

# MBC MEN'S STUDY

## DISCIPLESHIP AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

### CLASS 3: DISCIPLESHIP TODAY, CHAPTERS 5-8

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- Jan 18: Current State of Discipleship & Defining Discipleship Biblically (Chs.1-2)
- Feb 8: Principles of Biblical Discipleship Part I & II (Chs. 3-4)
- **Mar 8: Key Factors in Discipleship Today & Tomorrow (Chs. 5 & 8)**
- April 12: Discipleship Avenues for the Church & Personal (Chs. 6-7)
- May 17: Becoming a Mature Disciple-Maker ([GIBC Grace & Granite Notes](#))

### INTRODUCTION TO “DISCIPLESHIP TODAY”

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- Our view of the importance of discipleship in the church and in our own lives is going to have far-reaching effects. These effects are not only in our own lives but also in the lives of those people whom the Lord has given to us.
- We must know how to take care of our own spiritual life so that we are able to take care of those around us as well.
- As we will come to see, discipleship is all about transformation. It is not so much about the transmission of information (though that's important) it is about how that information is impacting real life.

### CHAPTER 5: KEY FACTORS IN DISCIPLESHIP TODAY

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- With regard to current trends in our churches and in our culture, it is vitally important that the church return to, and prioritize, biblical discipleship in the church, the home, and in our own lives.
- “Churches today are minimizing the expositional preaching and teaching of God’s Word. Most of our worship times is spent singing instead of preaching. Our Sunday School time is spent taking prayer requests and updating each other about our lives instead of teaching the Scriptures.” (51)

- While the author does not minimize the importance and impact of those spiritual practices, since the church has such a limited amount of time together, they should not be put on center stage.
  - Think about this for your own life and walk with the Lord...how do you view your own time in the Word and other times that you interact with God's Word through teachings/podcasts/etc.?
  - "...the main component of discipleship is growth in and through God's Word." **Thoughts?**
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- "It is critically important that we understand the importance of God's Word in the discipleship process. It is through the study of the Bible that people grow and are changed spiritually." (52)
- One can't have spiritual change without spiritual means. With the Bible as our central focus, we should not have the expectation that we are going to grow.
- Songs, prayers, fellowship are great, but your own soul grows through the Word of God being studied and applied in your heart.

### **Factor 1: The Importance of God's Word in Discipleship**

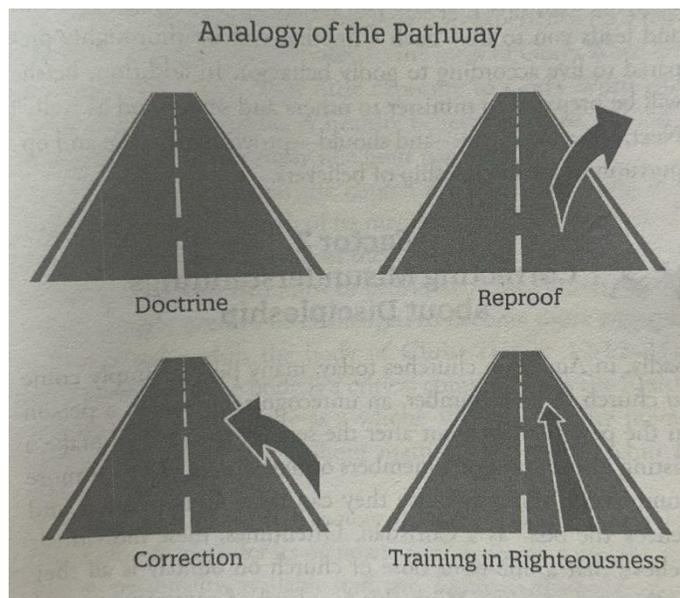
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- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
- How important is the Word of God in our spiritual walk with the Lord?
- Paul tells Timothy that *all Scripture* (OT & NT) is from God **and** it is critical to the growth of all believers.
  - "Not only is every word and all of Scripture from God, it is also inspired, or 'breathed out' from Him. The Greek word for inspired is the combination of two Greek words: *theos* meaning 'God' and *pneustos* meaning 'breathed.' When taken together, the Greek word for inspired means to be 'breathed out of God.' It is literally from God Himself. He is the source of Scripture." (53)
- It is through the Word that we are born again, through the Word that we start to have a transformed life, it is also through the Word of God that we develop ourselves and others into disciples of Christ.

