

Editorial: Core Values and Components of Discipleship

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In this issue of *Encounter* we revisit the emphasis of the Great Commission – “make disciples of all nations” – from a twenty-first century perspective. AGTS’ acting Academic Dean, Dr. Stephen Lim, encourages contemporary believers to “Make Room for God to Fill and to Transform” through the classical spiritual disciplines. Don Detrick, AGTS D.Min. student and Secretary/Treasurer for the Northwest Ministry Network asks us to be attentive to “The Sacred Serenade” by recognizing the role of music in evangelism and discipleship. The Seminary’s 2007 Spring Lectureship speaker, Dr. Gary Collins, introduces “Christian Coaching” as a new frontier in discipleship for leaders.

Additionally, we have three inaugural lectures and an award-winning student paper. Dr. Johnson, our first J. Philip Hogan Professor of World Missions, challenges us to return to an “Apostolic Function and Mission.” Dr. Gary McGee, in his inauguration as Distinguished Professor of Church History and Pentecostal Studies, chronicles from early twentieth-century Pentecostalism “How Tongues Empowered.” And in my inauguration as Professor of New Testament Exposition, I aimed to steer us away from being either, intellectual but not thoughtful, or righteous and not just, toward

“Trumping Hermeneutical *A Prioris* for the Sake of the Truth.” AGTS 2007 M.A.T.S. graduate Aaron Lawton’s wrote on “Placing Galatians 2:11-14 in its Forensic Rhetorical Context” and won The Stanley Horton Award for the Outstanding Theological Studies Seminar Paper.

On the lighter side, two ministerial reflection articles will make you reconsider relationships between “Jews and Fruity Pentecostals” (by Dr. Lois Olena) and all the nuances that are communicated by church signs (“The Best Church Sign in West Fargo,” by Dr. Carolyn Baker).

Two book reviews introduce the reader to the concept of *Grace-Based Parenting* (by Tim Kimmel, reviewed by Julie Smead) and to the fine new one-volume dictionary of Norwegian Pentecostalism and Charismatic Renewal, *Norsk pinsekristendom og karismatisk fornyelse: Ettbinds oppslagsverk* (edited by Geir Lie, reviewed by Dr. Darrin Rogers).

And now, a word about discipleship for the twenty-first century.

Having served the General Council of the Assemblies of God (USA) as the National Director of the Division of

Christian Education and the Commissioner of Discipleship from 2002-2006, I have become very burdened about the state of discipleship in both of its two aspects: that of individuals becoming ever more like Jesus, and that of their making disciples of others. My vision for discipleship has only intensified since I first vision-cast it in 2002 in a three-part series called “The Vision of the Commissioner.”¹ In fact, my whole life’s mission has become re-centered on influencing discipleship globally. To this end, I am currently in the two-pronged process of professional training and certification as a life coach, and the development of discipleship coaching training curriculum.

In my journey of going deeper in discipleship, I’ve come to believe that the present state of discipleship in the North American church could benefit from a fresh focus on the core values and components of discipleship, which were are part of the kind of disciple-making Jesus and the early church modeled but are not always evident today.

Consider these as essential components of discipleship along with brief definitions.

1. **Formation:** becoming transformed by Christ’s truth.
2. **Relationships and Community:**² living new Life as brothers and sisters who love him, and treating all people as Christ would.
3. **Evangelism:** sharing³ the great news about Jesus.
4. **Power:** allowing the Spirit a super-natural place in your life.
5. **Ministry or Service:** investing yourself in God’s purposes—not

only in the church but also in the marketplace.

6. **Worship:** delighting God in all you do
7. **Stewardship:** exercising responsible accountability⁴ for all of God’s gifts
8. **Multiplication:**⁵ investing in others to leave a legacy for Christ

Consider these as core values in the practice discipleship. Discipleship must be:

1. **Transformational:** disciple-makers equipping Christ-followers with biblical strategies for change.
2. **Intentional:** disciple-makers equipping Christ-followers to live life on purpose – from the inside out, strategically, missionally, purposefully—clearly comprehending God’s commands and commission for all people; and discovering in their own design, God’s unique destiny for their individual life.
3. **Life-Long:** disciple-makers equipping Christ-followers for a process of discipleship, life-long, not just a one-time event or experience, or a short-term activity.
4. **Relational:** disciple-makers equipping Christ-followers for a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus, for healthy relationships with other Christ-followers, and for authentic relationship with those who don’t follow Christ.
5. **Holistic:** disciple-makers equipping Christ-followers for discipleship that effects their whole life, that every component

is Christ-Centered and Spirit-Infused.

6. **Preeminent:** disciple-makers equipping Christ-followers to give first-place in their lives to Christ, his Kingdom, and his causes. Pleasing Jesus – bringing God glory – is a disciple’s number-one priority

This is as far as I have come. ...

I welcome you to join me in the dialogue of delineating the non-negotiables of discipleship: its core values and components. [Click the link to join the weblog.]

Deborah M. Gill,
friend and follower of Jesus

¹ Now from the AGTS website, you may download or audio stream those three messages as well as their accompanying PPT slide-shows.

#1 (is the sermon I presented in the General Council chapel when I was first installed as Commissioner of Discipleship) “Knowing is Not Enough ... It’s Living the Life that Counts: Confessions of a Recovering Pharisee.”

#2 (is a teaching) “State of Discipleship in the Denomination: Discipleship Descriptions, Diagnosis & Prescription.”

#3 (is a testimony) “How I Got Hooked on Relational Evangelism and Discipleship: Vignettes from My Life as a Follower of Jesus.”

² Deep and meaningful relationships of accountability, commitment, and care.

³ Both in word and deed, and in all the ways Jesus modeled in fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy (61:1-2) in Luke 4:18-19.

⁴ This includes obedience to the creation mandate (environmental stewardship) and a compassionate and socially just response to the poor.

⁵ This may also be expressed in the concepts of generativity and perpetuation.