

week 5: how to be an intentional leader

Some people are intimidated by the title *leader*; others are eager to take charge. How does it strike you? We use the label *intentional leader* interchangeably with *disciple-maker*. We don't see Jesus leading by accident, nor do we believe He was haphazard in His approach. As a disciple-maker, He intentionally led His followers.

day 1: INTENTIONAL LEADERS IMITATE JESUS

Many willing Christians have absolutely no plan for disciple-making. Some even spiritualize their lack of intention as if it leaves more room for God to be at work. Others follow a curriculum but have no idea *how* to make disciples. Jesus had a plan but was not limited by a curriculum.

Let's look closer at His intentional leadership.

1. Read the story of Jesus feeding five thousand people (see John 6:2-14). Underline the question that Jesus asked in verse 5. The next verse describes Jesus being intentional as He trained His disciples.

A great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." (John 6:2-14)

2. Write John 6:6 below:

3. Jesus knew what He intended to teach before He asked Philip the question. Name one lesson that the people, the boy, or the disciples learned from Jesus that day.

You might have written down one of the following: the people learned that Jesus was a prophet; the boy learned that Jesus could transform a little into a lot; Jesus' disciples saw proof that He was the Son of God. They also grew in their understanding of what it meant to be His disciple.

4. Read the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 below. What are two things Jesus did intentionally to make a disciple out of Zacchaeus?

- _____
- _____

Jesus *intentionally* singled out Zacchaeus from the crowd. He also invited Himself to Zacchaeus's home. When others grumbled about the tax collector, Jesus purposefully announced that salvation had come to Zacchaeus's home and that He came to seek and save lost people.

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'"

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:1-10)

5. There is yet another layer of intentional disciple-making in this story: What was Jesus teaching the disciples who were already following Him?

Among other things, the disciples clearly heard Jesus express His mission, and they were witnesses to how He dealt with grumblers who criticized Him. The classroom was Zacchaeus's house, and the lesson included Jesus' love for lost people.

These lessons were not accidents. Jesus did not begin the day saying, "Well, boys, I wonder what we will learn today." He did not seat them in a circle and throw out the comment "Does anybody have anything to share?" Jesus knew what His disciples needed to learn. He intentionally cooperated with His Father, which was an important lesson for the disciples to learn.

6. What was Zacchaeus doing that caused Jesus to single him out of the crowd?

7. How did Zacchaeus's climbing to the top of a tree help Jesus see that His Father already was at work in the tax collector's life?

In this situation, the disciples saw Jesus identify where His Father was already at work. Zacchaeus climbed the tree because he was eager to see Jesus; God was already drawing him to the kingdom. That day,

the disciples watched Jesus join His Father's work to reach an already-searching Zacchaeus.

Intentional but Not Rigid

Being an intentional leader does not mean controlling every possible distraction so that we can execute the perfect lesson plan. Jesus was flexible. He met people on their level without sacrificing His intention to make disciples. People grow at different rates. An intentional leader adjusts his or her approach but continues to deliberately make disciples.

8. Read the passages below and circle what stage of spiritual growth you think Jesus was addressing. Refer to week 3 for the stages of spiritual growth.

John 12:1-3,7-8: Mary Anoints Jesus' Feet

Spiritually Dead	Infant	Child	Young Adult	Parent
---------------------	--------	-------	----------------	--------

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume... .

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." (John 12:1-3,7-8)

Mark 9:20-24: Healing Possessed Boy

Spiritually Dead	Infant	Child	Young Adult	Parent
---------------------	--------	-------	----------------	--------

They brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:20-24)

John 21:15-17: Peter and Jesus by the Sea

Spiritually Dead	Infant	Child	Young Adult	Parent
---------------------	--------	-------	----------------	--------

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17)

Jesus adjusted His plan in order to meet people where they were. By anointing Jesus' feet, Mary revealed her heart, showing that she was not self-centered but rather Christ-centered and willing to serve Him. Her behavior was that of a spiritual young adult. The Bible does not specifically state, "And Jesus spoke to the

spiritual young adult,” but He purposefully defends Mary’s actions and encourages her faith.

The father who cried, “Help my unbelief,” was desperate and confused about Christ. His behavior was similar to how a spiritual infant or child would react. Jesus adjusted His approach to help the man grow as a disciple. Jesus did not declare, “Since you are a spiritual infant, I will heal your son.” He led the discussion to meet the man where he was.

