

8. PART II **BASIC**- Assessment Tools: “Determining Spiritual Phase with the Phrase.”

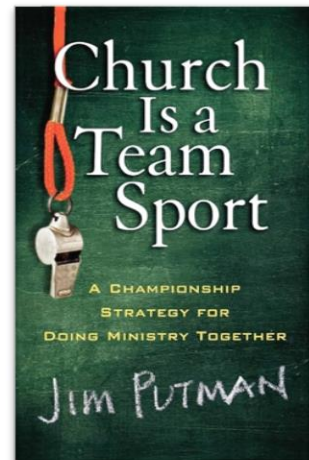
(REVIEW)

Small Group Breakout Questions:

CASE STUDY: “The Peril of a Geometry Student!”

“Imagine that you had a child whom you loved more than life. Like all parents, you wanted this child to grow to be a positive influence on the human race. Let’s say that your child has to pass geometry with at least a C to get into college. If he doesn’t get a degree from a college, he cannot get a job, and without a job, he cannot support a family. In the high school that your child attends, they have chosen to teach geometry in a classroom that holds five hundred kids. The teacher stands in front of the crowd and does geometry problems on the board. The teacher tries her best to explain how to answer the problems for forty-minutes one-time a week and then dismisses the class. She does not have time to meet in private tutoring sessions and she does not have a method to help students who are struggling. She tells you when you question her that the students have the book-they should just read it.”

(Case Study taken from *Church as a Team Sport*, pg. 131-132)



- i. **How would you feel about the school your child goes to? How important or costly could the grade of this student be?**
- ii. **What would you do in regard to this situation if you were the parent and this was happening to your Child? In short, how would you handle this situation?**
- iii. **Imagine your group was a focus group asked to solve this problem for your school, what might your groups recommendation look like?**

a. Large Group Review of Small Group Breakout:

ANOTHER LOOK AT OUR SCENARIO FROM A LITTLE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE:

When you look at our CASE STUDY- any loving and caring parent would be torque at the least! And I can tell you Beth and I would not stand for it; we would find a solution. And how many of you would agree with that?

Why do we react so adversely to something like this but then we allow the same type of thing to happen in our churches every week?

The people in our pews are struggling with the most important subject there is- **SALVATION.** *(As Pastors)*, We stand in front of *our congregations* for forty minutes a week and describe on the big screen what it takes to solve life's biggest problems. We don't have time to tutor them, and we don't raise people who do. Is it any wonder why our people can't answer the easiest of biblical questions *TODAY? Is it any wonder why the church of Jesus Christ is in such a devastating spiral downward?*

*While children's grades and education are so, so important, let me be clear here!!!! How much more is riding on how well God's children understand the Scriptures and apply them to their lives? We must remember that God's Word is truth, and that the Gospel is the **ONLY MEANS TO OUR SALVATION.** It is also our guide to having a truly satisfying and fulfilling life. The Gospel can only be passed on through a relational discipleship process. God's plan includes those who would guide people to maturity. And the fact is that faith cannot be matured or grown in a forty-minute lecture once a week any more than geometry can be taught to a large group in forty minutes per week. Why do we accept a practice in our churches that we would never accept in a classroom with our own kids? "(pg. 142-143, Italics are my added emphasis)*

b. What is a Disciple? They are Biblically Functioning Faithful Follower of Jesus Christ.

One of our basic clues to understanding “What is a disciple?” is found in Jesus’ calling of his first disciples in Matthew 4:18-20.

Matthew 4:18-20 says:

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into a lake, for they were fishermen.

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you **fishers of men.**” At once they left their nets and **followed him.**”

So, four things define a disciple:

- 1. First, a disciple is one who has made Jesus the Lord of his or her life.** Jesus said, “Come and follow me.” He is the leader. We must be committed to being the followers.
- 2. Second, a disciple is one who has entered a process of relational discipleship with other maturing Christians.**
- 3. Third, a disciple is one who is becoming Christ-like.**
- 4. Finally, a disciple is one who is committed to the mission of Christ.**

c. Jesus the Master of Discipleship:

- 1. He taught in a small group setting.** Jesus worked with 12 disciples in a small group format because He understood that was the best way to transfer experiential learning. Don’t you think it there was a better way to make disciples Jesus would have shown and emulated it for us.

