

# CONTENTS

With Gratitude	9
Introduction	11
1. What Matters to Jesus	15
2. The Real Deal on Discipleship	35
3. The Four Necessities in Action	55
<b>NECESSITY ONE</b>	
<b>WORSHIP</b>	
4. The Concept of Worship	73
5. The Content of Worship	93
6. The Context of Worship	111
7. The Compensation of Worship	127

**NECESSITY TWO  
FELLOWSHIP**

8. The Concept of Fellowship	145
9. The Content of Fellowship	161
10. The Context of Fellowship	179
11. The Compensation of Fellowship	195

**NECESSITY THREE  
SCRIPTURE**

12. The Concept of Scripture	215
13. The Content of Scripture	233
14. The Context of Scripture	249
15. The Compensation of Scripture	267

**NECESSITY FOUR  
EVANGELISM**

16. The Concept of Evangelism	287
17. The Content of Evangelism	305
18. The Context of Evangelism	321
19. The Compensation of Evangelism	337
Epilogue	351
Subject Index	353
Scripture Index	357

# ① WHAT MATTERS TO JESUS

① If you want to find out what mattered most to someone, read his last words. Usually, whatever a person considers to be most important is on his mind when he comes to his last days on earth. That's why we pay so much attention to last words, especially those of people important to us.

As those who seek to be obedient followers of Jesus Christ, we need to know what matters most to Him so it can matter most to us. Thankfully, we don't have to wonder about it. After His resurrection from the dead, and just before His ascension back into heaven, Jesus told His disciples—and us—what was uppermost on His mind. His last words on earth are recorded for us in Matthew 28:18–20.

Notice verse 19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” There it is, the mission of the church, stated in clear and concise terms: to disciple the people of God so that they affect the world for Christ. If Christ's mandate for the church is to *make* disci-

ples, then His will for us as individual believers is that we would *become* disciples.

The way we achieve Christ's will for us is what we're going to talk about in the four sections that follow these introductory chapters, what I'm calling four absolute necessities in following Christ: worship, fellowship, Scripture, and evangelism. These are the essential elements in becoming a mature, fully functioning disciple of Jesus Christ.

To be a disciple of Christ means that we become like Him. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 10:25, "It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher." So becoming a disciple is where we ought to be heading in our Christian lives. This is the goal toward which we are to aim. In this chapter I want you to see what discipleship is, because before we can begin the process we have to see and understand the goal we're aiming for.

Let me say right off that being a disciple, getting down to the essentials of the Christian life, is a lot different than just going to church once or twice a week. To get excited because the preacher moved you and the choir inspired you is nice, but it's not enough.

To be part of the family of God is to enter a whole new world. It's a whole new orientation to life. Unless we understand what that means and what it involves, we will never arrive at God's intended will for His people.

The goal and the cornerstone of our activity, that which brings God the most glory, is for us to become disciples. God's goal is not salvation; that's just the introduction to God's goal. His desire is that those who are saved become disciples.

It is not enough simply to say, "I'm on my way to heaven." The issue is, are you becoming like the One who is taking you to heaven? That's discipleship, and that's what Christ wants from us.

Let me give a working definition for discipleship that will undergird everything we talk about in this book: "Discipleship is that developmental process of the local church that progressively brings Christians from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity so that they are then able to reproduce the process with someone else."

Notice that this brings discipleship around full circle. Disciples

are to turn around and make other disciples. Ultimately, that's how we fulfill the mandate of Matthew 28:18–20.

## THE CONCEPT OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship was not a new idea in New Testament times. It was a well-established concept in the Greek world in the centuries before Christ. The word *disciple* itself means “learner, student,” and the Greeks had disciples in the realm of philosophy.

Plato, often called the “father of philosophy,” developed a system of thought that dealt with issues of epistemology, or how we gain knowledge, and issues related to the meaning of life. Plato disciplined his student Aristotle, who took what he had learned and built “gymnasiums,” or academies.

In the ancient world, gymnasiums were not arenas for sporting events. They were training centers to teach students Plato’s thought and the system developed by Aristotle, known as Aristotelian logic. The students thus trained were “gymnatized,” which is the verb form of the Greek word for gymnasium.

