

## Introduction

After I prayed to receive Christ I did not immediately see any changes in my life. It was about nine months later that God put a man named Jim into the dorm room next to me. Jim and his fiancé, Connie, were from Mineola, TX and he had stayed on campus to go to summer school. Jim was very active with Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC). After we had met Jim instructed me to begin reading the Bible. I didn't know where to begin, so I randomly chose to begin reading in Proverbs. I loved Proverbs, and could not get enough. I would read eight chapters a day (1-8, 2-9, 3-10...). I developed a love for God's word. Jim also exhorted me to start going to their weekly Campus Crusade meeting. There were probably twenty or more students that attended the weekly meetings. They would have some songs, and then a teaching. They also encouraged everyone to be part of an even smaller group for discipleship. When Karen returned to campus in the fall, we began going to McKinney Bible Church. The end result of all of these activities was that I began to grow in respect to salvation. What was it that caused me to grow in my faith? There is no question that reading my Bible was longing for the pure milk of the word was one of the keys. However, if an individual had not reached out to me, I would have never begun to read the Bible. If I had not gone to the CCC small group meetings, or attended corporate services at an excellent church where I was being fed God's word, I would not have grown like I did.

We are looking at the Great Commission. In Part 1, we looked at Mark 16:15, where Jesus commanded the apostles to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." The focus of the message was evangelism, which is part of the Great Commission. In Part 2, we looked at Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus commanded us to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." Our focus is on the goal of the Great Commission, which is to make disciples. In Part 3, we looked at 1 John 2:12-14, where John addresses spiritual fathers, young men, and little children. These are stages of discipleship, and when we are making disciples, we must be cognizant of where they are in their spiritual journey, and give them things that are appropriate for them. In Parts 4 we saw that God partners with us in fulfilling the Great Commission, and He is with us to the end of the age. We also saw that there are some key activities that are part of this Great Commission. We have to proclaim Christ or preach the gospel and see people baptized. This is the first step in fulfilling the Great Commission. We also have to teach them to observe all of God's commands, which is discipleship. We also took a look at how God also tells us to admonish or gently warn one another. All of these activities are part of making disciples.

Today, in Part 5 of the Discipleship Plan, we will be looking at the Organizational Structure. Specifically, we will be looking at how crowds, small groups and individual meetings all play a role in the Discipleship Plan. These different organizational structures facilitate all of these activities, which are necessary in making disciples. Today, we are going to look at these organizational structures. In my case, I had one-on-one mentoring from Jim. Later on in my life there would be other Jims that would speak into my life. I was also involved in small groups, where I met other believers. Finally, I was involved in larger groups, or corporate gatherings, or crowds. The activities that led to my growth happened in the context of one of these three settings.

## Discipleship Plan – Organizational Structure

1. Crowds
2. Small Groups
3. Individuals
4. Integrated Plan

## 1. Crowds

In Jesus' ministry, He healed the sick, cast out demons, and taught with authority. From the very outset of His ministry, crowds came to be healed and to hear Him teach. This morning I want to look at Mark 4, where we see a large crowd gather to Him. Jesus was by the Sea of Galilee and a very large crowd gathered to hear Him teach. Crowd ministry has the advantage of reaching a lot of people at one time with a message. Jesus preached about the kingdom of God to a large number of people at one time. That is called efficiency. Crowd ministry is great at reaching a large number of people with a message at one time.

(Mark 4:1-3) "He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. {2} And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, {3} "Listen *to this!* Behold, the sower went out to sow;"

In Acts 2, Jews from all over the world had gathered for the Feast of Pentecost. We don't know the exact number of people there at the time, but it is safe to say there were hundreds of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem for the feast. It is estimated that as many as two million Jews would go to the biggest feast, the Passover Feast. When the Holy Spirit came and filled the disciples at Pentecost, the sound of it brought a large crowd together. Peter preached to the crowd, and the result was that three thousand people received Christ as their Lord. The fruit from this crowd ministry jump-started the early church. At this time there were about 120 disciples in the church. No other type of venue could have brought about this kind of immediate fruit.

(Acts 2:5-41) "Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. {6} And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language... {40} And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" {41} So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."

In the larger churches today, a pastor can preach a message to thousands of people at one time. If the pastor were to try to give that message to small groups in his church it might take him a year to meet with all the groups. For messages that need to get out to a lot of people at one time, addressing everyone at one time is a big advantage to the pastor, and to everyone in the congregation.

