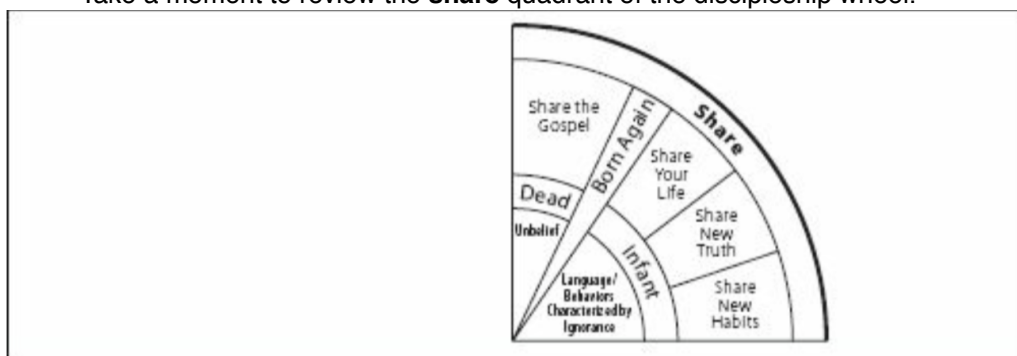


week 8 — share: being intentional with the spiritually dead and spiritual infants

Intentional discipleship requires the disciple-maker to respond to a person's stage of spiritual growth. To help disciple-makers do this effectively, we have coordinated each part of the SCMD process with the corresponding stage of spiritual growth. The next four weeks we will be focusing on what to do at each stage of a person's spiritual growth and on how to utilize the SCMD process.

Even though we have assigned specific stages of growth to specific parts of the process, this process is not like an assembly line. For example, although we have associated **share** to those who are spiritually dead or in spiritual infancy, disciple-makers may still share life or new habits with someone who is a spiritual child or young adult. In general, we have found that linking the stages of growth to the SCMD process makes spiritual growth less confusing and more deliberate. A clear process helps people be more intentional at disciple-making.

Take a moment to review the **share** quadrant of the discipleship wheel.



day 1: SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

1. Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-7. Who or what did the apostle Paul say was the cause of all spiritual growth?

Your answer should reflect that disciples grow because God is at work. They grow in spite of the disciple-maker's mistakes and shortcomings. The process of **share, connect, minister, and disciple** (SCMD) is a way for us to intentionally cooperate with God. It is a road map that can be handed off for others to follow, but without God it produces nothing. This week we will look more closely at the first step: sharing.

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

(1 Corinthians 3:6-7)

Not Trying to Make a Sale

"The typical church member will die without leading a single person to a life-saving relationship with Jesus Christ." Do you remember this fact from week 1? Disciple-making begins with sharing the gospel.

Religious groups of all kinds roam through neighborhoods, searching for converts. Their missionaries knock on doors, eager to tell us that we are lost and that we need their particular beliefs to find God. How do you feel when you open the door to one of these missionaries? Do you feel excited and eager to hear what they have to say? The first few minutes of conversation set the tone. These missionaries work hard to steer the conversation toward a question or concern that leaves the person feeling helpless and in need of their teaching.

2. If you have ever had a "missionary" at your door, how did you feel? Check the appropriate boxes.

- ☐ Irritated
- ☐ Cared for

- ☐ Frustrated
- ☐ Talked at, not talked to
- ☐ Supported and understood
- ☐ Suspicious

Many people report feeling frustrated or even attacked. The word *share* communicates relationship. *Sharing* implies give and take. It also means that the person we are talking with has a choice. The disciple-maker respects a person's ability to "take it or leave it." Unlike the person who comes to the door ready to argue and debate, we listen and discuss. We do not come to "make the sale," "close the deal," or "force a decision." We trust that God is playing His role, drawing people toward a relationship with Him.

Recognizing the Spiritually Dead

In week 3, we studied the characteristics of a spiritually dead person.

3. See if you can answer these questions without looking back. Circle True (T) or False (F) below.

T	F	People who are spiritually dead are in the third stage of spiritual growth
T	F	People who are spiritually dead often make statements like "I don't believe in God" or "There are many ways to God."
T	F	People who are spiritually dead need a family to connect with on their discipleship journey.
T	F	People who are spiritually dead are sometimes characterized by rebellion.
T	F	People who are spiritually dead need a place to begin to minister to others.
T	F	People who are spiritually dead can make disciples.

Answer key: F, T, F, T, F, F

The Importance of Being in Relationship

The old saying remains true: "They won't care about how much you know until they know how much you care."

4. Check the following perspectives toward the spiritually dead that reflect this saying:

- ☐ Every person is unique.
- ☐ When we are in a relationship with someone who is spiritually dead, we are better able to answer their questions about God.
- ☐ God gives us understanding and compassion, but at the same time we must listen to the person's story.

You should have checked all of the above. As intentional leaders (disciple-makers), we **share** our lives with unbelievers. It is far more effective to share with people our lives intersect with than it is to roam through neighborhoods, randomly knocking on doors. Whenever we meet someone who does not know Jesus, we know that he or she is spiritually dead. What would Jesus do with that person? He would offer a relationship that would lead him or her toward hearing the gospel.

Answering Questions

5. What do you think are the top three questions unbelievers struggle to understand?

Question #1

Question #2

Question #3

6. How would you answer each of the questions?

Answer #1

Answer #2

Answer #3

In your small group this week, discuss your questions and answers.

Preparing Your Testimony

While people may disagree about your beliefs, they cannot disagree with what God has done in your life. Your testimony is the most effective way you can share the gospel message with an unbeliever. If you have never developed your personal testimony, here is an outline that will help you do so now.

7. Write a significant event that falls under each part of this outline.

I. My Life Before Christ

II. How I Accepted Christ

III. My Life with Christ

Share your testimony this week with your group.

Review

- Building a relationship paves the way for sharing the gospel with the spiritually dead.
- The two primary ways a disciple-maker shares with the spiritually dead are by answering their questions regarding faith and God and by sharing our testimonies.

day 2: SHARING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Read 1 Peter 3:15 . Peter's words are at the heart of sharing with unbelievers. In this verse, he gives three directives: First, we are to make Christ our Lord. Sharing the gospel is obeying Christ. Second, we are to be prepared for every opportunity to share. We should be ready at all times to share our testimonies. Finally, Peter tells us to be gentle and respectful when we share.

