

The Method
The Necessary Ingredients for Making Disciples

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Introduction: Stumbling into discovery. Eric and my “ah-ha” moment in ministry.

I. The Primacy of a Relational Context for Making Disciples

A. Program vs. Relational Approach

1. Discipling relationships are marked by intimacy, whereas programs tend to be focused on information.

2. Discipling relationships involve full, mutual responsibility of the participants, whereas programs have one or a few who do on behalf of the many.

3. Discipling relationships are customized to the unique growth process of the individuals, whereas programs emphasize synchronization and regimentation.

4. Discipling relationships focus accountability around life-change, where as programs focus accountability around content.

B. A working definition of discipling: *Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.*

C. Jane's letter says it all

II. Multiplication: Empowering Disciples to disciple others

A. Frustration over multiplication: I was stuck

B. The characteristics of one—on—one method of discipling.

1. In the one-on-one the discipler carries **the full weight of responsibility** for the spiritual welfare of another.
2. The one-on-one relationship sets up a **hierarchy** that tends to result in **dependency**.
3. The one-on-one limits the **interchange or dialogue**.
4. The one-on-one also creates a **one-model approach**.
5. Finally, the one-on-one model **does not generally reproduce**.

C. The characteristics of triads/quads

1. There is a shift from **unnatural pressure to the natural participation** of the discipler.
2. There is a shift from **hierarchy to peer relationship**.
3. There is a shift from **dialogue to dynamic interchange**.
4. There is shift from **limited input to wisdom in numbers**.
5. There is a shift from **addition to multiplication**.

III. The Environment for Transformation: Creating the Hot House Effect

*When we (1) open our hearts in **transparent trust** to each other (2) around the **truth** of God's word (3) in the spirit of **mutual accountability**, we are in the Holy Spirit's hothouse of transformation.*

Climatic Condition #1—Transparent Trust

The extent to which we are willing to reveal to others those areas of our life that need God's transforming touch is the extent to which we are inviting the Holy Spirit to make us new.

Stages of Trust Building:

1. Affirmation
2. Walking together in difficult times
3. Prayerful Listening
4. Mutual Confession

Climatic Condition #2—Truth in Community

The Need for Truth:

1. We have lost the memory of Christianity
2. We need systematic instruction

Climatic Condition #3—Life Change Accountability

Covenantal Accountability: A covenant is written, mutual agreement between 2 or more parties that clearly states the expectations and commitments in the relationship.

1. The Challenge of Radical Individualism
2. Disciples are under authority

IV. Practical Steps to creating a small, reproducible discipleship group

Step 1: Pray

Ask the Lord to lay on your heart hungry people to whom he is drawing you. Take your time. Let the conviction settle in. Only then go to the next step.

Step 2: Make a personal invitation

Approach a person in the following way: "The Lord has been placing you on my heart, and I sense that I am to ask you if you would be willing to join me and one or two others on a weekly journey together toward becoming better disciples of Jesus?"

Step 3: Tell them what is involved

If you are using a curriculum such as *Discipleship Essentials*, give them an overview of the content and the means you will cover it.

Step 4: Review the Covenant (p. 14, *Discipleship Essentials*)

Disciples need to have a very clear sense of what is expected of them. Walk through the covenant line by line and have them restate the requirements in their own words. Mention that you will be meeting weekly for approximately a year.

Step 5: Ask the disciple to prayerfully consider the invitation.

Specifically, ask them not to give you an answer on the spot, but to examine whether that have the time and the heart for what lies ahead.

Step 6: Inform them that there will be at least one other person joining you.

If this is your first invitation, this person may even have a suggestion who the third or fourth person might be.

Step 7: Set the first regular meeting and get started

Find quiet space where you will be able to grow into intimate transparency. At the first session ask each person to share their process of making a commitment to the group.

Step 8: Guide the participants through the sessions

Go only at a pace that is comfortable. Encourage questions. Address personal matters. Life will happen while you are together. The curriculum is only a tool, not something to be to which to be enslaved.

Step 9: Model transparency

The group will go as deep as the willingness of the convener to be vulnerable.