

The Teacher as a Disciple Maker

Key Verses

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV)

And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Quote Matthew 28:18-20, the scriptural command for making disciples according to Bible theology.
- Explain how the key words of the Great Commission provide the pattern for making disciples.
- Give various examples of how and where discipling can take place.
- Define the difference between soulwinning and disciple making.
- Explain the two basic ways for church leaders to motivate and inspire the believers to reach people around them with Bible truth, and clarify which way works best for building a mature Apostolic congregation.
- List some biblical references from the Book of Acts and the Epistles showing how new believers were nurtured by leaders and other believers to develop spiritual knowledge and maturity.
- Describe how disciple makers can find their disciples and then proceed to lead them to maturity in their Christian life.
- Discuss the challenges faced by pastors and leaders in developing a disciple-making culture within a church body.

Introduction

Jesus' command to His disciples as recorded in Matthew 28:18–20 documents disciples of Jesus have been commissioned (ordered, authorized) to “make disciples.” This lesson focuses on how to *make disciples* according to Bible theology.

The major content of this lesson has been selected from *Follow to Lead – The Journey of a Disciple Maker* by Stan Gleason. Footnotes throughout the lesson identify the page numbers of the concepts or direct quotations selected from his book. In the *Preface* of his book, Pastor Gleason provided the following background for his concepts about *discipling*.

In the fall of 2012 I was praying and asking the Lord to speak to my heart about the vision He wanted for our local church in the coming year. I felt as though He clearly spoke into my spirit the words, “Go make disciples.” I was temporarily stunned and felt a little taken aback (I’m ashamed to admit). My flesh wanted to respond with, “Okay, duh . . . I’ve been trying to make disciples my entire adult life. What else do You have for me?” I thought I knew all there was to know about making disciples. I had been reasonably successful at seeing unbelievers become committed saints of God during my years of ministry. I had never called it “making disciples” nor did I think of the Bible studies I taught as making disciples, but at that moment I felt a great expectation about what God was trying to say to me. I quickly dispelled my sarcasm and continued to pray over those words. The Lord seemed to let me know that I had much to learn about how He wanted me to fulfill His great Commission.¹

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¹ Stan O. Gleason, *Follow to Lead, The Journey of a Disciple Maker* (Weldon Spring, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2016), 14-15.

The Theology of Making Disciples

Jesus gave us His view of reaching the world with the gospel in His instructions to His disciples. “Jesus gave us the right theology.”² Studying what Jesus communicated to His disciples gives insight into the biblical pattern for fulfilling the Great Commission as recorded in the Gospels.

Matthew 28:18–20

Mark 16:15–18

Luke 24:46–49

The Great Commission includes four commands: GO, TEACH, BAPTIZE, TEACH. Note that TEACH appears twice in the commission Jesus gave to His disciples. Jesus gave instructions for the mission and also for the method. Making disciples must be intentional for the mission to be accomplished.

The reading of Matthew 28:19 (NIV, NKJV) uses the phrase “make disciples of all nations” while the KJV states “teach all nations.” Both statements are correct. However, the NIV and NKJV translations give a fuller understanding of the original Greek word, clarifying that the teaching specifically means “making disciples.” The word translated “teach” (KJV) in verse 19 is a different Greek word than the one translated as “teaching” in verse 20. As this lesson progresses, the student will comprehend that the command to “go make disciples” is fulfilled by teaching disciples (verse 20) to observe the commands of Scripture.

Selected comments from Pastor Gleason’s book provide insight into exploring the theology of “Go Make disciples.”

- It is my belief that Christ’s command to go make disciples has not been completely understood by Christianity as a whole and among some Oneness Pentecostals in particular.³
- Perhaps we still have much to learn concerning the method that Jesus modeled and made sustainable within His disciple-making culture.⁴
- “Go make disciples” was a timeless method that, when employed, provided a strategy to reach the world.⁵

² Gleason, 21.

³ Gleason, 22.

⁴ Gleason, 22.

⁵ Gleason, 22.