There are many resources available for sharing the gospel. The following is one way that we coach people to share with unbelievers.

In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

(1 Peter 3:15)

Prepared to Give an Answer

First, be aware of what is happening around you:

- If you hear a “phrase from the stage,” a little bell should go off.
- Remember, God has you with this person for a reason. There are things going on behind the scenes leading up to this conversation.
- Respectfully ask, “Would you like to hear what I believe about that?”

We encourage disciples to use what we refer to as the Bridge Illustration, which we have explained and illustrated below. It is simple enough to draw on a napkin over coffee and profound enough to convey the gospel clearly. The first two drawings answer an important question: “What am I being saved from?” The last drawing answers an important question: “How can I be saved?”

What Am I Being Saved From?

Step 1. God's Perfect World

God created a perfect world. His design was for us to be in relationship with Him. Because He is our creator, this relationship is the source of life.



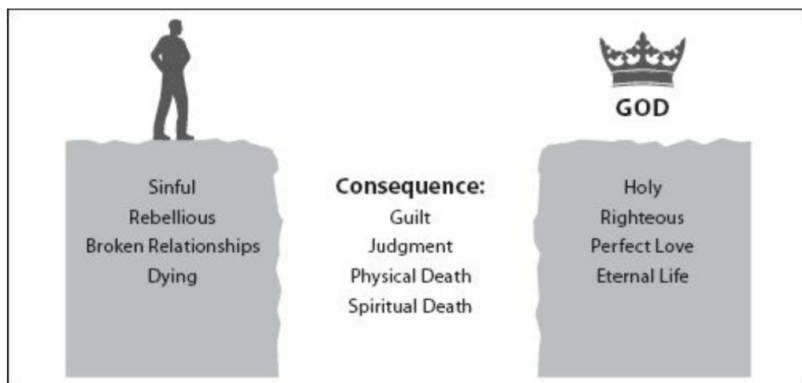
It was a perfect world. God and man walked together with no sickness, brokenness, or death.

Scriptures to reference: Genesis 1:1,26; John 6:40; 10:10. Read these Scripture passages from your Bible if the person you are sharing with is comfortable with that.

Step 2. A Broken Relationship

God did not make us robots to automatically love and obey Him. He gave us a will and freedom to choose. We chose to be our own authority. We still make this choice today. We disobey God and go our own willful way.

Scriptures to reference: Genesis 3:8-9; Isaiah 53:6; 59:2; Romans 3:23. Read these Scripture passages from your Bible.



This results in separation from God, His character, and the life He gives. Separation from God comes with consequences: guilt, judgment, and death.

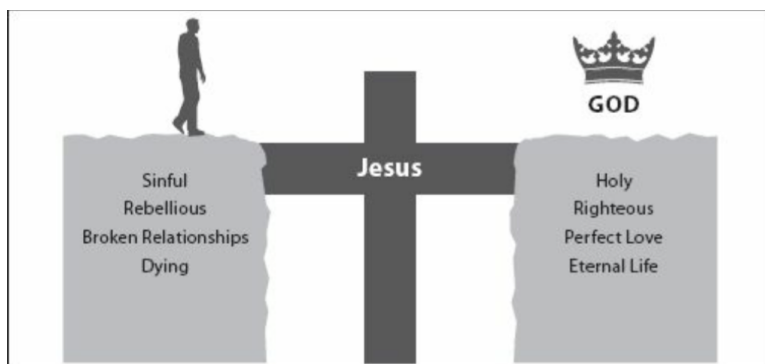
Scriptures to reference: Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4. Read these Scriptures out loud from your Bible.

How Can I Be Saved?

Step 3. God's Remedy: Jesus Christ

On our own, there's no way we can attain the perfection and holiness required to bridge the gap between God and us. Through the ages, individuals have tried many ways without success. Good works won't do it, or religion or money or morality or philosophy (see Proverbs 14:12).

God loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to save us (see John 3:16). Jesus Christ is the only answer to this problem. He died on the cross and rose from the grave, paying the penalty for our sin and bridging the gap between God and people.



Scriptures to reference: Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Read these Scriptures from your Bible.

Step 4. Our Response

Walk through the following list, asking for a response to each question. If the person is unsure, find out what questions he or she may have.

- Is there any reason why you shouldn't cross over to God's side and be certain of eternal life? You can choose Him right now.

Admit that your sin has separated you from God (see Psalm 32:5; 38:18).

- Have you sinned against God and others?

A person is made right with God by believing in Jesus (see John 5:24; Romans 3:23-24).

- Do you believe that Jesus, the Son of God, died in your place, was buried, and rose from the dead three days later?

A person who believes confesses Jesus as their Lord (see Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 10:32).

- Do you confess that Jesus is God's Son and He is your Lord and Savior?

A person who believes repents of their sin and is baptized (see Acts 2:38).

- Are you willing to turn away from your sin and look to God for direction following the New Testament example of baptism?

A person who believes is being changed by Jesus (see Romans 12:1-2; James 2:14).

- Will you commit to follow Jesus, learn His Word, and join with other believers to grow to be more and more like Him?

Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit. (Receive Him as Lord and Savior of your life.)

A disciple-maker must be prepared to share the gospel so that those who are spiritually dead can be reborn as children of God. This is one of the tools that can be used to communicate the gospel and help people choose. Take time to find other concepts that you can use to share your faith. The point here is not to push some canned formulas of salvation. No system is perfect. Only God and His Word. Be prepared to share naturally as you would engage in any other conversation that means so much to you.

Review

- We have provided a tool for sharing the gospel with a spiritually dead person.
- A disciple-maker must be prepared to share the gospel so those who are spiritually dead can be reborn as children of God.

day 3: SHARING YOUR LIFE

One leader astutely observed, "Spiritual infants don't know what they don't know. How are they gonna know if you don't tell them?" Some spiritual infants may have had church exposure; others may have no idea.