- “When we contemplate the idea of ‘God breathed,’ we are reminded of when God breathed into Adam and gave him life. Similarly, God has breathed out the Bible, and it is the life source for believers.” (54)
- **On a side note**, when we are spiritually “dry,” we can’t look to the world to “fill us up.” We need to go to the source, God’s Word that was breathed out by Him so that we can be “filled up” again.

### How Is the Bible Beneficial to My Life?

- “Paul states that the Bible is *profitable*.” (54)
- It means that the Bible is useful...not as a secondary tool or instrument.
- The Bible is beneficial in that it **will** equip the believer for growth in their walk with the Lord.
- “From what we have observed from this text, the Bible is the basis for all truth and is essential for our spiritual life. The Scriptures bring great benefit to the life of the believer!” (54)
  - **Doctrine**—teachings of Scripture, instruction in the truths of God’s Word. Doctrine shows you the path God has designed.
  - **Reproof**—convincing one of his/her sin; it also carries the idea of rebuking, pointing out the sin in one’s life. Reproof points out when you stepped off the path.
  - **Correction**—correcting faults, setting to right, restoration. Correction shows you how to get back onto the path.
  - **Training in righteousness**—moral training that leads us to living righteously before God. Training in righteousness keeps us on the right path. **(pic on page 55)**



- “The Bible is beneficial to you and me because it reveals to us what God desires from us. It points out when we have sinned and disobeyed God. It shows us how to repent and realign our desires with God’s plan. It discloses how to continually walk according to God’s commands.” (55)
- When we hide God’s Word in our hearts, this process will start to be habit forming. As we replace our sinful desires and tendencies with what God’s desires for us, we will start to walk in a way that brings Him honor and blesses those around us.
- This is why it is key to have the Bible, not as a secondary source in our meetings and personal life, but *the* main focus in our entire life.

### **What Will Happen as I Study Scripture? (56)**

- “The Greek terms [in 2 Tim 3:17] reveal that the Christian who studies God’s Word will be in shape and ready/prepared completely to do whatever God calls them to do. It reveals that studying Scripture prepares you for the future things God calls and leads you to do.” (56)
- God is going to use you to the capacity that you are able to be used.
- Have you ever learned something new and found yourself using and applying it with someone else soon after applying it to your own heart?
- As you study the Scriptures and as the Lord grows you in them, it will be time to put that knowledge to good use.
- If you find that the Lord is not putting you in places where He can use you...perhaps you are not putting in the time to be used by Him.

### **Factor 2: Correcting Misunderstandings about Discipleship**

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- “There is great misunderstanding as to what discipleship is and how it should be accomplished in the church. Part of the reason for this misunderstanding is that individuals have defined aspects of discipleship as discipleship itself. For instance, I’ve heard it said, “if a church does not have small groups than they are not doing discipleship.” Small groups are a critical component of discipleship. However, they are just an aspect of discipleship not discipleship entirely.” (DM801 Class Notes)
- Sadly, in American churches today, many people simply come to church to be a number, an unrecognizable name, a person in the Pew that slips out after the service, and they fail to make a lasting impact on other members of the church. It is more comfortable this way. They can remain anonymous and “check the box” as a Christian. (56)

