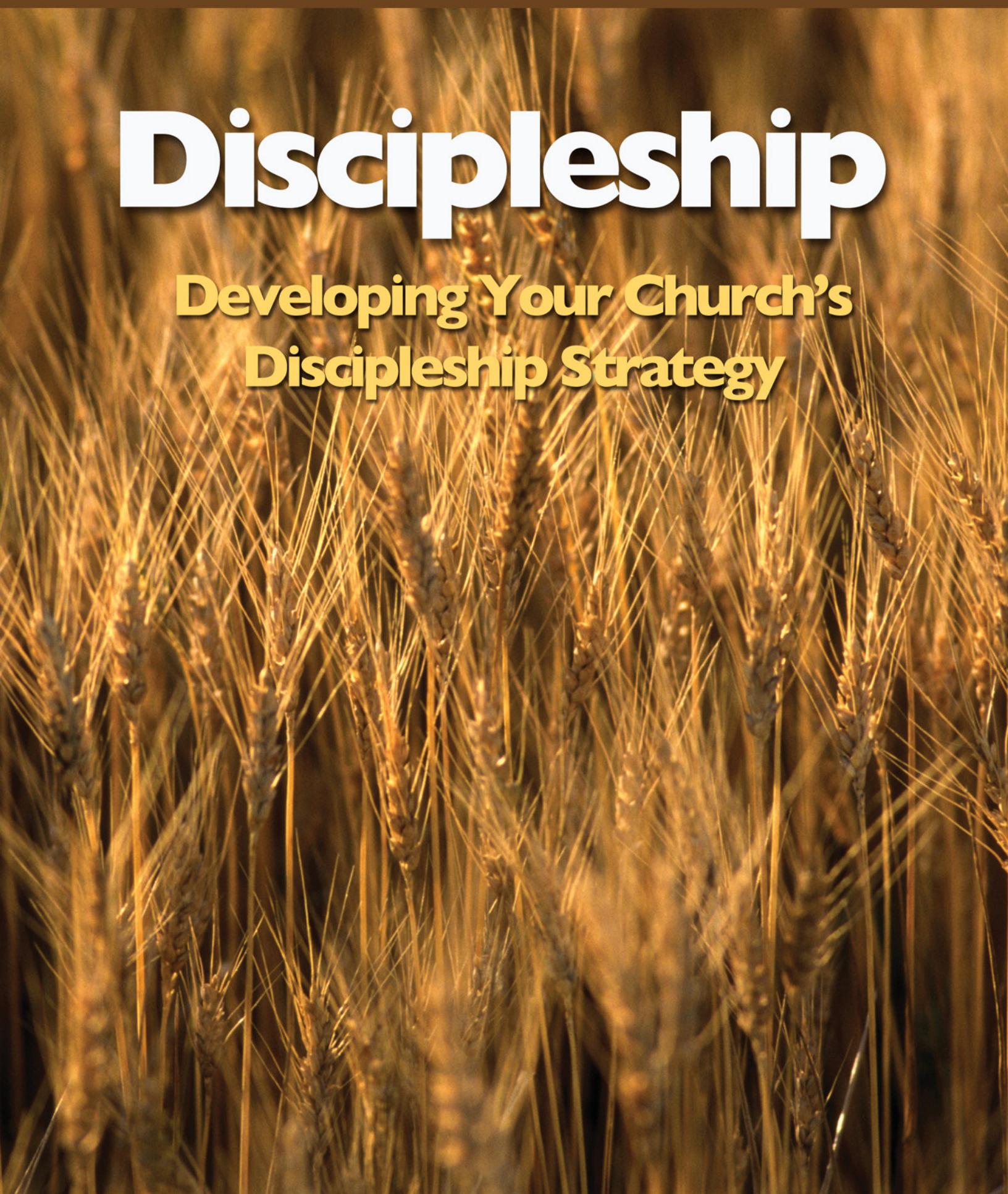


The 3-Strand Church: Crowd, Cell & CORE

# Discipleship

**Developing Your Church's  
Discipleship Strategy**



CORE Discipleship is a faith-based, Christian organization. Our mission is to help you make disciples of Jesus. We provide a simple and reproducible discipleship process based on Jesus' "inner circle" or "core" comprised of Peter, James, and John. We also provide discipleship training and free discipleship resources as free downloadable eBooks.

Just like you, Father God is using the many events and circumstances of life's journey to mold and shape me into the person He desires. Occasionally, I've cooperated completely. It's in those rare moments when something extraordinary takes place - Heaven touches earth, mountains are moved, a part of me is transformed.

Through His infinite patience and unfathomable love I am learning to become the man He created me to be. As I daily surrender my life to Him through His precious Holy Spirit, I see more clearly life eternal.

My hope and prayer for you are that you too will discover God's purpose and become exactly what He has planned for you all along - His son or daughter.

May God grant that we become His disciples by His grace,

*Doug Morrell*

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Doug is a seasoned discipler and small group leader. Since graduating from Texas Tech University in 1984, he's worked in a dual capacity -- working within for-profit businesses around the country while also serving the church in various pastoral roles. Additionally, he and his wife Suzie are the founders/directors of CORE Discipleship, a ministry dedicated to making disciples who make disciples. Doug and Suzie have three children: Katheryn, Hannah, and Nathaniel.

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**CoreDiscipleship.com**

## **To pastors, church leaders, staff and disciplers,**

I have had the great opportunity to visit with hundreds of pastors around the world regarding discipleship. As a pastor, I share your passion in seeing people become fully equipped, spiritually mature saints – believers who know Jesus and make Him known. I also know what it feels like to look out over the congregation and see that many are not growing up in the basics of our faith.

Back in 1988, my wife Suzie and I were members of Scottsdale Bible Church, Scottsdale, Arizona. Gary Smalley and John Trent led our Genesis 2 class – a group of about 120 people. Genesis was then broken down into even smaller life groups of 12-16 people who met in homes all over Phoenix. Both of these groups were comprised of folks of about the same age, marital status, number of children, etc. And though Sunday's big gathering followed by our large Sunday school and the home groups were incredible, nothing altered my pathway more than the next level of discipleship. Two guys from our small group invited me to a once a week, 6:00am men's fellowship. These men became disciplers and helped plant the seed for what is now known as the 3-Strand CORE Discipleship Process.

