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THE LOST
ART OF
DISCIPLE
MAKING



LEROY EIMS

CHAPTER 6

TRAINING OBJECTIVES FOR A DISCIPLE

“Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith” (Acts 14:21-22).

Progress. That’s what we’re dealing with at this stage. We want to help the new Christian advance toward discipleship—growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This progress cannot be accomplished haphazardly. It has to begin somewhere and then go somewhere, like the educational process from kindergarten to graduation from high school. The student has to master many lessons, assimilate many facts, and learn to do many things. But the way must be planned and organized. A person doesn’t learn calculus while playing in the sandbox.

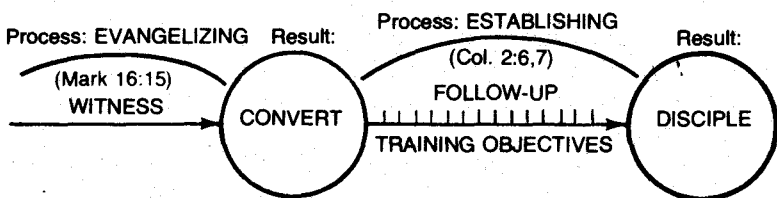
In helping a young Christian grow, you must have a step-by-step building program in mind; you must have certain objectives you want him to attain before he undertakes others. You want to see him go from taking in spiritual milk to partaking of spiritual meat.

In this chapter we want to look at some training objectives which will help make up a life of discipleship. The order in which they have been placed is general, not necessarily sequential. Since every person is a unique individual and must be dealt with as such, the order in which you will present them to the young Christian will vary considerably. You may want to eliminate some and add some. You may want to double the list

or cut it in half. The individual needs of the person you are helping will determine the objectives which you will help build into his life and the order which you will follow.

You may not be able to *adopt* some of the things listed here, for the list is simply meant to be a general guide which you can use to stimulate your thoughts and on which you can then improve. But there may be ideas here that you can *adapt* to your own ministry, lifestyle, and needs. The material is presented for your consideration as a suggestion of principles that have worked, not as the law of the Medes and Persians. You may not be able to adopt it all, but there may be some things you can adapt.

These training objectives are designed to stimulate progress on the path of discipleship. In their fulfillment they are characteristics of a disciple's life. To use our illustration, they are the steps in the process of a convert becoming a disciple.



They are written in specific terms. They describe what the person will be doing along the way and how you will know he is doing it. In other words, these objectives are measurable. They will identify the specific attributes of discipleship. They are written to help you measure the progress that is being made. The activities, materials, and Scriptures relate to each training objective. They are listed to give you guidance and direction as you, in turn, provide guidance and direction for the growing Christian.

The purpose of building these objectives into the life of a new believer is that he might be established in the faith. The apostle Paul stated, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude" (Col. 2:6-7, NASB).

A list of the training objectives follows. The details on how they are to be used—their descriptions, activities, helpful materials, Scriptures—are given in Appendix 1. That appendix is an inherent part of this chapter and should be studied carefully.

When these concepts and this material have been shared with pastors, they found the specific training objectives to be very helpful. They are biblical, have been tested in many different situations, and are applicable to life. As you read this chapter and Appendix 1, become aware that these characteristics are at the heart of a person becoming a disciple.

Training Objectives

The following training objectives are listed here and described in detail in Appendix 1.

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| 1. Assurance of Salvation | 16. Faith |
| 2. The Quiet Time | 17. Love |
| 3. Victory over Sin | 18. The Tongue |
| 4. Separation from Sin | 19. The Use of Time |
| 5. Christian Fellowship | 20. The Will of God |
| 6. The Bible | 21. Obedience |
| 7. Hearing the Word | 22. The Holy Spirit |
| 8. Reading the Word | 23. Satan—Know Your Enemy |
| 9. Bible Study | 24. Dealing with Sin |
| 10. Scripture Memory | 25. Assurance of Forgiveness |
| 11. Meditation on the Word | 26. Second Coming of Christ |
| 12. Application of the Word | 27. Witnessing |
| 13. Prayer | 28. Follow-up |
| 14. Personal Testimony | 29. Giving |
| 15. Lordship of Christ | 30. World Vision |

These are thirty vital areas that, when built into a life, make up the profile of a disciple. As mentioned before, depending on the needs of the person with whom you are working, you may add to this list or eliminate some of the topics.

With one person, love (No. 17) may be the great need in his life and you'll want to deal with it early. With another, the need may be obedience (No. 21) and you'll have to begin with that topic. For the sake of illustration, two of the topics will now be commented on in greater detail—the personal testimony (No. 14) and application of the Word (No. 12).

The Personal Testimony

One of the most helpful things a young Christian can do is write out his personal testimony. This exercise will help him think through in his own mind what God has done in his life and will prepare him to share his story simply and clearly with others.

Sharing how you became a Christian is one of the best ways of witnessing. It is particularly helpful in presenting Jesus Christ to relatives and close friends, usually the most difficult people to whom to witness.

