

churches on mission starter

For Pastors & Leadership Teams

Saturate’s vision is to train, coach, resource, and be a catalyst for a movement of the gospel in every church, every person, and every place. If you’re a pastor or leader in a local church, this resource is for you.

This short booklet will guide you through a big-picture view of what the church is called to be and do: make disciples. The bulk of this “starter” focuses on ten qualities of effective disciple-making environments with key questions to help you and your team grapple with what is working and what isn’t working.

The goal of this starter is not to upend your church radically, or shift your “model.” Our goal is to help you formulate a handful of next steps toward greater disciple-making effectiveness in whatever season your church finds itself. We’ve found this is the perfect place to start: where you take one step forward knowing Saturate is here to serve the local church in that step and all the ones to come.

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Saturate cultivates and curates resources from across the Church for equipping everyday people, leaders, and pastors to be disciples who make disciples in the everyday stuff of life.



EVERY CHURCH. EVERY PERSON. EVERY PLACE.

This starter is designed for church staffs, leadership teams, and elder teams.

It's written to remind and foster a heart for Jesus and for your church. God has called your church to be the people of God in this particular moment and place. What a privilege it is to disciple, care for, and equip people to be saints in your city! You're likely coming to this resource with many competing responsibilities, desires, longings, and dreams. While you might be looking for a silver bullet or a new model, this starter is only going to provide a starting point. In fact, we don't refer to any models. Instead we will guide you through key qualities of any disciple-making church, offer questions to foster next steps, and clarify priorities to help you move forward.

Our hope is that this starter can facilitate conversation amongst your leadership team toward greater unity and increased disciple-making effectiveness. We trust the Spirit of God is moving powerfully within your church, and as you read we pray you'll consistently put it aside to pray for yourself, your church, and your city. May this guide serve as a collective catalyst toward stopping, listening, and obeying together what He is saying.

The Church is More

We often think of the church as programs, a building, or events, but the Bible outlines a much bigger vision.

The Church is the regenerate people of God saved by the power of God for the purposes of God in this world. The gospel makes us a new creation. We are all made a family of missionary servants sent as disciples who make disciples. We don't stop being the church when we walk out of the building on a Sunday morning. Instead, everything we do, we do as the blood-bought church of God, for the fame of Jesus, everywhere.

The role of the church is to equip every man, woman, and child to live out of that identity in the places God has sent them.

- Imagine every person in your church (kids, teenagers, adults, and seniors) waking up each day asking Jesus: How can I use my time, gifts, energy, and relationships to be on your mission today?
- How would that change your church? Your city?

Go Deeper: “The Church Isn’t Just for Sundays”

In this short video, Jeff Vanderstelt talks about how we won't be effective in reaching people if we rely on them coming to church or events to hear the gospel.

<https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/church-is-more/church-isnt-just-for-sunday/>

What is Discipleship? What is a Disciple?

We must be clear on our definition of discipleship because this is the primary mission of the church. If we are not clear at defining it, we will not be clear in communicating what we are calling our people to.

A disciple is one who worships Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, obeys Jesus, and teaches others to do the same. A disciple is learning to submit all of life to Jesus.

In the Story of Scripture, we see Jesus make disciples and turn fishermen into fishers of men. Then, before He ascends into heaven, He gives them the mission also to make disciples who obey His commands. Over and over in the book of Acts we see how they accomplished that mission. They did what Jesus did with His disciples. They proclaimed the good news about Jesus and established communities of believers to live this new life together as family.

Discipleship wasn't merely a Sunday school class to attend or curriculum to be discussed or a smorgasbord of programs offered by a church. Those structures may teach what Jesus commanded, but alone they don't create an environment where people learn to obey what Jesus commanded. A gospel-centered community on Jesus' mission must be the context for discipleship.

This means your entire role and the entire purpose of your church's leadership team is to facilitate, cultivate, and equip your church to be disciples making disciples in the places God has sent them.

