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REVISITING
The
MASTER PLAN
of
Evangelism

**WHY JESUS' DISCIPLESHIP METHOD
IS STILL THE BEST TODAY**

Robert Coleman and Bobby Harrington

w/ Josh Patrick

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Is Still the Best Today**

**ROBERT COLEMAN &
BOBBY HARRINGTON**

with Josh Patrick

Revisiting the Master Plan of Evangelism

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Introduction

Over 50 years ago, a rookie seminary professor named Robert Coleman taught a class on Jesus' methods of evangelism. He couldn't find a lot of good material, so he prepared his lectures by reading and reflecting on the four gospel accounts and jotted down what he observed. By God's grace, his handwritten notes from that class turned into what is arguably the most influential book on discipleship to date. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, originally published in 1963, has sold more than 3.5 million copies in English and has been translated into more than 100 languages.

We want to introduce a new generation of pastors, church planters and Christian leaders to Dr. Coleman's proposals for how to make disciples the way Jesus did. We call him "Dr. Coleman" because we hold him in high regard as the quintessential graceful, godly man and master Bible teacher. For over 55 years, he has taught young pastors in the best seminaries in the world—Gordon Conwell, Asbury, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and the Southern Baptist Seminary (among others).

The basis of Dr. Coleman's esteemed book is a belief that Jesus' method of discipleship is the perfect one. He contends that we need both Jesus' message and Jesus' method. The timeless and transcul-

tural principles of His method simply cannot be improved upon (John 1:1-4). His master plan was the perfect plan because in Jesus we find all treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

As a part of founding discipleship.org, I (Bobby Harrington) have spent as much time as possible with Dr. Coleman to glean from his wisdom and find direction for starting a ministry that we hope will carry on his legacy. The interview throughout this eBook was conducted in Dr. Coleman's home, near Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. Josh Patrick, my ministry partner (a preacher and disciple maker in his 30s who wants the leaders in his generation to know this work), helped with the interview. Together, we asked Dr. Coleman live and on tape about *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, and how God intends discipleship as a way of life for every believer.

We had four goals in mind when we set out to interview Dr. Coleman and write *Revisiting the Master Plan of Evangelism*: 1) We wanted to summarize the principles from Jesus' method of discipleship—the same principles Dr. Coleman wrote about in his 1963 work; 2) We wanted to offer a brief application of these principles through personal stories of both Dr. Coleman's life and others; 3) We hoped to learn about and share any modifications or additions to these principles; and 4) We asked Dr. Coleman to offer any hindsight reflections on the impact of these principles 51 years after writing the watershed book.

What follows are the wisdom and insights of a man who has spent his life pursuing Jesus and His method and teaching others (including his family) to do the same. If you've read the original book, you'll no doubt come away with reminders of the power of these principles (when they are put into practice). You'll also find the addition of more personal stories. Don't miss the "Concluding Words" section at the end. It's gold! If you haven't read the book,

here's your introduction into these principles that continue to be talked about and taught around the world. We hope this short eBook fuels a desire to read Dr. Coleman's original work. Moreover, we pray that these principles would become active in your life and your church, and that you would continue to tell and teach others about Jesus' method.

Beginnings

THE STORY BEHIND THE PRINCIPLES

Dr. Coleman, tell us the story of how you wrote *The Master Plan of Evangelism*.

In the late 1950s, Asbury Seminary recruited me to teach evangelism. I wasn't exactly sure of the best curriculum, so I just started studying the Gospels, and that gradually evolved over time. The book began with lecture notes first scribbled on paper. As I continued to teach them, I would refine and rewrite them. That happened several times before I actually began to write the book. My students helped me by asking questions in class. So what began as a set of class notes turned into something I could never have imagined.

It was several years after I started writing it down before I gave it to a publisher. Our first editions were just some mimeographed notes that I gave to the class. The students said, "We would like to have this in a better form. It would be a little cheaper to have it printed (rather than mimeographed) if you had enough copies," and so that was the first publication back in 1963, our self-published book. You've never seen the first printing, because after you opened it a few times it would just fall apart in your hands.

Even in the first printing of it, there were some changes when I redid it with a regular publisher. Thankfully, one of the publishers, Fleming-Revell, saw it and said, “We can do a better job if you’ll just turn it over to us,” and that’s how it started. They came out with their first edition the next year, and it’s still in circulation today being read around the world. It all has been a great surprise to me, but it’s one of those serendipities that the Lord loves to give His children. I never anticipated this project having such a pervasive influence. I’m overwhelmingly grateful to God.

So that’s the story of how we began to study the life of Jesus and His methods that finally culminated into what is now known as *The Master Plan of Evangelism*.

Why did you feel a need to search the Bible to find Jesus’ method of evangelism?

When I came to Asbury Seminary, I tried to start a department of evangelism. Not having studied in this area, I realized I couldn’t go wrong if I just looked at Jesus. He is the only perfect person who has ever lived. His life on earth was flawless. His teachings are brilliant. His methods are masterful. Some of the questions I carried with me into the study were: “What did Jesus actually do when He was here on earth? *Why* did He do the things He did? What does the ministry of Jesus look like in today’s world?” I had a burning desire to understand Jesus and His approach to ministry. As I dove deeper into the Gospels, I began to see patterns and principles emerge. Jesus lived with remarkable intentionality to fulfill His mission. This journey through the Gospels was a game changer. I simply wrote down His master plan as it emerged from a study of the Gospels.

How does the basic premise of God's master plan follow His purpose?

That's essential as we look at what God has set out to do in the world. He doesn't operate on autopilot. He knows what He wants to accomplish and how He wants to accomplish it. Everything God created was designed to display His glory. "The heavens will declare how great is God" (Psalm 19). When He wanted to show His glory through making a creature like Himself in His own image, He made people who were free, who could choose, who could devote, who were intelligent—so that we might come to know Him and love Him, and enjoy Him forever. Love is always a choice, you know.

Surely God knew that we would rebel and choose self-reliance. He had already determined how He would redeem even fallen and flawed creatures. Amazingly, God still loved us. In the fullness of time, in that love, He came to seek and save us (Luke 19:10) and bear our sins in His own body (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). Jesus suffered for us, the just for the unjust, the righteous for the unrighteous, the holy for the unholy, that He might bring us to God. Having satisfied everything necessary for His own purpose, redeeming us in His own blood at the cross, He rose in power from the grave and has set out by His grace alone, by His love, to make a people who can stand in awe of the greatness of our God. It was all according to the plan.

When Jesus came into the world, it was to fulfill God's purpose to redeem ... to make all things new ... to restore His original vision for the world as depicted in Revelation 21. Jesus devoted His entire life to fulfilling that plan, and when He invites us to come to Him by grace, we come not only into life, but we are invited to join Him in His plan to heal and redeem the world. And that plan is in essence the Great Commission—to make disciples who make disciples.

Tell us your definition of what a disciple is and about your conviction of being a disciple that follows Jesus' lead.

A disciple is essentially a follower of Jesus, seeking to live his or her life as He lived His. It's someone who is actively learning how to live like Jesus. It's an ongoing process—a journey that has a beginning but no end. It's a lifetime full of adventure because you're living by faith, and yet it's not an unfounded faith. You have Jesus to look at; you know He is real, that He doesn't make mistakes. With growth, it's exciting to realize that God is not finished with us yet. He's got something more to teach us each day. Tomorrow will be a new day of discovery and learning.

I've lived long enough to realize how little I know, but I yearn to grasp so much more when I have a Teacher who can answer my questions. So the future is exciting. The best is yet to be, with the coming of the consummated Kingdom when God's purpose is fulfilled and every knee bows before Him, and all the nations are gathered to praise Him.

Dr. Coleman, share with us what you learned looking at Jesus' method of making disciples in Matthew 28:18-20?

