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# GROWTH POINTS

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With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

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## Elements of a Disciple-making Strategy

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Jesus' clear and compelling invitational challenge of *come follow me* has not changed. It was these three words that opened the door to transformational living for those to whom he extended it. It was these three words that demanded a response. It was these three words that set into play a path on which people could travel.

The invite was consistent. The invite was clear. The invite was full of challenge. The invite did not change in regard to the person, or the situation. The impact of the invite was dependent on the response of the one whom was extended the invitation.

When Jesus crossed paths with Peter and Andrew he extended the invitation to follow him. At his invite, it was reported, "They left their nets at once and followed him" (Matthew 4:19 NLT). For them the invitation of Jesus resulted in them letting go of what was to discover what could be.

In another invitational conversation Jesus extended an invitation for *followership* to a wealthy person. His first response was enthusiastic, but

Jesus noted something in him and added a challenge to his invitation. The challenge was to sell all that he had, then to follow him. This dampened the man's enthusiasm. "At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions" (Mark 10:21-22 NLT). This rich person responded to the invite by holding on to the known at the expense of the unknown. His willingness to follow was contingent on minimal risk.

The invitation to follow Jesus has not changed. As in the first century, today people are being compelled to respond to the opportunity extended by Jesus to come *follow me*. It is those who respond, as Peter and Andrew did, who set out on the path of discipleship. The question becomes How do we effectively make disciples at this time in God's history?

There are five key principles that influence effective disciple-making. These principles

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determine process, structure, and material for disciple-making. Effective disciple-making must incorporate the following:

*Effective disciple-making is relational:* It has to have an element of life on life. People are discipled in relationship, not in the transference of knowledge or content.

*Effective disciple-making is biblical:* The word of God is the central basis for making disciples. A disciple is a follower of Christ. How better to understand who you follow than to read about who he was, how he thought, and what he did.

*Effective disciple-making is applicable:* If a disciple-making process does not impact how people live in the world it is merely religious ritual. Disciples bring the Kingdom of God into the realms of life where they have been placed.

*Effective disciple-making is accountable:* Accountability is the runt of many a disciple-making process. Accountability goes beyond getting assignments completed, while holding those serious in following Christ to living out that *followership* in daily life.

*Effective disciple-making is reproducible:* Reproducing other

disciples is often the missing piece of disciple-making. Genuine disciple-making has happened when other disciples have been multiplied. The going and making of disciples is a lifelong process.

These five principles are the filter used in developing, implementing, and evaluating disciple-making in our ministries. Consistently ask the five disciple-making questions:

What is the relational impact?

How is the Bible used?

How are you applying what is being discovered in daily life?

How are people being held accountable?

How is what you are doing being reproduced?

Disciple-making is the call of every Christ follower. The call to “Go and make disciples” continues to be the intent of Jesus’ mandate to his church (Matthew 28:19 NLT). What will you do to fulfill this mandate in your life and the faith community you lead?

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*Adapted from [Building the Body: 12 Characteristics of a Fit Church](#) by Gary L. McIntosh and Phil Stevenson. Available now from your favorite store.*

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### *FACULTY-MENTORS*

**DR. GARY MCINTOSH** is Professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership at Talbot. He has served as a consultant for hundreds of churches in North America. Dr. McIntosh is also the Founder and President of the Church Growth Network, which provides a wide range of professional consulting services in the areas of church growth analysis, strategic planning, and generational change. He is the editor of the Growth Points newsletter. Having published over 300 articles and written over 25 books, he is a prolific writer and church growth expert.

**DR. ALAN MCMAHAN** has served in churches in North America and on the Pacific Rim. He has also taught in the areas of missiology, church growth, leadership, organizational development and evangelism. He has been active in training undergraduate and graduate students including mid-career professionals, Bible school teachers, pastors, and denominational leaders through the U.S., Canada, and much of Southeast Asia in the effective means to develop leaders and grow churches. He has served as Vice President for the Alliance Theological Seminary and as the Academic Dean at the King's College in mid-town Manhattan. He and his wife, Terri, have two sons, Billy and Jonathan, and live in La Mirada, CA.

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