So successful was this discipling process that it allowed the Greeks to influence the whole Greco-Roman world. This process was called “Hellenization,” in which people who were not Greek began to adopt Greek thinking, language, and culture. That was all part of this concept of discipleship.

The New Testament picked up this concept and put it in a spiritual context so we would know what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Discipleship involves an apprenticeship in which the apprentice or student is brought toward a particular goal.

### *The Right Information*

Since a disciple is basically a student, one aspect of discipleship is information. In order to become a disciple, you must acquire and master a body of knowledge. So teaching is always part of discipleship. It’s one of the four necessities we are going to study.

Jesus was the master Teacher, of course. He taught His twelve disciples the ABC's of what it means to follow Him. In God's Word we have the body of knowledge God wants us to know.

### ***The Right Skills***

But knowledge alone does not make you a disciple. You also have to know how to take that information and do something with it. Discipleship involves developing your skills. That's why Jesus would teach His disciples, then take them out into situations where they could apply what they were learning.

All of us know brilliant people who have lots of "book sense," but very little common sense. We wonder how these people can be so smart and yet not be able to function well in the situations of daily life.

That's not what a disciple is supposed to be like. A disciple marries the right information with the skill needed to put it into practice. How important is it that we get this picture?

Well, suppose you need open-heart surgery. The doctor comes into your room the night before the operation and introduces himself. You shake his hand and say, "Doc, this is a serious thing. How many of these have you done before?"

"You're my first one," he answers.

You reply, "Excuse me?"

"You'll be my first open-heart surgery."

"Doc, pull up a chair. We need to talk. How do you know you can do this?"

"Well, I went to four years of college and to medical school, and I made all A's. In fact, I graduated at the top of my class. I know the parts of the body, and I know the surgical instruments I need to use. You have nothing to worry about."

You are going to say, "Passing tests does not make you a surgeon. I want someone in there who has done this before."

So does every other patient! That's why a medical student does

an internship and residency. He has to come alongside someone who has been in surgery before, who knows what to do when complications arise and things happen that aren't covered in the textbook. That new doctor's knowledge is very important, but it's not enough. He needs to be shown how to do the operation.

That's discipleship. It occurs when a person brings another person or persons along in such a way that the discipler imparts the right information while modeling the right skill.

This is why you cannot be discipled simply by showing up at church on Sunday morning. Worship is an essential component of following Christ, as we will see. But like knowledge, it's not the whole picture. Discipleship demands someone walking beside you.

We have an example of disciple-making right in our communities: the drug pushers. These guys are slick. They will take a young boy and mold him, giving him the body of information necessary to make a quick dollar, letting him walk beside them as they deal, and then sending him on his own to do what they did.

See, the issue is not whether you are going to be discipled. The issue is, by whom will you be discipled? All of us have people and influences in our lives that shape who we are and what we do. Discipleship demands skills derived from a body of information modeled before you.

I want to make four key observations about the process of becoming a disciple, based on the definition I gave above.

### **A PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

The first thing you need to know about becoming a disciple is that discipleship is a process of spiritual development. I have already quoted Matthew 10:25, but let me give it to you again in context with verse 24: "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master."

Matthew 10 is a crucial passage on discipleship, and we'll come

back to it again. When Jesus said disciples are to *become* like their teacher, He was making clear that this business of being a disciple is a process.

You do not wake up the day after you are converted and discover that you are a spiritual giant, a fully mature disciple. Spiritual maturity takes time.

This concept reminds me of the story about the farmer who brought his family to the big city for the first time. They were particularly awed by the mall. As the wife toured the stores, the farmer took his son into a bank located in the mall. He saw a very elderly lady enter a room, then a few seconds later a beautiful young woman left the same room. The man looked down at his son and said, “Boy, run and get your mother fast.” Unfortunately we cannot be transformed into disciples in just a few minutes—or a few years, for that matter. It takes time.

### ***No Timetable***

But the New Testament does not give us a step-by-step timetable for becoming disciples, nor does it have a list of formal, legalistic steps to be followed.