- Often times, these are the people who think that they only need one hour a week to grow and as long as they were “at church” they must be “being spiritual.”
- It is imperative that the church provide discipleship opportunities for the growth of its members. Not all individuals will attend each of these ministries, but they must be provided with the opportunity to grow. Also, they need to be challenged to become more engaged and involved within the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31). Each member of the body is a critical component to the health and strength of the body as a whole. Without healthy members, the body suffers. **Without mature believers, the church suffers as well.** (57)
- A mark of an unhealthy church or a church in decline, is unhealthy believers. While this could happen for a number of reasons, it is easily traced back to a lack of discipleship in the church.
- When the purpose of the church is just to get people in the door or to try and retain people by any means necessary, discipleship tends to fall by the wayside.
- The church only attracts people who want to see the church body grow in numbers, not in depth.
- As Burggraff further points out, “Now it is important to note that the available ministries that a church can offer its members vary depending on size, location, personality, available staff, etc. However, I would argue that as many of these opportunities that a church can provide will only strengthen the growth and maturity of its members.” (57)
- As a church grows in depth, more and more members will step up to disciple others. This will be done through a variety of means, one-on-one, small groups, formal and informal settings. The point is to have disciples making other disciples.
- “Historically, being a Christian described one’s life (Acts 11:26). Followers of Jesus were first called “Christians” in the city of Antioch. Acts 11:26 says, “for an entire year they [Paul and Barnabas] met with the church and taught considerable numbers of people; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” They were called “Christians” because their speech, behavior, and lifestyle were like Christ.” (58)
- As Burggraff quotes Polhill, “The term [Christian] only occurs in two other places in the New Testament (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16). In all three instances it is a term used by outsiders to designate Christians. Evidently the term was not originally used by Christians themselves. They preferred terms like ‘believers, disciples, brothers.’” (58)
- This is interesting because this was the outside, unsaved world watching those who had been born again as they started to act like their master.

- “The Christian life was not simply a Sunday phenomenon to the early church. Christianity was not something that they simply practiced one day a week. Christianity—being a Christ follower (a disciple of Jesus)—was their life.” (59)
- This is, perhaps, the greatest misunderstanding about discipleship in our modern-day culture. That a Christian is only a disciple (or even a Christian...) on Sunday and only when at church.
- The discipleship process is not just one day or one hour a week...it is a lifetime of following Jesus, learning Jesus, and telling others about Jesus.
- In other words, have you just added Jesus to your already existing life? Or have you died to your life in the flesh so that you can live to Christ in the Spirit?
- **“I have often commented in my classes that most believers live their lives as if they were ‘practicing atheists.’”** (59)
- In other words, most believers go through their days/weeks/months without praying, without reading the Word, without consulting God or talking with others about Him.
- In other words, they live like those who confess that there is no God.
- “As Christians (little Christs, or Christ followers), our lives should be distinctive. People should know that we are different than those who do not know the Savior. Teachers and mentors play an important part in establishing this mindset.” (59)

### **Factor 3: The Role of Teachers and Mentors in Discipleship**

- **Ephesians 4:11-16** “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; {13} until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. {14} As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; {15} but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, {16} from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”
- “Ephesians 4:11-16 is an important passage regarding the role that gifted (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) individuals have in the growth and maturity of disciples of Christ.

Within this group, there is a specific group labelled pastors and teachers. The role of both pastor and teacher was to teach the Word of God to the believers within the churches. With regular corporate instruction by both pastors and teachers, believers would be challenged to grow spiritually. Pastors and teachers did not simply convey information, but rather they urged the hearers to live by what they had been taught (Eph. 4:20–21).”<sup>1</sup> (pp. 59-60)

### **What are the primary functions of the pastors and teachers for the local church? (60)**

#### **Equipping the Saints to do the Word of the Ministry (60)**

- “Equipping” refers to that which is “fit, is restored to its original condition, or is made complete.” The word was used in nautical settings to describe “refitting a ship” or in medical situations for the “setting of bones.”<sup>2</sup> The term indicates in Ephesians 4:12 that the “gifts” are provided to “fit out” saints to do God’s service. Paul’s language, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service,” indicates that it is not the “gifts” who are to do all the work of service.<sup>3</sup>
- Jesus gave gifted men to the church so that the church would be built up to do the work of the ministry in the church.
- It is through this work of the body that the church is then built up into the image of Christ.
- Every saint is involved in the work of the ministry...this is a fruit or a response that comes from the right preaching / teaching of God’s Word to the church.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 300–301.