- Tradition that is rooted in Scripture will always be right although it may need to be refreshed and personally owned by each succeeding generation.⁶
- In the first-century church, the expectation and the experience was that all born-again believers did ministry. Originally, the word *minister* was a verb and not a noun. Somewhere Christianity turned an action word into a title.⁷
- The fivefold ministry (see Ephesians 4:11) provided leadership for the church, but ministry was shared by all. Saints were trusted to serve, and they were highly esteemed by their leaders. The apostles equipped, empowered (i.e., laid on hands and shared their authority), and released saints for ministry.⁸
- When the ministry was decentralized and the saints were equipped, empowered, and released to do ministry, the results were explosive.⁹ (see Acts 6:5–8)
- Jesus did not intend for His command to “go make disciples of all nations” to be fulfilled only by the fivefold ministry or the so-called professional clergy. This was a commission for every believer to embrace.¹⁰
- Too much ministry is being done by the church for the church. It is no mystery why a local congregation will grow proportionally to the percentage of ministry that is done by the saints beyond the walls of the sanctuary.¹¹
- According to Acts 2:47, “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The Lord could add daily to the church because the first-century church was a daily church.¹²
- I constantly remind our local church that what happens Monday through Saturday is more important than what happens on Sunday. If we get our theology right and do what we should be doing Monday

⁶Gleason, 23.

⁷ Gleason, 24.

⁸ Gleason, 25.

⁹Gleason, 25.

¹⁰ Gleason, 26.

¹¹ Gleason, 27.

¹² Gleason, 28.

through Saturday, then Sunday will be an important part of an entire life of worship.¹³

A Look at First-Century Disciple-Making

Twenty-first-century Apostolics would do well to evaluate their disciple-making techniques by reviewing the principles presented by Pastor Gleason. Though we have advanced modes of communication for sharing the gospel message, are we truly using God's proven method for making disciples? While we can preach weekly sermons, sponsor radio programs, print and distribute thousands of tracts, put up big billboards, and communicate via the Internet, are we truly making disciples? While all these methods have merit for sharing God's message, Pastor Gleason invites his readers to consider Jesus' pattern for making disciples.

- Launching His ministry at age thirty, He [Jesus] had forty-two months to get done what He came to do. He could not afford to waste time, make mistakes, or experiment with unproven methods. He would leave a legacy, but more than that, it would be necessary for Him to establish His vision, values and virtues on this earth in a tangible manner. He could not do this by speaking to large crowds or by writing books, He understood that He could not make a lasting impact from a distance. He would need to do something more enduring than delivering sermons from the mount and working notable miracle. The real work He came to do had to be on a small scale that involves personally investing in individuals.¹⁴
- The final words that Jesus spoke while physically here on earth were uttered immediately prior to His ascension. What would He say at this critical and impressionable moment? We call His final speech "The Great Commission." Contained within the Great Commission are Jesus' last words, "Go make disciples."¹⁵ [See Matthew 28:19, NIV.]
- Matthew 28:19 renders the mission and the model of the Founder's plan for His followers to reach the world with His message. Four commands are contained in the Great Commission: go, baptize, teach, and make.

¹³ Gleason, 28, 29.

¹⁴ Gleason, 32.

¹⁵ Gleason, 33.

The church has done a relatively good job of obeying the first three, but we have fallen short in the last. Only one of these commands actually develops a disciple: make! This three-word command from the Lord to “go make disciples” (Matthew 28:19, NKJV) was an invitation for the disciples to begin living their lives with purpose and intention.¹⁶

- When Jesus said, “Go make disciples” His vision was not lost on the hearers. First-century dwellers in the land of Israel were well acquainted with the rabbi-disciple relationship. After carefully choosing their followers, rabbis would spend their lives teaching, training, imparting, and sharing their lives, values and principles. This is how the Lord Himself lived, and His disciples followed His model during their ministries.¹⁷
- The command to go and make disciples must become the overarching theme of the church with which all other principles, practices, and purposes align. Jesus never told us to go build programs, buildings or massive congregations, but simply to *go* make disciples.¹⁸
- The main point of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not to become a member of a church, ascribe to a code or creed, or check the boxes of all the possible philanthropic pursuits.¹⁹
- There is a reason Jesus declared and then instituted the propagation of the gospel through the disciple-making model. That reason is the power of building relationships with the people we want to see saved. The gospel must be personally delivered to the door of every heart by a disciple maker who has caught the vision of Jesus Christ to do His work, His way.²⁰

¹⁶ Gleason, 33.