There’s a very good reason for this. Although the process of discipleship involves certain basic necessities that are common to all believers, our spiritual experiences are unique to us. So is our rate of spiritual growth. Thus Paul admonishes us to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling.

Therefore, although you cannot control the fact that it takes time to become a disciple, you have a lot to say about how quickly you become a disciple. There are people who have been saved for twenty-five years who are less spiritually developed than people who have been saved five years.

The problem with older believers like this is that although they have had more time than the new believers, they have not grown as they should. Discipleship has to do with spiritual development, not





how long you've been a Christian. You can know Christ for years but never develop properly as a disciple.

### ***The Process of Discipleship***

Jesus points this out in a picturesque way in Matthew 11:28–30: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”

The word *learn* is the verb form of the word for “disciple.” Jesus is saying, “Come and be discipled by Me.” This is a wonderful invitation to the process of discipleship.

Jesus also paints a vivid picture of what the process looks like when He speaks of His “yoke.” You have probably seen a horse, a mule, or an ox harnessed around the neck and shoulders in order to pull a wagon or a plow. The yoke is put on for three basic reasons.

One reason for wearing a yoke is to bring the animal under *submission*, under the control of the one sitting on the wagon or the plow and holding the reins. A yoke makes control possible. In discipleship, Christ is seeking our submission. He wants to bring us under His control.

The yoke also speaks of *work* to be done. It implies responsibility. God saved you to bring upon you the right kind of responsibility.

In other words, when a person yokes something, he does it purposefully. There is something he wants to accomplish. God saved you because He has something He wants your life to accomplish. But you can only fulfill the responsibility when you are yoked together with Christ, under His control.

Finally, the yoke speaks of *companionship*. When Jesus says, “Take My yoke upon you,” He makes clear He is in the yoke too.

It was a common thing in the ancient world, and still is today in some communities, to train a young ox or mule by yoking it with an older, more experienced animal. That way, the young one comes

alongside the experienced one to learn how to pull. When the farmer does this, he usually adjusts the yoke so that most of the weight falls on the experienced animal until the younger one gets the hang of it.

When I was a young teenager, my father used to take me with him when he went to preach. He would preach on street corners and give me a fistful of tracts to hand out. Or he would go to a prison to preach and take me with him for the ride.

As far as I was concerned, when it was over, that was it. I didn't realize then that God would later place a call on my life that would necessitate the experiences I had going along with my dad.

When I was in college, I preached on street corners. I preached in prisons. I was the preacher then, but the groundwork of experience was laid for me by my father, who did the work but took me along to show me how it's done.

Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, "If you come unto Me and are weary and heavy-laden, I will give you rest. I will bear the yoke with you, and I will pull the weight" (author's paraphrase).

### ***A Different Level***

I said earlier that not every Christian is necessarily a disciple. You can see the difference in verses 28–29. In verse 28, Jesus says, "I will give you rest." But in verse 29, He says, "If you take My yoke, you will find rest" (author's paraphrase). What's the difference? Verse 28 is a *position*. Verse 29 is an *experience*.

Whenever the Bible talks about rest, it means the enjoyment of God's provision. In other words, as a believer you have God's rest. But you may not be experiencing that rest in your daily life because you have not accepted the yoke. You have peace *with* God, but you may not be enjoying the peace *of* God. The same can be said of joy, power, and a lot of other blessings.

It's not that these things aren't available to us. The problem is that we are not yoked to the One who can give them to us. The yoke implies a different level of commitment.

Matthew 11:28 is an invitation to salvation. Verse 29 is an invitation to the fellowship of discipleship.

**A PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT  
TOWARD MATURITY**

If discipleship is a process of spiritual development, what's the goal toward which we are to develop? It's spiritual maturity: becoming a full-grown, well-developed disciple of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, "I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1). The biblical term for a mature Christian is "spiritual." Paul expected the Corinthians to be maturing in the faith, but instead they were still acting like spiritual babies.

What's interesting is that Paul had gone to Corinth and led these people to Christ about A.D. 50. He wrote 1 Corinthians about A.D. 55. He was saying, "You should be spiritual by now, but you have not used your time well for spiritual development."

