, they went down to the seaport of Troas. That night, Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" The dream gave Paul his map.

—Acts 16:6–10 MSG

Both instances seem very similar to the one Jesus lived out.

There seemed to be an obvious course of action. Peter had a plan for reaching the Jews, and Paul had a carefully constructed plan for his journey. And yet, because Peter had learned from Jesus and Paul from the early disciples how to listen to and obey the voice of the Father, because they had learned that the Kingdom of God operates differently from what we are used to, they were able to respond.

They chose obedience over what was the most logical route.

Now we haven't read a Scripture passage where Jesus articulates this lesson exactly as we're seeing it here, though obviously there are many supporting passages. But it seems that in watching the life of Jesus and in watching the lives of other disciples (let's not forget Paul spent quite a bit of time living with disciples before he began his ministry), immersing themselves in the culture, language and rhythms of these men and women, the disciples' lives seemed to reflect the life and ministry of Jesus in ways beyond sheer coincidence.

BUILDING A DISCIPLING CULTURE

If you're anything like many of the leaders we work with, the more you begin to reflect and pray through this calling to make disciples, the more daunting the challenge can feel. What we want to offer you is a clear road map toward competent, effective discipleship and to help you develop a strategy for continuing the process well into the future.

Let's look at it this way.

In Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers*, the central question is this: Why are some people successful? He examines many of the factors that seem to contribute to people being successful, but there was one thing he gets into, in particular, that is of interest to us.⁶

Gladwell seeks to debunk the myth that some people are born geniuses, and because of this can't help but become successful. He shows, with wonderful stories and details, how this has played out in history. His equation for extraordinary people goes something like this: Someone with a certain threshold of competency (you don't have to be a genius) + the right set of circumstances + 10,000 hours of practice (which he guesstimates at about 10 years) = very high chance of success.

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Mozart had a musically gifted father (right set of circumstances) and was himself a musical prodigy (threshold of competency). Mozart wrote his first symphony at the age of twelve. But it wasn't until he was twenty-two, ten years and 10,000 hours later, that he wrote his first symphony considered a masterpiece.

Same with the Beatles.
Same with Michael Jordan.
Same with Bill Gates.

Even if you're lucky enough to be born a genius, you've still got to put in the time to learn and understand your craft, as well as walk into the right situation. What we want to do is help you learn the craft of discipleship and encourage you to put in the hours and perseverance necessary to become great at it. After all, that's what Jesus' last words were going after: Make disciples. If there's anything any of us should become great at, it's making disciples who can make disciples.

From our experience doing this, if you want make disciples, if you want to build a discipling culture in your community, you are going to need three things:

- 1) A discipleship vehicle (we call it a Huddle)
- 2) People need access to your life (discipleship can't be done at a distance)
- 3) A discipling language (our discipling language is called LifeShapes)

Jesus' model of discipleship was life on life but not everyone got equal access to him. He chose a team of twelve men, but even within that team he offered a deeper level of intimacy to Peter, James and John. Beyond the twelve

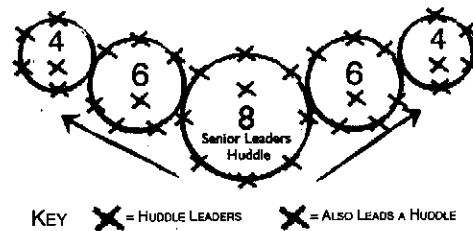
were the seventy-two, then the one hundred and twenty, and then there were the crowds. How did Jesus manage to balance his time and share his life with so many people looking to him for guidance? How can we possibly do the same?

Put simply, we invite only a few people into a discipling relationship with us. If Jesus invited twelve people, we're going to assume right off the bat we can't do as many as he did. And we invite these people into a **HUDDLE**.

A Huddle is the group of four to ten people you feel God has called you to specifically invest in, and you will meet with them regularly (at least every other week) to intentionally disciple them in a group setting. The best discipling relationships always have an intentional, "organized" component to them, as well as a less formal, "organic" component. Having a regular Huddle meeting is the "organized" component.

Ultimately, we are talking about creating a discipling movement in the place you live. Huddles do not grow by adding new members; Huddles grow when members of your Huddle start their own. Why do it this way? Because we take seriously the principle that Jesus established: Every disciple discipled. You can't be a disciple if you aren't willing to invest in and disciple others. That's simply the call of the Great Commission.

Practically, we've seen it play out in what we call the 8:6:4 Principle.



In this picture, the senior leader gathers eight leaders, and eventually those eight leaders Huddle six people each after an agreed period of time (often six to twelve months). The forty-eight leaders in the second generation then Huddle four leaders each once they are ready. If a third level of Huddles is established after twelve to eighteen months, there could be upwards of 248 leaders being disciplined.

We realize that theory like this often looks great on paper and doesn't quite work out like this in reality. And while it doesn't work exactly like this in real life, even we are often surprised at how well it multiplies over time when we establish a discipling culture and a vehicle to transport an agreed-on discipling language. For instance, we have a friend who started two Huddles two years ago. One Huddle was part of his local church; the second was for pastors who were interested in learning to Huddle. Two years later, after that small investment in the lives of about ten people, more than seventy Huddles have been started and they keep reproducing. That's the making of a movement.

Part 3 of this book is all about the details of what a Huddle is, how it works, how you disciple people in it and how to multiply them, so more on that later.

While a Huddle is an important part of discipling people, it isn't enough. An *organic* part of discipling people happens outside a Huddle. That means you need to give these four to ten people much higher ACCESS to your life than other people get or than you are probably accustomed to giving the people you currently lead. You'll need to be strategic with your time if you are going to build a discipling culture that will bear long-term fruit. You will need to simplify your life so you have space for people to be invited into your life and home.

