



# **DISCIPLE MAKING AFFIRMATIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS**

**Including Recommended Disciple Making Definitions**

**A DISCIPLESHIP.ORG RESOURCE**

**by Bobby Harrington**

# Disciple Making Affirmations

for

## Church Leaders

*Including Recommended Disciple Making Definitions*

*In January 2015, leaders from numerous national disciple making networks and organizations came together to talk about the collaborative efforts of Discipleship.org. The leadership of this group included Robby Gallaty, Kenon Vaughn, Bill Hull, Dan Spader, Dave Buehring, Todd Wilson, Jim Putman and others. It was after that meeting, we drafted these 10 affirmations.*

*~Bobby Harrington*

### **1. Disciple Making Gospel**

We believe the gospel and it is our message—this good news is focused on Jesus as our Messiah (King) and his death, burial, and resurrection. All who respond to salvation are freely saved and called to discipleship, no exceptions, no excuses (Mark 8:34–38; 1 Corinthians 15:1–8). The gospel we preach and believe dictates the kind of disciples we are and the kind of disciples we make. If we attempt to make a Christlike disciple from a non-discipleship gospel, we will fail. A non-discipleship gospel is one that does not include discipleship as a natural part of the message and expectation.

### **2. Disciple Making Calling**

We are compelled to be and make disciples of Jesus. We believe Jesus Christ is supreme and worthy of all devotion, worship, and emulation, and disciple making is a natural and necessary life response to Jesus. With laser focus, it was Jesus himself who made disciples who could make disciples... and Jesus commands us to do the same (Matthew 28:16–20; John 20:21). We prefer to use the expression “disciple making” over “discipleship” because the former is closer to the words of the Great Commission and the latter is often mischaracterized (Matthew 28:18–20).

### **3. Disciple Making Model**

We believe Jesus is the model (for life and ministry). Jesus showed us how to live life and how to make disciples. We seek to emulate his method and model. As the sinless second Adam, Jesus was man as God intended man to be. He then told us, “Do the works I have been doing” (John 14:12). John said those who “claim to live in him must live as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6). Paul understood this when he said, “Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1 NLT). Discipleship demands us to “follow” the resurrected Christ and

“imitate” the priorities and patterns of the incarnate Christ. We like the expression “Jesus’ model and method of disciple making” as a summary of what we do.

#### **4. *Disciple Making Motive***

We believe love is the driving motive. The Great Commandment precedes the Great Commission. Loving God and loving people is the passion behind the priority, the motive behind the mission, the heart behind the hands. Love is the signature card of true disciples... disciple making cannot happen apart from loving and caring relationships... both a tough and a tender love (1 Thessalonians 2). Larger ministries require more relational disciple makers to keep growing. Disciple making is relational and, as ministries grow, more relational disciples are needed. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

#### **5. *Disciple Making Measure***

We believe verifiable fruit is the measure. God’s agenda for each one of us is that we stay close to him and bear “fruit,” “more fruit,” and then ultimately “much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:8). God transforms our hearts as we “remain in [him]” and he leads us into lives of love (John 15:4, 17). Jesus modeled the focus of love as he came to seek, save, and disciple people (Luke 19:10; 6:40). Jesus masterfully showed how love produces disciples... reaching and developing his men and helping them grow from nonbelievers all the way to disciple makers reproducing disciple makers (Matthew 28:19–20). There is a natural process of moving people from those who do not know Jesus all the way to becoming mature disciple makers... and Jesus showed the model to us. In short, we haven’t truly made mature disciples until they are following Jesus’ model of love and helping to make more disciples... this is fruitful multiplication.

#### **6. *Disciple Making Power***

We believe Holy Spirit power is the means. Disciples cannot be made through fleshly efforts. Jesus, in His humanity, fully acknowledged his dependence on the Spirit. Disciple making is not just a good strategy... it is a way of life, accomplished through the fruit of the Holy Spirit living through a person’s yielded and holy life (2 Corinthians 3:16–17). If Jesus fully depended on the Holy Spirit’s power, how can we do any less? The Holy Spirit will lead us to be obedient people who live holy lives to God’s glory.

#### **7. *Disciple Making Environment***

We believe the local church is the primary environment for disciple making. The church is for discipleship, and disciples manifest the kingdom of God to the world (Colossians

1:28–29). When the church reverses this process and primarily attempts to get the world to go to church instead of the church going to the world, you get chaos. Pastoral and ministerial work should be evaluated and rewarded based on how many disciple makers are produced and the kind of people a church sends into the world. Jesus was a man for others; the church, likewise, is for others. Any plan that does not create disciples who live for others is a failure.

## **8. Disciple Making Movement**

We believe that equipping disciple making leaders is the linchpin of disciple making movements. All Christians are called to be disciples who grow to help make disciples, using the unique gifts God has given each of us. Leaders are also called to grow a movement of disciple making leaders. How Jesus built a movement differs from how a person makes a disciple. Jesus made disciple making leaders. If we are going to create disciple-making movements, it is our conviction that we must train leaders in how Jesus built a movement – discipling leaders who become disciple making leaders who lead others. We are committed to 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul casts the vision of four discipling four generations, when he told Timothy that “the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” Raising reliable leaders of a movement is harder and takes more time and prayer, but in the end this will bear fruit that will remain. Practically, this means we must develop a teams of disciple-making leaders who will fan the flames of reproducible disciple making into places where others have not gone before.

## **9. Disciple Making Definitions**

We believe definitions are vitally important. Our definitions are in agreement with the following and where possible, we will use these definitions.

**Discipleship** – is simply the state of being a disciple. This word (like the word evangelism) is not in the Bible. Unfortunately, in the North American church, discipleship is typically seen as an educational process designed to orient new believers to the biblical and everyday practices of our churches – and so we often prefer disciple making.

**Disciple** – someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus (Matthew 4:19).

**Disciple Making** – is entering into relationships to intentionally help people follow Jesus, be changed by Jesus, and join the mission of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20).

**Disciple Maker** – a disciple of Jesus who enters into relationships with people to intentionally help them follow Jesus, be changed by Jesus, and join the mission of Jesus.

**A Church** – A spiritual family growing in surrendered obedience to all the teachings of Jesus Christ who gather together regularly under Biblically recognized leadership for the purpose of fulfilling the great commission (making disciples) with a Great Commandment heart (loving God, loving people).

**A Disciple Making Culture** – The beliefs, habits, and narrative of a church constantly repeated with congruence and intentionality, that make it clear to almost everyone, all the time, including newcomers, that disciple making is what everyone does in this church.

**A Disciple Making Church (Level 5)** – is a church where disciple making is the core DNA and culture of the church, where the average church member makes disciples to the fourth generation and this disciple making activity is regularly produced in significant and diverse streams within the church and these streams multiply consistently into new churches.

**Disciple Making Movement (DMM)** – A rapid and exponential increase in disciple making disciples within a local culture who plant multiple churches and these churches are churches which multiply disciples, groups, and churches of obedience-based disciples so that we can see at least four generations of churches produced in six streams of disciple-making activity and these streams multiply consistently into disciple making churches (100 churches or more within 2 to 5 years).

## **10. Disciple Making Book**

We believe Jesus and Scripture are the basis. We believe the sixty-six books of the Bible are the authoritative, reliable, and ultimate standard for disciple making and life (2 Timothy 3:16–4:2). The Bible was written by disciples, to disciples, and for disciples. We find healthy guidance for our movement in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. Jesus is our focus and he rightfully deserves our commitment and imitation as we seek the fullness of the kingdom he offers to us, both in this life and the in next.