When a spiritually dead person receives Christ, he or she becomes an infant. Infancy can be a demanding stage of life! Helping a spiritual infant get established requires patience and effort. Yet from the beginning we want to nudge infants toward a personal walk with Christ, one that is independent of our constant care. Today, we'll look at how disciple-makers can nurture spiritual infants so that they grow and develop into spiritual children.

Share Your Time

For spiritual infants to be healthy and to grow naturally into childhood, they need someone to take time to care for them. We can't do this effectively in a once-a-week group meeting. We need to share our lives with those we are discipling, which includes things like eating meals together, having fun together, and just hanging out with each other. It's also important for disciple-makers to be available to answer questions and respond to teachable moments.

Even though Jesus had thousands of people wanting His time, He consistently withdrew from the crowds to spend focused time with the Twelve. As disciple-makers, we must do the same.

Open Your Life to Them

1. To see how Jesus opened His life to His disciples, read the following accounts and fill in the table.

Account	Who was there?	What did Jesus do with them?
Luke 5:27-32		
Luke 7:36-50		
Luke 11:38-42		

Suggested answers are in the following chart.

Account	Who was there?	What did Jesus do with them?
Luke 5:27-32	Levi, his friends (tax gatherers and sinners), the Pharisees and Scribes	Shared a meal with them
Luke 7:36-50	Simon, the Pharisees, his friends, and a sinful woman	Shared a meal, allowed His feet to be washed, and told a story
Luke 11:38-42	The Pharisees and probably Jesus' disciples	Knew the man's heart and clarified for him what He knew to be clean versus unclean

Continue to Share Answers

2. What are the three words we used to describe the characteristics of a spiritual infant? (Look back to day 2 of week 3 for the answers if you need them.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Life cannot stop every time a spiritual infant has questions, yet some questions cannot be put off until next week. The following exercise contains possible questions and situations that you might encounter when discipling a spiritual infant. Let's see how well you do at discerning their urgency and at addressing the question or situation.

3. An infant disciple comes to you with the following questions. Rate them on a scale of urgency.

1 means very urgent and must be answered ASAP.

2 means that we should get back to the individual if we have time.

3 means it can wait until our next regular meeting.

_____ A. "What kind of Bible should I buy?"

_____ B. "My husband and I just had an argument over my church involvement. How should I have responded?"

_____ C. "A guy at work said that Jesus will return next September. Is that true?"

_____ D. "My old pal just called and asked me to come to a party tonight. There will be drugs and alcohol there, but I think God is calling me to go be a witness. What should I do?"

- ___ E. "I just read where Jesus said disciples must hate their families. Is that true?"
- ___ F. "My business partner gave me reasons why he is going to leave his wife. How should I help him?"
- ___ G. "How should I dress for church this Sunday?"

Answers may vary, but we think the most urgent questions are B, D, and F.

How well would you be able to answer the above questions? The idea of answering questions like this might seem a bit overwhelming, and you might be worried if you don't immediately know how to respond. One leader said that she was afraid to appear as if she didn't have all the answers. She thought her disciple would lose confidence in her.

If that's the case for you, know that it's perfectly fine if you don't have all the answers. What is important is that your faith is secure and your walk with Christ solid. When we are aware of our weaknesses, we will be more dependent on God. When a disciple sees our dependence upon Jesus, it speaks volumes. So if you get into a situation where you don't know how to respond, just say you will find the answer and get back to your disciple.

Throughout this training manual, we have given you tools and challenges not only to make disciples but also to be a disciple. A disciple-maker continues to learn and grow in his or her walk as well. Spiritual infants benefit from seeing that growth-work in you.

4. Where do you want to improve in your walk with Christ?

- ☐ Bible study
- ☐ Prayer
- ☐ Relationships with other believers
- ☐ Sharing Christ with others
- ☐ Fruit of the Spirit
- ☐ Battling temptation
- ☐ Other _____

5. Pick one area and write two things you could do to improve in these areas. Share it with your group this week.

- _____
- _____

Review

- Spiritual infants need us to share our lives with them, which requires time spent with them.
- Sharing life means being available to answer questions and clarify confusion.
- In the early stages, we accept a spiritual infant's dependence, all the while moving him or her to greater dependence on Jesus.

day 4: SHARING NEW TRUTH

Sharing with a spiritual infant can be demanding, which is one reason why a small group is important for

the success of the discipleship process. It is critical that an infant continues to have one-on-one access to a spiritual parent even as these connections to the group grow. Though infants require personal attention, the sooner we can help them build relationships with maturing Christians, the sooner others can support the disciple-maker's nurture of the spiritual infant. These connections will also help infants grow and develop into children.

1. Based on your own commonsense knowledge of physical infants, explain why this one-on-one care cannot be neglected.

Be prepared to share your answers with the group.

Let's quickly review the characteristics of spiritual infants. They are ignorant about spiritual things. They don't know what they don't know. Perhaps they have never been taught the Bible or they were taught false doctrine. It's also normal for them to be confused. As new Christians, their worldview is changing. This shift brings an unfamiliar perspective that can be uncomfortable at times. They are also marked by dependency. It is only natural for someone who is navigating unknown territory to be dependent on a guide or for a baby to depend upon parents.

Feeding Them Spiritual Milk

As we saw in week 3, new disciples need milk to grow. Milk is defined in Hebrews 5:12 as an elementary principle of the Christian life. We can begin by teaching spiritual children the basics. Acts 2:42 gives four categories of things that young Christians need to know:

- **The apostles' teaching.** This is Scripture from both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.
- **Breaking of bread (or the Lord's Supper).** Not just Communion, but the meaning behind it, which directs us to the basics of the gospel (see 1 Corinthians 11:26; 15:3-4).
- **Prayer.** Talking with God in relationship is prayer.
- **Fellowship.** This happens in church and in large- and small-group gatherings when Christians gather to encourage each other in their faith.

2. Write two questions for each category that could help you assess where a spiritual infant is in his or her understanding of the basics.

The Bible (Example: What is the Old Testament?)

1. _____

2. _____

The gospel (Example: Did Jesus have to raise physically from the dead?)

1. _____

2. _____

Prayer (Example: Where do you go to pray?)

1. _____

2. _____

Church (Example: Do I have to go to church every week?)

