

Discipleship

Topic: The How To of Youth Work

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Biography:

Peter is passionate about seeing the church equipped to engage with culture and society on every level. He desires to see that new technology and social media are used effectively to change the world, advance the kingdom of Heaven and represent Jesus well in all we do. All driven by a desire to see people encounter Jesus and learn to live in the freedom of their identity in him. He is married to Ellen and is currently enjoying ABBA on vinyl.

INTRODUCTION

Discipleship can be misunderstood perhaps because it is often over-complicated or badly implemented within the Church. Discipleship is not a fad from a period in church history, nor is it an optional extra for the radical few. It is *the* thing. The very thing at the core of our Christian life. Jesus said 'I will build my church' but commanded us to 'GO and make disciples'. God can and does break in and change us in an instant. Absolutely! However, more often than not, he chooses process over power. This is not because he is un-willing or un-able to change us in a moment, but because we tend to struggle with such a change. Freedom can be as dangerous as it can wonderful. Therefore Jesus set this beautiful system in place that we call discipleship.

Discipleship is life long and, when done properly, facilitates much of our growth. It is learning, step by step, to walk with God and each other through all that life has to offer. In the process we are refined and find our true sense of identity and purpose.

At its heart is a desire to serve and to see people go further in life and into the things of God than we personally have. It doesn't work half-heartedly or unintentionally but is the way in which we approach a **life** of following Jesus.

THEOLOGY

Discipleship is at the heart of the Great Commission - So it's pretty important, but the command is really just an extension (or perhaps a overt 'naming') of what Jesus was doing with his disciples for three years.

There are two Greek words (that I know of) translated 'disciple'. The first (Didasko) means 'to teach'. We simply teach the things of God to those who have not been following Jesus for as long as we have. This is to disciple. It is done in relationship. The second (Mathetes) is to be a disciple. My favourite translation is a 'learner/doer'. The disciples weren't taught in a class room but rather in the field! Getting it horribly wrong and impossibly right. Jesus sends the disciples out on a mission, usually long before any of us would say they were ready. He then welcomes them back, whether they have succeeded or failed, and teaches them

some more.

For me this is the key from Jesus' model of discipleship. 'Succeed' or 'fail' there were always lessons to be learned. It wasn't clean and it wasn't neat. It was doing life with people who had real issues, caused problems, fought, and messed up. It was however, this group of people that went on to change the world. That's the power of discipleship.

PRACTICALITIES

I believe that this definition of discipleship is incredibly freeing. You don't need to have a degree in theology to disciple someone. You simply need to be willing to 'do life' with them. It is not about controlling them but rather pouring out your life again and again for someone, no matter how stupid they act from time to time. I would not be the man I am today without people who have been faithful to me. Celebrating when I get it right but always there to help, encourage and restore me when I've really messed up.

Firstly I would ask you who are *you* being disciplined by? If you can't answer straight off the bat you aren't being disciplined. True discipleship doesn't happen by accident.

At any one time I can tell you who is discipling me, who I am discipling and who am I walking alongside (on more of a peer level, being accountable and honest on a weekly basis). Discipleship is intentional. If it's not intentional, it's not discipleship. So if you don't have this in your life, get it! Find someone you trust and who is further in their walk with Jesus than you are. Forget pride and go for it. Also find people who are in a similar stage of life who you can walk with day by day.

This then leads to you discipling. Disciples make disciples – it's part of the deal! Now, you may not have anyone come up to you and ask you to disciple them, but that doesn't mean you can't disciple. It's okay to have favourites. There are usually those young people who just catch your heart. Sometimes they are similar to us or struggle in the same way or just catch our attention. There the ones to be intentional with. Jesus had favourites - a close few who got to see more than the others. I'm not talking about anything outside of good safeguarding practice. But when we are intentional even a casual conversation with a young person in the tuck-shop queue on a Friday night can be a chance to speak into their lives.

In today's society faithfulness speaks very loudly. We chuck things away as soon as there is a new model. Remaining faithful to someone can be the difference between a life following Jesus or not. It is a faithful few, who believed in me when I didn't, who have changed my life forever. I think they are Superhero's! Really, they are just men who have dedicated their life to seeing others follow Jesus with all their heart. It is their faithfulness to me that has made me want to do the same for someone else. This is discipleship. It's not really complicated. Teach people what you've learned and walk with them through good and bad. And that's the call, make disciples - He'll build the church.

REFLECTION & LEARNING

There are plenty of books and resources on discipleship. The Kings Arms in Bedford have a great booklet on Discipleship. It's quite acronym- and illustration- heavy but really well put together and has some gems in there.

Read how Jesus reacted when the Disciples messed up. He was never shocked! He always bought them back and then sent them back out to try again.

Francis Chan has a really great course called 'Multiply'. This might be something that you run in your youth group but it could be something that may just help you.

- Another key resources is called: 'Live life 123' by Urban Saints (www.livelifelife123.org) . This is an amazing resource about discipleship. It is very practical, and you can find loads of things to help you on their website. A great place to start...

DEVELOPING PRACTICE

Become a disciple. Find someone to learn from, be vulnerable with, and do life together, pursuing Jesus.

Choose one person to disciple - be intentional that every time you talk to them you get to be Jesus to that individual. Be faithful, speak life, and don't give up on them.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- The Kings Arms booklet on discipleship. Really well put together resource. <http://www.kingsarms.org/resources/the-disciple.html>
- Multiply website. Most of the videos are available for free along with a pdf. Definitely worth a look. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/multiplymovement.com/index.html>
- Live life 123. Really captures the importance of this. <http://www.livelifelife123.org/>
- Gospels - Read how Jesus interacted with the Disciples, how he taught them through life, and how he let them try, fail, and succeed.