<sup>2</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, *Word studies in the New Testament: Volume III* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 390.

<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 155. MacArthur explains that the pastors themselves cannot do all the work of the ministry.

No pastor, or even a large group of pastors, can do everything a church needs to do. No matter how gifted, talented, and dedicated a pastor may be, the work to be done where he is called to minister will always vastly exceed his time and abilities. His purpose in God’s plan is not to try to meet all those needs himself but to equip the people given into his care to meet those needs (cf. v. 16, where this idea is emphasized).

In contrast to the pastors doing all the work in a church, these leaders are to train the believers of the church to help carry out the work of the ministry.

## Leading the Saints to Maturity in Their Spiritual Walks (61-62)

- “Once Paul establishes that the gifted people were given to the church for the *immediate purpose of preparing all the saints to minister for the building up of the body of Christ*, he explains the need for the process that believers mature to the measure of the fullness of Christ. The adjective that is used means “having reached its end, complete, or accomplished.”<sup>4</sup> The term is used of sacrifices that are “perfect, without spot/blemish,” of animals that are “fully grown,” and of a person who is “fully grown” or “matured” as opposed to an infant or child.”<sup>5</sup>
- “In contrast to the mature believers, the immature believers are described as “infants or very young children.”<sup>6</sup> The term suggests not only physical age but childish understanding, foolishness, inexperience, or lack of insight.”<sup>7</sup>
- “The nature of the children’s immaturity is graphically pictured in the following clauses and phrases in Ephesians 4:14. These infants are unstable, lacking in direction, vacillating, and open to manipulation. Like a small, rudderless boat, they are tossed back and forth by the waves. They are continually driven back and forth by the different winds of teaching.”
- These immature believers are those who fall for false teachings. They are those who are easily influenced by other teachers.
- Many of them are simply so untrained and unskilled in the Word that they follow anything that seems to be the truth.
- Most false teachers rely on confusion to their ally. They are counting on the fact that they know enough to sound spiritual, to sound like they know the Bible, that those who lack biblical understanding will follow them.
- Within the church, the pastors / teachers are placed by God to bring and maintain stability in the church. They are there to lead the church in the direction that God desires it to go.
- As the pulpit goes, so the pews follow. It is vital that the consistent teaching of any church at all levels comes from the Scripture and points people to Christ.

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<sup>4</sup> BDAG, s.v. τελειος, 809.

<sup>5</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 554.

<sup>6</sup> BDAG, s.v. νηπιος, 537.

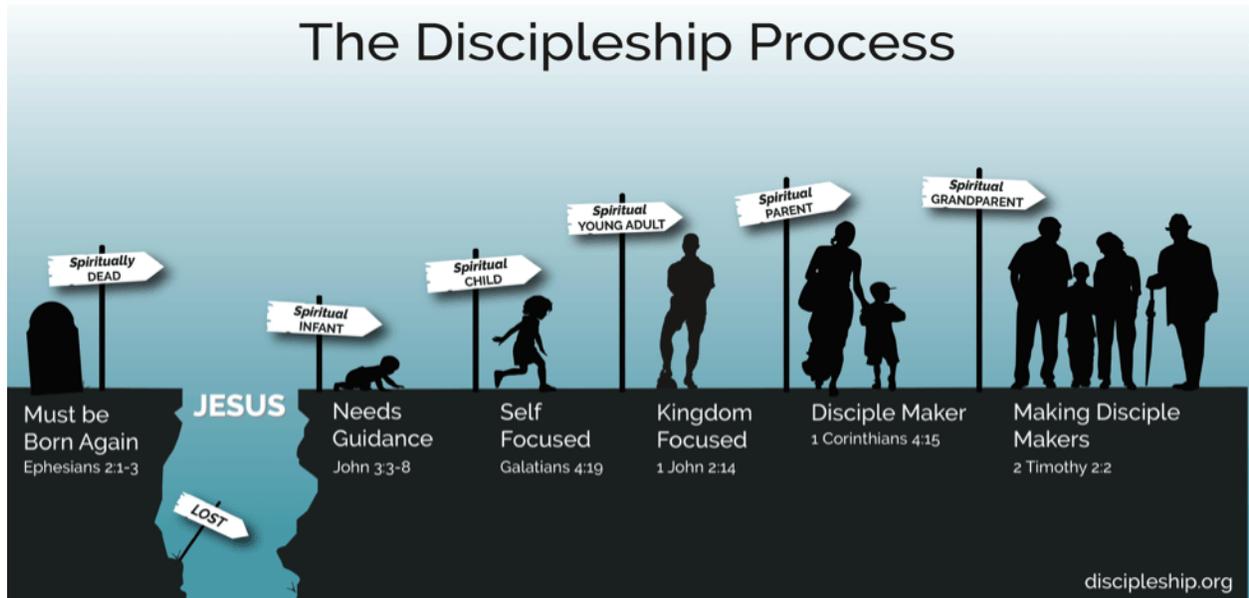
<sup>7</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 560.