1. _____

2. _____

Be prepared to share your answers with the group this week.

Keep in mind that the rest of this section is a brief overview. Volumes have been written on these subjects. Refer to the resource list at the end of this day's lesson for more help.

The Bible

Spiritual infants need to be given a broad overview of the story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. They need to be taught the theme of God's redemptive plan from the fall of Adam and Eve to the coming of Jesus the Savior. This does not mean they must start reading at Genesis 1:1 and finish at Revelation 22:21! We tell disciple-makers to use high points from important Old Testament stories to teach baby Christians God's story and then to slow down the story through the life of Christ.

3. Here are ten stories from the Old Testament and ten from the New Testament. These stories are important in helping people understand God's story. They all shed light on questions that a spiritual infant might ask, such as: How did the world begin? Why is there so much trouble in the world? How have people responded to God's leading in history? Beside each story, rate how well you know it by placing a check in the appropriate column.

IMPORTANT STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT			
Story	Well	Sort of	Not at all
Creation — Genesis 1–2			
The Fall — Genesis 3			
Noah's Ark — Genesis 6–9			
Abraham's Promise — Genesis 12			
Slavery in Egypt — Exodus 1–4			
Ten Commandments — Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5			
Israel Asks for a King — 1 Samuel 8			
King David Is Chosen — 1 Samuel 16			
Exile to Babylon — Daniel 1–3			
Return of Nehemiah — Nehemiah 1			

IMPORTANT STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS			
Story	Well	Sort of	Not at all
Birth — Luke 1–2			

IMPORTANT STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS			
Story	Well	Sort of	Not at all
Baptism — Matthew 3–4			
Sermon on the Mount — Matthew 5–7			
Healing of the Lame Man — Luke 5:12-26			
Feeding the Five Thousand — John 6			
Raising of Lazarus — John 11			
Crucifixion — Matthew 26–27			
Resurrection — John 20			
Jesus Commissions His Disciples — Matthew 28:18-20			
Jesus Ascends to Heaven — Acts 1			

4. Are there other stories that you think would be important? Write your additions below.

5. Discuss with your group this week how you think telling these stories would help a spiritual infant grow as a disciple.

The Gospel

The gospel message is found in the life of Jesus. Understanding why Jesus came and what He accomplished on the cross builds a foundation for spiritual infants. Infants often get confused about the assurance of their salvation; baby Christians often struggle with temptation. Understanding the gospel will help infants work through these issues. Many studies teach these core doctrines, including the 2:7 Series by The Navigators.

Prayer

This will be covered more in depth tomorrow, so let's move on to new truth about the church.

The Church

Spiritual infants may carry distaste for organized religion into their new life as a disciple. The church is referred to in Scripture as the body of Christ (see Romans 12:4-5), the bride of Christ (see Revelation 19:7-9), and the temple of God (see 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The early church placed high priority upon gathering in fellowship. We need to share these truths with infants.

Many things that we do in church or even in small groups may confuse spiritual infants. They might ask, "Why do we sing?" "Why do we go every week?" "What is the offering for?" Infants can all too easily go through the ritual without understanding the meaning. This puts them on a fast track to being religious instead of in relationship with God.

6. Are there any areas of biblical truth that you are ignorant or confused about? If so, write your questions here. Take time this week to find the answers.

Review

- When sharing new truth, the disciple-maker begins by listening in order to assess how much a person already knows.
- Young disciples frequently have common questions that a disciple-maker can be prepared to answer.
- Sharing new truth with spiritual infants includes teaching the foundations of the Bible, the church, the gospel, and prayer.

day 5: SHARING NEW HABITS

In week 3, we noted the habits spiritual infants need to establish. Individual personality influences these choices, yet all disciples need a few core habits. Today we look at how to help them develop these habits (or disciplines).

The Habit of Bible Reading

Though it takes physical babies a long time to learn to feed themselves, spiritual infants can immediately begin to develop this habit. As spiritual infants grow in their understanding of the Bible, they will find it less confusing to read it on their own. Here are some tips to help them get started with their Bibles. Choose two that you think would be most helpful:

- Help them choose a version of the Bible that is easy to understand.
- Hold them accountable to a regular time of Bible reading, starting with a goal of three times per week.
- Have them choose a specific location where they will do their Bible reading.
- Help them develop a Bible-reading plan. Start slowly. We often recommend that people start with the book of Mark, as it focuses on Jesus and is not too long.

Share this habit by making your personal Bible reading a regular part of your discussions. Don't assume that the spiritual infant knows what to do. As a new Christian matures, Bible reading will give way to more in-depth study and you can begin to introduce tools and methods for Bible study. But start with encouraging the disciple to have regular times of Bible reading.

Disciple-makers can also help spiritual infants develop activities that will reinforce what they read, such as journaling about what they learn, writing out prayers, highlighting things that are meaningful or important in their Bibles, and keeping track of their Bible reading with a reading log. All of these are good ways to reinforce this habit.

The Habit of Sharing the Gospel

Most spiritual infants have no problem finding someone to share the gospel with because many of their friends are not believers. Infants can share by simply telling others how they came to Christ, or they can present the gospel using a few verses highlighted in their Bible. The diagrams we covered in day 2 of this week are

easy to remember and pencil out on a napkin.

1. Draw the diagrams from memory here. Then go back and see if you remembered them accurately.

Diagram 1

Diagram 2

Diagram 3

The best way to share this habit with a spiritual infant is to model it. If you don't share the gospel with others, telling a baby Christian to do so will not work. You can also give new Christians a chance to practice sharing the gospel. For instance, have the disciple practice drawing the diagrams on a napkin as he or she might when visiting someone in a coffee shop. Listen as your disciple becomes fluent in sharing his or her testimony. Help your disciple select a few key verses to highlight in his or her Bible.

Also, encourage your disciple to identify a list of people to pray for who need to know Jesus. Pray together that these people might come to know Christ and for opportunities to share Christ. Celebrate what God does, and rejoice with your disciple when he or she gets to be a part of seeing someone come to faith. These actions will help a spiritual infant develop the habit of sharing the gospel.

2. The following verses are good for sharing the gospel. Read them and then write one or two sentences that a person could use to explain each verse.