In 2001, Phillip Hearn, founding pastor of New River Fellowship, listened to my vision about implementing a third strand to our existing church discipleship process. He agreed and the first CORE Group was born. Two year's later there were 28 CORE Groups, a CORE manual developed, and the CORE Discipleship website launched. In fact, we saw such incredible life transformation that Phillip wrote his doctoral dissertation for Regent University on the findings, "The Three-Strand Church: Understanding the Scriptural Values and Structural Venues of a Three-Strand Approach to Discipleship."

The 3-Strand discipleship process is not something new. Christ's ministry was to the multitudes (crowd), the 12 (cell), and the inner circle of three (core). In 1743, John Wesley imitated this structure by creating societies (crowd), classes (cells), and bands (core). We call this the 3-Strand Discipleship Process (crowd, cell and CORE). This process can help you fulfill the Great Commission, become intentional about discipleship and help establish and preserve leadership through many generations.

The 3-Strand CORE Discipleship Process will help develop an unbelievable spiritual discipleship network and community in your church where no one stands alone, struggles alone, develops alone or grows up alone. Please feel free to use the term CORE Groups – many have done so since we first launched out and we think it perfectly describes the purpose and process.

I realize that each local church must determine God's specific directives for that body. I pray that you and your church will consider and benefit from these 10 CORE Steps, tools and resources to establish a process for making disciples in your church family.

# 1

## Step One: Pray

To begin, I want to encourage you to spend time with God as you carefully and prayerfully consider the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV)

“Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life.” –Dietrich Bonhoeffer



# 2

## Step Two: Read the following from Ray Stedman

Ray Stedman wrote the following regarding Biblical discipleship in his study entitled Mere Christianity – or Discipleship?:

“Could it be we have missed the point of our Lord’s chief motivating appeal? Often the Great Commission passage in Matthew 28 has been used as a charge to evangelize the world. Certainly this is valid, but a careful study of these verses reveals that evangelism is not its main thrust. A closer look reveals that making disciples is to be our aim. Evangelizing is only part of the process of discipling. Let’s examine the words in detail.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

The structure of these verses is centered in the verb forms:

“go, make disciples, baptizing and teaching.” But only one of these is a finite verb (or main verb) while the other three are participles, or participating verb forms, modifying and explaining the main verb action.

Literally, it says, “Going, make disciples, baptizing and teaching.” The emphasis is clearly to make disciples. The first word,

“Go”, is not a command, as our English translations would make it, but rather says, “going” (in effect---“I assume you’re on your way”).

The second participle, baptizing, needs some clarification of its meaning. It can refer to the ritual act of water baptism, but here it has far deeper import than mere ritual

observance. All the other verb forms convey reality, not ritual, so it is logical to assume that this verb should do no less, in such an important context. The functional use of this word in Greek, as distinct from its ritual significance, means to introduce into a new relationship---in this case, the new relationship of having the resources of the Godhead made available.

The word name also requires some added understanding:

“---in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” means “into the resources of the Father, Son and Spirit.” This is based on the idea that a person’s name represents all that he is and has. “Open in the name of the law!” implies all the authority and resources of the government behind it.

Putting the passage all together, we would read it this way:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me; going therefore, make disciples of all nations, introducing them into all the resources of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

### **The Great Commission, Revised Version**

The one command is to make disciples, and the emphasis is on our Lord’s available resources from which to operate. Making disciples involves going, introducing into the total resources of the Godhead and teaching the truth of God. Thus, the Great Commission is far more than just evangelizing; it involves showing people the total resources available to them in the Godhead through teaching them the Word of God. A disciple is basically a “learner,” one who has put himself under the discipline of the Lord Jesus and is willingly subject to all His commands. What he is to learn is how to use the total resources now made available to him since life is in Christ.

This brings into focus the final motivating factor. We must lead men to be disciples of Christ, responsive to his leadership---allowing him to be Lord. Thus, we should enlist without pressure, allowing men freedom to respond to the Lord Jesus, not just to us. We can thus help them to seek the clear call of God to their avenue of service for him. Our place and privilege is to encourage them to explore, expose them to opportunities of service, then to let them observe the results and respond to the Lord from their own hearts. It is amazing what happens when we do this. The Lord does call them and confirm his appointed sphere of service for them. And becoming his disciples, they learn to draw on the adequate spiritual capital of a totally sufficient God.”

3

### **Step 3: Consider Jesus’ Definition of Discipleship**

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26 (NIV)

A disciple of Jesus must love Him more than he/she loves any other person. This love is demonstrated in everyday life. It is this type love that enables the disciple to meet the requirements of following Jesus. This type love is born and cultivated over a lifetime in Jesus' presence.

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:27 (NIV)

The cross symbolizes our purpose as disciples of Jesus. We are to die to our self-centered agenda and live for Him as we allow Him to live through us. Regardless of our station, our purpose is to know Christ and make Him known (see John 3:30). There simply cannot be discipleship without discipline. A disciple lives a disciplined life ordered by the Lord.

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33 (NIV)

Jesus' disciples must let go of everything. Jesus tells us that nothing in life can take the place designed for Him. A disciple realizes that God is the owner of all possessions (see Ps. 24:1). A disciple understands that he/she is only a steward charged with the oversight of His possessions.

#### **Step 4: Discipleship**

- 
- The ongoing, lifelong transformation wherein a believer becomes Christ-like in character and purpose (Mth. 5:48; Eph. 4:13-15; Phil. 2:5).
  - Doing the right thing for the right reason (Phil. 1:27).
  - Is progressive and sustained by Jesus (John 15:4).
  - Is a work of grace by the Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:7-8).
  - Is evidenced in serving others (1 Pet. 4:10).
  - Is reproduced in others (Mth. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2).
  - Is the mandate to and corporate responsibility of the church. The church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). What Jesus began to do and to teach, the church is to continue (Acts 1:1ff). No one believer can individually and/or independently fully represent or reflect Jesus. Each and every believer is a valuable member of His body, and each has his/her unique function and part in the discipleship process.

