



# PRESERVING BIBLE TIMES<sup>inc.</sup>

Because Context Matters

## **20 Reasons Why “Discipleship” Died (RIP)**

**(90% of an effective therapy is rooted in a sound diagnosis)**

*Nondiscipleship is the elephant in the church* – Dallas Willard

*Trying to be a disciple of Jesus is not the same thing as training to be His Disciple* – Bruce Demarest

- 1) Unlike Solomon, the church in America cut the “make disciples” (MD) baby in half, creating two new (non-biblical) words - *evangelism* and *discipleship*. This separation has had adverse consequences. It allowed the church to prioritize “saving” over discipling. We never did get around to doing much discipling. That takes too much effort; plus it can be messy and frustrating. But at least we saved them!
- 2) We confused being a convert/believer with being a disciple of Jesus.
- 3) We assumed that people will know how to disciple others – they don’t. How can you pass along something you have not experienced?
- 4) Faith became more a creed to assent to than a lifestyle verb to be lived out. Then life got separated into two spheres – sacred and secular – which gave rise to compartmentalized Christianity.
- 5) We failed to challenge people to take responsibility for their own discipling, and they didn’t.
- 6) We don’t know what a First Century disciple of Jesus looks like, e.g., attributes. So how then would we know what we are trying to reproduce or become?
- 7) We failed to reproduce ourselves. Recent data reveals that two out of three children raised in a Christian home are lost to the faith by age 30. Why is it that the life we are “living” isn’t something they care to emulate?
- 8) We assumed that MD would automatically happen if people hung around the church long enough. It didn’t. As a result we were not intentional about MD and thus failed to create a church climate that was conducive to discipling.
- 9) We treated MD as a periodic program that deserves an occasional emphasis rather than a purposeful, life-long process that is always Job #1, i.e., “*Discipling is everything and everything is discipling.*”
- 10) We took our eye off the MD ball and were seduced into offering “therapeutic consumerism” events where we felt people are itching; e.g. parenting skills, financial skills, divorce recovery, etc., etc. No time left for in-depth (transforming) Bible study and discipling.
- 11) We emphasized “*knowing*” over “*doing*” and “*being.*” And valued orthodoxy (*right thinking*) over orthopraxy (*right doing*). Then we falsely equated the acquisition of knowledge with spiritual maturity.
- 12) We failed to grasp the genius of Jesus’ experiential “*Do and Teach*” (Acts 1:1) pedagogy for MD, substituting in its place a Westernized classroom, cognitive approach of “Teach and Maybe Do.”
- 13) The old mentoring model is not working. Most of the gray hairs still don’t see themselves as quite ready (yet) to disciple others. They always seem to need to read a few more spiritual books!
- 14) We have a 21<sup>st</sup>-Century, Westernized, industrialized, urban understanding of Jesus which is not the Near Eastern, village, agrarian, Jewish Jesus of the Gospels who show us how (contextually) to MD.
- 15) MD takes place in community with transparency and intimacy. Too many believers are functional Long Rangers in the church, strangers in the worship crowd. We need to rediscover the biblical paradigm for our life together.

- 16) We aimed at too small/narrow a target. We failed to disciple the whole person. Peter Scazzero postulates there is no spiritual maturity without corresponding relational and emotional maturity. Why do we fill people up with biblical facts while still letting them continue as emotionally maladjusted, relational misfits in our midst?
- 17) We fostered a church model where clerics have taken the place of the “priesthood of ALL believers.” We have seminaries (mostly) training church managers, not shepherds of the flock who model discipling.
- 18) The narcissism of the culture has spilled over into the church resulting in people who think being a disciple of Jesus is a personal journey in self-development, self-actualization and self-fulfillment. Wrong! Missing are obedience, submission, emulation of Jesus, communion with God and the Body, and yes, joy unspeakable.
- 19) We have been dispensing spiritual/biblical facts without frameworks that tie everything together. Ever tried to work a puzzle without seeing the box top? That’s why we created a biblical framework for MD – it’s a missing piece that makes a huge difference.
- 20) It isn’t the “*Great Commission*.” That phrase is not in the text. Apple trees don’t have to be exhorted to make apples. That’s just what apple trees do! In the Greek, Matt. 28:19 reads much more as the “Great Given” - of course disciples will be making disciples (MD). Like apple trees, that’s what disciples (super) naturally do!