John 3:16	
Acts 4:12	
Romans 10:9-10	

Be prepared to discuss your sentences in your group this week.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

3. What other verses would you use?

The Habit of Praying

Spiritual infants need to *learn* to pray. Teaching about prayer is not as important as practicing prayer. In other words, infants can learn a lot simply by praying with you. Pushing through the roadblock of being self-conscious will eliminate a fear that can cripple the spiritual growth of a disciple. Forming this habit while the cement of spiritual growth is wet will pay dividends for the disciple throughout life.

4. Match the following aspects of prayer with the correct description.

___ Adoration	A. Admitting my shortcomings and failures to God and trusting in His forgiveness
___ Confession	B. Asking God to help others who are hurting and in need
___ Requests	C. Praising God for His awesome and holy character

Answer key: C, A, and B

The Habit of Church Attendance

New Christians must develop the habit of regular attendance in church and small group. Sunday morning may have been a time to sleep in, play golf, or do yard work. Citing a verse from the Bible may not be enough to convince some. They need to know why this habit is important.

5. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. What two reasons does the writer of Hebrews give for regular church attendance?

- _____
- _____

First, regular church attendance gives believers the opportunity to know (consider) each other in order to promote (spur) love and good deeds. Second, church serves as a refueling station where we can be encouraged.

When spiritual infants attend church, they are bound to have other questions. Each question presents an opportunity for discipleship.

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

6. Match the question from day 4 of this week with the habit it leads to for a new Christian.

___ Why do we sing?	A. The habit of fellowship
___ Why go every week?	B. The habit of tithing
___ What is the offering for?	C. The habit of worship

Evaluating Their Growth

Don't set a time limit on how long a disciple will be a spiritual infant. Instead, pay attention to his or her characteristics. For example:

- John has developed a fairly consistent habit of reading his Bible. He is learning how to feed himself spiritually.
- He comes to church each week and has good questions when he meets for discipleship.
- He is becoming more comfortable with praying in the group.

All of these are characteristics that show that John is moving into the childhood stage of discipleship.

7. Write a brief prayer that you, as a spiritual parent, might pray for someone who is a spiritual infant.

Review

- New habits form a foundation for the future.
- Disciple-makers need to intentionally help spiritual infants develop the habits of Bible reading, sharing the gospel, prayer, and church participation.

week 9 — connect: helping spiritual children grow

Today we will return to a theme that we have explored repeatedly in the past eight weeks — relationships. As the vehicles that God designed for the discipleship journey, relationships are necessary at every stage of the disciple's growth.

day 1: RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Brandon Guindon and Jim Putman once attended a conference designed to help pastors and church leaders reach out to non-Christians in other countries. In a small-group breakout session, the group spent some time getting to know each other. Brandon and Jim shared about hunting together, their friendship, and what God was doing in our church. It was a fun time, and the group bonded immediately.

The discussion went deeper as the group talked about struggles and fears and about being transparent as leaders. God was working in a powerful way. Soon Doug, their facilitator, was in tears. Like a car skidding to a stop, the group halted. Jim put a hand on Doug's knee and asked, "What's going on with you?"

Through his tears, Doug said, "I have no friends. No one knows me. This group is more transparent than I have ever been with anyone in my life. I feel closer to you guys than to my own staff, and I just met you."

Doug was the pastor of a large church, but he had no connection with anyone and felt separated from others and God. He felt that if he were to be transparent and share his struggles with those in his church, he would be ridiculed and probably let go.

How in the world did Doug come to that conclusion? God designed His church to be connected in deep abiding relationships, but Doug was alone and hurting. As a leader, he was hindered from effectively making disciples because discipleship requires relationships, and relationships require transparency. Do you know anyone like Doug?

How About You?

1. Check the quote that most accurately describes you:

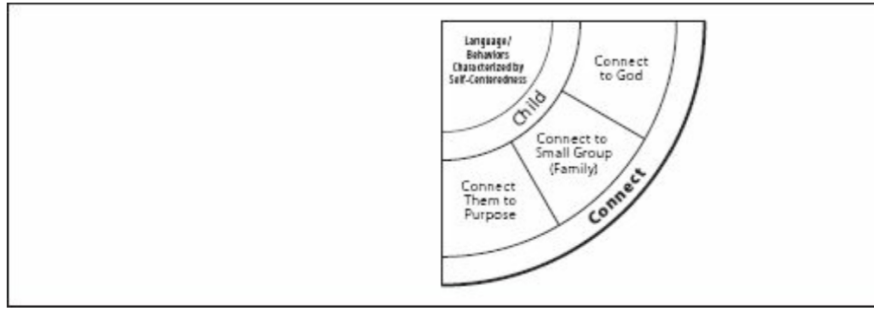
- ☐ I can make it on my own without telling others what is going on with me.
- ☐ I don't like to be transparent, but if I have to I will.
- ☐ I believe that connection to other believers is essential to my spiritual growth.
- ☐ I can list three people right now that help me in my spiritual growth.

Are you more like Doug or more like the person reflected in the last statement above?

We encourage you to be more intentional in your connections with people, especially those you disciple. Remember, a disciple-maker must be connected to God and others (see Luke 10:27).

Connection Means Investment

Take a moment to review the **connect** quadrant of the discipleship wheel.



2. What are the three essential connections that a disciple-maker should help a spiritual child make?

- _____
- _____
- _____

In the rest of this lesson, we are going to focus on how disciple-makers build relationships with spiritual children that help them connect in those three ways.

3. Check the ways you might build a connecting relationship with disciples who are spiritual children:

- ☐ Taking time in your schedule to get to know them
- ☐ Listening to their story
- ☐ Sharing personal stories so they can relate to you
- ☐ Checking up on their well-being
- ☐ Holding them accountable for applying what they are learning about being a Christian
- ☐ Empathizing as they experience “growing pains”

We hope you checked all of the ways listed. Here is a summary of those answers:

- As intentional leaders, we need to carve out room in our schedules to spend time with spiritual children. Time together needs to center around the relationship and not just tasks we might do.
- The give-and-take of listening to our disciples’ histories and sharing our own stories strengthens the bond of connection.
- Intentional leaders try not to assume that others are okay but probe deeper with questions about their well-being.
- As disciples, spiritual children should be growing and maturing. The disciple-maker intentionally helps them by checking up on their progress and helping them apply the new things they are learning.
- Finally, relationships deepen when disciple-makers let spiritual children know they are not the only ones to have the struggles that come with this stage of growth. Empathizing with disciples is an important way to connect with them.

