

# **A PATHWAY FOR DISCIPLESHIP**

MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS  
WHO MAKE DISCIPLES

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# A PATHWAY FOR DISCIPLESHIP

## *Making Disciples of Jesus who Make Disciples*

As you consider the relationships God has given you for the purpose of making disciples of Jesus, do you have a plan? Parents, do you have clarity about the specific principles and practices you want to instill in your children and a process you plan to implement? Church leaders and group leaders, do you have a specific direction in mind for how you plan to make disciples who can also make disciples?

### ***Do you have a pathway for discipleship?***

Paul, the Apostle, appeared to have a very clear and repeatable process for how he made disciples, appointed leaders, and established new churches. Luke captures this process in Acts 14:19-23. I believe we can discern a repeatable process from Luke's account and develop our own discipleship pathway for our present context.

### **PRAYERFUL DEPENDENCE**

Paul started with prayerful dependence. In Acts 13:1-3, while several are worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit tells them to set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work the Holy Spirit had called them to. Then, after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off. Later, at the end of a church planting cycle, Luke records (Acts 14:23) that they appointed elders in every church, committing them to the Lord with prayer and fasting.

Jesus demonstrated this same priority to His disciples when He clarified that apart from the Father, He could do nothing (John 5:19, 30). We observed Jesus often withdrawing to solitary places to be with the Father in prayer. Later, before His ascension into heaven, He commanded them to wait for power on high before embarking on Jesus' mission (Acts 1:8).

This kind of prayer is both a listening prayer and an empowering prayer—one that submits to God, listens for the Spirit's direction, and expectantly waits on the Spirit of God for the power to go in the direction God is leading. Any biblically faithful discipleship pathway equips disciples in the principles of prayerful dependence and leads them to practice it in daily life. A holistic approach to this will include the practices of silence, solitude, fasting, confession, supplication, and listening to the Spirit of God and the written Word of God. For Jesus and for Paul, prayer was at the beginning, middle, and end of all discipleship activities.

### **THE PAULINE CYCLE**

In Acts 14:21, after entering the city, Paul preached the gospel to the city and made many disciples. Then, (14:22) they returned to the other cities where they had previously preached the gospel and made disciples, and strengthened the souls of the disciples there, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and clarifying that they



would go through difficulty living into the realities of God's Kingdom while in this world. Then, they appointed leaders to oversee the ongoing realities of discipleship before they moved on.

We can see a discernible pattern in Paul's work that we can apply to the discipleship process we build in our present context.

## GOSPEL FOUNDATION

As you consider how you will work out your own discipleship pathway in your unique context, I would like to suggest a potential template to follow in light of Paul's pattern. Start with **prayer and fasting** to seek God's direction and empowerment. Then **lay a gospel foundation**. Start with establishing a disciple of Jesus in the **basics of the gospel**, clarifying how Jesus' life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, present intercession before God the Father, and His future return are all good news for our past, present, and future salvation.

When I think about the basics of the gospel, it's helpful to clarify the power and purpose of the gospel. The gospel is the power of God for our past, present, and future salvation to all who believe (Romans 1:16-17), which also leads to the purpose for our salvation. God has saved us FROM something FOR good works that He has prepared for us to do. For example, we have been saved from the penalty of sin for the purpose of becoming dearly loved children of God who love one another as we have been loved. We are being saved from the power of sin for the purpose of living Spirit-empowered obedient lives. We will be saved from the presence of sin for the purpose of being fully glorified children of God who dwell with God in a new heaven and new earth.

We lead a disciple to know and embrace the purpose of the gospel by establishing them in the overarching [Story of God](#). The Bible tells one overarching story of God's work in the world to rescue and renew all of creation back to Himself and His ultimate intention. As disciples of Jesus rehearse this story, they also discover and remember the purpose for why God created them and has recreated them in Christ Jesus for good works.

## 5 KEY QUESTIONS

This gospel foundation includes establishing disciples in their **new gospel identity** which leads to **gospel informed behaviors**. I like to establish a new disciple with five [key questions to reflect on as they read their Bibles](#) and engage in everyday decisions and behaviors:

- Who is God?
- What has God done (most fully in Jesus Christ)?
- Who are we?
- What will we do?
- How will we do it?



The first three questions are indicatives—they are what is true of God and us no matter what we do. The last two are imperatives—they are what we do and how we do it because of what we know and believe to be true.

