

Why is it?

- Churches under 3 years old win average of 10 people for every 100 church members
- Churches 3-10 years old win average of 5 people for every 100 church members
- Churches over 15 years old win average of 3 people for every 100 members

Bruce McNichol in *Interest Magazine*, Stetzer, *Planting New Churches*, 5

The average church in NAmerica is 70ish...and it takes 100 of us a whole year to win 1 person... so many churches go all year without winning anybody... what's with this?

Why? Sheer Desperation!

Churches launch with behaviors & practices that fuel growth, that can be ignored temporarily

TS - Principles...

1. The CONVICTION Principle

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

There is no other name under heaven, given to us by which men can be saved. Acts 4:12

- We serve in a day and age when relativism “reigns!”
- But it did back then as well! Pilate’s question: “What is truth?”

Back to Basics in Church Growth:

- We hold that the growth of the church is **not dependent primarily on methods** which will operate in any organization and on any theory of eternal truth. Rather, church **growth depends on conviction** that the biblical revelation has been given by God and that, in the absolute matters concerning man and God, ***God has revealed himself and his perfect will authoritatively. Christians in this century or any other, this land or any other, may confidently go forward, knowing that they are basing their actions on unchanging truth.*** (10-11, italics his)
- **Unshakable conviction** was one of the secrets of church growth in the early church. (19)
- Church growth rises from theological roots, from **Christian certainty**. (19)
- The **absolute certainty** of the early church (so well proclaimed by Scripture, probably for just such an age as this, in which relativism is enshrined in the contemporary ethos) **must be recaptured** if the church is to be healthy and to fulfill its God-given function. (19)

Why people don't share/make disciples?

- Pragmatics: They don't know how! Too busy!
- But also, we're Too Tolerant, Wishy-Washy, Fuzzy, and Wishful in our Convictions!

Solutions:

- Gain clarity as to who is lost & found!
- Preach Texts... more than Topics... Immerse yourself in Christ's sayings and biblical assertions!
- Let the text win!! Avoid the “false certainties” of systematic theology...
- Preach on heaven-hell and Jesus' Hard Sayings.

2. The RESPECT Principle

To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. 1 Corinthians 9:22-23

Operate out of a “Community-First” Expectation & Game Plan!!

- A culture that shared basic Christian assumptions could call for IMMEDIATE responses to the gospel. But people who don’t share even the basic Christian assumptions and beliefs need and require TIME to process the overarching claims of Christ.
 - First Disciples (John 1) up to a year before Luke 5’s call... and then 10-12 months before Mark 8 “You are the Christ.”
- The first conversion is the conversion to community. With few exceptions, people come to Christ after they have journeyed with other Christians—examining them and considering their claims. Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*. 2003, p. 193.
- For us... it comes down to **Respectful Evangelism**: We are as respectful of one another’s timetable for accepting Christ and growing to maturity in him as God is being with us!

How People Come to Christ...

Stages 1st 2nd 3rd 4th

In the Past: Information.....Faith.....Commitment.....Community
I was trained to expect this...

Today: Community.....Faith.....Commitment.....Information??
This is what I have found!

Let people Belong before they Believe... just like Jesus did!
Consider Discipleship as Pre-Evangelism... people follow long before they make it “official”

3. The INTENTIONALITY Principle

*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared** to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.* 1 Peter 3:15-16

- Intentionality is **the single most important** insight into the difference between those who do and those who don’t evangelize and make disciples.
- Intentionality = making evangelism and disciple-making a top priority, and shaping one’s activities, relationships, and contacts around it.
- Evangelistic people **make themselves accountable** to others for evangelism.

The Normal Process in a CPM... (from Curtis Sergeant)

- New Disciples List 100 people... tell 5 within 48 hours... usually have another new convert within 48 hours

TS - This presumes clear and simple methods that can be learned in 15 minutes...

4. The SIMPLICITY Principle

Sharing My Story...

*There was a time
in my life when...*

JESUS

*Now as a Result
of finding Christ*

COMPETITIVE
A loner...