When Jesus addressed the crowds, He taught many things in parables. Parables were stories that conveyed a simple spiritual truth. In this particular passage, the parable was about the different types of soils. Jesus was using the types of soils to describe the types of soils in men. This message applied to everyone. However, if a message is for a specific target audience, like the children, or youth, or the men of the church, a specific message to that one group leaves out much of the audience. When I evaluate and assess the condition of a flock, and seek the Lord about what areas to teach during the coming year, I prayerfully consider whether the message should be given to a specific group, like the men at a men's conference or meeting, or whether it should be taught in small groups, or if it is something that everyone would benefit. If it applies to everyone in the church, I look at Sunday mornings when everyone can hear the message.

In regard to the Great Commission and the statistics for crowd ministry, the overall numbers are not great. Only 1% of people come to Christ through a crusade. Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke were two great evangelists that recently died. Both of them led millions of people to Christ through crowd ministry, and we rejoice with the angels over each soul that has been added to the kingdom. But, the statistics show that this is the one of the least effective ways of reaching people with the gospel message.

In one survey with thousands of people coming out of their church services that was conducted by author, Ken Davis, roughly seventy-five percent were not able to tell him what the pastor had just preached about. They could not tell them the main point of the message. Crowd ministry leaves major gaps in understanding. Preachers must do a better job focusing their messages, but we cannot blame everything on the preacher. Jesus was the best preacher and not everyone in the crowds understood His messages.

## 2. Small Groups

Going back to Mark 4, after Jesus had preached to the crowd, He met with His disciples, who began to ask Jesus about the parables. Even His disciples had not understood the meaning of the parables that He had just preached to the crowds. Jesus was able to fill in all of the gaps in their understanding from the message He preached to the crowd. The crowds were not able to ask all of their questions, so they never gained an understanding of what they had heard. The crowd ministry is an efficient way of reaching a large group, but not it is not as effective in giving understanding of a message to everyone. One of the drawbacks of crowd ministry is the inability to ask questions, or to have your questions answered. We have found that when the group size gets over twelve to fifteen people, the interactive communication in the group goes way down. People are too embarrassed to ask their questions in a large group. Therefore, the effectiveness of crowd ministries is not as good as it is for small groups which afford people to participate and have their questions answered.

(Mark 4:10-34) “As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began* asking Him *about* the parables. {11} And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables... {33} With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; {34} and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.”

The example in Mark 4 was not an isolated example. In Mark 9:28, after Jesus had cast out a demon from a boy, He went into the house with His disciples and they began questioning Him privately. In Mark 13, Peter, James, John, and Andrew began questioning Jesus about His prophetic word about the destruction of the temple, and the end times. These various group settings all afforded opportunities for the disciples to ask questions and deepen their understanding about lots of things. In a small group setting, they were not going to be embarrassed in front of everyone, and they had the freedom to ask their questions. In smaller group settings, people will open up and ask their questions, although it does not happen immediately. It takes time for a group to develop a trust of the group members.

(Mark 9:28) “When He came into *the* house, His disciples *began* questioning Him privately, “Why could we not drive it out?”

(Mark 13:3) “As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately,”

In Exodus 18, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, came and visited Moses. After observing what was going on, he told Moses that he was going to wear himself out and all of the people. He told him to appoint leaders of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands, and let them handle all the routine cases. He told Moses to only handle the most difficult cases. A leader or a pastor cannot try to handle large numbers of people on his own. The crowd ministry is a way of reaching them with a message, but for the individual attention that they need, crowds need to be broken down into manageable groups.

(Ex 18:17-22) “Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. {18} "You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. {19} "Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, {20} then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. {21} "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. {22} "Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear *the burden* with you.”

In Mark 6, when Jesus was going to feed the multitudes, He instructed the disciples to break them down into groups of fifties and hundreds. Then, He broke bread and gave it to His twelve apostles to distribute. Just as in Moses’ case, breaking up a large group of people into smaller groups is necessary to take care of individual concerns and needs.

(Mark 6:37-41) “But He answered them, "You give them *something* to eat!" And they \*said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?" {38} And He \*said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" And when they found out, they \*said, "Five, and two fish." {39} And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. {40} They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. {41} And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all.”

In churches where I was not the lead pastor, I have always asked the lead pastor if there were any specific needs that he would like me to help with. I was there to serve in any capacity that I can. One pastor asked me to help with children’s ministry, lead a small group, head up the ushers, head up the greeters, head up communion, lead prayer and intercession every week, head the men’s ministry, and preach occasionally. I did all of these for this pastor while working a full-time job as the GM of one of the leading design firms in the Southeast.

At another church that I helped, they did not have any small groups. They only had a corporate gathering. So, I launched a leadership training program in the church. We trained and equipped small group leaders so that they were ready to lead small groups. You cannot just have small groups. Leaders need to understand the vision, be trained to lead small groups, and the people must also understand the vision of small group ministry.

