

# 1. *The urgent need*

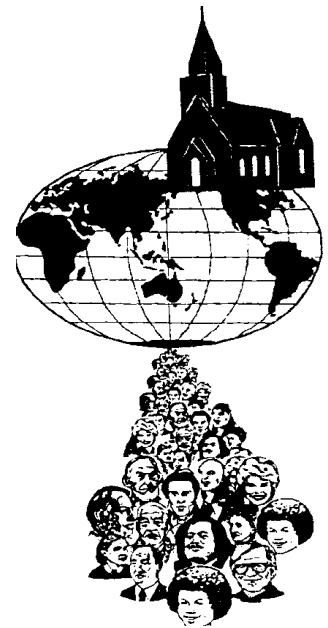
## *- intentional discipleship training*

*“Discipleship sums up Christ’s plan for the world. Yet for all its brilliant simplicity, it is the one approach that most western churches have neglected.”*

*- David Watson*

Think about the above quotation. How true are these words of your own church? Is discipleship training the foundation of all that you do?

The central thrust of Jesus’ command in the Great Commission is to *“go and make disciples”*. It is not enough to have outreach programs, to get people to make “decisions” or even to win converts. It is not enough just to have believers fill our churches and participate in our church activities. The central task of the church is **to make disciples**. If we are not doing that, we are not doing what Christ has called us to do.



### ***Getting back to the central task***

We can become so busy in our churches with many things - services, meetings, programs and activities - that we can lose sight of our central purpose. If at the hub of all our activities we are not seeing people brought to Christ, nurtured, disciplined, and made into strong disciples and trained to be disciple-makers, then we are not doing what Jesus has called us to do. The sign of a truly successful church is not that it is big or busy, but that it is producing disciples and making devoted followers of Jesus Christ who are going out into the world to do what Jesus has called them to do. Nothing short of making disciples fulfils the Great Commission.

### ***The 'hit and miss' approach***

Often in our churches we are more concerned to keep believers happy than to make them holy. We are more concerned to entertain and occupy them than to disciple and train them for effective ministry. The former is the easy option. The latter means intentional training, discipline, and patient work. Many churches have many programs, but have no ongoing discipleship training in place. They may have developed many ministries, but have missed the brilliant simplicity of straight down-the-line discipleship.

Consequently, new converts often have to find their own way along the Christian path, picking up a bit here and a little there, and somehow trying to piece it all together. This often leads to a piece-meal understanding of Christian discipleship and results in weak and ineffective Christians with big gaps and incomplete understanding in many of the foundation areas of Christian living. This kind of hit-and-miss approach to one of the very central purposes of the church is one of our major weaknesses! What can we do about it? In the following pages we will give you a plan.

## 2. A cyclical discipleship training series

*"We have instructed the church in nearly everything but becoming disciples of Jesus Christ."*

*- Francis Frangipane*

Because of the urgent need to establish discipleship as the basis of church life, a cyclical discipleship training series has been prepared. This is presented on the next page. The training series is made up of five study books which take a person step by step from the 'seeker' stage right through to the stage of becoming a disciple-maker.

### ***Discipleship should be cyclical***

Discipleship training is not meant to be a linear program. This means it is not meant to be a straight line series of studies that new converts do, and when completed drop off and begin doing something else. Discipleship training should be cyclical. It should take a person through the various stages of discipleship and then show them how to go back to the beginning to take others on the same journey also. Jesus not only calls us to become His disciples. He also calls us to become disciple-makers. We are meant to reproduce spiritually.

### ***Discipleship should be a way of life***

Some think that discipleship training is only for new Christians. They think that once they have covered the basics they then move beyond discipleship to something else. But Jesus calls us to be disciples for all of our lives. There is no Christian, however mature or used of God, who can ever say he has gone beyond being a disciple of Jesus. Ongoing discipleship then should be a way of life for all Christians. All of us are called to keep on growing, and to be a part of the process of making disciples throughout all of our lives. If we have moved beyond this, we have moved away from Christ's clear call and have lost the central simplicity of what it means to be a true follower of Jesus.

### ***A continuous training series***

The discipleship series outlined in this book is both *cyclical* and for Christians of all ages - for *mature Christians* as well as for new Christians. It starts with a manual for 'seekers', then one for establishing new Christians in the basics, one preparing them for baptism, then another training believers of all ages to grow into strong disciples. Then finally there is a training manual working through principles of disciple-making and showing how to become a part of the disciple-making process. This final manual takes a person back to the start of the cycle and shows them how to lead others through the same cycle also. In this way the process repeats itself.

### ***Start an intentional discipling program***

Here are simple and clear training tools to help you not only become a disciple yourself, but to help you become a part of the process of turning seekers into believers, believers into disciples, and disciples into disciple-makers. Don't just hope this will happen automatically! Put an intentional discipleship training program into action. Do what Jesus is calling you to do. Don't just be a believer, become a disciple! But even more than that - become a disciple-maker! Here are some exciting training tools to help you do just that!