(Share my key words)

PEACEFUL

LOVED/
VALUED

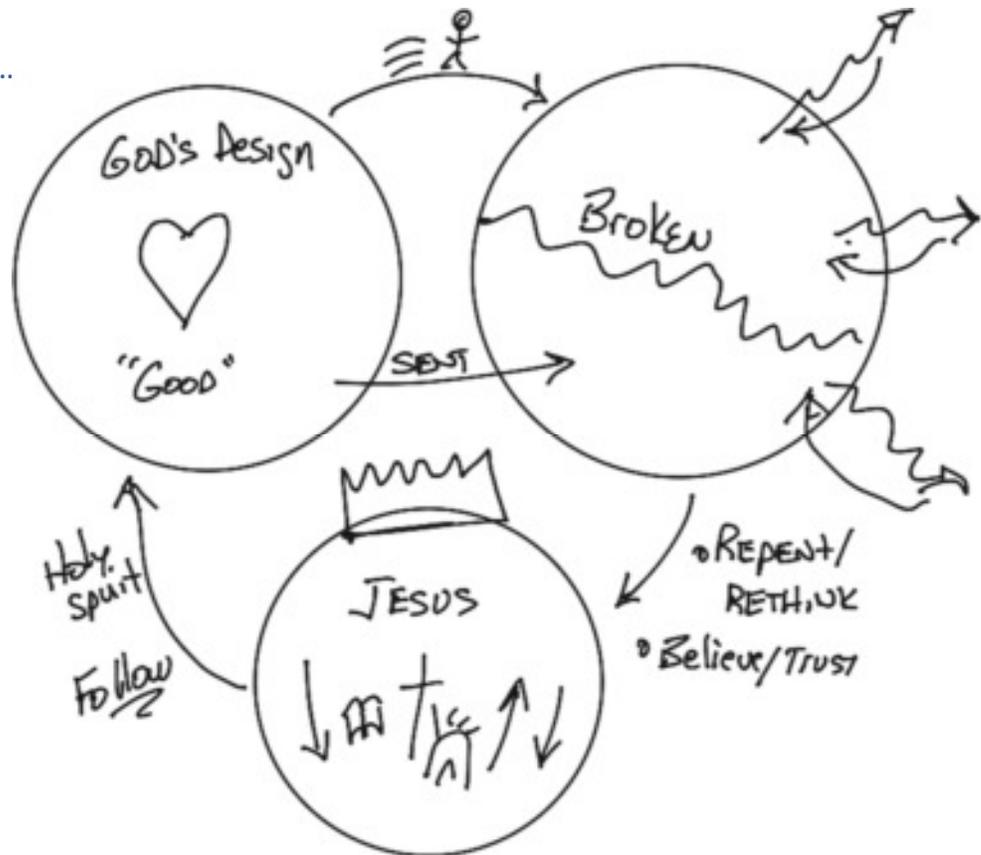
ANGRY

TRUSTED/
ACCEPTED

VALUED

Do you have a story like that?

Sharing God's Story...



Example of the 3 Circles presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5W8ynRMr59k>

NOTE: this framework is great! But as presented in the online video, it operates from an individualistic, consumer-oriented posture. It makes God's agenda out to be mostly just meeting our needs. We submit that the last thing our culture needs is another emphasis on how "our needs" are all that matters in the universe. Instead, people need to be introduced to King Jesus. The YouTube video fails to "naturally" invite new believers into discipleship. The good news, however, is that the presentation can be tweaked and modified as needed.

5. The LORDSHIP Principle

The 7 Elements of Jesus' Gospel

See Bill Hull & Ben Sobels, **The Discipleship Gospel: What Jesus Preached – We Must Follow**

- Mark 1:14-17 Kingdom of God (declarative statement)
Repent (response)
Believe (response)
Follow me! (response)
- Mark 8:27-31 the Christ! (declarative statement)
Must die... *according to scripture* (declarative statement)
Rise on 3rd Day (declarative statement)
- I Cor 15