¹⁷ Gleason, 33, 34.

¹⁸ Gleason, 36.

¹⁹ Gleason, 39.

²⁰ Gleason, 40.

Living Intentionally as a Disciple-Maker

As one who lives intentionally as a disciple maker, Pastor Gleason offers many helpful insights in Chapter 3 of his book about purposefully living to help others become true disciples. He points out that a person “can live for God and have good, morals, joy, and fulfillment in Christ”²¹ without having an ultimate purpose as a disciple of Jesus. A review of some of his statements provide understanding and inspiration for developing a disciple-making mentality.

- Believers not engaged in disciple making may be living for God, but they are not living intentionally so as to fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ. The greatest tragedy of a sanctified life is to never live intentionally for others with a heart to make disciples out of them.²²
- The first thing that stands out about Ananias (Acts 9) is that Scripture says he was a disciple. He was not an apostle, prophet, pastor, or evangelist; he was simply a disciple. Being described as a disciple simply means that he was a devout follower of Jesus Christ and living his life intentionally with a heart for others. He was not only a disciple in name and title, but also in function.²³

The story of Ananias being divinely directed by God to contact Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-16) reveals how God speaks to a disciple in one location to reach out to someone in another location with God’s message of salvation. “This kind of appointment happened several times throughout the Book of Acts and other places in Scripture.”²⁴

- God will give specific direction and order the steps of those who have committed themselves to making disciples.²⁵

²¹ Gleason, 43.

²² Gleason, 45.

²³ Gleason, 46.

²⁴ Gleason, 47.

²⁵ Gleason, 47.

Disciple-Maker Stories in Scripture to Study

- **Philip** (Acts 8:26–40) - “The Spirit led Philip into the desert on a disciple-making mission.”²⁶ In this case Philip gave the Ethiopian eunuch, who was an ardent student of the Scriptures, a Bible study. The study opened the eunuch’s understanding that he needed to be baptized, even though he apparently loved the Word and lived a good life. Already having a knowledge of Scripture and a desire to understand, the Ethiopian manifested a disciple mentality (see 8:37).
- **Cornelius** (Acts 10), “a devout man and one who feared God”) - God directed Cornelius to Joppa to find Simon Peter. God directed Peter through a vision to receive Cornelius and teach (disciple) him. “This divine appointment led to the salvation of Cornelius’s entire household and opened the door for the presentation of the gospel to the entire world.”²⁷
- Encounters for discipling happen as committed disciple-makers go about their daily activities. **Aquila and Priscilla** happened to be in the Temple and heard Apollos speaking. Noting that Apollos lacked revelation, they took him aside and “explained the word of God more accurately to him” (Acts 18:26).²⁸

Where and How Discipling Happens

- Ministry for discipling often occurs outside the place of worship. Peter and John were walking to a prayer meeting when they stopped to pray for the lame man (Acts 3:1-10).²⁹
- Whether God supernaturally directs us to a specific person or if we simply take advantage of opportunities that present themselves during the routines of daily life, the key is to live purposefully and not randomly. The majority of Jesus’ disciple making occurred within the

²⁶ Gleason, 47

²⁷ Gleason, 47.

²⁸ Gleason, 47.

