

FSMLeadership.com :: Four-Week Discipleship Plan on How to Study the Bible

The process of making disciples is one that has been commanded of believers upon the ascension of our Lord Jesus post-resurrection in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1. It is the commission of Jesus to his followers to continue the process of building leaders who will point others to Christ and point others to Christ and so on. This is the heartbeat of our ministry here at Fellowship: we want to turn students into world changing disciples of Christ.

The Question

Let's say you agree with the above, the question often arises..."now what? How do I make a student into a disciple? Better yet, how do I make a student into a self-feeding disciple maker?" There are many answers to this question and many different people do things in many different ways. One consistent answer, however, is to build in them a passion and a desire for God's word. Build in the students the ability to understand and read God's word on their own. This will create in the student an umbilical cord not to you, per se, but to the word of God so that twenty years from now when you may not be in their lives anymore, the word of God is living and active and within. They know how to study God's word. They know how to read it and understand it. They believe it and stake their life on it.

The Curriculum

This curriculum is designed for just that. It is designed to allow flexibility for the discipler, but also to give some reproducible and transferable ideas that the student could easily pass along to someone else that they begin to disciple. It has also proven successful in getting students to read the Bible and to learn how to study it as the word of God. It comes in a couple part, and feel free as a leader to do all or part of it. It's for you to look at, use the stuff you like, throw away the stuff you don't. We want to answer the above question: "Now what?" but giving y'all some easy but effective things that may help in your disciple-making process.

The Process

I always put a time-table on my discipleship with people. I will state, "we will meet for six weeks and go through the following and after that if you would like to continue to pursue discipleship you'll have to ask me and we'll go through something else." This curriculum could be as short as six weeks or as long as a year or longer. It depends on how much you choose to lead them through and what book of the Bible you choose to go through. Like I said, it's designed for flexibility.

...Continued on back

Four-Week Plan

:: Week 1 ::

Observation of *one* verse

The first time I meet with the student I will explain what we're doing and explain what the discipleship process looks like, usually using Matthew 28:18-20 and 2 Timothy 2:2. I will challenge the student to teach those two verses and the process to a couple people this week. Then I explain the purpose of the curriculum. I will walk them through, this first day, what I mean when I say, *OBSERVATION* of the text. I'll show them, using, 2 Timothy 2:2 how to observe that particular text. I'll throw out a couple observations of the text. (For example, we clearly see a four generation discipleship lineage in 2 Timothy 2:2. "Faithful" men is an important observation in the passage...things like this) I will show them the difference between an *OBSERVATION* and an *INTERPRETATION*. This is usually a difficult process as most students really struggle to simply observe the text and not jump to interpretation or application. I will answer any questions they may have on observing the text.

The Assignment

Have the student read and collect 25 observations on Acts 1:8. Make sure they know they cannot use any other passage in the Bible. They must use only that one verse. This limits the scope of their observations. They usually find this difficult to do. I usually find this difficult to do. But encourage them to give it a try.

:: Week 2 ::

Accountability

Walk through the observations with disciple. Encourage them where they were successful, and help correct them where they may be off.

For example

Students frequently will say something like this: "We are supposed to be Christ's witnesses." This is a true statement, but not an observation of this passage. It would more appropriately be considered a timeless principle in the text and one to be used in *APPLICATION*, but not an *OBSERVATION*. They also frequently put things like, "The disciples are going to receive the Holy Spirit." Upon which I ask, "How do you know it's the disciples? You only had Acts 1:8 to observe and it doesn't say that in that particular passage." They are reading into the passage extra-textual things. We do this all the time and it sometimes keeps from freshly looking at a passage of Scripture. We can't 'read into' the Bible what we want to see. Sadly, people do this all the time.

It would be helpful if you had a list of your own observations that you went over as well. That way they see that you are doing it with them and on the same page with them.

Week 2 Assignment

This week, have the student give you observations on Acts 1:6-11. This allows the student to see the context of Acts 1:8. They don't have to give 25 observations on each verse, but they should give enough observations to actually begin to understand the passage. 10-20 would be adequate. It is funny, at this point, to see the students be grateful that they get to see the context. They can now say that the "Men of Galilee" are the ones who are the "you" that Jesus is talking to. Limit the scope of their observations to only Acts 1:6-11. Have them bring NEW observations on Acts 1:8. Almost always, the second go-around is better than the first.

