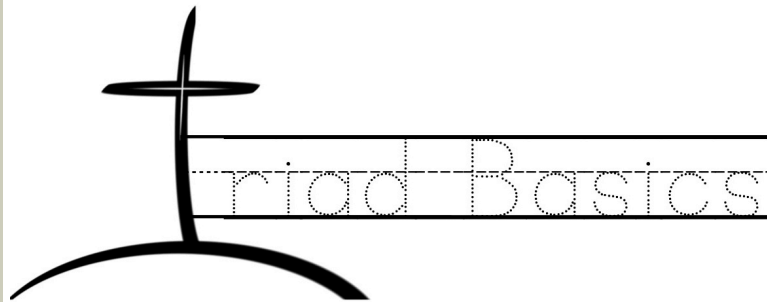


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A Manual for Discipleship Groups

1 Corinthians 11:1

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

Biblical Basis

Following the Example of Jesus to Make Disciples

When Jesus chose twelve men to be in His inner circle, He chose them from a larger group of followers. Jesus certainly had the ability to build and teach a large community of followers. However, He chose to invest Himself into twelve handpicked men (Mark 3:14). The most effective discipleship takes place in smaller, intimate groups. Intimacy and accountability is not possible in a crowd.

The simple meaning of the word “disciple” in the New Testament is “learner.” Implied by its usage is that the disciple has learned certain principles from his teacher and maintains these principles on his teacher's authority. Thus the phrase, “he is the disciple of _____”.

Jesus invested in a few who would pass their learning on to others. These would be faithful disciples passing their learning on to faithful others.

Also implied is that discipleship is fundamentally a relational process. It involves individual, personal attention. The disciples had continuous, consistent exposure to the life of Jesus. They had the opportunity to ask for explanations of the meaning of Jesus' words and Jesus explained their meaning, often showing the disciples what the hard teachings were, like what commitment to Himself would look like (Matt 13:10-17; Luke 14:26,27).

By investing in a few over a three-year period, Jesus was able to internalize His message and mission to His disciples.

Obedying the Command of Jesus to Make Disciples

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 has all the directives for the apostles. At the heart is, “go and make disciples”. The simplicity of this command makes clear what our mission is. The word translated “go” literally means “as you travel.” So: “...as you travel through this life, make learners of others in the same way that I made learners of you.”

The apostle Paul also trained men and women to do the work. The evidence of this is left for us in the epistles written to the churches he began. Paul's method, like Jesus, was to pass on what he had learned to faithful believers who would pass it on to other believers (1Cor 15:3; 2 Tim 2:2).

Definition of discipleship:

Discipleship is a process of life-transformation that happens when believers pursue Christ in the context of intentional relationships—disciples multiplying disciples in obedience to the Great Commission in order to glorify God.

Essential elements of discipleship

- Holy Spirit Led
- Mutual encouragement, equipping, and accountability
- In pursuit of: passion for and maturity in Christ

Definition of a Triad

A group of three or four individuals, who covenant to meet weekly, build intentional relationships with one another, and challenge one another to become more passionate, fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

History of Triad Discipleship Groups at PVC

In the fall of 2012 the staff of Peaceful Valley Church read a book by Greg Ogden entitled “Transforming Discipleship.” We understood our church family’s need for a coherent plan to help people become fully devoted followers of Jesus. In his book, Greg Ogden shares his vision for discipleship and the methods he discovered to be the most effective. What he discovered is that the model set by Jesus is best. This shouldn’t surprise us. Jesus invested in a few people at a time with the intention that those he invested in would in turn invest in others. What Ogden found, and what we are hoping to accomplish, is a self-replicating process with an ongoing impact from one generation to the next. Our first Triad began at Peaceful Valley Church in September of 2012- with Jim Trull, Glenn Walters and Josh Greenslade.

From Greg Ogden’s workbook, “Transforming Discipleship” we get the following definition of discipling:

Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ (following Him and discipling others). This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.

As we began our first test group we discovered that Francis Chan and David Platt were developing an online curriculum for discipleship called, “Multiply.” (This resource can be found at www.multiplymovement.com) This is a free online resource made available for others to use in the discipleship process. It was this curriculum that we initially decided to use. During that same time period the church also signed up for another online resource called, “Right Now Media.” Using their platform, we created online training posts to be used by us, and others in the future. We also purchased a number of books—hard copies of the online material by Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, called “Multiply.”

