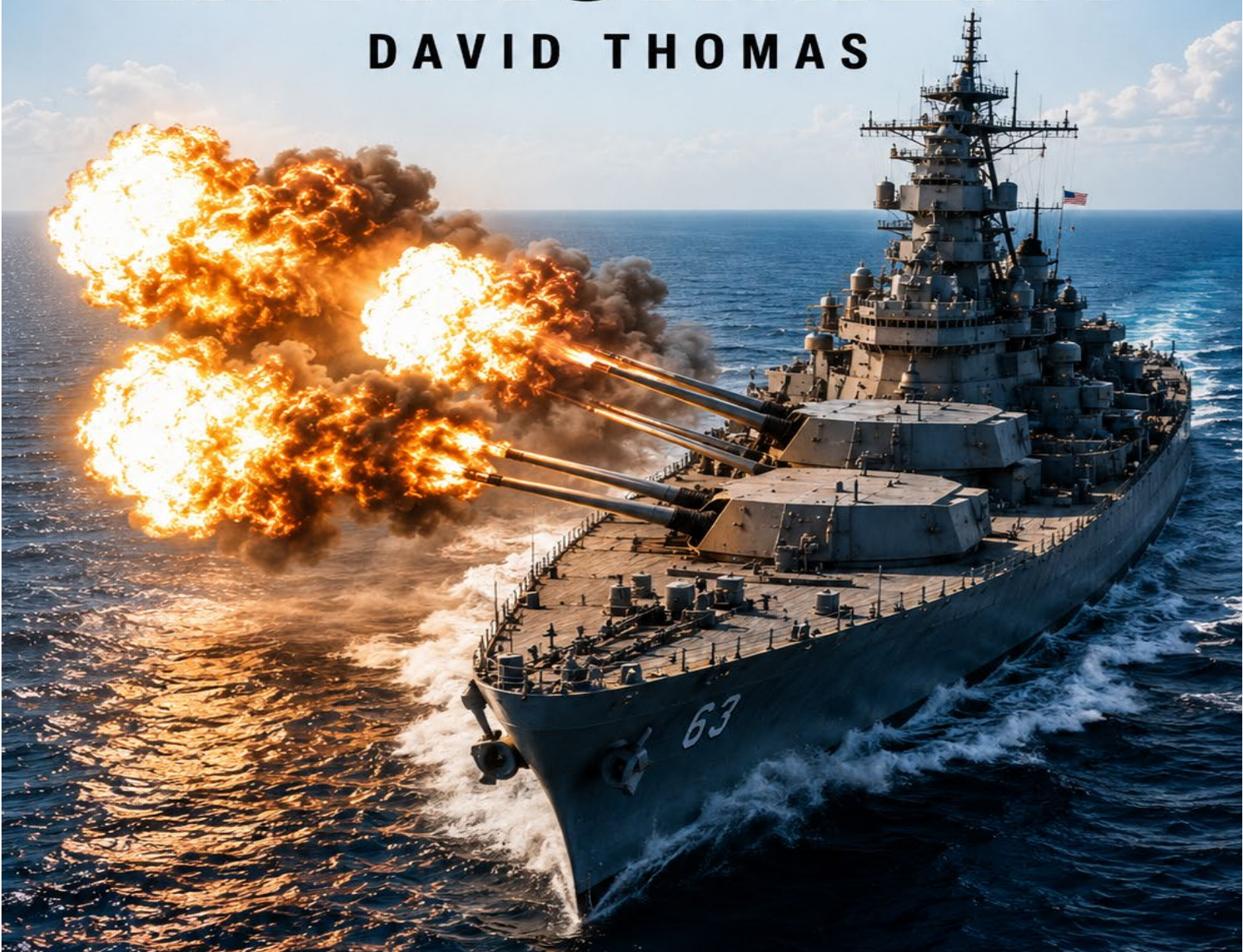


FINDING A DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENT

DAVID THOMAS



Finding a Discipleship Environment

By

David Thomas

This book is free and not to be sold; it is a first-fruit offering unto the LORD

Finding a Discipleship Environment

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First printing 2014

Printed in Australia

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Dedication

**To my LORD Jesus Christ,
The Author and Perfector of my faith**

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	5
PREFACE	6
CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO FINDING A DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENT	9
CHAPTER 2: FINDING THE DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENT	13
CHAPTER 3: FINDING OR IDENTIFYING A DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENT	32
CHAPTER 4: WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?	48
CHAPTER 5: WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP NORMAL?	62
CHAPTER 6: TIMING TO MATURITY	78

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To all my mentors—for most of you, I am unknown to you. However, in these words you will find yourselves, and through this your effect on me will continue to the glory of the Father.

PREFACE

I started writing this book in the middle of penning my first book, “The Art of Personal Spiritual Warfare, Book 1: Factors”. There were two reasons for doing this that were a source of frustration for me.

Firstly, at the time of this writing, our local church was running a men's camp. The camp was called 'Fight Club Boot Camp'. We were running this camp modelled after John Eldredge's 'Ransomed Heart Boot Camp'. I found that this was a tremendous tool to awaken the men in our church to see the great adventure and battle with God that lies ahead of them; that is, becoming men of God and men of War, like Him.

The following is an extract from the ‘Spiritual Warfare Book’ I was writing, and it will give you some context in which to understand my frustrations especially in light of preparing these men to be God’s men—men of War.

Quote: “Now you have been recruited by God (Salvation through Jesus Christ) and have been personally bought and chosen to come over to the other side, God’s side of this battle. This has made you an enemy! That enemy has a hatred for you that is beyond human comprehension, and his stated objective for and against you, and all you have, is to steal, kill and destroy this ‘life’ you have been given by Christ, due to your choice in changing sides in this war.

John 10:10 New International Version (NIV)

- (a) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;*
- (b) I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

To begin to understand Spiritual Warfare, you must first realize you are in a war and that it has and will impact your life both now and into eternity. In addition, it will impact the lives of all those in relationship with you both now and into eternity. This is your first, basic assumption and one of extreme importance to make!

The next thing you need to understand, and probably one of the most important assumptions you will need to make in the development of your Christian belief system about spiritual warfare, is this statement and scripture: “the LORD you now serve is a Warrior”! And He loves it! I also love this about the God I serve. I love this because it resonates deeply within my core, as well as the fact that it drives the politically correct and religiously correct crowd nuts. In addition, it provokes my enemy’s hatred of the fact that I hold and live from this revelation.

My LORD is a Warrior, a Fighter and a Man of War!

Psalm 24:7-8 New International Version (NIV)

⁷ *Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.*

⁸ *Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.*

Jeremiah 20:11 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ *But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior;
so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail.*

They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonour will never be forgotten.

The following concepts are foundational and pivotal for you to understand. First, “You have been born into the middle of a universal/multi-dimensional war.” Secondly, “the Lord you now serve is a Warrior”! This book is based on these two primary assumptions. Now, I will give you the next big assumption.

“The Lord is a warrior! You have been born into a war and you are designed, called and trained to fight next to this Lord, who is a warrior, and whose image you bear.” End Quote

As the Pastor of this church, I ensured that, as these men of God awoke, I had an environment in which they could continue being disciplined and trained in the ways of God as well as activated into their ministry and calling. We started to have men from other churches attend this camp as well. As a result, we began to see the visible impact and shift (towards God) happening in their

lives. However, on releasing them from camp back into their home church environment, I found that that environment was not always conducive to their continued growth and activation. Also, I often found that I would be spending hours on the phone trying to help these men grow and be disciplined, but they belonged to another church. This caused me to start asking questions. Why was this happening? What was causing this? Why were some of these men being deliberately shut down again?

Secondly, when deep issues of sin and failure surfaced, which caused destructive behaviour and sin as a result of ministry at the camp, why was there no one in their environment able or willing to help? Or when a man of God wanted to deal with such issues so as to step further into the things of God, why was he shut down and actively blocked?

In my frustration at trying to help these men as well as in trying to give them a frame of reference from which to interpret their environment, this book was written.

Enjoy!

David Thomas

CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO FINDING A DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENT

We, as disciples, need to become more intentional and strategic with our time, our prayer time, our work time, and our social time. We need to enlarge our sphere of influence. Remember this: when you deliberately look for opportunities for ministry (i.e. lost souls, friends, and family who are on their way to an eternity in the lake of fire), the Holy Spirit will lead them across your path. By placing yourself into this position, you step up to what I call level one ministry which I will talk about later in this book. A disciple like this will always place themselves in the “no excuse” zone – I’d like you to meditate on that for a moment.

- Think about a person who makes excuses, as opposed to a person who does not.
- Think about the type of person you want to be around.
- Think about the type of person you want to be.
- Now think about the Disciple you are.

This book is not an in-depth study on discipleship; instead, it looks at finding an environment in which such a Christian is birthed, trained, discipled, and released. It is a guide in helping you find and identify an environment in which you can grow into Biblical discipleship, as well as a benchmark for an average disciple.

Finding a Discipleship Environment

How then do we find an environment that will enhance and develop our discipleship lifestyle?

The result of discipleship, or the result and outcome of an intimate relationship with God, is that you become more like God! The result of that intimate relationship is the release of the disciple—you, the son or daughter—into Kingdom business - into the family business. So look again at the question asked above:

How do you find an environment that will give you these results?

My next question for you (as you will see in this book, I like to ask you a lot of questions) is this:

- How long does it take a church to train and recruit you into discipleship normal?

- Or asked in another way, how long does it take a church to raise a Christian to maturity?
- Or asked in yet another way, how long did it take or is it taking you to reach maturity in Christ?

Prior to writing this chapter, I was attending the wedding of a friend of mine. He also happens to be a minister of the Gospel and is presently leading a local church. So it would not surprise you that at his wedding reception, out of about ten tables of guests, two tables were made up of other church leaders (pastors or senior ministers who also lead a local church) that my friend has a relationship with. I happened to be at one of those tables and had a great time sharing with these men and women of God, who, like me, were also serving in the front lines. If you had been there, I can tell you that you would have heard some amazing stories.

During the course of the evening, and being that the topic of conversation mainly centred on Jesus and His church, I asked the men and woman at the table the question mentioned above: “How long, in their estimation, did they think it would take to train a new convert to become mature in the things of the Lord?” The measure of maturity in this case is the standard Paul the Apostle gave to the Ephesian church (Ephesians 4:12-15, quoted below). And what do you think happened to the conversation at that table? ... Silence!

Yes, it went completely quiet. One of the ministers said ‘wisely’, “Next question please!” After this, much discussion followed about this and that. For example, what is the measure of maturity, can we reach that level of maturity, what does that level of maturity look like, and so on and so forth. However, in the end, no real answer was given.

So, what do you think? What would you say in regards to this time frame? How long do you think it should take you to move from being a new convert, to being a novice, and then on to being a mature Christian?

Ephesians 4:11-15, New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”

I have been leading a church for many years, and it still amazes me - not in a ‘happy’ way, it saddens me deeply-to come across Christians who have been in the church for decades and have yet to move past the new convert stage. On a side note, you will often find that some of these people are in positions of leadership within the church structure; yet, they are so immature in the things and ways of God that it beggars belief. They get put into a position due to the time spent in church, not in the throne room! This state of immaturity in their lives, if left stagnant and unchallenged, leads to carnality. When you begin to apply God’s truth and His will into such a situation, to put it bluntly, all ‘hell’ breaks loose and you end up dealing with control and religion. So again my question is this:

“How long should it take a five-fold ministry team in a local church to build up a cadre of disciples to maturity?”

My answer is this: **it should take this team no more than three years!** Within three years, you, as a disciple, should be equipped to enter the family business! You should be operating at what I call your level two ministry. In other words, you should have been activated within your area of calling and gifting and have (or be in the process of being) released into the Kingdom - the family business.

Maturity, in my view, is not the end product of the Christian life; instead, it is the start of the disciple in the service of the Father within their field of calling and within the area of the Kingdom that the Father has designated through and by the Holy Spirit. You should be striving to operate at this level according to Paul:

Ephesians 4:12-15 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹²"His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church), ¹³[That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.

¹⁴So then, we may no longer be children, tossed [like ships] to and fro between chance gusts of teaching and wavering with every changing wind of doctrine, [the prey of] the cunning and cleverness of unscrupulous men, [gamblers engaged] in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead. ¹⁵Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One)."

From zero, to three!

I realise we will one day, upon seeing Him face to face, reach 'full' maturity. **But**, I believe that here and now we can and should be beginning to walk in maturity and stature as we step into and work within the family business. To get to this point in three years, you need to find the environment that will help guide and move you to becoming mature. Without that environment, you will find it very difficult to attain the standard mentioned above in Ephesians.

*The discipleship normal is the **normal** biblical standard of the expectations required by God from a disciple of the LORD Jesus Christ.* In my opinion, it should take you no more than three years to reach this level. To do so, you will have to find an environment that will assist you in attaining this goal within this timeframe. In this book, this environment is called the 'discipleship environment'. The aim of this book is to help you find such an environment-to find a benchmark of a disciple-and assist you to enter into this environment.

CHAPTER 2: FINDING THE DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENT

How do you find a working environment for a disciple? I don't know about you, but I'm a pretty simple guy. I like to have things laid out for me in a simple and concise manner. I'm also a preacher, so I like to talk about things and take my time in getting to the point. Hopefully, here, I will be able to do both; talk to you about this very important topic and bring you to certain conclusions in a simple and concise manner.

So here it goes ...

Try and work through these points:

- Most church leaders I know are all about wanting to raise up disciples!
- Most church members I know are also all about wanting to *be* disciples!
- Why then is this, the raising up of a disciple, a nearly impossible task?
- Why is it that I see church leaders and church members struggling, bleeding, and being battered when they try to either raise disciples or try to become disciples?

