

Maturing Believers Through Process Not Events

Discipleship is at the heart of the church. Jesus commanded us in Matthew 28:19 to “Go and make disciples of all nations.” The issue for the church throughout history is discerning the most effective way to do it. How can we lead people to salvation and develop them into mature disciple makers?

In many churches in our country, it involves a wide variety of moving parts. We start with worship and a core ministry of Bible study. Then, we add on additional classes, involvement in local ministries, accountability groups, mission trips, and taking on various roles such as deacon, committee member, usher, preschool volunteer, student chaperone, and the list goes on. On top of what you do, it also becomes a question of what you attend. We too easily equate being busy with being disciplined.

I want to remind you that we can make disciples without adding an extra hundred or two hundred or one thousand events to the church calendar. Here are a few simple ideas.

Disciple children in Bible study rather than moralize them. Too much that passes for Bible study with kids that is no more than benign morality lessons. “God is good and He is watching so you need to be good” type of lessons only make God into a cosmic kind of Santa Claus. To disciple children, you do not have to add a single event, social, party, or any other thing. Start with what you have as Sunday School; or whatever name you call the primary age-graded time slot with children. Train your leaders to focus on developing their understanding of God through the scriptures and do not shy away from the difficult ideas.

Teach teenagers to become self-feeders of the Bible. Middle school and high school students who are Christians are learning how to care for their faith on their own. It will happen as you use the existing Bible study groups to allow them to plow through the Bible. Our aim should be to train teenagers in how to understand a passage and its implications upon their life and culture. Lock-ins, retreats, and social events are fine but they should all be placed as secondary to the work of helping students to be self-feeders of the Bible.

Focus your current adult small group ministry toward discipleship rather than baptized social hours. Again, if you have a Bible study hour or system in place, you have the primary piece of what you need. Rather than adding more events (even religious ones), help your Bible study groups be focused on their real purpose. Group leaders and members want personal growth to occur so don't pile on events that steal away their time to prepare, meet, and live out the results.

Church leader: You will constantly face the temptation to plan more stuff so the church will seem to have forward momentum. More events is not evil unless those events interfere with the purpose for the church. Just remember, the purpose of the church is not more events but more disciples.

> [Read more from Philip.](#)

