

Identifying Your Discipleship Family

The mission of *Living in the Blessing Ministries* is to fulfill Jesus' commission in Matt. 28:18-20 to make disciples. Here are the biblical principles that guide us in this:

We Must Have a Strategy

Many people are familiar with Jesus' commission to make disciples, and they sincerely want to do this, but they have no strategy, and they have not been equipped. The goal of *Living in the Blessing Ministries* is to provide resources to help disciples make disciples.

Our strategy is based on the example of the apostle Peter, which requires some explanation. During Jesus' earthly ministry, He called twelve disciples to be with Him and to carry out His work (Mark 3:13-19). Out of these twelve, there were three who were a part of His inner circle: Peter, James, and John (e.g. Matt. 17:1-2), and out of these three, it appears that Peter was closest to Jesus (Matt. 16:13-19, John 21:15-19). It's significant to note that there were nine other disciples (in the entire twelve), and this may have allowed Peter, James, and John to provide oversight to three other disciples each. If this was the case, we can say that Peter had One over Him (Jesus), two with Him (James and John), and three under him. This serves as an example for each of us in our work of making disciples:

One Over Us. Jesus invested in Peter over period of about three years, setting an example for him and equipping him for the work He called him to. Based on this example, before we attempt to make disciples, we should ask: "Who is helping me grow as a disciple?" This is not to say we need just one to serve in this role for us. However, we need at least one.

Two With Us. Peter may have been a "first among equals" in his relationship with James and John, but his relationship with them appears to be marked by friendship and collaboration. We also need relationships with those who are neither over us or under us—just friends and coworkers in the mission God has given us.

Three Under Us. Even though Jesus spoke to multitudes, His primary work was with just a few: three who were closest to Him and twelve He called to be His apostles (Mark 3:14). We also should follow this priority of investing deeply in a few.

We Must Leave a Legacy

Because Jesus called His disciples to make disciples, they were not true disciples until they fulfilled this calling, and so it is with us. If we are true disciples of Jesus, we will carry out His commands, and this includes the work of making disciples. This also means our work is not complete until we equip disciples to make disciples. And we can take this a step further. Only then does the work of making disciples multiply according to the pattern Jesus gave us.

There are some powerful lessons for us in this. Our goal should be not just to produce “spiritual children,” but “spiritual grandchildren.” When this is our goal, we are able to support those we are discipling and the ones they are discipling as well.

This greatly assists in the work, and it applies to those who disciple us as well. When they adopt this model, we have a “spiritual grandparents” (those “over” the ones discipling us) and “spiritual aunts and uncles” (those “with” the ones discipling us).

Must Respect God’s Timing

As we observe this model, we might think that such a strategy requires too much time. Isn’t there a world that needs to hear the gospel and hear it now? Yes, without question, but multiplication is the strategy Jesus used, and over time it becomes far more powerful than addition alone.

Our Primary Focus Must be on Relationships, not Resources

Jesus called disciples make disciples. Books and resources can be useful tools, but they are just that—tools. The primary focus needs to be on relationships (with God and each other). Any tool that is used must serve this goal.

Here are some of the most important things to look for in any tool that is used for making disciples:

- 1) Is this tool faithful to the biblical teaching? The ultimate discipleship manual is the Bible, and the purpose for any tool is only to convey the biblical teaching.
- 2) Does this tool help develop followers of Jesus? The goal of disciple makers is not to make disciples of themselves; it’s to make disciples of Jesus. This is the supreme goal of any discipleship curriculum. Of course, no tool could ever be completely adequate, and disciple makers should be open to relying on multiple tools to accomplish this work.

Returning now to our strategy, here are three things we encourage you to do if you wish to use the *Living in the Blessing* discipleship curriculum to help you make disciples:

- 1) Seek out a mentor who will disciple you as you work through the chapters of this curriculum. This is the *one over us*. Meet together on a regular basis and share what you are learning. Have the humility to learn *before* you disciple others and *as* you disciple others.
- 2) Ask others to join you in learning from the mentor who is teaching you. This will add to the richness of your learning. Based on the example of Peter, we would do well to have *two with us*. However, we don’t need to be rigid about the number. There may be just one or a few more. The principle is what matters.

3) As you learn, let your goal be to be equipped to disciple others. Be patient, if you are a new disciple, you will need more time. As we have seen, Jesus spent about three years with His disciples. If you have been growing as a disciple for some time, you may be ready much sooner. A disciple hears and obeys God's voice. As you grow, He will guide you in the timing for what you do.

A good way to summarize these three points is to ask this question: Who belongs to my "Discipleship Family" (the one over me, two with me, and three under me)?