A very simplified answer would be to say, "We are at war!" Yes, this is true. It also explains a lot as to the resistance experienced in both raising and becoming a disciple of the LORD. A Christian disciple begins their journey by being born into the Kingdom of God. The place into which they are born is called the church, the body of Jesus Christ, and this is their family. The word church is a collective noun for a group of disciples. This family, God's family, has a business. This business is called 'The Kingdom of God'. Within this business, all family members are called to work in various areas using the gifts and talents given to them by the Father.

Discipleship, then, is the process whereby a Christian grows up to become a contributing member of their family and enters into and works in the family business.

Therefore this family, this body of Christ, this local church, *is* the discipleship environment. The discipleship environment is the place you are trained into the family business and then released to work with your big brother Jesus, along with all of your other siblings in our Father's business. It is actually pretty straightforward! So then why is there such a struggle? Why is it as

tough and difficult as mentioned above in my questions? I'm sure this thought has probably crossed your mind before. Why is it so difficult trying to find an environment, family, and/or local church that is a personal growth and release environment?

Creating a space for a disciple to grow may seem difficult; that is, a discipleship environment in which a disciple can be born into, trained up in, and released from. Personally speaking 'seems difficult' is the wrong wording. It is difficult! But why is this?

If you, as a church leader, walk into a local church and begin developing a discipleship environment, you will encounter difficulties! That's a fact! This statement is backed by my personal experience as a leader of a local church for years. In every church I've led, I have encountered opposition. Seemingly "internal" opposition. Your fight will begin with a redefinition of who you are and then applying that purpose and identity; this identity is you being 'an equipper, a disciple maker'.

Ephesians 4:12 New International Version (NIV)

¹² "...to prepare God's people for works of service,
so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Your fight will continue with what you believe a disciple is, what a disciple should be, how they should be trained, and where they should operate within the Kingdom of God. Once you understand who you are, once you understand what your mission is, once you understand what your calling is in Christ, you will then have to create or find a discipleship environment to fulfil that mandate. The discipleship environment is this:

*That you are able to **be** a disciple and you are able to **make** disciples.*

This is warfare: the raising up and releasing of disciples—soldiers of Jesus Christ—who are placed and deployed within God's Kingdom, the family business. I don't know if you have guessed what the family business is yet? Our commander-in-chief revealed his intent at the start of His ministry by quoting Isaiah 61:1-4. A Biblical disciple is one of the most feared opponents of the enemy and all of his forces of darkness. So this discipleship environment will also be opposed by the forces of the enemy arrayed against you. There is one thing they fear and that is a

discipler of men! This environment will also be opposed by people who do not believe what you believe, and by people who do not operate the way you operate. A true and genuine environment is born in the midst of struggle and conflict. It produces disciples. It produces people who overcome which means they are also equally people who the enemy fears the most!

In a light reading of the Gospels, you will pick up on the running battle between Jesus and the religious rules of the day. You will see how they opposed Him, the message, and the Gospel of the Kingdom. You will see their opposition to the family business that He preached and presented to the people. For example, read Luke 4:14–30.

My simplified answer to such a disciple is this: *please understand that for you to create a working environment for a disciple you will not only have supernatural opposition, but you will also have a fight on your hands against the status quo.* The status quo system against you is a system of man which is dominated by control and manipulation and backed by the religious spirit. It is a battle that has been on the go ever since Satan enticed mankind with, ‘Why not taste of the tree of good and evil’.

Discipleship is God’s planned method to reach the world with the message of freedom, which is the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Disciples are the carriers of this message, and this message is a message that sets mankind free from the law of sin and death. Creating a discipleship environment will show your intent to the dark realm that opposes the Kingdom of God. It also shows how God will reveal His purpose to this realm, and quite frankly, they simply do not like Him or His methods. Therefore, they do not like you. They do not like you using His method, and they will oppose you as they opposed Him.

Ephesians 3:10 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰ “**His intent** was that now, **through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.”

Read also verses 8 – 12.

In bringing the message of freedom-the Gospel of the Kingdom-through preaching, teaching, and making plain to the people of God 'the administration of this message' which is the salvation message of God through Jesus Christ and by equipping and releasing others to do the same, count the opposition a joy and a sign that you are on track.

If you, a church member, want to get into a discipleship environment, you will have to establish a relationship with a disciple; that is, an individual very much like the type of person mentioned above. In addition, you will have to find an environment that has already been developed. It will prove to be a difficult journey. In truth, this journey will be opposed by satanic opposition. It will be opposed by his system, his people, and his agents working with and for him. As I have mentioned before, the enemy walks in living fear and dread of an activated, Christ-centred disciple who is operating at ministry level one and two.

In my years serving as a minister in a local church, there is one incident that sticks with me that has occurred over and over again. It is hard to count how many times I have seen a Christian, awakened by the Holy Spirit through attending a conference, seminar, camp, mentorship, or through being discipled, return to their church and proclaim, 'The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me to....' They really want to step in and step up in the things of the Lord. However, in activating their ministry to the LORD, they only find opposition; they are blocked, treated with disdain, patronized, patted on the head, sidelined, etc. Does this sound familiar? Is this your story?

This book is partially meant as a response to give such disciples an understanding of what they might face, along with the choices that are now in front of them. For you, it will most likely be tough to find a discipleship environment; that is, a place where you can be trained in the ways of God safely and then released into your ministry to serve in the Kingdom of God.

If you happen to find yourself in a discipleship environment, cherish it. It took a lot of effort for you to reach this point. More than likely, a number of people paid a high price to get it there! Further, a discipleship environment is a very tough, highly rewarding, and invigorating

environment. At first, it will be tough for you to walk in comfortably and confidently, but give it time and give it your best.

Let me give you a brief explanation, as this point is discussed at length in this book. It is tough because it is a ‘change environment’! It is a ‘natural growth environment’ of the Holy Spirit! If you enter into this environment, you will begin to change and grow to become more like Jesus. As wonderful as this might sound-and it is wonderful-there will be a lot of tough ‘desert’ training and learning experiences that you will undergo as you begin to learn the central, discipleship growth point. That point is this: *to die to self and to begin to live for and in Christ-to become like him.*

So when you enter such an environment, be careful! A good way to make an entrance into this environment is to listen to my sermon series on “How to avoid hurts and offences in the church!” (Found at the time of printing of this book on <http://itunes.apple.com/au/podcast/life-house-church/id410376494> or e-book of the same name-still to be published).

Three Illustrations

I would like to use three illustrations to set up a framework for thought and discussion about what this environment looks like and how it can be easily recognised. Let me try to explain the differences of being in or not being in a discipleship environment through the following illustrations. I’ll be referring to these illustrations throughout this book.

Illustration 1: Passenger Cruise Ship Life House or HMS Battleship Life House.

Imagine, if you please, travelling in a motor car with a companion. Below you, in the distance, is a beautiful city surrounding a huge harbour. On one side of the harbour is a docking facility for commercial passenger cruise ships. Opposite this docking facility is a military naval base. Both berths are occupied by the latest cruise liner and battleship. Imagine the contrast of the activities and events surrounding the preparation for the departure of these two huge ocean-going ships.

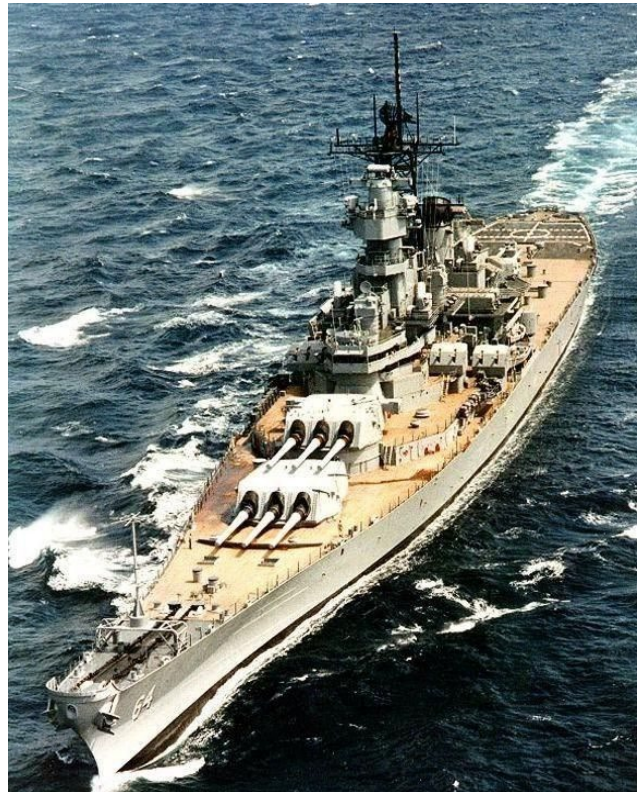
In one facility you have festivities and people dressed in a variety of holiday fashions lining up



to embark: Hawaiian shirts, swimming costumes, streamers, confetti, and deck chairs. Paper streamers are flying between the ship and the dockside, and confetti is raining down on passengers and sightseers alike. Laughter and shouts of joy are heard as a counterpoint to the music of the Caribbean steel drum band. The fog horn blares out and indicates that it is embarkation time and a

surge of partygoers stream up the gangplanks. Excitement builds as they are about to sail out to sea on an adventure of a lifetime.

Over on the other side of the harbour, the sounds of a lone trumpet can be heard as it echoes out the last bars of the national anthem. The commander gives the order for the dismissal of the sailors from the assembled ranks, in order for them to mingle for the last time with family members. They will not see them for months. In their battle dress, with their kits, military equipment, and warrior mentality, they carry a sober determination due to the sadness of parting from loved ones for an unknown period of time. Their destination, unknown! The ship's pipes sound out their high piercing whistle. Grips tighten around necks and final



farewells are said. Expressions of love are exchanged, and the warriors turn away with both determination and heavy hearts. They march up the gangplank, turn to salute the colours, and then the officer of the watch. Finally they turn to their stations as they are about to set sail—also an adventure of a lifetime.

The similarities of these two giant ships of the sea are evident, but so are the differences:

- They both sail on the ocean (remember, the sea in Bible often depicts humanity)
- They both have a mission, vision, purpose, and values
- They both serve people
- They both feed people on board and see to people's needs
- They both visit foreign ports
- They both offer the adventure of a lifetime.

Illustration 2: Recognition by DNA

It is a beautiful summer afternoon. The heat of the day has tapered off, and the cool of the evening is beginning to be felt. You are sitting on the grass between two identical trees. You look up through the canopy of their branches to see the bluest sky you've ever seen. It has begun to turn red with the setting of the sun. God is painting again! Your eyes get lost in the sight and slowly lose focus. Shapes begin to blur and merge into a beautiful shade of blue, deepening at one side to a vibrant pink as the sun sets. The sky begins to appear a deep shade of purple as night begins to walk across the world. After a short period of time, your eyes slowly refocus and rest on the branches above you.

As your focus sharpens, random thoughts merge into this one intriguing, repetitive thought. You try to distinguish which branches and leaves belong to which tree. After a while, you give up trying to trace the leaf to the twig, to the branch, and then to the trunk in the fading light. So you slowly reach up and pick two leaves, but you are still unable to tell which leaf belongs to which branch. The leaves look the same, but have two distinct roots. To discern which belonged to which, you would need to match them up; that is, match root to leaf through the use of DNA.

Illustration 3: Political Systems

Let's have a look at my third illustration that I take from the contentious world of politics. I'll be using this illustration for this chapter, and I will flow straight into it as this illustration is the essence of this chapter.

In this illustration, I'll be comparing the church and its two basic types of local churches: a nanny state and a capitalist state. I understand that all churches do not fit 'cleanly' and/or 'neatly' into one group or the other. I also understand that Christians do not fit cleanly or neatly into either one category or the other. However, I want to use these two opposite political systems as an illustration to help create a picture for you in order for you to begin to understand that there is an environment that is conducive to discipleship growth. It is incumbent upon us as both leaders and members to personally find one and to develop in it; that is, to be a disciple and to make disciples.

Generally speaking, I'm talking about being in an environment that creates an entitled mentality through enablements, versus being in an environment that empowers and teaches a person to take personal responsibility for themselves, their life, and their lifestyle. You might also compare the mentality of 'to serve or to be served', or 'to have rights vs. having responsibilities'.

As I go through this illustration, keep in mind the two other illustrations and their similarities: the two ocean-going ships and the identifying of leaves by their root DNA. Again, I want to say that, while I will be talking about the two extremes of this spectrum, I am fully aware that there are many shades that lie between enablement and empowerment.

My personal political views: as I was developing this book and sermon series, I felt it necessary to share with you my personal, political views. First, I have done this to *clarify* my political point of view. And secondly, I have done so to clarify my position and relationship that I have with the political world; this, then, will give you my framework and thought process as to my understanding and my assessment of the nanny state versus the capitalist state. It will also prevent any politico from claiming that this book endorses a particular political point of view.

In politics, you have people all over the political spectrum—leftist, rightist, socialist, conservatives, communist, libertarians and a slew of those who are either in between or indifferent. As long as the roots of all these philosophies (politics and policies) are based in humanism, I reject them all! Unfortunately I still have to live under them!

If you think back to my illustration of the two trees and how you might not be able to tell the difference between which leaves belong to which tree except through the tracing of them back to their roots—discernment by DNA—, this is my point of departure. Think on this: one tree belongs to the Kingdom of God and is rooted in Christ. The other tree belongs to the devil. All philosophies, all beliefs, all theologies, all systems, whatever you want to name that which is not rooted in Christ, are rooted in Satan! Branching off the trunk of the corrupt world system of Satan to the right, are the ‘right’ wing political philosophies. Branching off on the same trunk to the left are all the ‘left’ wing philosophies. In my opinion, no matter how good the philosophies sound or how good and well-intentioned the people practising them may be, if they are not of Christ, in Christ, or rooted in Christ then they are of their father the devil.