²⁹ Gleason, 48.

routine of every day. We should take note of this because He is our ultimate model and pattern.³⁰

- While we do read in the Bible and hear of present-day incidents of divine direction in finding someone who has an open heart for being disciplined, we usually “just wake up, pray that God will direct our steps, and head out into the world with a disciple-maker’s heart.”³¹
- Paul disciplined Timothy in the gospel one generation after Jesus provided the pattern for disciple making and told Timothy to commit to others the things he had been taught. “Paul stressed the necessity of continuing in disciple-making relationships. He used words like *commit*, *teach* and *faithful* along with the reference to this father-son relationship (in the gospel) with Timothy.”³²
- A now famous message titled “The Interval Between” (by Bishop Morris Holder) “emphasized that we have nothing to do with our birth day or death date, but everything to do with that interval between. I can write a book, build a chair, paint a picture, or carve a bowl, but the only living thing that will outlive me are the people whose lives I have influenced.”³³

Disciple Making Versus Soulwinning

In I Corinthians 9:19–23, apostle Paul expressed his desire to reach all men for the gospel’s sake by adapting his life to minister so that he might by all means save some (see 9:22). In our efforts to lead people to salvation and spiritual maturity, we would do well to evaluate our current methods being used to reach the unsaved. A look at statistics shows that our Pentecostal (Apostolic) soulwinning methods have not always produced a positive retention percentage.

In Chapter 4 of *Follow to Lead*, Pastor Gleason challenges the person who desires to win souls to consider disciple making as the biblical pattern rather than the often used soulwinning methods. He explores the concept of soulwinning as commonly known in the Pentecostal (Apostolic) culture and shows how the pattern of disciple making produces a much greater retention percentage. In his

³⁰ Gleason, 48.

³¹ Gleason, 48.

³² Gleason, 50-51.

³³ Gleason, 52.

discussion of “Disciple Making Versus Soulwinning” he does not negate any effort that has been employed to reach the unsaved with the gospel.

- Getting church members involved in soulwinning remains a challenge for church leaders. Pastor Gleason suggests that 90 percent of the congregation check out of soulwinning endeavors for one of four reasons:³⁴
 1. They don't do it.
 2. They don't relate to it.
 3. It doesn't fit their personality or gifting.
 4. They believe that only a few highly gifted people are called by God to do it.
- The bottom line is that most of the believers in our churches are intimidated by or unengaged with the soulwinning model we have perpetuated for generations. This cannot be the will of God. I think there is something we can do if we will get back to what Jesus actually said, and not put words in His mouth.³⁵
- The pastoral model: Pastor Gleason proposes that every local congregation has a culture which is largely inspired by the vision, preaching, teaching, communicating (verbal and nonverbal), and attitude of the pastor.³⁶
- In Pastor Gleason's view, there are basically two ways for church leaders to motivate and inspire the church people to reach the people around them: program-based evangelism or Bible-based disciple making.³⁷
 1. Historically the Pentecostal (Apostolic) movement has generally used programs designed to attract new people to the church as a main method of soulwinning. Unfortunately, programs alone fall short in establishing a lasting spiritual impact. Programs usually measure success by how many people show up rather than by assessment of the long-term spiritual impact on lives.
 2. Disciple making does not focus on numbers but rather on seeing converts led to spiritual maturity through discipleship relationships. While programs such as door-knocking, street services, crusades, special Sundays, tract distribution and other evangelistic endeavors,

³⁴ Gleason, 53

³⁵ Gleason, 54.

³⁶ Gleason, 54.

³⁷ Gleason, 55.

have reached the lost, there is a better and more biblical way to impact lost people.³⁸

- Pastor Gleason states, “I would suggest that reaching the world with the gospel of Christ is the mission of the church but the biblically prescribed method to accomplish this commission of Christ is not to win souls but to make disciples.”³⁹
- *Winning* communicates a short, measurable sequence of time after which there is no more obligation, but making communicates a skillful, labor-intensive, open-ended season of personal investment and oversight.⁴⁰
 - When a local congregation has a soulwinning mentality, their retention rate will be predictably low, but when they possess a disciple-making **vision**, their retention rate will be significantly higher.⁴¹
 - In a typical year of reaching lost people through soulwinning strategies, our local retention rate was around 15 percent. Once we changed our missional paradigm to disciple making, our retention rate jumped dramatically to 71 percent.⁴²
- The power of making disciples is staying with your disciples. It slows down the journey, but how much better for two to cross the finish line together than just one alone?⁴³
- Making disciples is not just about what happens after a sinner is saved, but it accurately describes the journey from the first contact with an undisciplined person to the last step in Heaven with Christ and the church. Jesus did not compartmentalize new birth and spiritual maturity. He placed it under one grand vision of making disciples.⁴⁴

³⁸ Gleason, 56.

