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# Making Disciples and the Christian Faith

Sylvia Wilkey Collinson

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THE CHRISTIAN FAITH community understands its prime directive from Jesus to be the making of disciples. It holds this model of teaching in high esteem because it was the specific form favoured by him in developing the leaders who would proclaim his message to humanity and establish his church across the Roman Empire. However, in present day church life, it appears the dominant models of teaching rarely include it. When people refer to teaching and learning they usually have in mind a schooling model. Protestant circles have largely ignored discipling. Where it has been practised, it has sometimes been misused or left mainly to a well-meaning but untrained laity.

When 'discipleship' is discussed, the word is used (1) to encourage a particular lifestyle or (2) to refer to the relationships between Jesus and his disciples and to construe similar actions as appropriate for followers today or (3) to help establish new believers in the faith by the exercise of Christian 'disciplines'.<sup>1</sup> However, it seems that more searching theological, philosophical or educational questions about discipling have rarely been asked.

## The Nature of Discipling

This paper is part of a larger investiga-

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Richard Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980) lists the Christian disciplines as meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance and celebration.

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tion into these questions<sup>2</sup> in which we have looked at the Greek background to the word 'disciple' (μαθητής), the activities of Jesus and the practices of the early church. These were then tested against other models of education so that in the discovery of similarities and differences the concept of discipling might be clarified and refined. It was discovered that the discipling model of teaching has six components.

- *Relational*—An essential component within Christian discipling is a close loving relationship with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Ultimately he is the Lord, the master discipler. The second constituent element of relationship in discipling is that between the person (or persons) teaching and the learner (or learners). Discipling requires that this relationship be voluntary, committed to the long term and of a close, loving nature.
- *Intentional*—Discipling is not pure friendship. The purpose of the relationship is that teaching will take place and that learning will occur. It requires a commitment to that purpose from all parties involved.
- *Mainly Informal*—Although it is agreed that some formal teaching is frequently necessary, the main teaching methods employed will be informal (life-related), not neces-

sarily requiring buildings, institutions, professionally trained teachers, classes, compulsory graded curricula or formal assessment.

- *Typically Communal*—The regular, committed, gathering together of individuals and small groups of learners into a larger, nurturing community of 'like-believing' people is of great importance. Differences in gender, age, ethnicity, social background and educational achievement, rather than causing division, are intended to enrich the learning dimension of all members of the community.
- *Reciprocal*—No one person is always teacher or always learner. Although some may have a gift of teaching (*didasko* teaching) which they frequently use, or superior knowledge or skills which they seek to impart at a particular time, all members of the community have a responsibility for enriching and contributing to the upbuilding (*oikodomeō* teaching) of others. This is achieved in part by the exercise of their own spiritual gifts and the example of their faithful, Christlike living. Learning thus becomes a mutual, collaborative affair.
- *Centrifugal in focus*—In the discipling model the actual learning process itself involves participants going out from the community to be involved in service and mission to the world. It does not focus on personal growth for its own achievement but in looking outward and serving others finds personal growth as a by-product. This entails cycles of action and reflection, as the matters which have

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2 Sylvia Wilkey Collinson, *Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus' Educational Methods for Today's Church* (Paternoster, 2004); Sylvia Irene Collinson, 'An enquiry into the congruence of discipling as an educational strategy with the objectives of Christian faith communities', Ph.D., Murdoch University, 1999.

been learned are observed, implemented, tested and reflected upon under the light of life's reality and in association with a supportive, nurturing environment.

In sum, the refinement of these criteria ultimately gave rise to the following stipulative definition.

Christian discipling is an intentional, largely informal learning activity. It involves two or a small group of individuals who typically function within a larger nurturing community and hold to the same religious beliefs. Each makes a voluntary commitment to the other/s to form close, personal relationships for an extended period of time in order that those who at a particular time are perceived as having superior knowledge and/or skills will attempt to cause learning to take place in the lives of those others who seek their help. Christian discipling is intended to result in each becoming an active follower of Jesus and a participant in his mission to the world.