***A Formula for Growth***

This passage points up a very simple formula or guideline for spiritual growth: rate multiplied by time equals distance. That is, the rate at which you grow in your spiritual life in the time you have been allotted determines the distance you will travel down the road of discipleship toward spiritual maturity.

A newborn Christian who dives into the Word and the things of God rather than spending his or her time on other things may burst from the starting blocks and arrive at spiritual maturity faster than a person who has been saved for ten years but is still struggling with the ABC's of the faith. It's your pace that makes the difference.

By the way, if you really want to pick up your spiritual pace, run with someone who is faster than you, who can set a brisk pace. That's really what discipleship is all about. You cannot run the

Christian life alone and run it with any speed or with much real endurance.

### ***Where You Are***

The good news is that even though you may have started off slowly, or started fast and then stumbled, you can get back in the race toward spiritual maturity. And I have even better news. No matter how you may have messed up, you can still cross the finish line a winner. The issue in the Christian race is not how you start, but how you finish (Hebrews 3:14).

The passage I referred to above in 1 Corinthians is important because it helps you determine how far along you are in your progress toward maturity. In 1 Corinthians 2:14–3:3, Paul identifies four categories of people with respect to the spiritual life.

The first category is the “natural man [who] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God” (2:14). This is the non-Christian, a person living by this world’s system who has no capacity to receive spiritual truth. If you realize you are in this category as you read this book, the spiritual necessity for you is to come to Christ and be saved.

But chances are that you are already a believer, so one of Paul’s next three categories applies to you. The second category is the spiritual man or woman (2:15), the person who “appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man.” This is the other end of the spiritual spectrum.

The spiritual person is a mature Christian, a well-developed disciple. The reason that non-Christians can’t “appraise” or understand such a person is that they don’t have “the mind of Christ” (v. 16). But the mind of Christ—the ability to live life from God’s perspective, the capacity to think God’s thoughts after Him—is available to every true believer.

A mature disciple is one who is able to make divinely informed choices. Paul is saying, “The spiritual person is able to look at,

understand, and figure out life from a divine standpoint because he has the mind of Christ.” The third category the apostle identifies in this text is “babes in Christ” (3:1). The baby Christian is someone who is brand-new in the faith. Newborn Christians cannot be mature. That’s an impossibility. They can be on fire and growing like crazy spiritually, but they cannot be full grown.

Paul’s fourth and final category is the “fleshly” or carnal Christian (3:2–3). The difference between a carnal Christian and a baby Christian is that the carnal believer has had time to mature. He should know how to live with a heavenly perspective, but instead he thinks and acts like a non-Christian. He makes little progress toward spiritual maturity. This person has not responded to the invitation and challenge to become a disciple.

And lest we think progressing toward mature discipleship is a take-it-or-leave-it deal, let me point you to Hebrews 5:

Concerning [Melchizedek] we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. (vv. 11–12)

The writer of Hebrews had some spiritually nourishing, “meat and potatoes” stuff to teach these believers about the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, but they had “become dull.” Evidently, these people had been growing, but they were regressing. If you don’t go forward you go backward, because there is no such thing as neutrality in the Christian life.

Adults who can’t eat solid food are sick. And Christians who still need kindergarten language in order to understand the things of God are not growing. This was the Hebrews’ problem, because they had had enough time to be mature.

In fact, the writer says that by the time of his letter the Hebrews should have been mature enough to teach and disciple others.

Every Christian has been saved to be an influencer—a teacher, a discipler—of another Christian.

But the Hebrews were regressing, so the writer continues in 5:13–14:

For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

### ***The Goal***

We are supposed to know which way is up spiritually because we've been trained—which, by the way, is the word “gymnatized” we talked about earlier. We're supposed to be mature because we've been practicing hard.

That's what God does when He sends us trials. He wants to see whether we are willing to implement on Monday what we said “amen” to on Sunday. Spiritual maturity is the goal of discipleship.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN THE CHURCH**

Here's a third important fact about discipleship. God has created a specific environment in which discipleship is to occur. Let me say again what I said in the introduction. Here it is: There is no such thing as biblical discipleship outside of the local church.