When Peter and Jesus talked by the sea, Jesus spoke to him as a spiritual young adult who was becoming a parent. Jesus challenged Peter to care for His followers (sheep). He directed him to join Him in ministry and even hinted at Peter continuing without Jesus.

In all three cases, Jesus adjusted His leadership to the person’s needs. Being intentional does not mean using a rigid, preprogrammed approach, nor does it mean being accidental. Intentional leaders drive the discipleship process. They do not leave it to chance or random luck.

Review

- The discipleship journey requires an intentional leader.
- Jesus modeled being intentional.
- Jesus adapted His plan to the needs of the person.

day 2: INTENTIONAL LEADERS UNDERSTAND THE GAME

Have you ever watched young kids play Little League baseball? An outfielder picks dandelions, while the third baseman is distracted by a jet in the sky. Occasionally, a child gets a hit, and the crowd cheers. When a child catches a fly ball, they roar. Yet these kids won’t master the game on their own. They can stand on the field, wear uniforms, and even catch a ball, but that does not ensure they are learning the game of baseball. They need someone who knows the game — a coach — to teach them.

1. Who taught you your favorite sport or hobby?

2. How well did he or she know “the game”?

A good baseball coach will know more than just how to catch a fly ball. Effective coaches know more than just a piece of the game. The same is true of disciple-makers. We can’t just add water to some prepackaged discipleship mix and stir until a disciple is made. Whether you are a parent, small-group leader, Sunday school teacher, or pastor, God is bringing people into your path whom you can disciple. But to be an intentional leader/coach, you must know the game.

In discipleship, understanding “the game” means understanding the spiritual battle, maintaining a biblical worldview, and avoiding an overdependence on classroom settings. Here is a brief overview of what disciple-makers need to know about “the game.”

Understanding the Spiritual Battle

Disciple-makers need to understand the spiritual realities behind the world we live in. Christians are in a spiritual battle for souls against an enemy that seeks to destroy everyone. Roman soldiers in full armor were a common sight in Paul’s day. Paul used the image of armor to help us understand this spiritual battle.

3. Pick two items from Paul’s description in Ephesians 6:13-17 () and explain how a disciple-maker might use these items intentionally to make disciples.

(Example: The truth-belt holds armor and weapons in place; therefore, disciple-makers use the truth to keep their message pure and its defense secure.)

Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:13-17)

Item	The Disciple-Maker's Use
1	
2	

Be ready to discuss your answers this week in your small group.

The battle between heaven and hell is real. All paths do not lead to God. The eternal destinies of fathers, mothers, children, friends, and coworkers are at stake. It is foolish to hope that a new Christian will figure this out without coaching.

Maintaining a Biblical Worldview

Understanding the mind of God and mastering His Word are lifelong endeavors. Our playbook is the Bible, but we don't have to know *everything* about the Bible before we can make disciples. Intentional leaders *work* to build and maintain a biblical worldview in order to better understand the game and make disciples.

4. The following are worldview basics. Using the Bible, which of these questions could you answer?

- ☐ Where did we come from?
- ☐ Why is our world so troubled and violent?
- ☐ Isn't there more than one way to God?
- ☐ Is there such a thing as a moral absolute? Doesn't culture dictate right and wrong?
- ☐ Is the Bible an accurate and reliable source of God's truth?
- ☐ What happens after this life?
- ☐ Is hell real?
- ☐ What is the purpose of our lives?

Take time in this week's small group to discuss answers to these questions.

If you want to win at making disciples, you must understand the game — so build your worldview around God's Word. Knowing the Bible is like knowing the rules as well as the playbook. Each "player" needs help to learn how to use these tools in discipleship.

Avoiding Dependence on a Formal Classroom

Understanding the game also means avoiding dependence on a classroom. An effective disciple-maker knows how to take discipleship from theory to practice, from the classroom to the living room. When disciple-making is reduced to a program, people often fail to connect it to a lifestyle. People can be conditioned to follow a list or lesson plan, therefore missing the relationships and dynamics of what it means to grow disciples.

We often witness this confusion when teaching classes to church leaders. During sessions about the process Jesus used for making disciples, we continually field questions about the day-to-day "how tos" of disciple-making. When we challenge the class to give details on discipleship, few of the leaders do more than speculate. Few, if any, offer specific, tangible ways of making disciples because most have never done it. They have only attended a class or followed a curriculum. They knew the theory of the game but had no plan to intentionally make disciples. Most confess that they have never been disciplined.

5. Jesus spoke to this in Luke 6:39-40. Please read the following passage. According to Jesus, whom will the student be like?

