

Avoid This Counter-Productive Discipleship Mistake

Seven months ago, when our church plant was nine months old, I realized I had made a big mistake in church planting.

I kept talking about discipleship and I was coaching others in how to make disciples, but I hadn't done enough face-to-face modeling of what I meant when I told our church to make disciples. Thus, our church didn't yet have the discipleship culture I wanted it to have.

So, I confessed my mistake and then prayerfully selected 12 men to disciple for six months in order to inject a strong disciple-making culture into our church. I created a discipleship process and then spent the last six months investing in these 12 men. It wasn't perfect, but it was my best. I gave these men my heart, my best training, my time, my love, my prayers, my energy, etc.

We met as a group every Sunday night for half a year. In addition, I sought out much one-on-one time with guys in the group in order to navigate more specific issues of care and training and I gave these guys missions and tasks to complete.

Recently, I held a graduation ceremony for the 12 men (pictured; one guy is missing, he was on his honeymoon). Each came to the graduation with a one-page paper, summarizing what they've learned from the process.

I then presented a simplified and stronger discipleship process that I've created after my six months of experimenting and learning. Next I gave each guy their "diploma," a document that list each man's identities, strengths, personality profile, main idol they struggle with, 2 Timothy 2:1-2, and a name that I gave to each man that speaks of how I see God uniquely at work through their life.

Finally, I anointed each man with oil as a symbol of the leadership mantle they now carry as they're sent out to select and make disciples of their own. We then closed our final gathering in prayer, thanking God for what he's done these past six months and asking God for guidance and blessing as each of us now continue forward with the one mission that God gave his church: making disciples.

I'm convinced that the investment made these last six months will bear fruit in our church and city for many decades.

What I have now are 12 men who are committed to multiplication, to investing in other men like how I invested in them. And, with learning so much from the process I now have a sharper, stronger discipleship process which I will be teaching to the men and women of our church as we aim to create a culture where everyone in our church always has two or so people whom they are discipling. I'm convinced that the investment made these last six months will bear fruit in our church and city for many decades.

There are many different ways to go about creating a disciple-making culture in your church. Each church gets to figure out how to best do that. I chose this route because after a lot of prayer and looking at Scripture I couldn't shake the fact that Jesus got this whole thing started by prayerfully selecting twelve men and investing in them. That strategy worked, so I figured I'd start there too.

This was just the beginning. Now I get to watch how what I started will transfer over to impacting tons of men and women in our church and city.

These men are the salt of the earth. I'm excited to watch God continue to use them in our city.

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