In sharing the story of your experience:

1. Make it personal—don't preach. Tell what Christ has done for *you*. Use the pronouns "I," "me," "my," and "mine."
2. Make it short. Three or four minutes should be enough time to deal with the essential facts.
3. Keep Christ central. Always highlight what *He* has done for you.
4. Use the Word of God. A verse or two of Scripture will add power to your story. Remember that the word of God has a keen cutting edge (see Eph. 6:17).

Try writing down your personal testimony just the way you'd tell it to an unbeliever. Make the story of your conversion so clear that another person hearing it would know how to receive Christ.

Tell a little about your life before you trusted Jesus Christ; then tell about your conversion, how you came to trust Him, and something of what it has meant to know Him—the blessings of sins forgiven, assurance of eternal life, and other ways your life or outlook has changed. If you have been a Christian for some time, be sure that your testimony includes some current information about the continuing effect of Jesus Christ in your life.

As you prepare your story, ask the Lord to give you opportunities to share it. Pray for two or three people whom you would particularly like to tell about Jesus Christ in your neighborhood, at work, or at school. Then take the first opportunity to share your testimony with them.

Follow a format similar to this:

MY TESTIMONY

Before I trusted Christ:

How I trusted Christ:

Since I've trusted Christ:

In conclusion, remember that you do not have the power in yourself to convince anyone of spiritual truth. The Holy Spirit convicts non-Christians of their need to know Christ (see John 16:8). As you pray for those with whom you desire to share your personal testimony, be sure to ask God to honor the proclamation of His Word, to convince people of their need, and to strengthen you as you share the gospel.

God has summoned each Christian to be a witness of what he has "seen and heard" (1 John 1:3). Witnessing is a style of living—you are a witness at all times. Loving others and showing your genuine concern for them are practical ways to communicate the love of Christ. You also witness by your life. Actions are often more revealing than words. Your actions, however, are not sufficient to communicate to another the message of the gospel of Christ. You need to witness by your words—to identify openly with Jesus Christ and to tell others how they can be reconciled to God. One of the most effective means of communicating this to another person is the story of how God has worked in your life—your personal testimony.¹

Application of the Word

Dwight L. Moody said that the Word of God was not given primarily to increase our knowledge, but to guide our steps. Some years ago I read in *Translation*, the magazine of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, something that was so meaningful to me that I wrote it in the back of my Bible. It concerned the application of the Word of God.

A notable commentary on the practical effects of Bible reading were the simple remarks of Moran, chief of the Piro tribe of jungle Indians of western South America.

He said, "When my wife does something wrong, I say to her, 'Mena, God's Word says so and so,' and she says, 'Moran is that what God's Word says?' So I give her the Word and she reads it for herself and then she doesn't do that anymore. When I do something I shouldn't, she says to me, soft and meek like she always is, 'Moran, doesn't God's Word say so and so?' So then I go and read it and by God's help I don't do that anymore."

Applying the Word of God is taking a portion of Scripture that speaks to your heart, meditating on it, and developing practical steps toward making it an integral part of your life. The following four simple steps outline the way to develop your application on the verse or passage you choose.

1. What does this passage say to me?
2. Where am I falling short?
3. Give specific examples.
4. What am I going to do about it?

This approach takes the Bible out of the theoretical and places the emphasis on daily life where it should be. But all too often the truths of the Word of God are left in the same categories as are other things we admire and appreciate. We are charmed, for example, by the majesty, beauty, and eternity of the Scriptures. But was that God's full intent when He gave us the Bible? Note what Paul says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Scripture must be applied to life.

It is God's desire that His Word be lived out in the daily affairs of life, that the Word of God become flesh and blood and find expression in His people. His desire is that we be walking, living Bibles, demonstrating the beauty and validity of the Scriptures in the home, the plant, the office, the school, the shipyard, the store, or wherever else we might live and work.

Shortly after I became a Christian, I was made aware of this concept and was challenged to make personal applications as part of my weekly Bible study. One of the first books I studied was Paul's letter to the Colossians. As I was studying chapter three, the Holy Spirit caught my attention with this: "But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these:

anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language” (Col. 3:8).

I tried to slide past this verse, but the Spirit kept bringing me back to the words “put off anger” (KJV). At the time I had a violent temper, and whenever it flared up I would haul off and bash my fist into the nearest door. In spite of the fact that I often bloodied my knuckles and on one occasion had completely smashed a beautiful diamond and onyx ring my wife had given me, I couldn’t seem to stop. And yet here was God’s Word: “Put off anger.” It was clear to me that this was not just some good advice given to the people at Colossae centuries ago. It was God speaking to me at that moment.

So that week I made a covenant with God. He had spoken to me about my sin of anger, and I promised the Lord I was going to work on it. It was obvious to me that I was falling short of keeping this command. My broken ring lying in a box on the dresser was a clear reminder. So the question became—what was I going to do about this sin in my life?