John 8:44 Amplified Bible (AMP)

“⁴⁴You are of your father, the devil, and it is your will to practice the lusts and gratify the desires [which are characteristic] of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a falsehood, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar [himself] and the father of lies and of all that is false.”

It does not matter what they promise or how sincere they start out. If they are of their father the devil, they will eventually show you their fruit! It’s a DNA thing! This scripture shows you my approach to politics or politicians that are not rooted in Christ. Let me just point out that when speaking to these people or interacting with them, I do not denounce them as sinners nor do I act like a fanatical loon. Instead, I interact with them in a normal and godly manner. However, I never get lulled into thinking that even though we might be working on or cooperating together in a community project-like helping the underprivileged—that they are anything different than their root. A tree will always produce after its kind. So-right wing, left wing, any wing—if you are

not from my God and of my God, I want nothing to do with your views. Those views and philosophies have a root DNA which comes from Satan.

It might sound harsh and judgemental, but it saves me a lot of hassle. It also helps me to then work well with these people of the world and their worldly systems. It helps me to focus on whom I am trying to reach and impact with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. When they come to me saying that it is good to help the poor, I agree with them. My Bible tells me that helping the poor is something that pleases God, but because I know that our root DNA is different, this knowledge safeguards me from compromising my Biblical stand in the performance of my duties. Because, at the end of the day:

John 8:44 New International Version (NIV):

⁴⁴ *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

My political view is this: **I am a “Kingdomist!”**

- I believe in and follow the God of creation, Yahweh El Shaddai
- He is my God and King – my religion and politics
- I am a Bible-believing Christian
- I am a citizen of the Kingdom of God
- I am in His military force which is called the church of Jesus Christ
- I am in active service – I am a disciple of Jesus Christ and discipler of men
- I try to follow the laws of the Kingdom which can be found in the Gospels, specifically the words of Jesus Christ; for example, the Beatitudes in Matthew. With regards to these, I live with and from a Biblical view and mind-set, not a religious view and mind-set
- I do not separate or compartmentalise any aspect of my life from my God

Everything I do is permeated and saturated by the DNA of my root, Jesus!

Jesus says he is the vine and I am the branch! I have his DNA.

John 15:5 New International Version (NIV)

⁵ *"I am the vine; you are the branches.
If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; ...*

The government and all authority come from God. By His own power He brought it all into existence, and by His sustaining power He keeps it in existence. By His divine authority, He delegated authority to mankind. Unfortunately, mankind sinned and lost this delegated authority to the enemy-Satan. Through Christ's work on the cross, He got this back. To cut a long story short, Christ has delegated this authority to the church.

However, the authority I want to talk on here is civil authority and politics. The government, civil authority, has been delegated by God to man. Government is an institution; who and what that is in the institution 'flavours' that institution with their DNA. Therefore, it is important for the church to release its members/disciples of kingdom ministry into the area of government in order to find and support worldly people of peace. These individuals will preferably be those who are friendly to the children of God, in order to ensure that the principles of good governance are practiced so that we, the populace, may live in peace and safety.

Romans 13:1 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹*"let every person be loyally subject to the governing (civil) authorities.
For there is no authority except from God [by His permission, His sanction],
and those that exist do so by God's appointment."*

1 Peter 2:13-15 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹³*"Be submissive to every human institution and authority for the sake of the Lord, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴Or to governors as sent by him to bring vengeance (punishment, justice) to those who do wrong and to encourage those who do good service. ¹⁵For it is God's will and intention that by doing right [your good and honest lives] should silence (muzzle, gag) the ignorant charges and ill-informed criticisms of foolish persons."*

When political views enter into the institution of government and through the authority of the government promote and sow their views, they have an impact on your personal life. These views influence society and saturate that society with its root DNA.

I obey, support, and pray for the government of this land. According to the two scriptures quoted above, I do not support any system other than that which is based in Jesus Christ! Whenever I interact with the people of this world and with the system of this world, I am very conscious of the fact that our DNA is different. I am also very aware that, even though I am in the world and its system, I am not *of* it! I am also aware that the enemy has done his best to corrupt and hinder every plan of God. So, when dealing with people in the world system, I am aware that their ‘leaf’ (for example: a community project or a cause) might look exactly like mine and we might collaborate in a common cause. *But*, I never forget that the DNA is different. My primary purpose is to ensure the furtherance of the message and impact of the Gospel of the Kingdom in people’s lives!

Matthew 13:24-29 New International Version (NIV) the Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ “Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.’”

We need to be aware that we will be growing and working next to and with people of another Kingdom. As these two kingdoms are at war, we need to be cognisant of this fact and operate in an appropriate manner. So when working to further the intent of God through the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom, know that this message will be opposed and the training environment will also be opposed. It is this environment that produces Kingdom ministers whom the enemy actually fears, and so he will do all in his power to sow weeds in and among the training environment.

Let me repeat my point of view: I do not separate religion from politics; in fact, I do not separate my God from any aspect of my life.

- Jesus is my God and Saviour – that’s my religion
- Jesus is my LORD – that’s my politics
- Jesus is my commander – that’s my military service
- Jesus’ words are my law – that’s my military, civil, and social laws
- Jesus is my friend and brother – that’s my family

Whilst there are parallels and similarities in my belief system as a Kingdomist to other political philosophies, I do not want you to mistake my preference given in this illustration as a political endorsement of one side or the other. I am a Kingdomist, a Christian, and a disciple of Jesus Christ. The roots of my belief and value system lie deeply in Jesus Christ.

“Branch” socialism-the left- and “branch” capitalism-the right- in my opinion are two branches from the same tree. Both have the same root system and DNA. How do I know this? For one, look at a government that has been in power for a few terms. It becomes riddled with corruption; they cannot help themselves. It’s in their DNA to produce after their father the Devil. That DNA ultimately comes from the enemy, and we all know what poisonous sap flows from that root. Humanism (and the other philosophies) and Christianity are mutually exclusive. Oil and water, they do not mix well.

I’m giving you this information about myself and my views because I’m using a worldly political illustration as one of my main illustrations to help explain a disciple environment. One of the reasons I am using politics is to deliberately create conflict and contention. I find that we have been so infiltrated with the underlying values of humanism (and the other philosophies) in the church, as well as society, that we have an unspoken rule of not mixing religion with politics. This is soapbox area for me as I am a Kingdomist; therefore, God is my religion and politics. He is the centre of my belief system and He is my ruler-that’s religion and politics.

So when I talk about God, I am always talking about religion and politics, Kingdom! I cannot and will not separate the two. Even if it is not politically correct (pc) and even if it makes some people uncomfortable. In my opinion, if a Christian is uncomfortable, then that Christian has

been influenced by pc and the religiously correct element. In return, that element is influenced by humanism (and the other philosophies) and is influenced by the spirit of lawlessness, which is already at work in the world. Thus, that person has been influenced by someone carrying satanic DNA!

Political correctness has its roots in humanism (and the other philosophies). We mutually do not get along and if we are honest, we mutually hate each other, the system, and the philosophy. If we are really truthful, we are at war! I am a Kingdomist, a Christian, and a disciple of Jesus Christ. The roots of my belief and value system lie deeply in Jesus Christ. I am more than fully aware of the common root of humanism that supports both extremes of the political world, and that is the enemy of the Church-Satan. Humanism and Christianity are mutually exclusive.

I am able to separate my thinking of the need for the institutions of good government, recognising that they are from God as well as recognising that they can, and more often than not, are filled with non-Christians; both good people and bad people. These people then influence these institutions to reflect their belief system, and this then has a corresponding effect on the community that that system serves.

All political views outside of Jesus Christ are based in humanism (and the other philosophies). To further develop my third illustration (the comparison of the two states), I would like to also share my opinion on humanism and a satanic battle plan that moves people away from the worship and service of God to the worship and service of Satan.

Definition: *Humanism*

1. *A school of philosophy that believes in human effort and ingenuity rather than religion.*
3. *Interest in the welfare of people.¹*

This is my understanding of humanism:

- Humanism is basically a belief system that says ‘believe in man’.
- Humanism is basically a belief system that denies or ignores ‘sin’.

Listen to a humanist when they are talking or listen to a news show or a current affairs program when they talk about someone who has done something wrong. The tendency is to lay blame on everything other than the individual and individual responsibility!

- Humanism promotes ‘good works’.

These ‘works’ seem acceptable in the sight of men. This shows one of the core differences between humanism and Biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity involves the thought process that we are sinners because we have been *born* sinners (the sin of iniquity – inherited sin). We are therefore in need of a Saviour, who we accept by recognising ourselves as sinners and in need of salvation. We do good works not for salvation, but as a result of our salvation.

We need to recognise personally what we are—sinners against God—and what we need: salvation from God. It is our personal, individual responsibility to accept, or not to accept, the gift of salvation offered by God; thus, through the work of the Holy Spirit, have Him deal with our guilt and sin and the effect(s) of that sin in our lives! Humanistic psychiatry at best shows us the cause of our guilt; leaving humanistic psychology to help us best live with the guilt-behaviour management. No human philosophy can remove sin or its consequences! Only by accepting Jesus through His sacrifice on the cross can the guilt and sin be removed.

Here is a satanic battle plan. More often than not, when Satan attacks, he does not appear as he really is; that is, he generally does not invite a person to move from serving the living God to serving him in one direct step. He is more subtle than that. He will take a person on a journey that can completely erode their belief system. Keep in mind that an individual does not necessarily have to step down the whole ladder to be ensnared. It simply takes one step away from God accompanied by the act of staying there.

Just imagine a circular staircase proceeding from the ground floor upward in a half circle that leads to the first floor. At the top of the circle on the landing are those who worship and serve the one, true God. Moving down the circle are landings where the enemy has devised a system to entrap and ensnare those who are not paying attention to where and what they are standing on and doing. Each step away from God, from the first step, is a step towards the devil and his plans. In addition, to become entangled in the schemes of the devil, a person does not have to

move all the way to the actual *worship* of Satan. An individual can stay on every landing between God's landing and Satan's. To you that step might look like you are moving away from both God and Satan. For example, you might think that you are not submitting to either by not believing in the existence of the supernatural; however, every step taken away from God is a step taken towards Satan even if it looks like you are not heading in his direction.

This, then, is a staircase to Hell, to Satan worship:

- **Formalism**

On the first landing, a religious person takes their first step down and away from God when he denies God the right to change him. This then gets disguised as religion or the home of the religious spirit; that spirit has more than likely done more damage to the church than any other spirit. The moment you deny God the right to change you, you replace that right with rules and religious laws.

- **Materialism**

This is the next step down. People pay too much attention to the things God made: things and money. Here people become lovers of the world system, the counterfeit to God's Kingdom. Materialism can manifest itself in all of the steps in different ways. For example, it can manifest itself in formalism through the love of a church building-the love of a system and not the body of Christ. Also, it can manifest itself in existentialism-in a love for the life of the planet over a love and concern for human life.

- **Humanism**

They then move further down by ignoring God's warnings and beginning to exalt people. People become more important than God. This leads to the deception found in good works.

- **Modernism**

Once a person denies God the right to change him or her, and the focus moves from being God/Christ centric to man centric, man begins to adapt God's Word to justify whatever

he wants. They argue away a large part of God's word, and they call themselves teachers that will teach what their itchy ears want to hear.

- **Rationalism**

From this position, they can now strip away all their dead religion and its traditions and trappings and even go so far as to say they are not even a 'believer in God'.

From this point onward, there are two paths down the stairway to hell that a person can choose, one is social and the other is spiritual. A system without the true God governing it is in need of a system to govern its people.

- **Marxism**

Social – society and mankind without God. The answer proposed for governing this godless society is communism (eastern governments, e.g., Russia and China) and/or socialism (western governments, e.g. the European Union). Marxism cannot meet the needs of the spiritual man; therefore, we must consider the second path of this downward staircase.

- **Existentialism**

Spiritual – Once a person reaches this place, they have reached a very dark place indeed because here...anything goes! An existentialist will believe in anything except the God of Creation. Existentialism is the search for meaning outside of logic. It is the search to fill the God vacuum in mankind outside of the spiritual realm of the Almighty God. Here mankind enters the spiritual realm, the second heaven, under demonic influence. This leads to pure enslavement in the Satanic.

- **Spiritism**

This is Satan's occult belief system; the worship of Satan as God. As we get closer to the return of Christ, in my opinion, these two belief systems-Marxism and Existentialism-will probably be joined into the one world government system designed by the false prophet and governed by the Beast. These two systems will be combined under the

Antichrist as he implements his mark of the Beast system. Until Jesus comes and declares victory over him, Satan will be served.

Proverbs 14:12 New International Version (NIV)

¹² *“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.”*

The enemy fears a real Christian disciple because that disciple carries a message of liberation and freedom from slavery and deception. The message of the Gospel of the Kingdom “*is the power of God for the salvation of everyone*” (Romans 1:16). When a real Christian disciple is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and especially if they are operating in unison with other believers, the gates of hell cannot stand against them. For the world’s sinners to be saved from Hell, the church needs real disciples. For the Church to help sinners to connect with God, the church needs real disciples. Workers in the fields!

Empowered disciples are among the deadliest enemies of Satan’s purposes.

- That is why he fears Jesus’ disciples
- That is why he tries to destroy the real discipleship birthing fields
- That is why it is hard to find a real discipleship growth environment

And that is what this book and sermon series is all about:

Being a Disciple and making a Disciple in a Discipleship environment

NB: this thought is in essence the teaching at the heart of this political illustration:

An environment is created based on the belief system of the group.

As a Christian, you are born into the Church to serve in the Kingdom with certain abilities, gifts, talents, and potential; that is, everything God knows you will need for your job in the family business. He has already placed these abilities and gifts within you. In addition, you are commanded and commissioned to be a disciple and to go and make disciples! You need to know the difference between service and ministry, and you need to operate at both the first and second ministry levels. Note: The environment you are in determines the release of that potential!