Jesus told the disciples to go and make disciples. That's what He had been doing Himself. A disciple literally means “learner” or “apprentice.” The disciples could see what He meant because they had followed Him, and He was showing them the meaning of the Great Commission in His way of life. It wasn't a theory; it wasn't dogma. It was a way of life. It was all part of the plan that would not fail because they were seeking to do what they had learned from Jesus.

When we step over the line and decide to follow Jesus and embrace the discipleship lifestyle, we become lifelong learners. I sus-

pect this will go on forever. In eternity, I don't think there is ever any conclusion of grace. God has taken all that into His plan, so there's no end [of discipleship] in heaven, I believe. The best is yet to be discovered. Even when you're going through the valley, you can see in the distance the mountaintop. We're all coming to that day.

What is so brilliant about Jesus' method of making disciples?

For one thing, it's unassuming. He is brilliant because His strategy is so unassuming and silent; the hurried pastor may not even recognize it. That's the marvel and mystery of it. Jesus shows us that it's not about planning elaborate events or creating big moments. Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God is here, and it has broken into our everyday lives. Sometimes we don't recognize this because we're too interested in a special program or big campaign to attract a crowd, and we get off track thinking that's the purpose. We must remember that the Church is not a human operation. Jesus is the head of the Church, and He alone gets the final say on what the church ought to be about.

Jesus drew large crowds, but that was not His goal. That's not what drove Him. His disciples saw when they were with Him that every believer could be fulfilling the Great Commission by their lifestyle. Nothing is accidental, nothing is irrelevant, and nothing is without purpose because it's accomplishing the reason we are made—to know Him, love Him and to find joy in Him forever.

Before we look at the principles of the Master Plan, tell us why you now share nine principles in this eBook instead of the eight in the original book?

The incarnation of Jesus was behind the book and the eight principles I originally wrote about. The fact that Jesus came to rescue

us and to show us how much God loves us was just assumed in my original work. But now, when I present the material, I believe that it is helpful to make that concept explicit. So, when I go through the nine principles, I start with the incarnation, and I tell everyone that all the other principles are built on it.

Another minor change is that I now put the principle of “impartation” at the end to emphasize the Holy Spirit. Originally I wanted to make sure it was integral to the whole process, so I put it earlier. But now I usually put it at the end, after “reproduction,” because the Holy Spirit is the real power source for disciple making.

Let’s summarize the nine principles of the Master Plan as we begin?

I call it the “Master Plan” because it is comprehensive. It started with the incarnation and reached its peak at the Great Commission, and it continues to this day.

1. *Incarnation* - Jesus came into our world to show us God’s love.
2. *Selection* – People were Jesus’ method.
3. *Association* – Jesus stayed with them.
4. *Consecration* – Jesus required obedience.
5. *Demonstration* – Jesus showed them how to live.
6. *Delegation* – Jesus assigned them work.
7. *Supervision* – Jesus continued to check on them.
8. *Reproduction* – Jesus expected them to reproduce.
9. *Impartation* – Jesus gave Himself away (through the Holy Spirit).

I believe that Jesus intended for us to adopt His plan. He simply asked His disciples to do for others what He had done for them. He

The Story Behind the Principles

knew what He was doing, and God will bless church leaders who seek to replicate His plan today.

1. Incarnation

JESUS CAME INTO OUR WORLD TO SHOW US GOD'S LOVE

Tell us about the first principle in the Master Plan, the incarnation.

The incarnation is what makes everything we know about the life of Christ possible. Until Jesus came into the world in our identity, we didn't really recognize God (Hebrews 1:3). He's the perfect photograph of God, the exact representation of His character (John 1:14). And because we can see Him, we know not only who God is, we also know what God wants us to become when we are made new in Christ. The incarnation brings into our human experience the meaning of God as He lives in our place, tempted as we are tempted, and yet always without any sin. It makes a life lived in conformity to what we were made to be, possible.

When Jesus died and initiated our redemption on the cross, He made a way for us to be changed into His likeness, born again so that we become Christians—little “Christs.” It always inspires us to think of what we are in Him. His way of life sets before us a perfect pattern by which to measure our lives (1 John 2:5).

The incarnation is the way God's love will be expressed in our lives, and for Jesus it found expression at the cross when He gave up His very life for us.

Why is the incarnation integral to disciple making?

Nothing disarms a person like love. Everyone likes to be loved and for someone to express love to them in tangible ways. When you know you're loved, you'll listen and open up. It was Christ loving people, His service to them, His ministry to them—healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, delivering those possessed by demons, teaching them about the Kingdom of God—that drew people to Him, and the same is true with our ministries. You have an audience with everybody who knows they're loved and knows you care about them. The incarnation is the foundation upon which we must begin to express our life in Christ. It's a beginning place to fulfill the Great Commission, starting with reaching out just as Jesus did in making disciples.

How do Christians live out the incarnation?

This is certainly the way a church planter who's reaching out into a new area wants to draw people to a church. He's the leader, and people will be drawn to him by his love and service when they see that he cares about them. The church planter does all kinds of things to make people realize that he wants to help them, which gives credibility. A church planter continually seeks ways to show his love for people and to be known as a servant.

When we're known as a servant, we never lack opportunity to make some disciples. But before we begin to make disciples, we have to get their attention by the incarnational principle of giving

our lives to them, care that is relevant to their needs. That's the foundation of the Master Plan, and it leads to tremendous opportunities to reach the community. I don't think people turn away from love. In fact, people will respond to it in such numbers you'll be overwhelmed with success. More people will want your attention than you can give. As Jesus ministered to the people, moved with compassion, He saw the crowd and noticed how the people were harassed and they were without anyone who could lead them. They were sheep, He said, without a shepherd. That's the beginning of the Great Commission.

2. Selection

PEOPLE WERE JESUS' METHOD

How does our love for lost and hurting people lead us to the necessity of selection?

As I said above, when Jesus saw the multitudes, He realized people needed more than just teaching, preaching and healing. They needed someone who could lead them. They had people who were supposed to give them direction, the scribes and Pharisees (the lawyers and Bible scholars)—a lot of people in positions of prominence. The problem was that these people who could have helped were lost themselves. They were the blind leading the blind, characterized by Jesus as hirelings who were only in it for what they could get out of it. They didn't really love the sheep.

Obviously, the crowds had come to hear Jesus and wanted someone to take them to the next level, so He looked for disciples. You begin to see this emerge very early in His ministry (John 1). Jesus has gone to the other side of the Jordan and joined what we might call a revival, led by John the Baptist. People had gathered there from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and as far north as Tyre and Sidon. It was the greatest religious awakening Israel had known in over 400

years—not a bad place to begin your ministry, where people are obviously looking for help. It was there John baptized Jesus, and the prophet identified Him as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

I think this is the most significant statement made in the history of redemption because it was like saying the aspirations and the dreams of Israel for thousands of years were embodied in Jesus. They were always looking for the Messiah, the Lamb that God would bring into the world, who for hundreds of years had been represented in their sacrifices on Jewish altars. Those who were most sensitive to the meaning of Scripture lived in that anticipation that someday the promised one would come who would actually be their redeemer. The Lamb of God was the fulfillment of everything they'd hoped for, the one on whom they'd put their hope of salvation when they poured out blood upon the altar.

How did Jesus select His disciples, and how can Christians do the same today?

After Jesus' baptism, two of John's followers noticed Him go—Andrew and John—and He noticed them out of the corner of His eye (John 1:35ff). He stopped and said, “Who are you seeking?” They answered, “Master, where do you live?” That's a good question. In light of what you've already heard, wouldn't you like more information? Wouldn't you like to talk more with Jesus?

