

FOLLOWING JESUS— CULTIVATING PEOPLE FOR DISCIPLESHIP

If you read Mark 1:17-20 or Matthew 4:19-22, you see Jesus issuing a clarion call to discipleship to Peter, Andrew, James, and John. He basically walks up to them and says, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.” However, unless you are reading a Chronological Bible (where the events are taking place in a chronological order), you would not realize that the following things took place:

- Andrew was already a disciple of John the Baptist.
- Andrew had already told Peter, “We’ve found the Messiah.”
- Jesus had already changed Simon’s name to Peter.
- All four had witnessed the miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana.
- They had witnessed Jesus clearing the temple at Passover.
- They probably heard Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus.
- They traveled with Jesus into Judea and took part in baptizing people.
- They were with Jesus in the event described in John 4 and witnessed the spiritual awakening that took place after “the woman at the well” was saved.

Before Jesus **called** them, He **cultivated** them.

While there are people we will meet that are “ripe fruit,” (they have already expressed an interest to someone else about being discipled or they immediately say yes when asked about joining a discipleship group), **you will (as Jesus did) have to cultivate most people.**

How does that happen?

Two foundational principles:

- Be a godly person. People aren’t drawn to the discipleship process as much as they are drawn to the Jesus in you. There are no shortcuts.
- Sincerely love people. Making disciples is not about you, but Jesus and others. People call tell if you love them or are wanting to use them.

Realize that you are “in the people business.”

- Strangers are friends you haven’t met yet. Know people. Know their names. Be friendly. Reach out to people. Your Life Group is ONE OF, but not the only place to encounter people. The church, the world itself, is full of people who need to be disciplined.
- Listen to people. Be interested in **them**—their hurts, dreams, and stories. “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.”
- Pray for people. Pray that God will bring people into your life that you can disciple. “You have not because you ask not.”
- Pray with people. As people share a problem, or an opportunity, ask if you can pray with them. If they say yes—then pray, right there!

Follow up on people. This cannot be stressed enough! **Cultivate them as a farmer cultivates a field.**

- Listen to people to see if they talk about discipling others. People are either a disciple maker or they need a disciple maker.
- Continue to pray for people and the things they share with you. Don’t tell people you have been praying for them if you haven’t!
- Text, call, or email people during the week to let them know that you are praying for them.
- As God impresses something on your heart that would encourage them: a verse of Scripture, a podcast, or a booklet—share that with them. If there is a verse of Scripture that God brings to mind that would be beneficial for both of you to learn, write that down on a card and give it to them. Let them know that you too are memorizing it.
- When you see them next, let them know that you have been praying for them and see how their problem, opportunity, situation is.
- Ask them if you can meet for coffee or lunch. Get to know them.

- If you are doing “ministry,” (meeting a practical need, visiting the hospital, taking food to someone), include them.
- Share with them what God is teaching you: truths from your Quiet Time, books, podcasts you are listening to.
- Be wisely transparent. Let them know that you don’t have “it all together.” Ask them to pray about a need in your life. In other words, let them into your life.

Cultivate a discipling relationship with them before you seek to enlist them for your discipleship group.

- When you ask them to be a discipleship group, it will be a natural step—for that is what you have already been doing!