

The Lost Art of Disciple Making by LeRoy Eims, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI (1978). (28 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

1. Disciple Multiplication.

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly” (Acts 6:7, KJV).

One day I received a phone call from a busy pastor. Could we get together, he asked, some place, sometime to talk about training people in his church? He was willing to fly anywhere in the United States to meet me and discuss his problem for half a day or so. He obviously needed help, so we set up a meeting.

As we spent some time together, I found his situation to be fairly typical. He was the pastor of a growing, healthy, and flourishing church. People were coming to Christ, attendance had increased, and he had to have two morning worship services. God was clearly blessing in many wonderful ways.

But he also had a problem. He knew that unless he trained some spiritually qualified workers among the men and women of his congregation, many people would not get needed help in the initial stages of Christian growth (adequate follow-up) and would not develop into strong, robust disciples of Jesus Christ. And the pastor knew he was the key to this. The whole process had to begin with him. He could not toss it to a “department,” nor delegate it to someone else. As the spiritual leader of these people, he had to lead the way.

He had another problem—he was already a busy man. Many things demanded his attention; many people demanded his time. Like many pastors, he spent a good deal of his time putting out brush fires in his congregation. No sooner had he dealt with one problem than another one arose.

To his consternation and frustration, he spent too much time with problem-centered people, trying to settle quarrels, make peace between members, deal with difficult family situations, and a 101 other things.

But he had a dream. At times, he would go into his study, lock the door, and think of his situation in a whole new light. *Wouldn't it be great*, he would think to himself, *if I had a dedicated, ever-growing band of spiritually qualified men and women who could help handle some of the “spiritual” problems that keep coming up in this church?*

He did not mean people who merely took tapes of his sermons to the shut-ins, delivered food, clothing, and financial aid to the needy, taught in the Sunday school, or helped him manage the business and financial affairs of the church. He meant people who knew how to win another person to Christ and then take that person from the time

of his conversion and help him become a solid, dedicated, committed, fruitful, mature disciple who could in time repeat that process in the life of another.

He would smile there in the privacy of his study, for his dream was so vivid he could almost reach out and touch that which he envisioned. But then he would be jarred back to reality by the ringing of the phone. Another problem. And he was the only spiritually qualified person in the congregation who could help. So he would set aside his dream, pick up his Bible, and go out the door. [page 17-18]

2. The Variety of God's Choosing.

The work of Christ is a many-splendored thing, and there are times when the man who is rough and ready will be more fit for a particular task than the philosophical theorist and vice versa. God loves variety. [page 30]

3. Serving and Spending Time.

It is true that those who would lead must first learn to serve. And it is equally true that to train men a person must be willing to spend time with those men in hours of conversation and association in the normal affairs of life. [page 31]

4. The Life Changing of Disciple-makers.

The effect this ministry of making disciples by association has on the men in training is powerful, dramatic, and life changing. It is almost unbelievable to see the transformation that took place in the lives of the twelve apostles. It is one of the most spectacular miracles in Scripture. To watch them go from the humble shores of Galilee to the sophisticated center of Jerusalem and more than hold their own with the most august assembly Jerusalem could produce is a wonder to behold. [page 33]

5. The Cost of Discipleship.

When you are training potential disciples and workers, let them in on some of the trials and tribulations of the ministry that you have faced. Talk to them about some of the times you were rejected while witnessing in the neighborhood. Tell them about the cost of discipleship. [page 35]

6. Defeats as well as Victories.

Dawson Trotman, founder of The Navigators, used to take a few of us aside and tell us about his defeats as well as his victories. But he was also careful to help us see that the mighty hand of God was always there to see us through. A verse he delighted to share with us was, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from Me, declares the Lord" (Isa. 54:17). [page 35]

7. The Vision of a Disciple-maker.

...three things are a must for the person who would help others become stalwart, loyal, productive disciples in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

1. He must have clearly in mind what he wants them to know and understand of the things of God; he must know what are the basic ingredients in a life of discipleship.
2. He must have a clear picture of what he wants these disciples to become. He must know what bedrock elements of Christian character must be theirs and what kind of people they should be.
3. He must have a vivid vision of what he wants them to learn to do and a workable plan to help them accomplish it. [page 36]

8. Making Disciples.

What was their commission? Get converts? No. Their commission (and ours) was *to make disciples* (Matt. 28:19). Jesus had been clear about that, and these men had heard Him talk about discipleship many times. They knew His standards and what He expected from His followers. [page 41]

9. Discipling Take People.

The Great Commission remains the same. The message of the gospel is the same. We minister through the power of the same Holy Spirit. We have the same Word of God. And we have the promise Jesus made after the command to make disciples, “And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

What then is the problem today? Why don't we see more of this going on? Why are fruitful, dedicated, mature disciples so rare? The biggest reason is that all too often we have relied on programs or materials or some other thing to do the job.

