

*RESOURCES IN
THE PROCESS*

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*A FRESH NEW CONCEPT ABOUT
CONGREGATION! (PART 12)*

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PROLOGUE

The process of discipleship is really the heart of everything. This process must be understood before knowing why it is the way it is, but the most important part, of course, is to apply it. The saying is “The proof of the pudding lies in the eating!” A theory, model, or process stays useless if it is not a lifestyle from the heart. To do and activate something is not really part of our congregation culture in the West. Everything is done by the full time ministry team and the others merely attend.

Without activation, we actually still have nothing. If everything would just happen spontaneously I do not understand why it has not happened long ago. Life in general is very busy, but also purposeful. If you do not plan to do something, there usually is no time to do it. Believers do not plan to read one chapter in the Word each day and therefore it does not happen. “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail! If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time!” Life is very intentional. If you want something you will have to work toward it, otherwise you will not get there. Life flows spontaneously from the heart, but it has to be deliberately and purposefully aimed at where it should flow as a way of living.

In this process there are a few resources or recommendations on how to achieve this. In this chapter we will look at what we can give on hand to establish this process as a lifestyle in peoples’ lives. Peoples’ life styles have to change and this does not happen by itself. It requires spending hours in the Father’s presence, and to purposefully obey what He is saying to you. We are not born with discipline and it is something to which we should subject ourselves.

RESOURCES IN THE PROCESS

12.1) CHILD – YOUNG MAN – FATHERHOOD

In the Father's family, according to I John 2:12-14, there are three groups of people, namely children, young men, and fathers. The whole purpose of congregation life is for unbelievers to become children of God, after which they have to grow up to become young men and finally fathers. Spiritual children are very dependent and they ask for contributions to their lives from everyone around them. The young men, however, tend to become independent and do many things on their own without the involvement of other people. Only the fathers, who are interdependent, have the steadiness to bring people together to form teams.

CHILD	YOUNG MAN	FATHER
Dependent	Independent	Interdependent
Knowledge	Understanding	Wisdom

Most of the children's energy goes into gaining knowledge about everything around them so that they can be informed and start making mature choices. You cannot make the right choices if you do not even know the facts of life. Young men's knowledge has developed in understanding and they recognize where they fit into the whole picture. Insight is nothing but a revelation, which indicates all the benefits for you and where you fit into the picture. Insight is knowledge revealed. The fathers live in wisdom because they apply the understanding they have received. Wisdom is simply applied knowledge. Wisdom is to bring new people into the process through your lifestyle by transferring knowledge to them. Wisdom is for your knowledge and lifestyle to be such that other people also want it.

Most important of all is to know that the only way to grow from a child into a young man is by the knowledge that comes from the WORD. In 1 John 2:13-14 it says, in particular, that people became young men because they are strong in the Word! Only the Word can transform children into young men. Courses cannot do this because it is a processed word. *By Word is meant to spend time reading the Bible in the presence of the Father, to listen to His voice, and to do what He says.* Word does not mean to listen to sermons, to attend courses or even to memorize a few verses. Word means to have an encounter with the Father and communication between your heart and His heart. Word means learning to know the voice of the Father personally in every aspect of your life and to obey so that you will live in immediate and constant obedience.

What determines young men to become fathers in congregation life? Again, there is only one thing that makes young men turn into fathers and *that is to take up RESPONSIBILITY and to put it into practice!* The only way to become mature and competent in something is to start doing it. There is no other way to fatherhood but to obtain experience by doing it yourself. Experience can never be bought; it can only be obtained by practically taking up responsibility in certain areas. A person who sits in a chair never becomes mature. You must stand up and start putting things into practice. To learn how to live cannot be taught in classrooms but only in life itself. According to what has been said then, the two keywords in congregation life should be WORD and RESPONSIBILITY! If these are not two of the main pillars, there will never be a harvest of fathers in the congregation.

12.2) PRAYER

It has already been explained that life comes from God. Only He can give life, maintain, modify, and transform it. Everything in discipleship revolves around the fact that we can only create processes in which we restore the Father to His rightful place in life and in our lives so that He can transform us. Only He can touch hearts and bring change. In the light of this it is logical that there will be a great emphasis on prayer. There is no way that any human plan or leadership can bring about true discipleship. God made the world and created all people on it and He wants us to voluntarily allow Him to move through our hearts in this world. We are in charge on the earth, but the Father wants to do the work for us if only we would give Him the opportunity to do so.