We need to check the degree to which this definition remains congruent with the Christian faith. It is necessary to limit the scope of this chapter as it could easily expand to encompass the whole of systematic theology. We have used two of the great credal statements of the church<sup>3</sup> to establish the core values and beliefs which have relevance to our present study.

Our plan is to make an assessment

of the 'discipling' model of teaching and whether it is consistent with these beliefs. Some attempt will also be made to evaluate its effectiveness in upholding the values of the Christian faith and inculcating them as part of the teaching process, especially in relation to the schooling method which has been so dominant in the history of Christianity.

## Core Beliefs of the Christian Faith

### God and humanity in personal relationship

Personal relationship finds its ultimate expression in the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one, in perfect harmony and relationship, yet moving beyond himself to create and sustain the universe. The salvific narrative in the Bible begins with the revelation of God as creator and introduces humankind as his masterpiece, made in his image and likeness (Gn. 1:26,27). The man and the woman related to God in a personal way, received his blessing and heard his communications. However, when they disobeyed his command, sin impaired their relationship with God. But God did not completely cast them off. He had a plan for the full restoration of the original relationship (Gn. 3:16–19).

The first part in that drama came when he called the patriarch, Abraham, to leave his country, kindred and father's house and go in faith to the land he would be shown. God promised that through him all nations would be blessed (Gn. 12:1–3). Abraham's descendants were God's treasured

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3 The Apostles' creed and the Nicene creed (Church of England in Australia, *An Australian Prayer Book*, p. 26, 118).

possession (Ex. 19:5,6). He loved them and rescued them from slavery in Egypt and formed them into the nation of Israel (Dt. 5:6). He entered into a covenant agreement with them, binding himself to them and in turn requiring their undivided love and loyalty. 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' (Dt. 6:5).

He gave them the law, the land, leaders and kings and when they failed to keep their part in the covenant he spoke through the prophets, warning them of his judgement if they did not return to him. The Old Testament used the shepherd image to describe God's care for his people (Ps. 23; Ezk. 34:11–31). He searched for them, rescued them and brought them to a place of safety and freedom from fear. He provided more than enough for their sustenance, bound up the injured, strengthened the weak and brought justice to all. His relationship with the nation was likened to that of a husband toward his wife (Ho. 2:19), a father to his child (Ho. 11:1) or a mother bird sheltering her young under her wings (Ru. 2:12; Ps. 63:7; 17:8). These intensely personal images expressed the depth of God's love and unreserved commitment to his people.

The second part of the drama of God's relationship with humanity came when Jesus appeared on stage, as God incarnate, the dearly loved Son. He lived, worked, healed and proclaimed the good news of God's kingdom. He cared for his followers like a shepherd with his sheep. He provided for their physical needs but he also demonstrated the full extent of God's love for the world by laying down his life for the salvation of humanity (Jn. 10:1–18).

His sacrificial death on the cross made possible the restoration of God's original relationship with all who would respond by placing their faith in him.

In our earlier chapters we have seen that the close personal relationship which Jesus had with his disciples in the Gospels and which continued, albeit in a changed dimension, in the life of the early church, demonstrates something of the relationship which Christians believe that they may share with God. Although Jesus sometimes used the imagery of servant/master to illustrate his teachings, he never addressed his followers as servants. They were his friends (Jn. 15:15) whom he knew and allowed to know him (Jn. 10:14). He looked to them for support (Mk. 3:14; 14:32–41). He loved them, taught, guarded, prayed for and sent them out into the world (Jn. 17:6–19). He was much more than a human master or teacher among his disciples. After his resurrection they worshipped him as Lord and God (Jn. 20:28), and they responded to God in a prayerful relationship much more readily than had previously been the case.

Although Jesus did not refer to his followers as 'servants', most of the writers of the Epistles identified themselves primarily in that way (Rom. 1:1; Jas. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:1). They chose the title to identify with his death, as the suffering servant of Yahweh and in acknowledgment of his lordship in their lives (Is. 52:13–53:12; Phil. 2:6–11).