³⁹ Gleason, 56.

⁴⁰ Gleason, 57.

⁴¹ Gleason, 57.

⁴² Gleason, 57.

⁴³ Gleason, 57.

⁴⁴ Gleason, 58-59.

Making Disciples Involves Leading People into the Knowledge and Positive Acceptance of Apostolic Doctrine and Lifestyle

- As Oneness Pentecostals, we believe that the first-century brand of Christianity is who we are. We have a strong restoration impulse among us that compels us back to the beginning of the church that started in Jerusalem. Those first-century Christians experienced the full gospel of Jesus Christ by repenting of their sins, receiving water baptism in the name of Jesus, and being filled with the Holy Spirit initially evidence by speaking with other tongues. Although our definition of Christian initiation has been gaining traction around the world, contending for it creates a stir of opposition with others who consider themselves to be Christians, but do not agree with us.⁴⁵

Twenty-first-century Oneness Pentecostals may lack a significant characteristic and practice which was understood by the first-century church. The early Christians understood the commission to *go* make disciples. While church programs commonly promote inviting people to church with hope, they will receive salvation (soulwinning), emphasis has not been on linking them with someone to nurture them into maturity as a believer in the full apostolic doctrine (disciple making).

Without someone connecting with new converts to guide them and encourage them in the acceptance of the apostolic doctrine and lifestyle, they tend to drop out when faced with opposition. The association and friendship with a committed Christian can sustain them during their season of maturing in their faith.

The Far-reaching Impact of a Disciple Maker. Compared with a Soulwinner

- If a gifted soulwinner won one soul per day for an entire year, he would have won 365 souls. If this same person won 365 souls for 30 years, 10,950 people would have been born again.⁴⁶ However, statistics

⁴⁵ Gleason, 59.

⁴⁶ Gleason, 61.

indicate that the majority of these souls would not have remained in the church to become committed disciples.

- By contrast, a disciple maker would likely spend an entire year to fully disciple and establish one lost person. In that year he would spend considerable time teaching and influencing the disciple. Yet at the end of the year he could only claim one disciple. However, that trained disciple would then become a disciple maker, and at the end of the second year there would be two disciples. If this pattern of disciple making continued for 30 years, there would be one billion disciples.⁴⁷
 - In his book, *Our God is One* [published in 1999] Talmadge French stated that there were 15–20 million Oneness Pentecostals in the world.⁴⁸
- What explosive growth every local church would experience if every believer made one disciple per year.

The Culture of “Follow to Lead”

Jesus introduced His disciples to the disciple-making culture that was already established in the mindset of His Jewish culture. In his book, *Follow to Lead*, Pastor Gleason shows how the rabbi-disciple culture of the first century remains sustainable and reproducible in any culture and any generation for disciple making. He comments that “it is likely that nothing will ever be more effective in reaching the world than disciple making.”⁴⁹

The disciples followed Jesus, their teacher (Rabbi) during his three and one-half years of ministry. As they followed Him, they became equipped to lead others. The ultimate goal of discipling, as modeled by Jesus, should be to transmit truth to others so that they grow and mature in the grace and knowledge of God, becoming able to teach and lead others. Paul expressed this “follow to lead” concept in II Timothy 2:2.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses,
the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach
others also. (II Timothy 2:2).

⁴⁷ Gleason 62.

⁴⁸ Gleason, 62.

⁴⁹ Gleason, 67.

