



DISCIPLESHIP

CHURCH PRACTICES SERIES

NOVEMBER 2022



WELCOME

Over the last few years serving as GTA Regional Director in the Western Ontario District, it became clear that there were some common challenges facing church leaders in the Greater Toronto Area.

As a result, we decided to develop The Church Practices Series to assist our leaders in addressing these challenges in their unique context.

In the following few pages, you will find links to interviews with those with an academic perspective on these challenges and those who have personally worked to address them. In addition, you will find links to resources and a curated summary of what we have seen in our research.

We hope this package helps spark conversation as we work together to see our region impacted for God.

Joel Spiridigliozzi with Jonathan Gallo



INTERVIEWS

WATCH / LISTEN HERE: <https://vimeo.com/767072289>



Dr. Yau Man Siew
Associate Professor, Theology
Tyndale University



Jerry Berenguer
Lead Pastor
Champion Life Centre



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RESOURCES REFERRED TO IN INTERVIEWS

Alison Morgan, *Following Jesus* (2015)

Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, *The Disciple Maker's Handbook* (2017)

Jonathan Gallo, *Growing Deeper: Disciple Making Lessons* (2020)

James KA Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (2006); *You Are What You Love* (2016)

Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington and Robert Coleman, *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples that Make Disciples* (2013)

Fred Eddie and Mark Lamport, *Nurturing Faith: A Practical Theology for Educating Christians* (2021)



DISCIPLESHIP

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave his disciples the mandate to go and make other disciples. To transfer His way of thinking, His way of living/behaving, and His heart attitude through teaching, modeling, and practice – to others – just as he had with them. History tells us that the early disciples made disciples, and we see this practice in various forms throughout the centuries. Following Jesus' command, we are called to be active in leading discipleship in our local churches.

The goal of all discipleship is to see a person become a devoted and mature reflection of Jesus. This is a trajectory of growth that continues until the day we see Him. (Colossians 1:28-29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:19; 1 John 3:2).

DISCIPLESHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Creating a clear discipleship path is different from an assimilation/integration path. An assimilation path moves people into the life of your church, from first-time visitors to leaders. An example of an assimilation path with action-based next steps might look like this.

- > **Visitor** (Follow Up Welcome Lunch)
- > **Attender** (Membership Class)
- > **Member** (Volunteer Orientation)
- > **Volunteer** (Abuse Prevention Training)
- > **Ministry/Group Leader** (Leadership Training Class)
- > **Board Member** (Board Training)

DISCIPLESHIP PATH

A discipleship path is concerned with the spiritual maturity of a person. Therefore, understanding spiritual maturity is essential to this process. There are several models to work from – Frank Gray, Avery Willis, Dan Spader, etc. Here is an example of a discipleship path.

- > **New Believer** – committing faith, baptism
- > **Spiritual Infant** – learning how to read and approach the Bible & learning how to pray
- > **Spiritual Child** – awareness of scripture, the Holy Spirit, obedience to Jesus
- > **Spiritual Young Adult** – growing in scriptural awareness, maturing behavior in multiple areas
- > **Spiritual Parent** – seeing others begin, grow, and mature in faith



MAPPING IT OUT IN YOUR CHURCH

Once that is accomplished, map out what discipleship looks like for your church. Here is an example of a system with small groups and classes working together.

1. **Alpha > Baptism > New Believers Class > Classes** (Freedom Session, Spiritual Gifts, Finances, Marriage Class, Bible Survey, etc.) > **Online Bible Classes** (Masters College, GlobalUniversity.ca)
2. **Small Groups** offered simultaneously (leaders focused and trained in discipleship)

Communicating and tracking the path can be done through your church software or a simple spreadsheet. In addition, some churches create a “passport” that people can have stamped as they complete individual classes.

WHAT CONTENT SHOULD WE OFFER?

For the sake of simplicity, all content can be categorized under Loving God, Loving Ourselves, and Loving Others. This is the focus of the Shema that Jesus acknowledged in Matthew 22:37-40. Here are some examples of content you can offer in classes, through groups, or through Sunday messages.

LOVING GOD

Walking in a relationship with God, prayer, reading and studying the Bible, how we walk with the Holy Spirit, the spiritual world, obedience, faith, God's character, and nature, and understanding the story of the Bible.

LOVING OURSELVES

Understanding and accepting how we are created as spirit/soul/body, being firm in our identity in Christ, finding healing in our emotions and our body, learning to take care of our bodies, understanding our purpose (spiritual gifts, heart, aptitudes), overcoming evil, managing our time, learning how to manage money, learning to live on a mission.

LOVING OTHERS

How to start and maintain healthy relationships and friendships, singlehood, marriage, parenting, the church, evangelism, missions, and making disciples.

There are several curated sources for discipleship content:

Wordcom - wordcom.paoc.org; RightNow Media - rightnowmedia.org;

Discipleship.org discipleship.org; Global University globaluniversity.ca



ENVIRONMENTS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

There are several approaches to building discipleship in the local church. Here are some popular methods that are used. For some, it is a combination of each of these approaches.

PULPIT CONTENT

A sermon schedule planned over a few years to provide a) exegetical teaching of crucial books and passages of scripture or b) key discipleship topics along with additional content and discussion guides for groups to discuss during the week.

CLASSES

A series of classes with a learning path that can be taken over a few years. Some classes can be in person and online. Here are some examples: faith discovery (AlphaCanada.org), new believers' class ([Growing Deeper](#), [The Purple Book](#)), Inner Healing ([Freedom Session](#), [The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey](#)), Spiritual Gift Discovery, Bible Survey, Financial Management, Marriage Class, and more.

GROUPS

A variety of environments where a combination of worship, learning, relationship, care, serving, and more can occur. There are interest groups, support groups, large community groups, small/home groups, and micro/mentoring groups. Generally, the frequency of meetings, availability of childcare, and location are decided by the leader in participation with their discipleship leader or pastor.

Large Community Groups: Groups of 20-50 are set up in an environment with plenty of tables where smaller clusters of 4-8 eat and discuss a topic presented by video or live. This open format allows people to learn how to lead a group and helps connect people.

Small / Home Groups: Groups of up to 15 meet at the church, in a home, or in a different location. Groups can differ in nature and purpose.

Interest Groups: People meet in a casual environment to engage in intentional conversation over activities of shared interest. Interest groups are often used to build relationships within a church before people take active steps to get involved in other groups. This can include mountain biking, motorcycle rides, hiking, sewing, playing hockey, serving at a food bank, etc.

Support Groups: Groups that meet for a specific amount of time to help focus on areas of need. Programs might include [Griefshare](#), [DivorceCare](#), 12 Steps, Freedom Sessions, Single & Parenting, etc.



Micro/Mentoring Groups: Made up of two to three others. The purpose is to provide focused discipleship in a particular area, such as new believers, marriage, leadership, or any other topic.

Have a story or experience that you would like to share? Section meetings are a perfect place to debrief. We would also love to hear from you and help pass on what you have learned.

