

# Discipleship Diagnosis

## Effectiveness and Relevance



### DIAGNOSING THE NEED

In our curriculum and conferences, books and articles, we have embraced an ill-defined discipleship process. Though sincerely motivated, most miss the target and produce inferior results.

#### **RATIONAL/BEHAVIORAL MODELS ARE SIMPLY NOT WORKING!**

They start at the wrong point which guarantees a wrong result. In theological terms, they are rooted in anthropology (the nature of man) instead of pneumatology (the nature of the Spirit). These models call on the disciple to *know* and *do*: rational knowledge (learning, memorization, course work) and behavioral activity (how to act, what to do).

- Knowledge and behavior are essential, but do not transform!
- Knowledge stops short of the Holy Spirit's destination of loving God and loving others.
- Behavioral effort (doing more or behaving better) cancels grace and creates Pharisees.

What's missing is the imperative of life in the Spirit, experiencing the presence and the power of the living God.

Do we have the courage to **STOP, BACK UP, and START AGAIN**...with *ministering to the Lord and loving our God*?

Must we de-construct discipleship as it exists today, exchanging **rational/behavioral models for relational/experiential models**?

Doctors diagnose patients from empirical evidence; then they assign a treatment.

Rule One: If the treatment is killing the patient, stop the treatment. *Church, our treatment is killing the patient.*

### DISCERNING THE SOLUTION

This Spirit-empowered, relational framework would propose a transforming journey for all ages and stages of spiritual development, where the Holy Spirit leads us in a relational journey with God's Son, God's Word, and God's people.

**Spirit-empowered discipleship will require a lifestyle of:**

- Fresh encounters with Jesus –Jn. 8:12
- Frequent experiences of Scripture –Ps. 119:105
- Faithful engagement with God's people. –Mt. 5:14

*"Walk while you have the light lest the darkness overtake you"* Jn. 12:35.

#### **BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND! RELATIONAL OUTCOMES**

The ultimate goal of discipleship relates to the person of Jesus—to Christ-likeness. Models based upon *knowing* and *doing* are incomplete, lacking the empowerment of a life of loving and living intimately with Christ. **Spirit-empowered discipleship outcomes must be relational and impossible to realize apart from a special work of the Spirit.** Thus a Spirit-empowered discipleship outcome of *listening to and hearing God* is both relational and requires the Holy Spirit's work. (see next page).

#### **BEGIN AT THE RIGHT PLACE! LOVING GOD, LOVING OTHERS**

Relevant discipleship does not begin with doctrines or teaching, parables or principles, church polity or stewardship—but with *loving the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength*. It's this life of loving intimately that the Spirit calls us to and empowers us in. Reconsider the words of Jesus to make disciples of all nations—teaching them to observe ALL I've commanded—and then recall that this same Jesus has already declared that we should begin with the greatest commandment! (Matt. 28:19, 20; Matt. 22:37–40)

#### **AN AGE-STAGE PROCESS: EXPLORE—EMBRACE—EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESS TRUTHS OF THE FAITH**

Critical to faith formation is that our first encounter with Jesus, and His Word, and His people, is not our last!

**40 Spirit-Empowered Faith outcomes have been identified organized around:**

- L1-10** Loving the Lord
- W1-10** Loving the Word
- P1-10** Loving People
- M1-10** Loving God's Mission