- We see the model of spiritual reproduction unfold in the *Book of Acts* and throughout the epistles. New believers or underdeveloped Christians were nurtured by leaders and mature believers in hopes of developing their maturity in Christ.⁵⁰
 - Acts 8:4 The believers went everywhere preaching the Word.
 - Acts 9-13 Ananias and Barnabas teamed up to disciple Saul of Tarsus.
 - Acts 18:26 Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside to explain the way of God more accurately.
 - III John 4 John wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”
 - I Peter 2:21 Peter wrote that Christ left an example for following in His steps.
 - I Corinthians 11:1 Paul told his disciples to follow him as he followed Christ.
- The evidence of true discipleship or maturity in Christ is fruitfulness. There are many ways that mature believers can become fruitful. The most obvious fruit a disciple can bear is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Disciples can also bear the fruit of the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7–10). As believers mature in Christ, they will become faithful in many things.⁵¹
 - Faithful to God’s house
 - Faithful in maintaining daily prayer
 - Making daily time for God’s Word
 - Growing in godly character and attitude
 - Paying of tithes and giving offerings
 - Involvement in church ministries
 - Reaching out to help others (discipling)
- Pastor Gleason believes that the fruitfulness Jesus was talking about in John 15 (Jesus the vine and His disciples the branches) also involves the fruitfulness of making disciples. Jesus employed the metaphor of the vine, the branch, and the fruit. The ultimate goal of being fruitful is to reproduce. It should be obvious to us that our fruitfulness is not what

⁵⁰ Gleason, 69.

⁵¹ Gleason, 70.

we do at church or our godly character or spiritual gift. Our fruitfulness is to reproduce after our kind in making disciples like us.⁵²

The Challenge for Twenty-first-Century Apostolic Pastors/Leaders

Though twenty-first-century Apostolic pastors and other leaders embrace the new birth, doctrine, and lifestyle (in terms of holiness and separation) of the first-century church, they seem to fall short of being fruitful in helping saints to become disciple makers. “The endgame of being a disciple in the first century was to become a disciple maker. This is a much different picture than what being a Christian is today.”⁵³

- Feeling content with new converts coming to church at least weekly and giving up their worldly ways, pastors may fail to provide the example, attitude and church structure for new disciples becoming disciple makers.
- Herein lies the problem and perhaps is one reason for our lack of greater impact in our communities. A changed life is wonderful and one of the great benefits of obeying the gospel, but we must begin to build within a local church culture the expectation that new believers quickly turn around and make disciples (and not wait for years until their ship of full spiritual maturity comes in).⁵⁴

Accepting the biblical pattern that disciples should make disciples, pastors and church leaders need to be diligent in equipping believers with the knowledge and strategy for disciple making. In the process of learning and following biblical principles of Christian behavior, new disciples should begin to function also as a disciple maker. However, for this to become reality within a local church, both established believers and new converts need to be schooled to understand the difference between soulwinning and disciple making. They also need to be provided with the example and tools for effective disciple making.

⁵² Gleason, 71.

⁵³ Gleason, 72.

⁵⁴ Gleason, 72.

- The lesson for pastors and the local church is that we need to teach, train, demonstrate, and model disciple-making behavior in our new believers immediately after their new birth.⁵⁵
- There are no special formulas, secrets, or shortcuts to growth in a local church. If you are truly growing the kingdom of God by making disciples, then I can tell you it is plain, old-fashioned hard work.⁵⁶
- Jesus began to steadily increase his expectations of His disciples. He not only told them they would be eventually be doing what he was doing, but He sent them out to do it. Luke 10 [Note verses 1–3] is probably the moment that it hit them they were in training to do the things Jesus had been doing alone up to this point. This was the moment of change for the disciples. They realized that they were not following just to follow, but *Jesus'* plan for them was to follow for now, but eventually to lead.⁵⁷
- Follow to Lead: “This simple concept is the reason for the dramatic growth in the first-century church. When you have a follower you have the power of one, but if you have a leader you have the power of exponential growth. If there was any secret to the success of the first-century church in terms of the impact on Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth, it was their expectation of a disciple.”⁵⁸
- A kingdom-minded pastor should cultivate a disciple-making culture within the congregation. Such a culture produces deeper spiritual maturity in the saints while reproducing similar qualities in the lives of the new believers.⁵⁹

The Process for Developing Disciple-Makers. (Practical Pointers)

NOTE: The following practical pointers have been selected and adapted from notes taken at a seminar session: “New Metrics for Disciples: Becoming a Disciple-Maker” presented by Pastor Stan Gleason at the 2017 UPCI General Conference in Kansas City, MO USA with additional comments from his book, *Follow to Lead*.