At another church I was only asked to start a men's ministry, which I gladly did. I launched a monthly men's breakfast and along with some other leaders in the church, started some men's small groups. At the small group that I led, the men would not open up at first. I began to ask ice-breaker questions at the beginning of each meeting. These questions were designed to have the men share something about themselves with the group. My goal was to open up the men and help them get to know one another. After about two months, the men began to open up on their own and share struggles, prayer needs, and other things. Just because we had a small group, the benefits of small groups were not immediately realized. It took some intentional effort by the leader to open up the group.

### 3. Individuals

Jesus did not just minister to the crowds and to His group of disciples, He ministered to individuals throughout His ministry. In John 3, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night to ask Him some questions. Jesus took time to minister to Nicodemus. In John 4, Jesus was by the city in Samaria called Sychar, which is where Jacob's well was located. It was mid-day and Jesus' disciples had gone to the city to buy food. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus ministered to this lady. Jesus always took time to minister to individuals.

In Acts 8:25-31, Philip had been preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. As he was traveling back to Jerusalem, the Lord told him to get up and go south on the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. So, Philip got up and went on it and came across an Ethiopian eunuch, who just happened to be sitting in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit told Philip to join him, which he did, and the eunuch had lots of questions for Philip to answer. One-on-one ministry is the best for answering questions and giving people understanding. Through this encounter, Philip was able to lead him to Christ, and to baptize him.

(Acts 8:25-31) "So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. {26} But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert *road*.) {27} So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, {28} and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. {29} Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." {30} Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" {31} And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him."

Jesus gave a number of parables to let us know the importance of individual ministry. In Luke 15:1-7, He gave the parable of the lost sheep. A man had one hundred sheep and one of them was lost, so he left the ninety-nine to go look for the one that was lost. When he found it he rejoiced, and Jesus' point was that the angels in heaven rejoice more over this one sinner that was found than over the other ninety-nine. In Luke 15:8-10, He gave the parable of the lost coin. The point was the same; there was joy in heaven over the sinner who was found. In Luke 15:11-32, He gave the parable about the prodigal son, and the point of it was the same. Jesus reached out to individuals, and we must reach out to the individuals. Second, Jesus rejoiced when sinners were found. We must go look for the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. They matter a great deal to the Father, and we need to rejoice when they are found.

When I worked as a chaplain at the prison, the regulations stated that the chaplains had to meet with only one inmate at a time. This regulation was in place for safety concerns. There were almost two thousand inmates at that prison, and there were more chaplain requests than our team of chaplains could meet. I was also only there twenty-four hours a week. I worked two twelve-hour days, and did not take any lunch breaks during my twelve-hour days. So, for efficiency sake, I tried to meet with three or four men at a time in the various pods. My initial meetings were always one-on-one, but when I had several believers in the same dormitory, I would try to meet in small groups with them. Some of the prison guards allowed me to do this, and other guards stayed in strict accordance to the regulations. If something bad happened to me on their watch when I had violated the prison regulations, they would be held accountable, so it was a risk for them. For me, the small groups greatly increased my time efficiency and I was still very effective in small groups.

I gave you the salvation statistics for crusades, so let me give you the numbers for relational evangelism. Eighty-seven percent of people that have come to Christ have come through someone reaching out to them. While relational evangelism may not reach thousands at a time, the effectiveness of individual ministry is better than any other venue.

#### 4. Integrated Plan

In Mark 4, Jesus preached to the crowds, and then answered questions in a small group setting. We also saw that Jesus took time to meet with individuals. Jesus used crowd ministry, small group ministry, and individual ministry. He had an integrated plan that incorporated all three types of ministry. The disciples also continued after Jesus had ascended back to the Father. In Acts 2:46-47, the early church met with one mind in the temple (crowd ministry) and they also went house to house, which was small group and individual ministry. They had an integrated plan of ministry.

(Acts 2:46-47) “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, {47} praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

In Acts 20, Paul was near the end of his ministry, and he was having his final meeting with the Ephesian elders. He said they would never see him again, and they wept over it. He had built strong relational ties with them. In his message to them he said that he had not shrunk back from declaring to them anything that was profitable and had taught them publicly and from house to house. Paul had an integrated ministry; he had a public ministry preaching to the crowds, and a small group ministry meeting from house to house.