- “The pastors and teachers bring stability and unity, whereas these teachings bring confusion, turmoil, and disunity. The false teaching is meant to confuse and swirl one around violently, causing dizziness.”<sup>8</sup>
- One simple test to find a false teacher is to listen to where they are pointing you to go and who they are pointing you to follow.
- If they are taking you away from the church and from God’s Word and bringing you to them, this should be a red flag.
- I hope you realize how important the church is in the life of the believer.
- Matthew 16:18; Jesus said He would build His church.
- Matthew 28:19-20; Jesus gave the command to make disciples and the method to use...baptizing them and teaching them what He commanded.
- Ephesians 4:11; Jesus gave gifted men to the church...
  - The Apostles and Prophets were there for the foundation and beginning of the church.
  - The Evangelists, Pastor / Teachers took the Apostolic message out to the world so that they would make disciples and plant churches.
  - This ensures that Jesus message is being taught today in the church and is exactly what He has commanded His church to do.
- From Jesus to the Apostles to the Pastor / Teachers, Jesus is building His church by His way.

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<sup>8</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 561–562.

## CHAPTER 8: DISCIPLESHIP TODAY & TOMORROW



- Where are you on the discipleship journey? If you were to rate yourself on your level or maturity, where would you put yourself?
- How do you view discipleship as being an integral part of the Christian life?
- If we are going to impact the next generation for Christ through discipleship, we must take a moment and assess where we are in our own walk.
- Thinking about the last chapter and how he related it to Ephesians 4, are you maturing in your faith and your walk with the Lord?
- **1 Corinthians 13:11** “When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.”
- **1 Corinthians 14:20** “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.”
- **Hebrews 5:13-14** “For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. {14} But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”
- **Hebrews 6:1** “Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...”

- **1 Peter 2:1-3** “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, {2} like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, {3} if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”
- **2 Peter 1:5-8** “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, {6} and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, {7} and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. {8} For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- **2 Peter 3:17-18** “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, {18} but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- **Philippians 3:12-14** “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. {13} Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, {14} I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
- **Colossians 1:9-10** “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, {10} so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...”
- **Proverbs 1:5** “A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel...”
- **Proverbs 9:9** “Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.”
- **Proverbs 4:18** “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.”
- All of these...and more...show the importance of growing, of learning, of teaching, and of sticking close to the Scriptures.

## **Challenge to Pastors/Church Leaders**

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- Are there intentional discipleship avenues for everyone in the church?
- Are they being properly promoted and taught by church leaders?
- Do we have every level of believer in mind when we are presenting discipleship to the church body?

## **Challenge to Discipleship Teachers / Mentors**

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- “One of the most important roles within the church is that of the teacher and mentor. Through your instruction of Scripture, a believer is challenged in their walk with Christ.” (97)
- While it is important to have times of fellowship and fun with one another, those are not necessarily times of discipleship.
- Those who teach are on the “frontlines” of the discipleship ministry of the church.
- This is when the nitty-gritty of the Christian life comes out. This is when people can ask questions, share hardships, and find out how they can follow Christ closer in their Christian life.