The _____

Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. (Luke 6:39-40)

You should have written the word *teacher*. Discipleship is not a curriculum or a program; it is a lifestyle.

6. Has it hit you yet? How seriously do you take this spiritual battle?

7. How important is it that you know “the game”?

8. Why is it important that discipleship become a lifestyle?

Be prepared to share your answers with your small group.

Review

- Jesus’ example calls us to be intentional leaders who understand the game.
- Understanding the game means understanding the spiritual battle, maintaining a biblical worldview, and avoiding overdependence on classes or curriculum.

day 3: INTENTIONAL LEADERS EVALUATE THE PLAYERS

Rookies as well as veteran players need help to reach their full potential. Winning coaches evaluate a player’s weaknesses in order to strengthen them. They also assess a player’s talents in order to place the player where he or she will benefit the team most. These principles from sports apply in discipleship as well. Effective disciple-makers intentionally evaluate the players.

1. List some things you think an intentional leader should look for when evaluating disciples.

Come back and compare your list with what you learn in this lesson.

What to Look For

When a coach evaluates a player’s current ability, it helps the coach know what areas the player needs to work on. Likewise, the first thing a disciple-maker does to evaluate a player is identify what growth stage a disciple is in. Expecting a spiritual infant to teach a Bible class is like requiring a toddler to pitch in baseball. Giving people opportunities that align with their maturity prepares them better to grow to the next stage.

2. For each statement, check the box that identifies the disciple’s stage of growth. If you need to, refer to the appendix for a summary of each stage.

Disciple 1 – “When you asked us to find Matthew 4:19 in our Bibles, I did not know where to start.”

☐ Spiritually Dead ☐ Infant ☐ Child ☐ Young Adult ☐ Parent

Disciple 2 – “Louise is having surgery this week. I would like to organize meals for the family.”

☐ Spiritually Dead ☐ Infant ☐ Child ☐ Young Adult ☐ Parent

Disciple 3 – “This small group really accepts me. I hope it never changes.”

☐ Spiritually Dead ☐ Infant ☐ Child ☐ Young Adult ☐ Parent

A coach also evaluates the players by studying their abilities to determine their best fit on the team. The answers above are: 1 – Infant, 2 – Young Adult, 3 – Child. Disciple-makers must evaluate the disciple's aptitudes — their gifts, talents, and abilities — in order to help place them where they can best serve God's team. The disciple-maker watches to see what disciples are naturally drawn to in order to identify strengths they might have. The discipling leader intentionally pictures ways that a disciple's talents could contribute to the mission.

Jesus with His Disciples

Disciple-makers are more likely to accurately evaluate their disciples' growth stages and aptitudes if they spend time together. If Jesus had interacted with His disciples only once a week, for one hour, His impact on them would have diminished greatly. Jesus modeled relationship by being with His disciples. To be intentional and relational as a leader, you must spend time around those you are discipling.

Some people believe that evaluation is done best through questionnaires or aptitude tests, but none of these can replace face-to-face interaction. The only way intentional leaders can get to know their players is to be in relationship with them. This requires time together.

3. What would it require of you to spend time with those you are discipling?

4. Read Mark 9:33-37 below. How did being together with the disciples set up Jesus' teaching?

The answer is that by spending time with the disciples, Jesus was able to respond to where they were in their growth as His followers. As they traveled the road, He observed their behavior, listened to their discussions, and understood their motives. Jesus called out their argument and gave them a lesson that fit the situation perfectly. It pointed them to greater truth about discipleship: “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

A disciple's life should not be characterized by struggles over position or control.

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” (Mark 9:33-37)

Listening to Disciples

While He was with them, Jesus listened to what the disciples were saying so that He could teach them what they needed to learn. Disciple-makers must do the same. As people grow, their comments reveal a great deal about what stage of spiritual growth they are in. At Real Life Ministries we refer to these kinds of statements as “the phrase from the stage.”

As you listen to someone you are discipling, ask yourself if the person is:

- Confused about truth (infant)?
- Using self-centered language (child)?
- Making statements that tell me he or she cares about others and is maturing in the faith (young adult)?

Helping People Find Their Fit

Paying attention to what people do and say will help you guide them to find their fit on the team. An intentional leader watches and listens so that he can help people find a place to play in ministry that fits their gifts and abilities.

5. The following list contains needs that present themselves in a small group. These needs offer opportunities for disciples to grow by serving the group and its members. Beside each need, write one or two abilities or aptitudes that an intentional leader might look for in a disciple in order to fit them to that need.

