A fascinating question has become popularized: Who is discipling you and who are you discipling?

I ask, “Is that question merely a conversation starter to call us to an idealistic, unrealistic, even unnecessary ideal, or does our living Lord actually intend and expect that normal Christians be discipled until they are intentionally making disciples?”

The thesis of this article is that every normal, healthy Christian is to be discipled until each is intentionally discipling others.¹

Joe’s life² was very rough. He was raised around drug use and drug dealing, and he himself soon became a dealer. His wife, Sue, devastated by the brokenness and hopelessness of their life together, was led by her friends into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus. Joe was so surprised by the change in Sue that, partly out of support for her, but mostly out of curiosity, he agreed to come to her baptism. He heard not only her testimony of Jesus’ life-changing presence, but also the story of 31 others who that night as part of their baptismal experience told their conversion stories.

Joe was convicted of sin and persuaded to change. He profoundly repented, believed, and was baptized that very night. The next Tuesday he joined Sue at a meeting for Jesus’ disciples. There he was quickly discipled (taught, trained, tested) to relate to Jesus, being trained to:

1) **KNOW JESUS**: Talk with Jesus about Jesus – praise and worship (Matthew 16:13-16).

2) **SEE JESUS**: Observe, report (be accountable to group for), and give thanks to Jesus for Jesus’ observable activity in his life (John 13:12).

3) **HEAR JESUS**: Listen to Jesus talk to him through scripture, and respond to whatever Jesus said through His Word (Matthew 17:5).

4) **LOVE JESUS**: Commit to living out his sincere love for Jesus by securing Spirit-led, Word-based guidance in how to better care for and feed four groups of Jesus’ sheep: himself, his family, his new Christian family, and his lost neighbors and friends (John 21:1-18)

¹ Just as some couples are incapable of giving birth to a physical child, some Christians are mentally, physically, or socially unable to intentionally make disciples. However, that is to be the exception, not the norm.

² Not his or his wife’s real names.
BELIEVE JESUS to empower him to make progress in Christlikeness, including loving God and loving others. (1 John 4:9-11)

It was not long until I asked Joe to talk. I asked, “Do you know what I am seeking to do in this Tuesday meeting?” He quickly responded “You are helping us grow as disciples of Jesus.” I agreed and then continued to explain the following.

“Just before Jesus left, He gave His disciples this commandment: “make disciples.” The rest of that command included Jesus directing His disciples to teach their disciples to obey everything He, Jesus, commanded. Since His disciples were to train their disciples to obey every one of Jesus’ commands, then Jesus’ disciples must train their disciples to obey the command ‘make disciples.’

So, because I am Jesus’ disciple, I must make disciples, for Jesus is my Lord. Because I have faith in Him, to say nothing of loving Him, I am determined to obey His commands. This includes making disciples. It also includes obediently training my disciples to obey everything Jesus commanded, which includes training them to make disciples. If I do not see to it that my disciples are making disciples, I am failing to do what Jesus commanded. I am disobeying Jesus. Does that make sense?”

Joe understood. “Of course, for you to do what Jesus told you to do, you must work with the Tuesday night group to obey everything Jesus commanded, and one of His commands is, ‘Make disciples!’ To obey Jesus, you must work with each of us on Tuesday night to become not just disciples but disciple-makers.”

“Yes,” I responded. “But there are some understandings and skills involved in making disciples that are beyond those in being a disciple. Time does not allow me to disciple everyone in our Tuesday night group to make disciples. But, to obey Jesus, I must start somewhere to disciple (teach, demonstrate, delegate, supervise, celebrate progress, correct as needed) at least one to be a disciple-maker. Would you consider letting me disciple you to be a disciple-maker?”

His answer was immediate. “Sure. What do we do?”

“Well, instead of you coming to Tuesday night to work on being Jesus’ disciple, I would like you to come to Tuesday night’s meeting to watch me as a disciple-maker. Next, if you will invite everyone possible to your house on Thursday nights, we will start a little church in your house. I will attend, but I would like you to facilitate the meeting, just like you have watched me facilitate the Tuesday night meeting.

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3 Matthew 28:18-20
4 Colossians 2:6
5 Hebrews 5:9, 1 John 2:6, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, John 14:23, etc. By biblical study, to be a Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus. It is essential to realize that obedience is, first, a relational word, an attitude of submission to Jesus. God sees the heart – the determination to obey. This genuine intent will lead to progress in performance.
Almost immediately we planted a “house church” in Joe’s home with Joe being the disciplemaker and me observing and coaching him. We debriefed after each meeting about what happened in the meeting, celebrating good and talking about how to better handle situations that were challenging. Since Joe had demonstrated his commitment to being a disciple and to making disciples, I soon asked him to add one more discipline to his life: studying a systematic curriculum over which I would give him an oral examination each week.

I have now discipled Joe beyond spiritual infancy, beyond deep, accountable commitment to being Jesus’ disciple (consistent time alone with Jesus, determination to never lead but to always be led by Jesus’ Spirit, including making specific progress in caring for and feeding family members, church family, and Jesus’ lost sheep), all the way to becoming a disciplemaker. My remaining task is to coach him until he is committed, wise, and skilled in helping each of his disciples become disciplemakers.

Now I have been obedient to what Jesus calls me to do: make disciples, discipling them to obey everything He commanded His disciples, which includes making disciples. It should be the normal expectation that every disciple to be discipled until they are making disciples and disciplemakers.

What has been the result of the discipleship effort with Joe? To God’s glory and through Joe and Sue’s faith and obedience, they have for 38 years faithfully made disciples in their home. They have planted a new house church in every city to which his company transferred him.

Who could disciple you until you are intentionally, relationally making disciples and disciplemakers?

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6 I had already learned to start with disciplemakers discipling others before I engaged them in their “theological education” because many wanted to study but were unwilling to disciple others. I used my curriculum, “Leadership Multiplication.” The Master’s Plan by Craig Rench and Dynamics of Discipleship are examples of other excellent, more exhaustive curriculums.