He told them, “Come on home with me. Come and see” (John 1:39). That's the way He began His evangelism—before He ever preached a sermon or worked a miracle or launched a crusade. He called some men to be His disciples, to learn from Him. One of them was so overjoyed that he could hardly wait to get back and tell his brother. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus.

The next day, the Bible tells us Jesus found Philip. When Philip saw Jesus and knew who He was, he ran and told Nathaniel, “We found the one—the Christ—that we’ve been hearing about!” Nathaniel was a little incredulous, especially when he learned Jesus had been raised in Nazareth, which is on the other side of the tracks. He never heard of anything good coming out of that place. But Philip had learned something already—you don’t have to try to force this on anyone. You don’t even have to preach to them. Get him to see the evidence and bring him to Christ, so he brought Nathaniel.

Soon Jesus gathered some men, including Matthew, and formed a company of learners. The group continued to grow until it became almost unmanageable. In fact before Jesus returned to the Father, there were about 500 believers. You can see the pressures on His time when He assumed the incarnation in the human body. So he selected 12 to be with Him. You can’t be with everyone, but you can be with a few. We must recognize our human limitations. We want to reach the world, and we want to reach larger numbers of people, just as Jesus was proving He could reach thousands.

How do we practice this principle today?

The principle of selection involves looking for those who seem to have the desire to learn. Notice that those first disciples of Jesus aren’t the ones you would normally have picked out. None of them were well educated or well to do as far as we know. Even more surprising is that none of them were members of the Levitical priesthood. They were just ordinary people like you and me, fishermen and businessmen. One was a tax collector of all things, and yet these were the people Jesus called to learn from Him.

So what does Jesus’ example of selection teach us today? Look around you and you’ll see those that God has already planted in your

path. Your lifestyle is hopefully so different from those in the world that they want to know what makes you tick. They've seen your love in ways they've never seen before, and they really would like to know more about you. Some of them are probably neighbors or those you've worked beside. Continue to trust God to lead men and women into your life, and He will answer your prayer. As you see Christ's ministry unfold in your life, the principle of selection will be foundational.

3. Association

JESUS STAYED WITH THEM

How does the principle of selection lead to association and relationship?

Building an authentic relationship should happen so naturally that it doesn't call attention to itself in dramatic ways. Jesus said, "Come with me," and His disciples began to realize this was part of the plan. They walked the trails together; they went to the synagogue and the temple together. There were times they would go to a retreat together to pray, on the mountain or maybe in the desert. On one occasion, they went as far north as Tyre, many miles from where they were born.

Association, or relationship, is the platform or foundation for discipleship. It's like a family. The Great Commission really begins in the Garden of Eden. Tragically, Adam and Eve blew that opportunity. But the principle of learning in the home was established. That was God's plan in the beginning, to raise up a people from all the nations who would never cease to praise Him. The family, with its emphasis on relationship, is a natural setting for showing love to your kids and leading them in the way of Jesus. The family analogy

is an embryonic way of teaching us. It's in these natural relationships with people closest to us that we're going to have the greatest opportunity to make disciples.

From there, we can reach out to neighbors, friends and to other people we are with in more relaxed settings. The principle of association is simply the principle of being together. That's the way we learn. Jesus doesn't establish a college or a formal theological seminary. Those places are all right, but there's something more basic to learning than just going off to school. Jesus' constant presence with His disciples ensured they were always learning.

Tell us more about discipleship in the family.

Discipleship began by God's design in the beginning when He created a family to give us an object lesson of how disciples are made. In that family, we learn discipline; we learn obedience; we learn to respect authority; and we learn how to humble ourselves for the sake of others.

That's a mark of discipleship. Discipleship is always motivated by love. Of course, as you follow Him there needs to be a demonstration of obedience for those who are looking to you for direction. So you lead by example. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 teaches us the key principles. What Jesus did with His disciples was simply to live out those principles He had been taught.

Dr. Coleman, how has discipleship played out in your own family?

I was fortunate and blessed to marry a wonderful girl right after I finished seminary and she finished college. We have three precious children.

Jesus Stayed With Them

Our oldest daughter is retired now with her husband; at least he's retired. He was a minister down in Texas of a little Presbyterian church. We love her, and she has been for us a beautiful young lady. She has one daughter who lives in New Jersey with her husband.

My other daughter lives here locally. Her husband is a teacher at Asbury Seminary. She's just like her name, Angela (Angel), and she's one you can guide with your eye. There's a secret of guiding someone with your eye—you have to look in their face. Angie has always been that way. We are so blessed that we can live close to her and her husband now. She has three children who are walking with God.

My son, Jimmy, has six children. He's the youngest, and he and his wife have homeschooled their kids. He's an engineer down in Georgia. He is probably one of the best disciple makers I've ever seen. He's done it with his family. Those kids love Jesus, and they're very active in the First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, which is a great missionary church with expositional preaching every Sunday. Their oldest daughter's graduating from medical school next month, and she wants to be a missionary. It's been a joy to see them grow up loving Jesus and making disciples.

When they were young, what did you do to disciple them?

As the kids were growing up, we always tried to have family devotions at the table. It wasn't always successful in the way I would have liked. I remember sometimes my son would start crawling out from under the table, and I'd have to throw my leg under him to hold him down. They appreciated it because it was part of the schedule, and we would have prayer before going to bed at night.

My son and I developed a very close relationship by having prayer and Bible study together at night for years. MI remember when he was getting ready for college; he said, "Dad, you know I'm getting

a little old now. I don't know if we need to do this together every night." It kind of broke my heart at first, because more than once we would kneel down to pray after a Bible study, and I'd go to sleep on my knees. I was so tired.

Our time together paid off, and I'd carry the kids around as I traveled to speak. We had an old Station Wagon, and in those days you could put a mattress down in the back and the kids could all lie down and sleep at night. We tried to make it a priority to be together in church, to pray together, and I think that that has made a difference. We haven't seen the last chapters written yet with all the kids and the grandkids, but we're still growing and trusting the Lord.

I remember once, when I was in the basement of our house, my son came down and said, "Dad, I changed my major." He was a physics major, and he told me he'd changed his major to Bible. I had to stop what I was doing, and said, "Jimmy, I don't want you to feel like you've got to be a preacher because your daddy is."

He said, "Oh, I know that, Dad. I'm not going to be a preacher. I'm going to be an engineer." I felt relieved.

You know, when you're talking about the Great Commission, it doesn't matter whether you're a preacher or a missionary overseas, or whether you're a seminary graduate or what. That's all good, but most likely everybody you disciple is not going to be a preacher or an overseas missionary. We've got to get that out of our heads and realize that everybody who's a Christian is called to obey the Great Commission. Everyone—regardless of the ministry gift God gives us—is a ministering priest. That's the priesthood of all believers. Until we can bring it down to this level, we're not relevant to the Church. It's only when the whole Church realizes Jesus' commission is for all of us that the Church begins to multiply.

Tell us how association applies outside the family?

Association is relationship. The basis of Jesus' method was relationships. He spent a tremendous amount of time with His disciples. And, as Deuteronomy 6 teaches us, when He walked along the road with them, He was teaching. When they lay down and when they got up, Jesus was able to show them the way.

The same is true today. Maybe we will go to the movies or out for dinner, or regularly have people in our homes. The key is association and relationship. By relationship, we get to know each other. We learn what is really going on in our lives. So much of discipleship is following Jesus in the normal things of life. If someone wants to learn about Jesus and what it means to follow Him and we have a relationship with that person, then that is the ideal way to guide him or her.

4. Consecration

JESUS REQUIRED OBEDIENCE

Dr. Coleman, define “consecration” for us and how it fits into the Great Commission.

Consecration is another way of saying that we have to teach disciples to obey. It’s spelled out in the Great Commission—not just to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but also to “teach all that I have commanded you,” Jesus said (Matthew 28:19-20). That is the witness of our faith, and in a way it’s the expression of our love.