- What would it look like to make disciple-making and equipping 100% of your role and your team's role?
- How would that change your church? How would it change your city?
- What would have to change in your church?

Go Deeper: Following Jesus in the Everyday Stuff of Life

In this video, Jeff Vanderstelt explains how we can recapture the idea that everyone in our churches are to be equipped to be in the world.

<https://saturatetheworld.com/resource/church-is-more/following-jesus-in-the-everyday-stuff-of-life/>

The Church as an Effective Disciple-Making Environment

The mission of your church is to make disciples. But as leaders, we can no more force people to grow as disciples than a farmer can force a plant to grow. “So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” (1 Cor 3:7) Much like a farmer, we get to create an environment that supports growth.

Discipleship is the holistic care of a small group of people who are consistently experiencing Jesus’ life and teaching together in a healthy discipling environment where they are learning to submit every area of life to the lordship of Jesus.

- What kind of environment did Jesus create to make disciples?
- How does your staff/elder team work toward cultivating an environment for effective disciple-making?

We’ve identified ten qualities every effective disciple-making environment has. As we walk through each, ask yourself how your church embodies that quality or could grow to become a healthy disciple-making environment. The questions can be powerful. Press into them. See what the Spirit does.

Quality 1: Gospel Fluent and Saturated

Romans 8:28-29; Galatians 2:14; Matthew 15:1-20, 20:20-28; Luke 6:1-11, 8:1-15

The gospel must permeate the discipling environment. It is ultimately the answer to every problem and the motivation to submit every area of life to the lordship of Jesus. In other words, it's the motivation to apply the gospel to every area of life.

As we are amazed by God, His wisdom, power, glory, grace, and goodness revealed through His Story and especially in Jesus, we find our security, significance, approval, joy, and satisfaction in Him rather than anything else.

As the gospel seeps into every crack and crevice of our lives, we walk more and more in submission to Jesus, for our good and His glory.

We often see Jesus help the disciples reflect and apply truth based on experience. In the course of everyday events and conversations, He showed them how being a part of his kingdom gives a new perspective on everything. The truth of the gospel when connected to experience is much more likely to be remembered and applied.

- Can the people in your church apply the gospel to their own lives? Each other's lives?
- Do their casual conversations often go to the gospel of Jesus?
- How do you equip or help people become gospel fluent?

Go Deeper: Gospel Fluency Resources

We've created an entire suite of resources around this crucial quality of all disciple-making environments. Learn more about gospel fluency and find resources to equip your church at gospelfluency.com

Quality 2: Empowered by the Holy Spirit

John 14:15-20, 16:7-15, 1 Cor. 2:10-14, Romans 8:5-14, Galatians 5:16-26, Acts 1:8

Only the Holy Spirit can change hearts and transform lives. Therefore, He is the primary discipler and equipper of people. He teaches, reminds, convicts, helps, leads, reveals, and counsels.

The Holy Spirit's job is to make us like Jesus and to help us accomplish the works we've been created to do. The Holy Spirit calls us, equips us, and sends us out to bear fruit through his power.

"Making disciples" must be done in submission to and in partnership with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the primary discipler and equipper of people. We can do nothing apart from Him (John 15:5).

- What would it look like to disciple in submission to and in partnership with the Holy Spirit?
- How regularly do people depend on the Holy Spirit in prayer, quiet, learning the gospel, and speaking the gospel?

Quality 3: Community-Influenced

Matthew 8:23-27, 9:9-13, 9:35-38; Luke 22:14-23, 22:39-46

The disciples learned an extraordinary amount from watching and listening to Jesus. We can assume they also learned a great deal from their interaction with each other, as they traveled, lived, and ministered together in close community.

While corporate gatherings, teachings, and one-on-one conversations teach us a lot of new information, most learning, modeling, and sharpening takes place between others in the community as they serve together and experience life together—think of a healthy family or successful sports team. We are disciplined by being around other disciples through life—think of Jesus’ community of disciples.

