HOW TO MAKE DISCIPLES TEACHING SERIES

At the heart of the Church's calling is the invitation Jesus gave his disciples: "Go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:19) The Great Commission is not just a task for the first disciples, but the blueprint for the Church in every generation. Making disciples is how the Kingdom of God takes root and spreads - person to person, life to life, community to community.

This teaching series is designed as a framework for church leaders and preachers who want to grow a culture of discipleship in their churches. It is not a set of ready-made sermons, but a way of beginning to think, pray, and teach about what it means to be a community committed to making disciples.

Each of the four sessions explores a different facet of disciple-making:

1. **Great Commission** - rediscovering Jesus' missional strategy and the Spirit-empowered movement it birthed.
2. **Questions** - learning to cultivate curiosity and ask questions like Jesus did.
3. **Listening** - following Jesus' example of listening deeply: to people, to stories beneath the surface, and to the Spirit.
4. **Kingdom not Empire** - shifting from building churches as empires to living as co-heirs in God's Kingdom.

At the end of each section you will find a series of reflective questions. These are not necessarily designed to be asked during your sermon. Instead, they are offered as prompts to help you, the preacher, meditate, wrestle, and prepare.



How to Use This Series

- **Start with Scripture.** Each session is rooted in a key passage of the Bible, with further passages to draw from. Allow the text to shape your teaching before turning to the notes.
- **Use the notes as a framework, not a script.** They are designed to spark ideas, highlight themes, and suggest directions you might take. Adapt them freely for your context.
- **Pray through the reflective questions.** These aren't necessarily questions to use in your talk (although you may wish to do that). Let them challenge and expand your own walk with Jesus before you invite others into the journey.
- **Shape your church culture.** These talks are not ends in themselves. They are seeds, planted to help your community see discipleship not as a programme, but as the heartbeat of life with Jesus.

As you prepare and preach, may this series help you place the Great Commission back at the centre of your church's life, and may it spark a movement of disciple-making in your community.

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About the Book

This series is inspired by the book How to Make Disciples that Make Disciples, which aims to empower and equip the next generation of disciple-makers. Whilst written primarily for a student context, is a practical and biblical resource for anyone who wants to take Jesus' call seriously, whether in their friendships, small groups, or church leadership. You can get a copy here: https://www.fusionmovement.org/resources/product/howtomakedisciples

About Fusion

Fusion exists to help students find hope in Jesus and home in the local church. Fusion are committed to championing a worldwide movement of student mission. We believe in the power and potency of students as a force for revival and transformation in the world and recognise that university is a key formational, decision-making time for them. We are convinced that it is the local church who are best placed to nurture, disciple and support students into mission across campuses, cities and beyond. Fusion, therefore, seeks to equip students for a life of mission and discipleship by guiding them into local churches that are trained and resourced to effectively care for and release students into the calling God has placed on their lives.



HOW TO MAKE DISCIPLES TEACHING SERIES

01. Great Commission

Big Idea:

Jesus says go and make disciples of all nations - but this often gets lost in our churches. We need to equip our churches to carry out this mandate.

Key passage:

Matthew 28:16-20

Further passages:

Acts 2:42-47

The early church devotes itself to community learning and mutual support - are we committed to becoming life-long learners like they were?

Acts 8:26-39

Phillip makes time to sit with the Ethiopian Eunuch and his questions. Disciplemaking is all about giving people time and space - and through this, bringing them into the kingdom!



John 1:35-51

Jesus makes disciples by inviting them to come and see. To walk with him and see how he lived. When we make disciples, we are inviting them into the same walk.

Notes:

What makes a kingdom? Is it territory? Is it culture? People? Power? When Jesus tells his disciples that "all authority on heaven and earth has been given to [him]", he is transferring power to his disciples. He's giving them exactly what they need to build the kingdom of Christ. And through this power, he instructs them to do one thing: go and make disciples.

This is his game plan. This is his blueprint for the kingdom. Disciple-making movements. All made possible because Jesus delegates his own power and authority to those who follow him. The commission to go and make disciples is the last thing that Jesus says on earth, in Matthew. So it should be the first thing on our agenda as the church. When we make disciples, we are representing and acting on behalf of our King.