There appears to be a lack of consensus regarding the Biblical definition of discipleship as it appears in the Gospels and the Epistles (theology and methodology). It appears from Scripture that the main verb, 'make disciples,' does not really explain the means of discipleship, but its goal. To make disciples according to Jesus' Great Commission is accomplished by going (first participle), initiating people into the life of discipleship by 'baptizing' (second participle), and achieved by 'teaching' (third participle) which is the continuous obligation of the church in the life of a new convert as they develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as both Savior AND Lord. Teaching then is the process of getting the

person to know Him in a life-long, deeper, and more intimate way.

Scripture is an absolute essential element in the process of Holy Spirit-inspired, transformation of knowledge, character, and conduct. I would suggest that the church should come to recognize that discipleship is the corporate responsibility of the church. From practical application and long experience, I believe that discipleship is a life-long process, beginning at the point of salvation, and participated in by a variety of individuals within the church, each as the Lord directs, from his or her own unique gift set and way.

Making disciples does not refer to some formal structured program intended only for the super-spiritual. It is God's imperative for every believer. It involves the initiation and the instruction of every believer into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. It seeks to make every person a follower of Christ.

The Holy Spirit initiates and provides power for transformation as believers practice spiritual disciplines (see John 6:63; 16:13; Eph. 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:7). When disciples practice spiritual disciplines, they open their hearts and lives to the work of the Holy Spirit – the result is spiritual transformation.

As we have discovered, the Great Commission has three participles: “go,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” and one imperative verb, a command: “make disciples.” The main idea is to make disciples. The participles tell us how to do that: we make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching. So the goal of discipleship is to make disciples, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded.

Discipleship involves mutual accountability among disciples (see Rom. 1:12). By having a CORE Group, a disciple is challenged to stay the course and become more like Christ. CORE Groups play a major role in fostering mutual accountability among disciples of all ages.

## 5

### **Step 5: A Cord Of Three Strands**

“One standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer; three is even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

### **Jesus**

The most effective manner to train and equip people for any skill is by providing effective models and opportunities to practice the skill itself. Jesus used a show, tell, release, and supervise model of training. Jesus ministered to the multitudes (crowd), the 12 (cell), and the inner circle of 3 (core). After calling the disciples, He took them along with Him, teaching and healing the sick as He went. Then, after He thought the disciples had seen and learned enough to try for themselves, He commissioned, empowered, instructed, and sent them out to do the same things. This discipleship process should be no different for those

desiring to bring others into a complete understanding and walk in Christ-likeness.

### **John Wesley**

In 1743 John Wesley created a 3-strand discipleship model, a company of people having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their own salvation. The 3 groups were called societies (multitude), classes (cells), and bands (core).

6

## **Step 6: Biblical, Relational and Structural Evidence for a 3-Strand Discipleship Process**

### **Biblical Evidence for a 3-Strand Discipleship Process**

Scripture paints a clear picture of a God who not only lives in community but also embraces and seeks after it. First, with Adam (Gen.1:26), then with the people of Israel (Deut.6:4) and finally in the Godhead itself (John 1:1-3). There is power in a cord of three and this concept runs throughout God's Word. Since God Himself lives and works in community, and we are made in the likeness of God, then we too are created to live in and for community. To be human is to hunger for community.

Additionally, Jesus and the disciples modeled a closely-knit community. Christ Himself came to provide community and live with us (Mth.1:23) and then He called a small group of disciples to live and walk with Him (Mark 3:7-10,13-14). Jesus knew that the multitudes had great needs, but chose to minister to the twelve and especially the three (Peter, James and John). By walking with and training a few, He ultimately transformed many lives.

This cord of three strands is Christ's highest dream for His Church. It is seen in His prayer for us that we may be one as He and the Father and Holy Spirit are one (John 17:11). Additionally, Christ sees our unity and community as our message to the world that He came and that He is love, and if we, the Church, fail at community, we fail our mission (John 17:21, 23).

### **Relational Evidence for a 3-Strand Discipleship Process**

There is relational evidence that God created us to crave relationships and community:

- God wants us to seek a relationship with Him (Acts 17:24-27)
- God wants us to have relationships with others (Genesis 2:18)
- God reveals His emotions to us (Ephesians 4:30; Zephaniah 3:17)
- God intervenes when we can't communicate (Romans 8:26-27)

There is also blessing that comes from community:

- Strength for storms of life (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)
- Wisdom for making good decisions (Proverbs 15:22)
- Confidentiality and accountability for spiritual health (Proverbs 27:17)

- There is strength, reliability and assurance in community (Proverbs 18:24)

### **Structural Evidence for a 3-Strand Discipleship Process**

As churches are planted to accomplish God's work in the world, organization becomes a necessity to ensure community. The CORE Discipleship process and groups are a way to ensure that this done in a life-giving manner by "doing life together" - everyone is cared for and no one cares for too many (not more than four). Just as is true in a natural family, the CORE Discipleship process enhances spiritual parenting to ensure that no one stands alone, struggles alone, serves alone, develops alone, seeks alone, or grows up alone.

The CORE Discipleship process and groups are a God-ordained way to provide infrastructure within any church to assure the development of disciples (Matthew 28:19, 20), where the workload is shared (Exodus 18:9-22), where everyone receives care (Acts 6:1) and where leadership can be determined, equipped and repeated (Titus 1:5).

Finally, the CORE Discipleship process provide a structure for "mutual membership" to promote unity in the body (Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16), a sense of belonging to one another (Romans 7:2-4) and a place to edify, bless, grow, serve and challenge each other through the exercise of each person's spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:12-27).

7

### **Step 7: Considering the Crowd, Cell & CORE**

The CORE discipleship process can be integrated by any Christian church as a roadmap and adapted to fit any church expression. In addition to the process, we also provide resources to assist you in equipping the saints.

