
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Genesis of Disciple-making

The genesis of disciple-making is the leader, and the pastor must lead in this endeavor. You cannot make disciples until you are a disciple. You cannot challenge others to be followers of Christ unless you are a follower of Christ. It is out of your *followership* that you lead others to follow. The truth is that the greatest way to create a movement is to be a follower and to show others how to follow.

Following is the most underrated form of leadership in existence. Paul said to those he led, "Follow my example, as I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1 NLT). Craig Groeschel, the lead pastor of Life Church in Oklahoma City, explains, "We have too many full time pastors who are part-time followers of Christ. What we need are more part-time pastors who are full time followers of Christ."

He was not making a case for bi-vocational ministry, but instead was making the point that pastors are to be followers of Jesus first. It is from following Jesus you are to pastor/lead your church.

Pastor you are the genesis, epicenter, core of the disciple-making aspect of your church. You must be in a discipling relationship and you must be discipling others. It will be from your modeling and living as a disciple that your church will progress toward fitness in this area. It is out of your connection with God that you are able to influence others to connect with God. The only enduring influence we have to offer others is the influence God has in our lives. What are you doing to increase being influenced by God?

Aubrey Malphurs in his book, *Strategic Disciple Making*, identifies four competencies a leader can, and must, bring to the disciple-making process: Character (being), knowledge (knowing), skills (doing), and emotions (feeling). He notes, "Achieving excellence in all four competencies must take place for the leaders to be able to do their jobs effectively."

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Define a Disciple

In the diving competition at the Rio 2016 Olympics one of the commentators made an interesting comment. He said that in training divers, the first thing the Chinese do is teach their divers how to enter the water from whatever diving apparatus they are competing from (e.g., spring board, platform, etc.). Prior to any work on flips, turns, somersaults, and other aspects of technique, divers are coached on how to enter the water. The result is that Chinese divers enter the water with minimal splash, and minimal splash is a critical element of scoring high marks. In essence the Chinese divers start with the end in mind. Everything else is built on the conclusion of the dive. If they know how to end well, everything leading up to that provides a solid performance.

This same principle needs to be applied to the disciple-making process. You need to know what you are looking for in a disciple. What does a disciple look like? What actions, attitudes, and attributes do you want in a follower of Jesus. You need to define what you want to accomplish and how you are going to do it. Clarity as to the end result will inform the process you put in place to get there.

The three characteristics, or attributes, of a disciple are: A disciple follows Jesus, a disciple is changed by Jesus, and a disciple is on mission with Jesus. Thus, a disciple as an individual who is following Christ, being changed by Christ, and is committed to the mission of Christ. It is the drive to produce these attributes that informs the disciple-making process.

The most basic characteristic of a disciple is obedience. This is seen in John 2. It is in the story of Jesus turning water into wine that this simple obedience maker is specified. Mary, the mother of Jesus, told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” (Matthew 2:5 NLT). Obedience to the instructions of Jesus without hesitation is the primary mark of a disciple. Basic to all discipleship is our resolve not only to address Jesus with polite titles but to follow his teaching and obey his commands. In all the effort put into a definition of a disciple, obedience is an observable action.

What qualities and behaviors are we trying to develop in disciples?
 What do we want them to do?
 What do we want them to be?”

Adapted from [Building the Body: 12 Characteristics of a Fit Church](#) by Gary L. McIntosh and Phil Stevenson. Available now from your favorite store.

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Building the Body *12 Characteristics* *of a Fit Church*

Just as physically, healthy people might not actually be fit enough to run a 5K, so churches can appear healthy—with no obvious issues, maintaining a healthy size—but not exhibit fitness.

A fit church is one that is not satisfied with merely coasting along with no problems. A fit church is actively making disciples, maturing in faith, developing strong leaders, reaching out to the community, and more.

Building the Body unveils the twelve characteristics of fit churches and shows pastors and church leaders how to move their church through five levels of fitness, from beginner all the way to elite.