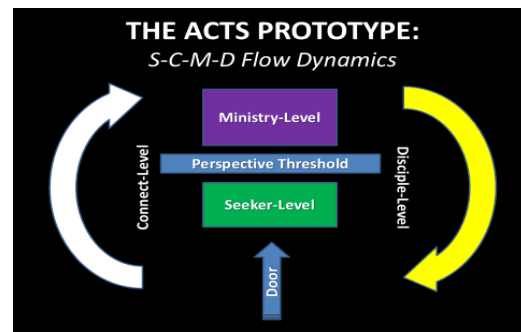
2. Then He modeled it in the **real life laboratory**. Christ did more than hold classes and speak words, He took His disciples into the real-life laboratory of Israel and modeled for them the behaviors he spoke about. In other words, *“He modeled for them the behaviors He wanted to see in them. When dealing with our children, we often hear that character is caught, not taught.”* (pg. 134)

“Jesus is the best example of what it means to be a great coach. He gave us a picture of real discipleship that works. Unlike many pastors today, Jesus knew that you cannot disciple in mass numbers. Yes, He spoke to the crowds, but He took His disciples aside and taught them in a relational way. Discipleship is a process that can only be accomplished through relationship. Jesus was the master of effective education. He taught in a small group.” *(Church as a Team Sport, Pg. 131)*

- d. **Four phases or stages of the Discipleship Process:** (You cannot get to one phase without the previous.)
- a. **Seeker Phase-** **“Seeker-level** people are those who have either not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior or have accepted Him but have not been connected to other believers.” (pg. 144) **I have modified Putman’s Share-level to be Seeker-Level to fit my terminology.*
 - b. **Connect Phase-** **“Connect-level** people are growing in their knowledge of the Word... Connect-level disciples are going to church, taking some Bible classes, and reading books that will bolster their understanding of what it means to be a Christian.” (pg. 144)

c. **Minister Phase**- In the **ministry-level** people “will start to see things as God sees them, because they are connected to Him... They become other-centered people, servants, a natural result of walking with the Lord... When they walk into a room, rather than thinking, Who will talk to me? Who is going to notice me? They are being transformed into people who think, Who needs help? He looks lonely.” (pg. 144-145)

d. **Disciple Phase**- In the **Discipleship-level** people are “the disciples learn not only to minister to those around them but to train others to do the same thing.” (pg. 145)



e. **Putman’s Model of Determining Spiritual Phase with the Phrase:**

a. **Introduction:** Real Life Ministries with Pastor Jim Putman came up with a way to help leaders better understand where people are in their faith journey. They termed it “*Phrase from the Phase.*” In short people say things that give us good indicators of where they are in their spiritual journey, and through understanding their phrase we can help people move along their journey to becoming Discipleship-Phase leaders.

b. Putman says, “Some are not Christians, but God is drawing them. *(In Wesleyan terms they are in the Prevenient Grace Stage.)* Some gave their lives to Jesus at some point but have never been disciples, so they are very immature in their faith. Others are Christians who are struggling and need encouragement; still others are Christians who need to learn a lesson. The key is to determine who needs what.” *(pg. 146 italics my addition or emphasis)*

f. Seeker-Level people: There are 2 varieties. (146-148)

a. Unsaved- Need to hear the Gospel. They need to have people walk them through God’s plan of Salvation. They need answers to questions and may need Biblical Apologetics for faith so they can find out what it means to be a Christian.

In each of these cases, we can know that they have never accepted the Gospel Message that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of their lives because “*Unsaved Seeker-level people*” use phrases like:

- “*I don’t believe in the Bible,*”
- “*I believe Jesus is a way to get to heaven, but He is not the only way,*”
- “*I went to church when I was young, but Christians were mean to my family, so we never went back.*”
- “*What do I need to be saved for? I am as good as anyone else.*”
- “*Why does God allow bad things to happen?*”

- b. **Saved-** Need to begin to develop basic knowledge and the new believer habits of prayer, study, fellowship, and witness. They need someone to begin to show them how to understand God's will for them as Christian's.

Saved Seeker-level people who have accepted Jesus as Savior, as the Son of God, but may not understand yet their relationship to other believers and the Church of Jesus Christ use phrases like:

- *"I love Jesus, but my church is in the mountains [meadows, nature] because I feel close to God there,"*
- *"I have been hurt too many times by believers to let them get too close to me,"*
- *"My accountability is God."*
- OR ONE I HEAR SO OFTEN: *"I am too busy at work to get connected."*

- g. Connect-Level People: (149)** This stage represents the current stage of the largest amount of believers in the four-stage process.