### **The 3-Strand Discipleship Process: Crowd, Cell, and CORE**

<b>The 3-Strand Church Model: The Master's Plan For Discipleship</b>			
<b>Jesus' Model</b>	Multitudes	The 12	The 3 (Peter, James, John)
<b>Wesley's Model</b>	Societies	Classes	Bands
<b>3-Strand Model</b>	Crowd	Cells	CORE
<b>Group Size</b>	50+	5-16	3-4
<b>Focus</b>	Celebration	Community	Commitment
<b>Population</b>	Mixed gender	Mostly mixed gender	Gender specific
<b>Message Content</b>	General	Less general	Discipleship specific

## **Strand 1: Crowd**

**Size: 50+ people; typically the large gathering; corporate worship**

**Purpose: To bring about a change in knowledge**

**Focus: celebration - worship**

Wesley's society or crowd group included those in a geographical area, much like a typical, congregational meeting in today's church. These large groups of people met once a week to pray, sing, study scripture, and to watch over one another in love. However, as is true of today's corporate church gathering, there was little or no provision made at this level for personal response or feedback.

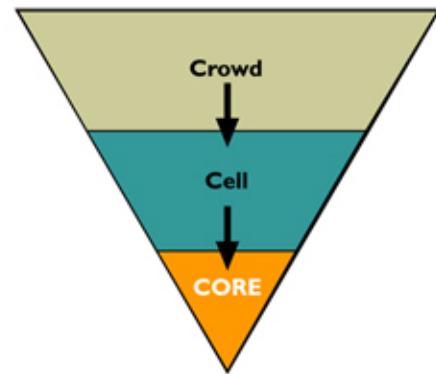
## **Strand 2: Cell**

**Size: 5-16 people**

**Purpose: To bring about behavioral change; conduct**

**Focus: community - fellowship**

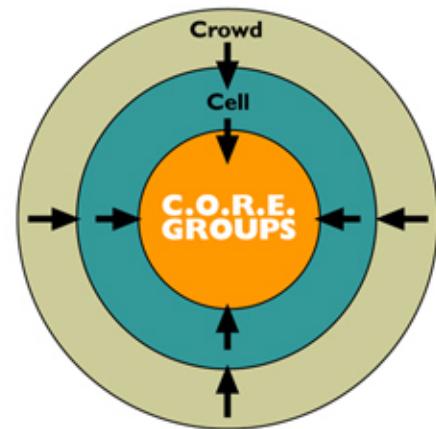
Wesley's class or cell group was the most basic group structure of the society. The class was composed of 12-20 members, both sexes, mixed by age, social standing and spiritual readiness, under the direction of a trained leader. It was not a gathering for academic learning. They met weekly in the evening for mutual confession of sin and accountability for growing in holiness. This group provided the structure to more closely inspect the condition of the flock, to help them through trials and temptations, and to bring further understanding in practical terms to the messages they had heard preached in the public society meeting. Membership in a class meeting was non-negotiable. If you wanted to continue in the society you had to be in a class. In 1742 in one society in London there were 426 members, divided into 65 classes. Eighteen months later that same society had 2200 members, all of whom were in classes. Every week each class member was expected to speak openly and honestly on the true state of his or her soul. This strand closely resembles today's cell group, small group, life group, etc.



Crowd: Sunday large group worship;  
50+ people; celebration centered;  
mostly mixed gender

Cell: Weekly small group meetings;  
5-16 people; fellowship centered;  
mixed gender

CORE: 3 or 4 meeting weekly; gender  
specific; discipleship specific



## **Strand 3: CORE**

**Size: 3 or 4 people**

**Purpose: To bring about a change of direction, heart and position; knowledge, character and conduct**

**Focus: commitment - discipleship**

Wesley's band or CORE was made up of 4 members, all the same sex, age, and marital status. This was a voluntary group of people who professed a clear Christian commitment,

who desired to grow in love, holiness, and purity of motive. The environment was one of ruthless honesty and frank openness. There were specific rules about punctuality and order within the meeting. He introduced accountability questions that everyone answered openly and honestly in the meeting each week. Bands became the training ground for future leaders. This group held to extreme confidentiality in a “safe place”, mutual submission where matters of indifference were yielded to the released leader, and godly stewardship. This was the group that could intensively pursue goals and vision together. There is a strong case to be made for churches to review, adapt and integrate a 3-Strand Discipleship Process into their expression. It begins with the Bible, is supported by sociological evidence, makes sense from an organizational standpoint, and has been proven successful for thousands of years.

## 8

### **Step 8: CORE Discipleship Process**

As we have seen, being a disciple and making disciples is a direct command from our Lord Jesus and the primary responsibility of the church and every born-again believer.

Everything we do in church or ministry should have discipleship as the ultimate core goal. Our going, baptizing, and teaching needs to be discipleship-centered. What we do each time we gather, whether church services, Sunday School, children’s ministry, women’s ministry, men’s ministry, VBS, outreach, etc., all need to focus on making disciples.

### **CORE Discipleship - Simple. Proven. Biblical.**

- **Adaptable:** the CORE discipleship process can be easily adapted to your existing ministry setting for maximum flexibility.
- **Undated:** CORE is undated - you can begin the process at any time in a variety of ministry settings.
- **Ungraded:** CORE is ungraded. You can either select your own resources or select the CORE resources (A1-A9, B1-B9, C1-C9) most appropriate to the level of learning of your Group. The CORE Group moves through sequential “precept-on-precept” learning levels.
- **Translation Independent:** CORE is translation independent. CORE Group members will be comfortable using their preferred English-language Bible translation. CORE Groups are encouraged to bring and use their Bibles to find answers.
- **Free:** Our eBook lessons remain the same so that you can re-use them year-after-year with each new CORE Group. Our ministry exists to provide a simple, proven, reproducible and Biblical process and resources.
- **Non-Denominational:** CORE Discipleship is not affiliated with a denomination. We are sensitive to the doctrinal distinctions among Christians, so we have focused on the CORE teachings of our Christian faith. CORE has been used by a wide spectrum of churches, ministries, organizations and schools.
- **Make Disciples:** CORE purposes to make disciples who can then make disciples. Plus, from the very beginning, each CORE member is encouraged to begin praying for

his or her own CORE Group and for someone who does not know Jesus as Lord.

