

Discipling in the Local Church - Disciplers must make the church the primary platform and context for one-on-one discipling relationships. This lesson shares the rationale for this proposition and helps people think about how to get started.

I. First Week – April 28, 2024

A. Introduction

1. My background

Born to Christian parents who were members of a Southern Baptist church

Born in Blytheville AR, raised in Memphis, the buckle of the Bible Belt

I was raised in SB church life. If the doors were open, we were there and often when they weren't

Earliest memories are of attending services in a white frame building with hard wooden pews, no AC, funeral home fans, and loud singing and preaching.

If there was a program appropriate for boys, I was in it. Cradle Roll, Sunbeams, RA's, graded choirs, SS, TU, VBS, revivals (spring and fall), sports teams (baseball, basketball).

Raised in a pre-millennial, dispensationalist, ultra-conservative (no card playing, movie going, or staying up late), mission-centric atmosphere

Went to the only conservative SB seminary at the time, SWBTS

Have served in nearly thirty different SB churches as full/part-time and supply in all but sr pastor role

Ordained in 12/81

Home church/pastor, South Woods in Memphis, shifted to doctrines of grace in early 1990's

Simply, if you poked with me with a pin, I oozed Southern Baptist

2. Significant to let people know who I am and to let people know the frame of reference from which I teach. It is equally important to know as much as possible about the person you disciple before hand and ongoing during the discipling relationship.

3. Each person's own unique God-guided life journey and set of experiences critical to discipling experience

4. First step in any discipling relationship is familiarity. Introduce yourself to the persons next to yourself

5. Disclaimer – get everyone's full attention

Concerning the following parable, any resemblance by any character to any person, living or dead, encompassing the state of North Carolina for the last twenty-five and one half years is unintended, coincidental, incomprehensible, inconsequential, and purely nonsensical. However, it may contain examples of certain behaviors that were part of my life experiences prior to moving to North Carolina in Jan 1999.

B. The Parable of the T's – with apologies to John Bunyan

Helpful was holding true to his namesake as he busied himself with raking his neighbor's leaves. He had garnered a good reputation on his street for assisting those less capable of yard work and other household chores, and was enjoying the pleasant temperature and sunshine of the day. However, his attention was distracted from his work as he noticed Incharge approaching him at a brisk pace from the direction of the local civic club. "Yo, brother Helpful, I would like a word with you as well as your able assistance with a project at the clubhouse," Incharge exclaimed breathlessly. "It's a bit of an emergency, and I need you right away." Seeing that he was almost finished with the leaf raking and having no other pressing matters, Helpful took a break and fell in step behind Incharge, and they both headed back to the clubhouse.

Arriving at the clubhouse, Incharge led Helpful to a small dark workroom and flipped on the ceiling light, revealing an old desk against one wall, a chair by the desk, and various piles of junk scattered about the room on the floor. There was a cardboard box on the desk, and a flexible work light was attached to the desk. "We have a serious problem," intoned Incharge in a grave voice, "in that we have something that is not working right that is absolutely vital for the continuation of our group. If it's not fixed immediately, our club could cease to exist, and we would be in a huge pickle." Helpful caught the gravity of Incharge's words and, true to form, quickly replied, "What can I do to assist in getting things working again?" "I'm so glad you asked,

brother Helpful, it's right here in the box," said Incharge, with a sigh of relief. Incharge proceeded to pull out an old, but apparently little used DVD/CD player from the cardboard box. "We used to use this to recruit and train new club members, but it seems to be non-functional and hasn't gotten much use lately." Helpful wondered if it had ever been used at all since he had been a civic club member for 32 years and had never seen or heard of the device and really wasn't sure what it was. "What is it, how is it supposed to work, and why is it such an emergency now when you say it hasn't been working for some time?" Incharge went on to reiterate that it had been used to recruit and train club members in the past, but hadn't seen much use since so many folks had been moving into the neighborhood, joining the local club, and keeping a lot of activity going for many years without a lot of external effort. Now, however, many members were moving away and not being replaced, quite a number had become aged and not able to participate, and all too many, young and old alike, had just been losing interest in club activities. "We have to do something, or we'll dry up completely," moaned Incharge. "But honestly, I'm not sure what it does exactly or how it works."

