

week 11 — disciple: being intentional with spiritual parents

The **disciple** phase of SCMD matches up well with the stage of spiritual parent. Let's look at the transition from the **ministry** phase to the **disciple** phase by comparing two disciples and their stages of maturity.

day 1: MAKING THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD

Michael has participated in numerous Bible studies and ministry seminars since he became a Christian. Over the last ten years, he has read his Bible repeatedly from cover to cover and developed clear defenses for the Christian faith. He loves to study and discuss God's Word. His resource library continues to grow, and he has become somewhat of a "go-to guy" for people who have questions about the Bible. He is kind and humble and enjoys his special ministry of explaining Scripture to others.

1. Do you know anyone like Michael? If you do, write down that person's name.

Julie has grown by leaps and bounds since she joined a small group. She is a first-generation Christian who has grown through the intentional investment of her leader. In the last month, Julie realized that Christ's mission is hindered more by people *not* making disciples than anything else. She enjoys her ministry of teaching in the three-year-olds' class; however, she has become aware of what Christ's mission is. If she does not make disciples who can in turn make other disciples, she will fail to complete the work God has given her to do.

2. Mark an "M" by the characteristics you think fit Michael and a "J" by the ones that fit Julie. Write both letters if you think they fit both people.

- _____ Believes service to others is vital to a disciple's growth
- _____ Is well connected in a relational environment
- _____ Sees the need to be intentional about a person's spiritual growth
- _____ Measures spiritual maturity by the ability to explain the Bible
- _____ Likes to discuss and debate ideas pertaining to the Bible
- _____ Thinks discipleship primarily consists of Bible experts explaining God's Word
- _____ Sees ministry as done best by a team, not an individual
- _____ Feels an urgency to reproduce disciples who can disciple others

Though these descriptions are short, they can tell us whether Julie and Michael are ready to become spiritual parents and enter the **disciple** phase of the process.

3. Which one of the two do you think is most likely transitioning from being a spiritual young adult to a spiritual parent and why?

There are clear signs that Julie may be making the transition, but not for Michael. Too often people assume that Bible knowledge alone is the best predictor of spiritual maturity. We emphatically believe that knowing your Bible is necessary for disciple; however, knowing all about it and doing little to intentionally make disciples is not a characteristic of a spiritual parent. Characteristics D, E, and F primarily fit Michael and are not indicators of a transition to spiritual parenthood.

4. Why do you think this stage uses the term spiritual parent instead of spiritual adult? Circle the letter of the reason you think is correct.

- A. Spiritual adult indicates leadership only
- B. Spiritual parent indicates the ability to reproduce and raise up disciples
- C. Spiritual adult is not a hip-enough title
- D. Spiritual adult sounds prideful
- E. Spiritual parent sounds more friendly

The ability to reproduce and raise up disciples is one of the primary indicators of a spiritual parent. B is the correct answer.

5. A disciple who is ready to become a spiritual parent demonstrates the characteristics below. In each space, write the letter of the following statements that best reflects whether you have that characteristic.

- A. I don't demonstrate this characteristic.
- B. I am developing this characteristic.
- C. I think my life reflects this characteristic.

_____ Is ready and capable to reproduce disciples who can disciple others

_____ Understands what it means to be intentional

_____ Sees the greater mission to the world and the future

_____ Has dependable relationships to support the person as he or she makes disciples

_____ Has an experience-based understanding of the stages of spiritual growth

_____ Is able to make connections from the stages of spiritual growth to the SCMD process by reflecting on his or her own growth and process

6. What characteristics do you need to develop in order to be ready to be a spiritual parent?

7. In which areas are you most ready to become a spiritual parent?

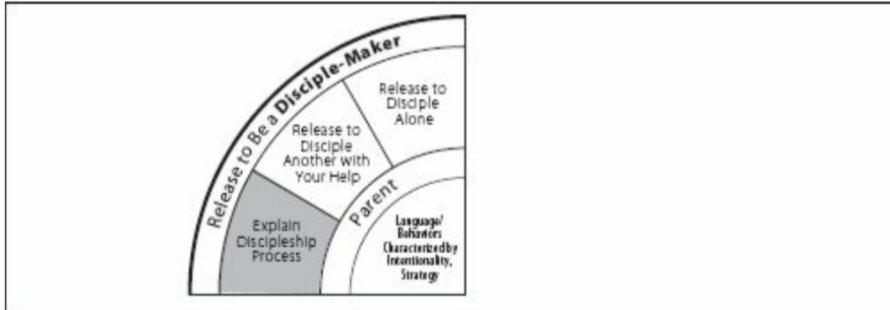
Share your answers with the group this week.