When Jesus' physical presence was withdrawn, he promised that the Father would send his Holy Spirit to be with them forever (Jn. 14:15–26; 16:7–15). The ministry of the Spirit would be built upon, and the necessary

sequel to, that of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> He, also, was 'person' and would continue to teach them and help, encourage, comfort and be an advocate for them (*paraklētos*). He would guide them into truth. The Acts of the Apostles recounts his coming upon Jesus' assembled disciples (Acts 2:1) and his subsequent activities among the Samaritans, Gentiles, disciples at Ephesus and as guide and enabler of the missions of the apostles. The Epistles represent him as God's gift to believers, providing a pledge of their future inheritance as the people of God (Eph. 1:13–14), and giver of gifts for ministry (1 Cor. 12:7–11). 'Within persons, and within the church the Spirit is the Spirit of holiness, love, worship and praise, prayer, proclamation...' <sup>5</sup>

Is discipling congruent with these perspectives? In the light of our previous analyses of the biblical evidence it is clear that discipling by its very nature reinforces the centrality of God as sovereign Lord and Master. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who takes the initiative and calls humanity to a close, personal relationship of learning and following him. Those who respond, express their love for him in worship and prayer. They begin the lifelong task of knowing him personally, learning his will for their lives as revealed through the Scriptures and serving him through the use of their ministry gifts. Christians understand God himself to be the source and supreme example of

the values they teach. Disciples learn those values as they experience them expressed toward themselves by God. Thus love (1 Jn. 4:19), forgiveness (Eph. 4:32), holiness (1 Pet. 1:16), comfort (2 Cor. 1:4) and many other qualities are learnt directly from God who gives them to believers when he gives them himself (Gal. 5:22,23).

### The value of each individual

Equally integral to the Christian faith is the concept of the distinctive significance of each individual in the sight of God.<sup>6</sup> Every human is created in his image and deemed as 'very good' (Gn. 1:27,31), not in the sense of moral worth, but as a being who in a special way reflects the 'image' of God. The value of each individual is evident throughout the biblical revelation in the significance placed on human life from its very conception (Gn. 9:6; Is. 44:2), in care for the underprivileged, oppressed, weak or dispossessed (Ex. 22:21–27), and in the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Lv. 19:18). New Testament teaching proclaims no difference between Jew and Greek, slave or free, male or female (Gal. 3:28). Jesus valued care for the least important as being the same as care for himself (Mt. 25:45), and he would not turn even a little child away (Lk. 18:15–17). God's love shown in Jesus extends to all (2 Cor. 5:14,15), and every person is unique and of worth, yet different from every other being (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–11).

4 L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (NICNT) (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1971), p. 701.

5 G. Bingham, *The Things We Firmly Believe* (Adelaide: New Creation, 1981), p. 58.

6 C. Sherlock, *Contours of Christian Theology: The Doctrine of Humanity* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1996), p. 157.

Once again the discipling model is seen to be highly congruent with such perspectives in that it does not discriminate against any person. Every person within a Christian community is considered of equal worth in God's sight and is given gifts whose exercise brings good to all and assists in building up the community of faith. Even the newest member of the community or the oldest and most frail is significant. Discipling takes into consideration the level of understanding and knowledge of God which each individual possesses, his or her pace of learning and preferred style of learning. It embodies a life-centred approach to learning which combines cognitive input, personal experience and practical involvement, and is appropriate for all ages and stages of life.

When special discipling relationships are formed within the community there is no fixed hierarchy of status. Those who teach, remain in that role only while they have some superior knowledge or skills to impart. At other times a previous learner may adopt the role of teacher. Those whose gift is teaching still learn from others. Even 'a little child shall lead them' (Is. 11:6).

### The community of believers

Among the persons of the Godhead perfect community is expressed. They are in complete agreement of heart, mind, thought and will and it is into this 'community' that believers are welcomed, not as gods but as dearly loved children (Jn. 14:20,23, 1 Jn. 3:1,2). This means that the love shared within the Godhead extends out to his children who then relate in loving community to one another (Jn. 15:12). They

become a believing, confessing community which acknowledges the lordship of Christ (Mt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Philp. 2:11).