*If you, as a disciple, find yourself in an enablement environment
your potential will not be released!*

*If you, as a disciple, find yourself in an empowerment environment
your potential will be released!*

It is that simple!

CHAPTER 3: FINDING OR IDENTIFYING A DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENT

A non-discipleship environment is an environment I would compare to the political system called the nanny state – entitlement! If you think back to the illustrations I gave, this would also look like the ‘passenger cruise liner’ and the ‘leaf of the tree’ whose root is Satan. In politics, the term and understanding of the use of the term ‘nanny state’ refers to a system where the desire of a state is to protect and look after a citizen from the cradle to the grave. This concept most likely comes from the nanny looking after and protecting another individual’s baby.

Much of this information was taken from Wikipedia as relating to the “Nanny State”. The negative aspect of this is governmental overprotection and control over every aspect of its citizens’ lives. In a nanny state, hundreds of laws and regulations for the management and safeguard of its society are constantly being passed. Areas of control, for example, can be found in the areas of public health; such as, disease surveillance, quarantines, mandatory or government-subsidized vaccination, food labelling regulations, school lunch programs, and the prohibition of substances natural or otherwise.

Consumer protectionism is another area that removes or controls free choices; such as, helmet laws, anti-smoking laws, and many other laws and regulations regarding personal choices that infringe into a person’s privacy. Naturally these ‘left’ orientated policies would be opposed by ‘right’ wing conservative and capitalist policies that favour a more conservative, capitalist free market system and less government intrusion into people’s lives.

Many countries within the European Union are considered to be ‘nanny states’. For example, the union has been criticised as acting like a nanny state by banning mercury in barometers in June 2007. Many such regulations are passed, which eventually lead to a mandate control of an individual’s daily life and lifestyle. (Other buzz words for the nanny state are ‘big government’, ‘welfare state’, ‘paternalism’, and ‘social engineering’.)

Many of the European Union countries, due to the big government left wing socialist policies, are currently undergoing severe economic hardships. This is largely due to the enablement and

entitlement policies of the socialist system. For example, Greece is an example of a nanny state gone wrong. It is an example of the results of excessive enablement due to the combination of international and local factors. Greece is on the verge of bankruptcy. To keep their system going, the government borrowed more money from money lenders. Eventually, it reached the point where the money lenders saw that, due to a number of events, the Greek government would be unable to pay back the money unless something was done. So the money lenders instructed the Greeks to implement austerity measures.

These austerity measures meant that the Greek government had to change the way they governed the country, which was not what they were elected to do. The money lenders told them to stop spending, cut enablement and entitlement programs, and raise taxes. In economics, austerity measures are described as policies of deficit cutting, lowering of spending, a reduction in the amount of benefits and public services, entitlements and entitlements that are provided to the citizens by the government of the country.

So when the measures are applied, what gets cut? Social development projects, welfare, and social spending are the most common programs that are initially cut. Taxes also go up. When these measures are implemented, there is a decline in the standard of living. A man gets told he will have a guaranteed job for life with benefits and a pension at the end. During the time of austerity measures, pensions get cut, the retirement age gets raised, public services are reduced, education and entitlements are reined in, and the protests begin! After all, he was promised this. It is his right to then have it!

Definition: *Entitlement*

To give (a person) the right to do or have something; qualify; allow ²

Within the nanny state, a citizen is entitled, whether morally, through social principles, or by legislation, to receive entitlements from the government. At the time of the writing of this book, these austerity measures have been met with anger by the Greek people. At first, it started with

peaceful demonstrations taking place in front of the Greek parliament (starting May 25, 2011), but it has since led to riots and social unrest.

Within the church, I believe and I have come to believe, that a disciple can only survive in a discipleship orientated environment.

Remember at the beginning of chapter two, I said “try and work this one out”?

- Most church leaders I know are all about wanting to raise up disciples!
- Most church members I know are also all about being disciples!
- Why, then, is raising up a disciple a nearly impossible task?
- Why is it that I see church leaders and church members struggling, bleeding, and battered when they try to either raise disciples or try to become disciples?

To create a space for a disciple to grow, the environment must be one that a disciple can be born into, trained up in, and released from. This seems to be difficult, if not impossible!

Understand this: to create a discipleship orientated environment, you must first change or destroy the enablement environment!

There will always be those that promote and want enablement, the entitlements, and the rights to be served within the modern church. And they will fight to keep them. A disciple will then walk into a church that is enablement, entitlement, and rights driven and that disciple will implement austerity measures—change. Some will rally and embrace the call to empowerment; however, some people are happy and comfortable with where they are and will oppose the change.

One of the phrases I use for this zone at our local church is the ‘no excuse zone’.

- You have no excuse not to fully implement Matt 22:37-40 – (the law of the Kingdom)
- You have no excuse not to fully implement Matt 28:18-20 – (the order of the Kingdom)

The above two bullet points are **level one ministry!**

Question: Are you Matthew 22 and 28 compliant?

- **The disciple, in the discipleship environment, has no personal rights and entitlements.**
- **The disciple in the discipleship environment has personal responsibilities and duties.**

Between a sinner being born into the kingdom of God, (let us say that that is now a ‘baby’ Christian, someone who has just signed up to kingdom service) and the act of reaching maturity, (a Christian who is about to practice level two ministry), there might be a certain amount of leeway given. Certain rights and latitudes might be given as they are in their training and development phase. However, once the recruit walks out of basic training and has become a level one and two minister, the disciple should automatically develop the attitude of having ‘personal responsibilities and duties’ rather than continuing to have a recruit mentality of being told what to do along with the when and how. The disciple should automatically ‘love’ living and operating in the ‘no-excuse’ zone.

A discipleship environment is empowerment and freedom. If you place a disciple in an ‘entitlement’ driven environment, the disciple will succumb to the rights and entitlements offered and be in danger of developing a sense of entitlement! There will be the danger of succumbing to the lifestyle of the passenger cruise ship.

Imagine if you will, what happens if you introduce entitlements, enablement, and rights into the lifestyle of a battleship! For example, you have the right to be informed that battle stations will only be called during official office working hours! What would happen if the personnel on that ship embraced that right, accepted it, and was then called to battle stations during the middle of the night! Further, imagine a person joining the battleship who has somehow slipped through the basic training phase. They did not do basic training and think that this is a cruise liner dressed up as a battleship, a ‘theme’ holiday if you will. What would happen amongst the crew?

Imagine if a naval ship’s captain took control of the cruise ship and began to change it into a battleship, there would be a battle on the ship! Can you imagine what the paying passengers would be saying? If they had all of their entertainment taken away and replaced with basic

military training, and then, of all horrors, made the passengers work on board the ship. Can you imagine the letters sent to both the offices of the ship and the ship's head office?

Today, there are many church leaders and members who want to lead and be part of a discipleship orientated environment. It eventually comes down to a personal choice on the part of the disciple as to how they find it or get into it. For you, if this is you, it might start with the following questions:

- How do you recognise a suitable environment?
- When you find one, what do you do with it?
- Or, the big problem comes in recognising that you are not in one and knowing what you will eventually have to do about it.

I don't know how many times I have held a men's camp or conference and have been contacted by an attendee who was called into action in wanting to become a disciple. Unfortunately, they went back to their local church and found it to be an enablement environment.

What do you say to someone who dearly wants to enter the family business, but is told to pull up a deck chair, order a drink, and enjoy their cruise? Many times I would be contacted and asked for help on how to survive in such an environment, or how to awaken the passengers within the environment. I had difficulty in trying to encourage such a believer in trying to survive as a 'military trained' disciple on a passenger ship.

The Lord has had to speak to me about this reluctance of giving direct advice, and so now I have come up with the following. If the Lord has called you to an enablement church and He wants you to stay and be His agent for change, then know this: you will be in a conflict situation, it will be tough, and barring an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fire, it will take a long time to develop the discipleship environment. It might even be that the whole ship gets scraped down to its keel (core) and rebuilt into the battleship that the Lord originally intended for it to be. If He has not called you to stay, then you need to seek Him as to where He wants to place you and release you in ministry levels one and two. Read Matthew 13 again.

Movement from entitlement to empowerment is CHANGE—it is accompanied by conflict!

Movement from empowerment to entitlement is CHANGE – it is infused in self and personal rights!

For such awakened disciples who are called to be change agents, a hard path lies ahead.

My advice to you is this:

1. Listen carefully to what the Spirit of the LORD has to say to you
2. Do what He tells you to do no matter what the cost (after counting the cost)
3. Recruit and work with a team of disciples that have the same call to stay and be the change with you

Finding or Identifying a Discipleship Environment

A discipleship environment is an environment of *empowerment*. Empowerment within any context is the delegation of power and authority to do a job or to perform a task. Within the church context, a disciple is given a task; they are also given the gifts and abilities and the power and authority to fulfil that task. They are also given the promise of the continued abiding presence of Christ throughout the performance of that task. With all this comes the accountability. You can see this empowerment method used continuously by Jesus.

Matthew 28:18-20 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸ “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Today we have a church in many instances that has both an ‘enablement element’ in it and an ‘empowerment element’ in it as well. You can tell from the definitions, illustrations, and discussion above that it is not an easy mix. The question you need to ask yourself is this, which do you fit into and where are you comfortable?

Empowerment encourages individual development. It encourages people to gain the skills and knowledge that help them overcome and become people who have the ability to breakthrough barriers and obstacles in their lives, developing not only themselves but contributing to the development and betterment of all around them. And in so doing improve the society in which they live.

(Below is one of the lists I have collected down the years and have lost reference to it, so I am unable to give any reference.)

Empowerment includes the following, or similar, capabilities:

- The ability to make decisions about personal/collective circumstances
- The ability to access information and resources for decision-making
- Ability to consider a range of options from which to choose
(not just yes/no, either/or.)
- Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making
- Having a positive belief in one's ability to make change
- Ability to learn and access skills for improving personal/collective circumstance
- Ability to inform others' perceptions through exchange, education, and engagement
- Involvement in a never-ending, self-initiated process of growth and change
- Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma
- Increasing one's ability in discerning thinking to sort out right and wrong

Today we have in the church an 'enablement wing' and an 'empowerment wing'. The question to ask yourself is 'which do you fit into and are comfortable in'?

Finding and Identifying an Environment

Warning: Be careful what you ask for!

Prior to running our Men's Boot Camp in 2011, I went before the Lord and asked Him for some specific words that He wanted to say to the team running the camp about the camp and what He would be doing in the lives of the men who attended.

He gave me three words: *shift*, *shock*, *advancement*. That was it. So I asked Him what that meant for us that year, and this is what I received. He was going to *shift* the men coming to the camp toward Himself. The result of this *shift* would be a *shock*. As He drew them closer to Him, their lives and their Christian walk would experience a *shock*-a tremor. A shockwave was going to go through them. The closer He draws you to Himself, the more you will have to and need to address 'issues' that are not acceptable to the LORD.

This will entail dealing with wounds, faults, and hidden sins. This will entail taking Jesus into our lives in areas that might have been shut down and off limits to Him for years. Much in their lives will be challenged and have to be sifted through. A new level of discipline will be brought into their lives as the Holy Spirit takes them out to the desert to be tested and tempted in preparation for the third and last word: *advancement*. A life of discipleship is a lifestyle of *advancement*; that is, continued growth and maturity in the things of the LORD. He would draw them to Himself, disciple them, and then release them into active kingdom service. They were prepared for level one and two ministry and activated and released into the family business.

This is a disciple environment. It is a hard environment to adapt to if you are coming out of an enablement environment. It is like moving from ship to ship - from the passenger cruise ship to the battleship/disciple ship.

To identify the empowerment environment look at the following passage of scripture:

Ephesians 4:11-16 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹¹"And His gifts were [varied; He Himself appointed and gave men to us] some to be apostles (special messengers), some prophets (inspired preachers and expounders), some evangelists (preachers of the Gospel, travelling missionaries), some pastors (shepherds of His flock) and teachers. ¹²His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church), ¹³[That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.

¹⁴So then, we may no longer be children, tossed [like ships] to and fro between chance gusts of teaching and wavering with every changing wind of doctrine, [the

prey off] the cunning and cleverness of unscrupulous men, [gamblers engaged] in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead. ¹⁵Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). ¹⁶For because of Him the whole body (the church, in all its various parts), closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints and ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions], grows to full maturity, building itself up in love.”

Tips and Advice in Finding a Discipleship Growth Environment

1. Look at the Church Leaders

The Leaders will be Fivefold in Function

This book is not about discussing the validity of the fivefold ministry, but I accept the full restoration of this ministry by the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ in these last days. When I look at this, these ministries are function based and are not hierarchy-based - but that is a discussion for another time. (Refer to the scripture above: Ephesians 4:11-16.)

The first thing to look for, in trying to identify an empowerment environment, is the deliberate activation of the fivefold ministry within the local church. If a local church has a fully functioning fivefold ministry within their church or their intention is to raise up the full fivefold to active and functioning status, then you will be in or have the makings of a discipleship environment. If you discern that your church environment leans towards enablement and one or two fivefold ministers are called into your church to work, or are raised up and released into your church to work, you will find or begin to find a conflict developing within this church environment as the application of ‘austerity’ measures within that enablement environment begins or does take place.

The Leaders will Produce and Facilitate a Change Environment

A change process is underway to transform that enablement environment into an empowerment, apostolically orientated environment. With the release of the fivefold within a church

environment, change and austerity are inevitable! I believe that you cannot have an empowerment environment within a church if that church is not based on the functioning ministry of apostles and prophets. It takes apostles and prophets functioning and being fully released in their ministry to raise an apostolic church - an empowerment environment.

Ephesians 2:19-21 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹⁹"Therefore you are no longer outsiders (exiles, migrants, and aliens, excluded from the rights of citizens), but you now share citizenship with the saints (God's own people, consecrated and set apart for Himself); and you belong to God's [own] household.