Jesus’s invitation to the disciples was simply, “Follow me.” He didn’t ask them to recite a creed or to shake His hand, or to kneel at an altar. He said, “Do what I am doing; you follow me.” That is what makes a disciple. The word “discipline” is from the same root as disciple, and this is what we all need. Growing up, we all learn discipline in the family. Consecration means that you commit yourself to trust and follow the teacher, and this is what you see with Jesus as He leads these disciples.

“Not everyone who said, ‘Lord, Lord’ is my disciple,” He said. “You are my disciple if you do what I command you” (Matthew

7:21). It is love, of course, that constrains obedience, which is the way we continue to learn. If we just keep following, eventually we'll learn what He wants to teach us. Most of us are slow learners. It takes us awhile to learn some things, and we have to go through the same lesson again and again. But if we'll just keep following, we'll get through. "He that has my commandments," Jesus said, "is the one who loves me" (John 14:23-24). We've talked about how incarnation flows out in love, and, that's also the motivation in obedience.

What about those of us who stumble and fail?

The last chapter of John's Gospel closes with a story and a question (John 21). After the resurrection, the disciples have gone back to fishing. Jesus finds them there one morning, asks them about their catch, and they hadn't caught anything. They were discouraged of course, but He said, "Cast your net on the other side," and they did. When Peter heard that voice, he dived in and swam ashore and left the others with the job of pulling in the nets that now were full of fish. When they got ashore, there was a fire and Jesus invited the disciples to come over for breakfast and bring some of their fish. When they had eaten, Jesus turned to the big fisherman and said, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Remember Jesus asked the question three times. Each time He said, "Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep and follow me." That third time Jesus asked the question, Peter was grieved. Jesus wasn't referring to how many bitter tears Peter had shed in repentance, but rather Peter's *love*. That's the issue. Love is always the issue in consecration and obedience.

Why is our love for Jesus so important in obedience?

God wants us to be obedient because we love Him (John 14:23-24). Yes, we will stumble and fall. But do we love Him? If we do,

we can always start again. I remember when my son was just past his fifth birthday, and I was cleaning up my garden here in Wilmore. Jimmy looked out the back door and saw me working. It was a hot day, and it occurred to him that I was thirsty. He pulled up a chair to the kitchen sink and filled a dirty glass full of water. The next thing I knew, Jimmy was handing me this dirty glass of hot water. A smile stretched all across his face when he said, “Daddy, I thought you was thirsty, so I came to give you a drink.” Now you might say, “Couldn’t he do better than that? It wasn’t even pure water,” and you’d be right. But if you saw his face, you’d say that was pure love. He was doing the best he knew to do to please his daddy.

Love is what makes us want to reach out and help people, and it’s the motivation for our obedience. Love flows out of the incarnation of Christ and displays obedience to the Great Commandment to love God with all of your mind, soul and strength, and your neighbor as you love yourself. You want to follow Him because you know God has something better for you. He wants to lead you on, and that principle follows us through our lives, and positions us to receive all the other blessings from the Lord.

How do church planters and leaders lead people into obedience?

Your example as a leader becomes a pattern for people, and you don’t ask them to do something you’re not willing to do. When they know that you really care about them and love them, they are not disposed to disobey what you ask them to do. It should not be unreasonable, or not suited to them and their gifts. We ask people to do things because we love them; their expression of love in that act encourages them to want to do more, to want to follow and learn

Jesus Required Obedience

more. We live by faith. “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. The just live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

Faith and obedience, then, are two sides of the same coin. You can’t really believe in Jesus unless you obey Him. Not everybody who professes to belong to Him actually obeys Him. But if we truly believe Him, we will obey Him because what we do reveals the true condition of our faith.

5. Demonstration

JESUS SHOWED THEM HOW TO LIVE

How did Jesus demonstrate a life of obedience?

Jesus asked His disciples to follow Him, and in doing so He invited them to see a **living example** of a disciple. It was always a live demonstration of what He was teaching. This was true of everything about His life. We want to follow this pattern when we make disciples.

This was certainly true in prayer. Sometimes Jesus and the disciples would go to the synagogue to pray. Often, the disciples would notice Jesus going alone to the desert or the mountain to pray. They observed that the time He put aside for the Father was important. One morning as He was coming down the mountain, they asked, “Master, would you teach us to pray?” (Luke 11). He said, “All right, after this manner, you can pray,” and He lifted His eyes toward heaven and prayed, “Our Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come”

The disciples soon learned to pray on their own. They didn’t have to be prodded; they were learning the basic structure Jesus modeled. We call it the Lord’s Prayer. It wasn’t a book they read; it was a living demonstration of prayer (Matthew 6).

The same is true of Scripture. About 166 times Jesus referred to Old Testament passages, and the disciples realized He was really living by it. He not only knows what is written, but He knows what it means and how it applies to real-life situations. They learned that Jesus viewed the Bible of His day, the Old Testament, as the very Word of God. They didn't have any problem with the inspiration of Scripture because Jesus believed it and lived by it.

How did Jesus demonstrate the essence of ministry?

In everything else, they witnessed His compassion for the people—healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind and displaying tenderness for the children. They were learning to have a real consciousness of social needs of a lost and floundering world. He didn't write them off; He loved them, even the people that rejected Him. They were seeing this in living color, incredible as it may have seemed to them. They were learning what it means to have a burden for lost and hurting people.

At least 35 separate incidents record where Jesus is involved in some personal evangelism. Several of them are given in some detail, like the woman at the well (John 4).

The account of Zacchaeus in Luke 19 is memorable. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, passing through Jericho. Word that He was coming had preceded Him. There was a little tax collector who decided he would close up his office early, and he stood out on the street. Already, a crowd had gathered. Zacchaeus had difficulty seeing over the heads of these people, so he climbed up into an old sycamore tree beside the road. As Jesus was walking down the main thoroughfare, He looked up, and there was the tax collector holding onto a branch overlooking the highway. Jesus stopped and

said, “Zacchaeus, come on down, because today I must stay in your house.” How would you have felt if you had been in Zacchaeus’ place, and you had looked down at the face of the Son of God and knew He was talking to you?

So loving people was the heart of Jesus’ ministry?

Zacchaeus must have thought to himself, *He not only sees me up here, He knows my name. He must know things about me that even the people don’t know.* Others saw Zacchaeus as a scoundrel, a person who had used his money to get a position of influence. They saw his wealth, but they didn’t know in his heart there was a longing to know God, emptiness only God could fill. Jesus showed the way of love.

Zacchaeus was finally feeling understood. He must have said to himself, *It’s wonderful to know that Jesus knows all about it and He’s not only calling my name, but He wants to go home with me. I believe Jesus wants me!* Here was someone who was going to make Him the guest of honor, and everyone in town could see it. When that message comes through, you have attention. You have an audience who will listen.

That was an example of evangelism, and those disciples could see it. Evangelism wasn’t something you read about in a book or something heard on a special day of a crusade. It was a **lifestyle** of Christ. It flowed out of natural circumstances that seemed to erupt providentially out of what He was doing and how He responded. Evangelism was a response to the heart of people who were already prepared, who were just waiting for a witness. All along, though, they don’t realize it in the beginning. But it finally dawns on them: They’re seeing what discipling means. When Jesus told them at last to go and make disciples, they knew exactly what He meant because they had seen the Great Commission lived out before their very eyes. That’s the way to teach. That’s demonstration.

How does a church planter or a leader practice this principle?

This principle of demonstration is critical to a church planter who will no doubt need to reach new people who are unfamiliar with the church. If they can help it, pastors should not ever do anything by themselves. Your time pays double when you're teaching someone else how to do what you do.