Here's what others are saying

“Building the Body powerfully draws on the biblical imagery of the church while taking the concept of church health to a whole new level. Becoming fit is presented in a way that motivates rather than produces guilt, and the combination of principles and practices applies to churches at all levers of development.” — Wayne Schmidt, general superintendent, the Wesleyan Church

“Practical steps to the next level—that’s what this book offers. Wherever your church lies along a continuum of twelve factors (e.g., outreach, stewardship, worship, disciple making), McIntosh and Stevenson give concrete strategies for advancing to the next level . . . and then the next level . . . and then the next level.”

—Donald R. Sunukjian, chair, department of Christian ministry and leadership, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“A practical, informative, doable resource for leaders and churches who want not only to get better but also to get as strong or fit as possible for the good of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.”

—Jim Dunn, vice president of church relations, Wesleyan Investment Foundation

Authors

Gary L. McIntosh (Ph.D., D.Min.) is professor of Leadership at Talbot School of Theology. He is the author of twenty-five books and numerous articles.

Phil Stevenson (D.Min.) is district superintendent of The Pacific Southwest District of the Wesleyan Church. He is a coach, writer, and speaker.

“All fit churches are healthy, but not all healthy churches are fit.”

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Elements of a Disciple-making Strategy

Jesus' clear and compelling invitational challenge of *come follow me* has not changed. It was these three words that opened the door to transformational living for those to whom he extended it. It was these three words that demanded a response. It was these three words that set into play a path on which people could travel.

The invite was consistent. The invite was clear. The invite was full of challenge. The invite did not change in regard to the person, or the situation. The impact of the invite was dependent on the response of the one whom was extended the invitation.

When Jesus crossed paths with Peter and Andrew he extended the invitation to follow him. At his invite, it was reported, "They left their nets at once and followed him" (Matthew 4:19 NLT). For them the invitation of Jesus resulted in them letting go of what was to discover what could be.

In another invitational conversation Jesus extended an invitation for *followership* to a wealthy person. His first response was enthusiastic, but

Jesus noted something in him and added a challenge to his invitation. The challenge was to sell all that he had, then to follow him. This dampened the man's enthusiasm. "At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions" (Mark 10:21-22 NLT). This rich person responded to the invite by holding on to the known at the expense of the unknown. His willingness to follow was contingent on minimal risk.

The invitation to follow Jesus has not changed. As in the first century, today people are being compelled to respond to the opportunity extended by Jesus to come *follow me*. It is those who respond, as Peter and Andrew did, who set out on the path of discipleship. The question becomes How do we effectively make disciples at this time in God's history?

There are five key principles that influence effective disciple-making. These principles

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determine process, structure, and material for disciple-making. Effective disciple-making must incorporate the following:

Effective disciple-making is relational: It has to have an element of life on life. People are discipled in relationship, not in the transference of knowledge or content.

Effective disciple-making is biblical: The word of God is the central basis for making disciples. A disciple is a follower of Christ. How better to understand who you follow than to read about who he was, how he thought, and what he did.

Effective disciple-making is applicable: If a disciple-making process does not impact how people live in the world it is merely religious ritual. Disciples bring the Kingdom of God into the realms of life where they have been placed.

Effective disciple-making is accountable: Accountability is the runt of many a disciple-making process. Accountability goes beyond getting assignments completed, while holding those serious in following Christ to living out that *followership* in daily life.

Effective disciple-making is reproducible: Reproducing other

disciples is often the missing piece of disciple-making. Genuine disciple-making has happened when other disciples have been multiplied. The going and making of disciples is a lifelong process.

These five principles are the filter used in developing, implementing, and evaluating disciple-making in our ministries. Consistently ask the five disciple-making questions:

What is the relational impact?

How is the Bible used?

How are you applying what is being discovered in daily life?

How are people being held accountable?

How is what you are doing being reproduced?