Review

- The disciple phase of the SCMD process correlates with spiritual parenthood.
- There are many characteristics of spiritual parenthood, but most important is the ability to reproduce and raise up disciples who can make disciples.

day 2: EXPLAINING THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

Dave was not disciplined by an intentional leader in a relational environment with a reproducible process, but he loved the Lord and was committed to His mission. You could see it in his eyes and hear it in his voice. He was realizing how haphazard his discipleship had been, but he was putting it all together. As he talked with others about the discipleship process, each conversation helped him piece together how he had grown spiritually. This understanding made it possible for him to be intentional at disciple-making in the future.



If you have been an intentional leader, you have taken the person you are discipling through the stages of growth and through a process. During this final phase of disciple-making, you need to explain both of these to your disciple so that he or she can be intentional about disciple-making as well. This explanation will help your disciple see how he or she has grown and identify which areas are weak and need work.

1. Identify the correct stage of the SCMD process next to each of Caleb's experiences described below. Use "S" for Share, "C" for Connection, and so forth.

_____ Someone invited Caleb to a home group where they did Bible study and opened up about each other's struggles in order to pray for one another.

_____ An elder in his church invited Caleb to go through a new member study for ten weeks right after he accepted Christ. Caleb had a lot of questions and the man took the time to answer them.

_____ Caleb saw that the church needed help with the children's department, so he volunteered to serve there.

_____ A guy at Caleb's work sat down with him to explain the gospel. Dave had never heard it before.

_____ Caleb is now leading two groups of men in a Bible study about how to become more like Christ. He hopes they will be willing to do the same with other guys when they are done.

The correct answers are C, S, M, S, and D.

It is much easier to explain the process to someone who has been led through it intentionally. *Intentional* is the key word here. Jesus did not make disciples accidentally. As we said before, we believe that disciples are made best with an intentional process. For people to move into the *disciple phase* and become *spiritual parents*, they must have a clear explanation of the process.

2. Which of the following are benefits of having a clear explanation of the discipleship process, including the SCMD phases and the stages of spiritual growth?

- A. It provides a common language for others on the team.
- B. It is a good way to organize Bible verses.
- C. It clarifies what needs to happen when making disciples.
- D. It helps disciple-makers be intentional in their actions and assessments.
- E. It shows disciples what they will do someday with people they disciple.
- F. It highlights the importance of disciple-making by making it extremely complex.

We will review this more on the last day of this week, but for now you should have circled A, C, D, and E.

3. Did you ever have discipleship explained clearly to you? Why or why not?

4. As you reflect on the past ten weeks, how would you describe your personal growth? Check the stage you think you were in when we started our journey and place an “X” in the box next to the stage you think you are in now.

Spiritually dead

Spiritual infant

Spiritual child

Spiritual young adult

Spiritual parent

5. If someone were to challenge where you think you are in the process, what evidence would you give to show that you are at the stage you selected?

Review

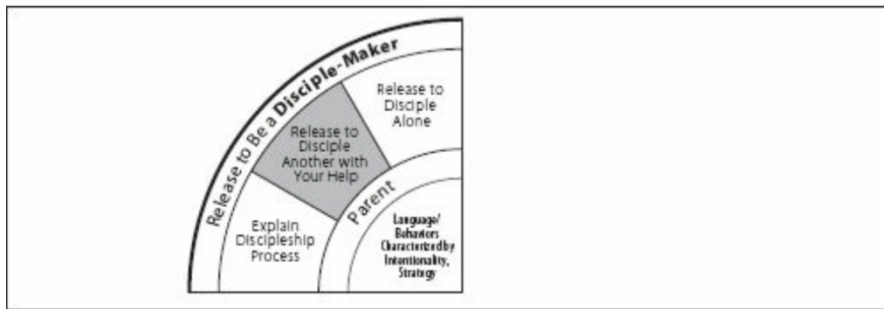
- The first thing to do in the disciple phase of the SCMD process is to explain the process clearly to disciples who are ready to be spiritual parents.
- An explanation of the process enables disciples to gain clarity so they can evaluate where they are in the process and become intentional in making disciples themselves.
- A clear explanation of the process provides a common language for everyone who is making disciples.

day 3: DISCIPLING TOGETHER

Brandon Guindon’s first men’s group was a challenge, but as the men began to grow relationally, several started to grow spiritually. God honored Brandon’s efforts, and in about nine months the men in his group went from being spiritual infants to being spiritual young adults. They were speaking truth to each other, asking good questions, and applying God’s Word to their lives. The Bible came alive to them, and Brandon saw positive changes in the way they viewed life and treated their families.

