

THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR DISCIPLESHIP

#6B

Who should I disciple? Who should I invest my life in? The reality is that you can't disciple everyone. Realistically, you can disciple two or three people. Jesus didn't disciple everybody, and neither can we, so we need to choose wisely. The most important ministry decision you may make will be which individuals you pour your life into. Let's talk about why we must choose wisely, and then how to do it.

- **Why Must We Choose Wisely?**

In Luke Chapter 6, observe how Christ chose who to disciple, and the fact that He didn't disciple everybody. Luke 6:12 says, "And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God." The text doesn't say what Jesus prayed, but He spent the whole night in prayer to God. You've got to wonder if at least some of the time was spent communing with the Father about the men that He was going to build the kingdom upon. Why? See verse 13 – "And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles." There you see the names of the guys – Simon and Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew, and all the gang. He chose twelve disciples. Now watch verses 17-19. "And He descended with them, and stood on a level place; and there was a great multitude of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all."

When He descended with the twelve, there was a great multitude of His disciples – others who wanted to be followers, others who wanted to be learners from Christ. Jesus had a whole lot of people He could have chosen from. But He chose twelve. Did He love all those other people? Did He care about their needs? Did He have compassion? Of course He did. But He also knew, even as the very Son of God, that He could not do what we cannot do. He could not invest His life fully in hundreds of people, even though He was God in the flesh. He was also limited by being a man. He was God and man in one. He was limited in time and space and in how many people He could spend time with. So Jesus chose twelve.

- **Why? Four Reasons to Choose Wisely**

1. **You can only disciple a few** – Relationally, it's not very realistic to think we can get deeply involved in ten, twelve, or fifteen people's lives. You can't do it. You can't emotionally invest. You don't have time to spend that much time with that many people. It's difficult to give individual attention to that many people.
2. **It's what Jesus did** – Jesus invested in a few. We learn from Him because He's the Master.
3. **Not everyone wants to be disciplined** – Here's the reality: there are a lot of Christians in church. They don't all want to be disciplined. And God has not called us to disciple everybody. We know we are called to make disciples (Matt. 28:19) so why not invest in those who have a desire to also become disciples of Jesus?

4. Long-term impact is key – If you're going to invest your life in someone, if you're going to impart things that God has put into your life, if you're going to trust them with things God has taught you, don't you want to know that they're going to take what you teach them and be faithful with it someday? That they're going to use what you give them, as opposed to burying it and letting it go to waste? This principle should inform all the discipleship decisions you make over the coming years. Now, we don't have guarantees on anybody. No matter how promising someone may seem at the time, he may choose not to walk with God down the road; he may not have the long-term impact we hoped for. But by choosing biblical disciples wisely, our church will reproduce leaders who in turn will have impact on others.

- **How? Four Ways to Choose Wisely**

1. Carefully observe potential disciples – Ask questions about someone in whom you think you'd like to invest your life. There are several things to look for.

a. Do they have a heart for God? Do they demonstrate a hunger to grow? Are they reading the Word? Are they having quiet times and showing a desire to get to know God? Are they asking you questions about their own walk and growth and about the Lord? Are they dealing with sin in their lives that the Holy Spirit reveals to them? Do they take advantage of opportunities to grow?

b. Are they FAT? (Faithful, Available, Teachable)

- **Faithful** – Do they follow through on things? Do they attend Bible Study consistently? Do they want to be a part of the body?
- **Available** – Do they have time to meet? If you initiate getting together and they're always too busy with other meetings, it's going to be tough to disciple them.
- **Teachable** – You can know if someone is teachable by how they respond to things you try to impart to them. If you get a response like, "Oh, yeah, I've heard that before," "I know that," or "I was taught that before," that person may not be teachable. One of the biggest disappointments about discipleship is when you try to work with someone who thinks they've got it all figured out.

c. Are they socially and emotionally mature? – Everybody's got problems. We're all dealing with stuff, and you're not looking for a perfect person who doesn't have problems. Emotional maturity means the disciple acknowledges that he's got problems, but is growing in his ability to trust Jesus with those problems and be involved in the body's life so he can continue to function and grow. Sometimes you're going to get a person whose emotional needs are so deep that they're not quite freed up to be able to move into somebody else's life. Some people may need professional help to help them work through the stuff of life. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul tells Timothy, "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." Notice the four generations of spiritual multiplication: Paul to Timothy to faithful men to teach others. Paul's implication

is that Timothy should be teaching people who have the ability to teach others. Ask yourself if this person can relate well enough to others so that people will want to follow them.

d. Will they go where God has called us to go? As a campus movement we want to teach people to walk, communicate, and multiply their faith. If a person does not want to go there, then it's probably not best for you to disciple him. We want to develop people, and if this person doesn't want to go there, it's not your place to twist his arm. There is no need to disciple someone who does not have a passion for where we're going.

- 2. Cast a vision for God's call to biblical discipleship** – Sit down with the person you've observed and say, "This is where we're going. We're really committed to biblical discipleship. We want to help people to walk, communicate, and multiply their faith." Cast a vision so you can invite this person to come with you toward biblical discipleship. You're inviting them to come where you're going. Everything we want to build into a disciple's life involves equipping them to be a biblical disciple for the remainder of their life. No matter what their vocational calling is, or if they're in some type of ministry, we want them to walk, communicate, and multiply their faith for the rest of their lives.
- 3. Lay out the cost of discipleship** – If this is a worthy vision you're casting, you'll have to explain what it takes to get there. You might say, "I would like to ask you to be committed to meet together weekly." Challenge this person to be discipled by you. You're going to make a commitment to his or her life, so ask them for a reciprocal commitment – coming to Bible Study, meeting individually for discipleship, and attending church so they will be a part of the larger body of believers. Lay it out that this is the vision, this is what it's going to take to get there, and this is a mutual commitment you are making to his spiritual development. In Luke 14:25-35, Jesus encourages believers to count the cost before committing.
- 4. Ask that person to prayerfully decide if this is where he is going** – Encourage him to ask these questions: Am I willing to count the cost? Am I willing to be committed? This way, you're not selecting them out; you're not determining if they're worthy of being discipled. You're casting the vision and saying to them, "Is this where you want to go?" They can decide, "Yes, that's where I want to go," or "No, I don't really want to go there. I'd rather give my life to something else." You may select who you'd like to work with based on your observations of that person, but they make the decision. It's up to them to count the cost and respond, "Yes, I'm in."

Questions for Reflection:

1. What part should prayer have in inviting someone into a discipleship relationship? _____
2. Recalling the four reasons to choose wisely, which is most motivating to you? _____
3. Are you a FAT disciple yourself? _____
4. In your own circle of friends and connections, who comes to mind for you to pray about discipling? _____