

# Jesus' Leadership Principles and Method of Training His Disciples

**" If you had unlimited power, unlimited resources, unlimited time, how would you transform the world."**

God has a master plan for reaching and transforming a lost world. Jesus came with the purpose of reclaiming the world with the Gospel. His plan is simple and profound -take twelve ordinary men, give them three years of training through association with Him, observing and obeying and send them out equipped with the Word, prayer and the Holy Spirit to reproduce disciples, That is the Lord's program, and it is reaching the world.

Jesus could have made a play for the masses and sought to usher in the kingdom by popular acclaim. The early days of His ministry sought great multitudes drawn to Him. (Mark 1:28,33,45,4:1) Yet He discouraged mass movements, downplayed Himself publicly, revealing Himself to His disciples and those who believed instead of the religious leaders, political powers and the masses of the curious. Those who had messianic expectations were disappointed- He made no effort to raise up a following, seize power, overthrow Rome. In fact He made demands in His preaching that turned away many and alienated the establishment. His plan tested on the few men He had chosen.

The Lord knew that quality of discipleship and not quantity of disciples was more important. Before the masses could be reached and taught and ministered to there must be leadership to minister. One man cannot carry the load of the whole world- first a foundation must be laid. Jesus concentrated on His disciples for good reasons. Disciples - not converts - was His goal.

What was Jesus' master plan to reach the world?

His Mission was to...

- to reveal Himself as God's son come to redeem God's people
- to offer Himself up as an atoning sacrifice
- to reach all of God's people with this Gospel

His Task was further complicated by...

- self-imposed human limitations (Phil 2:6-8)
- a ministry of only 3.5 years
- limited to 30 AD technology and communications

His Goal...

- To establish the church, the body of Christ.
- To reach all of God's elect in every nation.

His Method was simple...

First to select, disciple and train 12 ordinary men who will be able to evangelize, disciple and train others in the same task. Then to turn them loose equipped with the Word and the Holy Spirit to disciple the nations.

We can see a pattern in the ministry of disciple training that Jesus carried on. He did not try to reach all the masses with the Gospel. Even if He had wanted to, the task would be too big. Rather He concentrated on a few selected ordinary men, who were "with Him" and to whom He gave both verbal instruction and a constant example - preparing them though their time with Him to do the same. A similar method of discipleship was practiced by the early churches in Acts.

In the long term, devotion to preparing disciples who can reproduce themselves has the potential for greater growth than an emphasis on reaching the masses with large numbers of converts. Preaching to 100,000 people a day with perhaps 4% response would yield 23,360,000 converts in 16 years. Taking one convert for 6 months and building a disciple who can reproduce, then each another, then the four another, etc in 16 years would reach 4,000,000,000 people. Multiplication begins small, but ultimately yields greater results. And these are disciples, Christians growing and maturing, not babes in the faith demanding constant nurturing. Jesus left His disciples at the end of three years to carry on His ministry without Him.

**The Master Plan of Evangelism**, by Robert Coleman is a tremendous study of Jesus' method of building disciples. The leadership training principles that He used were simple, logical and full of wisdom. They are the principles that He passed on to the Church. The following eight principles are a summary of Coleman's book. It is highly recommended. only 126 pages, still available as inexpensive paperback after 30 years.

1. **Selection:** He chose a few faithful, available, teachable (FAT) disciples. (Luke 6:13-17, Mk 3:13-19). They weren't scholars, men with special talents, just ordinary men who he could shape and mould into leaders. He did not spread Himself too thin.

2. **Association:** He devoted His time to them, even in the midst of ministry to the masses. They were with him in all sorts of situations -called to simply "be with Him" and "follow Him".

3. **Consecration:** He called them to obedience- to turn away from sin and sacrifice their own personal interests- to turn to Him and His teaching. He called them to commit them selves not to a doctrine or program, but to His person.