Therefore, it is understandable that without prayer we will not get anything going nor be successful. Prayer is a declaration of our dependency on the Father and that we cannot be successful on our own. Prayer is our total reliance on the Father, acknowledging that He is the only source of spiritual life and that nothing will ever be successful or lasting if He is not everything in our lives and programmes. All spiritual movements though the centuries were preceded by a movement of prayer. This is one fact that is indisputably established in church history. The only problem was, however, that when the life and wine came, it did not remain consistent because the wine skins could not contain it! This is the more difficult part in which we were less successful in history, although it is the easier part to put into practice. The main problem for us as Westerners is that we find it hard to rely on God because we have our own plans for everything. In addition, we are very independent and self-providing and we see to it that we always remain in control of everything in life. We will have to go back to this and take a renewed look at it. When we

try to cause a new movement, let us make sure that its greatest founding stone will be prayer.

The first pillar of discipleship is the GROUP or ENVIRONMENT. This is the place where prayer should feature very prominently. The group agrees to gather together in the presence of God and to ask Him to minister to them as their leader. This is why the Father wants to move through people who minister to each other through active prayer. The atmosphere in the group is indeed nothing else but one of prayer. Everyone comes together in complete dependency on Him that He will come and make Himself known to everyone. As the group departs, the atmosphere of prayer and the conversation with the Father remains with everyone for the rest of the week because they intercede and pray for each other. The discipleship group, or congregation, is small and personal involvement is of great importance in the process.

Prayer is not an act that occurs occasionally. It is a spirit of dependence on the Father who has to leaven everything we do. Prayer is a heart focused on the Father and an expectation that He will, at anytime and in everything, manifest in all we do. Prayer is awareness of God's presence everywhere and in each aspect of our lives. It is a constant knowing that if God does not build the house, the work of the builders is useless. Prayer is born from the knowledge that everything we do as people is useless unless God's blessing rests on it. Let us give Father the place He deserves in our lives and in congregation life again, through a prayerful life. Without Him we have nothing and nothing will even come alive and stand firm. Discipleship is God moving in people's hearts, not our own efforts and programmes to turn people. Let us, once and for all, take church life out of the dynamic of a movement of

leaders and change it into a movement of the Holy Spirit through ordinary believers.

12.3) 'DISCOVERY' GROUPS

When the group only includes unbelievers it is not a congregation, but is called a discipleship- or discovery group. When you work with a lot of unbelievers, which is indeed the ideal, it is best to call it something generally acceptable like 'Discovery group'. In a group like this it is all about discovering and understanding the Father, and therefore the starting point is the Word, beginning with Genesis. The group meets and works from the Word weekly, although not necessarily each day of the week. The unbeliever must first start to discover the Word as the only source by which the Father speaks before he will be motivated to read the Word during the week as well. The following are time-honored verses to go through with unbelievers in a Discovery group.

Discovering God – Overview

Following is the list of Scriptures that can be worked through with unbelievers who are interested in learning more about God the Father. It is important to start with Creation and not with Christ. Each story teaches an important aspect of God that must be discovered. Please remember not to teach, but only to facilitate the group and ask questions!

Scripture Main truth to be discovered

	Creation	
1	Genesis 1:1-25	There is a God and He created the world

2	Genesis 2:4-24	God created Adam and Eve
The fall and the flood		
3	Genesis 3:1-24	Man is disobedient and is judged
4	Genesis 6:5-8:14	God weeps over man's disobedience. There are consequences for disobedience. The flood destroys mankind and only Noah is saved.
God prepares a Savior		
5	Genesis 12:1-8, 15:1-6; 17:1-7; 22:1-19	God blesses Abraham and tests his faith.
6	Exodus 20:1-21	God gives commandments to His people.
7	Leviticus 4:1-35	God expects sacrifices for the sin of his people.
8	Isaiah 53	God speaks of the suffering of the promised Messiah.
God sends a Saviour		
9	Lukas 1:26-38, 2:1-20	Jesus is born according to the prophecy.
10	Matthew 3; John 1:29-34	John's witness of Jesus as the promised Son of God.
11	Jo. 3:1-21	Jesus is God's only son, sent to save the world.
12	Jo. 4:1-26, 39-42	Jesus is the promised Messiah.
13	Luke 5:17-26	Jesus has authority to forgive sins and to heal.
14	Mark 4:35-41	Jesus has authority over the wind and the sea.
15	Mark 5:1-20	Jesus has authority over evil spirits.
16	Jo. 11:1-44	Jesus has authority over death.
17	Matthew 26:17-30 John 18:1-19:16	Jesus predicts his denial.

18	Lukas 23:32-56; 24:1-12	Jesus dies and rises again.
19	Luke 24: 36-53	Jesus dies and rises again to fulfill the prophesy and to bring an end to the dominion of sin
20	Jo. 1:1-14; 3:1-21	If we believe in Jesus we can have eternal life

Discovering God – in a Group

With people who do not know Christ!

