

ESTABLISHING THE NEW CONVERT THROUGH A DISCIPLING MINISTRY

Establishing a discipling ministry is one of the most important ministries any church could ever engage in. It is the life blood of the church!

The **goal** of establishing is to see a new or immature Christian become firmly grounded in various aspects of living the Christian life successfully.

I. The areas which need to be dealt with in working with this person would include the following.

- A. **DOCTRINAL** -- to help new believers become doctrinally grounded and Scripturally oriented.
- B. **DEVOTIONAL** --to help new believers become familiar with basic skills which aid spiritual growth. We must help them build an atmosphere for growth, and know how to feed themselves in the Word of God.
- C. **MINISTRY** -- to expose new converts or young Christians to ministry evaluations in which they can learn by observation. We must help them understand the importance of the gifts God has given them, and to build the desire to use these gifts for the Lord and the work of the church. (The discipler must also develop his own ministry philosophy.)
- D. **CHARACTER** -- to help the new believers to build character traits in their lives that will aid them in their walk with Christ. We must spend time with the young disciple observing his character strengths and weaknesses. We must help him develop his strengths and correct the weaknesses.

God wants every believer to grow toward maturity. The Scriptures speak of being "*rooted and grounded*" in the faith (Col. 1: 28; 2: 6,7)

Identifiable marks of maturity are-- holiness - Heb. 5:14; **love** - I Tim. 1:5; **endurance** - I Cor 3. 1-13; **unity** with other Christians - I Cor. 3:1-3. The discipler should labor to help the new convert grow into a mature believer.

II. Some reason why people FALL AWAY prior to discipling or even after discipling.

- A. **Because of the KIND OF SOIL of their hearts.** (Matthew 13: 3-9; Mark 4:3-9; Luke 8: 5-15).
The parable of the sower teaches us that some fall away because of a lack of nourishment due to an environment which is not conducive for growth.

The condition of the soil is the main topic in these portions. Then trials or temptations expose the weakness that is there. In other words, the person has no internal resources to bear up under the pressure of the situation.

- B. **Because of an EVIL AND UNBELIEVING HEART.** (Heb. 3: 7, 8 ; 12, 13, 15; 4: 7) Unbelief in the passage is synonymous with disobedience. To walk in unbelief is to doubt God. Such doubt limits, if not fully negates, growth in any Christian's life.
- C. **Because of HABITS OF SIN, OR SINFUL LIFE PATTERNS** which constantly cause a the person to walk in sin and sinful life cycles. (See Eph. 4:17-32; Col. 3: 8-14.)
- D. **Because of the NEGATIVE WITNESS** of another person's life. (See Rom. 14: 21; I Cor. 8: 13; II Cor. 11:29.)
- E. **Because of FALSE DOCTRINE and deceitful spirits** (I Tim. 4:1).

III. All growth takes place in the context of Christian relationships.

This should include one-to-one friendships, small-group fellowship, and corporate worship. (See Acts 20: 32; I Pet. 2: 5; Jude 20.)

A church has a vital role in establishing a new Christian. There are both **internal** (knowledge of the Word, prayer, meditation, character, etc.,) and **external** (ministry, skills, good works, relational ability) aspects of the growth process.

Spiritual growth is a lifetime process. No one has fully arrived. We must become life-long learners, and teach the new convert the importance of this goal for their own lives as well.

IV. There are practical guidelines for discipling the newer Christian.

- A. **The first week of a new Christian's life is very vital** to his growth and ongoing spiritual development.
- B. **Establishing them is the very essence of a relational dynamic** with the Lord.
It is not just passing on material, but a shared life experience. It is a shared experience which "is going somewhere" for the Lord. It involves goals and objectives and it is intentional.
- C. **Establishing must be person-centered, rather than materials-centered or program centered.**

DISCIPLING - Establishing the Convert

1. People grow at different rates and come with various situations in life and have different needs.
2. There should be both structured and unstructured time with the person you are discipling.
3. Get excited with the disciple when they see and are thrilled with something new. Use 90% encouragement and 10% correction.
4. In every follow-up situation certain problems will arise--expect them. If the problem is great or you are not ready to help them in it, refer the person to someone else with more training than you have.
5. Remember the details he shares with you. It is good to keep a file (supplemental) on each person and write down insights, observations, and answers to prayer, etc.
7. Work with a person of the same sex.
8. Learn to be a good motivator and encourager.
9. Don't strongly advise unless Biblical principles are being violated. Don't be a junior Holy Spirit.
10. Not everyone will grow. Understand that and don't be discouraged.
11. Prayer by the discipler for the disciple must precede and pervade the entire disciple making process.
12. We must get with the convert immediately after conversion, preferably within 24 hours.

V. There are some general principles that are vital.

1. The process is as important as the product.
2. Balance gentle affection with firmness.
3. Balance armchair discipling with lifestyle discipling. (Take time with the person.)
4. Combine the structured with the unstructured.
5. Seek to build depth into the person.
6. When training the person, take into account the total person.

7. Never demand respect or emphasize your authority.
(Make much of Christ.)
8. You never disciple from a position, but only from a relationship.
9. Truth is best communicated when it is presented simultaneously by example and precept.