Sherlock comments that the 'image' idea has been assumed to be individual in nature, but that it actually is 'a relational and personal reality'.<sup>7</sup> Thus while each individual is important, humanity is more than a collection of isolated beings. The relational nature of the triune God leads to those in his 'image' living in relationship as covenant partners with God and each other.<sup>8</sup>

Those who relate to God in and by faith are called out (*ekklesia*) into an assembly of believers, the body of Christ (Acts 2:44–47; 1 Cor. 12:12), the household and dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:19–22), a family of brothers and sisters (Heb. 3:1), 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Pet. 2:9). These all indicate that the gathering of believers is indispensable to the concept of belief. The church is a worshipping, serving (Mt. 25:40), living and growing community. The New Testament allows for no isolated believers (Heb. 10:24,25). Each member is important, having spiritual gifts to be used for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7) and a contribution to make to the building up (*oikodomeō*) of the body. Love and loyalty in action between members is their aim (Gal. 6:10). All members are servants of Christ together, whatever their social status, gender, age or ethnicity.

When we seek to align the concept

7 Sherlock, *Contours*, p. 87.

8 Sherlock, *Contours*, p. 89.

of discipling with such insights, the congruence is close. In particular, as we saw in the New Testament church in Part Three of this study, discipling is closely allied with the normal life of the community of faith. The process of learning to know God and becoming like him is one which is assisted by others in the faith community. Teaching may come through those who at a particular time have superior knowledge or skills and who seek to impart this to their fellows. It may also come from the community as a whole as it provides worthy models of life and faith or as spiritual gifts are exercised in the supportive, caring community atmosphere or as the community reflects upon its life and ministry. Those with positions of responsibility within the church are representatives of Christ, and by teaching and applying his word derive their authority from him, not themselves.

The focus of discipling is not on the teacher or the community but on Jesus the master-teacher. The process, however, involves a teacher or a teaching-learning community which performs the roles of facilitator, organizer of learning experiences and model. Thus discipling entails: an atmosphere of love and friendship, with openness between teacher and taught; pastoral care for each person's whole being to enable the development of joy and life in all its fullness (Jn. 10:10; 17:13); nurturing, guarding and protecting the learner in a 'safe' but challenging environment; and remembering his or her needs and bringing them to God in prayer.

Christian teaching emphasizes the connection between personal belief and active good works. 'Faith by itself,

if it has no works, is dead' (Jas. 2:17). By its nature discipling is a dynamic, working relationship. Disciples are involved in the learning process often in active, informal situations. They interact with the teacher or leader, with one another and among those they are serving.

### Human freedom

The Christian faith emphasizes that God has given to humanity the freedom to choose between right and wrong. Each person is a responsible moral agent. And although sin entered the world and humanity lost 'the rational power to determine [its] course in the direction of the highest good',<sup>9</sup> people remain accountable for their actions. Individuals have the freedom to choose to live under the lordship of Christ, and are free to make choices as to their life of discipleship.

It is therefore highly significant that discipling is a model of teaching which depends upon the voluntary, willing commitment of the learner to the teacher or community and to the learning process, for an extended period of time. As with the disciples of Jesus, the freedom exists for the process to be concluded at any time, but with Jesus those who were genuine did not permanently leave. Followers today may choose to enter or leave teacher-learner relationships with others or with particular discipling communities, but in the general course of events their relationship with Christ finds expression somewhere within an

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9 L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth, 1941), p. 248.



enduring community of faith.

It is appropriate here to comment briefly on misuses of discipling as a model of teaching. The role of discipler has on occasions been abused and this has caused some to be wary of its use. Some persons have so imitated the role which Jesus had among his followers that they have initiated their own teachings and endeavoured to exercise their own authority over learners, encouraging unthinking obedience. The Scriptures make it plain that there will be no further revelation from God. All was complete in Jesus (Heb. 1:1,2; Rev. 22:18,19). The authority which Jesus exercised belonged to him because he was divine. No human being can take it from him. Discipling is not about the exercise of personal power. Christian disciplers do not make their own disciples. They point their learners to Jesus as master. Instead of requiring obedience to the discipler, disciples in the Christian community come under the authority of Jesus' words as revealed in the Scriptures. Disciples do not give unthinking obedience to anyone. They are expected to weigh up the words and actions of a discipler or a discipling community (Acts 17:10,11) against the authority of the Scriptures, with the Holy Spirit as guide and enlightener (Jn. 14:26). Each person is responsible for his or her own decisions.