4. **Impartation** -He gave Himself to them and for them. The foundation of their relationship to Him was His love and self denial. He lived discipleship before them on a daily basis and there was no limit to His love for them. His commitment to them, and giving of Himself for them was the motivation of their giving themselves totally for Him.

5 **Demonstration:** He taught them by showing them. All the disciples had to teach them was a teacher who practiced with them what He expected them to learn .So they learned to pray by hearing Him pray, learned how to use the Word by observing His handling of it, learned how to minister by watching Him ministering. They became evangelists by His demonstrations of evangelism. Discipleship is easier caught than taught.

6 **Delegation:** He put them to work. (Mk 6:7, Mt 10:5, Luke 9:1,2) They assisted Him as He ministered, gradually He sent them out two by two. The instructions He gave them are most interesting, revealing how even this was a part of their preparation as His disciples.

7. **Supervision:** He kept check on them and used their experiences to instruct them further. (Mk 6:30) This was "on the job training" at its best. They were given adequate room to work and learn, yet never without His concern and guidance as it was needed.

8 **Reproduction:** it is clear that He intended them to become disciplers. The church is like the mustard seed, it starts out small- yet we expect it to grown bigger than the crops around it. Jn 15:1-17 the branch abiding in the vine must bear fruit.

The wisdom and strength of His methodology stands out. He chose those who were teachable, and devoted him self to them. He established a relationship based on commitment to Him on their parts, and His commitment to them on His. He showed them how, then sent **them out to learn** by doing, using their successes and failures to make them into men able to do what He was doing with them - reproducing. The New Testament reveals that these principles became the pattern for the early church. We find Paul using them in His missionary work- residing in a city just long enough to reproduce leadership for a new church, then returning periodically. He urges Timothy to make disciplers (2 Tim 2:2). There is Apollos, mighty in the church, discipled by Aquila and Priscilla, disciples of the disciple of Barnabas: Paul. There is Mark whom Paul gave up on, whom Peter succeeded with - the author of the first of the Gospels to be written. Titus, Luke, etc - the New Testament abounds with the evidence that Jesus' program of discipleship has been passed on to the church.

Of course, Jesus was a "perfect Leader." We, however, are all imperfect leaders, as were many leaders in the Bible such as Joseph (who organized Egypt for famine); Moses (who lead 2 million grumbling people for 40 years in the wilderness); Nehemiah (who rebuilt Jerusalem's wall in the face of opposition) and Paul (who organized numerous churches and trained leaders for them.) You are strongly encouraged to study their characters and lives, and the ways God trained them as leaders, both through their mistakes and their successes. And especially how they used Jesus' leadership principles successfully in their leadership.

## The Seven Step Disciple Training Program

The next part of this study is an examination of the seven stages in the process Jesus used in preparing his disciples. The main resource is the Gospel accounts, however, a book by Carl Wilson: **With Christ In the School of Disciple Building** furnishes an outline of the seven steps or stages that Christ used with His disciples in preparation for their world wide ministry. It is Wilson's thesis that careful study of the Gospels with a harmony reveals a definite pattern to Jesus' teaching of, first, the twelve, and then, a second group, the Seventy. Perhaps the One Hundred and Twenty at the time of the resurrection was group number three.

The Gospels thus have a two fold purpose:

- 1.To present Jesus and the Gospel!
- 2.To prepare the church to continue His ministry!

The second is not as obvious as the first, but with careful study of Jesus' methodology, a pattern becomes clear. This summary of His steps in training disciples is based on the following studies: **With Christ in the School of Disciple Building**, by Carl Wilson (Zondervan, 1979) - a detailed exposition of these stages. **The Master Plan of Evangelism** (Fleming H. Revell Co., 1979), by Robert E. Coleman ; **The Training of the Twelve** (Kregel Publications, 1971) by A. B. Bruce - very valuable studies of Christ's methods of training his disciples. The Gospels are more than sources for our teaching about Jesus, they are also "manuals" for continuing His mission! The Gospels were written not only to teach us about Christ and His ministry, but also to serve as a pattern for us, guiding the church in its mission to reach the world. That is why they are much more than a biography of Jesus. While each has its own particular themes and emphases, together they give us a rather complete picture of the Master's plan that he has passed on to His church.