Disciple-making is the call of every Christ follower. The call to “Go and make disciples” continues to be the intent of Jesus’ mandate to his church (Matthew 28:19 NLT). What will you do to fulfill this mandate in your life and the faith community you lead?

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DR. GARY MCINTOSH PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
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North America has changed and is changing. This residency will help you adapt to these changes. It begins by helping you understand the complexities and possibilities of ministry in our increasingly multi-ethnic society. And since our culture is increasingly post-modern, you will learn how to evangelize and minister among people who are absolutely convinced that there are no absolutes.

FACULTY-MENTORS

DR. GARY MCINTOSH is Professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership at Talbot. He has served as a consultant for hundreds of churches in North America. Dr. McIntosh is also the Founder and President of the Church Growth Network, which provides a wide range of professional consulting services in the areas of church growth analysis, strategic planning, and generational change. He is the editor of the Growth Points newsletter. Having published over 300 articles and written over 25 books, he is a prolific writer and church growth expert.

DR. ALAN MCMAHAN has served in churches in North America and on the Pacific Rim. He has also taught in the areas of missiology, church growth, leadership, organizational development and evangelism. He has been active in training undergraduate and graduate students including mid-career professionals, Bible school teachers, pastors, and denominational leaders through the U.S., Canada, and much of Southeast Asia in the effective means to develop leaders and grow churches. He has served as Vice President for the Alliance Theological Seminary and as the Academic Dean at the King's College in mid-town Manhattan. He and his wife, Terri, have two sons, Billy and Jonathan, and live in La Mirada, CA.

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A Leadership Myth

A person may neglect leading because he believes the myth that he is not a born leader. The first question that many pastors ask at leadership conferences is “Do you believe leaders can be developed?”

It is accurate to say that some people are born with a propensity toward leadership as a result of some natural giftedness and personality. But anyone who chooses to learn can increase leadership capacity. Indeed, everyone can ramp up their leadership ability.

Educators, James Kouzes and Barry Posner, in their book, *The Truth About Leadership*, report “After examining the immense variety of stories from so many different people and places, it has also become crystal clear that *leadership is not a birthright* (emphasis added).”

This underscores the *de-mythization* of leaders being born. The sooner pastors recognize that they can develop leadership capacity and competency, the more willing they will be to develop the necessary skills to lead a church to fitness.

Another common reason a pastor neglects leading is a tendency to avoid responsibility for results. Often the pastor’s reasoning is couched in spiritual terms. He believes that God brings the harvest, God is the one who saves, and Jesus will build his church not us.

This is all true, but it is also true that God works in partnership with human leaders. For example, in the parable of the sower, what begins the process of reaping a harvest? It is the action of the farmer! “Listen! *A farmer went out* to plant some seeds. As *he scattered* them across his field” (Matthew 13:3-4 NLT, Emphasis added). It was the farmer (leader) who *went out* and *scattered*. All of the seed did not sprout, but there was seed that germinated and grew. And, while God produced the fruit, you can be 100% certain that if the farmer had done nothing, nothing would have resulted.

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Paul makes this same point to the church in Corinth. “After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God’s servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:5-6 NLT). God did indeed make it grow, but someone (a leader) needed to plant or water, and sometimes both; but it was God that provided the growth.

A pastor cannot, must not, avoid responsibility in the work that God desires to do in the life of the church he has been given to lead. When God was responding to the cries of his people in captivity he called Moses (a leader) to partner with him. God said to Moses, “Then the Lord told him, ‘I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land’” (Exodus 3:7-8NLT). God saw the need and took action.

His action was not unilateral. It was not exercised in a *divine vacuum*. He said to Moses, “Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my

people Israel out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:10 NLT). God was going to do it, but he was going to do it through Moses. What God desires to do through your church he desires to do through you. The call he has on your church to bring it to greater fitness is for you to lead. The call he has on your church to make it more Great Commission effective is for you to lead.

