

5 Do and Teach

*In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to **do and teach**.*

—Acts 1:1 (added)

*What the Evangelists recorded in the Gospels was the sweat, blood, tears and elation they **experienced** with Jesus. Fisherman and tax collectors came to Jesus, listened to His teachings, witnessed His works, and observed His devotion to the Father. The theology of Jesus in the Gospels is rather thin. But their **experience** of Jesus is rich – so strong and convincing, in fact, that it prompted them to lay down their lives for Him. **Experience** changed them from timid, lukewarm followers into tenacious, blazing disciples of the risen Lord.*

—Bruce Demerest¹

(added)

Changing a Worldview and its Paradigms

How do you change a person's worldview? Remember the old joke: How do you eat an elephant? Answer: One bite at a time! This might give us an insight to that question: How do you change a person's worldview? Answer: One idea or paradigm at a time.

When it comes to achieving meaningful and permanent change in a person's worldview, you can try to change the way they think from the top down. This can be accomplished by exposing people to new ideas, concepts, and perspectives that they might never have thought about before. Another approach would be to strategically target certain key paradigms within their worldview, and then find ways to creatively change them. That would be effecting change from the bottom up, or perhaps better put, from the inside out. Another option would be to try and do both at the same time. Finally, you could elect to do both, but in a certain rhythm of first paradigm behavior change, then worldview idea change, repeating that pattern over time.

In the case of the Twelve, Jesus had those same tactical choices before Him. He could give these observant Jews some new ideas about how to see and think about their world differently – an approach that Western evangelicalism seems to favor. Alternatively, Jesus could strategically target certain key religious paradigms and dramatically and creatively confront them one at a time until their worldview starts to remake itself. Jesus could also choose to do some of each, in which case the wisdom is found in watching the sequence in which He does it. Let's watch the Master Paradigm and Worldview Remaker at work and closely observe not only what Jesus does, but also how and when He does it. As we will

see, Jesus seems to have adopted a paradigm and worldview changing rhythm of “*do and teach.*” This chapter explores that methodology and asks what does that mean for Western discipling today?

Wisdom in Sequence

If every word in Scripture is inspired, then it necessarily follows that the sequence of those words, as well as the thoughts contained therein, are likewise inspired. Because of that, there is often great discipling wisdom to be found in the sequencing of Scripture. As an example, Paul often starts his letters with various forms of the same grace-and-peace (underscored) salutation:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father...
(Col. 1:3)

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: *Grace and peace* to you... (I Thess. 1:1)

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ... (Phil. 1:2 & Gal. 1:3)

With Paul, the sequence is never “peace and grace,” it’s always “grace and peace.” That sequencing is essential for there is no peace to be found outside of God’s preceding grace.

Luke’s Sequence

When Luke reflects back on his Gospel, his opening summary statement in Acts 1:1 begins by referencing all that Jesus “began to do and teach.” He did not reverse that order by characterizing it as “teach and do.” Luke’s sequencing gives us another often overlooked insight into the genius of Jesus’ manner of making disciples: If you want to effectively and efficiently change a person’s paradigms – their ways of looking at and understanding things – give priority to creating experiences that foster behavioral change. By

doing that, attitudinal change will follow. Conversely, it may not be wise to rest the bulk of a discipling methodology on a lot of front-end teaching, especially when changing behaviors, attitudes and paradigms is the objective. In general, people have been adequately taught. It’s the experiential reality they are missing.

No where in Luke’s Gospel do we have any record of the Twelve ever expressing a self-initiated desire to interact with “sinners.” As far as we can tell, these future Kingdom leaders never woke up in the morning with a burning desire to touch lepers, interact with Gentiles, or dine with undesirables. Jesus knew He would have to teach for a very long time before those observant Jewish attitudes deeply imbedded in their psyche would ever change, let alone change to the point where they would be open to considering such radical Kingdom of God behaviors. Knowing the wiring diagrams of the Twelve perfectly, Jesus therefore gave them no choice in the matter as to how they were going to change.

No Choice!