Need	Characteristics or Aptitudes
Someone to facilitate group discussions when the leader is not able to be there.	
Someone to do minor home repair for elderly people in the group.	
Someone to visit people who are in the hospital.	
Someone to lead a prayer night for the group.	

Helping people find a fit on the team is not too hard if you are intentional about evaluating your players' aptitudes and gifts. A group facilitator would need to be a good listener. Someone with construction experience could help with minor home repairs. Those who possess compassion are great at hospital calls. Leading a prayer night requires organization as well as prayer. All of these needs become opportunities to make disciples.

We want to be clear that when a disciple-maker evaluates a disciple's stage of spiritual growth, it is not for the purpose of ranking that person's value. Doing so would be harmful. Each disciple comes with a unique set of skills and gifts. Good coaches intentionally evaluate their players so they can help them grow. As they evaluate and train the players, their team begins to win.

6. What do you need to do to be more intentional about evaluating the players?

Review

- Intentional leaders evaluate their players' level of maturity and skill.
- Accurate evaluation requires spending time with people.
- All of this happens in the context of a relationship with your "players."

day 4: INTENTIONAL LEADERS CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR GROWTH

Bill Krause's Sunday school class was well attended, but when he accepted a job at another church and moved away, the class dwindled. People had learned a lot about the Bible, but the class died when Bill left.

Why? Bill admits that he did not hand off duties and responsibilities. He did it all, even setting up the room. He was the star player. No one else ever got in the game. He had trained them to be only spectators.

Effective disciple-makers know they shouldn't do everything, as that will stunt their disciples' growth. They know what needs to happen for an individual disciple to grow and serve, so they create an environment that will help the disciple develop and improve.

1. How might things have turned out differently if Bill had looked for capable people and involved them in the planning and teaching of the class and used those opportunities to make disciples? Circle True (T) or False (F)

T	F	The class would stop learning the Bible.
T	F	The class would have had a qualified leader in place before he left.
T	F	The class would have lost members immediately because Bill wasn't the only one leading.
T	F	New leaders would have grown up.

The correct answers above are F, T, F, and T.

2. Read Ephesians 4:11-14 below. Use it to fill in the blanks.

God gave intentional leaders to the church to _____ God's people for works of _____.

Paul provides clarity for disciple-makers. He taught leaders to strengthen people so that they could fulfill their roles in the body of Christ. We would say it this way: "Coach people so that they learn to be effective players who accomplish their role. Prepare them for the purpose of obeying Christ's command to make disciples" (see Matthew 28:18-20).

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

(Ephesians 4:11-14)

A Place to Play

Intentional leaders give disciples the opportunity and responsibility of service. That's what Jesus did: He gave His disciples *a place to play*.

3. Read the following passages and answer the accompanying questions.

- What role did the disciples play in feeding the people? (see John 6:5-11)

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. (John 6:5-11)

- What did Jesus send the seventy-two disciples out to do? (see Luke 10:8-12)

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, “The kingdom of God is near you.” But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, “Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.” I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. (Luke 10:8-12)

- What responsibility did Jesus give to Peter and John for the Passover? (see Luke 22:7-13)

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.”

“Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked.

He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.”

They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. (Luke 22:7-13)

In each case, Jesus met the needs of those around Him, but He also intentionally created opportunities for His disciples to serve. Serving produces players, not spectators. Service helps a disciple develop and mature.

Coaches Create Environments to Win

As a wrestling coach Jim taught the three areas of skill a wrestler needs in order to win:

- Top — starting above your opponent
- Bottom — starting beneath your opponent
- Neutral — both wrestlers on their feet

Most wrestlers have skill in one area, some in two, but few in all three. To win consistently, all three skill sets are needed. A good coach will evaluate the wrestlers’ weaknesses and then organize practices so that boys are working on the skills they need to improve.

4. Disciple-makers need to do something similar. Go back to the definition of a disciple (see Matthew 4:19). What three areas of a disciple are addressed in the definition?

- _____ - level (primarily information and Bible knowledge)
- _____ - level (character and relational skills)
- _____ - level (ministry skills and abilities)

All three are needed to make disciples, but each one is developed differently.

5. Place an “X” on the line where you think your strengths are. Ask someone close to you to score your strengths. Discuss the differences.

Head-level *Follow*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Heart-level *Be Changed*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hands-level *On Mission*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. If you are all head and no heart, that is a problem. Balance and growth in all areas helps you mature as a disciple. What are some possible coaching tips that might help you improve your weakness?

