

Empowering the Incarcerated

A Model for Sustainable Discipleship Inside Facilities

Presented by

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**GOD OUR
PROVIDER**

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

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ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT YOU

YOU ...

- are a believer in/follower of Jesus.
- desire to be conformed into Jesus' likeness/His image.
- strive to obey Jesus.
- bare witness to others the truth of the gospel/Jesus.
- focus on making disciples of Jesus.
- love Jesus by serving justice-involved individuals.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT MINISTRY

EACH MINISTRY ...

- is unique in their role, approach, and context.
- is a recipient of God's grace.
- is a group of individuals with God-given spiritual gifts.
- has access to God's wisdom and guidance in the Bible and through the Holy Spirit.

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR YOU

- You will consider a scriptural definition of discipleship.
- You will determine how your discipleship focus and your beliefs about discipleship influence your ministry practices.
- You will consider some barriers to effective discipleship.
- You will examine some scriptural examples of imprisonment to inform decisions about discipleship content.
- You will design your sustainable discipleship process to implement inside facilities among the incarcerated.

DISCIPLESHIP DEFINED

GOD'S COMMAND

YOUR SERVICE

GOD'S PRESENCE & POWER

DISCIPLESHIP: GOD'S COMMAND

MAKE DISCIPLES (Matthew 28:18-20)

DISCIPLESHIP: YOUR SERVICE

Disciplemaking includes ...

- Going for purposeful engagement
- Baptizing identification with (*outward recognition*)
- Teaching for obedience-sake (*observable change*)

DISCIPLESHIP: GOD'S PRESENCE & POWER

MAKE DISCIPLES (Matthew 28:18-20)

DISCIPLESHIP: YOUR SERVICE

Disciplemaking is empowered by ...

- God, Jesus' Authority
- God, Jesus' Presence
- God, Holy Spirit's Indwelling/Power/Work

PAUSE FOR ENGAGEMENT

Step 1: Grab a piece of paper or open a document or text screen.

Step 2: Consider the disciples/followers of Jesus you know.

Step 3: Jot down a few of their names.

DISCIPLES MAKE DISCIPLES.

MAKING DISCIPLES TAKES TIME.

JESUS SAID

I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in Me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. **John 14:12**

Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher. **Luke 6:40**

PAUSE FOR ENGAGEMENT

Step 1: Determine whether the following statements are true or false.

Step 2: Jot down the #1, #2, and #3 to represent the three statements.

Step 3: Consider each statement. Write either True or False next to each #.

TRUE? OR FALSE?

1. Discipleship is best accomplished by a few Christians who are trained to disciple those who show evidence of a real commitment to Jesus.
2. Discipleship is one of many things Christian ministries should be doing, but not the key thing.
3. The only way to make a disciple is for a gifted, mature disciple to work one-on-one with another less mature disciple who expresses desire to grow in maturity toward Christ's likeness.

**#1, #2, and #3 are FALSE STATEMENTS
ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP.**

PAUSE FOR ENGAGEMENT

Step 1: List at least 3 activities, programs, or services of your ministry.

Step 2: Next to each item you listed write what that item accomplishes in the lives of the incarcerated and/or the families of the incarcerated.

Step 3: How do these activities, programs, or services your ministry provides represent your beliefs about discipleship?

DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

PROGRAMS VS PEOPLE & PROCESS

WORSHIP (Acts 2:42-43, 46-47)

BIBLE STUDY (Acts 2:42, 44-46)

FELLOWSHIP (Acts 2:42)

EVANGELISM (Acts 2:41,47)

SERVICE (Acts 2:44-45)

BE WITH JESUS (John 15:5)

OBEY GOD'S WORD (John 8:31-32)

LOVE OTHERS (John 13:34-35)

MAKE DISCIPLES (John 15:8, 17:20)

DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

PROGRAMS VS PEOPLE & PROCESS

Churches/Ministries develop

PROGRAMS such as

- Worship Services
- Bible Studies
- Fellowship Times
- Evangelistic Events
- Service Projects

DEVELOP PEOPLE through a **PROCESS**

- **Teach people to be with Jesus** both alone (solitude, silence, prayer) and among others (worship, Bible study, fellowship, prayer)
- **Train people to study & obey God's Word** for themselves (evidence that their knowledge, skills, and obedience is growing)
- **Show people how to love others as God loves them** (mark of a true disciple)
- **Equip people to serve others to make disciples** (use life, skills, resources, giftedness in service to God as act of obedience to God)

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

Barna study showed that ministries

- have **no clear process** for discipleship.
- define discipleship as **head knowledge** rather than life transformation.
- teach in **random** rather than systematic ways.
- have virtually **no accountability** for what they say, think, do, or believe.
- promote **programs** rather than people.

POSITIVES REGARDING EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

Barna study showed that

- no two ministries had exactly the same delivery method for effective discipleship, no “magic” method needed.
- no two ministries used the same **resources**, making resources not a relevant issue for effective discipleship.
- passion and commitment were more important factors than methods and resources.

CONCLUSION: CHIEF BARRIER TO EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

“The chief barrier to effective discipleship is not that people do not have the ability to become spiritually mature, but they **lack the passion, perspective,** and **perseverance** to develop their spiritual lives.”

George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*

EXCITING NEWS!

ANY DISCIPLE CAN HAVE PASSION, PERSPECTIVE, PERSEVERANCE

PAUSE FOR ENGAGEMENT

Step 1: Consider the barriers and the positives to effective discipleship.

Step 2: How do they make you feel? What could you do in response?