As Luke records it in his early chapters, Jesus put his initial focus on fostering Behavioral change in the Twelve, knowing that Attitudinal change would follow later. In the beginning, Jesus chose not to preach intensively on “love thy neighbor.” Rather, He had them come along with Him as He lived out loving and rescuing people. Furthermore, these disciples had no choice in the matter. All of that just comes as part of the “Follow Me” package. In the process of exposing the Twelve to these unwanted and unsettling encounters, Jesus also started to redefine for them who their neighbor is and what it means to be neighborly. It was not so much a classroom experience as it was an onsite internship in the reality

of the human condition and how the Kingdom of God transforms it.

You Need to Experience This

As part of detoxing and remaking the Twelve's religious paradigms, Jesus decided each day where the band would be going and what the Twelve would experience. Since disciples always submitted to their rabbi, Jesus was able to get them to observe and experience encounters with undesirable people – to see up close the prisoners being set free.² As Luke records it, only after many of these events had been experienced did Jesus start to spend significant time explicitly teaching them about the inherent inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God.

In Jesus' methodology for re-forming the Twelve, these disciples were deliberately taken far outside their comfort zones and paradigms. Day after day they followed Jesus and watched closely as He healed lepers, demon-possessed people, paralytics, and people with birth defects. They were all people who had been culturally marginalized as outcasts. Left to their own preferences, these Twelve would have avoided these disconcerting and bewildering encounters at all cost, staying safely within their deeply embedded observant Jewish comfort zones. This strategy of fostering unwanted Kingdom-shaping encounters for the Twelve to experience is another key dynamic Jesus used in remaking them. It is a dynamic that is often missing in many of today's discipleship programs.

The Military Model

The United States Marines understand very well the implications of using **Behavioral** change to achieve **Attitude** change. They start with a disparate group of narcissistic, undisciplined young people, and make them into a cohesive unit where commands are not optional; and what's

best for the Corps and the squad, not the individual, is of utmost importance. The Marines know how to tear down self-absorbed paradigms and replace them with new community paradigms. Their tactics include non-optional long marches, unquestioned discipline, perplexing situations, and very uncomfortable environments, to name a few. The end result is a group of people who have been transformed in a short period of time to accomplish more than they might have ever thought possible. They are now trained soldiers who have a new community identity.

I don't want to push this analogy too far, and I certainly don't want to be misunderstood as implicitly blessing authoritative cults. Nevertheless, it is worth observing that Western discipleship is much more like an optional scouting-jamboree weekend than an "Onward Christian Soldiers" commitment. By way of contrast, especially when understood from the perspective of observant Judaism, Jesus' manner of making disciples had much more in common with the Marines than the Boy Scouts. For example, Jesus radically remade the disciples' paradigm of

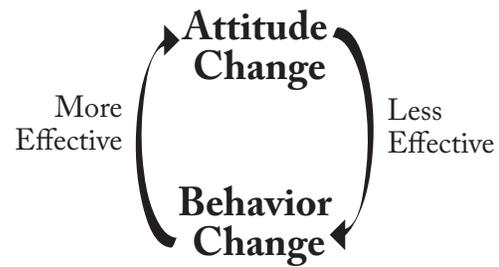
- **Society**, from giving priority to social status and reciprocal hospitality to one of elevating "the least of these"³ to the top of His priority list.
- **Gentiles, lepers, paralytics, disease and demon-possessed people**, from untouchables to dearly beloved brothers and sisters.
- **Blessing** with the Beatitudes.⁴
- **Prayer** with The Lord's Prayer.⁵
- **Righteousness**, away from the works oriented gold standard of the Pharisees and into one that focused on the condition of one's heart.⁶

- **God**, making a Holy God approachable and personal with the very familiar family word, *Abba*.⁷
- **Messiah**, from that of a political king on a throne to one of a suffering servant on a Cross.

The necessity of having to totally remake the disciple's worldview and all its core paradigms should provide ample food for thought for us today. In essence, Jesus had to detox the disciples from just about everything they held to be right and true in their religious culture. Is anything less than that detoxed outcome needed for today? Do we need to be detoxed from everything our world has told us, and even perhaps from some of what our religious culture has told us is "true?"