CORE Groups specifically embrace the Great Commandment and the Great Commission by focusing on the imperative to make disciples found in the Great Commission as they are taught to "...observe all that I commanded you" (Mth. 28:20). This is accomplished as we build life-long relationships in the context of safe and confidential groups of no more than four disciples, men with men and women with women. CORE Groups are not accountability groups or smaller, small groups. CORE Groups develop students and adults who commit their lives to Jesus Christ and are willing to follow Him as presented in the pages of God's Word. From the very beginning, CORE members are held accountable to begin praying for two to come to Christ and for someone they are called to disciple.

## **CORE Key Values**

There are 5 key values emphasized within a CORE Group: Matthew 22:37-40; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 4:11-16, and 2 Timothy 2:2:

**1. Love:** The first foundational value of a CORE Group is the pursuit the Great Commandment - our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with others (Mth. 22:37-40).

**2. Christ-likeness:** The second foundational value is the pursuit of Christ-likeness as we observe the Great Commission (Mth. 28:19,20). It is our desire to be genuinely conformed to the character of Jesus. We believe God's vision for man is to make us in the image of Christ (Gen 1:26; Rom 8:29). We believe that all spiritual progress is the result of God's grace. We believe that humility is the pathway to Christ-likeness. In seeking to truly become like Christ, we remember His command to, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mth. 11:29).

**3. Devoted:** The third foundational value of CORE is a commitment to the four fundamental devotions of the church as recorded in Acts 2:42: devoted to God's Word, fellowship, communion, and prayer. It is learning to be a doer of the Word.

**4. Equipped:** A CORE Group outfits the saints for the work of ministry - the privilege and enterprise of each member of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

**5. Faithful:** A CORE Group is facilitated by a more spiritually mature person as seen in 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

## **A CORE Group**

- Consists of 3 and no more than 4 people
- Same gender
- Meets weekly for an extended time

- Purpose is to grow in relationship with God and each other
- Mutual transparency, trust, encouragement, instruction, accountability and “peer” counsel desired by all
- Each person desires to be formed, conformed, and transformed through Biblical knowledge/understanding/application, growing in Christ-like character, and evidenced by Holy Spirit-empowered conduct
- The Bible is absolutely essential (Acts 2:42)
- CORE resources are available to you as free tools to use in your CORE Group
- The group is facilitated by - but never dominated by - a more spiritually-mature believer (2 Tim. 2:2)
- The groups create an environment of life-transformation and multiplication by the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:19; Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:11-16)
- There must be equality, independence for each person to hear God’s Word and the Holy Spirit, open and honest dialogue (not monologue)
- Produces disciples who can then make disciples
- Each person in a CORE Group must agree and allow others in the Group to accountability (a downloadable and printable covenant form is available on the CORE website) to growing in Christ-likeness
- Christ-like growth is the ultimate goal of each Group
- Accountability focuses on learning to “observe or obey all that Jesus has commanded” (Mth. 28:19).



## The Promise

The last phrase of Matthew 28:20 contains an incredible promise: “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” In context, this verse is primarily talking about making disciples. What Jesus is saying is that when we make disciples according to His plan and process, He will be with us. When Jesus sees a disciple making church, He gets involved there. When He sees disciples going out to make new disciples, then baptizing and teaching them, He is very present. According to Romans 8:29, God wants disciples to be conformed to Christ’s image, and according to His Commission, He promises to help us make disciples to accomplish His plan.

The CORE Discipleship process follows the Master’s plan for discipleship by imparting life, not just teaching about life - it is spiritual parenting. It is showing, telling, supervising and releasing disciples to make disciples who can then repeat the process once more. It is both an adventure of a lifetime and a lifetime of adventure.

**9**

## Step 9: Spiritual Life Stages

As a means of introducing the concept of spiritual life stages as it relates to the CORE Discipleship process and resources, the following is presented as a brief overview so that you can develop your discipleship process:

- A. The Christian life (spiritual) parallels the physical life (natural):
  - There are definite stages in life;
  - Each stage of life in the Christian journey builds upon the other (precept upon precept);
  - Just as there are natural parents, there should be spiritual parents;
  - Only through “growth” does a person pass from one stage to the next;
  - When growth does not occur, it is a sign of a serious problem.
  
- B. There is a major difference between physical growth and spiritual growth:
  - Physical growth usually takes place with little to no effort on our part;
  - Spiritual growth must be nurtured and overseen by spiritually mature “fathers/mothers” who understand the process as being intentional, relational and that the process is 100 percent spiritual.
  
- C. From the mature writings of the Apostle John:
  - We discover several truths (1 John 2:12-14): “I write to you dear children ... young men ... fathers”
  
- D. Spiritual Transformation:
  - Simply leading people to Jesus and getting people to attend church regularly does not produce a spiritually mature disciple.
  - Spiritual transformation is learned and imparted as believers walk together on the journey.
  - Unlike 1 John 2:1,18,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21 where “children” appears to be a term of endearment for all believers, in 1 John 2:12,13 “children” seems to refer to a specific life-stage.  
\*Any distinction between “teknion” and “paidion” is likely not significant, since John uses both as terms of endearment in this epistle when speaking of all believers (1 John 2:18 paidion) with (1 John 2:28 teknon)
  - Taken literally, the terms “fathers, children, young men” would leave out many disciples (old men, old and younger women); therefore, we take the terms to be figurative.

10

## **Step 10: CORE Discipleship Resource Chart Three Stages of Spiritual Maturity: (1 John 2:12-14)**

The Apostle John made reference to three stages of spiritual maturity (children, young men, fathers). CORE resources have been developed and are provided based on John’s categories:

- In each stage there are blessings to be enjoyed and instruction/virtues to be realized and learned.
- Children need to become young men/young women, and young men/young women need to become fathers/mothers.

CORE provides a variety of discipleship resources for all three stages. These resources

are organized by a suggested spiritual-development plan – Beginnings/Children (knowledge); Intermediate/Students (character); and Seasoned/Adult (conduct). The purpose of these categories is to help you develop a balanced set of discipleship opportunities for your church family as part of your discipleship process.

### **A1-A9:**

Children (regardless of age-level this category includes those just entering the journey of faith).

### **B1-B9:**

Students (young sons and daughters in the faith - regardless of age-level this category includes those growing in the faith).

### **C1-C9:**

Adults (fathers and mothers in the faith - those who are spiritually mature and who are reproducing like kind).