Jesus spent time in close proximity to the people He disciplined. He walked, ate, prayed, talked, ministered, cried, and traveled with them. They knew He was concerned for their welfare by the way He related to them. In all likelihood, the most consistent impression they had was *Jesus loves me*.

4. Read John 13:1-5 . How did Jesus show the full extent of His love to the disciples?

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

(John 13:1-5)

5. Place a checkmark by the commitments that you think would fit you best in building relational connection with spiritual children.

- ☐ Scheduling a time to discuss over coffee questions they have or to listen to their story
- ☐ Inviting them to my house for dinner or dessert to get to know them and their families better
- ☐ Meeting them after church for lunch at a local café
- ☐ Spending time with them doing something we both like that is not related to church

6. List ways you will be more intentionally relational with some of the spiritual children God has placed in your life.

Name	Ways to be more relational

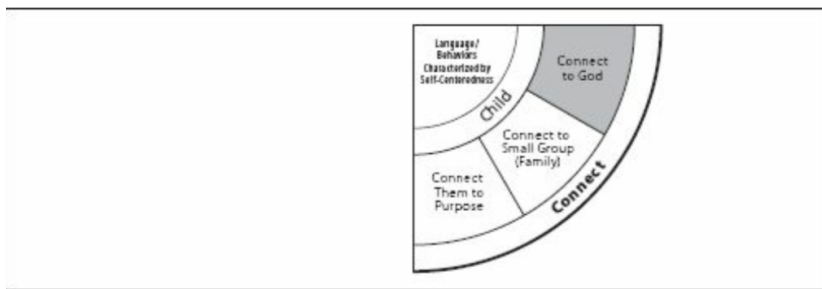
7. Pray for the names you have listed.

Review

- A disciple-maker helps spiritual children connect with God, other disciples, and their purpose.
- An intentional leader connects relationally with spiritual children to help these things happen.

day 2: HELPING SPIRITUAL CHILDREN CONNECT WITH THEIR FATHER

Yesterday we looked at how disciple-makers can connect relationally with spiritual children. Today we want to examine what a connection with God looks like and how intentional leaders can help foster this vital connection.



It Begins with You

Disciple-makers must be connected to God in a deep, abiding relationship. We cannot help others have a relationship with God when we do not. Our connection with God changes us. That relationship becomes the source of our ability to connect others to God as well.

1. In the chart on day 3 of week 2, you listed ways you can spend time with Jesus. Alongside each, you rated how frequently you spend time with Him in that way. Go back and review your answers.

- What do you feel are the strengths of your relationship with God?

- What areas of your relationship could be improved?

Your relationship with God is very personal. Please be balanced in your assessment. Here are a couple examples of how disciples can have a skewed perspective:

- Linda felt she was very connected to God. She proved it by constantly telling others how strong her prayer life was. What she didn't know was that she sounded like she had spiritual pride.
- Tom perpetually put his spiritual life down. No matter how much he read his Bible or prayed, he always thought he could do more. Instead of enjoying a relationship with God, he felt that his connection with Him was inferior to every other Christian.

2. What are some things you do to be in relationship with God that you could show someone else how to do?

Your answers might include learning to pray, reading and studying the Bible, and memorizing Scripture. Spiritual children also build their connection to God by worshipping together, attending church functions, and participating in a small group. Key habits such as these help them learn to understand God's Word and know

His will. Without these habits, disciples will remain spiritual children, ignorant of God's plan and stunted in their growth.

3. Circle the letter of the statements that reflect what disciple-makers should help spiritual children learn so they can build their relationship with God.

- A. God hears and answers prayers.
- B. God has no plan or design for spiritual growth.
- C. God can use other Christians to help us relate to God.
- D. People who are connected to God have to be able to pray all night.
- E. Corporate worship can help us connect with God.
- F. God is removed from our daily lives.
- G. The Word of God provides direction for our lives.
- H. Other non-Christian religions help us connect relationally with God.

We hope you circled all but B, D, F, and H. When people you disciple learn to pray, search the Word, and become involved in the family of God, they can begin to build a personal relationship with God that is meaningful and accurate. They can grow beyond being spoon-fed all of their spiritual nutrition and start connecting with God personally.

Dependent upon God and Less upon Me

Spiritual children need to learn how to connect with God personally. Consequently, the disciple-maker should not do everything for them. It is tempting to become an answer person, like a walking spiritual dictionary, but that is not best. We do not want disciples to be solely dependent on us. Intentional leaders help spiritual children use their connection with us to draw closer in their own relationship with God. Letting them find answers on their own is good. Allowing them to struggle through different issues without providing a shortcut answer for them helps them grow in their dependence on God.

The apostle Paul discusses this issue in 1 Corinthians 3:3-4. He was concerned because the Corinthian believers were connecting primarily to a certain leader instead of to God and His family.

4. Read what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. Answer the following questions:

- Who makes us grow?
- How do different leaders help us grow?
- Which is most important, a disciple's connection with God or with the disciple-maker?

Paul directs people to the source of their growth: God. Disciple-makers help spiritual children grow by doing the same.

planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. (1 Corinthians 3:6-9)

5. Where do you think you fall on the dependence scale? Place an “X” where you think you are.

I think I would be most likely to foster a disciple’s dependence on ...

