

“Dad, LET’S GO!”

By Randy Loescher

“**H**urry! I don’t want to be late for school,” my five-year old urged. “I’m the line leader today.” How many times the words “hurry up!” have come from my own mouth.

All day Samuel provides me with reflections of myself. Because Daddy sleeps without a shirt, Samuel sleeps without a shirt. Because Daddy puts on deodorant each morning, Samuel daily rubs deodorant under each arm.

Making disciples and parenting can be so similar. We pass on who we are, what we do, and what we say. With that in mind, I offer these five disciple-making principles.

Christ-following is a commitment that’s caught. God admonishes us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength – a walk that requires constant cultivation. Without regularly practicing God’s presence, we become stagnant. And since passion for God is something more caught than taught, we cannot take people further in God than we are going ourselves. My actions and attitudes reveal the authenticity and depth of my own walk with God. What will these growing disciples catch from me? Passion? Ambivalence? Workaholism? Faith? Control?

Christ-following is about life transformation. We are called to make disciples – not converts. This demands that people understand their sinfulness before God and truly repent of their sin. The message of the kingdom is one of repentance, forgiveness through Christ, and radical life transformation by the Holy Spirit. *Thus garnering “decisions” for Christ does not equal making “disciples.”* Practicing humble repentance and surrender to God even after conversion results in transformed lives.

Discipleship is a pre- and post-conversion process. Seeing discipleship as the goal affects how we do evangelism. If we view discipleship as beginning at the moment of first contact with an unbeliever rather than at the point of “conversion,” we won’t be so quick to “shake the dust from our feet.” Many who are not yet ready to pray the sinner’s prayer still have an interest in hearing about God or in learning how to talk with Him.

Discipleship is the process of moving people one step closer to God, regardless of how hard or soft their hearts towards Him are. Conversion occurs somewhere along that continuum. Pressing too hard for conversion rather than meeting people where they are can push people further away from God. Spiritual parenting can

actually begin prior to conversion.

Discipleship is intentional and measurable.

When our children leave home, we want them competent to do laundry, cook, drive, manage money, pay bills, etc. What does a disciple moving towards maturity look like?

Andy Stanley’s *The Seven Checkpoints* and Josh Hunt’s *Disciple Making Teachers* suggest areas of intentional discipleship to consider when planning sermon series, small group curriculum, elder/staff meetings, one-on-one discipleship conversations, youth ministry, etc. Stanley’s checkpoints include authentic faith, spiritual disciplines, moral boundaries, healthy friendships, wise choices, ultimate authority, and putting others first. Hunt creates an acrostic.

D -- Disciplined
I -- Intimate Friendships
S -- Self-Esteem (Identity in Christ)
C -- Corporate Worship
I -- Intimate Family Life
P -- Passion for God
L -- Lay Ministry
E -- Evangelistic Involvement
S -- Sacrificial Giving

We can’t evaluate what we cannot measure, and we cannot measure without growth indicators. Indicators enable us to be more intentional about our spiritual parenting.

Discipleship is relational. Converts can be made in a moment. Disciples develop gradually, usually through *relationships* with mature believers. Programs, classes, and sermons alone do not make disciples; they supplement a spiritual parenting *relationship*.

To produce a discipleship DNA, church leaders model *relational* discipleship from the top down. We ask pastors, “Jesus had His Twelve. Who are the two to twelve people God’s called you to disciple? How are you currently discipling your key leaders to become disciplers themselves?”

May our lives be devoted to raising up a generation of self-feeding, reproducing disciples who reflect Jesus’ character and anointing!



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