The accountability that can and should take place as a group of individuals live open and transparent lives before each other is also critical to the discipleship process. Without a high level of accountability and encouragement, most people are likely to keep significant areas of their lives hidden and in sin. A group of trusted friends is usually the only safe place where sin can be confessed and healed. Also a community of friends is usually the only safe place to learn to make disciples.

- Do the people in your church see themselves as disciplers, even if they aren’t considered leaders?
- Do people share struggles, decisions, and resources with one another? How do people in your church teach each other how to follow Jesus?

Quality 4: Missional and Serving

Matthew 8:1-3, 8:14-17, 10:5-8; Luke 9:10-17, 18:35-43

Jesus placed a high value on service and evangelism to those who were not yet His followers, especially to those in great need. Jesus was consistently exposing the disciples to different kinds of people, in different kinds of places, with different kinds of needs. Many of these people were physically, relationally, emotionally, or spiritually needy. He often placed the disciples in situations where they could learn to love and serve “the least of these” by watching Him or by serving alongside Him. He also consistently looked for those “outside” the group—even the wealthy people such as Zacchaeus!

Character qualities such as love, compassion, servanthood, sacrifice, and generosity are more likely to be integrated into people’s lives as they enter into the lives of others and frequently demonstrate the above qualities in the context of those relationships. Spiritual growth is often more significant when people serve outside the church family and serve people who are desperately needy—whether those needs are relational, spiritual, or physical. It’s very important for these things to be practiced frequently, so that they become part of a person’s lifestyle, rather than a project that they participate in a few times a year.

- Can compassion, generosity, sacrifice, etc., be “taught into” the life of a believer? How does it happen?
- How do people in your church care for and bless the people around them in need? How do people in your church pursue relationship with people who are not Christians?

Quality 5: Holistic

Matthew 5:1-12, 6:1-4, 6:19-34; Luke 5:5-11, 6:37-42

It's obvious from the teaching and experiences Jesus had with the disciples that He was committed to developing them holistically and concerned with helping them bring their whole lives under the will of the Father and offering their whole lives as worship to the Father.

Discipleship needs to involve caring for the whole life of a person. Every area of a person's life needs the gospel, not just the "spiritual" areas such as Bible study, prayer, etc. A person's time, job, money, relationships, body, etc., must all be shaped from a gospel perspective.

- What kind of care needs to be given to help each person in your church apply the gospel to their whole lives, rather than just the "spiritual" areas?
- Do people view their time, money, family, health, and jobs in light of the gospel? How does your church equip them for that?

Quality 6: Frequent and Long-Term

Matthew 4:18-23, 9:35-38; Luke 8:1, 8:22

It took Jesus three years of investment in the disciples before they were ready to minister and lead on their own. During those three years, they spent an incredible number of hours together.

Discipleship is not fast. It takes a lot of time, commitment, and sacrifice. A discipler must be with his or her disciples frequently and must care for them over the long-term.

- How much time does the average person in your church receive intentional communal and missional discipleship each week?
- Is it possible to disciple someone truly with the 2-4 hours a week that are spent together in most discipling relationships?
- How much time do you think it should take?

Quality 7: Experiential

Matthew 9:9-13, 9:18-33; Luke 8:26-56, 17:11-14

Most of the time Jesus spent with His disciples was in an experiential learning environment. They were living together, traveling together, eating meals together, ministering to the needs of people together, etc. Very little of their time spent together seems to be in what we would consider a formal learning environment.

People learn much more when they do something than when they just hear something. For this reason, we need to help people experience life lived in line with the gospel (Gal 2:14). We need to live closely with them outside of church gatherings, engaging in life, relationships, and ministry together.

- How can the people in your church live and experience more life together in a given week or month?