It was not long before Brandon knew that God wanted him to release these men to start other groups with his help. He intentionally coached and encouraged each leader. Before long, and not without trials, these men saw God at work in the new groups. Brandon celebrated their achievements and continued to coach them. Eventually they were discipling men whom Brandon would never have been able to reach.

New spiritual parents need help as they try on the responsibility of disciple-making solo.



Last week in day 3 we used the idea of “See one, do one, teach one” as a template for providing ministry opportunities for spiritual young adults. Today we will apply a similar idea in the **disciple** phase of the SCMD process. We call this part “release to disciple another with your help.” A good starting place is helping the disciples in this phase identify potential disciples.

Identifying Potential Disciples

God calls us to disciple our children (see Deuteronomy 6:5-9), so encourage your disciples to put their families at the top of the list. (They should be at the top *of your* list as well!)

As for discerning potential disciples outside the family, have your disciple begin with prayer. God is always at work around us, and we know His will is for disciples to be made. If we are praying and aligning our lives to the mission of Christ, God will show us who to disciple. Certainly if we lead someone to the Lord, God has committed that person to us to disciple.

Here is an example of how this happened for Brandon. He began to cross paths frequently with Brian, a young man in our church. During Brandon’s devotions, God consistently put Brian on his heart, and Brandon felt God leading him to reach out to Brian by inviting him into a discipling relationship. Over the next few days, Brandon continued to pray about this, and then he set up a time to talk with Brian.

When they sat down together, Brandon asked Brian if he would be interested in meeting for discipleship. He said that their meetings would be focused intentionally on helping Brian grow in his walk with Christ. Brian said that he had been praying for several months, asking God to bring someone into his life to disciple him. At that moment, the relationship began.

Recognizing the Spiritually F.A.T.

Clearly, God was working in Brian’s life, and clearly Brian was willing to be disciplined. He was spiritually F.A.T.: Faithful, Available, and Teachable.

Each of these factors should be evident at each stage of growth, from spiritual infants through spiritual young adults. Looking for these F.A.T. qualities will help us discern whom to disciple.

1. Match the terms **Faithful (F)**, **Available (A)**, and **Teachable (T)** to their corresponding descriptions:

_____ A person who is allocating time and priority to growing in his or her walk with Christ and in his or her relationships. The opposite would be someone who does not prioritize and value the importance of time together. *It does not work to disciple someone you have to beg or who is too busy to study outside your meeting.*

_____ A person who is committed to the things of God. The opposite would be someone who is sporadic, impulsive, and unwilling. If someone is not serious about his or her faith, that person is not ready.

_____ A person willing to learn and open to seeing new truth through honest questions. The opposite would be someone who is proud and argumentative at every turn.

You should have labeled the descriptions in this order: Available, Faithful, and Teachable.

2. Read the following scenarios and circle the spiritually F.A.T. quality missing from the person you are hypothetically discipling.

• Jan has been a Christian for about a year. She reads her Bible regularly, shares her faith at work, and attends two different churches, depending on her schedule. She is young and single and extremely busy. Jan has many questions about the Bible and loves to discuss God's Word and learn more. It took you two weeks to get a cup of coffee with her, and even when you finally met, she was fifteen minutes late. When you asked her to call you back, she lost your number. Had you not seen her at church, she might have waited a couple more weeks to get back to you.

Faithful Available Teachable

• Lou has been a Christian for over ten years. Last week he confided to you that he felt stagnant in his spiritual life. He takes the Bible and his walk with Christ seriously and feels as though he needs help. When you met with him initially, he arrived ten minutes early. Lou had already thought of three different times during the week that he could clear his schedule. The first meeting felt more like an interrogation. Lou had questions about your credentials and seemed somewhat argumentative. Lou says, "There is nothing like a good debate."

Faithful Available Teachable

Both of these people need to be discipled, but they may not be ready and could be difficult to disciple intentionally. Jan is obviously too busy. You should have circled *available* as the missing component. Though Lou is *faithful* and *available*, he might not be *teachable*.

It may seem strange or awkward to walk up to someone like Brandon did with Brian, but Brandon recognized that Brian was spiritually F.A.T. If you are releasing a new spiritual parent to disciple another with your help, it begins with helping that person find the people they are going to disciple.

3. Circle below the letter corresponding to other details that you think new spiritual parents might need help with as they begin to disciple others in a small group:

- A. Deciding what translation of the Bible to read for his or her personal devotions
- B. Determining what activities and questions to use to create a relational environment
- C. Finding a meeting time that works for everyone in the group
- D. Assessing where each member of the group is in his or her spiritual maturity
- E. Planning the weekly meeting
- F. Compiling a phone and e-mail list of the group so they can contact each other during the week
- G. Picking a T-shirt design that everyone likes and will wear as a way to identify that he or she is part of that particular small group
- H. Putting together a snack schedule

You should have circled all the letters except for A and G.