### **CORE Discipleship Resource Guide**

<b>Years 5+</b>	CORE Manual	<b>C7</b>	CORE Manual	<b>C8</b>	CORE Manual	<b>C9</b>	<b>Adult</b>
	CORE Leader's Guide	<b>C4</b>	CORE Manual	<b>C5</b>	CORE Manual	<b>C6</b>	
	Field Guide	<b>C1</b>	Field Guide	<b>C2</b>	Field Guide	<b>C3</b>	
<b>Years 2-4</b>	Discipleship By Design: 4	<b>B7</b>	Discipleship By Design: 5	<b>B8</b>	As A Man Thinks	<b>B9</b>	<b>Student</b>
	Discipleship By Design: I	<b>B4</b>	Discipleship By Design: 2	<b>B5</b>	Discipleship By Design: 3	<b>B6</b>	
	God's Order For Family Life	<b>B1</b>	God's Order For Family Life	<b>B2</b>	God's Order For Family Life	<b>B3</b>	
<b>Years 1-3</b>	Presence	<b>A7</b>	Foundations	<b>A8</b>	Foundations	<b>A9</b>	<b>Children</b>
	Disciple's Journal	<b>A4</b>	Disciple's Journal	<b>A5</b>	Disciple's Journal	<b>A6</b>	
	Chrysalis	<b>A1</b>	21 Days To Breakthrough	<b>A2</b>	Discovering God's Will	<b>A3</b>	

### **Begin With CORE Discipleship Guide As The Foundation**

- █ **Seasoned: (C1-C9 Series) - Spiritual “Adult”**
- █ **Intermediate: (B1-B9 Series) - Spiritual “Student”**
- █ **Beginnings: (A1-A9 Series) - Spiritual “Children”**

## **Beginnings - “Children”**

**Spiritual Age:** Children in the faith – those just entering into the journey

**Spiritual Needs:** nurturing, nourishment, protection, love, basic training

**Discipler’s Role:** Spiritual “father/mother” in the faith (see 1 Thess. 2:7)

**Suggested CORE Resources:** A1-A9

### **Overview:**

The primary needs of a new believer are nurturing, nourishment, protection, love and fundamentals. New believers need to be greatly loved and protected from the enemy, encouraged, guided, and confirmed. They need to learn that they are a part of God’s family (Eph. 2:19). They need to learn how to hear, know and do God’s Word. At this stage, the primary role of a discipler is that of a spiritual “father/mother,” (not gender specific) who tenderly and gently meet their needs just as the apostle Paul did: “but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.” (1 Thess. 2:7)

#### A. At this stage, disciples are “little children” in Christ Jesus

##### 1. There are two terms used by John referring to small infants

- teknion {tek-nee’-on} - diminutive of tekna; an infant
- paidion {pahee-dee’-on} - neut. diminutive of pais; a childling (of either sex), i.e. (prop.) an infant, or (by extens.) a half-grown boy or girl (cf. Mark 5:39-42)

##### 2. Those who are new Christians, or immature Christians, are spoken of as “babes in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1; Galatians 4:19; Hebrews 5:12-13)

- Knowledge: learn and love God’s Word
- Begin to learn to live godly lives and grow as believers
- Begin to learn how to lead in the next generation

##### 3. This can be a difficult time, in which a disciple:

- Is still more carnal than spiritual (1 Corinthians 3:1)
- Can be a source of anxiety for those trying to example and lead them toward Christ-likeness (Galatians 4:19)
- Instruction should focus on the “milk” of the Word (Hebrews 5:12-13)

#### B. Disciples At This Stage Need Much Encouragement And Reminders:

##### 1. They must be instructed frequently so that they fully grasp that their sins have been forgiven in Christ (1 John 2:12)

- They must be instructed and fully grasp that forgiveness is not based upon maturity or perfection
- They must be instructed and fully grasp that forgiveness is based upon the blood of Jesus, and upon a willingness to confess sins (1 John 1:9); holiness and grace must be taught

##### 2. Because they have “known the Father” (1 John 2:13)

- They must understand that they have fellowship with the Father, which is John's definition of "eternal life" (John 17:2-3)
- They must recognize that though they may be "babes", they have "eternal life" in Christ (1 John 5:11-12)
- They must understand that God wants them to continue to believe and grow (1 John 5:13)

### **Recommended CORE Materials: Spiritual Children (Year 1)**

- **Chrysalis - New Believer's Guidebook:** This book contains the basic teaching every new believer should know. If you're a new Christian, coming back to Christ after a period of doubt, trying to process the "big picture" or just need a refresher course, this guidebook will help you get started.
- **21 Days To Breakthrough:** will help disciples understand that the habits we form, the sin we embrace, the forces we struggle against, are very real and can be overcome because they have been defeated by Jesus at Calvary.
- **Discovering God's Will:** provides seven keys to discovering God's will - following these keys will bring assurance and confidence as disciples make major life decisions.
- **Presence: The Practice Of The Presence Of God:** Written 300 years ago by a cook in a European monastery, this is one of the most famous Christian books of all time and will help disciples practice being and remaining in God's presence continuously.
- **The Disciple's Journal:** through-the-year study contains individual weekly character/virtue studies, a daily journaling area, a weekly note page for sermon/lesson notes, and weekly words of wisdom from the Bible ... all in one book! Each week a character trait of Jesus is provided such as: Perseverance, Patience, Courage, Friendliness, Forgiveness, Honesty, Dependability, and 45 additional weekly studies.

NOTE: The Disciple's Journal can be used simultaneously beginning with Chrysalis and then followed by 21 Days To Breakthrough, Discovering God's Will and Presence over the first year.

### **Recommended CORE Materials: Spiritual Children (Years 2-3)**

- **Foundations - Essentials Of Our Faith:** The foundational doctrines presented in this study are from Hebrews 6:1-3. Just as is true of any good foundation, these must be established first, and then built upon. These principles include: Repentance From Dead Works, Faith Toward God, The Doctrine Of Baptisms, Laying On Of Hands, The Resurrection Of The Dead, Eternal Judgment and a section on Maturity.