An Example

In the late 1960's, I heard a dialogue sermon that really caught my attention, both in its format and in its content. It was a two-pulpit exchange between a psychologist and a pastor entitled "What Psychology Could Teach the Church." What the psychologist suggested was that the church had the wrong emphasis in the 1960's when it gave priority to repeatedly preaching "love the Blacks" from the pulpit. He contended it was naively optimistic to repeatedly preach that theme, somehow hoping that the White people in the pew would wake up one morning and suddenly love people of another color. Basically this Christian psychologist went on to suggest that this emphasis on **Attitude** change preaching was often only marginally effective, particularly if its purpose was to achieve long-lasting **Behavioral** change. He suggested the church would be well advised, and its members would be better served, if that emphasis was reversed as portrayed by the following graphic:



In making his observations, this psychologist drew upon social scientist Leon Fessinger's Cognitive Dissonance model developed in the late 1950's. Cognitive Dissonance is a fancy name for the tension that results when a newly experienced behavior is in conflict with an ingrained attitude. With that perspective in view, this psychologist observed that achieving life-long **Attitude** change would be far more effective if a White church would partner with a Black church – that was the vernacular of that era – and periodically pair off its families for something like "My Place, Your Place" weekend visits. Thus, when a White family went to spend a weekend at a Black family's home, and a few months later vice versa, many discoveries and insights leading to **Attitudinal** change would inevitably take place. For example, both families might discover they like the same cereal for breakfast, laugh at the same cartoons, even like some of the same sports. They would discover they shared a concern about their kids' education and spiritual development, and that they both loved Jesus. Thus, at the end of those paired-off weekends, there would be many White families with significantly changed **Attitudes** towards Blacks because of their **Behavioral** experience with these families. And vice versa for the Black families! It was the experience that would be catalytic, not the attitudinal "love thy neighbor" exhortation that everyone had long heard.

Sequence Matters

Many discipleship programs are implicitly based

on the “teach and maybe do” model of Western thinking, not the “do and teach” emphasis of first-century discipling. In church life, this usually works itself out with an over emphasis on reading, teaching, and preaching at the expense of observing, doing, and experiencing. Not to be misunderstood, we desperately need good teaching and preaching focused on God’s Word. It’s more the sequence and the mix with paradigm-changing experiences that tends to become unbalanced.

To a Fessinger, all of this is a weak substitute for structuring appropriate Behavioral change situations and experiences that take people outside of their entrenched paradigms and comfort zones. The purpose of these situations would be to expose believers to those spiritual experiences that only get talked about in the pew and classroom. In our traditional Western teaching modes, we all too often:

- Spend too much time talking about prayer, and too little time doing it.
- Devote more time discussing the spiritual disciplines of meditation and contemplation, but seldom setting aside significant time to experience those transforming realities.
- Exhorting believers to become world Christians. But all too few will commit time every few years to go to Haiti, Brazil, China, or Indonesia to experience world Christianity first hand.

The reader is encouraged to add other examples.

Achieving Effective Behavior Change

While many Westerners will always maintain that teaching first is a necessity, Fessinger would suggest that this approach is often insufficient to significantly disrupt people’s comfort zones, let alone change their paradigms. It’s often a much

better discipling strategy to find creative ways to first expose people to needed new experiences, and then teach about them later. Examining Luke 4-8, we see Jesus operating in this manner. A large majority of the verses in these chapters are doing oriented. In these chapters, Jesus provides a continuing series of radical exposures and experiences that must have been daily shock therapy to the Twelve. It is a very different form of teaching – teaching by exposure to explicit doing.

Get In The Boat

This do-first pattern is particularly evident in Luke 8 when Jesus tells the Twelve to get in the boat because they are “going to the other side,” to the Decapolis – the land of evil. Not only was this in total conflict with their observant Jewish paradigms, but when they got there they found out the purpose was to rescue a demon-possessed, naked Gentile, living in a cave tomb. To an observant Jew, this was at best a sub-, sub-, sub-human being! Not in a million years would they ever have been open to considering that, let alone doing that! In reading Luke’s narrative carefully, observe that only Jesus gets out of the boat.⁸ The disciples stayed in the boat to avoid becoming contaminated with a quadruple violation of ritual impurity as defined by their religious culture. Yet Jesus knew this never-to-be-forgotten extreme experience was part of the necessary process if they were ever going to be detoxed from their observant Jewish paradigms. Only then would these disciples be able to rediscover that the Abrahamic Covenant was truly meant for all peoples. Time and time again, these disciples had to be systematically wrenched out of their restrictive paradigms concerning Gentiles, demon-possessed people, lepers, paralytics and people with birth defects, all “poor” people who had been disenfranchised

by observant Judaism. Only with their religious paradigms completely pulverized could they start to get the notion that *all* were welcome in the Kingdom of God.