People who say they are being discipled outside the context of a local church do not understand the nature of either discipleship or the church. In 1 Timothy 3:14–15, Paul says:

I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

This means that parachurch groups cannot by themselves fulfill this mission.

Some of these groups, rather than strengthening the local church, have become replacements for it. This is illegitimate. Parachurch groups are only valid as they strengthen and empower the local church. Paul makes clear that the church is the context in which the conduct of the saints is measured and critiqued. The church is “the household of God.”

### ***The Nature of the Church***

Don't misunderstand. I am not saying you cannot listen to the radio or television and benefit from a message or other program. I don't mean you can't go to a conference and be encouraged and helped.

But all of these things are ancillary. They may augment and support the ministry of the church, but they can't replace it. A child can go to school and learn, but school can never take the place of home.

The church is God's context in which discipleship is to occur. The reason for this is the nature of the church. Ephesians 1:22–23 is crucial to understand here because sometimes it's the church's fault, not the people's fault, when discipleship isn't happening. Why? Because sometimes the church either doesn't understand what it is or forgets what it is.

Paul writes in these verses, “And [God] put all things in subjection under [Christ's] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.”

Notice that although Christ is head over all things, He has only been given to the church. So if you and I are going to follow Christ, we are going to follow Him to church!

Notice also that Paul calls the church Christ's “body,” a familiar New Testament metaphor. The body only has one job—to carry out the dictates of the head. Whenever your body stops doing what your brain says, get to the hospital quick. You are a very sick person.

So Christ is the head and the church is His body, manifested in each local assembly. The church's job is to execute the commands of its head. It's in this sense that the church can be said to be "the fullness of Him who fills all in all." The way Christ does what He wants to do today is through His body. Christ fills up the church as the church fills up the purposes of Christ. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

### ***The Nurture of the Church***

Just as a baby needs a family to provide it with a context for nurture and development, so every Christian must be a dynamic part of a local body of believers. Sadly, there are many people who attend church but do not partner with the ministry. That is a sin.

You say, "Why is that a sin?"

For the same reason that if your finger is not attached to your hand, you have a physical problem. The unattached finger, or Christian, is unusable and cannot develop.

It is a sin not to belong to a local assembly of the family of God. Imagine a child who only comes out of his room to eat. That's not family life. Family life is dynamic participation and involvement.

One reason we need the ministry of the church in this matter of becoming disciples is that no one person can give another person everything he needs to become mature in Christ. We need the full body of Christ, so that what is lacking in one person can be made up by another. That way the whole body grows "by that which every joint supplies" (Ephesians 4:16).

Hebrews 10:23–25 underscores this same truth. The Hebrew Christians were going through difficult times, so the writer urged them:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one





another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

The word *assembling* here is from the word for “synagogue.” The writer is talking about the believers’ place of assembly, the church. But it’s not just a building. He’s talking about the fellowship of the saints.

We need the gathered body of Christ because it is the context in which spiritual growth occurs. You may grow some without the family of God, but you cannot develop into a fully mature disciple of Christ without the family of God.

The church is like a hospital. If you are sick, you are welcome. Jesus said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick” (Matthew 9:12). However, I know of no hospital that just wants to make you comfortable with your illness.

No doctor is going to say to you, “In here, we’re going to let you have all the cancer you want.” The hospital’s job is to help you get rid of your illness. The hospital has the people and the equipment to do the job. It’s the same with the church.

First Corinthians 12 is another passage of Scripture that points up the necessity of the church for spiritual growth. Paul says here that every believer is critical to the spiritual development of every other believer: “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. . . . For the body is not one member, but many” (vv. 12, 14).

Because this is true, Paul goes on to say that no member of the body can say to any other member, “I have no need of you” (v. 21). On the contrary, “God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired” (v. 18). Why? So that “there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another” (v. 25).

The body of Christ is designed to work the same way the physi-

cal body works. If I stub my right big toe on the coffee table, a whole series of things will be set in motion.

My brain will send a signal to my left hand to reach down and grab my right toe. My brain will also send a message to my left leg, “Get ready to bear this brother all by yourself.” Then my brain will send a signal to my mouth to let everyone else know that I stubbed my right toe.