My first step was to memorize the verse and review it daily for a number of weeks. I prayed and asked the Lord to bring this verse to mind whenever a situation arose where I might be tempted to lose my temper. And I asked my wife to pray for me and remind me of that passage if she saw me failing in my promise to the Lord. So Colossians 3:8 became a part of my life and gradually God removed that sin from me.

The Wheel Illustration

As we look at these training objectives, it is evident that their real purpose is to help us live a Christ-honoring life. In the 1930s, Dawson Trotman, founder of The Navigators, was working with a group of students with a view toward helping them in their Christian lives. He longed to see them progress to maturity, fruitfulness, and commitment. He tried to think of a way to communicate the bedrock essentials of the life that has Christ at the center of all that we are and do.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts the Lord enabled him to design an illustration which communicates the essence of such a life. It shows how Christ should be the center of our lives, that we should live in obedience to Him, communicate with Him through the Word and prayer, and reach out to others through fellowship and witness.

The Wheel Illustration is a helpful way to remember the basic truths about the Spirit-filled life. The key to living that life is Jesus Christ as center and Lord of all you do. With Christ in control, life is balanced and effective.



Christ the Center (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20). Just as the driving force in a wheel comes from the hub, so the power to live the Christian life comes from Jesus Christ the Center. He lives in you in the Person of the Holy Spirit, whose expressed purpose is to glorify Christ.

Obedience to Christ (Rom. 12:1; John 14:21). The rim represents the Christian responding to Christ's lordship through wholehearted, day-by-day obedience to Him.

The Word (2 Tim. 3:16; Josh. 1:8). The spokes show the means by which Christ's power becomes operative in your life. You maintain personal contact with God through the vertical spokes—the Word and prayer. The Word is your spiritual food

WORSHIP?

as well as your sword for spiritual battle. It is the foundational spoke for effective Christian living.

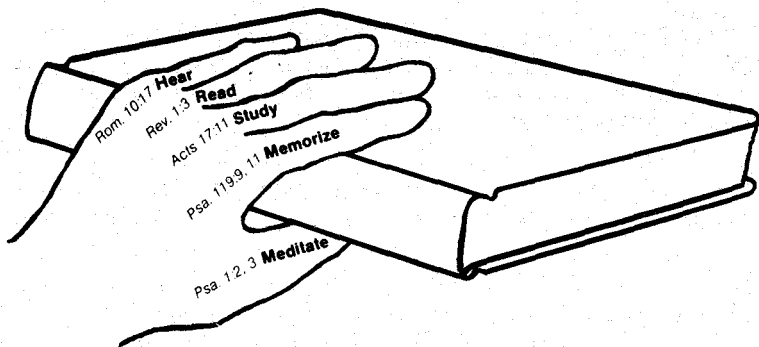
Prayer (John 15:7; Phil. 4:6-7). Opposite the Word is the spoke representing prayer. Through prayer you have direct communication with your heavenly Father and receive provision for your needs. As you pray, you show your dependence on and trust in Him.

Fellowship (Matt. 18:20; Heb. 10:24-25). The horizontal spokes concern your relationship to people—believers, through Christian fellowship, and unbelievers, through witnessing. Fellowship centered around the Lord Jesus Christ provides the mutual encouragement, admonition, and stimulation you need.

Witnessing (Matt. 4:19; Rom. 1:16). The first three spokes prepare you for passing on to others all you have received from the Lord. This is accomplished through witnessing, sharing your own experience of Christ and declaring and explaining the gospel, God's power to save.²

The Hand Illustration

Another illustration that conveys the importance of the Word of God in the lives of believers and the means to appropriate it practically in their lives is the Hand Illustration. It shows us the five methods of learning from the Bible.



The five means of taking in the Word of God are hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating.

Hearing the Word of God (Objective No. 7). Hearing the Word from godly pastors and teachers provides us insight into others' study of the Scriptures as well as stimulating our own appetites for the Word.

Reading the Word of God (Objective No. 8). Reading the Bible gives us an overall picture of God's Word. Many find helpful a daily reading program which takes them systematically through the Bible.

Studying the Word of God (Objective No. 9). Studying the Scriptures leads us into personal discoveries of God's truths. Writing down these discoveries helps us organize and remember them better.

Memorizing the Word of God (Objective No. 10). Memorizing God's Word enables us to use the sword of the Spirit to overcome Satan and temptation and to have it readily available for witnessing or helping others with a "word in season."

Meditating on the Word of God (Objective No. 11). Meditation is the thumb of the Word Hand, for it is used in conjunction with each of the other four methods. Only as we meditate on God's Word—thinking of its meaning and application to our lives—will we discover its transforming power at work in us.³

Notes

¹Adapted from "The Spirit-filled Christian," Book 2 of the *Design for Discipleship* series, pp. 44-46. © 1973 by The Navigators and used by permission.

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³From *The Hand* illustration from the Personal Growth Series. © 1976 by The Navigators and used by permission.