

## Appendix C

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### Missions and Discipleship

by Claude Hickman

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I've noticed something over the past few years as I have labored on a college campus and traveled the U.S. speaking to college students. Everybody has his or her bandwagon. Especially in Christian circles, everyone has one conviction about some issue that they always find a way to bring up, and they are always attempting to persuade others to their way of thinking. It makes them feel spiritual. Most of the time they are right and their convictions are good. In this student generation, I've seen missions become one of those bandwagons. Of course, I'm not opposed to beating the missions drum, the problem is that missions has become the 'quick fix' spirituality that some newly converted, zealous but unbroken believers have found to be their ticket to the head of the pack. He reads a book, hears one talk, memorizes some statistics and jargon – and next thing you know he is criticizing the pastor and every other ministry because they don't share his world vision. Unfortunately, this disgruntled Christian is mistaken for a leader and given authority to reward his puffed up attitude.

What is wrong? Was this the way Jesus designed it? No. What's missing is discipleship, the process of being mentored and taught the basics of the Christian life by another human being. It is humbling to be taught. One of the first qualities I look for in a believer is teachability. If someone is unteachable, self-reliant and so independent that they have nothing to learn from anyone, I don't care how much they know or what they have done, they are useless. But a lifelong learner is of far greater potential, even if he knows very little now. Unfortunately, most of the students I meet have no one discipling them one on one. They may be in a Bible study or cell group that they float into once a week for an hour, but this is not discipleship.

If we look at the life of Jesus we see that he moved his disciples through several phases. The first is Evangelism, bringing them to believe in Him as the Messiah. The next phase is Establishing, grounding them in the basics of the Christian life. After awhile, some followers proved themselves to be faithful men and were selected for special training, or Equipping. Only after this filtering process did he Extend them to the nations on their own. Dr. Bill Jones, Bible professor at Columbia Bible College and Seminary, uses the analogy of first, second, third base and home plate. A team can have a lot of runners on base and still lose the game. You must have them all. Discipleship without extension to the nations is just as empty. You must score. But to score, you have to round all the bases. That was the Lord's method; evangelize, establish, equip, extend.

We also see that the early Church modeled this. Just read through Acts and see the pattern of developing believers, training them and then sending them to the nations.

*Evangelizing - Acts 2:38,47 “Repent and be baptized...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

*Establishing - Acts 2:41,42 “Those who accepted his message were Baptized... they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”*

*Equipping Leaders - Acts 6:3,7 “Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.”*

*Extending - Acts 10:34-48 “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”*

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*Evangelizing - Acts 11:20-21 “Some of them went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus...a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”*

*Establishing - Acts 11:22-26 “So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the Church and taught great numbers of people.”*

*Equipping Leaders - Acts 13:1 “In the Church of Antioch there were prophets and teachers (trained men).”*

*Extending - Acts 13:3-4 “So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”*

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We can even see how Paul walked through these phases with the church in Thessalonica.

### *1 Thessalonians*

*Evangelizing - 1 Thess. 1:4-5 “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power...”*

*Establishing - 1 Thess 1:6 “... you know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord.”*

*Equipping - 1 Thess 1:7 “And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.”*

*Extending - 1 Thess 1:8 “The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia - your faith in God has become known everywhere.”*

This was the Lord's method and the early church's method: Evangelize, Establish, Equip, Extend. A friend from a mission agency told me that at their last candidate training, they were getting ready to show the candidates how to share Christ in a Muslim culture, when one student raised his hand and said, "Uh... I've never shared Christ in my own culture." My friend also told me that they send people home all the time because they are not established or equipped for the work. They have zeal, knowledge and even seminary degrees, but they lack the real life model. Without this grounding the missionary has nothing to reproduce once he goes overseas except his idea of what a Christian is. He may be able to lead them to Christ, but as far as knowing how to teach them the basics of the Christian life (how to share their faith, scripture memory, Bible study, prayer, fellowship, accountability), he has no experience to draw from. He has never seen the training process worked out in his own life. He is unable to reproduce a growing Christian that can help others to grow. Even if he does plant a church, the people will be dependant on him because he lacks the ability to establish and equip them to lead. Or worse, he will teach them that intellectual knowledge is the equivalent of spirituality, and reproduce his own independent spirit into those he desires to train.

The goal of discipleship is to multiply. Jesus could have lead large crusades to win thousands of people to the Kingdom, but He didn't. Instead He chose to invest His life deeply into a few faithful men. He knew the result would be far more impacting for the future if He could train some disciple-makers. The missionary Paul caught on to the same vision. In 2 Timothy 2:2, he exhorts Timothy to entrust the things he learned from Paul to, "faithful men, who are able to teach others also." Four generations of discipleship in one verse; Paul to Timothy, Timothy to faithful men, Faithful men to the others they would train. There is power in multiplication. If you lead one person to Christ each day for 33 years, that would be over 12,000 people. But let's say that you lead one person to Christ and discipled them for a year so that they could go out and win and train others, and that this process of evangelizing, establishing, equipping, and extending was built into each disciple. Even if it just started with you, within 33 years you will have reached over 4 billion people. Jesus knew that this was a powerful thing to give His life to.

There are very few men and women out there who are reproducing themselves into others. If you find one, latch on to them. Do you want to see missionaries mobilized and sent out to the nations? Begin establishing, equipping and extending those around you. It is your greatest investment.