What is true of the physical body is true of God’s spiritual body. We are to show the same kind of care for one another that the body shows for itself. That’s why it is selfish to simply come to church and say, “Minister to me. Serve me. Encourage me. Visit me when I’m down. Pray for me when I’m hurting. Disciple me—but don’t ask me to be available to help disciple other believers.”

People like this are more like “church leeches” than church members, sucking the lifeblood out of the church without making any meaningful contribution to it.

### A TRANSFERABLE PROCESS

Here is the fourth and final component of our definition of discipleship. The process is designed to be transferable from you and me to others.

The goal is for every member of the body of Christ to be active in the development of the rest of the body. We are to reproduce the process of discipleship in the lives of others.

You cannot hire professionals to do it for you. Neither I nor the staff at our church in Dallas can disciple four thousand people. It takes a lot of people to develop four thousand people spiritually. It takes the body supporting itself for this to occur.

Satan doesn’t want you to become a disciple. He also doesn’t want you to teach anyone else how to be a disciple. He would love for all of us to stay baby, immature Christians, because we can’t do him any damage that way. People are not afraid of one year olds.

Satan knows you aren’t dangerous until you begin to grow. So he doesn’t mind your going to church, as long as that’s all you do. As

long as you don't get involved in this discipleship stuff, as long as you don't start growing in the faith and helping others to do likewise, he's happy to let you go to church.

But, if your faith ever starts growing and rubbing off on someone else, you become a threat to Satan. The one thing he can't stand is disciples reproducing the life of Jesus Christ in other Christians.

### ***God's Imitators***

Paul was the preeminent discipler. He could say, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). There's nothing wrong with following people if those people are following Christ. There's everything wrong with following people who are not following Christ.

The real danger for most of us as believers is not that we will suddenly plunge off the deep end and lapse into gross sin, tossing our faith aside. That can happen, of course, and none of us is immune from the downward pull of the flesh.

But I think a more common danger is that we will take in the truth, not do anything with it, then take in more truth, sit comfortably on it, and continue this process until we are so spiritually bloated we can't move.

We must exercise, using what we are learning to change our own lives, change our communities, and help bring other people along in the faith. Otherwise, what we are taking in even stops nourishing us.

We know it's possible to eat so much that food, instead of nourishing and building up the body, actually begins to work against it. This can happen in the spiritual realm, and it happens all the time.

Discipleship is designed to keep the fat off by allowing us to burn spiritual calories as we put into practice the truth of God. What God is looking for is people who imitate Christ; that is, who look and act just like Him.

### *Teaching Others*

I love the charge Paul gave to his disciple Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1–2:

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Paul is telling Timothy to do with the next generation of leaders what Paul did with Timothy: hand on the truth of Christ. Discipleship is a transferable process. The loop isn't closed until you and I are teaching someone else what God has worked into our lives.

Now let me go back to Hebrews 5:12, a verse we talked about above. We saw that the Hebrews had so regressed spiritually that the writer has to say to them, "I had some good stuff to teach you, but you aren't ready" (see v. 11).

The problem was not only that the Hebrews themselves weren't as spiritually mature as they should have been. They were unable to teach others, which they should have been able to do by then. They needed bottle-feeding themselves, in fact. Their spiritual digestive tracts were underdeveloped. As a result, other Christians who needed to know what they knew were being undernourished too.

Our churches are full of people who have been following Christ for ten, fifteen, even twenty years, yet they cannot point to one other person they are bringing along in the faith. Prospective disciples are all around us: in our marriages, in our families, at church, in our neighborhoods, at work.

Finding a candidate for discipleship is not usually the problem. The problem is that too many of the saints are on the sidelines instead of in the game.

It's easy to sit in the stands and call the plays. It's another story to get out on the field and play the game. We have a lot of professional



critics in our churches, but not enough disciple-makers. God has not called you to be a critic. He has called you to build His truth into somebody else's life.

Discipleship is a process that involves some basic concepts, what we are calling four absolute necessities. We're going to talk about these necessities, what they involve, and how you can put them into practice in your life and the lives of others.