The ministry is to be carried on by people, not programs. It is to be carried out by *someone* and not by *something*. Disciples cannot be mass produced. We cannot drop people into a “program” and see disciples emerge at the end of the production line. It takes time to make disciples. It takes individual, personal attention. It takes hours of prayer for them. It takes patience and understanding to teach them how to get into the Word of God for themselves, how to feed and nourish their souls, and by the power of the Holy Spirit how to apply the word to their lives. And it takes being an example to them of all of the above. [pages 45-46]

10. Motivation, Fellowship, and Witnessing.

To get people involved in a discipleship ministry and to help them become disciples, three things are necessary initially. They must be motivated to become disciples, they

must have regular fellowship with Jesus Christ, and they must witness to Him. [page 51]

11. Discipleship Ministry Takes Planning.

To begin a discipleship training ministry in the church takes the same kind of foresight and planning. The key is to do it slowly and not try to do too much with too many too soon. The spectators are still out there and many of them want to remain that way.

To motivate people to discipleship will be an exciting project. In time you will be able to spot those who show an interest in becoming disciples. They will become aware of their own need for spending time in the Word—reading it, studying it, memorizing it—and establishing a daily time of prayer. [page 52]

12. Spending Time in the Word.

Our first and foremost responsibility as Christians is to maintain a strong, day-by-day abiding fellowship with the Lord Jesus by feeding on His Word. And we need to help others do the same. [page 54]

13. Opportunities for Discipleship Are Widespread.

Witnessing must be approached with much prayer, thought, and planning and the ones who will do it are your trained mature and dedicated disciples. The opportunities are boundless and the need is overwhelming. But committed disciples, who are fellowshipping with the Lord, can take advantage of those opportunities and meet those needs. [page 57]

14. The Harvest Is Plentiful, but the Workers Are Few.

When Dawson Trotman, founder of The Navigators, was trying to recruit counselors for one of the Billy Graham Crusades in a large metropolitan city, he made numerous phone calls to the supporting churches. He would ask them, “Could we have the names of the men and women in your congregation who know their Bibles well enough to lead someone to Christ?”

The church secretary of one of the larger churches replied, “Would you repeat the qualifications again, please?”

Trotman did.

After a long pause, the secretary said rather wistfully, “You know, we did have a man like that in church once, but he moved away.”

That church was most likely an exception. But on the other hand, the analysis of Jesus of His own time was, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” (Matt. 9:37). If we’re honest with ourselves, we would all sadly admit that it is still the case today.

Spiritually qualified workers—disciples who labor hard to make other disciples—are rare. [page 61]

15. Prayer and the Word of God.

J. O. Fraser was a missionary in Southwest China, ministering to tribal people living in that very mountainous region. After some years on the field, he noticed a strange thing. The churches which were miles away from the city in which he was living seemed to do better than the church in his own town. He would visit the distant churches occasionally and discovered that they were healthy, active, dedicated, and growing, much more so than the church in which he ministered regularly. Why was that so? Finally the Lord showed him. He found out that he prayed far more diligently for people who were miles away than for those with whom he fellowshiped regularly.

From this discovery he concluded that there were four basic elements in developing disciples and churches: prayer, prayer, prayer, and the Word of God. In thinking through on this, it seems that the thing which does the most good we do least of. It is much easier to talk to men about God than to talk to God about men. [page 69-70]

16. Training Objectives of Discipleship. [page 75]

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| 1. Assurance of Salvation | 16. Faith |
| 2. The Quiet Time | 17. Love |
| 3. Victory over Sin | 18. The Tongue |
| 4. Separation from Sin | 19. The Use of Time |
| 5. Christian Fellowship | 20. The Will of God |
| 6. The Bible | 21. Obedience |
| 7. Hearing the Word | 22. The Holy Spirit |
| 8. Reading the Word | 23. Satan—Know Your Enemy |
| 9. Bible Study | 24. Dealing with Sin |
| 10. Scripture Memory | 25. Assurance of Forgiveness |
| 11. Meditation on the Word | 26. Second Coming of Christ |
| 12. Application of the Word | 27. Witnessing |
| 13. Prayer | 28. Follow-up |

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| 14. Personal
Testimony | 29. Giving |
| 15. Lordship of
Christ | 30. World Vision |

17. Sharing One's Testimony.

One of the most helpful things a young Christian can do is write out his personal testimony. This exercise will help him think through in his own mind what God has done in his life and will prepare him to share his story simply and clearly with others.

Sharing how you became a Christian is one of the best ways of witnessing. It is particularly helpful in presenting Jesus Christ to relatives and close friends, usually the most difficult people to whom to witness.

In sharing the story of your experience:

1. Make it personal—don't preach. Tell what Christ has done for *you*. Use the pronouns "I," "me," "my," and "mine."
2. Make it short. Three or four minutes should be enough time to deal with the essential facts.
3. Keep Christ central. Always highlight what *He* has done for you.
4. Use the Word of God. A verse or two of Scripture will add power to your story. Remember that the word of God has a keen cutting edge (see Eph 6:17).