Our goal was to go slow and evaluate how the process was developing in our lives before we opened it up to others. It didn’t take long for us to realize the incredible benefits of this type of discipleship group and it began to reproduce. While we initially believed that we would meet for about a year before we extended out to others, we soon realized that we could start expanding sooner than that. Within nine months into the process, we had eight separate Triads and the excitement was growing—which was good, but we also saw a need to develop some foundational guidelines for the training to continue from generation to generation.

These guidelines are intended to maintain the purpose of these groups and to ensure that any who begin or are ever a part a discipleship Triad will be equipped with some helpful tools for discipleship and replication. Greg Ogden asks,

“What would happen to the church of Jesus Christ if a majority of those who claim to follow Christ were nurtured to maturity through intimate, accountable relationships centered on the essentials of God’s word? Self-initiating, reproducing disciples of Jesus would be the result.

Rational behind Limiting Numbers to 3 or 4

One of the keys to effective discipleship is relationship. There are many benefits of having a committed group of three or four. As he studied the discipleship process, Greg Ogden had a breakthrough. Instead of meeting in a one-on-one setting, he invited two others to join him on his journey. He writes,

“There was no way I could have anticipated the potency to be unleashed. Just by adding a third person it was as if the Holy Spirit was present to us in a way that was life-giving and transforming and laid the foundation for multiplication. I have never gone back to the one-on-one model for making disciples because of what I experienced.”

The Need for Discipleship and Key Elements Involved

In God's Great Commission we are called to make disciples. Once a person becomes a Christian—saved by God's grace through faith—his or her greatest need is discipleship. And while making disciples is central to what God has called us to do, we are not very good at making disciples who make more disciples (multiplication). This Triad process works and is effective, but there are some key elements that must be agreed upon by all who desire to be a part. If you want to begin a Triad or if someone has asked you to be a part, there are three necessary elements that must be present in your meetings:

1. The unchanging truth of God's Word as our authority
2. Transparent relationships
3. Mutual accountability

Transformation happens when we live in community with other Christians being encouraged and challenged to consider the truth claims of the Bible in the context of everyday life. Accountability brings the relationship to a deeper level—allowing others to speak truth into our lives and hold us responsible to keep the promises we make.

One of the dynamics that works is the understanding that every member of the Triad brings value to every meeting. Traditionally one person would be the leader, teacher, and mentor and the others would be the followers and students—learners. However, in this context, all parts work together in building one another up. While some may be further along than others in education or experience or understanding of Scripture, we all have the same Holy Spirit leading and directing as we study God's word.

One of the most helpful tools, and hardest to consent to, is the use of a covenant that each member would sign before a group begins. A covenant is a solemn agreement between two or more persons to fulfill certain stated obligations toward each other. In this case we are agreeing to an intentional relationship with others to become more fully devoted followers of Jesus

Christ—"disciples."

The Disciple's Covenant has proven to be very effective in ensuring that those involved stay involved and caught up as they go. The covenant helps to solidify the expectations and requirements of each member of the group. And it is important to give people time to consider the covenant before they sign.

On the next page is an example of our first "Disciple's Covenant," using the sample provided by Greg Ogden in his book, "Discipleship Essentials."

A Disciple’s Covenant

In order to grow toward maturity in Christ and to understand more clearly my role as His disciple, I promise to...

1. Complete all assignments on a weekly basis prior to my discipleship meeting in order to contribute fully.
2. Meet weekly with my discipleship partners for approximately one and one-half hours to discuss and process through the content of the assignment.
3. Offer myself fully to the Lord with the anticipation that I am entering a time of accelerated transformation during this discipleship period.
4. Be honest, trustworthy and vulnerable in a spirit of mutual encouragement and accountability to build each other up.
5. Develop and maintain the habit of daily time with God through Bible reading and prayer.
6. Attend church regularly with my faith family.
7. Give serious consideration to continuing the discipling chain by investing in at least two other people for the year following the initial completion of this covenant.

All for the glory of God!

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Why Triads?

The following 5 points are a summary from Greg Ogden’s book entitled, “Transforming Discipleship,” that shows why Triads are, in his words, “energizing, joy-filled and reproductive.”