Even during Bible study, you can invite someone or just have prayer together. Praying together is crucial to discipling because through prayer God brings specific people into your life. You've been praying for the Lord of the harvest to send them forth. When I meet with the boys in my discipleship group on Thursday mornings, we always have time to pray before it's over. We actually get down on our knees and pray together in the room.

Being together, you have the opportunity to demonstrate what you're talking about. In any aspect, what we actually *see* will impress us far more than what we *hear*. Carrying over that concept into your active ministry of preaching emphasizes building relationships where you can be together. Even relaxed and casual get-togethers allow the opportunity to apply the principle of demonstration in your ministry.

6. Delegation

JESUS ASSIGNED THE WORK

How did Jesus delegate ministry?

Jesus found ways to get the disciples involved, building in them a sense of importance and utilizing their gifts and abilities. The first thing He asked them to do was to take care of His hospitality. He didn't own any property of His own, so far as we know. He lived with His disciples and friends. I haven't found anywhere in the Gospels where Jesus turned down an invitation to dinner. What a beautiful way for somebody else to be the minister. You see, we're getting over the idea that we have to do it all the time. We're now working on this principle of delegation—getting others involved, getting them to minister, allowing them a sense of importance.

Jesus found natural ways for the disciples to minister. There was the time that He was preaching, but the disciples were baptizing. That's interesting—Jesus apparently let His disciples baptize. Baptizing somebody doesn't require a whole lot of theological training; but at least a person feels like a valued part of the ministry.

Was Jesus explicit about delegation?

Delegation comes into focus when Jesus sent out the 72 (Luke 10). They'd been with Him awhile, probably a year and a half, but at the rate they were going, they weren't going to get around to all the different villages. Jesus realized that, and they did, too. I expect they stopped somewhere along the trail and He said, "We're going to have to adjust our program. I'm going to send you out to places where we haven't gone, and you can do just what I've been doing." It probably scared them to death. You can almost smell a visitation program coming on. He said, "Now don't worry, all you have to do is what you've seen me do. You just go into town, go with my authority, and you heal the sick, cast out the demons, and you proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom."

They could do that; they had seen Jesus do it.

He added one thing more: When you go out, you look for the most worthy person in each village. Sometimes it's called a man of peace. Find a person who is receptive enough to your mission that they will provide hospitality. And you will stay there. You can evangelize all day long out in the community, doing your ministry and healing, caring for people. But at night you come back to this same house, kick off your sandals, sit down at the table and talk about what's been going on. You laugh, you sing, you build a relationship. When you leave town, at least there'll be one place that knows a little bit more about why you've come. It could be the beginning of a new little Bible study or a church plant.

What did Jesus do in the face of resistance?

Jesus said, "If no one's interested, if no one wants to learn, you shake the dust off your feet and go to the next village," where, pre-

sumably, someone is waiting for you, someone who will listen. Remember, we're under a mandate. There's a harvest waiting. We don't have the luxury of just going through the motions when no one is being disciplined. We're on a mission to reach the world, and we can't just do perfunctory duties to keep up the appearance of business as usual.

Discipling is the measure by which you know you're effective. That's what you can actually see because disciples continue to follow Christ. It's not how many people you preach to, not how many people are healed, or baptized. What ultimately matters is how many people are equipped to make disciples.

How does this relate to “the ministry of all believers”?

One of the great doctrines rediscovered in the Reformation is called “the priesthood of all believers,” which clearly indicates that everyone redeemed by the grace of God becomes a minister to others. A minister, of course, is a priest to God. We've done pretty well getting that focus on God; we don't have to go someone and confess our sins in a confessional booth—we go directly to God.

However, in the other dimension of priesthood to our fellow man, we've been slow to catch on. The priesthood of all believers refers to the total life ministry of Christ, and it's not something that clicks in only in prayer. It applies every day, as you are a ministering servant to others. We profess that priesthood is true of all believers. We've still got a long way to go to make it applicable to the average church. In its most practical expression, while all the other aspects of ministry are important, discipling is where we can be involved in direct ministry and will see reproduction. You don't need a gift or a special calling for that. It's part of being a Christian.

Does the Bible teach that seminary or formal training is necessary?

For many of us, we traditionally believe that we are to be properly trained in a Bible school or theological school. Many believe you have to go through certain rituals before you are finally certified and ordained. I've gone through that process, but I don't think that's what Scripture teaches. I believe the Great Commission doesn't make any of those stipulations. Jesus is speaking to the whole Church and sending us all out.

Remember, Jesus' disciples weren't really certified above others. They were just believers who went out. I see no reason why anyone who is faithful to the Lord shouldn't have the privilege of administering the baptism and even the sacrament. I belong to the Jesus model, where anyone who is a believer is also a minister, and as a minister of God, you are a priest of God. For that reason, you can administer the holy sacraments.

How can a pastor or church planter give the Great Commission back to the people?

The priesthood of all believers can be recovered in a vital way so that anyone walking in on Sunday morning feels like he or she is just as much a minister as the preacher behind the pulpit. We've been ministering in different ways though, during the week. We haven't prepared a sermon, but we're still ministers. The most effective ministry will be the example we set for those watching us. The priesthood of all believers is essential if the Church is going to multiply and fulfill the Great Commission. We cannot relegate this to a few people, particularly highly educated, theologically trained people. If we have to trust that model, we've already lost the battle. But when

everybody in the congregation senses their own priesthood, it's exciting. They come to learn more from someone who has perhaps had more opportunities to be involved in Bible training. But they're ready to learn because they will repeat it the next day with someone else. They're going to share what they've learned at the dinner table. We're all preachers, bearing testimony to our faith.

7. Supervision

JESUS CONTINUED TO CHECK ON THEM

How does supervision or coaching work?

When people are involved, they will face issues they haven't had to confront before, and a lot of problems will evolve. This is on-the-job training, and you learn as you go. You build a road as you are walking on it. That requires supervision from someone who may have already walked this way and can help you over some of the hurdles. Someone who can give you counsel, but can save you from some of the pitfalls they have already experienced.

Jesus was continually checking in with the disciples, seeing how they were coming along, and asking insightful questions. He was using their experiences as the starting point for further instruction. For example, a few months after the 12 dispersed, 70 were sent, including the 12. They report back and say they had a great time. They said to Jesus, "Even demons were subject unto us." And then Luke adds, "Jesus rejoiced with them in the Holy Spirit" (Luke 10:21). Don't miss anything in the Bible. It's all inspired.

Why is celebration important?

If you're a parent, you know how important it is to rejoice when your kids do something right. Don't you give them a hug or a kiss? Or you take that little drawing they did in Sunday school and put it on the refrigerator door. You call attention to it and let everyone know how proud you are. Most children need a lot of affirmation. In fact, all of us need more affirmation than we usually get. Jesus let His disciples know He was proud of them. They had been successful on this occasion.

With the 12, we don't have any record of success, except that a larger number going out would indicate there had been success. Jesus is happy, so He seizes the occasion to give them a profound lesson. There are many ways to look at it, but He says He can see Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Jesus can envision the whole Kingdom of darkness ultimately being defeated. I like to see that optimistic note. Don't miss the practical application.

Having given the theological interview, Jesus said, "Don't rejoice just because you've been successful. Don't rejoice just because you've seen demons subject to you. **Rather, rejoice that your name is written in the book of heaven.**" Do you see the application? Suppose you get the idea you're happy only when everything goes your way. You've been very successful. People not only have hugged you and embraced you and congratulated you, but some for the first time have given their faith to God through your witness and you rejoice.

How will you respond when nobody seems to show appreciation?

What do you encourage leaders to do when their disciples have a hard time?