A New Paradigm for Purity

The Twelve also needed to have their rigid notions of purity redefined back to God's original intent – away from the corrupted ritual purity notions of the Pharisees, and back to God's standard as repeatedly voiced by Moses and the prophets. In its place, a renewed understanding of purity was needed – a purity that had to do with the heart! In the end, Jesus' ready-or-not-here-it-comes strategy of systematically exposing these Twelve to everything that was in conflict with their religious way of seeing things, was effective. It was a strategy to deconstruct their entrenched paradigms and replace them with a new Kingdom of God way of looking at the world, as well as the people around them. Is any less required for making disciples of Jesus today?

A Personal Example

When I was 30 years old, my wife and I were living in a Midwestern university town, where we attended a campus church. One Sunday after the worship service, I was introduced to an older man named Bill. I didn't know much about Bill, but I had heard that he was affiliated with some group called the Fellowship Foundation, and they were somehow involved in the Prayer Breakfast movement. Over time, we struck up a relationship that mostly revolved around our common interest – pitching softball.

In retelling this story, it helps to understand that I had previously joined this church when I was 25 years old, which required me to confess Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. If the truth were known, I joined the church so my wife-to-

be and I could get married by the pastor. While I was raised in a Christian church culture, and I had no question that God existed, and that Jesus Christ was His Son who came to save me from my sins, there was nothing particularly personal or intimate about that for me.

A Penny For Your Thoughts

Some time later, this Bill became an Elder in the church. Shortly thereafter, he approached me one Sunday morning and asked me if I would consider doing something for him. Since he had just been elected an officer of the church, he wanted to get some input from people in the church. What he was particularly interested in was how people saw the church, what they liked about it, and what the church might consider doing differently. For whatever reason, I was one of the people he decided to approach with that request. In those days, I was both naive and arrogant enough to believe I just might have something worthwhile to say on those topics! So home I went, pulled out my 18 inch by 22-inch notepad, and began to compose some expansive ideas. That was the big pad I always used when I wanted to think big thoughts!

A couple of weeks later Bill stopped me after church and asked how I was doing on my assignment. I told him that I had two pages of diagrams, flow charts, Scripture verses, management principles and thoughts, and that they were coming together quite nicely. "That's great," he observed, "How about I stop by next Thursday evening at 8:00 PM, and you can share your thoughts with me." I said that would be fine, went home, and continued to polish up those expansive ideas being worked out on my big pad!

An Unexpected Outcome!

When Thursday night at 8:00 PM arrived, there was Bill at my door. After a few pleasantries,

he asked me to share my thoughts with him regarding the church. So I began my monologue. Every ten minutes or so Bill would interject something short and crisp like, “that’s interesting,” or “that’s intriguing,” or “that’s fascinating.” After I had completed about 90 minutes of my download, Bill made a seemingly straightforward statement: “You must really care about this church to have spent so much time thinking about it.” I replied rather quietly, “Yes, I do.” To which Bill then responded, “That’s great! By the way, do you care enough about this church to pray for it with me?” As those words began to sink in, I actually remember feeling like a noose was starting to drop around my neck! I realized I had but two choices: Yes and no; and if I said no, I would be contradicting everything I had just done and said. So, much more hesitatingly, and with a much more subdued voice, I replied, “Yes, I would be willing to pray with you about the church.” To which Bill promptly responded, “That’s great. How about I come to your house every Monday morning at 7:00 AM, and we’ll pray for an hour before you go to the office.” Then out the door he went. It was only then that it began to dawn on me that I was truly trapped, or so it seemed!