There will be resistant as you move the church toward an increased level of fitness. There will be resistance as the necessary fitness plans are put into place. The exertion of your pastoral leadership in dealing with the resistance will be the difference between increasing fitness as opposed to remaining static.

The need for leadership is a constant. Pastors need to lead. The variable is the context in which they lead. “We tell our audiences that as much as the context of leadership has changed, the content of leadership has not changed that much at all.”

This being the case a leader needs to decide the type of church they have, determine the church’s level of fitness, and devise a plan to move to the next level. Are you taking responsibility to lead your church?

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Growing God's Church

God does not change, but people do. The ways people are hearing the gospel and connecting with churches today are not the same as they were even twenty years ago.

It stands to reason, then, that if we want our churches to grow—if we want the kingdom to grow—it's time to reevaluate how we do outreach.

Based on ten years of comprehensive research, *Growing God's Church* unveils how people are actually coming to faith in the 21st century. Church Growth expert Gary L. McIntosh answers questions like:

- How are new Christians hearing the gospel today?
- How are they finding churches?
- What makes them stay at a church?

He helps you evaluate your motives for ministry, your church's priorities, the reality of churchless Christians, the name of your church, and much more in the light of the Great Commission and the changing face of our modern world.

Here's what others are saying

"Gary McIntosh is one of the leaders in research on growing churches. Anyone who is interested in knowing about growing churches should read this book. Everyone who is interested in actually working in a growing church needs to read this book." — Elmer L. Towns, co-founder and vice president, Liberty University

"A true gift to the kingdom. Every leader with a desire to fulfill the Great Commission should read *Growing God's Church* as soon as possible. The takeaways are revolutionary for the way we do outreach today." — Nelson Search, lead pastor of the Journey Church, New York City

Author

Gary L. McIntosh (Ph.D., D.Min.) is professor of Leadership at Talbot School of Theology. He is the author of twenty-five books and numerous articles. He just completed thirty-two years at Talbot School of Theology as professor Christian ministry and leadership.

Interesting insights from the book:

"While churches are becoming more missional in their thinking, they are becoming less evangelistic in their practice."

"If a church desire to be truly missional, evangelism must be restored to a primary place in its ministry."

"The gospel message requires a verdict. One either rejects Jesus or believes in him; there is no middle ground."

"To preach the kingdom of God adequately is to issue a call to conversion."

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Building a Loving Community

Everyone wants to be part of a loving church. Here are some ideas on how to build a loving community.

First, nurture an atmosphere of acceptance and love among the people. Walk into any church and you can sense the atmosphere. While it is hard to put a finger on what atmosphere actually is, it is easy to feel it, especially when one is a recent newcomer. Atmosphere is created by the sounds, smells, colors, lighting, and noisy buzz of people gathered in a close space. It is especially noticeable in the welcome or lack of welcome newcomers receive, the willingness of people to talk to strangers, the laughter that wafts over the conversations. The makeup of the worship team sends a strong signal of acceptance or of rejection to people as they observe the ages, ethnicities, and personalities of those on the stage.

Second, offer a small group ministry to build community. Developing a network of small groups within the church community is a necessity. People are looking for close personal relationships. Intimacy is a key value, and for this reason, small groups are an extremely important aspect of church fitness. Small groups must be designed

for a variety of needs: study, personal growth, ministry, worship, pastoral care, evangelism, and special needs or tasks. Nearly all fit churches have at least one support or recovery group. While a small group ministry does not guarantee that a church will be fit, a church will be limited without it. Typically, in fit churches over two-thirds (70%) of the members attend a small group, and they talk positively about the level of spiritual care they receive.

Third, welcome and follow-up with guests well. One of the most overlooked areas of church fitness is the design of a welcome and follow-up process. The church, more than any other organization, should be open to welcoming and connecting with newcomers. Fit churches take full responsibility for incorporating guests into the loving community by designing an intentional flow of ministry that touches on the following six areas of ministry. Connecting: Helping new people understand and become a part of the church

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beyond Sunday morning worship. Growing: Helping people grow spiritually as they use their gifts in service. Learning: Helping people learn their own unique talents, passions, and gifts. Matching: Helping people find an appropriate place to serve inside or outside of the church. Coaching: Helping people develop in their ministry experience. Recognizing: Helping people celebrate the way God has made them and used them in ministry.