Jesus trained first 12 disciples, then a second generation of 70, using basically the same pattern. This pattern continued in the growing church in Acts. When you have grasped the stages of Jesus' plan for disciple building, then you can much better understand both the Gospel accounts and the unfolding of various events in the life of Jesus. And you will see the value of careful reading and study of the Gospels' accounts of the ministry of the Lord for you as you seek to be His disciple.

**Step one: Bring someone to repentance and faith - conversion:** Mark 1:14,15; John 1:29ff

Before anyone can become a disciple of Jesus, they must first be born again. This salvation is entirely God's work through the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. Having been redeemed in Him, a man or woman responds in repentance and faith, embracing Christ as Savior and Lord.

The testimonies of Jesus' early disciples, recorded in John 1 show the faith they had in Him right after they became believers.

**Step Two: Enlightenment and Guidance** - Help them develop a growing personal relationship with Jesus.

A new Christian needs to get to know Him better. A believer needs to understand the significance of Christ's person, nature, and ministry. He also needs to understand God's will for us as disciples: learning, following, serving one another, and sharing our faith with others.

Only John records for us the 8 months of Jesus' beginning ministry with the first disciples. A period of time when they became better acquainted and learned much listening to Jesus teach and watching Him minister. (cf John 2:11)

**Step Three: ministry training and encouragement.** - Give them increasing opportunity to minister and serve.

Jesus was engaged at this time in His ministry in Capernaum, where His tremendous miracles of healing attracted large numbers of people, crowds greater than He could handle alone and and this increased public ministry required more workers. The disciples learned how to minister gradually through assistance in small tasks and by observation of the master at work.

Eventually Jesus issued a call to his disciples to become fishers of men: i.e. disciplers. This was more than a call to faith, it was a call to join Him in His mission to mankind.

**Step Four: Leadership development and Christian character** - prepare them to serve the body of Christ - the church

Jesus was ready to establish leadership for his church with the designation of "The Twelve" apostles. He spent several months training and selecting them out of a much larger group. (This method parallels the NT Church's method of designating leadership.) Jesus selected those who had already the commitment to follow and serve, and who had already shown their quality and potential to Him.

With the establishment of organization and leadership, they were structured as a team - there were no "bosses" - they were all submissive to the Lord and mutually to each other. Jesus rebuked any attempts at power plays. Jesus began sending them out into the outlying regions (in pairs on carefully defined missions under His supervision. (Mt 9:35-11:1; Mk 6:6-13, Luke 9:1-6).

At the same time, Jesus withdrew to less populous regions. During this time there was increased teaching about the kingdom of God, emphasizing the character of believers. (The Sermon on Mount and the Kingdom parables were given at this time.) He used any miracles to strengthen individual believers, no longer to attract crowds.

**Step Five: Re-evaluation and Separation** - Helping disciples to evaluate their values and separate themselves from the world to follow Christ fully.

Many were following Jesus for temporal reasons: economic and health benefits, rather than for the "eternal" life He offered. They needed to be forced to choose between Christ and the World. Eternal values must take precedence over temporal concerns. Here the reality of their faith and repentance was tested repeatedly.

This testing in Step five came about in a series of crises: John the Baptist was first imprisoned, and then beheaded (Mt 14:13). Jesus resisted the crowds wanting to making him King, because his mission was to bring the Bread of life. (John 6). The Feeding of 5,000 (Jn 6:1-14), and the storm at sea (16-21) [cf Psa 107:23-32, Psa 77:19; Mark 6:52] also became tests of the disciples' faith in Him. In the Bread of Life discourse, Jesus confronted those who followed him for temporal benefits.