Helpful inspected the player briefly, and a few thoughts began to coalesce into an action plan. "Do you have any tools for this?" he inquired of Incharge. "Let me look in the box," he replied, and started fumbling around in the box. "How about this?" said Incharge, and pulled out a large drill. Helpful's eyes widened at the sight, and he replied, "A bit too large, I think. Something smaller, perhaps?" Whereupon Incharge retrieved a jeweler's toolkit. "Maybe a little too far in the opposite direction. Anything somewhere in between, maybe?" sighed Helpful. Incharge tried once again and brought out a well worn, zippered case. Opening the case revealed a number of different tools, each with an apparent function for manipulating electronic components. "We'll start with this," said Helpful, relieved that a little progress had occurred.

Helpful questioned Incharge once again. "Now that we have some tools that we think are going to be useful, are there any technical helps like schematics or drawings or hopefully an instruction manual?" Helpful had enough experience repairing other things to know that such resources were going to be indispensable for assessing the condition of the device and possibly resurrecting it to full operational capacity. "Just these two documents," Incharge replied, "but I can't make heads or tails of either." Helpful glanced at the papers and gulped. "You and me both" were the only words that immediately stumbled out of Helpful's mouth. After a moment, Helpful caught his breath and looked at the oblivious Incharge and asked, "Do we have or could we obtain some training for this project?" "Well, today is your lucky day, sir," Incharge cheerily returned. (Imagination needed.) "I see several books in here that will meet that need right away. We have 'DVD/CD Repair for Dummies', 'Learn DVD/CD Repair in 24 Hours', 'DVD/CD Repair NOW!', and 'How to Win Friends and Influence DVD/CD Repairmen'".

Helpful didn't have the heart to describe to Incharge just how disheartened he felt at that moment. Instead, he just said, "Well, maybe we have enough here to get started on the work. Why don't you pull up a chair and let's see what we can do together." "Oh no," Incharge hastily replied. "I have to go and meet with the other members of the Civic Club board to discuss the upcoming Summer FunFest and Clambake. You'll just have to work on this by yourself. I'm fully confident you can handle this effort alone and make us all proud. I look forward to seeing the end result in a few days." With that, Incharge turned quickly to the door and strode out the small room hurriedly to his next appointment.

Helpful looked at the door as Incharge faded in the distance. He then glanced around the dismal little work room and at the pile of stuff on the desk. His eyes did this same dance several times as his countenance fell with each movement of his gaze. Then, with a bit of a sigh and a shrug of the shoulders, he turned off the light, shut the work room door, and headed back down the street to where he had been raking his neighbor's leaves. Picking up his rake, he resumed the task he understood and knew he could handle, went back to enjoying the pleasant temperature and sunshine of the day, and thought to himself, "I'll touch base with Incharge sometime later."

II. Discuss the story using the “T’s” – pop quiz

A. Task

1. Incharge not sure of device’s function or status
2. Not sure whether to repair or replace
3. Goal a bit vague; recruitment, training, holding interest?
4. Was this a real emergency?

B. Tools – some uncertainty about the most appropriate tool for the job

C. Technical helps – far too complicated for untrained persons

D. Training – self help usually not the best route

E. Together – absolutely essential for effective results

III. Discuss the functions of the church

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| A. Worship | Exalting |
| B. Witness/Evangelism | Evangelizing |
| C. Education | Equipping |
| D. Ministry/Application | Edifying |

IV. Focus and apply to Matt. 28:16-20

A. What are the two greatest laws?

1. Matt. 22:34-40
2. Mark 12:38-34
3. Luke 10:25-28

B. What is the greatest command?

1. Matt. 28:16-20 – correlate to church functions
2. Power/authority – significance
3. Go and make disciples – the primary command is to reproduce
4. Baptism indication of salvation
5. Teaching Christ’s commands discipleship
6. Holy Spirit’s enduring sanctifying presence with us

V. Narrow discussion to “Together”

- A. Authority
- B. Accountability
- C. Maturity
- D. Diversity
- E. Look at CHBC manuscript