For example, if we know and believe:

God to be love **[Who is God?]**

as revealed through Jesus dying for us while we were still sinners **[What has God done?]**

then we know and believe we are dearly loved children of God **[Who are we?]**.

If we know and believe this to be true regardless of what we do (He loved us while we were sinners), then we will love others like God has loved us **[What will we do?]**. You see this very pattern in 1 John 4:7-21.

The answer to the fifth question **[How will we do it?]** is based upon our unique personality and situation. And this is where helping a disciple understand their unique gifts, personality, and story (KC Underground has [a great resource around this](#)) contributes to how they uniquely practice their faith.

## ENGAGING IN EVERYDAY B.L.E.S.S. RHYTHMS

Establishing disciples in the gospel serves as both the foundation upon which their ongoing discipleship is built AND as the form and fuel for everything they do. This leads to disciples engaging in **everyday rhythms**, both personally and communally, to make new disciples of Jesus. Borrowing from others with some adaptation, I like to use the **B.L.E.S.S. rhythms** as I lead disciples to make disciples together where we live, work, learn, and play. B.L.E.S.S. is an acronym for **B**less, **L**isten, **E**at, **S**low Down, and **S**hare. Eat is at the middle of the acronym as it is also at the center of discipleship. In the life of Jesus, we see the table at the center of everything. He was known as one who eats and drinks with "sinners." As we share meals and engage with those who don't yet know and follow Jesus, we LISTEN to their stories, while also listening to the Spirit to help us discern their longings and needs. As we listen, we are looking for opportunities to BLESS others in word or deed. As we engage in proactive mission, we also regularly SLOW DOWN through sabbath, solitude, and recreation, thus both displaying lives at rest in the gospel and inviting people experientially to enter into God's rest with us. As we engage in these rhythms it is our hope that the Spirit opens the door for us to SHARE the reason for why we love and serve the way we do (1 Peter 3:15).

## GOSPEL PROCLAMATION



This leads to: **gospel proclamation**. Peter called the church to be a display people, showing the truths of the gospel in everyday life (1 Peter 2:4-12). But it wasn't enough just to display; they also needed to be ready to declare the truths about Jesus when given the opportunity (1 Peter 3:15). Paul urged the church to live lives that display the Kingdom of God, while he also clearly declared the good news about Jesus. We train people to become **gospel fluent**, able to speak the truths of Jesus into the everyday stuff of life. We also equip disciples in a process we call **fruit to root**. This process takes the previous five questions and reverses them to trace the fruit of our lives (behaviors) to the roots of our faith (beliefs). We also equip disciples in **how to share their story with Jesus as the hero**. More recently, many groups are engaging in discovery Bible studies with their non-Christian friends.

As our friends and family come to believe in Jesus and are given new spiritual life (regeneration) by the Spirit, we need to **establish and strengthen disciples** in the faith. The first step is baptism. Since Jesus commanded us to make disciples, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we need to train every disciple in how to **baptize new believers into their new identity**. Baptism is both the way we demonstrate union with Christ into His death, burial, and resurrection, and how we establish them in their new identity as sons of God (Family), servants of Christ (Servants), and sent ones of the Spirit (Missionaries).

### **D.E.E.P.E.R. TRAINING**

We also teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded, which is best accomplished by bringing them through one or more of the Gospels and using **D.E.E.P.E.R.** training: Training that Demonstrates, Explains, is Experienced and Practiced, which Exposes the truth in our heads and hearts, and gives space to Reflect. This is then repeated until it can be reproduced by the disciple with another disciple.

So, to summarize, first, a discipleship pathway begins and ends with prayerful dependence. We lay a gospel foundation, lead disciples to practice B.L.E.S.S. rhythms that demonstrate and hopefully lead to declaring the truths of the gospel. As we share Jesus and people come to faith in Him, we establish these new disciples in the faith through baptism into their new identity in Christ, and strengthen them to become obedient to Jesus through D.E.E.P.E.R. training, which leads them to repeat the cycle with another group of disciples sent to make disciples of more friends and family.

Whether you are a parent making a discipleship plan for your kids, a church leader forming an overall discipleship strategy for your church, or a group leader who is wondering how to form and lead those in your community toward Jesus, it is important for us to be thoughtful and prayerful in developing a repeatable process for making disciples of Jesus who will also be able to make disciples of Jesus.



Saturate members, [access the full, 12-session video training](#) now with Jeff Vanderstelt walking through this content further and equipping you to build a discipleship pathway in your context.

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