This mandate kickstarted the action of the early church that we read about in Acts. Through the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples start multiplying. We know that God "added to their number daily those who were being saved". How did they

do this? They did as Jesus taught them. They walked with others in a community centred around Jesus. Disciple-making is about replicating how Jesus led people to himself by intentionally making time and space to walk alongside others as they go deeper in their faith. Being a disciple-making church means that at our core, we are prioritising teaching people the things that Jesus taught. Part of this is outworked by the preaching of scripture, but people usually need spaces to wrestle and engage with this themselves in small groups, or one to one. From the perspective of the discipler, this teaching takes the form of asking great questions, listening well, praying both with and for the disciple, and opening up scripture together. If you can do this, then you can probably disciple someone. It's not about having the answers. It's just about walking with them as they walk with Jesus. So that they can do the same for someone else, who can do it for someone else, releasing an exponential disciple-making movement.

When Jesus called his first disciples, they weren't ready. They didn't know all the answers. They were just curious. When the church exploded in the 1st Century, it was messy. It was dangerous. It was probably a bit chaotic. They still didn't know all the answers. But they knew they needed to help others walk with Jesus like they had. And they built a whole church.

Questions to consider as you prepare:

- What was the last thing you did to promote curiosity in others?
- What is the discipleship culture like in your church? How could you grow or deepen this?
- What are you doing to grow the kingdom in your community?
- How are you leading people closer to Jesus?



02. Questions

Big Idea:

Jesus asked great questions. If we are his disciples, we also need to do this in order to lead people closer to Jesus.

Key Passage:

Matthew 16:13-20

This is a key question from Jesus because it illustrates how he wanted the disciples to go on a deep journey of discovery. He didn't want to just tell them things. It provokes Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ - a level of learning and revelation that he would not have reached if Jesus had simply said who he was.

Further passages:

All of the following are examples of brilliant questions that Jesus asks. As you reflect on these, think about what Jesus is drawing out of the people he is questioning. Why is he asking these questions? And what do the people he asks these to learn about themselves, Jesus, and their place in the kingdom?

Matthew 6:27

Matthew 9:5

John 5:6

John 7:19

Mark 5:9

Matthew 27:46

Notes:

At the start of the Bible, God asks Adam and Eve a question after they have eaten the apple. "Where are you?" In Hebrew this is "ayeka" which isn't a geographical question, he is asking where have they gone in relation to him. Why has a distance appeared between them? Throughout the Bible, God is essentially asking his people this question, "where have you gone?" and he is still asking this question of us today.



Jesus valued question-asking very highly, maybe more highly than answer-giving. He asks 307 questions in the 4 gospels combined. He is asked 184 and only answers 3 directly. This isn't because he's trying to be evasive. It isn't that Jesus doesn't have the answers. The point is that our faith is worked out through questions and exploring - it's a journey, rather than a ticklist. Do we have the same commitment to question-asking in the way we explore the scriptures, teach the word and live out our everyday discipleship? Sometimes, there is an expectation in culture or society that church can provide all the answers. This can lead a congregation to feel like they don't know enough - about the Bible, about faith, or theology in general. This is missing the point, and if we believe this, then disciple-making will grind to a halt. We don't need to have all the answers. We just need to be willing to journey with people and ask them good questions.

In this session, aim to equip the church to embrace hard and deepening questions so that the fellowship of the church grows. It is also great to explore this as an evangelistic exercise too. Great questions lead to fascinating discoveries about those we are sharing Jesus with. Stay curious and ask questions.

Questions to consider as you prepare:

- What was the last question you asked?
- What was the last question you were asked?
- What is the best question you have ever been asked?
- What is your favourite question in the Bible? Use this in your talk.

03. Listening

Big Idea:

Jesus listened well, both to the people around him, and to the Holy Spirit. We need to listen to those we are discipling and invite the Holy Spirit into these conversations. This is where the true transformation takes place.

Key Passage:

John 4:1-30

Further Passages:

John 5:6-9

Jesus takes the time to learn about this man's history and background. Are we as aware of the deeper life story of those whom we are investing our time in?

