

The Value of a Discipleship Plan

After hearing about the *Deepening Discipleship* emphasis there may be some questions that have come to your mind. One of those questions may be, “What is the value of a discipleship plan?” I’m so glad that you asked that question and have now opened up the opportunity for me to give you some answers to it.

One of the primary reasons a specific discipleship plan is thought through, adopted, and implemented is so that you and your congregation know the expected outcomes of the discipleship process you are using. When my children were in school I remember receiving information each year that detailed what would be taught and also what my daughters would be learning. As a parent this gave me the assurance that the hours my children spent in school were working toward a very specific goal. We can take a similar approach with the “students” that attend our Sunday school, children’s ministry, youth ministry and other discipleship arms of the church. It would be a major failure if a child came to Sunday school regularly but did not carry away some sort of increased knowledge and ability to understand the Word and work of God.

Let me pose it to you another way. What if you and your leadership established some discipleship benchmarks that your congregation is made aware of? Those standards could look something like this:

- When a child finishes their time in the kindergarten Sunday school class they will have memorized a specific set of Bible verses and say the Lord’s Prayer.
- Before a child moves from the children’s ministry to the youth ministry they will be able to recite the 66 books of the Bible and be able to explain what salvation means.
- When a student graduates high school they will be able to recite and defend the Articles of Faith.

It will take some work to establish the benchmarks and expectations, but once you do that you will know your discipleship program is working toward a desired end. Think about how this approach would benefit you and your congregation as you share it with folks who begin to attend your church. When utilized properly a specifically designed plan of discipleship can become a recruiting and retention asset.

Effective discipleship will require increased effort on your part and the part of your leaders. It may even be hard work, but I remember being taught from an early age that hard work produces rewards. The future of the church is dependent upon a successful discipleship program. Take the time to develop a discipleship plan that works in your culture and context. Implement that plan and then reap the rewards of better equipped believers.

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