²⁰You are built upon **the foundation of the apostles and prophets** with Christ Jesus Himself the chief Cornerstone. ²¹In Him the whole structure is joined (bound, welded) together harmoniously, and it continues to rise (grow, increase) into a holy temple in the Lord [a sanctuary dedicated, consecrated, and sacred to the presence of the Lord]."

With the manifestation and application of the fivefold ministry in a local church, the atmosphere of that church becomes vibrant, expectant, and it births an overcoming lifestyle among its members; thus, creating a platform for a ministry launch into the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, this atmosphere will be toxic and found to be intolerable to people who favour the enablement model of church. It will be a church that has good fathers and mothers. Discipleship and mentoring will be a core facet of the lifestyle. It will also exhibit a martial atmosphere that will prove contrary to the PC and RC crowd. It will be a church that will be loved, feared, and hated (I speak from personal experience). You will find camaraderie, loyalty, and love. You will find 'awe' for those being deployed to join, as they know without a doubt that this is an active battleship. And it, the ship, actually goes out and does battle. You will find a pure hatred against these churches from those who tried unsuccessfully to slip into enablement and entitlements, and from those who were subsequently dealt with by both the leadership and the crew.

The Leaders will Facilitate Level One and Two Ministry Launch

It is not a blessing model. It is not an enablement model. It is a birthing place; that is, a sending place and an overseeing place. The status quo Christianity cannot thrive in such an environment.

When looking for a discipleship environment, look for a church leadership that exhibits a fivefold strategy for activating their members into Kingdom service. These leaders should always be about moving people towards Jesus and becoming more like Him; this will be evident in most everything they say or do. Look for the prophetic and apostolic ministries that are restoring and designing proper divine building strategies for empowering the church.

Here is a helpful warning! In looking for the prophetic and apostolic, make sure you find the genuine article. There are a lot of counterfeits out there. Fruit! Look at the quality of the disciples they produce. Look for the quality of life within the church. Look carefully again at Ephesians 4:11-16. Don't be scared to look for 'fruit' in addition to asking questions. I can assure you they will be examining you and the state of your life to see what needs to be done in regards to your austerity and empowerment! So, look for the manifestation of godly apostolic wisdom! Look to see if the church has godly fathers and mothers that are stepping into that role and imparting legacy to the next generation.

These Leaders and this Type of Church will be Christ Centric!

Are the leaders discipling their people? In other words, are they moving their people towards Jesus and training their people to be like Jesus! Remember, and fair warning to you, this process will not be easy, you will pay a cost for being in a Discipleship environment as well as being a Disciple of Christ! Finally, look at the leadership and at what they are doing. Listen to their message. To them it is all about Jesus and releasing you into His business.

2. Look at the Church Members

The Church Member will be a Disciple, a Discipler and an Over-comer

A discipleship environment is full of breakthrough believers and over-comers, not merely attendees and subscribers. So if you find 'church members' be careful; you might be in the wrong place. In a discipleship environment, you will find recruits at various levels. You will find veterans, and you will find them discipling the recruits. You will find that each of the veterans

has a vision, mission, and purpose. In addition, they will be personally and actively involved in the family business. They will be Matthew 22 and 28 as well as Ephesians 2:10 compliant.

If you take the time to ask them what their ministry is, the response will probably ‘blow your mind’; each one carries such a huge vision for God that, in the natural, it is impossible to fulfil except with the direct intervention of God in their lives. *Note:* they are ‘ordinary’ people just like you! When you listen, you will find that it is similar to reading about the exploits of the mighty men of David in 2 Samuel 23. These people are *not* ‘church members’, they are the mighty men and women of God - they serve God. They are His Disciples!

It is time for some ‘word’ reclamation! A Christian, a believer, a church member **is a disciple!** The word ‘church’ is a collective noun for a group of disciples on mission together. And there is only one level of ministry for a disciple, and that is disciple normal. (This level will be discussed later in this book.) *You are either a disciple according to Biblical standards, or you are not!* The disciple, this church member that you will find in an empowerment environment, has very little tolerance for the enablement system!

A discipleship environment is built around these people: breakthrough believers, the senior ministry leadership, and fivefold ministers of the church! Look at the body; look at the company of believers! You will see that each one will be actively involved in level one and two ministries and will be operating, to a large degree, from discipleship normal.

- What is the general mentality and attitude of the believer sitting next to you in church?
- Do they have an enablement lifestyle or an empowerment lifestyle?
- What do they love to talk about?
- What do they love to do?

This thought might be a little controversial, but, I have often found it to be the case – *an enablement believer and an empowerment believer generally do not get along!* You will not find them mixing in equal numbers in a church. In an enablement environment, the empowered will be considered disruptive. Their lifestyles are completely different, as illustrated previously by the

two distinct examples of the individuals on the passenger cruise liner and the crew of the battleship.

The disciple has correct priorities.

Matthew 6:33 Amplified Bible (AMP)

³³“But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides.”

Over the years, when talking about the priority of Christians, the general list of priorities given (in order of importance) was this:

1. God first
 2. Family second
 3. Ministry to the Lord third (although this often got confused with service)
 4. Church service
- ...and so on and so forth down the list

A few months prior to the writing of this book, my wife read something to me from a book she was reading at the time concerning this particular passage of scripture. She often reads her books to me, which I enjoy because I then get to hear the highlights without having to read them myself! I cannot remember the particular book that she read, but this is a summary of the points I found important and relevant here:

1. God first
2. Ministry to God second (Kingdom/family business, level one and two ministry)
3. Family third

Now, read that passage of scripture again carefully. Personally, I agree with the second list. If I put God first and His business second, He will then take care of me in regards to all other relationships and ‘stuff’ in my life. If my wife and son have the same priorities and live under the

same understanding, the resonating effect of God's favour will be evident within my household. Look for the evidence of God in a disciple's life and in their household!

In closing this chapter, I want to give you this list of characteristics of a disciple - of a breakthrough believer. I received this list from a friend of mine who was leading a church with her husband in South Africa:

Characteristics of breakthrough believers:

1. They grow in adversity and persecution and produce new life
2. They are sent ahead as pioneers – a new move of God
3. They can face existing religious systems, oppose and defeat them
4. They are often excellent role models (understand legacy and fatherhood)
5. They are moved (sown) under intense pressure – read Acts
6. Persecution produced a greater quality, character- not chocolate soldiers that melt
7. Crowd pressure never prevents them from becoming high achievers for Him
8. They will flee a place of popularity. (Matt 14:22-23, He put them in the boat)
9. Obedience to Christ today is more important to them than what they did yesterday, than resting on our laurels
10. They are constantly guided to rise above self, sin, and demons
11. They retain the Biblical standard of truth in their lives - no compromise
12. They are practising believers rather than hearers only
13. They stay true to their convictions despite contrary winds and pressures
14. They will leave 'Ur' for the land of 'Canaan' and they will remain
15. The purposes of God in them remain the same; the vessels must change, grow, and mature
16. With their personal growth will come progressive revelation from God
17. They will move in present day truths because they are learning to become sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit
18. They are always being led by the Holy Spirit to breakthrough new limitations whether in their own life, circumstances surrounding them or in the lives of others
19. They are taught by God to hear His voice and obey it

20. These people also become progressively perceptive of God's overall plan, big picture.
21. They know it is only the truth, Jesus, which sets man free
22. They are able to advance well under godly delegated authority (Acts 11:21)
23. They understand the power of submission to each other and to flow in recognition of each other's gifting in the unity of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 8)
24. Coming under the hand of God is an essential quality of a breakthrough believer
25. They begin to listen for God's plan, time, and purposes in every situation
26. For these people to function is more important than position
27. Their vision is for their city, nation, and other nations, not just for their own life or household & local church
28. They begin to think 'us & them' not 'me & mine' only
29. Their heartbeat is to instil life changes in others not just to scare them into heaven
30. Their desire is to birth a new generation of Christians that will be "born" by the Spirit of God out of a sinner's recognition of the need for salvation—someone knowing that they need to change and serve their Lord with all they possess. No more anaemic, emotional Christian babes that are waiting for everyone to pick them up and nurse them
31. They will be a company of 'parenting-leaders'; thus, creating sons and daughters in the faith, not orphans that will be carried away by emotions and the enemy
32. They will equip and multiply themselves into these people
33. They know that it takes one life to change another

Group Discussion

1. Describe in your own words the difficulty in finding or creating a discipleship environment.
2. Can you identify any additional illustrations that can show you the difference between the two environments?
3. Why and how does an environment impact the use of your gifts and ministries?
4. How has the general satanic battle plan affected the development of your discipleship lifestyle?
5. What strategies can and should be used to destroy the plan of the enemy?
6. Discuss rights and entitlements vs. responsibilities and duty.
7. List some rights and entitlements found in an enablement environment.
8. List some responsibilities and duties found in an empowerment environment.
9. Is conflict inevitable in the establishment of a discipleship environment and, if so, why?
10. Why should you always be careful for what you ask God for?
11. How do you measure up in the characteristic stakes?

CHAPTER 4: WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Finding the right Disciple for the Discipleship environment

The illustration that I will use mostly in this chapter will consist of an HMS battleship Life House vs. the passenger cruise liner Life House. Let me add some characters to this illustration, as mentioned in the previous chapter:

A motor car makes its way down to the harbour; its occupants consist of twin brothers. The first is dressed in Hawaiian swim shorts, a ticket located in the palm of his hand. He is very excited, for he is starting a cruise that he has been saving for throughout his years in college. The other brother has battle fatigues on with placement orders in his hand. He's just finished his basic and specialised training and is about to embark on a lifelong dream of joining the navy and serving his country. He has been deployed!

There are two brothers, two tickets, two ships, and two journeys.

Both are going out to sea on huge ocean-going vessels!

The similarities of these two ships of the sea are evident, as well as the differences:

- They both sail on the ocean (remember the “sea” in Bible often depicts humanity)
- They both have mission, vision, purpose, and values
- They both serve people
- They both feed people on board, and see to people's needs
- They both visit foreign ports
- They both offer their occupants an adventure of a lifetime.

Note: take this illustration and play around with it, (e.g.)

- What would happen if the twins got switched?
- What would the twins be thinking and feeling being switched?
- What would happen to the passengers on the cruise liner, or the sailors on HMS, as far as being influenced by someone from the other ship and lifestyle?
- What do you think would happen to the twins?
- Would their attitudes change? For the better, or for the worse?

Finding the right environment is important!

Definition: *Discipleship*

Discipleship is that process whereby a person becomes a follower of a certain teacher and they are there to imitate the teacher and live out his teachings.

Where there has been a father and a son, a mother and a daughter, an elderly man and one that is younger, there has been discipleship. Discipleship is as old as civilization. This relationship is found from the beginning pages of the Bible to the very conclusion of them. It permeates our society, whether with deliberate intent or by happenstance. Moses had Joshua, Elijah had Elisha, John the Baptist had disciples, Jesus had His disciples, and so did the Apostles.

An area that is weak in the modern church is the lack of discipleship throughout the church. More often than not, I see this in the church's leadership. Also, you have to look hard to find it practiced within the congregation; that is, to the level that I believe it *should* be practised within the church. This "level" that I am referring to would be the level we see in the Bible; for example, the level seen between Moses and Joshua and Jesus and His disciples. This level of discipleship should be practised with deliberate intent within the life of *every* member of the body. I believe that every Christian should *be* a disciple and should therefore be *making* disciples.

Christian discipleship recognizes Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelation of all truth. He is the only way to that truth! He is the only way to God! To get to God, you have to go through Him. You have to become like Him, like Jesus. He is the goal, the model, and the standard.

John 14:6 Amplified Bible (AMP)

"Jesus said to him, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by (through) Me. He came into this world to "bear witness to the truth."

John 18:37 Amplified Bible (AMP)

³⁷"Pilate said to Him, Then You are a King? Jesus answered, You say it! [You speak correctly!] For I am a King. [Certainly I am a King!] This is why I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the Truth. Everyone who is of the Truth [who is a friend of the Truth, who belongs to the Truth] hears and listens to My voice. He is Himself the exact representation of that truth."

Hebrews 1:1-3 New International Version (NIV)

¹"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word..."

For a person to get to the truth, to become an imitator of God, that person has to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. They have to become like Jesus Christ. Jesus is an exact representation of the Godhead, and that is the goal of Christian discipleship. No more, and no less!

Ephesians 5:1 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹"THEREFORE BE imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father]."

So a Christian disciple recognizes that, in order to become an imitator of God, they have to be an imitator of Christ. They also have to be *remade* by the Holy Spirit into His image.

John 13:13 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹³"You call Me the Teacher (Master) and the Lord, and you are right in doing so, for that is what I am."

Matthew 10:25a Amplified Bible (AMP)

²⁵"It is sufficient for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant or slave like his master..."

A disciple of Christ is in the process of **becoming** like Jesus!

A disciple of Christ is in the process of **talking, thinking, and operating** like Jesus!

A disciple of Christ even **begins to smell** like Jesus – I love this one!

Not long ago, I told the church during a Sunday service that they all smelt! So, I'll also tell you the same thing - that you smell! (not only through your nose)

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ "For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?"

Think about this scripture! Apply this scripture to yourself as you appear before the Lord. What I mean by that is this: when you stand in His presence now, or through prayer, worship, or service, what odour do you bring into the Throne room? What does He smell when He smells you?

In addition, apply this scripture to yourself as you interact with other people both saved and unsaved. What is it that you are releasing when you walk into a room? For example, if you walk into a cell group meeting, what weight, fragrance, sound, and/or anointing are you carrying into that meeting? What about the feeling you bring into the presence of a group of unsaved people that you are intending to disciple (according to Matthew 28)?

What a heavy responsibility to walk into a room knowing that, for someone there, you have the smell of death and to another the smell of life? Think on this: your impact into and upon a person's life, especially if they are unsaved, has an eternal life or death consequence that accompanies it. Your impact into a Christian's life could result in a disciple being trained and a legacy being released. A disciple carries some serious 'weight' to their life!