Step 3: How might these research findings change your ministry perspective and practices about effective discipleship among the incarcerated?

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF IMPRISONMENT

JOSEPH is falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and thrown in prison. Genesis 39:19-23

“But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.” Genesis 39:21-23 (NLT)

IMPRISONMENT FOR GOD'S PURPOSES

JOSEPH'S View of God – God is sovereign

“God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. So it was God who sent me here, not you! And He [God] is the one who made me an advisor to Pharaoh – the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.” **Genesis 45:7-8**

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF IMPRISONMENT

DANIEL is in prison for praying to God and is miraculously saved from death. Daniel 6:1-23

“So at last the king gave the orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown in the den of lions. The king said to him, ‘May your God whom you serve faithfully, rescue you.’” **Daniel 6:16**

IMPRISONMENT FOR GOD'S PURPOSES

DANIEL'S View of God – God is worthy of worship, approachable, and trustworthy

“He [Daniel] prayed three times a day just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God. The officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help. ... My God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in His sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty. ... Not a scratch was found on him, for he [Daniel] had trusted in his God.” **Daniel 6:10b-11, 22, 23b**

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF IMPRISONMENT

PETER is in prison because of the jealousy of the religious officials. Acts 5:17-42

“The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.” **Acts 5:17** (NLT)

“But Peter and the apostles replied, ‘We must obey God rather than any human authority.’ ... they continued to teach and preach this message: ‘Jesus is the Messiah.’ “ **Acts 5:29, 42b** (NLT)

IMPRISONMENT FOR GOD'S PURPOSES

PETER'S VIEW OF GOD – God answers prayers and performs miracles

”But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him. ...Suddenly there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, ‘Quick! Get up!’ And the chains fell off his wrists. ...So Peter left the cell, following the angel. ...Peter finally came to his senses. ‘It’s really true!’ he said.” **Acts 12:5, 7, 9a,11a**

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF IMPRISONMENT

APOSTLE PAUL is in prison because of the Jewish leaders at the Temple rousing a mob. Acts 21:26-36

“He [Paul] immediately called out his soldiers and officers and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander arrested him and ordered him bound with two chains. He asked the crowd who he was and what he had done.” **Acts 21:32-33**

IMPRISONMENT FOR GOD'S PURPOSES

PAUL'S View of God – God is worthy of worship despite injustice and suffering

“They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and signing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.”

Acts 16:23-25

PRACTICES TO CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF GOD

- 1. Worship a God of love and reject God-concepts that induce fear.**
- 2. Regular meditation on some aspect of God's character of love, at least 15 minutes a day.**
- 3. Be truthful and eliminate falsehood of any kind from the mind (*i.e., lies/falsehoods believed*).**
- 4. Actively seek to help others.**
- 5. Establish relationships with people of loving and mature character and terminate destructive and exploitive relationships.**

PRACTICES TO CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF GOD

- 6. Trust God with your life and your life's outcomes.**
- 7. Make decisions to live in harmony with God's design** *(sleep, eat, exercise the mind and body, avoid destructive/harmful activities for the mind and body).*
- 8. When mistakes are made, resolve guilt as soon as possible, forgive those who mistreat you, and don't hold onto anger or grudges.**
- 9. Resolve fear, as unremedied fear truly destroys.**

HOW DISCIPLES GROW

ACCEPTANCE promotes spiritual growth.

- God makes discipleship possible.
- God wants His disciples to grow.
- God provides what His disciples need to grow, and disciples respond to God and His grace.

CONDEMNATION is an obstacle to spiritual growth. (see Romans 8:1)

CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF GOD - TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE

- 1. The Bible is primary text in discipleship.**
- 2. People and process are the focus of discipleship.**
- 3. The content of discipleship is teaching people how to combat lies about God to break the cycle of fear and selfishness that consume the mind so that healing and transformation of the mind takes place.**
- 4. God's grace and acceptance enable discipleship.**

SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DISCIPLESHIP

DEVELOP PEOPLE through a PROCESS

- **Teach people to be with Jesus** both alone (*solitude, silence, prayer*) and among others (*worship, Bible study, fellowship, prayer*)
- **Train people to study & obey God's Word for themselves** (*so their knowledge, skills, and obedience grows*)
- **Show people how to love others as God loves them** (*the mark of a true disciple*)
- **Equip people to serve others to make disciples** (*use life, skills, resources, giftedness in service to God as obedience to God; disciples need passion, perspective, & perseverance!*)

SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DISCIPLESHIP

1. How can you help the incarcerated **study the Bible for themselves?**
2. How can you help the incarcerated have a **scriptural view of God?**
3. How can you help the incarcerated **evaluate their beliefs, behaviors, and past** that is impacting their present and future growth?
4. How can you strengthen the incarcerated with **desire and ability to love God and others?**

SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DISCIPLESHIP

5. What is your idea/plan to **combat the lies about God** that the incarcerated have believed which are distorting their **view of God**?
6. What is your clear picture a **maturing disciple of Jesus** and what is your ministry doing to ensure **disciples mature (grow)** to what you described?

PRIORITIZE SUSTAINABLE DISCIPLESHIP

What are you able to do THIS YEAR to prioritize sustainable discipleship among the incarcerated?

- **Jot down at least 3 workable, realistic ideas for you to develop a sustainable discipleship process inside facilities among the incarcerated?**
- **Challenge yourself to implement at least of 1 of the 3 ideas by next year's CMCA Summit - May 2027!**
- **Report back what God did when you prioritized people and process rather than programs**

COURAGE FOR LIFE



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