⁵⁵ Gleason, 73.

⁵⁶ Gleason 73.

⁵⁷ Gleason, 75.

⁵⁸ Gleason, 75–76.

⁵⁹ Gleason. 76.

1. The Decision to Make Disciples - Fulfilling the Great Commission

Go make disciples: A pastor must make the critical and life-changing decision to fulfill the Great Commission by changing the soul winning programs of his church to the disciple-making process. This must be done through personal example and focused teaching about disciple-making.

- I would suggest that most pastors, including myself, have been too easygoing on the members of our congregations when it comes to assigning them the responsibility of making disciples. Have we unwittingly perpetuated a myth that only people possessing certain personality types, skill sets, or the gift of evangelism are capable of making disciples?⁶⁰ – Pastor Gleason
- Pastors communicate their expectations to the members of their assemblies by how they preach to them and speak with them personally, and by the practice they model before them. If the expectation is for saints to just come to church, sing in the choir, come to prayer meetings and give in the offering, they that is exactly what pastors will get. However, if the expectation is that they will go and make a disciple this year, I believe that most of them will respond positively.⁶¹
- For a pastor/leader there is no greater joy in the world than taking responsibility to facilitate the spiritual birth and maturity of others.⁶² When we as pastors fail to preach commitment, we are doing Christ, the mission, ourselves, and our people a disservice. Without asking for commitment, we will never build mature saints (disciples).⁶³

2. Understanding the Foundational Premise: *Disciples make disciples!*

A disciple-maker walks beside another person in prayer and person to guide them in their spiritual quest and growth. Discipling directs, encourages and stabilizes young believers in their journey to become Christ-like.

Committed disciples in Apostolic churches have accepted the spirit of holiness and a lifestyle that distinguishes them from the world. It does cost

⁶⁰ Gleason, 79.

⁶¹ Gleason, 80-81.

⁶² Gleason, 81.

⁶³ Gleason, 83.

something to belong to a congregation that teaches and models a separated lifestyle different from most churches. New converts can initially feel overwhelmed by the unique lifestyle of Apostolics. They need a friend (disciple-maker) close by to make them feel welcome and comfortable.

- “Separation from the world is a clear and timeless scriptural doctrine, but it is not ‘culturally correct’ today.”⁶⁴
- Apostolic churches do have a culture and spirit of holiness about them that carries a spirit of conviction. People who don’t want to change their lifestyles and carnal ways turn back at the moment of conviction.⁶⁵ However, when a committed disciple (a disciple-maker) has bonded with a new believer, his positive spirit and influence enable the convert to understand, desire and embrace Apostolic doctrine (teachings) and lifestyle.

3. Developing a Disciple-Maker Attitude

- Disciple-makers have a servant’s heart, desiring to bless and help others. They focus on the presence of others in the room. When someone walks in the room, their response by action or words is there you are rather than here I am.
- Disciple-makers “don’t eat lunch alone.” They seek out ways to spend time with their disciples. Jesus spent time with His disciples and “kept them” (John 17:12).

4. Recognizing that Disciple-Makers Make Friends

Apostolics who desire to become disciple makers must recognize that establishing a friend relationship with a potential convert or new believer must precede any effort to disciple that person.

- Jesus met sinners and turned them into friends. Matthew 11:19 indicates that he spent time with others in the common activities of drinking and eating.

⁶⁴ Gleason, 84.

⁶⁵ Gleason, 84.

- New converts must be lovingly accepted as friends who desire to know God or grow in the knowledge of God even though they may not have matured in their understanding and acceptance of the Apostolic lifestyle.
- In the story of Paul's conversion, Ananias addressed Paul as "brother" prior to his baptism (Acts 9:17-18).

5. Finding Your Disciple

Disciple makers pursue those who need to be guided and mentored in their spiritual growth. Those who need spiritual guidance do not necessarily seek for someone to guide them. Apostolics who develop a "there you are" attitude will identify young believers and work to forge a friendship that will lead to a disciple-making relationship.