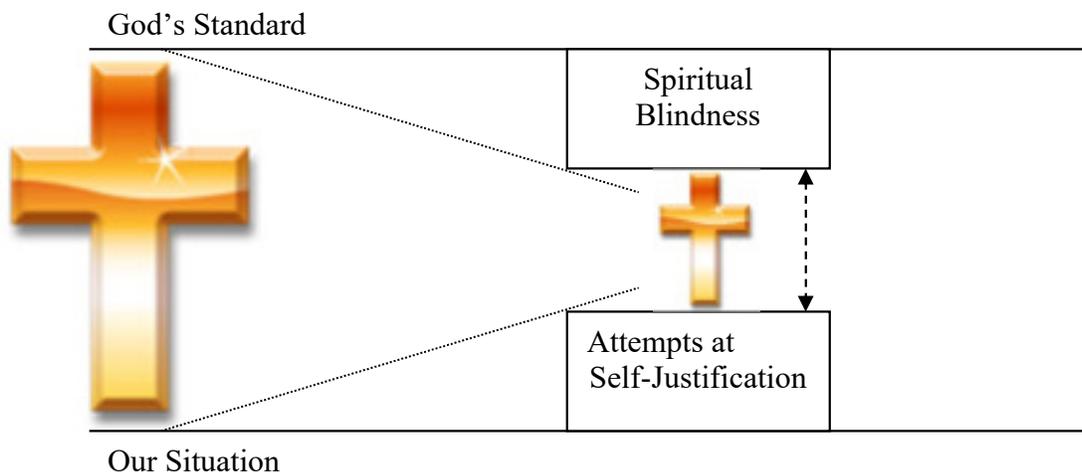
Three Assumptions Worth Considering

1. You cannot make CHRISTLIKE disciples from a non-discipleship gospel.
2. The gospel you PREACH determines the disciples you make.
3. You cannot be a CHRISTIAN and not be a disciple.

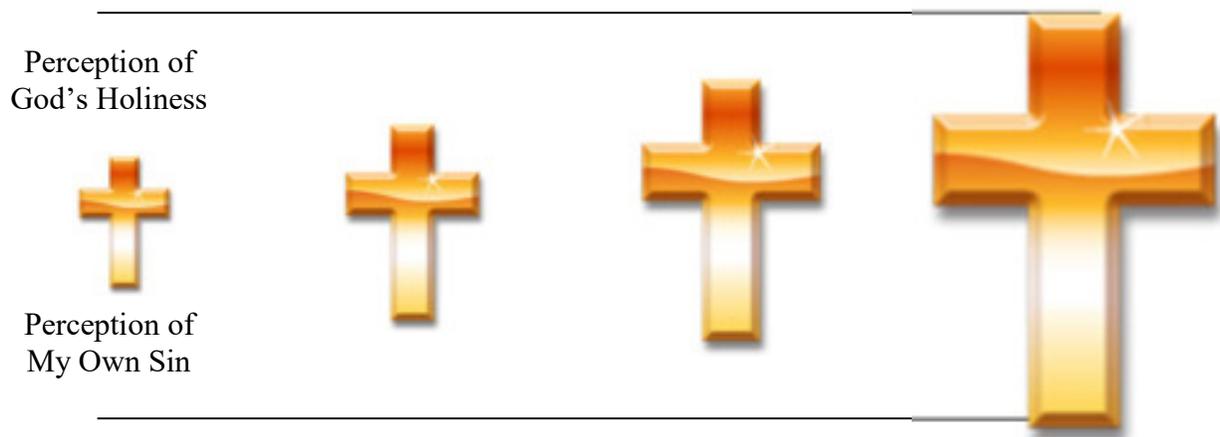
6. The GRATITUDE Principle

A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." Luke 7:41-43

How Big Is Your Cross?



The Size of Our Cross Changes Throughout Life...



Consider Paul...

Acts 7
Killer

Acts 9
Disciple

Gal 1
Apostle!!!

1 Cor 15:8-9
Least of the
Apostles

Eph 3:7-8
Least of God's
People

1 Tim 1:15-16
Chief of all
Sinners

15 years

7 years

7 years

3 years

This concept is from James Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*. 2008, 104-113.