Jesus said that in this life we would have trouble. I guess one response to adversity would be to feel sorry for yourself and begin to pout around the house about the way people ignored how you cared for them? But if that's the way you handle it, you'll be off balance a good portion of your life because there *will* be times of rejection. People aren't always going to show appreciation.

We weren't sent out to get the applause of people. We were sent out to announce the coming of the Kingdom.

Jesus tells His disciples you don't need success as men count success—just rejoice because you know you're saved, because your name is written in the book of heaven. That's why I tell my students that I want to hear some shouts on this campus. I want people to know we're alive. Because we've been saved, I want people driving down the road to stop and wonder what's all that celebration going on at the seminary.

What are some practical ways a Christian can employ this principle of supervision?

If you'll notice, Jesus spent more time with His disciples in the last year of His ministry than in the first two, particularly the last weeks. He knew time with them was growing to a close. He knew that those last things would be crucial if they were going to continue His ministry. In the closing chapters of John, you really see the depth of this communion between teacher and follower.

As a church planter, you'll find it necessary to spend more time with some who really develop leadership potential, who will take over responsibilities you've had. You must supervise them and help them walk through some of these hard places you've already walked. Supervision is the way to reach that harvest time when what you've seen in people comes to fruition. You can't stop with the first fruits; you've got to go on to the harvest.

How do you apply the principle of supervision in a small group?

In a group, starting off with the fundamental truths of the gospel is often helpful. That's where you have to begin if the people in the group don't understand the basics. Then move on to encouragement at deeper levels of grace, growing into the deeper dimensions of sanctification and holiness. That's where I think the dimension of your time together takes on more significance. Sanctification is a message that makes sense to a person who is out there struggling with the pressures of the world.

As the group leader, you want people to feel like they can come to you for help as they live the discipleship lifestyle. They will run into problems or make mistakes. They need to come back to you for guidance. Supervision, as we have said, is like coaching. We are helping people to do what God wants them to do.

For me, the 17th chapter of John is the greatest chapter in the Bible because it's the longest recorded prayer of Jesus that we have in Scripture—26 verses. Jesus prays, "As you sent me into the world, I send them into the world, and for their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they may also be sanctified through the truth."

Jesus speaks of His own sanctification. That's the dimension of holiness that can change and revive a small group. That kind of

Jesus Continued to Check on Them

holiness finds expression in deeds of mercy and in acts of kindness and evangelism. We desperately need that kind of sanctification in the Church. That's the kind of sanctification that I yearn for and pray will be true in my life, that I want above all other dimensions of sanctification.

8. Reproduction

JESUS EXPECTED THEM TO REPRODUCE

Why is reproduction important in discipleship?

Reproduction is evidence that your discipling program is beginning to **multiply**. Until you see how the person you've invested in is or isn't growing, you really don't know if you've gotten through. Until you see the fruit of your discipling in reproduction, you're not sure you've finished your work. From the beginning, reproduction was always on Jesus' mind. He isn't just looking to the next generation. But to the generation beyond that generation and the generation beyond that one. He's looking always to the fulfillment of His plan to reach the world. In His mind, there's no distinctive between global missions and local missions. God loves every person in the world.

How does this principle work?

When you start with a just a handful, you recognize the necessity of multiplication. It starts with the person you've invested in beginning to replicate that in the life of someone else. Let's not get

the idea we're the only one involved in this. Thankfully, others are impacting that life more significantly than our involvement—moms, dads, husbands, wives and children. We may be a significant part of the process, but never forget that disciple making is a process. We're getting a lot of help from others who can compensate for some of our deficiencies. Seeing something happen in the lives of others made Jesus rejoice when He could anticipate the time His investment in a few would begin to pay dividends for eternity. We want to do the same thing.

Is the principle of reproduction for all Christians?

In an inclusive sense, I see the word “disciple” as all followers of Jesus designating the Church of the redeemed. The Great Commission was given to the whole Church. If this commission wasn't to the whole Church, how would we ever fulfill His purpose in creation? How would the love that God expresses in creating us ever find fulfillment in a people created in His image to know Him and to love Him? So I have to see the Great Commission as a way of life for every believer, every follower. We're all ministering priests; we are in this together, and that's when we'll rejoice together. When we see this as a lifestyle, it really begins to resonate in our life as a plan by which we can measure our steps.

Whatever we're doing, wherever He plants us, we can follow these principles. We have to work out the details in the specific culture where we are and the time spent. That's going to continually change. A lot of programs and techniques will change. For example, Jesus didn't have the technology we have today. He didn't have a car. He probably would have gotten around on a donkey if He didn't have to walk. Those are just methods and programs that facilitate

how we can fulfill our mission. Discipling comes down to a way of life. Nothing is irrelevant or peripheral. It's all part of the plan. What are you going through today? You don't see it working out now, but God's working through it to accomplish a purpose that's still good. Trust Him. He'll not leave you alone.

How does love for lost people result in multiplication?

Love for lost people is not anything we work up in the flesh. It is an overflow of the love of God in the heart of a disciple. Only that kind of love will penetrate the darkness of a sin-infested world because love cannot be denied. That doesn't mean everyone will receive you with delight, but they will recognize there's something unnatural about the compassion and concern flowing out of you into the world.

You don't engineer it. You don't announce a big meeting. You don't get on TV and talk about whatever big thing you're doing. Love will overflow and make itself known when it's genuine, which in a sense is getting back to what we were saying about being filled with the Holy Spirit. Like Paul said, "Be continually filled with the Spirit," (Ephesians 5:18) where "be" is used as a continuing sense of the verb. Unfortunately, I think for most of us that it's more of a fluctuating thing. There are high points and low points, and that's why we need reaffirmation that what we know is God's privilege and God's Word. That comes out in just yielding to the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We sometimes call it revival. I think Paul is talking about a revival experience when he describes being filled with the Spirit, and it's evident at Pentecost.

When people are coming to Christ, their lives are transformed and they have evidence of it in their lifestyle. I can thank God and

say, “He’s doing something here with us that’s not of this world.” We dare not try to limit the dimensions of what God accomplished when Jesus died on the cross. The blood of Christ goes deeper than the stain of sin. I believe God loves us so much that when Jesus died, He died to solve the sin problem. Now, who am I to question the efficacy of what Christ did at Calvary? I fall short, but I do know that what He did was perfect, and it just makes me hunger and thirst for more righteousness, and more of Him and the Word.

9. Impartation

JESUS GAVE HIMSELF AWAY.

Dr. Coleman, help us understand the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship.

Jesus told His disciples before He left them, “You will be filled when the Spirit of God comes upon you, you will have power, and you’ll be my witnesses, and you’ll begin where you live in Jerusalem but you’ll keep going” (Acts 1:8). This isn’t anything new. Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit throughout His life. Really, we’re introduced to it in Genesis 1:2, when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep. He was the power of God creating the cosmos.

Throughout the Bible, you see the Spirit at work in different ways through different people, trying to bring God’s people back to what He made them to be. The Spirit is working today as He did in the past. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus promises He will be with disciple makers until the end of time. We rely on the impartation of the Spirit when we release disciple makers.

How was the Spirit at work in Jesus' ministry?

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was already indwelt and empowered by the Spirit. The Bible tells us He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1). The Spirit directed Jesus throughout His life. When He began His public ministry at Nazareth, He was invited to read the scripture that morning. He turned back to read what is now the 61st chapter of Isaiah and began to read from the scroll, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach the gospel... .” After He finished reading, He announced to that startled congregation: “This Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Everything that had been planned has now come to fulfillment in me.”

Jesus completed his whole ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit—the power source. In the same way, the Holy Spirit must be the power source for our disciple making efforts. We rely on God's Spirit because we cannot do it without His presence.

How did Jesus say the Spirit works in us?