What might this look like?

Honestly, it's usually just inviting them to join what you're already doing. Invite them and their family to have dinner over at your house with your family. We often forget that while we may not consider it "discipleship time" it doesn't mean we aren't teaching people what it means to follow Jesus. If we have people over at our house, they are going to be intuitively observing how we parent, how we love our spouses, how we order our lives. We are immersing them in our lives. For immersion to happen, we must give people access to our everyday lives.

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That's why it is crucial that we have a life worth imitating! We are inviting people into our lives and asking them to imitate the parts of our life that look like Jesus.

Giving people access to our lives doesn't necessarily mean we constantly schedule additional time for coffee or drop everything for them at a moment's notice (though depending on the situation, it could mean that). If someone is struggling spiritually, invite him or her to go to the grocery store with you and talk with you on the drive there and at the store as you shop. Fold the person into your normal comings and goings. It doesn't have to mean more work; it means we are more efficient and smart in how we use our time.

This is exactly what we see Jesus doing.

He ate. He taught. He laughed. He healed. He prayed. He told jokes. He told stories. He visited friends. He fed thousands. He partied. He went to weddings. He went to the local synagogues. He went on retreat with his disciples. He cried. He went to funerals. He gave advice. He answered questions. And in all of his comings and goings, his disciples watched him doing this and observed. They

As we have already discussed, most of Western culture lives in the information part of this triangle, believing that information without imitation can lead to innovation. However, Jesus taught his disciples, asked them to imitate his life and then said, "You will do greater things than me." So when we read the book of Acts, we see the early church doing so many things exactly as we see Jesus doing them. But then we also see the early church taking those foundational things and innovating on them. Jesus' example showed that having the right information was important, and next came competency in using that information, seeing it in the life of another and imitating that person. Only when we achieve a base level of competence in using information and imitation can innovation flourish.

We suspect that given the current climate of the church most Christian leaders are very leery of imitation and apprenticing themselves. Why? There are probably many reasons, but one is because we've seen "cloning" happen within the church. Certain churches are particularly famous, and suddenly everyone is copying what they do, producing less effective, cloned versions of the same church. What inevitably happens for these churches searching for the "as long as it works" answer is that eventually it stops working as well as it once did. However, because they lack the foundational information for forming the original practices, the churches are unable to successfully innovate what they are doing.

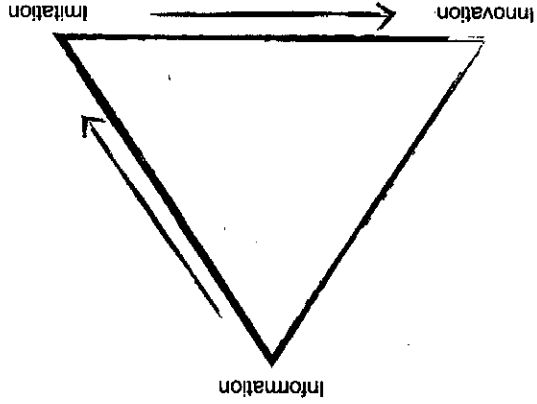
What many have done is jump from ditch to ditch. Rather than taking a posture of learning through information and imitation and then innovating in their own context, they've decided that unless they come up with it themselves, they are selling out. Instead of finding and learning the tried-and-true practices for discipleship and mission, they try to re-invent the wheel.

were immersed in a life with Jesus. It should come as no surprise, then, that we see them doing the *exact same things* in the book of Acts.

Discipleship didn't stop simply because it wasn't "intentional discipleship time." That kind of compartmentalizing is detrimental to the discipleship process. You are inviting someone into your life to learn how you follow Jesus in all aspects of your life. Giving people access to your life is a necessary component to making this happen.

Lastly, you will need an agreed-on **DISCIPLINE LANGUAGE** that you will teach the people in your Huddle who will build this discipling culture. As we will explore in more detail in Part 2 of this book, language creates culture. We will share with you the language we have developed to create this culture and, in Part 3, explain how to best teach and use this language in a Huddle.

In conclusion, this is how discipleship works, in its simplest form:



We suggest that if you want to be a disciple, and if you want the people you disciple to be able to disciple others who then disciple others, you will need to follow the path of Information to Imitation to Innovation. Information is incredibly important, but having it right in our heads isn't enough. We need to see how that Information becomes knowledge and is incarnated in the everyday life of another person. We then apprentice ourselves to that person, learning not only the Information but also how to do what he or she does. And finally, after becoming confident in knowledge and practice, we have the capacity to innovate new ways of discipleship and mission.

Practically speaking, what does this look like? Well, let's give an example. Most of us are probably people who believe reading scripture and certainly having an intentional prayer time every day are fundamental components of becoming spiritually mature. But telling people to read and pray doesn't mean they can do those things well. So what would you do if someone asked you how to read the Bible in a meaningful way and how to pray? Well, more than likely you'll take the person to the places in scripture that deal with this and maybe give him or her a book or two that was helpful in shaping you (Information), but you'd also teach him or her how you do it! You would show the person the way you've learned to do it, and for someone who doesn't know how, chances are good he or she would start off doing it just like you do it (Imitation). Now that doesn't mean that a little ways down the road they won't branch out and discover ways of doing this that might be more suited to his or her personality (Innovation), but the person is starting with a foundation they can build on. That is the process of discipleship, and that is the path you can provide for people.

Above all else, know that good leaders always define their own reality. No one else can build a discipling culture for you—it must begin in your own life

and then overflow into the lives of those you lead. You will not be the perfect example, but you can be a living example. It will more than likely be a difficult and challenging task, but as we look at our own lives and then to the stories from the leaders who have gone before us, we know that the prize is truly worth the price.