



Discipling for Spiritual Growth

Many are concerned about the spiritual health of believers and the church. Some congregations are discouraged and even at the point of despair about the condition of their church.

SOME SYMPTOMS OF AN UNHEALTHY CHURCH

- A survival mode mentality
- Unhealthy dependence on the leadership
- A focus on property, personnel, and programs
- Spiritually anemic believers
- Superficial relationships
- Dissension and divisions
- Leaders who coerce, manipulate, or micromanage
- Devotion to corporate prayer is minimal
- Lack of personal evangelism
- Little or no discipleship

Church leaders are looking for answers to address their concerns. The answer is simply profound yet profoundly simple. It is all based on the Great Commission: “As you’re going... make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). Jesus did not tell us to build a church but He does want Christians to be “built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

BELIEVERS SPIRITUAL HEALTH = HEALTH OF THE CHURCH

This material will be focusing on discipleship as the biblical pattern for helping believers grow spiritually which leads to biblical church growth. This is not intended to be a “course,” but the start of an ongoing relationship with others. Disciple-making is not a program, it’s a life-long process.

For the purpose of this material, “disciple making” is defined as “*An intentional, intimate relationship that influences life-change through instruction, correction, participation, and direction; resulting in well-grounded, self-disciplined, fruitful followers of Jesus Christ*”¹

It’s important to understand that the *process* a person or group goes through in learning is just as important, if not sometimes more so, as the subject matter being taught. The process of learning to study the Scriptures and determine biblical principles is probably more important than simply learning a specific principle itself, somewhat similar to the thought that we can either give a man a fish to eat or teach him to fish so he can feed himself for a lifetime.

This material is structured to disciple others one-on-one with the intent that the one being disciplined is to reproduce themselves by discipling others. You are also encouraged to model discipleship in small groups such as Sunday School and other venues to cultivate an environment of dialogue, transparency, encouragement, accountability, asking questions, and building biblical consensus. This allows for interaction, dialogue, and even debate so that the student develops ownership of the truths and principles of God’s Word as he learns how to properly study and apply Scripture.

¹ Berrus, Ron, *Making Disciple-makers*, www.ronberrus.abwe.org, p.4

This material is comprised of the following modules of one session each week for about sixteen weeks:

1. ***Foundations for Christian Living*** (Eight Sessions)
Clarifying how to have a right relationship with God, selecting an appropriate Bible, addressing the believer's security, focus, enemies, resources, and commission.
2. ***God's Mission is Our Mission – Biblical Principles and Practice of Witnessing, Evangelism, and Missions*** (Four Sessions)
Learning the biblical principles for cultivating relationships with unbelievers and how to share the gospel with them.
3. ***Understanding the Essence of the Church*** (One Session)
Rediscovering how simple a church can be. Learning what the essence, or core essential nature of the church is if all cultural expressions of the church were removed.
4. ***Understanding the Purpose of the Church*** (One Session)
Addressing “Why are we in existence as a local church?” and “What is the priority of the church?”
5. ***Understanding the Nature of the Church*** (Two Sessions)
Explaining that believers *are* the church, the church is a body, a community, is relational, is a family, is an organism, and is a spiritual entity.

Although this material is designed to be divided into several one hour sessions, don't try to fit everything into a time frame just to get through the material. This is not a classroom experience – it's a discipleship process. It is okay to wait until the next session to continue the subject matter if necessary. Be sensitive in allowing the Holy Spirit to work in a person's heart to clarify things before progressing further.

Help Ministries – *Assisting You In Ministry!*

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