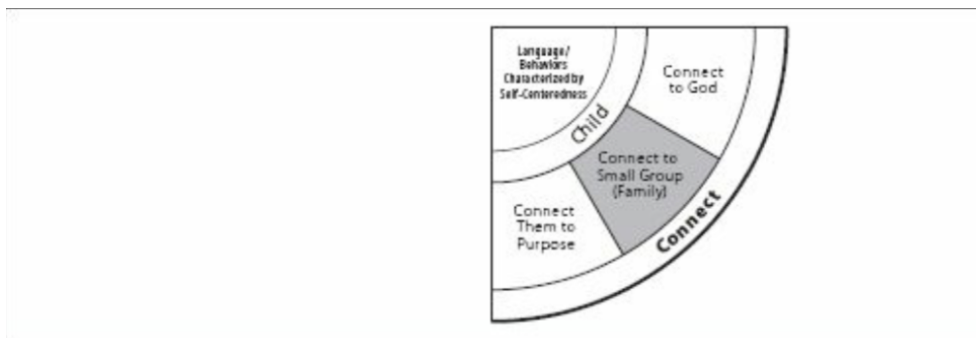


Review

- Disciple-makers must have a solid connection to God if they are to give spiritual children help in their own personal relationships with God.
- Disciple-makers should intentionally show spiritual children how to build a relationship with God.
- Disciple-makers should avoid fostering a spiritual child’s overdependence upon them.

day 3: CONNECTING SPIRITUAL CHILDREN WITH GOD’S FAMILY

The people we disciple belong to God’s family, the church. They are part of a team and have a role to play in helping the church succeed in fulfilling the mission Jesus gave us. Their church family also gives them a new web of relationships. In a world of broken relationships, the family of God can help spiritual children grow as disciples.



As you begin today, take a moment to reflect about your own connection to your small group. How has it changed over the past nine weeks?

A Real Life Ministries Story

Tim had recently given his life to Christ. One night he came to Brandon Guindon’s small group with a frustrated look on his face and body language that showed he was tense and angry. After the group was over, Brandon asked Tim what was wrong. Tim said that he had listened to the sermon the previous Sunday and decided that he should just quit the “whole Christian thing.” Shocked, Brandon asked what had happened.

The sermon, which had been about men being spiritual leaders at home, left Tim confused, embarrassed, and frustrated. He had grown up without a father and said that he had no idea how to do things such as pray with his wife or have devotions with his children. He felt overwhelmed and had no idea how to be a spiritual leader.

1. Read Hebrews 3:12-13 and 10:24-25 and write three reasons why Tim needs his connection to the small

group more than ever.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Your answers might include meeting together so he could be encouraged and spurring on toward love and good deeds.

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (Hebrews 3:12-13)

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

2. If Tim had been only a Sunday morning spectator who was not connected to a small group, what do you think would have happened to him?

Most likely, Tim would have left the church with feelings of inadequacy or even resentment toward God. This would have impacted his wife and children. Fortunately, the family of God, especially his small group, lived out their role as outlined in Hebrews and prevented such an unnecessary tragedy.

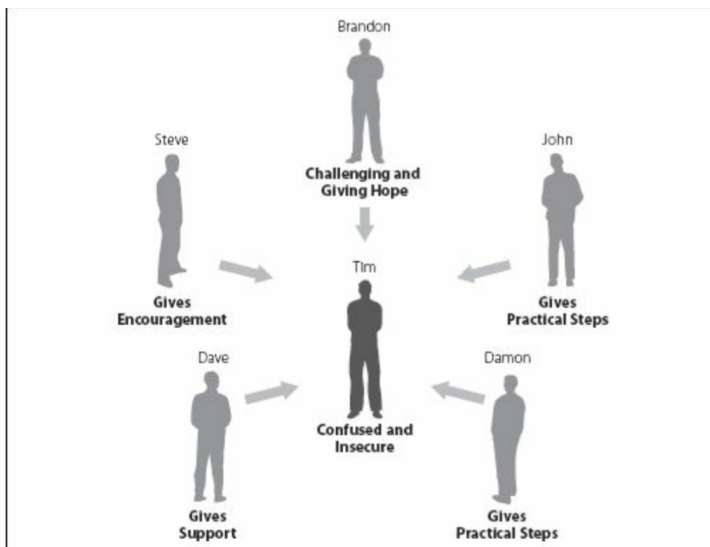
Connections Modeled

When Tim voiced his frustration, the small group played key roles. God used Brandon to challenge Tim and give him hope that together they would work through his frustrations. Another small-group member, John, gave Tim specific ideas about how to do devotions with his kids. Damon shared with Tim his own fears of praying with his wife and how God helped him through it. Together, the family of God surrounded Tim and gave him the concrete help he needed to begin new habits that enabled him to become a spiritual leader in his home. God used Tim's spiritual family to help Tim, a spiritual child, grow.

3. Think of someone in your small group or someone you know who is experiencing struggles. Write the person's initials here. _____

4. How could the family of God encourage this person through this problem? (Be specific.)

5. Read the verses again and then, in the following diagram, look at the practical things Tim's spiritual family did for him. Circle the things you and your group could do for the struggling person you know. This week in your group time or with another person, talk about how you can help this person grow.



As Tim's experience illustrates, when spiritual children are connected to other believers, they receive the encouragement and help they need to grow up in their faith.

6. Reread Hebrew 3:12-13 and 10:24-25 as you pray for the friend whose initials you wrote above. Check the things here that you think you could do immediately for friends experiencing one of the negative things mentioned in these verses.

- ☐ Pay attention to childlike behavior
- ☐ Give encouragement
- ☐ Point him or her to biblical truth
- ☐ Genuinely care for the person
- ☐ Confront him or her and point out specific sins
- ☐ Hold him or her accountable
- ☐ Give grace and support
- ☐ Help the person be aware of temptations
- ☐ Bear with the person as he or she grows

7. What are the three connections the intentional disciple-maker helps spiritual children make?

- Connect them to _____
- Connect them to _____
- Connect them to _____

8. Write Hebrews 3:12-13 in your own words.

Be prepared to share your answers with the group.

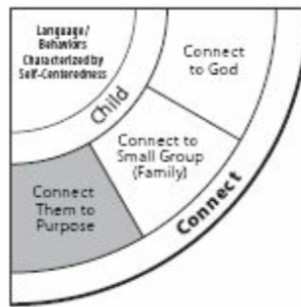
Review

- Spiritual children need to be connected to other disciples.
- Believers can help each other by meeting together, encouraging each other, and spurring one another on to growth.
- Intentional disciple-makers connect spiritual children to others in the body of Christ as well as minister to them personally.

day 4: CONNECTING SPIRITUAL CHILDREN TO THEIR PURPOSE IN CHRIST

Healthy things grow, and when spiritual children deepen their connection to God and a church family, they naturally mature. The Holy Spirit works in their lives as they begin to understand biblical truth through their devotional times and prayer. With the help of the Holy Spirit, their church family can support them and bring clarity to biblical truth.