Connect-level people are found in groups led by Discipleship-level persons. *"If the group is functioning correctly, these groups act like little churches. People learn from one another and love each other while helping to take care of the needs in the group."* (148-149)

People at this level are there because *"they want to be a part of something or because they are still working from a works-salvation mind-set."* (149) They are serving typically from with "me" perspectives and motives. At this level they

are working through how they will be involved and how the gospel includes them. This is a normal stage in our discipleship process but not the Lord's end goal.

Remember the disciples argued over who would be the greatest and who would sit at Jesus' right hand in the Kingdom. (*Matthew 20:20-28 & Luke 22:24-30*)

This is a far cry from the final worries these same later Spirit-filled Disciples or Disciple-phase followers of Jesus would encounter later. As you can see from Acts 4 & 5, they are not even thinking about who sits where, just how great it is to be found worthy to suffer like their Jesus. (*Acts 4:13-22 & Acts 5:22-40*)

Connect-Level People are very self-orientated in their perspective and are permeated with a "me" mentality.

There phrases will repeatedly use the pronoun "I":

- *"I love my group"*
- *"I have never felt so loved."*
- *"I have finally found home."*

Everyone has to go through this Connect-phase, but those that are clinging to it as the honeymoon wears off will begin to become "I" critical. If not careful, and if they don't continue to grow in their faith, they can become very high maintenance and costly to good Biblical growth cycles. Some phrases that indicate that "I" critical level can be:

- *"The leaders better not try to split my group— I was just starting to get comfortable here."*
- *"I had to walk a hundred yards to get into church last Sunday. It made me so mad."*

- *“I was working in the nursery (or just fill in the _____), but they don’t appreciate me there, so I think I am going to quit.”*
- *“I am not comfortable at that church. There are far too many people?”*

h. Ministry-Level People: At the Ministry level the huge threshold is crossed from being centered on Me”, “My” & “I” to being centered on “OTHERS.”

Ministry-level people focus primarily on giving God the Glory with their actions. At this level serving is the very heart of their witness. And motivation is sparked out of graciousness for what the Lord has done for them and can do for “others.” At this level there is a desire and drive to go deeper in the Word, to be better equipped to do ministry and to apprentice under Disciple-level leaders. Finally, instead of seeing the church as a means to serve them, they see their gifts, talents and faith as a tool to serve the Lord and His Body. Ministry-level people are becoming “OTHER” centered in their language. When someone new comes in they are the ones that go over to the table and sit down with them or invite them to the group. They don’t talk about themselves in their groups, they are talking about others! They are becoming givers rather than takers. This does not mean they don’t get their feelings hurt, they are human after all, but they don’t let their “me” thinking dominate their walk, they have truly died to Christ. *(This is evidence of what John Wesley called Sanctifying Grace.)* Some phrases they use are:

- *“ _____ was not here tonight in our Bible Study.”*
- *“Does anyone know why _____ was not in church this morning?”*
- *“I was watching _____ the other day and she seems kind of down. Maybe I will make her a cherry pie, she loves them and drop it by.”*

i. Disciple-Level People: When Ministry-level do more than just desire to care for a need but begin to think about how they can get others involved in caring they are moving into the Disciples-phase.

We see the Apostle Paul doing this in his letters to Timothy and Titus. He spoke to saying simply “Do what you have seen me do!” Paul, who was trained by Barnabas, is now training others to be like Him. At this level you move from being in the group or apprenticing in the group to being able to lead a group to being one who disciples others.

People who are moving from the ministry phase to this new Disciple-level ministry will use phrases like:

- *“Who can I get to help me reach more people in this ministry?”*
- *“Have you noticed _____? He is really talented and loves the Lord and is great with those kids; he should be using those gifts to serve God.”*
- *“I was going to the Hospital tonight to pray for a couple of people, and I am thinking about taking George with me. He is so compassionate and loves to pray, and if he goes with me, I know he would enjoy it!”*

Discipleship-level persons have a passion to share their joy of serving with others by giving them the opportunity to experience God in this same way.

Putman tells us that Discipleship-level people: (153-154)

1. **See the need** to grow a ministry they are **passionate** about.
2. They notice that the ministry could **expand** if they had help.
3. They notice the gifts and passions of **someone else** who could play a part in the ministry.
4. They are willing to **invest in another** who they see needs to be trained.

j. OUR MAIN OBJECTIVE:

Jesus' clear hope was Every **Disciple** would grow to become like Him in calling people to a **repentant and saving** faith in God and in turn **training others** to go forth and continue the work of spreading the Gospel as a part of His Great Commission until Jesus returns.

k. Closing Prayer.

NEXT WEEK

Building Dynamics: "Shepherding & Flock Dynamics"