In balance, with individual responsibility is the extra accountability expected of those who have a teaching role. Teachers or discipling communities will be judged severely and their condemnation will be greater if they are responsible for others going astray (Mt. 18:6,7; Rom. 14:21) or if their teaching leads others into wrong belief

or sin (1 Tim. 1:6,7; 6:3,4; Tit. 1:11; Jas. 3:1; 2 Pet. 2:1,2).

### The mission of the church

The focus of the mission of the church is to make disciples of all nations. This commission from Jesus is recorded in a number of different forms in the Gospels and Acts (Mt. 28:19,20; Lk. 24:46,47; Jn 20:21; Acts 1:8).<sup>10</sup> The message for all time is that 'Christ...died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God' (1 Pet. 3:18). This good news is to be proclaimed to all peoples (Jn. 11:51,52; Acts 26:23; Rom. 1:5; 5:15,18,19; 1 Cor. 1:23,24; Eph. 2:16; Heb. 2:9,10).

Some believed that this mission was fulfilled by the apostles and ceased to be relevant after the passing of their era.<sup>11</sup> But history records that there have been those in every age who went out to other places to make disciples. Some deliberately chose to take the good news to those who had not

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<sup>10</sup> The longer ending of Mark's gospel, probably attached some time before the mid-second century (C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, p. 472) contains the following, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation' (Mk. 16:15).

<sup>11</sup> J. L. Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), Vol. 2, p. 495.

heard,<sup>12</sup> while others moved to new places for political, social or commercial reasons taking the message with them. From the time of William Carey (1761—1834) it has been a major factor in Protestant missionary endeavour.<sup>13</sup> The making of disciples is to be a continuing process as each generation in turn passes on the message to the next. Paul encouraged Timothy to entrust his message to those who would in turn become its teachers (2 Tim. 2:2). This is not the responsibility of a few, but of all believers.

### Congruence of Discipling

It may be concluded from the foregoing, then, that the discipling model of teaching in its focus and methods shares a high degree of correspondence with the core values and beliefs of the Christian faith. This will be compared with the schooling model to ascertain which of the two has greater congruence with foundational Christian beliefs and values.

Discipling reinforces the centrality of God as Father, Son and Spirit as supreme. It enables the believer to establish his or her primary relationship in life with him as child, friend and

indwelt learner. The relationship it promotes is close, personal and committed to God as Father, Teacher, Example, Guide, Paraclete and giver of spiritual gifts.

Discipling enables every person to be treated as an individual learner of significance, not a product of mass education. Individual differences can be recognized and addressed in the teaching-learning process. Yet individuals are not isolated. They become part of a community of other believers where they are able to develop open, caring relationships. Their community life is oriented to learning and growth in faith in Christ and, like a family, its members all have a contribution to make to the well being of the whole. There is a pattern of faith expressing itself in works of service, which develops and in turn leads to growth and learning. Opportunities to observe the example of others, remembering past experiences and reflection on present events or activities enable learning to increase. Within the community personal freedom is associated with accountability for one's life and actions and for the lives of one's fellows.

The schooling model has been widely used within the faith community, but there is the danger that it may over-emphasize the need for right belief without touching the attitudes and values behind those beliefs or the behaviours which result from them. Christian beliefs, facts and knowledge are extremely important and the schooling model has been very successful in transmitting these. Preaching and formal teaching in Christian schools, Sunday schools, church-based Christian Education programs and Bible and Theological Colleges have

<sup>12</sup> These included Patrick to Ireland (432 CE); Columba from Ireland to Scotland (521—97); Augustine to England (597); Celtic monks to Gaul, Germany and Italy (late 6th century); Boniface (680—754) to Germany; English people to Northern Europe (11th century); Dominicans and Franciscans throughout Europe, North Africa, Hungary and Middle and Far East (13th & 14th centuries); Portuguese and Spanish to the Americas (15th & 16th centuries); and Jesuits to almost every corner of the globe (16th century to the present day).