Fourth, help people make friends in the congregation. People will drive a long way to connect with a church that provides substance beyond simple words like “We care” and “We’re glad you’re here.” While most churches are friendly, what most people want are friends. Thus, fit churches organize ways to help people build friendships. It may be programs (e.g., Dinner Eights), or creating centers for community (e.g., some churches are rearranging church facilities to create several places for people to gather casually), or stressing involvement in small groups. But, fit churches realize people must find at least seven friends in a church if they are to remain for a significant period of time.

Fifth, handle conflict well. The stresses and strains created by changes in a growing church quite regularly lead to conflict. In some cases, the conflict is simply between a few people, while in other cases it is church-wide. Yet, fit

churches have found effective ways to handle conflict in a responsible and biblical manner. In most situations, the board of the church has received some training in conflict resolution, and is thus prepared for situations that may arise. Leaders deal quickly with issues rather than letting concerns reach a pressure point that may explode into larger conflict. People are encouraged to not listen to criticism, but to encourage critics to speak directly to the persons being criticized. The pastoral staff and visible leaders model healthy respect and support for each other, even when everyone does not agree. Leaders hold to the principle that “Those who know don’t talk; those who are talking don’t know.”

Sixth, provide regular opportunities for fellowship and community. The early church devoted much energy to “fellowship,” which was seen in the fact that they regularly “were together” and took “their meals together” (Acts 2: 44-46). As a result, the believers “were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32). There is no doubt that the busyness of our society makes it difficult for God’s people to spend time together. Thus, fit churches provide multiple ways for people to gather in fellowship. Some churches provide low cost meals at church on a week night. A few churches with enough space have started food courts to encourage worshipers to stay around after the worship service and talk with others.

Which of these ideas are you already using? Which ones can you improve? Which ones do you need to start this year?

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What Every Pastor Should Know

Pastors and church leaders are constantly faced with tough questions. What size staff does the church need? How many workers are needed in the nursery this month? When is the right time to start a second worship service? How many people should we train for evangelism this year? How does seating and parking impact worship attendance?

What Every Pastor Should Know offers 101 valuable rules and time-tested wisdom to help answer real-life ministry questions. From advertising to facilities to visitation, this valuable book offers the practical help you need, just when you need it most. This comprehensive guide will become one of the most valuable books in your library.

What Others Are Saying . . .

“This book is fantastic! There is no doubt that it will be on my shelf as a reference for years to come.” -Thom S. Rainer, president, LifeWay Christian Resources

“Every pastor should read this book.” -Elmer Towns, Co-founder, Liberty University

“An incredible reference guide . . . the practical information in these pages is essential knowledge for those of us who want to lead growing, effective churches.” -Nelson Searcy, The Journey Church

“A wealth of insights for pastors on the day-to-day issues of leading an effective church.” -Ed Stetzer, Missiologist

A sample of some rules for ministry you'll discover in this book:

Rule #11: Give higher priority to second-time guests than to first-timers, and to third-time guests than to second-timers.

Rule #19: The sermon is not the message, the message is the service.

Rule #26: One hundred percent of new members should have a sponsor.

Rule #44: When people learn how to listen, they are learning how to love.

Rule #55: The effective life span of a ministry program is fifteen years.

Rule #66: For every one acre of land, a church will have 100 people in worship attendance.

Rule #74: One dollar of every ten should be spent on local community outreach.

Rule #81: Churches using a well-designed fundraising campaign can raise up to three times their annual income.

Rule #92: The mathematics of church mergers is $1 + 1 = 1$.

These and ninety-two more rules are explained and applied in this significant book. Order it today!

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