(Acts 20:20-21) “how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, {21} solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In the Bible, there are over thirty “one-another” commands. We are to accept one another, serve one another, rejoice with one another, comfort one another, admonish one another, be devoted to one another, and build up one another. While we can greet one another in a crowd ministry, most of these things cannot be done in a large crowd setting. The fact is that in large churches, people do not develop relationships in the meetings. People primarily develop relationships in small

group settings. The one-on-one relationships that we are commanded to do cannot happen unless we are involved in individual and small group ministry.

1. Accept one another. Rom 15:7
2. Admonish one another. Rom 15:14, Col 3:16
3. Agree with one another. 1 Cor 1:10
4. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Rom 12:10
5. Be of the same mind toward one another. Rom 12:16, Rom 15:5
6. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 1 Pe 4:9
7. Be kind to one another. Eph 4:32
8. Be subject to one another. Eph 5:21
9. Bear one another's burdens. Gal 6:2
10. Build up one another. Rom 14:19, 1 Thess 5:11
11. Care for one another. 1 Cor 12:25
12. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another. 1 Pe 5:5
13. Comfort one another. 1 Thess 4:18
14. Confess your sins to one another. James 5:16
15. Encourage and build up one another. 1 Thess 5:11, Heb 3:13, Heb 10:25
16. Fellowship with one another. 1 Jn 1:7
17. Forgive one another. Eph 4:32, Col 3:13
18. Give preference to one another in honor or honor one another. Rom 12:10
19. Greet one another. 1 Pe 5:14, Rom 16:16, 1 Cor 16:20, 2 Cor 13:12
20. Live in peace with one another. 1 Thess 5:13
21. Love one another. 1 Jn 4:11, 1 Pe 1:22, 1 Pe 4:8, Jn 13:34-35, Jn 15:12, Jn 15:17, 1 Thess 3:12, 1 Thess 4:9
22. Pray for one another, so that you may be healed. James 5:16
23. Regard one another as more important than himself. Phil 2:3
24. Rejoice with one another. Rom 12:15
25. Restore one another in a spirit of gentleness. Gal 6:1
26. Seek that which is good for one another. 1 Thess 5:15
27. Serve one another. 1 Pe 4:10, Gal 5:13
28. Show forbearance to one another in love. Eph 4:2, Col 3:13
29. Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Eph 5:19
30. Stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Heb 10:24
31. Teach one another. Col 3:16
32. Wait for one another. 1 Cor 11:33
33. Weep with one another. Rom 12:15

### Conclusion and Applications

If we are going to carry out the Great Commission, we need crowd ministry. It is great for evangelism and for teaching. However, it is not very effective for giving people a better understanding or applications in their lives. We need small group ministry to help people understand and apply what has been taught from the pulpit. People need to have a safe place to ask their questions and to gain understanding. While someone may come to Christ in a crusade, it is the individual follow-up that will help them become a disciple of Christ. We need one-on-one and small group ministry if we are going to help people grow and mature as disciples. If we are going to carry out all of the one-another commands, we must have small group ministry. We need to have an integrated plan.

Many churches today have both crowd ministry and small group ministry, and that is terrific. However, there are many large churches where the majority of people only go to a Sunday service and are not connected relationally to others because they are not in a small group. There is no care, accountability, service, or discipleship taking place. The end result is that people are not being discipled, and their lives are not being transformed. At the Connection Church, we want to have public preaching and reach the multitudes. But, we realize that making disciples happens in the context of small groups and with individual meetings. Small group ministry must be a part of the DNA and as people join our body, they are also joining a small group. If we are going to present every man complete in Christ, we must proclaim Him, and this happens in crowd ministry, and in our small groups, and in our individual relationships with people. We must admonish and teach people, and this happens in both crowd ministry, but more importantly in small group settings. I say more importantly because it is in the small group settings that people can ask questions, gain understanding, and begin to apply the truths in their lives. It is in the small group settings where relationships are built.

Let's pray.

“Father God, help us to preach the gospel, not just in corporate settings, but to the people that You bring into our individual lives. Father, help us to be committed to small groups. I ask You to bring us future leaders to train and release as small group leaders. Bring us the captains of tens and fifties. Father, we ask You to help us establish small groups as part of our DNA. Help us be like the early church that met in the temple and from house to house. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Introduction** (Mark 16:15, Matt 28:18-20, 1 John 2:12-14)

**1. Crowds** (Mark 4:1-3, Acts 2:5-41)

**2. Small Groups** (Mark 4:10-34, 9:28, 13:3, Ex 18:17-22, Mark 6:37-41)

**3. Individuals** (John 3-4, Acts 8:25-31, Luke 15:1-7, 8-10, 11-32)

**4. Integrated Plan** (Acts 2:46-47, Acts 20:20-21)

**Conclusion and Applications** (Col 1:28-29)