- **Seek – find – bring:** The disciple maker should **seek** attentively in the church body and also in the community to **find** someone to disciple. Then positive action should be taken to forge a friend relationship so that the disciple will be impacted by God's love and his Word and **brought** to growth and maturity in Christ.
- Barnabas found Paul in Jerusalem, befriended him and gave him a positive introduction to the apostles (Acts 9:26-27). Disciple makers desire for their disciples to succeed. Though Barnabas first mentored Paul, Paul later became more prominent than Barnabas in ministry.

6. Identifying Your Neighbor

The ministry of disciple making may lead a person from a comfortable neighborhood to people and places different from the norm.

- Your neighbor may be someone *not like you*.
- Your neighbor may be from a different social class.
- Your neighbor may be from a different tribe.
- Your neighbor may be highly educated.
- Your neighbor may not even know how to read.
- Your neighbor may not trust someone who calls himself a Christian.

- Your neighbor may be someone who has shown hatred toward you.
- And the list continues!

7. Recognizing and Reaching Your Disciple Who Attends Church

Accepting that you do have a **responsibility and capability** of discipling someone in their Christian growth, you can walk across the aisle and extend your hand of friendship. Discipling can begin on that first encounter to forge a friendship.

- Develop a keen eye for spotting someone who needs to be discipled.
- Sincerely pray for God to give you guidance in finding your disciple.
- Seek pastoral advice on finding your disciple.

8. Establishing a Shepherd's Team of Trained Disciples

People who attend church and are not yet converted or mature in their Christian walk need disciple makers to impact their lives. Such people provide a great pool of potential disciples.

- Recognizing the need to connect visitors with disciple makers, Pastor Gleason created a *Shepherd's Staff* within his congregation. These people are posted in assigned sections of the church to watch for guests and make connections with them, endeavoring to link them with disciple makers.

The Challenge of the Great Commission

Disciple making takes much time and is labor intensive! However, the investment in eternal souls calls for Apostolic disciple makers to accept the challenge in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

- Pastor Gleason stated in a seminar session that "it probably takes one hundred encounters to make a disciple."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Stan Gleason, "New Metrics for Disciples: Becoming a Disciple Maker," UPCI General Conference Seminar Session (September 29, 2017).

Unfortunately, many believers do not feel qualified to teach a Bible study, much less to become involved in disciple making. They need the challenge, encouragement and direction of their pastor/leaders to become committed disciple makers. Pastor Gleason offers good advice for both mature and young believers:

- Don't wait to have the answers to all of life's questions before you decide to become a disciple maker.
- Don't wait until you know the answer to every Bible question.
- Don't wait until you have perfected Christianity in your personal life.
- Don't wait until you upgrade yourself to something more for God than you are now.
- Don't wait until God speaks to you personally about making disciples.⁶⁷

The disciples of Jesus likely felt unqualified to be disciple makers, yet Jesus sent them out with limited resources to be laborers in His harvest with this command:

The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold I send you out as lambs, among wolves. (Luke 10:2-3, NKJV)

Bibliography

Gleason, Stan O. *Follow to Lead: The Journey of a Disciple Maker*. Weldon Spring, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2016.

Gleason, Stan, "New Metrics for Disciples: Becoming a Disciple Maker," UPCI General Conference Seminar Session (September 29, 2017).

⁶⁷ Gleason, 147.

The Teacher as a Disciple Maker

Lesson in Review

Name: _____

Nation: _____ Date: _____

1. What is a disciple?

2. What is the Great Commission?

3. To whom did Jesus direct the Great Commission?

4. What is a disciple maker?

5. What is the difference between soulwinning and disciple making?

6. Are you a disciple maker? If yes, list who you have disciplined. If no, why not?

7. What role does relationships play in disciple making?

8. Who disciplined you? How did they do it?

9. List five points from this lesson that stood out to you.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

10. List five potential people that you could disciple.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

11. List the first five steps you would take to establish a disciple-making relationship with a new convert.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

12. List five ways this lesson has changed your view on soulwinning.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____