When a "babe in Christ" is fed the milk of the Word, learns to stand on the power of the blood of Christ, learns to remain in fellowship with the Father and sharing in "eternal life", and as they begin to grasp the holiness and grace of God they will soon enter into the next stage.

## **Intermediate - “Students”**

**Spiritual Age:** Young sons/daughters in the faith – “Students”

**Spiritual Needs:** growing in the faith

**Discipler’s Role:** Teacher/Coach

**Suggested CORE Resources:** B1-B9

### **Overview:**

As a student begins to grow in his/her faith, their needs change, too. At this spiritual life stage, the student must learn to recognize and respond to the Lordship of Jesus, develop and demonstrate Christ’s character, and develop godly relationships. A discipler must provide continuous, firm guidance and teach the basics of how to walk. More is required of the student with added responsibility and accountability. It is at this stage that the foundational principles of the spiritual life are modeled and taught (see Heb. 6:1-3). It is at this stage that the discipler’s role becomes that of “teacher/coach.” As growth continues, the student begins to stand and it is easy for the discipler to fall back into the role of “father/mother” whereas the student needs a “teacher/coach.” The student needs to fully understand that they have the same opportunity for success and failure and that there are rewards and consequences for each attitude and action. As the student is assigned more responsibility, more accountability is given with more authority provided. In other words, the student is now “in the game” and the discipler is on the sidelines, cheering, guiding, and patching up skinned elbows, knees, and hearts as need be.

A. At this stage, disciples are “young men”

1. The expression “young men” is taken figuratively
2. Young men refers to all, male or female, young or old chronologically, who are “strong in the Lord”
3. Those who are “strong in the Lord” are those “who have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:13,14)
  - At this stage, disciples must be taught and come to understand that they are not perfect nor without sin (1 John 1:8)
  - These disciples must be taught that their faith must and will be tested; they have demonstrated that they are truly “born of God” (1 John 4:4; 5:4-5)

B. Disciples at this point must be taught and understand that the source of their strength is the Word of God

1. They must be taught and realize that only as the Word of God “abides” in them are they strong (1 John 2:14)
2. They must be taught and realize the strength of God’s Word as David saw the value of allowing the Word of God to abide in his heart (Psalm 119:11)
3. They need to heed the admonition found in 1 Peter 2:1,2.
  - Disciplines include: Lordship, disciplines in the faith, character, discernment, relationships, and influence

## **Recommended CORE Materials: Spiritual Students (Years 2-4)**

- **God's Order For FamilyLife:** will help the disciple discover and recover the pattern of godly relationships in the home and with our loving Father God.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book 1 “The Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** The Bible tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This introductory study will show a disciple how we are to walk and presents a clear understanding between our soul’s response and our Spirit-to-spirit response.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book 2 “Discovering Your Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** Book 2 shows us how we can daily live under the Holy Spirit’s control and guidance, obeying every prompting of the Holy Spirit, knowing that it is by this means that the fleshly or carnal desires are defeated. This speaks of relational discipleship.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book 3 “Growing In Your Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** Book 3 will help you understand and apply the Great Commission using the model the Apostle Paul established for the preservation and transmission of the gospel.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book 4 “Serving In Your Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** Book 4 will help you discover that godliness results only from Jesus Christ living through us by the Holy Spirit. It can never be accomplished by any external means.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book 5 “Sharing In Your Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** Book 5 will help you become the kind of person who understands that discipleship means the total renunciation of all selfish interests for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is a total commitment to Him and Him alone and a maximum realization of His life lived through us.
- **As A Man Thinks:** Few books have been so widely read, have stood the test of time, have had such an impact on generations of readers, and have carried such a simple, profound message based on the admonition found in Romans 12:1,2.

As a disciple demonstrates repeatedly that they are strong in the Lord, they progress to the final stage of the disciple’s life.

## **Seasoned - “Adults”**

**Spiritual Age:** Spiritually mature; reproducing like kind

**Spiritual Needs:** abiding, praying, serving, discipling

**Discipler’s Role:** Friend/Partner

**Suggested CORE Resources:** C1-C9

### **Overview:**

It is at this spiritual life stage that the discipler’s role is that of “friend/partner.” The disciple has grown and is now ready to launch out from under your “spiritual roof”. They are now fellowshipping with believers, praying in faith, living in the Word, abiding in Christ, ministering to others, and witnessing to the world. It is at this stage that the discipler needs to release the disciple to develop his/her faith, not yours, and this will sometimes be painful as they learn firsthand the reality and harshness of life (natural and spiritual), the flesh, and the tactics of the enemy. The discipler will have the tendency to rush in and save the disciple, but this is counterproductive. Just as a caterpillar must be allowed to struggle to gain freedom from its cocoon, if assisted, it will not have the strength necessary for life’s battles. Encourage the disciple to deepen their walk, increase their faith, practice the presence of God, and produce lasting fruit. As their friend/partner, you are now shouting: “You can do it! Don’t give up! Keep the pace! Finish the race!”

#### A. Disciples are now “fathers”

1. This term is used figuratively
2. This term refers to disciples, male and female, who are recognized as Christ-like (love/servanthood) and who are in the process or are making disciples
3. This stage suggests:
  - They have experience, having progressed through earlier stages of the Christian life (infancy, strength)
  - They are or are in the process of making disciples - going, baptizing, teaching others all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19,20; 1 Corinthians 4:14-15)
  - They are abiding in Christ, praying in faith, living in the Word, fellowship with believers, minister to others, and witnessing to the world.

#### B. Disciples at this stage continue developing, reproducing, and bearing lasting fruit

1. They “walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6)
  - They purpose to “grow in the...knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)
  - They realize that this knowledge comes only as they develop the Christ-like graces found in (2 Peter 1:5-8)

### **Recommended CORE Materials: Spiritual Adults (Years 5-9)**

- **Field Guide: Charting A Course For Today’s Discipleship Groups:** This book presents a general overview of discipleship and includes the six elementary doctrinal points presented in Hebrews 6:1-3.

- **CORE Discipleship Leader's Guide:** this guide serves as the companion piece for the CORE Manual. This guide presents the 3-Strand Church Discipleship Model, the CORE process, and prepares you as you intentionally invest your life in the lives of a few other people. It is all about spiritual parenting.

