

## Discipleship in Cross-Cultural Context

### *Discipleship in a New Culture: Some Preliminary Issues*

1. Friendship: we assume that the ideas noted in the notes on cross-cultural relationships carry over into the discipleship relationship.
2. Curriculum: should the approach to developing a discipleship curriculum be "content" or "needs" (either "real" or "felt") centered, or some combination of these? (E.g., do we teach the Bible, or do we teach students?)
3. Cultural models of discipleship: within the new cultural setting, are there appropriate cultural models of discipleship that can be borrowed and used within the Christian context?
4. Teaching methodologies: what models may be employed?
5. Multiplication: a major goal of discipleship is reproducibility--how may that be inculcated within the cultural setting?
6. Discipleship in the organizational setting: some obstacles to consider (adapted from Kathy E. Kram, "Creating Conditions that Encourage Mentoring", in The 1985 Annual: Developing Human Resources, ed. J. William Pfeiffer and Leonard G. Goodstein (San Diego: University Associates, 1985), p. 240):

Feature	Potential Obstacles
Reward System	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mission "promotion" is based solely on bottom-line results (however the mission defines these)</li> <li>2. No recognition exists for developing nationals or building relationships that provide mentoring functions.</li> <li>3. No appropriate "rewards" or "incentives" are offered to mid-career missionaries who might provide mentoring functions; they may be come stagnant, resentful, and withdrawn.</li> <li>4. Relationship-building efforts are viewed as a distraction from the work (however the "work" is defined).</li> </ol>
Work Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The design of jobs provides little opportunity for junior missionaries or nationals to interact with senior missionaries.</li> <li>2. Job definitions do not include the responsibility to provide mentoring functions either within or without the mission.</li> <li>3. Tasks are highly individualized, requiring little or no collaboration among those who may have complementary relationship needs.</li> </ol>
Performance-Management Systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No performance-managements systems exist; thus, there is little opportunity or encouragement to discuss objectives, performance, and potential.</li> <li>2. Formal systems exist but are not used effectively; little coaching or counseling is provided.</li> <li>3. Formal systems exist, but mission members do not have the interpersonal and/or intercultural skills or the motivation to use them.</li> </ol>
Organizational Culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Values and rituals support "results" and discount the importance of relationships in spiritual and/or career development.</li> <li>2. The leaders of the mission are concerned with short-term results and do not model or reward concerns for personnel development.</li> <li>3. Trust among mission members, particularly at different hierarchical levels (or across cultural boundaries), is low.</li> </ol>
Individuals' Assumptions, Attitudes, and Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mission members are not aware of the importance of mentoring in spiritual and/or career development.</li> <li>2. Mission members lack the interpersonal and/or intercultural skills to initiate, build, and maintain supportive relationships.</li> <li>3. Self-confidence is low; junior missionaries (or nationals) are afraid to ask for guidance and coaching, or senior missionaries are too unsure of themselves to offer advice.</li> </ol>

*Biblical Considerations*

1. Roots for the concept of discipleship.
  - a. Linguistic root: *manthano* ("to learn"):
    - i. Basic sense: to direct one`s mind to something
    - ii. The use "consistently implies an intellectual process that always has external effects and involves a conscious or unconscious intellectual initiative" (Rengstorf, TDNT Abridged, 552)
  - b. The concept in the OT: though the concept of learning was present, the idea of discipleship as we see it in the NT is almost non-existent. Though there were schools of prophets, the term "disciple" for that relationship was not used.
  - c. The concept in secular Greek:
    - i. Apprentice
    - ii. One who went with a teacher to learn from him.
    - iii. One who belonged to a certain school of philosophy.
    - iv. One who adhered to the teaching of another (even if the other was long dead).
  - d. The Rabbinic concept: a student of Scripture and its interpretation under the strong guidance of a teacher in the path of that teacher`s tradition. The student usually chose the teacher. The term used by the rabbis was *talmid* rather than *mathetes*, and it was the idea of the *talmid* which we see carried over into the NT.
  - e. The noun form (*mathetes*) is in the most general sense a pupil. It implies both a relationship with a particular teacher and an intellectual link with those who are distant in time (e.g., Socrates was a *mathetes* of Homer).
2. The range of uses in the NT.
  - a. It always involved attachment to a person, most often directly to Jesus
  - b. Disciples of people other than Christ.
    - i. Disciples of John the Baptist (Matt. 8:14, Mark 2:18, Luke 11:1, John 3:25).
    - ii. Disciples of the Pharisees (Matt. 22:16, Mark 2:18).
    - iii. Disciples of Moses (John 9:28).
    - iv. Disciples of Paul (Acts 9:25)?
    - v. Disciples of false shepherds (Acts 20:30).
  - c. Disciples of Christ
    - i. Disciples in secret (Joseph of Arimathea, John 19:38).