1. There is a shift from unnatural pressure to natural participation of the disciple. When a third or fourth person is added, the initiator of the group is no longer the focal point, but they are a part of a group process. The initiator in this setting is a fellow participant. Though there is only one who initiates the Triad, that person quickly becomes one of the group on the journey together toward maturity in Christ.
2. There is a shift from hierarchy to peer relationship. The Triad naturally creates more of a come-alongside mutual journey. The focus is not so much upon the initiator as it is upon Christ as the one toward whom all are pointing their lives. Even for pastors or church leaders, who may have started the relationship with a consciousness that they were the “Bible answer-man” because of their title and training, within the first few weeks, the Triad allowed them to be another disciple with fellow disciples who were attempting to follow Jesus together.
3. There is a shift from dialogue to dynamic interchange. In Ogden’s initial experiment with Triads, he often came away from those times saying to himself, “What made that interchange so alive and dynamic?” The presence of the Holy Spirit seemed palpable. Life and energy marked the exchange. As he came to understand group dynamics, he realized that one-on-one is not a group. It is only as you add a third that you have the first makings of a group (think trinity.)

4. There is shift from limited input to wisdom in numbers. The book of Proverbs speaks of the wisdom that comes from many counselors (Proverbs 15:22). It is often those who may be perceived as younger or less mature in the faith from which great wisdom comes, or a fresh spark of life or just great questions.
5. There is a shift from addition to multiplication. There is no greater joy than to see a Christian reproduce. All the above adds up to empowerment. For over two decades, Ogden has observed an approximate 75% reproduction rate through the Triad model of disciple-making.

In summary, a smaller unit encourages multiplication because it minimizes the hierarchical dimensions and maximizes a peer-mentoring model. By providing a discipleship curriculum specifically designed for this intimate relationship, it creates a simple, reproducible structure, which almost any growing believer can lead. Leadership in these groups can be rotated early on since the size makes for an informal interchange and the curriculum provides a guide to follow.

Anything worthy of the name of discipleship must have a way of creating the dynamic of intergenerational multiplication.

A Step-by-step Process for Starting a New Triad

1. Pray – Spend a significant amount of time praying before you begin or ask others to begin a discipleship group (Jesus did this before selecting the twelve).

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. Luke 6:12 (NIV)

1. Ask – when you approach someone; let them know that you've been praying for them and that you would like to go through a process of intentional mutual discipleship with them and one or two other persons.
2. Set a meeting to define what the relationship will be and to go through the covenant with each member of the group. Explain the covenant being completely upfront and honest about the commitment required for this group to be successful. Give each person a copy of the covenant and allow them to have at least a week for prayer and consideration before signing it together.
 - a. Realize that not everyone will be ready or willing to sign a covenant- that's ok- don't force them or pressure them to sign.
 - b. If they are not willing to make the commitment the likelihood of completion is reduced. We recommend getting the commitment from each member or considering another person to be a part.
 - c. Participation from every member is so important and you're better off starting with those willing to do the work than being frustrated by those who are not.

4. Once the group is formed and the covenant is signed, you're ready to begin meeting.
 - d. Inform the church for prayer and support.
 - e. Set your weekly meetings at a time that works for everyone. This is one of the greatest challenges. Be flexible and creative when schedules change.
 - f. We have determined that it is best for each group to meet for six months to one year or more before finishing and beginning your next group.
 - g. We recommend the following resources for your "Bible Study Material"
 - i. "Multiply" – Available in the church office in book form, on the internet at www.multiplymovement.com, or online through Peaceful Valley Church at www.rightnowmedia.com
 - ii. "Discipleship Essentials, A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ"- by Greg Ogden
 - iii. "Stranger on the Road to Emmaus,"- by John Cross and available at the church office.
 - h. Reinforce the commitment by reviewing the covenant occasionally and encourage one another to start praying about your next group.
 - i. It is our goal that every person who gets involved with discipleship will stay involved in the process for life. There is always someone in need of discipleship. Jesus makes the mission of the church clear, "Go and make disciples of all nations..." There is only one mission: making disciples of Jesus. We who are His are all called to participate.

5. How to End a Group Well
 - a. No one will pre-determine when your group will end. However it is not the intent of this discipleship process to continue indefinitely with those same 3 or 4 people. The goal is that each disciple will learn to disciple others and keep the process of multiplication going.
 - b. Celebrate- Praise God for the relationships built and the lessons learned and consider how this process continued can change the world. Have a party or get together for dinner and pray for one another as you each form your next group.
 - c. Inform the church that you've completed the process so that they can recognize your achievement and celebrate with you.
 - d. Start again in step one and may God bless you.

Acknowledgements

Ogden, Greg. "Multiplication Through the Generations." *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003. 145-149. Print.

www.multiplymovement.com