An intentional next step for the disciple-maker is to help spiritual children see beyond themselves — to see that they are saved for kingdom purposes.



What Would You Do?

Imagine for a moment that you share an office with a young woman who is spiritually dead. You share Christ with her; she becomes a Christian and gets connected to a small group. As a spiritual parent, you continue to meet with your friend and disciple her. She is growing spiritually and developing new habits: daily devotions, a prayer life, and a commitment to attending church and her small group. Because of the time you spend together and your deepening relationship, you notice her gifts and abilities. You begin to see how God could potentially use her to impact others. As an intentional leader you are at a crossroads in the discipleship journey.

1. Check the statement that best fits how you would respond at this juncture:

- ☐ I would do nothing yet. She doesn't know the Bible well enough to serve in the church.
- ☐ I would encourage her to keep growing. Someday God is going to use her, but right now she is not ready. She might get hurt or become disappointed.
- ☐ I would challenge her, pointing out the abilities she has, and invite her to serve in some way so she could begin seeing her purpose in God's mission.

Did you check the last option? The transition to service is a critical link to becoming a spiritual young adult. Without a connection to their purpose as disciples, spiritual children can become stunted in their growth. They begin to rely on a spiritual parent or others in the church in an unhealthy way. As intentional leaders, we don't want a church full of infants and spiritual children; we want mature disciples who can disciple others.

2. Read Ephesians 4:12. Paraphrase the following words or phrases in your own words.

- Prepare

- Works of service

- Built up

Prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:12)

Be prepared to share your answers in your small group.

God intends for disciple-makers to prepare God's people. This means to grow them up, to help them mature. We believe that *works of service* encompasses anything from holding babies to serving as a leader of a small group. Works of service do not earn our salvation, but they do build up the church. "Built up" means the church has grown in number and the people are growing to be more like Jesus.

A Spiritual Parent's Hesitations

Despite this need, disciple-makers are sometimes hesitant to connect spiritual children to a larger purpose. We fear that they will fail, say something wrong, misquote or misuse the Bible, or give others the wrong impression.

3. What if something like this happened with your disciple? Write a way that you could correct each of the following mistakes if they occurred. Discuss your answers in your small group.

- Disciple 1 – It has come to your attention that a person you are discipling said that the people at the church across town are probably not real Christians.

- Disciple 2 – In small group, the person you are discipling said that the phrase "The early bird catches the worm" is in the Bible somewhere.

Certainly we need a balance between moving children too quickly into service and encouraging them to serve. Keep it simple. You are helping them think about how God designed them to serve in the mission of Christ. Connecting them to God's bigger purpose is paving the way for the next stage of spiritual growth: spiritual young adulthood.

Making These Connections

All three connections are important. Intentional leaders do their part to help spiritual children connect. We pray, encourage, and wait patiently as God grows them and they respond.

4. Who helped you most in learning to develop a personal relationship with God?

5. Who helped you most to get connected to a group of Christians who would support you?

6. What helped you most to connect to God's greater purpose for your life?

Be prepared to discuss your answers with your small group.

Review

- The spiritual child needs to connect to the purpose of God's mission.
- Intentional disciple-makers should challenge even spiritually young children to get involved in simple service.

day 5: HANDLING CONFLICTS

We change the pace today to look at an unavoidable fact of life: We will face conflict in our relationships, including with those we disciple. Today we are going to present biblical ways of handling conflicts.

Conflict Is Normal

Conflict is a normal part of relationships, yet for many the word *conflict* creates anxiety. There seem to be two extremes when it comes to conflict: Some people ignore it, hoping it will go away, whereas others refuse to take any responsibility, making the conflict worse.

Most of us fall somewhere between these two extremes. As an intentional leader, you will need tools to work through conflict so that your relationships are not only preserved but also deepened. God does not allow us to hide from relationship problems. Intentional leaders must model, practice, and teach God's principles for unity to those we disciple.

A Biblical Process and Principles

Here are six steps gathered from many Bible verses that can guide you in resolving conflict between you and another person:

- Step 1: Acknowledge the conflict or offense, and go to the person involved.
- Step 2: Talk to the person in private.
- Step 3: Ask if you have offended the person. If so, confess your sin and ask forgiveness.
- Step 4: If you are the one offended, consider overlooking the offense.
- Step 5: If the person has sinned, show your brother or sister his or her fault with a humble spirit, using the Bible.
- Step 6: Restore the relationship with the kind of grace Jesus has given you.

Remember, the goal is to win over your brother or sister in Christ through a biblical process (see Matthew 18:15-19). When connecting with a spiritual child, conflict may occur. Intentional leaders must do their best to work toward reconciliation and unity. We should not expect spiritual children to do this on their own. As spiritual parents, it is our responsibility to lead people we disciple to unity and peace. Being connected relationally means that we do not drop a relationship as soon as it becomes difficult.

1. Read () the following verses that shed light on relational difficulty and conflict. After each, write a summary sentence, highlighting helpful hints for managing conflict.

- Matthew 7:3-5

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5)

- 1 John 2:9-11

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him. (1 John 2:9-11)

- Colossians 3:13-15

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

(Colossians 3:13-15)

- Ephesians 4:1-3

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

(Ephesians 4:1-3)

There is no simple formula for handling relational conflict, but these verses provide wisdom from God's Word that can guide us through difficulties.

2. Using the six steps above and your thoughts from these verses, write out two or three guidelines that will help you navigate through relational conflict with those you disciple.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Make it a priority to discuss your ideas in your small group this week.

3. What are some unresolved conflicts you have with those you are discipling?

4. What is God calling you to do to resolve the conflicts?

Review

- Conflict is inevitable in relationships.
- The disciple-maker/spiritual parent needs to help spiritual children resolve conflict.
- The Bible gives us wise counsel for dealing with conflict.