- ii. Followers of Jesus during His earthly ministry (John 6:60-66)
- iii. Christians in general (Acts 14:28, 15:10, 19:9)
- iv. The twelve apostles (Mt. 10:1)

3. Defining Discipleship: Discipleship is the process of making disciples! What is a disciple?

a. NT characteristics:

- i. Follows the general characteristics of *talmid*, but Jesus is LORD, not just a rabbi. The primary task is not just transmission of His teachings, but witness to His Lordship.
- ii. People who have a deep, abiding commitment to a person (Christ), not a philosophy.
  - (1) They hold to Jesus' teaching (Jn. 8:31-32)
  - (2) They love one another (Jn. 13:35), and help each other (Mt. 10:42)
  - (3) They bear fruit for Christ (Jn. 15:8) and are partners with Him in service (Luke 5:1-11)
  - (4) They are to make other disciples (Mt. 28:18-20)
  - (5) They are the family of Jesus (Mt. 12:46-50)
  - (6) They are to put Jesus ahead of all other earthly commitments (Mt. 8:21-22; Luke 14:26-27), which involves a call to suffering for the sake of the Gospel (Mt. 10:17ff).

b. Definitions from more recent evangelical literature:

- i. "A true disciple is one who has a love for the person of Christ, confidence in the word of Christ, and is completely committed to Christ in service and obedience" (J. Dwight Pentecost, Design for Discipleship, p. 20).
- ii. "May we become disciples who are: (1) committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, (2) reliant on the power of God, (3) guided by the Holy Spirit, (4) absorbed in evangelizing the lost, and (5) devoted to building the saved, that in everything God might be further glorified through us." (Leroy Eims, Disciples in Action, p. 320).
- iii. "A disciple is a Christian who is growing in conformity to Christ, is achieving fruit in evangelism, and is working in order to conserve his fruit." (Gary W. Kuhne, The Dynamics of Discipleship Training, p. 13).
- iv. "Characteristics of a progressing disciple include: (1) a supreme love for Jesus Christ, (2) fervent love for others, (3) denial of self and choosing the cross, (4) a life spent following Christ, (5) continuance in His word, and (6) a forsaking of all to follow Him." (Ron Jenson, "Gearing the Local Church for Discipleship").

c. Definitions of discipleship also vary:

- i. The three levels of discipleship (D-1, D-2, D-3) of Donald McGavran (Understanding Church Growth, Fully Revised ed., p. 169):
  - (1) Level D-1: The turning a non-Christian society for the first time to Christ.
  - (2) Level D-2: The turning of any individual from non-faith to faith in Christ and his incorporation in a church.
  - (3) Level D-3: Teaching an existing Christian as much of the truths of the Bible as possible.
- ii. "Helping others to mature and grow in their relationship with Christ. It is training and imparting of the Christian life so that they can impart the Christian life to others." (Roger Berry: "ME875: Principles of Discipleship," class notes, p. 11).
- iii. Ron Jenson distinguishes between technical discipleship (one-on-one) and corporate discipleship (in the local congregation, from Dynamics of Church Growth, pp 158-60):

Technical discipleship describes the intense concentration of attention on a man or small group of men for the purpose of spiritual growth and leadership development. Technical uses Christ's training methods--instruction, demonstration, involvement, and evaluation. . . .  
The focus in technical discipleship is on the one-to-one relationship or the one-to-three-or-four relationship (small group) of the one who makes disciples and those who learn person looks to another person for instruction, counsel, training and fellowship.

(1) Corporate Discipleship:

Although this kind of concentration on leadership (technical discipleship) is necessary, we do not believe that technical discipleship is the New Testament model for discipleship in its fullest sense. God has designed the internal climate and program of the church in such a way to disciple those who are exposed to and involved in the church. . . .  
God has initiated two processes in the local church which result in the discipling of its members. Without them, discipleship in the fullest sense cannot occur.

- (a) The first process that God uses in the church is the exercise of spiritual gifts.
- (b) The second process inherent in the local church is . . . the full range of the "one another" expressions found in the Epistles (including caring, exhorting, rebuking, praying, encouraging, and stimulating). The types of one another commands are found in the following chart:

<p>Exhortations</p>	<p>Love one another (John 13:14, 22, 34, 35, 15:12, 17, Rom. 12:10, 13:8, 1 Thess. 3:12, 4:9, 1 Pet. 1:22, 1 John 3:11, 3:23, 4:7, 4:11, 2 John 5); Prefer one another (Rom. 12:10); Have the same mind towards each other (Rom. 12:16); Pursue things that build up one another (Rom. 14:19); Accept one another (Rom. 15:7); Greet one another (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Pet. 5:14); Serve one another (Gal. 5:13); Bear one another`s burdens (Gal. 6:2); Be kind to one another, tender-hearted (Eph. 4:32a); Forgive one another (Eph. 4:32b, Col. 3:13b); Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ (Eph. 5:21); Regard one another as more important than yourself (Phil. 2:3); Bear with one another (Col. 3:13a); Comfort one another with words of the return of Christ (1 Thess. 4:18); Encourage one another (1 Thes. 5:11a); Build up one another (1 Thes. 5:11b); Seek that which is good for one another and for all men (1 Thes. 5:15); Consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24); Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16a); Pray for one another (James 5:16b); Be hospitable to one another without complaint (1 Pet. 4:9); Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (1 Pet. 5:5)</p>
<p>Prohibitions</p>	<p>Do not judge one another (Rom. 14:13a); Do not put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother`s way (Rom. 14:13b); Do not lie to one another (Col. 3:9); Do not speak against one another (James 4:11); Do not complain against one another (James 5:9)</p>
<p>Truth Statements</p>	<p>We can be encouraged by each other`s faith (Rom. 1:12); We are individually members of one another as part of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5, Eph. 4:25); If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7); If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us (1 John 4:12)</p>
<p>Paul`s Hope</p>	<p>May God grant us to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus (Rom. 15:5); There should be no division in the body, the members should have the same care for one another as do the members of our physical bodies (1 Cor. 12:22-26)</p>

4. The goal of discipleship: **empowering people to progress towards completion in Christ**

a. Anderson builds the following discipleship chart on the framework of Colossians 2:6-10 (Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, pp. 230-1):

	Level 1: Identity <i>Complete in Christ</i> Col. 2:10		Level 2: Maturity <i>Built up in Christ</i> Col. 2:7		Level 3: Walk <i>Walk in Christ</i> Col. 2:6	
	Conflict	Growth	Conflict	Growth	Conflict	Growth
<b>Spiritual</b>	Lack of salvation or assurance (Eph. 2:1-3)	Child of God (1 John 3:1-3; 5:11-13)	Walking according to the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21)	Walking according to the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)	Insensitive to the Spirit's leading (Heb. 5:11-14)	Led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14)
<b>Rational</b>	Darkened understanding (Eph. 4:18)	Renewed mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23)	Wrong beliefs or philosophy of life (Col. 2:8)	Handling accurately the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15)	Pride (1 Cor. 8:1)	Adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
<b>Emotional</b>	Fear (Matt. 10:26-33)	Freedom (Gal. 5:1)	Anger (Eph. 4:31), anxiety (1 Pet. 5:7), depression (2 Cor. 4:1-18)	Joy, peace, patience (Gal. 5:22)	Discouragement and sorrow (Gal. 6:9)	Contentment (Phil. 4:11)
<b>Volitional</b>	Rebellion (1 Tim. 1:9)	Submissive (Rom. 13:1, 2)	Lack of self-control, compulsive (1 Cor. 3:1-3)	Self-control (Gal. 5:23)	Undisciplined (2 Thess. 3:7, 11)	Disciplined (1 Tim. 4:7, 8)
<b>Relational</b>	Rejection (Eph. 2:1-3)	Acceptance (Rom. 5:8; 15:7)	Unforgiveness (Col. 3:1-3)	Forgiveness (Eph. 4:32)	Selfishness (Phil. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 10:24)	Brotherly love (Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:1-5)

b. Four mutually-interlocking aspects may be noted:

- i. Establishing identity (Who am I or who are we in Christ?)
- ii. Understanding God (Who is God?)
- iii. Understanding truth (What is truth, how is it to be discovered?)
- iv. Understanding growth and development (What does it mean to progress towards completion in Christ?) What do we see about growth in the NT?  
The following chart summarizes the major emphases:

Growth in the NT		
Growth in our relationship to God	Individually	Growth in . . . faith (2 Cor. 10:15; 2 Thes. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:5-8) knowledge of God (Col. 1:10) grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18) all aspects into Him (Eph. 4:15) respect to salvation (1 Pet. 2:2)
	Corporately	Growth . . . as the body of Christ (Col. 2:19) into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21) in giving thanks to God (2 Cor. 4:15)
Growth in godliness	Individually	Growth in . . . faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and Christian love (2 Pet. 1:5-8) walking as we ought to walk (1 Thes. 4:1) behaving properly towards outsiders (1 Thes. 4:9-12) love (Eph. 4:16, Phil. 1:9, 1 Thes. 3:12, 2 Thes. 1:3) generosity (2 Cor. 8:7; 9:10-11)
	Corporately	Growth in . . . edifying the church (1 Cor. 14:12) the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58) love of outsiders (1 Thes. 3:12)

*Discipleship in Cross-Cultural Context:*

These aspects must be engaged in discipleship in all cultures, but the means of engaging them in a discipleship setting will vary from culture to culture as well as from group to group within a culture.

1. Discipleship always takes place in the context of relationships.
2. The four aspects of movement towards completion in Christ do not have to be worked through sequentially (e.g., monochronic!)—they can be intertwined (polychronic).
3. They do not have to be scheduled, but they are areas that must be developed in the process of discipleship. In cultures where scheduling communicates a business relationship, we can communicate a "business" mentality in discipleship by scheduling its development!
4. They are not to be developed only in the cognitive areas (see Anderson's chart above) and are not to be divorced from the real circumstances of life.