The key is the right environment; it will empower you to be all He has designed you to be. For you to achieve the goal of discipleship, *it is important for the disciple to be like his teacher.* You need the right environment in order to continue to become more and more like Jesus.

Recruiting

Disciples are recruited and trained

It is important, recruiting and training the right people for the right ship! Recruit well, and be sure that you are under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In level one ministry, we are called to serve God with our whole being. We are commanded to make disciples of all nations. What I promote in Life House is both a deliberate, intentional recruitment and targeting process. In addition, the disciple should respond to any opportunity that presents itself.

Let me briefly discuss these two thoughts:

1. Deliberate Targeting

I encourage each disciple of Life House to first go before the Lord and ask Him who, within their circle of influence, He wants to disciple within the year ahead. Once they have received their answer and the name of the target, they need to then deliberately formulate a plan of action to begin the discipleship process into this person's life. The disciple needs to be in consultation with the Holy Spirit as well as with their team of disciples surrounding them with support (e.g., a cell group, a band of brothers, or a band of sisters).

Using this 'download', ministry support, and various support programs on offer at Life House, they move this person towards the cross and wait on the Holy Spirit to bring this person to conviction and salvation. Once this person makes this commitment, they then begin the discipleship training process within this person's life. At Life House, they take them through the Big 5 Discipleship Training Programme. Their job is to then lead this person into level one and two ministry lifestyles. Whilst this is taking place, the disciple needs to then begin the process again; this process should take a disciple between twelve and eighteen months. Getting the person to level two ministry should take the disciple another three years post salvation.

2. Divine Encounters

A disciple should always be alert for the opportunities presented by the Holy Spirit. They should always be ready to bring the fragrance of the aroma of 'Christ's life' into a person's life. If the person is within 'personal encounter distance'-they live within about thirty minutes drive from your home or local church - then you should begin the process laid out in point one above. However, if they live further out than that distance, then a 'seed' should be planted, watered, and directed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Training

All I want to say here is this:

- A disciple will know that they have been called (recruited).
- A disciple will know their identity in Christ and develop the ability to look at themselves as God sees them.
- A disciple will know that they will have, and will continue to undergo, rigorous training.

A large amount of training deals with a disciple's identity and understanding in how to function in that identity. In other words, a disciple will know who they are, what they are, whose they are, and they know exactly what it is they are supposed to be doing.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.

If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.

*If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."*⁵

I have modified this quote from Sun Tzu to the following:

"If you know your God, know yourself and the enemy, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.

If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.

If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

This thought is important to note. When you disciple a person and instil in them from the start this high level of discipleship, let this level be their norm. It is better to raise them up in the way they should go so that they will not depart from it than to teach them the ways of ‘religion’; thus, leaving yourself with the task of retraining them.

“Nevertheless it is easier to form young soldiers and inspire them with proper notions of honour than to reanimate troops who have been once disheartened.”⁶

When you read the stories of the men and women in the Bible, you will find that most originate with a calling from God; this then is responded to by the soon to be disciple in various forms of fear and trembling. I think one of the lessons at ‘angel school’ is to teach prospective guardian angels how to say ‘fear not’ in a non-threatening and non-frightening way! On a serious note, it is at this point that revelation begins to be passed to the prospective disciple, and also most always it involves ‘identity’ and ‘mission’.

I shared with you, earlier in this book, the facts surrounding the Men’s Camp we conducted in 2011 and the advance words I was given by the Lord. They were as follows: *shift, shock, and advancement!*

He intended to begin to ‘shift’ the men who heard Him at the camp towards Himself. By doing this, he would be drawing them closer to Himself. A ‘shock’ would take place in their lives, as He aligned the men to Himself. The training and re-training process would begin. This process would then result in ‘advancement’ within their lives towards maturity - towards functional discipleship as required by the Lord and as laid down in the Word of God. It is here we begin to understand who we are, what we are, and what we are called to do. It is also here that we begin to gain a Kingdom perspective of who we are. Finally, when a disciple starts to realize that he is a son and friend, not a child and slave, *advancement* begins.

At Life House, we are developing the Big 5 Program of discipleship. As my roots are from Africa, I took to naming this programme the 'Big 5'. Most hunters would know what the Big 5 are! If you ever went on Safari in Africa and either wanted to hunt or sightsee, you would probably want to spot the Big 5; these consist of the African elephant, Cape buffalo, black rhino, lion, and leopard. Of all of the animals in Africa that are hunted, hunters grouped these particular five together in one group for a reason. If you try and hunt these five on foot, you will find them to be the most deadly and dangerous animals to hunt.

The Devil is a hunter of men!

1 Peter 5:8 New International Version (NIV)

⁸ "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Like a level one disciple, the devil is also a hunter of men! He is hunting you, so my question to you is 'what type of prey are you'? Are you deadly and dangerous? Are you weak, sick, and slow? A 'normal' disciple is a deadly prey for the enemy to hunt.

When a disciple understands the recruitment and training process activated in their life from God's perspective and begins to 'know' God, know themselves, and know the enemy, they become Christian Disciples who are deadly and dangerous to that enemy. They begin to live intentional lives! This Big 5 Program within Life House Church is designed to begin the initial training of the disciple or the retraining of a church attendee into becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus - mature, effective, and active in the Kingdom.

The Big 5 Basic Discipleship Programme:

1. Know God (hear him/developing intimacy with Him)
2. Live from your heart
3. Fulfil your calling
4. Know where you stand in time
5. Spiritual warfare

When studying the lives of the men and women of the Bible or the lives of other disciples down through the ages, you will find a general pattern to their lives as well as a **deliberate** and **intentional** preparation of their lives for Kingdom service. This is something which could help you begin to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in your life as He prepares you for discipleship activation within the service of the Kingdom.

- Their first call – salvation
- Their call to service and ministry – into the army of the Lord
- Their preparation – basic training
- Their operation and placement

When a disciple accepts his calling, or signs up so to speak, a process of development begins! All this development and training that a disciple goes through is to reach a point *where he knows who he is in Christ*; thus, *shift, shock, and advancement*.

Finding the Right Training Environment and Leaders

*It is incumbent on **you** to find the right training.* Around the church today, ‘discipleship training’ is frequently aimed at instructing people on how to be members of good standing in their chosen local church or congregation. How effective is this approach in making dynamically reproductive disciples of Jesus Christ? Have you ever wondered what *Jesus* did in the training of His Disciples? Have you thought about where He recruited them from; ordinary men, from ordinary lives, who were called, and who responded to that calling. They then allowed Him to pour His life into theirs. Being a disciple of Christ does not mean studying to be a member of a local church in good standing; instead, it means becoming more like Him and doing what He has asked and called us to do.

Here are my suggestions to you in regards to measuring your training and its effectiveness. Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I becoming more like Jesus?

- Am I talking more like Jesus?
- Am I living more like Jesus?
- Am I sounding like Him?
- Do I smell more like Him?
- Am I doing what He did?
- Am I hanging around others who are like Him?

Has what you have been taught in church moved you towards becoming more like Jesus? Are you starting to live like Jesus, or are you being challenged to live like Jesus? That is essentially discipleship! Look at your training. Are you being taught to become more intimate with Jesus Christ - to know Him? Are you being taught to live from your heart for Jesus Christ? Are you being taught to identify your unique calling and to receive training in its use within the Kingdom? Do you know how to wage a successful spiritual warfare campaign? The answers to these questions are all part of helping you to measure the ‘movement’ ability of what you are receiving as training to be a disciple. By “movement”, I mean moving to become like Jesus.

Isaiah 50:4 Amplified Bible (AMP)

“[The Servant of God says] The Lord God has given Me the tongue of a disciple and of one who is taught, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ear to hear as a disciple [as one who is taught].”

Upon obtaining salvation, He, through His sacrifice, set me into a right standing relationship with God. I became a son of God. Now, I was taken through an on-going process of sanctification; that is, growing to the ultimate goal of being exactly like He is. This process will now take me the rest of my life on earth until I am translated into perfection when I see Him face to face. Now, as far as I am concerned, it should take me (a new disciple) between twelve and eighteen months to reach ministry level 1, of reaching and discipling my first disciple, and beginning the process of living a Matthew 22 lifestyle.

By my third year, I should know my particular calling and placement within the Kingdom of God and be ready to launch out on this journey of preaching the message of the Kingdom. In

addition, I should be living the lifestyle of a son or daughter of the Kingdom; this is my launch point as a mature disciple. Again, discipleship is not a destination, but a journey with its completion when I stand face to face before Christ.

So, three years training to effective Kingdom ministry. Three years to move from being a baby in Christ to a Kingdom minister of God, which is also an effective operating child of the Father who is both interested and involved in the business of the Father. This concept will put pressure on the Christian who has been sitting in the church for longer than three years and still does not know the difference between service in and for the body, as well as stepping into ministry levels one and two. Let me reiterate. The goal of Christian discipleship is to follow Jesus and to become like him; this is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Romans 8:29 New International Version (NIV)

²⁹ “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

2 Corinthians 3:18 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹⁸ “And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendour and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit.”

As a disciple there are two things that we need to be doing. First, it is our personal responsibility to acknowledge God’s right to speak into our lives. This is essential, as it will keep us on the right (or should I say ‘wrong’ side) of Formalism. Continually allowing God the right to speak into our lives guards against becoming religiously correct and prevents us from wandering down the staircase to becoming a Pharisee (religiously correct people). This might sound easy, but let me tell you, when God does speak... sometimes it hurts. Shift, shock, and advancement!

We must take His advice and receive His guidance and direction. We must listen to His warnings. In other words, we must become doers of the Word and not hearers only! Notice that, when I talk about a disciple, I talk about a personal responsibility – it is a duty! It is your

personal responsibility to yield yourself completely to Jesus as Lord of your life. This is the way that we become witnesses to Him, living an authentic Christ-centred lifestyle and proving ourselves to be the children of God.

Philippians 2:15 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ “so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.”

Together, we, the church, present the testimony of Jesus to the world and to the enablement community church. We represent life and death!

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?

This is actually a frightening responsibility! Especially when you remember the level of life and death we are dealing with! People are going to make eternal decisions due to the impact you have had on their life! So what are you supposed to do as a disciple of Christ?

1. Allow God the right to speak into your life
2. Allow the Holy Spirit to change you to become like Jesus Christ

As He draws you closer, change will occur from what you once were to what you are now becoming as you strive to be more like Him!

Secondly, the New Testament is not merely the gospel of salvation from sins; it is the gospel of the kingdom of God. It is our responsibility and our commission not only to preach the gospel to save sinners, but also to make disciples. Matthew 28:18-20, be a disciple and make a disciple!

What comes next comes with a warning label attached!

Here is where we must be extremely careful concerning discipleship.

**You are responsible for what goes into your life,
and you are responsible for who puts it there!**

It is important that, through all of this, we must never allow a person or a teaching to take that place in our lives that belongs only to Jesus. Your training should be to move further towards maturity and becoming more like Jesus.

Ephesians 4:11-16 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Who speaks to you in your life to bring you to maturity and to prepare you for service?

An environment is created based on the belief system of the group.

As a Christian, you are born into the Kingdom with all these abilities, gifts, talents, and potential.

You are commanded and commissioned to be and make disciples!

The environment you are in determines the release of that potential!

Group Questions:

- Who is responsible in your life for the environment you are in?
- Who is responsible in your life for your journey from baby to maturity/recruit to veteran?
- How much personal responsibility are you taking for the state of your discipleship?

CHAPTER 5: WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP NORMAL?

A Christian begins their journey at the cross of Jesus Christ. They undergo a ‘born again’ experience. They effectively die to the Kingdom of the devil, their old life, and their old way of living and are born into the Kingdom of God. Their new journey begins - a new journey, a new life, a new way of living. Chronological age, whatever age they were at their conversion, remains the same, but their spiritual age in Christ begins now. They become a baby Christian.

In becoming a baby Christian, they need to begin their growth within the Kingdom and within a local family to becoming a novice; that is, a recruit who enters basic training to learn how to become a soldier. As their spiritual life continues, they need to grow into maturity. They need to become a veteran soldier and a disciple producer. *The question to ask then is this: what does a “normal” disciple look like?* To add a picture of an example inside your imagination as you read this chapter, I would like you to read two passages of scripture:

First, what you are is *recognised* by God (and by others)!

2 Corinthians 5:11 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ “Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.”

2 Corinthians 5:11 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹¹ “...But what sort of persons we are is plainly recognized and thoroughly understood by God, and I hope that it is plainly recognized and thoroughly understood also by your consciences (your inborn discernment).”

Second, test your faith to see that you have not failed!

2 Corinthians 13:5 New International Version (NIV)

⁵ “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?”

2 Corinthians 13:5 Amplified Bible (AMP)

⁵ “Examine and test and evaluate your own selves to see whether you are holding to your faith and showing the proper fruits of it. Test and prove yourselves [not Christ]. Do you not yourselves realize and know [thoroughly by an ever-increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you— unless you are [counterfeits] disapproved on trial and rejected?”

With that framework in mind, I would like to look at three points in this chapter:

1. The no excuse zone
2. A disciple’s ability to break out
3. Then to the big question: what moves us up into discipleship ‘normal’?

1. The No Excuse Zone

Any named program that promotes a ministry of personal spiritual growth; in other words, discipleship can be categorized as a ‘no excuse zone’. This zone has different names in different places; such as, an empowerment environment. This empowerment environment is an environment in which you are able to be a disciple, and you are equally encouraged to make disciples! In addition, empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities. It is a system or environment which often empowers an individual or community in developing confidence in his or her capacities. It is also a means of releasing those abilities, thereby enriching themselves and those around them in the process.