7. What will you do to work on one area?

The relational environment Jesus created (and we strive to recreate) helps us ensure that discipleship happens. A relational environment offers the best place to challenge a disciple and also provides a place for the disciple to practice.

If you had no intentional leader to coach you, the idea of a safe relational environment in which to grow is probably high on your list. Be a coach who gets disciples in the game.

Review

- Disciples need a coach as they “play the game.”
- Giving disciples an active role helps them learn and mature.

day 5: UNDERSTANDING GOD’S ROLE, OUR ROLE, AND THE DISCIPLE’S ROLE

A men’s group in our church made a commitment to go deeper as disciples. The next time the group met, the leader shared his past and revealed areas of his life where he had struggled. Others opened up as well, but

some men still talked about only football and work. When challenged to go deeper, they made excuses and found reasons to miss meetings. Even when God allowed circumstances in their lives to reveal how broken their families were, these men continued to avoid opening up to the group.

The leader was frustrated and felt he had failed, but that was not the case. He had played his role well. God was definitely at work, revealing to the men their need for Him, but some refused to accept the invitation. They chose shallow acquaintance over real relationship, and the group disbanded.

The material we are studying today convinced that leader not to quit. Eventually he restarted the group, and it has become a healthy discipleship group that continues to meet. It has given birth to two other groups as well.

This disciple-maker understood that he *had* fulfilled his role. He realized that even the best intentional leader cannot make people be relational against their will. We can only do our best to create an environment where relationships can happen.

Only Responsible for Our Role

The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (see Acts 8:26-40) helps us see that when it comes to disciple-making, whether someone grows as a disciple is not up to only the leader; God plays a role in all spiritual growth, as does the disciple.

1. Read in your Bible Acts 8:26-40, noting the parts that God, Philip, and the Ethiopian eunuch play. Then read the statements below. Put “G” for God’s role, “P” for Philip’s, and “E” for the Ethiopian’s.

- _____ The Holy Spirit told Philip to go to the carriage.
- _____ Philip ran to the carriage.
- _____ Philip asked the Ethiopian questions.
- _____ The Ethiopian invited Philip to join him in the carriage.
- _____ Philip shared about who Jesus was.
- _____ The Ethiopian was convicted to be baptized.
- _____ Philip baptized the Ethiopian.

Your answers should look like the following: G, P, P, E, P, G, P.

Having a clear picture of our role is like having a job description. It helps us stay focused on our responsibilities and tells us what we should count on from others.



A Case Study

Nine guys gather into a small living room at 5:30 a.m. They have just listened to the story of the prodigal son (see Luke 15) and are discussing this story. Ben, the leader, asks, “Who are you in this story?”

Cliff shares that he feels like one of the servants who informed the older brother that the celebration was not for him. Dave, a new Christian, says he still feels like one of the party friends back in town. Everybody chuckles, but they get the point.

Tom is unusually quiet. He leans back in his chair and tries to disengage from the group. The story has cut deep into his heart, and he doesn’t want to speak because he knows he will cry. The letter he had just received from his son is still stinging. *Wow*, he thinks to himself, *I wasn’t at all like the father waiting for his son. I was so clueless that I ignored his rebellion and tried to pretend everything was all right.* In the letter, Tom’s son had told him how he wasn’t there when he needed him and how angry he was at him.

Ben notices Tom’s body language and directs the question his way but is met with the response of “I don’t know.” He probes deeper: “Tom, is that all, or is there more? Are you all right?” At that, Tom breaks. He tells the whole story to the group and confesses that today’s discussion was too close to home. They pause and pray.

The next few minutes are spent with several guys offering encouragement and suggestions for what Tom could do to rebuild his relationship with his son. The group ends with handshakes and hugs. Ben knows that

God is at work using this Bible story to change a disciple.

2. Let's evaluate what happened in this scenario.

What was God doing?

What was the leader's role?

What was the disciple's role?

Here are some key points you may have covered in your answers:

God's Part

- Prompts Tom to go to the meeting that morning
- Uses Luke 15 to speak to Tom
- Uses group to encourage Tom

The Leader's Part

- Tells the prodigal story
- Notices Tom's tension
- Gently probes Tom

The Disciple's Part

- Attends at 5:30 a.m.
- Listens to the story
- Shares his story

Intentional leaders are responsible for only their role in the disciple-making process. If they try to perform God's role or the disciple's role, they will be frustrated. When we know what we are responsible for, it helps us remain intentional and focused.

Review

- A disciple-maker needs to know three roles that are at play in the group: God's role, the leader's role, and the disciple's role.