Later that evening, I couldn’t get over what had just happened. As I told my wife before we went to bed, up until that night I had created this nice, neat, arms-length Christian thing that I was nicely managing for over five years. During that time, I never allowed myself to be put into a position where I had to pray out loud with another Christian. But now I had this professional praying person coming to my house every Monday morning, and I can not even be a “no show” because it is at my house!

We Have Ignition

True to his word, Bill was there every Monday morning at 7:00 AM. I can still vividly remember anticipating that very first Monday morning with a good deal of dread. In fact, I didn’t sleep a wink the Sunday night before. I was too busy practicing my prayers to sleep! I figured if a professional pray-er was coming to my house, I at least better sound good – recognize any performance Christianity at work? It took months for me to start to become comfortable with this one-on-one hourly prayer time. But gradually it became more comfortable. As the months unfolded, the Holy Spirit started to make His presence and leading known. Then there came a time, as they say at Cape Kennedy, when “we have ignition.”

More New Experiences

As part of that three-year experience, Bill began to take me along to various fellowship weekends in different parts of the country, and more new experiences began to open up to me. I think you get the idea that for me this was “do and teach” in action. At that stage in my life, if any man had ever asked me if I would like to experience one-on-one weekly prayer time, I would have always found a creative way to avoid it. But Bill’s approach, whether intentional, or just guided by the Holy Spirit, was the kind of appropriate behavioral breakthrough I needed that no amount of words, pulpit rhetoric, or exhortation would ever have gotten me to do.

Today’s Dilemma

Jesus was able to put His “do and teach” methodology to good use because of the nature of the rabbi-disciple relationship. Those Twelve had to follow where ever their rabbi Jesus went because

they were committed to submitting to His teaching and way of understanding life.

Two thousand years later, the question is: How can we move closer to that powerful life-changing dynamic of rebalancing ourselves to more of “do” before we teach, that making disciples is often more “caught than taught.” Unfortunately, we can’t really mandate much of anything to disciples anymore, cultural paradigms being what they are. Furthermore, many believers now view everything in the area of discipleship as optional for their consideration, not mandatory for their participation. One pragmatic answer may lie in understanding the interrelationship of commitment and spiritual maturity, particularly as it relates to key decision times in the life of the believer.

Sacraments Can Be Strategic Too

In the life of our churches today, there are very few occasions when the church participates in a decision made by a person. However, there are at least three decision-making events – baptism, marriage, and church membership – where the church is significantly involved. It is at those strategic times that the church has a wonderful opportunity to ask individuals for a discipling commitment. Let’s explore one way how that might work itself out regarding church membership.

Want to Join This Church?

Dick and Joan are a married couple in their mid-30’s. After attending Gospel Times Community Church (GTCC) for several months, they were thinking they would like to become members of that particular community of faith. But unbeknownst to this couple, the leadership of GTCC is committed to making disciples as a total philosophy of ministry. To the pastoral staff,

making disciples is not a program, nor is it the emphasis of a particular church season. It is a life-long process undergirded by commitments, experiences, teaching, and much prayer.

As the leadership of GTCC began to embrace this new commitment emphasis to making disciples, they discovered a life-changing insight. If you wait for people to spiritually mature before you ask them for a discipling commitment, that day seldom comes. As a result, the flock doesn’t necessarily grow and mature. However, if you ask prospective church members for a discipling commitment up front, much to everyone’s surprise, spiritual maturity inevitably seems to grow out of that commitment, and the related experiences that flow from it. This epiphany understanding has dramatically reshaped how the leadership of GTCC now views church membership.

Commit and Join

When Dick and Joan approached the church administrator to inquire about joining GTCC, they found out that you just couldn’t join per se. First, you need to make some commitments as to what kind of a church member you were willing to become. In subsequent discussions with the pastoral staff, Dick and Joan discovered that to formally join the fellowship of GTCC, they needed to make a written commitment to dedicate their time and resources to a number of discipling experiences, including:

- Joining a Growth Group of 15-20 other church members that meets twice a month to focus on what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in all that we do and are.
- Take a Saturday Spiritual Gifts Workshop to identify their spiritual gift possibilities. Then commit to exploring those gift possibilities in a ministry setting. This includes mentoring

relationships with those who have already developed and refined the using of those gifts.