A Life and Death Zone

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (AMP)

¹⁵ “For we are the sweet fragrance of Christ [which exhales] unto God, [discernible alike] among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing: ¹⁶To the latter it is an aroma [wafted] from death to death [a fatal odour, the smell of doom]; to the former it is an aroma from life to life [a vital fragrance, living and fresh]. And who is qualified (fit and sufficient) for these things?” [Who is capable for such a ministry? Us?]

A Transformation Zone, a Zone of Perpetual Growth and Change

2 Corinthians 3:18 (AMP)

¹⁸ “And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendour and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit.”

A Fivefold Environment

In this scripture, you will see the catalysts that create the ‘no excuse zone’, which then creates the reaction and/or result.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NIV)

¹¹ “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

In this passage we have:

- The catalyst – Jesus releasing His five-fold
- The no excuse zone – the church (flawed but authentic)
- The result – disciples making disciples

Some questions for you:

- Who is responsible in your life for the environment you are in?
- Who is responsible in your life for your journey from baby/born again to novice/ recruit to veteran/mature?
- How much personal responsibility are you taking for the state of your discipleship?

By now, I hope you are developing the ability to discern an enablement and an empowerment environment!

Here are a few more questions to meditate on:

- Is this happening in your life right now?
“Are you constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendour and from one degree of glory to another?”
- Are you being equipped by a fivefold ministry team?
¹² “...to equip his people for works of service.”
- Are you being built up/trained?
“so that the body of Christ may be built up.”
- Are you walking in unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- Are you unified in the faith of Jesus Christ with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- Are you one in the Knowledge of the Son of God
- Do you consider yourself to be mature Christians?
¹³ “...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature.”
- Are you more like Jesus today than you were yesterday?
“...attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”
- Do you have the ability to discern when someone is trying to deceive you?
¹⁴ “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.”
- Are you able to speak the truth in love, to such a deceiver?

¹⁵ *“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”*

You see, this type of person is the product of a *no excuse zone*! If you are in an environment that does not pressure you and/or makes you uncomfortable about your lack of discipleship production, you are not in a ‘no excuse’ zone! A disciple knows they have one mission and one command to fulfil. Think of this: the more excuses I present regarding the one mission and one command, the further away I am from discipleship normal and, possibly, not in a discipleship environment.

1 Mission – 1 Command

A Disciple has ONE mission:

Matthew 28:19-20 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹⁹ *“Go then and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰Teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you ...”*

A Disciple has ONE Command:

Matthew 22:37-40 Amplified Bible (AMP)

³⁷ *“And He replied to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (intellect).³⁸This is the great (most important, principal) and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as [you do] yourself. ⁴⁰These two commandments sum up and upon them depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

And there is a ‘no excuse zone’ understanding in relation to this mission and command:

John 14:21 Amplified Bible (AMP)

²¹ *“The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I [too] will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him.” [I will let myself be clearly seen by him and make myself real to him.]”*

If you love me you will do what I command:

John 15 New International Version (NIV) ASSORTED VERSES ...

¹ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² 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.

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

There are ‘no excuse zone’ churches out there!

There are ‘no excuse zone’ disciples out there!

Matthew 7:20-22 (NIV)

²⁰ “Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. ²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’”

Matthew 10:1 (NIV)

¹ “Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

¹⁹ “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...”

Here is a simple test to see if you are a ‘no-excuser’:

You are either a disciple, or you are not!

You are either becoming more like Jesus, or you are not!

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 Amplified Bible (AMP)

⁵ “Examine and test and evaluate your own selves to see whether you are holding to your faith and showing the proper fruits of it. Test and prove yourselves [not Christ]. Do you not yourselves realize and know [thoroughly by an ever-increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you— unless you are counterfeits] disapproved on trial and rejected? ⁶But I hope you will recognize and know that we are not disapproved on trial and rejected.”

What does a *normal* disciple look like?

Here is a simple test to see if you are a ‘no excuse’ individual:

- Am I living (BECOMING) like Jesus?
- Am I doing what Jesus did (asks me to do)?

I cannot break it down any simpler than that!

2. A disciple’s ability to break out

The Ability to Break into Discipleship Normal

- Do you have a disciple’s ability to break out and live a normal Christian life?
- How do you find that ability to break out and launch?
- Is it in all of us; is it an external or internal act?
- Why does it seem that there are some Christians that seem to “break the sound barrier”, so to speak, and others can never get near it?
- Does the body you are in-local church-have the ability to launch you as a disciple?
- Does that local body have the ability to get to the launch pad and take off?

To answer these questions we need to examine and answer this question:

What actually constitutes a normal Christian, discipleship lifestyle?

or

What is the Biblical benchmark for a normal Christian?

Once we understand what it is we need to be looking at, we then need to look at what it is that moves or initiates the move of a disciple from babyhood to maturity. The Bible tells us that the Old Testament is a foreshadowing of the New Testament. In other words, we can see and identify patterns in the Old Testament that will be repeated and developed to its fullest in the New Testament.

Often, the physical realm-the earth, physical man, and human relationships-can act or demonstrate what is to take place in the spiritual realm. An example of this would be life after death. How do we know we will live after we die? Besides it being shown in the Bible and the Holy Spirit telling us and guaranteeing it by living in us, we can see a demonstration through nature. For a new plant to grow, a seed must die! What you see in nature as a law of nature will often point out a truth or a law in the spiritual.

Here is my example to you regarding reaching discipleship normal! When a physical human baby is born, you don't ask the question 'is it going to grow, or will it grow, or how will it grow'? You take it for granted; this baby will grow into adulthood naturally and within its normal growth environment! The baby has been born with most of what it needs to facilitate its growth through its physiological stages of development. What it needs to support this growth is an external environment. For humans, God provided the family. Do you see where this illustration is going?

The family environment provides the sustenance for growth in the body; that is, food, care for the soul, loving support, and development of the spirit. In addition, a family that worships God will help enlighten and direct the spiritual welfare of this young child. This enhances what has already been imbedded within the baby's DNA to help it grow into an adult; that is, a well-developed and well-balanced individual serving God and fulfilling his or her destiny.

The question is this, 'if it does not grow normally and naturally in such an environment, then is something wrong'? Something within the baby itself and/or something within the baby's growth

environment is wrong! The next question that needs to be asked is this: ‘what then is wrong, why is this baby not growing, what do we do?’

We take the child to a Paediatrician and see what it is that is preventing its natural course of growth. We take the baby to other specialists to see why the child is not developing according to its age requirements; such as, walking and speech. We also investigate the physical and family environment to see if this is, in any way, the cause for hindering this child’s normal growth patterns.

Spiritually, you are born as a baby into the Kingdom of God then specifically placed into a family or household - or in other words a local church. Two things automatically take place:

1. Within you, you have been given the life of God through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. This new life will cause you to grow towards discipleship normal naturally. There should be nothing that should stop you from your normal course of growth from being a baby to a novice, to a veteran, and a mature disciple.
2. You are born as a healthy spiritual baby into a family. An environment. This then should be the growth environment of a disciple.

You should be growing normally (baby to novice, to a mature believer). If you are not growing normally, then something is wrong! Very simplistically,

- it is either you – inside you (flesh desires out of control) or un-dealt with sin,
- or it is the environment you are in,
- or it is a combination of both.

The ability to break out resides naturally within you. It is in the DNA that the Holy Spirit placed in you at the time of your new birth into the Kingdom of God; that is, when He placed within you the very nature of Jesus Christ Himself! The question to ask about the ability to ‘break out’ is not what will make you break out, but what exactly is it that is hindering your natural DNA ability to break into and become a normal disciple?

Now, back to the question concerning, ‘what actually constitutes a normal lifestyle?’

3. What Then Does a Normal Disciple Look Like?

A ‘normal disciple’ looks very much like an over-comer, a true God worshiper, and a maker of disciples. I like how Dr. Ed Murphy puts it in his book, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*.⁷ (I’ve abbreviated the quote to only include the section title and accompanying scripture)

The normal Christian life and the path of development:

1. An abundant life

John 10:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*”

2. A conquering life

Romans 8:37 (NIV)

³⁷ “*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*”

3. A victorious life

1 Corinthians 15:57 (NIV)

⁵⁷ “*But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

4. A triumphant life

2 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ “*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*”

5. A holy life

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NIV)

¹³"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

When Jesus-through John-writes to the seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation, we see a standard of normalcy described, in His words, which are given in the comparisons. Jesus says to the churches, 'This is what you are doing, I don't like it, and this is what I actually want you to be doing.'

Revelation 1: 1-7 is written to the Christians in Ephesus. He writes to tell them that He is pleased with them in their battle against wicked men who are trying to bring false doctrine and compromising behaviour into their church. However, in their battle to maintain their ground, they have 'deserted Him'!

I see many lessons from these letters, but for the purposes of this book, I restrict myself to discipleship normal. As Christians, we will be placed into positions where we will need to maintain our stand for Christ against doctrinal and sexual impurity. But, we must not lose sight of our primary relationship and command (Matthew 22) - intimacy with Christ.

Revelation 1:8-11 is written to the Christians in Smyrna. Here are some Christians who are fighting the religious spirit who, in their own eyes, seem poor, weak, and possibly defeated. For them to overcome it means they must stand up and maintain their walk in the face of a vicious spiritual attack, regardless of the outcome. They were encouraged to maintain the pure stand before the Lord, even under all sorts of persecution.

Revelation 1:12-17 is written to the Christians in Pergamum who are living in the middle of the power base of the satanic realm. They are told to hold the line and to not be overcome by the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. Such teachings involved the use of the prophetic for money, as well as allowing the rise of promiscuity within the church. In the end, they lowered the moral standards of the church in order to become acceptable to the people of the world - in order to 'reach them for Christ'. To overcome, they would have to stand and maintain the integrity of their teaching and lifestyle.

And so, the letters go on. Dealing with what I believe would be the major problems that we would face as disciples on our journey towards becoming like Jesus. Read through the rest and make some practical applications to your standard of discipleship. These individuals are overcomers!

The normal Christian is not only able to maintain personal and structural integrity within their own life, but is also able to ensure that this happens with their family. In addition, they ensure it is also implemented with the corporate church family; while at the same time invading enemy territory and making disciples.

I find the above information a good overview of what discipleship normal looks like. However, I would also like to get a little more specific and see how this actually translates out into my day-to-day life. What I have done to get this magnified picture is to look at the advice Paul gives to both Timothy and Titus regarding selecting leaders in the church. So, what I have done is lay out the list of requirements for an elder within the church and have used it as my measure for discipleship normal.

Personally, I use this as my standard check list, not only for myself, but also as a measure of those around me. One further point I would like you to take note of and remember as you read through the list below, is this: behind all of this should be the image of Jesus! Christian discipleship is all about becoming like Jesus. I find that having an understanding of the qualifications of leadership within the church will give me a practical check list with which to work on and to work towards; this is a good benchmark of discipleship normal.

The typical individual likes to have lists. We like to have goals. We like to be able to measure off the distance between these goals. For you to even begin to become like someone is a little more difficult. Discipleship means *becoming* like Jesus! The qualifications that he demonstrated need to be the qualifications you demonstrate. How do you do this? Or, how do you find an environment that will lead you to this goal of becoming like Jesus? This is my attempt at a list. In the next chapter, we will look at a time frame within which to accomplish this goal of discipleship - becoming like Jesus!

Before we look at this list, I would like you to read Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding proper conduct and behaviour of members of God's household. I've underlined certain words for you to meditate on in light of the bringing together of disciples into the household of God.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹⁴ "Although I hope to come to you before long, I am writing these instructions to you so that, ¹⁵If I am detained, you may know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and stay (the prop and support) of the Truth."

These 'instructions' given by Paul to Timothy are to teach Christians how to live and how to grow into and behave within the household of God. An instruction is an order, a command, a directive, etc. The ideal list of behaviour to implement within God's Household-the church-is the fruit of the spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23. From verse 23b to verse 26, we have some interesting comments regarding this fruit and its implementation within the life of a disciple.

There is no law against the use and practice of living a 'fruit of the spirit' lifestyle within the church, as well as society in general. In verse 24, Paul says that those who belong to Christ-those disciples who are becoming like Christ-are able to 'crucify'; that is, they are capable of controlling and killing the manifestation of the flesh with all of its evil desires. They can live a life of discipleship; being able, through the Holy Spirit, to manifest this within the body.

So as an individual begins to live as a disciple, they are able to function within the church. They are living through the fruit of the spirit. Much of the New Testament letters attest to the fact that this standard is not kept well within the household of God, hence these lists of instructions, expectations, and practices of discipleship within the household. I believe the closer a disciple walks toward becoming like Jesus, the less the disciple walks under these instructions and discipline. Instead, they walk in absolute freedom (see Galatians 5:1, 13).

A further list would be the one mentioned below; the normal discipleship list as practiced by a normal disciple in their day-to-day life. I've used the rank of elder here as the benchmark, as there is little difference between this and a deacon.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 New International Version (NIV)

¹ "Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full[a] respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."

A disciple must be:

- above reproach
- faithful to his wife/her husband
- temperate
- self-controlled
- respectable
- hospitable
- able to teach
- not given to drunkenness
- not violent
- gentle

- not quarrelsome
- not a lover of money
- manage his/her own family well
- see that his/her children obey him
and he/she must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his/her own family, how can he take care of God's church?)
- must not be a recent convert, (this point would be taken into account as the disciple aspires to this office), or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil
- must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap

These I believe are a good benchmark for a disciple.

Here are some standard additional qualifications. Now these may seem standard, and you may take them for granted, but I have witnessed behaviour in the church that shows me that these should not be taken for granted.

- You must be born again, born of the Spirit, born from above, (John 3:1-5)
- You must be baptized in water (Mark 16:15–20; Acts 2:37–47)
- You must be baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14; Ephesians 5:18)
- You must be “added to the Lord” first, then “added to the Church” (Acts 5:14; 11:24; 2:41)

Now that you have the check list, we need to go back to the question.