Notes:

Jesus properly understood the people around him. He knew their stories, their backgrounds and their problems. When he sees the man lying at the pool in Bethesda, he takes the time to learn about him and his life (John 5:6), before asking him a question. Only after he's learned, listened, and asked, does he do anything for the man in question. This is a pattern of his life. Do we take a similar approach in our conversations, or do we rush in with advice before taking the time to listen properly?



When he encounters the Samaritan woman at the well, he listens to her story, but he also listens to what's going on beneath the words. In verses 9-10, he listens to her remonstrations of cultural differences but hears her fear of rejection. At the same time as this, he's listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who reveals the word of knowledge: "you have had five husbands, and the man you have now is not your husband". He's listening in three layers: to the words, to what's going on beneath, and to the Holy Spirit. We can call this triple-listening. All three, together, lead to transformation in the woman's life. Having arrived at this moment of transformation, she is then propelled outwards to share this good news with the people around her in her community and through her testimony, "many Samaritans from that town believed in [Jesus]". She was led, through good question-asking and great 'triple listening', to a fuller understanding of Jesus as the Messiah - and she, in turn, led many others to this same place of encounter by leading them with curiosity - "Could this be the Messiah?"

In this talk, aim to challenge your church to be great listeners. This is a skill we need to learn and practice if we are to be disciple-makers. Like the people Jesus meets, those that we are making disciples of need time and space. They need and deserve our full attention. And often, it's through real deep listening that humans realise they are seen and valued. It is only through this kind of 'triple listening' that we begin to understand the complexity and depth of people. And it's only through being attentive to the Holy Spirit during conversations that we can ask questions that help the disciple get closer to Jesus and discover more of his love for them. How can you encourage your community to practice this skill?

Questions to consider as you prepare:

- When was the last time you truly listened to someone?
- What often distracts you from listening well?
- How have you been listened to in the past? How did this feel?
- What would you suggest to others to help them practice this skill?
- Could you include a practical listening exercise in your talk?

04. Kingdom not Empire

Big Idea:

Jesus came to build a Kingdom of disciples who participate, not an empire of believers who consume Christian services.

Key Passage:

Philippians 3:20-4:1

Further passages:

Jesus spends a lot of his time describing what the kingdom of heaven is like. Why does he do this? Why is this important for us, as his disciples, to think about?

Matthew 5:3-12

Matthew 13:31-33

Matthew 18:1-5



Notes:

What does it mean to be a citizen of heaven?

God is on a mission to reconcile all people to good relationship with him. This is sometimes called the Missio Dei. He invites us, his church, into this mission. He also commands this, and equips and empowers us for it. Everything that we do should fit within this mission. Sometimes, the church gets so fixated with its own activity, it can feel as though the church is on mission and we invite God into that!

Our churches and networks can become like human-run empires that we are growing and inviting God into. We can develop an insatiable appetite for growth in church attendance and our systems can support this. However, we are not growing church empires, we are participators in an unstoppable Kingdom; our king has commissioned us to make disciples that make disciples. We need to shift our focus from counting the numbers in our churches to prioritising the depth of discipleship.

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We all follow King Jesus, and he spent a lot of time describing what his Kingdom is like and invites his disciples into it. In Romans 8:17, Paul says that we are co-heirs with Christ in his Kingdom. This creates a very different image for a disciple to that which has often been assumed. We are not invited to be passive, subservient church attenders who do whatever they are told. Instead, we are invited to be responsible leaders in the Kingdom of God who have a role to play. Shifting our thinking from an 'empire' to a 'kingdom' mindset will help break out of hierarchical power structures and free us up to release a disciple-making movement.

A good section of this talk could address the ways that Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven. Why does he use the various analogies (pearl, salt, yeast, light, mustard seed etc)? How does a disciple-making culture fit within this picture of the kingdom? Perhaps you can draw on some of the themes from the previous three talks to round this out. Disciple-making requires a kingdom mindset - often we will never see the full impact and fruit of making disciples. But when this becomes a movement, it can go far beyond itself and reach to the corners of the kingdom.

Questions to consider as you prepare:

- What within your church is more like an empire than the Kingdom of God?
- Have you seen yourself like a prince/princess in the Kingdom of God?
- Do the people in your church know they are called to be responsible leaders in the Kingdom of God? Do they act like it?
- If you saw Jesus as your King, how would this change how you viewed your life?