- **CORE Discipleship Group Manual:** The manual contains a comprehensive presentation of what is expected of those who call themselves “disciples” and a series of practical lessons to help develop strong and obedient believers. Each CORE Member will be challenged to reach out and begin praying for two converts and for their own disciple, will develop and write-out their personal testimony, be challenged and trained to launch their own CORE Group, and learn to effectively present the Gospel message to the lost.

## **Discipleship: Spiritual Parenting**

“... but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7).

A disciple-maker is a more spiritually mature person who sincerely desires that those they disciple become fully equipped and spiritually mature. They are folks who will:

### **Encourage you**

We tend to become what the most important person in our lives thinks we will become. Great instructors are those who bring out the best in us. They are great encouragers.

### **Confront you**

Proverbs 27:5,6 says, “Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” This is someone who knows that loving confrontation develops a person and that criticism destroys a person. It is someone who knows that to critique is to criticize. He or she will hold you accountable while demonstrating a spirit of mutual submission and humility. A disciple-maker is a person in your life who will ask you the hard questions like: “Are you walking in the Spirit?” Or, “Are you blameless before God and man - are there any known offenses in your life?” Or, “Are you involved in anything that would bring harm to Jesus’ name such as sexual immorality?” Disciple-makers know the point is always restoration and patiently work to that end. Disciple-makers are people who earn your trust in time; they become trustworthy allies.

### **Intercede for you**

A disciple-maker is bold in their witness, passionate about God’s promises, committed to but humble in their relationships with others. They act as a bridge between God and those they are praying for and are bonded together with those they are discipling. They are faithful (2 Timothy 2:2), obedient to God’s Word (John 8:31), loving (John 13:35), and fruitful (John 15:8).

## **Be your lifelong friend and partner**

Just as I will always be father to my children, likewise, I have made life-long commitments to those the Lord has entrusted to me as His disciples. It is in knowing that I have this responsibility and great privilege that brings a heightened sense of accountability. Conception is the stuff of God; parenting is a life-long partnership (Hebrews 13:5).

## **How To Start Your Core Discipleship Group**

**Pray.** Take a few weeks and prayerfully consider 2 or 3 others who have your heart and a heart for evangelism/discipleship. Only then go to the next step.

**Invite.** Personally approach each person. You might ask something like, “The Lord has placed you on my heart. Would you be willing to join me and one or two others on a weekly discipleship journey so that we can become even more devoted followers of Jesus?”

**Communicate.** If you are using resources from CORE Discipleship, give them an overview of the process and how the material will be used.

**Expectations.** Disciples need a clear sense of what is expected of them. Walk through the CORE Discipleship covenant line-by-line and have them restate the requirements in their own words. Mention that your CORE Group will be meeting weekly for an initial period of 9-weeks at which time the group will evaluate and if in agreement, will continue for a total time together of a year.

**Count The Cost.** Ask each disciple to prayerfully consider the invitation. Specifically, ask them to not respond immediately, but to really examine whether they have the time and the heart for the journey. Let them know that others will be in the CORE Group, too.

**Time & Place.** Set the first regular time together and get started. Quiet places are best to develop transparency and intimacy. At the first gathering, ask each person why he or she decided to commit to the CORE Discipleship Group.

**Guide & Facilitate.** Take your time and move at a comfortable pace. Encourage questions. Address personal matters. Life will happen while you are together. The CORE resources are only tools, not something to check off your “to-do-list”. Remember, discipling cannot be forced through a curriculum. Discipling relationships require an individualized approach that takes into account the unique growth of those involved. The goal is Christ-likeness, not to complete the curriculum. It’s all about loving God and each other.

**Keys For Growth.** The group will only go as deep as your willingness to be vulnerable, honest, and transparent. Intimacy, accountability and transparency are

paramount.

**Multiplication.** The commitment to disciple others is in the CORE Discipleship covenant and should remain the focus. Each CORE Group member should be allowed to lead the process. They will learn by hearing, seeing and doing.

I pray that you and your church will consider implementing the 3-Strand Discipleship Process. I hope you have found this simple presentation of the process, steps, tools and resources of some value. May our Lord Jesus bless you as you purpose to fulfill the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

**Please visit our website for even more information, articles, free studies, and to download our discipleship materials (the majority of our discipleship resources are available as free downloads and you can print and make up to 1,000 copies).**

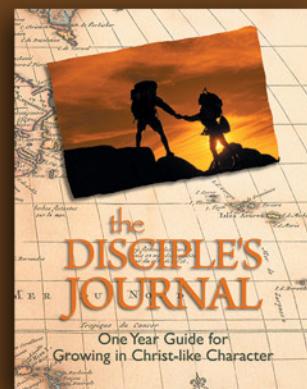
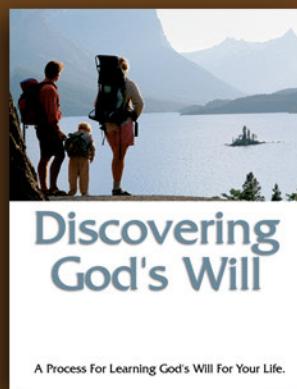
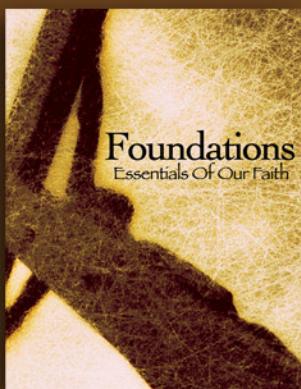
**CORE Discipleship Resources: [CoreDiscipleship.com](http://CoreDiscipleship.com)**

CORE Discipleship is a faith-based, Christian organization. Our mission is to help you make disciples of Jesus. We provide a simple and reproducible discipleship process based on Jesus' "inner circle" or "core" comprised of Peter, James, and John. We also provide discipleship training and discipleship resources available as free downloadable eBooks. CORE is a Biblical process that can help develop an unbelievable spiritual discipleship community where no one stands alone, struggles alone, develops alone or grows up alone.

May God grant that we become  
His disciples by His grace,

Doug & Suzie Morrell  
CORE Discipleship

## More Resources From Core Discipleship



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