- Use the scriptures of the “Discovering God” overview.
- Ask everyone in the group to share something for which they are grateful.
- Ask everyone in the group to share something that bothers them and causes stress in their lives.
- Read the selected Scripture for the day. If there is an Audio Bible it can be listened to.
- Ask somebody in the group to repeat the story. When the person has finished, ask the others if anything important was left out.
- Ask: “What does the story say about God? What does the story say about man? What does it say about God’s plan?” Allow enough time for them to answer. Resist the temptation to tell them what the story means. If they do not understand, look for other Scriptures and ask more questions.
- Ask: “If this story is true, how does it change the way we live at present?”
- Ask: “What questions do you have about the story?”

- Ask: “Do you know anybody who will benefit from hearing this story?” Encourage them to share it with other people.
- Ask” “Is there anybody that you know who needs help?” Let the group decide what they can do for that person and let them do it before the next group meeting.

12.4) THREE COLUMN TABLES

To keep the reading of Scripture focused and simple, it can be printed on a three column page. The first column is for the Scripture, the second column is to convert it into your own words, and the third column is for the steps of obedience. The idea of the columns is to let people write what they say and to remain in the Scripture given. Be careful not to give too much Scripture and do not allow them to skip between Scriptures. It causes people to lessen in obedience. More examples can be requested from me and they will be sent by email.

SCRIPTURE	WRITING IN OWN WORD	WHAT WILL I DO?
<p>Mat 7:21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord,</p>		

<p>did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' (23) And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'</p>		
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12.5) DISCIPLESHIP BOOKLETS

I am also preparing a series of discipleship booklets for use in congregations with people who already decided that the Word is the answer to their questions about life. These booklets are not compulsory, but a good tool in the process of discipleship and they have definite advantages.

- It determines the topic of the month.
- It causes everybody to read the same Scripture.
- It provides training and structure to the groups.
- It has four pillars of discipleship for each day.
- It helps the disciples to focus on the Word, obedience, and witness.
- It requests you to journal about what the Father speaks to you.
- It confronts you to be disciplined daily.
- It keeps you in daily responsibility to the obedience the Father asks of you.

- It evaluates your relationships on a monthly basis.
- It shows an easy and quick way to launch into congregation life in case you do not know where and how to begin.
- The booklets are in A5 format and it fits easily inside the average study Bible. It consists of 40 pages each.
- There are a number of these booklets in a series available in English and Afrikaans. You can also write your own on any subject and use the basic layout of the existing one.

The booklets can be printed or the electronic format can be ordered from me by email at arno@lifewise.co.za. As they are being finished they will also appear on the website www.lifewise.co.za under “Congregationwise”. The printed booklets have a price attached, but the electronic format is free since you need to print them yourself. An example of the booklet will be attached to the current email.

12.6) TRAINING VERSUS EQUIPMENT

According to Eph 4:11-13, we read the following: “And truly He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (12) *for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* (13) And this until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”. In our Western congregation life, we became very fixated with training people, as if believers cannot and should not do anything before they are trained by leaders. Be careful, for there is a difference between training and equipping. Training involves the context of courses and theory while

equipping has more the context of being an example to someone else. Let us get rid of the idea that people always have to be trained for everything in the spiritual world. Every believer received God's capacity through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the best thing they can do is to simply go out and do it. If they start doing this they will start asking questions. Training gives answers to questions that people have never asked!

The only true and effective training happens when applied practically and by doing the work that you want to be trained in. We call this practical training or equipping. There is obviously still room for equipment in various areas of congregation life, but everything is built around the four pillars of discipleship like the hub of a wheel. All other equipment is complementary to the core of discipleship. If believers are established in the process of discipleship all other equipment will be like a vitamin supplement. It is not addictive, but good to use occasionally. The most important training is to gather the congregational leaders of a certain area together once or twice a month and to let them share with each other about congregation planting. Cross pollination between congregation leaders is most important because they can learn from each other's mistakes and strengths.

SUMMARY

- 1) If a belief is not a life style it is only a theory and of no value.
- 2) The discipleship process can only come to fulfillment when things are activated.
- 3) The life in our hearts is spontaneous, but it must be consciously and purposefully focused to be effective in practice.
- 4) There is only one way for a spiritual child to become a spiritual young man and that is through the WORD!
- 5) By the Word is meant to have a living encounter with the Father and obedience to His voice as you study the Word!
- 6) There is only one way for a spiritual young man to become a spiritual father and that is PRACTICAL RESPONSIBILITY!
- 7) All spiritual movements throughout the world were preceded by prayer, but could not be sustained through prayer only. New life and new wine can only be preserved in new wine-skins.
- 8) Unbelievers do not mind to discover God in the Discovery groups.
- 9) There are resources to help us carry out the process of discipleship.
- 10) There is room for training regarding the four pillars of discipleship.