4. What other details might a new disciple-maker need your help with?

Share your list with your group this week, and discuss specific ways you can help a new disciple-maker succeed.

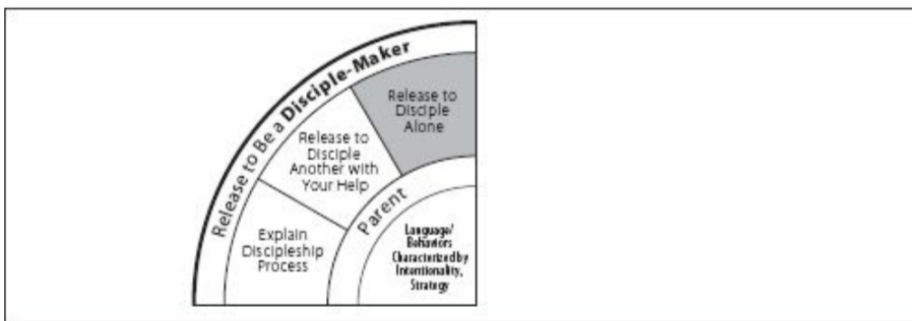
Review

- A new disciple-maker will need help getting started.
- Finding people to disciple is best done by determining who is spiritually F.A.T.: Faithful, Available, and Teachable.
- The new disciple-maker may need help with other details as well, ranging from planning the meetings to assessing where people are in their spiritual growth stages.

day 4: RELEASING TO DISCIPLE ALONE

The final part of the **disciple** phase is releasing them to disciple alone.

Intentional leaders recognize the value and importance of this handoff. They put into place a plan to effectively release someone to make disciples by explaining the process of discipleship and then clearly transferring that responsibility. As parents, we make this transfer with our children. We want them to be able to parent their own kids. That is the natural process of life.



Jesus Released His Disciples

When Jesus had completed His work of making the Twelve into disciple-makers, He released them. He commanded us to do the same in what is called the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:18-20). When Jesus released His disciples, they no longer needed specific instructions and limited objectives, as their training was complete. They were ready to do what they had been trained to do. When Jesus gave them the Great Commission, they just needed the command, vision, and assurance that He would be with them always.

The time has come. Your disciple is ready. Disciple-making is no longer something he or she does; it is becoming who that disciple is. The Great Commission is now for your disciple as well, and you must transfer the responsibility of disciple-making over to him or her. Your disciple, in turn, must transfer his or her dependence on you to Jesus, who promised to be with us always.

Acknowledgment and Recognition

When disciple-makers release spiritual parents, the clear transfer of responsibility does two things:

- It changes the way disciples look at the ministry they have just taken on. They have assumed a responsibility and will be held accountable for it by Christ (see Luke 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
- It gives them confidence that they will be supported when circumstances demand it.

As we commission spiritual parents to their ministry, they become our peers in disciple-making. They are now making disciples without depending on our direct leadership. We move out of the way so these new spiritual parents can rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance. The message of John 15:1-15 makes this new dependency evident. We must get out of the way and allow God to work in the spiritual parents we are releasing. This creates healthy disciple-makers.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can

bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

(John 15:1-8)

1. Read John 15:1-8. From this passage, what does Jesus say is vitally important for disciple-makers?

2. What helps you the most to maintain a healthy connection to Jesus?

3. How will you provide those supports for the disciple-makers that you release?

4. What fears do you think your disciples might have when you release them to go out and make disciples?

5. What could you do to help relieve those fears?

6. Answer each of the following questions by focusing on the word in bold letters.
 - What will you intentionally do to **prepare** a spiritual parent to be released to make disciples?

 - What will you intentionally do to **release** the spiritual parent?

Discuss your answers in the small-group session. To effectively send out spiritual parents, intentional leaders need to think through the actual process of letting them go. If we keep these questions in mind throughout the discipleship process, we will continue to generate ideas for releasing spiritual parents effectively.

Review

- The final action of the disciple phase is to release the individual to disciple alone.
- New disciple-makers accept Matthew 28:18-20 as a personal commission from Jesus.
- This release highlights the importance of the disciple-maker's connection to Christ.

day 5: MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SPIRITUAL PARENTS

The key to learning is repetition. Let's take some time to review the discipleship wheel to ensure that you are clear on this process and can use the wheel as a tool.

1. Below is a blank discipleship wheel. How much of it can you fill from memory? Look back in the manual as you need to.