What moves us up into discipleship normal?

2 Things:

1. An irrevocable decision made by you
2. Commitment by you to honouring your decision

Study Questions

Put yourself on a no-excuse diet now!

Exercise: Write down your excuses for the following:

1. That one hidden sin within your life
2. Why you have not made a disciple
3. Why you are not fulfilling your ministry-to your full potential

Now, go into your prayer closet and read those excuses out to the Lord as if he were in front of you. How does your excuse measure up?

John 15:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ "You are my friends if you do what I command."

Challenge:

- Who is responsible in your life for the environment you are in?
- Who is responsible in your life for your journey from baby/born again to novice/recruit to maturity/ veteran?
- How much personal responsibility are you taking for the state of your Discipleship?

CHAPTER 6: TIMING TO MATURITY

This chapter is a ‘personal opinion’ chapter. So some, or most, may not agree. It is written from my perspective and personal observation as a serving church leader within a Pentecostal Denomination for just under fifteen years. In addition, I am the church leader of an independent church which I founded around seven years ago. I have been involved in leading various local churches since 1988. The questions I ask, the opinions and statements I express are my own. They are not meant to point a finger at denominations, denominational pastors, or independents or members of those local churches.

However, I do ask the question in light of my personal experience in pastoring a local church, as well as speaking to many friends and colleagues who lead or are involved in leading local churches. As I said, this is my opinion, and my observation, and if I’m the only one having it... well, then I’m in trouble! However, I do not think that I am. I think there are many church leaders and members out there who see what I see and have possibly asked what I have asked. I think many will disagree with my opinion, and that is why I’ve written this first paragraph. In order to show you that, as much as I respect your opinion to disagree with my opinion, I would still like to take the opportunity to voice mine and put into practice the conclusions I’ve drawn regarding the answer to my own question.

Ephesians 4:1 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹“I THEREFORE, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to and beg you to walk (lead a life) worthy of the [divine] calling to which you have been called [with behaviour that is a credit to the summons to God's service.”

In chapter one, I shared this story with you. I was attending the wedding of a friend of mine. At his wedding reception, two tables were made up of other church leaders that my friend is in relationship with, all of them ministering in local churches. I happened to be at one of those tables and had a great time sharing with these men and woman of God who, like me, were also serving in the front lines. I can tell you that if you could have been there you would have heard some amazing stories.

During the course of the evening and due to the topic of conversation mainly centring on Jesus and His church, I asked the men and woman at the table the question mentioned above: ‘How long, in their estimation, do they think it would take to train a new convert, to become mature in the things of the Lord?’

And, what do you think happened to the conversation at that table? *Silence!* Yes, it went completely quiet and one of the ministers said ‘wisely’, ‘next question please!’ After much discussion about this and that, we still had not come to a conclusion as to a time frame - no surprise there!

So what do you think? What would you say regarding this timeframe? How long do you think it should take you to move from being a new convert to being a novice, and then on to being a mature Christian? The questions, the assumptions, the development of an opinion and the resulting actions discussed here are currently being implemented in our local church as we speak!

How long does it take to grow a disciple from their moment of salvation to them living out their calling within the family business, the Kingdom of God? I asked this question of these men and woman in the ministry. I asked this question of my friends in the ministry who lead churches, and I’ve asked this question of my own fellow workers (members in my local church). As you can see, I did not receive any accurate or satisfactory answers.

It always seems that the conversation gets sidetracked down some path in an attempt to try and define words, time frames, and meanings; such as, ‘What is maturity?’ ‘How can you measure maturity?’ ‘What happens if some mature at a different rate than others?’ ‘What happens to those who are unable to mature in such an environment?’ ‘Is it even possible to measure maturity in a Christian?’

For me, and I believe for many, I began to see a gap between the discipleship mentioned in the Bible and the discipleship practiced in the church. Now, I know that ‘every’ church preaches and teaches discipleship. I know ‘every’ preacher emphasises discipleship, and I know ‘most’

believers practice discipleship. But do you want to really know something? If you scratch the surface of the church, I think you will see the gap I'm talking about; the difference between what I see as the measure (benchmark), and what is the reality of a below-par performance of biblical discipleship within the church.

Now here is where some might begin to think I've gone overboard and become a bit harsh in my views and practices. I became tired and worn down appealing to passengers on my 'HMS warship'. I got tired of begging Christians to live the 'divine life' they had been privileged to obtain through grace and to live according to that calling.

Ephesians 4:1 Amplified Bible (AMP)

*"I THEREFORE, the prisoner for the Lord, **appeal to and beg you** to walk (lead a life) worthy of the [divine] calling to which you have been called [with behaviour that is a credit to the summons to God's service."*

Simply put, I was tired of having to see and put up with mediocrity in the body of Christ - the most wonderful, powerful, and blessed body to be connected into! I grew tired of having to constantly deal with the spiritually immature ten (or forty) year old. I also grew tired of trying to implement discipleship to people playing the part of a biblical disciple! I grew tired of saying and acting as if they were living out their calling when, in fact, they couldn't tell the difference between serving in the church vs. the great calling from God on their life.

And so I started asking questions:

- Where are the disciples who actually *want* and *do* live out their calling?
- Where are the disciples who have reached unity in the faith?
- Where are the disciples who have the knowledge of the Son of God?
- Where are the disciples who have become mature?
- Where are the disciples who have reached the full measure of the fullness of Jesus Christ?
- Where are they?

Please notice that I'm not talking about the famous world-renowned Christian saints past and present. I'm talking about a biblical overcomer in the local church—one who knows who they are, knows what God thinks of them, and then acts from that base. A disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ who is becoming more and more like Jesus in their home, place of employment, and impacting the global community by impacting their local community—a discipler of men! Where is this person?

You might find a trace of tiredness in my words, even frustration. Please understand that I am coming from being a leader in a local church who has wrestled for years with setting up an active growth environment; this effort has been opposed, hindered, and sabotaged. Sadly, the majority of this opposition came from within. It wasn't until I got to this state of tiredness that I finally had enough and began to implement a 'no excuse' zone policy within the church that I lead.

Unfortunately, if you are an enabler or if you are enabled, you will find some of this rather extreme and harsh. You might even find this chapter to be unpalatable. Concerning the enabled and that whole system, I simply do not bother to fight it anymore. Instead, I raise up people to be disciples of Jesus Christ. On my ship, you shape up or get shipped out! And do you know what I've found? I have found those who are serious about being a disciple, as well as in living out their calling. I have found those who want to reach the unity in the faith. I have found those who have the knowledge of the Son of God and who are becoming and have become mature. I have found those who are desperate to reach the full measure of the fullness of Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 4:15 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ *"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."*

So, with a little bit of tongue in cheek, I will speak the truth in love in order to grow the body to maturity! You have probably noticed that I like Apostle Paul, especially in this mood. However, I do speak the truth in love in order to see you mature and grow up into 'Him'. I speak this in order that you may become a disciple of His. In addition, if you are a church leader, I speak this in order for you to be able to create a discipleship growth environment; raising and training up disciples worthy to carry the name of Jesus.

Over the last few years, I have slowly begun to switch my focus onto the top 20% of my church congregation, while also opening the church windows along with the back door (church growth terminology) in order to allow the enablers ample opportunity to leave. And, for the most part, they have. My job is to prepare God's people for works of service-making disciples. Therefore, my focus and attention turned to those who wanted to become disciples of the Lord, and I began to parent them in the Lord. It's an investment of time into relationships and mentorship; the ultimate objective being to make them Elishas to your Elijah. What I mean by that is that each person I mentor, I want them to have a double portion of what I have. I want to launch them to a greater height than where I operate. In light of all of this, the goal is that, within three years, these disciples must have reached the level of discipleship mentioned in Ephesians 4:13-14.

Ephesians 4:13-14 Amplified Bible (AMP)

¹³"[That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [[a]full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.

¹⁴So then, we may no longer be children, tossed [like ships] to and fro between chance gusts of teaching and wavering with every changing wind of doctrine, [the prey of] the cunning and cleverness of unscrupulous men, [gamblers engaged] in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead."

A Christian who walks into this discipleship environment is told, 'Examine us, check us out, taste us, test us, and see if this is what you want. Then go and ask God if this is where He has planted you.' If they are happy and we, the church, meet their criterion then it is time to climb on board and be welcomed to HMS Life House. If you are three spiritual years or over, what is your

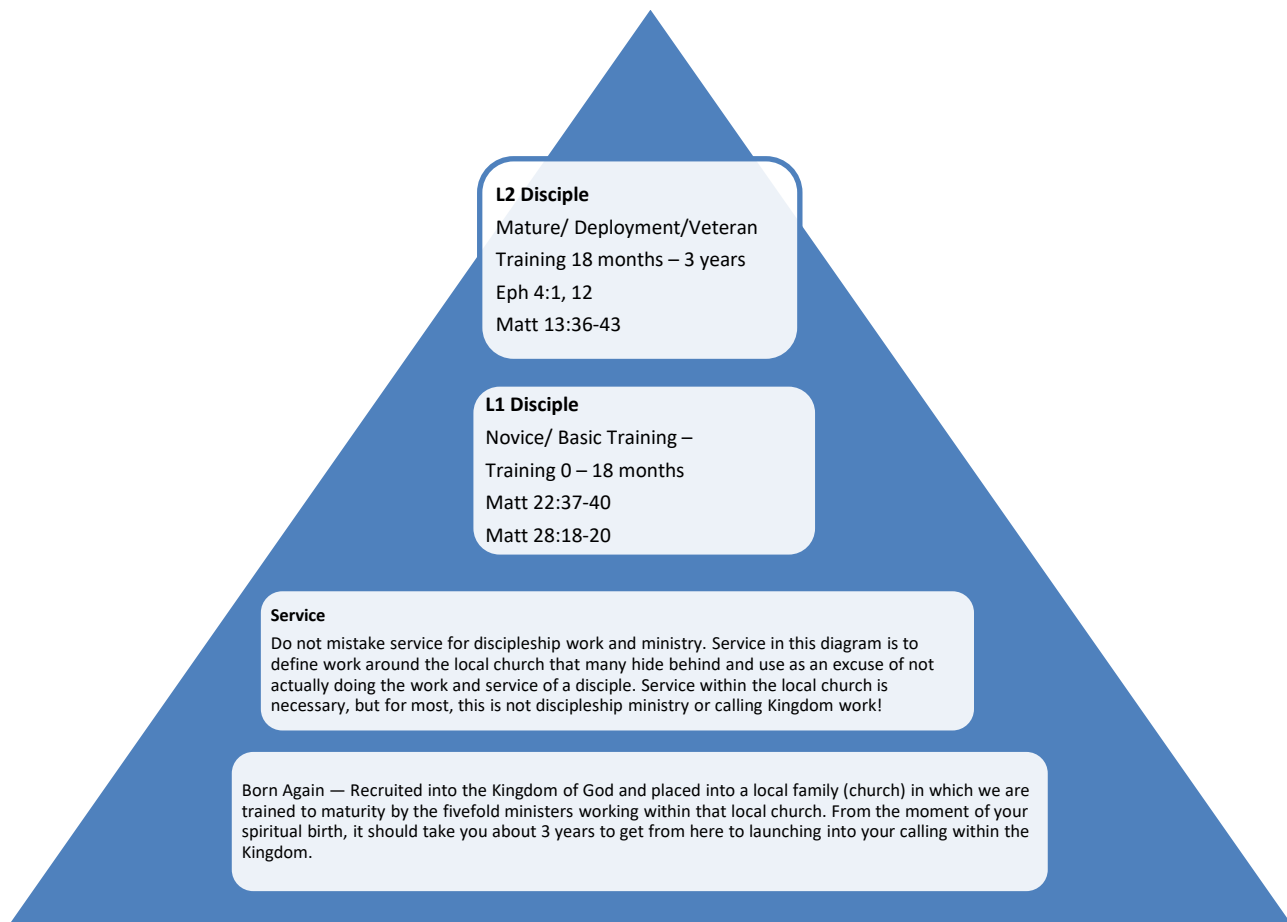
calling and are you living it? Are you a mature veteran (*Ephesians 4*)? If not, welcome to boot camp! We will give you your training in the minimum three-year period.

*Jesus also took a three-year period to go about his mission and raise up world changers; that is, from a tradesman to a fisher of men! Therefore, a believer coming into this church should already be a disciple if they have surpassed the three-year mark. Such a believer should already be a veteran in the ‘catching’ of men and discipling of them. They should already be Matthew 22, 28 and Ephesians 2:10 compliant. They should be a big impact on their families. They should be an imparter of a godly legacy within their families, within their circle of influence at work, and within their community associations. In fact, with this believer I should be able to take the definition of a deacon and place it over their life, and they should pass with flying colours. After decades of trying to lead people into an empowerment zone and lifestyle—while being opposed mainly from within—I have reached a point where I now *insist* on that minimum standard! When this firm standard is in place, it may come as a shock to the system. However, for those who stay and continue in the discipleship lifestyle, the effect is incredible!*

In conclusion, when an individual has reached the three-year mark, I insist that the members of this church live in a ‘no excuse’ zone! I insist that they live and operate out of God’s perception of who *He* sees them to be in addition to following their calling; this is level two discipleship! I insist that they operate out of the level of maturity that makes them mothers and fathers in the faith, cognisant of the impartation of their legacy; that is, becoming generational thinkers! I insist that, on this ship, they choose one or the other. If you were born onto the ship, this then is the legacy you will naturally inherit and live with.

You should and will be a level two disciple within three years.

This then is how I see it:



Endnotes

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⁴ Collins Dictionary of the English Language, Collins, London and Glasgow pg 31
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⁵Sun Tzu, The Art of War, pg 46
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⁶ Vegetius, The Art of War, Roots of Strategy, pg 46
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⁷ Dr. Ed Murphy, The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare, pg61
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