<sup>13</sup> Garrett, *Theology*, p. 496.

successfully passed down the basic elements of Christian belief to new generations of believers. But formal teaching alone will never communicate the full spectrum of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. That is a completely different way of life.

A personal relationship with God may receive great emphasis in formal teaching, but the relationship itself is more easily 'caught than taught'. People understand what it means by seeing and being with others who have such an experience. Classroom situations are too limited to demonstrate or experience more than a few of the attitudes or behaviours involved in being Christian. It is one thing to teach about the fruit of the Spirit,<sup>14</sup> and another thing for people to be provided with opportunities to develop these in their lives.

Something of the value of each individual is lost in the schooling model because of the groups of learners involved. It is difficult to provide for the range of individual differences which exist in any formal group of learners where set curricula or graded assessments apply. In formal situations the teacher often is the focus of attention, not the learners. Schooling's curriculum-centred approach means subject materials do not arise naturally out of the learning environment and may bear little relevance to the daily lives the learners. Learners may become receptors of information rather than active participants in the process, and frequently spiritual gifts possessed by

members of the body and given for the upbuilding of everyone, lie idle or under-utilized while those with teaching responsibilities exhaust themselves trying to meet every demand.

The formality of the schooling model can mitigate against the formation of open, caring relationships and hinder the promotion of community. Development of faith through experiences requiring its exercise is largely absent and opportunities for reflection on such times are divorced from the moment of experience and action.

The processes of schooling and discipling both involve some loss of freedom for learners but those involved in discipling have voluntarily chosen to do so, whereas some of those involved in schooling may be offered no choice in the matter.

Discipling's emphasis on the mission of the church is not reflected strongly in the schooling model. Learners may be formally told to go out in the name of Christ in service to others, but apart from establishing schools or colleges, informal situations are usually required for them to actually implement the commission. Discipling makes that possible.

While Jesus endorsed both the formal and informal teaching models for members of the faith community by his use of them, discipling rather than schooling was the model which he commissioned his followers to use in taking his message to the world. It is a life-centred approach which they could use among future believers no matter what their nationality, gender, age, skills, resources or experience of life.

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<sup>14</sup> Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22,23).

## Conclusions

It becomes evident that true Christian discipling is dependent on a close, personal relationship with God himself as Lord, made possible through the death of Jesus on the cross, into which the learner voluntarily chooses to enter by faith. By his Holy Spirit God enters into the life of the believer, teaches, encourages and gives gifts which are to be used for service and for building up the community of faith.

Discipling gives value to the individual whoever he or she may be. It acknowledges that believers belong to the family of God and enables the community of faith to recognize its role as a teaching-learning body. Discipling encompasses much more than the impartation of 'head knowledge' beliefs, it involves the development of attitudes, values, skills and behaviours which are appropriate for all those who are followers of God.

It allows the development of close, personal relationships. It embodies love, commitment, concern for all, humility and meekness. Every individual within the discipling community is a learner and is able to be used for the building up of others in loving, caring relationships. As God's word is proclaimed and obeyed, as gifts are used,

examples are demonstrated, life is experienced, free choices are made and as people are nurtured and encouraged, growth towards maturity in Christ occurs. This is the intention of the gathering and the result of the life of the faith community. 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled' (Mt. 5:6).

Discipling has the authority of Jesus as being the model to be used for taking his message to the world. It is not optional. It is mandatory. As a model of teaching its value cannot be estimated too highly. Its distinctive strength lies in the formation of the discipling communities of faith wherever the gospel is spread. The effectiveness of the discipling community may be judged by the spread of Christianity, in spite of extreme opposition, to almost every nation in the world and by the numbers of those who hold to the faith, which have increased enormously over the last two millennia.<sup>15</sup>

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**15** 32.54% of the world's population is Christian (1,973 million adherents out of 6065.1 million total world population). Annual growth rate +1.43% (P. Johnstone, and J. Mandruik, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition* (International Research Office: WEC International, 2001), p. 2.

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