Quality 8: Individually Tailored

Matthew 14:28-31, 16:15-19, 26:36-38; Luke 9:28, 22:31-34

Though we see Jesus spending a great deal of time with the disciples as a group, we also see Him speaking specifically into the lives of individual disciples at different times and in different ways.

In addition to the need for the group dynamic, discipleship must have a personal nature as well because each person in a group has different needs, problems, passions, and spiritual gifts. Each person must be viewed individually, in the same way that parents view the development of each of their children individually. We need the leading of the Holy Spirit to identify needs and see effective ways to meet those needs.

- How can you make sure that you are giving regular and personal care to each member of your group based on his or her needs and personality?

Quality 9: Modeled

Matthew 8, 9, 14:13-21; Luke 5:12-13, 13:10-17, 14:1-6

Though, at times, Jesus taught the disciples in more formal settings, it was His consistent example of love, servanthood, sacrifice, generosity, encouragement, worship, etc., that probably had the greatest impact on the lives of the disciples as they watched Jesus' life.

Disciples need to see most of what is expected of them lived out in the day-to-day example of their discipler. If they can not see a model of what they should be doing, it will be difficult for them to do it well or to do it consistently themselves.

- Who are the “models” in your church, and how do people witness their lifestyle?
- How can you model as much of a Christ-like lifestyle as possible for those you are discipling?
- How are the elders, deacons, or staff members of your church that type of model? How do people get exposed to their life of disciple-making?

Quality 10: Multiplying Disciples and Sending Disciples

Matthew 4:19, 10, 28:19-20; Luke 10:1-3, 10:17-20

It was Jesus' strategy from the beginning that His disciples would be the foundation for the church and the foundation for the multiplication of followers of Jesus around the world.

As disciples teach others to obey all of Jesus' commands, that includes His command to make disciples. Part of being a disciple of Jesus is making disciples of Jesus. This goal of multiplication, with "disciple" becoming discipler, should be stated and expected from the beginning of a person's experience with your church. Though every person is not a gifted leader, every person is spiritually gifted and called to be a discipler as part of some form of gospel-centered community on mission.

Based on your church's past and your current plan, how likely is it the average person in your church will make a disciple of someone outside their family throughout the course of the next 1-3 years?

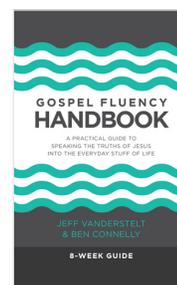
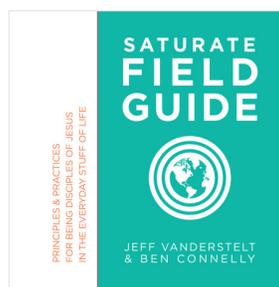
- Can you imagine people leaving your church to start a new church?
- How can you give the vision to those you are discipling to become disciplers in the next 1-3 years?

Next Steps For Your Church

- Look through your answers and the ten qualities of a disciple-making environment.
- In what two to three qualities were you and your church strong? What is one thing you can do to increase their strength and support it even more?
- What two to three qualities were lacking in your church? What is one thing you, your team, and your church could do to grow in each of those areas?
- Lastly, which quality do you, personally, want to learn more about? How can you learn and grow?

Continued Reading

There's much more to learn. Check out these books as another gateway into the disciple-making life.



www.saturatetheworld.com/store

Consider Becoming a Member of Saturate

Membership to Saturate's online community and resource site offers both individual and group access to the best available video, print, and digital resources designed to help you and your church implement a gospel-centered disciple-making culture. This is a great way to deepen your learning.

The Saturate online community connects leaders and disciples to experienced leaders from all over the world who are available to interact on a variety of topics, offer shared experience and mentoring, as well as provide support and encouragement.

The community also offers live discussion events, moderated topical conversations, and interaction with national thought leaders on a regular basis.

You can get started with 50% off the first year with this coupon code: **SAVE50**.