Jesus promises to send another counselor, another comforter. In the Greek text, that word “another” is of special significance (John 14:16). It's not used to compare two different objects that are unlike in object and quality. Rather, it compares two different objects that are alike in quality, but are unlike in object, like comparing the Son with the Father. So you're talking about a different person here, but in quality of life He has everything you've already seen in Jesus—the same holiness, the same power, the same love. Everything you've learned in Jesus is now true of the Holy Spirit who will be with you, never leaving or forsaking you.

In giving the final command to make disciples, Jesus makes that promise: “I’ll be with you always, even unto the end of the age.” I believe that is the greatest promise in the Bible. It’s the only way we can fulfill all the other principles, because this promise is super-human! The Spirit of Jesus Christ in these unworthy fallen vessels is recreating the ministry of Christ in us. He’s breathing His life into us but also helping us fulfill His ministry. That’s the secret of discipleship because the Spirit of God is doing it.

You’ve said that the impartation was really part of every principle in The Master Plan of Evangelism. What do you mean by that?

The Holy Spirit is ultimately the one who catalyzed the incarnation, reversing the value system so that we don’t live like pagans but rather, servants. It’s the Spirit of God who makes the selection. He is the one that calls them. We simply respond to what the Spirit of God is doing. Doesn’t that take the burden off your shoulders? He’s the initiator. We just recognize what God is doing. It’s the Spirit who creates the fellowship, that association of believers who comes to be called the Church. That’s true whether there’s a whole congregation or just you and one other person. Jesus is there with you. The Spirit is the power behind all nine principles.

Because sometimes we have to show others how we really are, a lot of repentance is going on in this Christian walk. Yes, we can fall. But even our repentance and confession of our failure and sin is a demonstration to others that we will continue to live as broken people. It’s the Spirit who in His own way will show how this life will be reproduced in those who are close to us. It’s the principle of being born into the world. You come into the world as a baby, and that is

a miraculous work of God. But that principle of rebirth is seen now as the Spirit makes us new. A new dimension is added as the Spirit begins to transform, lead and fashion us into His own image—an image He wanted for us in the beginning, but that we’ve never fully realized because we didn’t develop according to His initial plan.

How do we rely on the Holy Spirit today, and how do we teach others to do the same?

We send out others just like Jesus sent out His disciples—with the promise that He would be with them forever. We tell people that through the Holy Spirit, Jesus goes with them and when He’s with them, nothing is impossible. Whether you find great success or whether you fail, there’s fellowship with Him regardless. So, it’s a life of faith that is lived out in communion with Him who gave Himself for you and loves you unto death. In that confidence, someday there’s going to be a reunion in the sky when you’ll see Him face-to-face, when faith will turn to sight. Think of that!

That day, when every knee will finally bow before Him and every tongue declares, “Jesus Christ is Lord” is always before us, and God is going to accomplish it. So whether we see it or not doesn’t in any way detract from the reality of it because God has said it will happen.

We must teach people to pray and draw close to God. The Holy Spirit is the conduit for our relationship with God and our lifeline. We *teach* others how to pray. And then we *show* them how to pray because our model is just as important as our teaching.

Concluding Words

“I believe in these principles more today than when I wrote them 51 years ago.”

—Robert Coleman

What I’ve said in different ways is simply that making disciples is to live the way Jesus did. It’s not a great campaign or a great sermon. It is a lifestyle of faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us as we trust Him to lead and accomplish His own pleasure in us.

My practice has always been to invite a group to join with me. It is usually 12 men (I have included women recently). When I am teaching, we typically meet at 6:30 a.m. every week. We talk, pray and seek to follow Jesus together. I have done this now for decades. I call those who have met with me this way over the years “my boys.” By God’s grace, these “boys” are now ministering all over the world.

What is the connection between evangelism and discipleship?

The original book is called *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, but some say it's a book about discipleship. I don't really like to make a radical distinction between the two because they go together, and if you try to separate them you do harm to both. Evangelism is announcing the Good News, which focuses on Jesus and how He died for us, rose from the dead, and has poured out his Spirit to make all things new. That's good news. It brings people to faith in Christ and introduces them to a new life where they will continue to grow in knowledge and grace.

The Great Commission doesn't tell us to make converts; it is a simple and straightforward command to make disciples, always with a vision of the nations and anticipating the day of its grand conclusion. Without discipleship, we would just bring people in and they would never grow up, doomed to go through the motions of a shallow and hopeless life. And that's the tragedy of so much of what I see in the congregation. People have been born for a life of fullness, joy, fruit and love, but they still flounder in aimlessness, no sense of purpose. That's the condition of a church that's living below the expectation of God.

How do we get out of that? Well, making disciples would lead us into deeper dimensions of what God wants to do with our lives. We can live every day in that expectancy. We live in a day of miraculous things happening as God is working to complete His commission.

After writing these principles 51 years ago, how do you feel about them today?

I believe them more today than ever before! I've lived long enough to see the extended impact in the lives of men and women. I've seen it with my family. I've seen it with people in whom I've largely invested. I've seen it replicated all around the world. Yes, I believe in them more than I did in the beginning.

I wish I could have said them better. I wish I could have been a better model of what I'm trying to say, but I'm still learning. I'm still growing, and so far I haven't reached the mark—the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. But thankfully God is not finished with me yet.

If you were writing these principles today, in what ways would you emphasize some of them over others?

I would start with the incarnation and try to be more emphatic about what happened when God became a human being. I would elaborate upon it and show how everything is a reflection of Christ assuming our identity when He became man. Then, after going through the other principles, I would leave impartation to the end because that is where the promise of the Great Commission comes into focus, when Jesus said, "I'll be with you all the way, even unto the end of the age." This is the promise of Christ's command, which assures us we can live it out in our lives. Without the Spirit of Christ in us, we're helpless, but when He's with us, we can live out Christ's commission by grace. That's why I would end on the note of impartation, seeking to give it more emphasis. Apart from the Spirit of Christ, we're hopeless. There's nothing more pathetic than trying to do the work of God in your own strength and wisdom.

Dr. Coleman, what does the future look like for you personally?

I want to keep doing all I can for as long as I can. I still teach seminary classes and go out to preach the gospel. I want to serve the Lord for as long as I'm able.

I want to say a few words about discipleship.org. I look forward to helping. Discipleship.org is an attempt to try to bring Jesus' concept of intentional discipleship into the lifestyle of individuals, families and the Church (to help make discipleship the Church's core mission). I have been involved with it from the beginning (over the last year), and I plan to be fully involved in this ministry, as much as I am able to in the future.

I'm excited about many things I hear happening today around the world. Not so much in North America or Western Europe, but in South America, India, China and Korea, I'm encouraged that the gospel is taking root in many people and they're following Jesus' words and methods. I truly believe the greatest days of discipleship and evangelism are before us. And the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world, for a witness before the end comes (Matthew 24:14). God has a plan to make it happen.

I believe His plan is perfect, and I want to fit into it. I want to have a little part in that—fulfilling the Great Commission, looking to the day when at last it will be accomplished. And we shall see Christ as He is in all of His glory.