:: Week 3 ::

Accountability

Walk through their observations of Acts 1:6-11. Encourage them where they're successful, and correct them where they may be off.

Now it would be a great idea to start discussing how to interpret and apply the passage. After they have spent a couple weeks on the passage, it is now possible to start unpacking it. Start walking them through what it means to *INTERPRET* a passage of Scripture. What did it mean to *them* and what, then, should it mean for *us* in 2011 Arkansas. Then, once the text is *INTERPRETED* we can now *APPLY* the text. Have the student *APPLY* it to their life. How should their life be different in light of the interpreted text? What are they to do in light of the interpreted passage? One goal in *APPLICATION* is that it should be measurable and timely. So, saying something like, "We should be people of prayer" is a difficult application to actually unpack. That is an appropriate application to start praying toward, "Lord, make me into a person of prayer." But saying something like, "This week, I am going to spend 15 minutes in prayer each morning before school" is something measurable and timely. It's something you can check. It has a practical side to it. Help them understand the difference between general and timely application because you'll be asking them to bring you each later.

:: Week 4 Option 1 ::

The Assignment

Choose a book of the Bible (I like using Philippians or Ephesians because they are packed with theology and practical application) and go through it a chapter per week. Have them spend at least four days that week in the chapter. Ask them to bring you the following:

Day 1: OBSERVATIONS

Day 2: INTERPRETATIONS

Day 3: GENERAL PRAYER APPLICATION (encourage them to start praying through these, it may only be 4-5 things)

Day 4: SPECIFIC AND TIMELY APPLICATION (2-3 things that they are actually going to DO)

Weekly: Pick one verse per chapter to memorize and encourage them to memorize. They should know that the observation day should take them the longest. That is the most time consuming day. You are asking them to observe it how you trained them in above. They should understand how to observe a passage and proper observation will lead to proper interpretation which will lead to proper application.

:: Week 4 Option 2 ::

How to Study a whole book

Take one more week and help show the student how to not only study one verse at a time (like you did with Acts 1:8) but show them how to get the 'big picture' of an entire book.

The Assignment

Have the student read the book of Habakkuk and break it down into the following components:

Paragraphs- where would they break up each section. Make sure they mark the verses.

Sections- group each cluster of paragraphs together. Make sure they mark the verses. (for example, God's second answer to Habakkuk is several paragraphs long)

Have the student:

Title the book of Habakkuk: What is the main point/theme? It should be less than seven words.

Title the sections- what is going on in each? Less than seven words.

Title each paragraph- same as above

Write a brief description of each paragraph.

Bible Chart

This doesn't have to be rocket science and they can do it on a piece of paper by hand if need be. Just have them put it together on one piece of paper so they can see it. This is to give them an idea of what it looks like to study the 'big picture' of a book. To see it in its fullness before diving in to the individual verses. This would be particularly helpful when discussing a larger book of the Bible.

Accountability

Give the student a week to work on the chart and then encourage them where they get it and help correct where they're off. Then, follow the instructions of **Option 1** above. You may assign them another 'big picture' assignment, this time of whatever book you want to study before they dive in to the individual chapters.

The Point

I have done this particular strategy with several students in the past and seen them grasp it in a way that really makes the Bible make sense. They will be frustrated at points while doing it, but every student I've asked after doing this has said that they really feel like they have a great handle on the passages I assigned them, particularly Acts 1:8. I come back months later and they can almost all quote Acts 1:8 for me simply because they studied in such great detail. This affords me the opportunity to really spend time diving into the text when I meet with them for discipleship. I want my disciples to know that we are going to have plenty of "flow" time and fun and discussion of life and other things going on, but when we meet to discuss the Bible we are going to get serious and actually work hard to know the word of God better and be better equipped at how to study it. If we have students that leave our ministry who know how to unpack their Bibles and apply it to their life, that is a win. We are doing our jobs right as leaders if that happens.

Feel free to use any or all of this. Discipleship is not a formula, this is simply a tool that you can use to help your students learn to study their Bibles. Feel free to let us know if you have any questions on this.