This testing was necessary because the disciples needed to know who Jesus was if they were to remain with Him in the face of the growing opposition of the Pharisees and when the crowds deserted him. Jesus' bread of life discourse and other hard sayings caused many to depart. (Jn 6:60ff)

In the events on the Mount of transfiguration, we see Jesus' closest disciples (James, Peter and John) wrestling with their own values and faith, and this continued as even as Jesus began to teach them about the cross. (cf Matt 16:16-20 and 22,23!! 17:4 ("Shelters" = "tabernacles" = "places of worship?") and 6; 17-23!! Such confusion in their hearts and minds.) Jesus' "Take up your cross" saying in Mark 8 comes in this context. His disciples must be ready to hold fast to Him whatever the cost.

**Step six: Participation and delegation** - development of the community of believers (Mt 17:22ff ,Mk 9:30ff , Luke 9:44ff)

There were again growing numbers of disciples (due in part to the ministry of the Twelve) but there were also growing tensions. It was about this time that a second generation of disciples were called in the choosing of the Seventy. (The exact details are unclear, but it appears that they too were going step by step through the stages of discipleship.)

These Jesus sent out to specific cities in advance of His coming in 35 teams of two. About this time we have a repetition of earlier teaching for this new group of disciples. Only Luke records this period of Jesus ministry which we call the Perean ministry. (Luke 11-13)

The Gospels record the giving of many guidelines for interpersonal relationships at this time. The body has to learn how to relate to one another and the world around them. (Mt 17,18, Mk 9:33-50; Luke 9:49-62)

how to relate to the Jews	dealing with brothers who offend
how to relate to each other	how to relate to jealous believers
how to relate to independent ministries	how to deal with new converts and disciples
how to deal with false teachers	problems: divorce, riches
how to deal with those who stray from obedience	

Jesus' teaching about the Church is reaching completion. About this time Jesus made some important claims of deity in preparation for evangelism of the World.

**Step Seven: An Exchanged life and a Worldwide challenge** The events of the last week: Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, and later Pentacost, had an earthshaking impact on the disciples. First their hopes for a kingdom in this world were forever shattered even as for a moment they were scattered. However, reassured of God's grace, endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, they were now ready to press forward with a worldwide vision and mission - the Great commission. We see Peter returning to his nets and then called to Feed my Sheep. The disciples on the Road to Emmaus, Thomas.

The challenge was for them to continue the ministry of Christ by discipling as He disciplined, generation after generation, undergoing to lead men and women through the same steps to maturity and ministry. They came to understand that Christ was present with them through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the church moved forward with the power given them to.

Those who would be Jesus' disciples are those who are willing to let go of themselves and let God work in and through them, pressing on in faith and obedience to all that Jesus has commanded: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." Matt 28:18-20

### Some Suggested Further Reading:

**The Master Plan of Evangelism** By Robert Coleman (ISBN 0800754670)

**The Master Plan of Discipleship** by Robert E. Coleman (ISBN 0800752376)

**The Lost Art of Disciple Making**, by Leroy Eims (ISBN 031037281X)

**Out of the Saltshaker & into the World: Evangelism As a Way of Life** by Rebecca Pippert (ISBN 0830822208)

**Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer** by J. Oswald Sanders (ISBN 0802467997)

**Spiritual Leadership: Moving People to God's Agenda** by Richard Blackaby, (ISBN 0805418458)

**The Training of the Twelve** By A. B. Bruce (ISBN 0825420881)

**Excellence in Leadership**, John White (ISBN 0877845700)

Gene Getz' **Men of Character series** has a series of good studies on various men in the Bible that God used as leaders. Series includes volumes on: **David, Moses, Samuel, Nehemiah, Elijah, Jacob, Abraham, Joshua, Daniel, The Apostles**, and **Paul**. A similar series has been done by Charles Swindoll.

**The Maxwell Leadership Bible Developing Leaders From The Word Of God** by John C. Maxwell (ISBN 0785256881)