Bobby Harrington's Conclusion

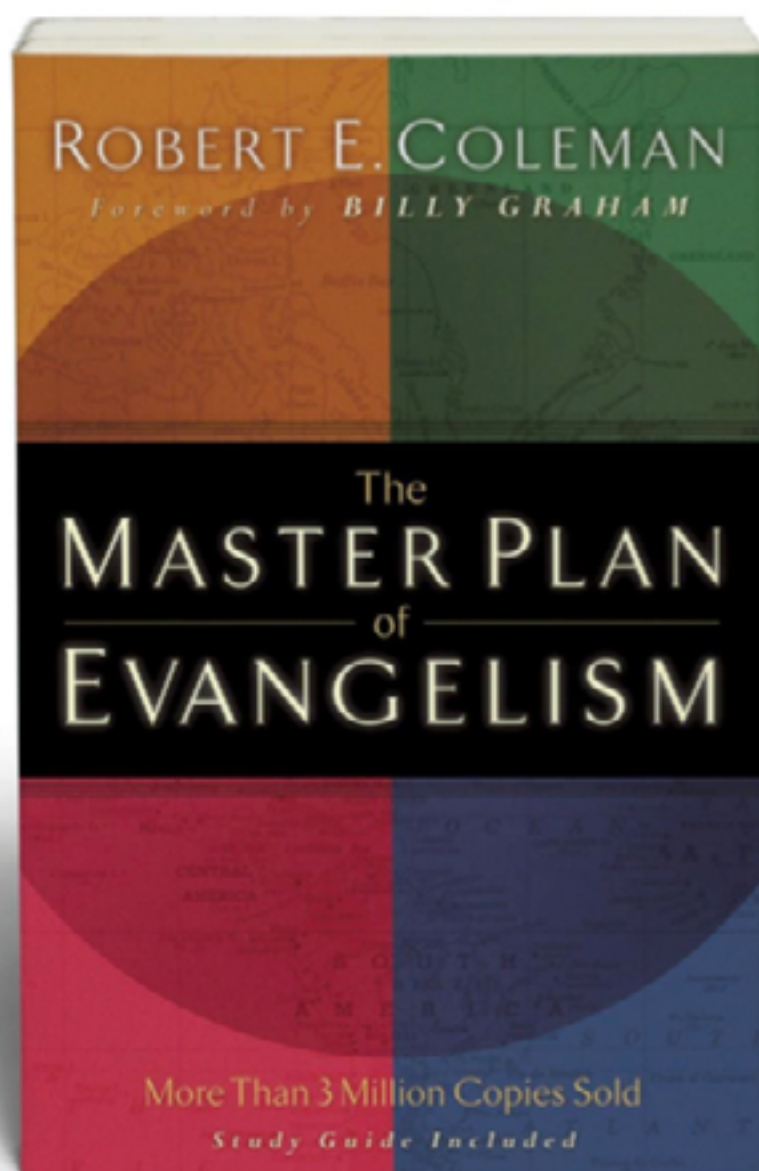
I encourage you to work through Dr. Coleman's original book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, and read the exact language and Scripture references the book provides. It has been a complete joy

to spend as much time as I have with Dr. Coleman over these last several years (we also worked together on the book *DiscipleShift*, with Jim Putman). Dr. Coleman is very much a Christlike person, as is his wife, Marietta. They both show forth the radiant image of Christ—He, as the quintessential Christlike gentleman, and she, as a Christlike wife and partner. Jesus shines as brightly in these two disciples as in anyone I have ever seen. Both Josh (who helped with the interview and this eBook) and I say without hesitation that we hope we can have their character and Christlike presence if we live into our 80s.

During the video interview, we asked Marietta if we could record her talking about discipleship (in addition to Dr. Coleman and a few others). At first she hesitated, which puzzled us a bit. Then she said, “Yes, if it will help others,” and asked us to give her a minute. Before we realized what was happening, Marietta had crawled up the stairs and was sitting on the chair for the interview. She hesitated, we later found out, because of a physical condition that made it impossible for her to walk upstairs to the interview room. It was a poignant and momentary glimpse into her soul. She was Jesus’ servant, and she was willing to do whatever she could to serve Him.

"Few books have had as great an impact on the cause of world evangelization in our generation as Robert Coleman's *The Master Plan of Evangelism*."

—BILLY GRAHAM



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10 DISCIPLESHIP AFFIRMATIONS

of Discipleship.org

1. We believe Jesus Christ is central to life and the Bible – He is supreme and worthy of all devotion, worship, and emulation. We affirm the Nicene Creed and its statements about Jesus and the Trinity (Colossians 1:15-20).
2. We define a disciple as someone who is *following* Jesus, *being changed* by Jesus, and is *committed to* the mission of Jesus (Matthew 4:19). This is only possible by the Holy Spirit, and it is for God's glory.
3. We define discipleship and disciple making as helping people to trust and follow Jesus (Matthew 28:18–20).
4. We believe disciple making is the core mission of the local church (Colossians 1: 28-29).
5. We believe the Bible is the authoritative, reliable and final guide for discipleship and life (2 Timothy 3:16-4:2).
6. We believe Jesus' method of disciple making is the wisest and best method to follow today (Luke 6:40).
7. We believe our love for one another is the most important sign of true discipleship (John 13:34-35).
8. We believe discipleship includes serving the poor, striving for holiness and living with accountability in the local church (1 Corinthians 5: 1-13).
9. We believe true discipleship and love compel us to join Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).
10. We believe our obedience to the Great Commission will result in the expansion of God's Kingdom, the betterment of humanity, and God's exaltation and pleasure (Luke 19:11-27).

[FREE Discipleship Resources from Discipleship.org](#)

Free eBooks available for [download here](#).

- *Revisiting the Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman and Bobby Harrington with Josh Patrick
- *Evangelism or Discipleship: Can They Effectively Work Together?* by Bill Hull and Bobby Harrington
- *Stay the Course: Seven Essential Practices for Disciple Making Churches* by Brandon Guindon
- *Discipleship that Fits* by Bobby Harrington and Alex Absolom
- *Discipleship is the Core Mission of the Church* by Bobby Harrington
- *The Discipleship Gospel Primer* by Bill Hull and Ben Sobels
- *Invest in a Few* by Craig Etheredge
- *Beyond Accountability* by Nate Larkin
- *Becoming a Disciple Maker* by Bobby Harrington and Greg Wiens

Podcast Episodes: [The Disciple Maker's Podcast](#)

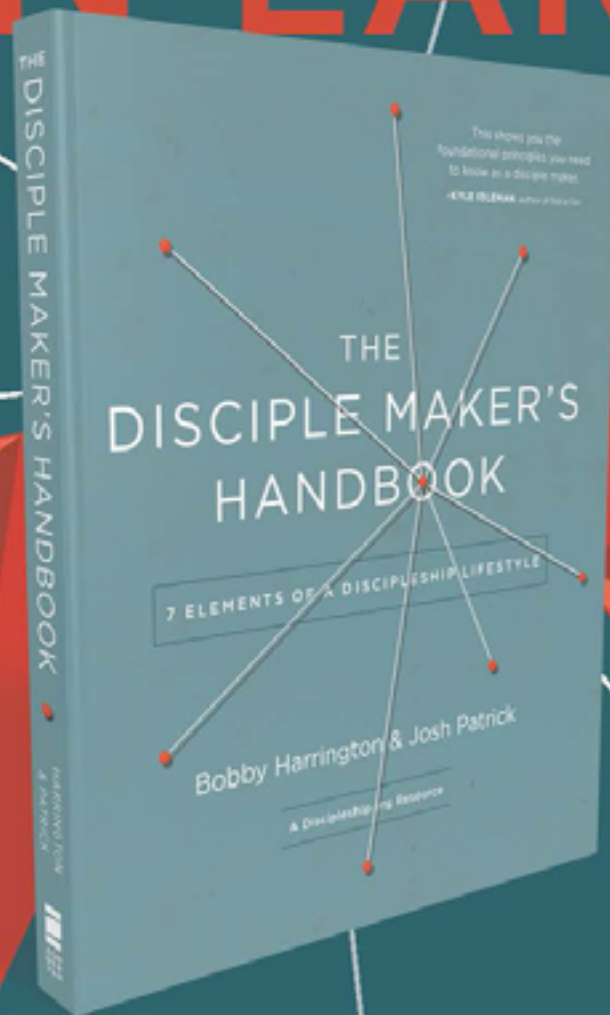
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