Try writing down your personal testimony just the way you'd tell it to an unbeliever. Make the story of your conversion so clear that another person hearing it would know how to receive Christ. [page 76]

18. One Is a Witness at All Times.

...remember that you do not have the power in yourself to convince anyone of spiritual truth. The Holy Spirit convicts non-Christians of their need to know Christ (see John 16:8). As you pray for those with whom you desire to share your personal testimony, be sure to ask God to honor the proclamation of His Word, to convince people of their need, and to strengthen you as you share the gospel.

God has summoned each Christian to be a witness of what he has "seen and heard" (1 John 1:3). Witnessing is a style of living—you are a witness at all times. Loving others and showing your genuine concern for them are practical ways to communicate the love of Christ. You also witness by your life. Actions are often more revealing than words. Your actions, however, are not sufficient to communicate to another the message of the gospel of Christ. You need to witness by your words—to identify openly

with Jesus Christ and to tell others how they can be reconciled to God. One of the most effective means of communicating this to another person is the story of how God has worked in your life—your personal testimony. [page 77]

19. Application of the Word.

Dwight L. Moody said that the Word of God was not given primarily to increase our knowledge, but to guide our steps. Some years ago I read in *Translation*, the magazine of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, something that was so meaningful to me that I wrote it in the back of my Bible. It concerned the application of the Word of God.

A notable commentary on the practical effects of Bible reading were the simple remarks of Moran, chief of the Piro tribe of jungle Indians of western South America. He said, “When my wife does something wrong, I say to her, ‘Mena, God’s Word says so and so,’ and she says, Moran is that what God’s Word says?’ So I give her the Word and she reads it for herself and then she doesn’t do that anymore. When I do something I shouldn’t, she says to me, soft and meek like she always is, ‘Moran, doesn’t God’s Word say so and so?’ So then I go and read it and by God’s help I don’t do that anymore.” [pages 77-78]

20. Multiplication.

Dr. Jerry White, at one time an instructor in the field of astronautics at the United States Air Force Academy, ran an experiment on the school’s computer. If a piece of thin india paper, the thickness of a page in the Bible, were folded fifty times, how thick would it be? The computer gave a startling answer—it would stand 17 million miles high. To put that into some kind of understandable perspective, we must remember that the moon is some 239,000 miles away. [page 85]

21. Committed to Excellence.

... a worker should have is a spirit of excellence. He must become proficient in his ministry to others and do it well. His witness, his service, his involvement should reflect the testimony of Jesus Himself, who “has done everything well” (Mark 7:37).

At the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974 I met the director of the Toronto Institute of Linguistics. A couple of friends of mine had gone to this excellent school in preparation for service as missionaries. I asked him how they were doing.

He freely admitted that they were not the highest in their class academically, “But,” he said, “they are going to come out at the top because they will not permit themselves to settle for less than the best they can do.”

“And,” he continued, “the motivation seems to come from Jesus Christ Himself.”

My friends were committed to excellence. One writer of Scripture prayed:

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21). [page 94]

22. Being Transparent.

[A] quality for effective transmission by example is transparency. Cecil and Thelma Davidson are two of the most effective makers of disciples I have ever met. Their lives are open books. Their home has an open door. Their dinner table has been a meeting place for hundreds of young men and women through the years. These men and women who today are carrying on their own discipling ministry around the world consider themselves part of the Davidson family. [page 100]

23. Being a Friend as a Discipler.

Dawson Trotman used to share with us a poem by Edgar Guest that bears on this:

I'd rather see a sermon
Than hear one any day.
I'd rather one would walk with me
Than merely tell the way. [page 102]

24. Discipling as Training.

You must discipline yourself to think in terms of training, to look on the various facets of your ministry as opportunities to build in depth into the lives of your potential workers. This will enable you to keep your priorities straight, and you will be able to gauge what you do by how it contributes to your prime objective of developing spiritually qualified workers. Your ministry will have meaning only as it contributes to the maturing of these men. [page 104]

25. Workers Are Still Few.

The harvest truly is plentiful, but the workers—the “harvest workers”—are still few. As you give your life to this ministry of training makers of disciples, pray that God will enable you to be an example, work with your men on an individual basis, and correct any problems that might arise. [page 107]

26. Functioning as a Team.

When I served in the Marines in World War II, each man was considered a “self-contained unit.” But when we hit the beach, we functioned together. We were not a

bunch of individual snipers, but a team. The infantry worked together in fire teams: a point man, automatic weapons man, and the rest of the riflemen. In addition, they were supported by tanks, airplanes, and artillery. We were interdependent in times of battle, for we needed each other. We functioned as a team. [page 116]

27. Doing the Best with What One Has.

Lorne Sanny, president of The Navigators, often preaches to us about Shamgar, who started where he was and did the best he could with what he had. The battle with the Philistines was raging and he had no sword. So he fought the enemy with an ox goad and killed six hundred of them (see Judg. 3:31). [page 128-129]

28. Stability and God's Sovereignty.

Stability is a necessary quality of a leader and it comes from having a firm belief in the sovereignty of God. To know that God in heaven is in control (see Ps. 115:3); to know that all things do, in fact, work together for good and are brought our way to conform us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ (see Rom. 8:28-29); to know that God's hand is shaping and molding the events of our lives. [page 133]