## **Challenge to Parents**

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- “One of the areas that Satan targets the most is the home. Without strong homes, the church and the nation suffer.” (97)
- We have already discussed how the world’s systems are not hiding the fact that they are coming after our children.
- They know that if our children fall under their control, they will rule in the years to come.
- Satan and the darkness play the long game. They know what it takes to lull parents to sleep so that their children are raised and influenced by ungodly and God-hating people.
- This is why it is vitally important that we display God’s love in our home.
- That our children know the importance of Bible reading and prayer in our life so that they will replicate the same care and dedication in theirs.
- If we don’t make church and the Lord a priority in our life, neither will they.
- Make no mistake, it is not a neutral ground that your children are living in.
- We must show them how to stand strong, how to grow in discipleship and make sure that the next generation is ready to carry the baton and keep up the good fight of the faith.

## **Challenge to You as a Follower of Christ** (98-100)

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- **Make Disciples:**
  - Am I actively involved in both evangelism and discipleship?
  - Do I actively seek to make an impact for the next generation of Christians?
- **Resemble the Master in All Areas of Life:**
  - Am I seeking to replicate the example of the Master?
  - Is my life focused and centered on being spiritually, morally, and ethically different from the world around me?
- **Be Singular in Your Allegiance to Christ No Matter the Cost:**
  - Am I consumed with selfish desires or is Christ my singular devotion?
  - Am I willing to sacrifice my comforts in order to follow Christ?
  - Do I love others more than myself, and God above all?
  - Am I willing to lay aside my personal desires to follow after Christ?
- **Display Specific Characteristics as a Disciple of Christ:**
  - Do I have a passion for the Word of God?
  - Do I regularly read and study God's Word?
  - How is my prayer life? Consistent or just when I am in need of something?
  - How is my desire for ministry and service to the church and the body of Christ?
- **Display a Proper Mindset in Relationship to This World:**
  - Am I distinct from the world?
  - Do I desire the easy life or am I ready to view my life as a sacrifice for the King?
  - Do others see me as blameless in the world?
- **You Are to Replicate Yourself into the Lives of Others:**
  - Am I faithfully reproducing myself spiritually in the lives of others?
  - Am I teaching the truths of Scripture to my children, new believers, younger men, younger women, etc.?
- “Our world and our churches are in desperate need of disciples of Jesus Christ. The world needs to see men and women who will live differently and reveal a life dedicated to Jesus Christ.” (100)

<b>Spirituality Maturity Stages</b>	<b>Overall Goal</b>	<b>Equipping Opportunities</b>
<b>New Believer</b>	Being established and grounded in the faith.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunday Service</li> <li>• Small Group</li> <li>• Membership Class</li> <li>• EH Classes</li> <li>• Foundations of Faith Class</li> </ul>
<b>Maturing Believer</b>	Being equipped to grow in the faith.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunday Service</li> <li>• Minister in and out of church</li> <li>• Small Group</li> <li>• EH Classes</li> <li>• Theology Class</li> <li>• Truth for Troubling Times</li> <li>• ETS Conferences</li> <li>• TES Seminars</li> <li>• 1-1 Discipleship</li> <li>• Knowing and growing in spiritual gifts</li> <li>• Women of Grace Events</li> <li>• Women’s Bible Study</li> </ul>
<b>Ministering Believer</b>	Being equipped to minister to the church.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministering in gifted areas in the church.</li> <li>• Training in specific areas to minister to the church.</li> <li>• Challenged by leadership in their ministry.</li> </ul>
<b>Developing Leader</b>	Being equipped to lead others to maturity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential Elder Training</li> <li>• Counseling</li> <li>• Small Group Leaders</li> <li>• 1-1 Elder discipleship and Mentoring</li> <li>• Men’s Training</li> <li>• Women’s Training</li> </ul>
<b>Equipping Leader</b>	Equipping others to equip others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TES</li> <li>• Pastoral Internship</li> <li>• Women training Women</li> </ul>

**Maranatha Bible Church Pathway to Maturity**

**“All to maturity, some to leadership.” (Colossians 1:28-29)**