- Attend a Marriage Encounter weekend within the first two years.
- Take a prescribed list of twelve biblical studies and discipling courses in the church's Adult Education program over the next ten years, with the first four to be completed in the first two years.

In addition, Dick and Joan would be asked to commit to two of the following spiritual growth experiences:

- Spend two long weekends in the first four years in a silent retreat setting under the direction of a Spiritual Director.
- Give every third holiday to working in an inner city soup kitchen.
- Work in a ministry setting with people with developmental disabilities.
- Fast two days a month.
- Make up to four weeks available in the first six years for short-term mission trips to Haiti, Brazil and China to begin to develop a world Christian's perspective.

The staff of GTCC has come to realize that the best time to ask for people's commitments to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ is at the very beginning – when they want to join the church. This church discovered it is crucial to ask each member to participate in those events that the staff feels is important for his or her spiritual formation, growth and perspective. These are the kind of events and experiences that people unknowingly either avoid or miss, even with the best of discipleship intentions. For the GTCC leadership, this is part of “do and teach” in action!

What's Happening Here?

When the GTCC church began to raise the bar with these new expectations for church membership, the staff was convinced church attendance would start shrinking in size – that they would be left with a Gideon's army remnant. Much to their surprise, the church began to enter into progressive phases of ever increasing growth. The testimonies and case histories of those who embraced and benefited from the church's new commitment to a “do and teach” philosophy of ministry persuaded many others to join the church and experience that reality for themselves.

Looking through the rearview mirror, the leadership of the GTCC realized they had been expecting too little from their members, and therefore were asking too little from them. Furthermore, they were surprised to discover that there seemed to be more people than they ever would have imagined who were looking for a church that actually asks something substantial of them, certainly asking more than their community service organizations do!

A New Legalism?

My sense is that the preceding GTCC scenario will make many uncomfortable. I hope so! Becoming uncomfortable is the first step to meaningful change. There may be some who might object that such an approach to church membership could easily lead to a new form of legalism. While anything is possible and anything can be abused, I would not agree this would be the expected outcome. GTCC is all about encouraging new experiences that will foster spiritual growth and maturity. Furthermore, these experiences are all optional. If you don't want to go down that road, you certainly don't have to join.

Reflections to Journal and Share

- Do you have your own Bill experiences? Can you point to some examples in your life where unintended behavioral change came from events and experiences that someone engaged you in that you would not have chosen on your own?

- What is the balance in your life between doing and teaching? How about your church?

- Would you want to join the Gospel Times Community Church? Why or why not?

- What experiences from your past have significantly contributed to your spiritual growth? Looking forward, what experiences do you feel are still needed to further facilitate your spiritual growth?

- Do we need to be detoxed from our culture as part of the process of being remade into disciples of Jesus Christ? What about from aspects of your religious culture? If so, what might be some effective ways for this to be accomplished?

Ponder

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so. For that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

—**John 13:12-17 (added)**

Jesus’ approach to remaking the Twelve brings to mind G. K. Chesterton’s profound observation that *“All education is implication.”* Much of the disciple’s education came from daily wrestling with the paradigm changing implications of what Jesus was doing that went far beyond the boundaries of their religious culture. The question for disciplemakers is: How best to utilize this all-education-is-really-implication reshaping reality as part of the process of making disciples today?

Concerning the process of making disciples, someone once observed,
When all is said and done, a lot gets said and very little gets done!

Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your perfect wisdom.

*Thank You that You always use that perfect wisdom
in shaping my life.*

*Thank you that You know everything about me,
and still love me.*

*Show me the way to go. Lead me in the way of
being a disciple of Your Son.*

*Grant me the courage to go where I would not
normally want to go,*

*And experience that which I would not normally
choose to experience.*

*Empower me with a desire to be a doer, not just a
hearer.*

Remake me into Your person.

Amen

Notes and Sources

¹Bruce Demarest, *Satisfy Your Soul*, (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1999), p. 101.

²Luke 4:18

³Matthew 25:40

⁴Matthew 5:3-12

⁵Luke 11:2-4

⁶Luke 8:15

⁷Luke 11:2