

As part of module seven I conducted several interviews with different pastors about discipleship and how they felt their church should participate in the Great Commission from Matthew 28. Over the course of preparing for the interviews, I asked twelve pastors if they would be interested in participating in the interview. Since there seemed to be such a wide ranging opinion of exactly what the churches role in discipleship should be or how well discipleship should be emphasized, I intended to interview a wide range of pastors from differing denominations, different parts of the country, different age groups, races, and church sizes, and I narrowed the list down to the twelve pastors who were asked to participate. The preparation in finding the twelve pastors and leading them through the interview process was a learning experience and emphasized many aspects both Barna and Hull wrote about in regards to expectations of our clergy today.

From the group of twelve pastors, seven either declined (most due to time constraints) or did not respond to my request, five agreed to participate, and three ultimately completed the interview by the required time frame. Of the three pastors who completed the interview with me, two were from local churches in my area and one was from Canada.

The notes that follow come straight from the interview and I have left, as much as is possible, my own bias and opinions out of the interview notes. The notes listed below are, in context, exactly as each pastor responded to the interview questions. Even though there were only three pastors in the final interviews that I conducted, the responses are still quite different if compared side by side. Some have given the discipleship process

much thought; another seemed to know of its importance but did not have much of a personal opinion. I didn't view any of the three pastors as being biblically incorrect or out of God's will for their church, but the commitment level was certainly not exactly the same across all three.

## Interview Notes:

### First Interview – Marc A. Wright

**Pastor's Name:** Marc A. Wright  
**Affiliated Church:** The Starfish House-Church, Canada  
**Churches Website Address:** just1church.wordpress.com

#### Interview Questions:

*1. How do you define "disciple" or "discipleship" for your church?*

Discipleship for me is contained in basically two different verses.

#### **Matthew 28:18-20 (New Living Translation)**

<sup>18</sup> Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.

#### **John 8:31 (New Living Translation)**

<sup>31</sup> Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings.

Jesus here defines discipleship as the process of teaching the people groups of the earth to be obedient to every command He gave.

*2. How do you "make disciples" (strategies, methods, materials used, etc)?*

I would again say to go back to Matthew 28:18-20.

- First your life must be under submission to Jesus

- You must go to them (not call them into a tent meeting ... etc)
- Share the Good News: You are guilty of breaking every one of God's Commandments (this is called sin) and you deserve the penalty (which is death and destruction). God knows you and loves you so much that He sent His blameless and innocent Son, Jesus to pay the penalties for your sin by His death for you; a life for your life – The innocent for the guilty. Jesus indeed came to this world, suffered and died for every sin, and having paid this penalty for your sins was raised by the power of God back to life. God through Jesus is now no longer angry with you, He wants you to believe in what Jesus has done, accept this gift of forgiveness, from now you owe your life to Jesus and must be willing to obey every command He gave and will give. (Galatians 2:16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.)
- Baptize this believer by fully immersing in water
- Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands Jesus gave by sharing your life in community with them and in example

### ***3. How do you know if you have been successful?***

You know you have been successful by the increasing fruit of obedience and the character of Jesus they bear as fruit of the in-dwelling Word of Truth! As it says in Galatians:

Galatians 5:22-30 (King James Version): 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there

is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit

**4. *What advice would you give to an emerging (just getting started) minister?***

- Be obedient to all that Jesus taught
- Let scripture be the basis for your life and ministry at all times (it is written!)
- Endeavour to be the least and the slave of all in the body of Christ – don't seek fame, prominence, or any titles (reverend, doctor, pastor, ...)
- Love lavishly as you are loved by Jesus and the Father
- In family life let your highest goal be to out-love and out-serve your wife and family

## **Second Interview – Josh Agerton**

**Pastor's Name: Josh Agerton**

**Affiliated Church: Cornerstone Church**

**Churches Website Address: [www.cornerstonebuzz.org](http://www.cornerstonebuzz.org)**

### **Interview Questions:**

**1. *How do you define "disciple" or "discipleship" for your church?***

A disciple is someone who devotes and adheres themselves to the teachings of another person. In the context of Christianity, a disciple is then a person who devotes themselves to the teachings of Jesus Christ. I tend to see the marks of a true disciple of Jesus Christ as the following:

- A life of sacrifice. They do not live for themselves any longer but for Christ. They are willing to offer all of their life for the things that matter to Jesus. This looks like laying down your life for others. John 15:12-14

- A life of discipline. The very nature of a disciple is to have discipline. This would specifically be in the classical disciplines of prayer, scripture study, fasting, meditation, etc.
- Bearing Fruit. This happens in two ways, both of which are the most telling mark of a true disciple. First, in the sense of are they able to reproduce another disciple? Are they leading others to know Christ and to full maturity in their spiritual life? Again...John 15 and Matthew 28:19 Second, are the fruits of the spirit displayed in their life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

**2. *How do you “make disciples” (strategies, methods, materials used, etc)?***

- For some time now I have been searching for the perfect program or model to make disciples. I’ve been at a church that used the Saddleback model of 101, 201, 301, 401 and I also have spent much time evaluating other popular programs that are marketed through the Christian networks. After 2 years of banging my head against the wall with this I have come to this conclusion. The most effective way to make disciples is simply by one person taking on another person, one on one, and investing all of themselves into that one person in love. It is simply playing out Jesus’ command in John 15:13, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”
- This one on one discipleship movement is something I am undertaking now. It’s a slow organic movement that can’t be programmed. It looks like having fostering relationships with others until there comes an opportunity to invite a

person along for a deeper journey of growing together. Then I begin to carry them through ten conversations. It starts with the basics of our make-up as humans, carries us through living with the Holy Spirit in us, and goes all the way through personal spiritual disciplines, spiritual gifts and sharing one's faith. The hope is to bring a person along and equip them to eventually go and do the same for others in their life.

**3. *How do you know if you have been successful?***

Success is seen in the multiplication of disciples who display the fruits of the spirit. But sometimes success may look different. It may look like taking someone through 4 conversations about what it really means to be a Christian and then they may decide they don't want to go any further. This is still success, because now that person at least knows what it means to follow Jesus. They may just be at a place where they are not ready for that kind of commitment with their whole life...but at least they know what it takes now.

**4. *What advice would you give to an emerging (just getting started) minister?***

I would say to not get wrapped up in looking for the magic bullet or the latest and greatest strategy in how to make disciples. There is a timeless way that Jesus modeled for us when he walked on this earth. He had 12 disciples but he had 3 that he especially invested in. What would happen if one person did this with three other people in one year. Then those three did the same the next year (9 more disciples) then the next year each of those took on 9 more (27). What would happen if we got back to the basics of laying down our lives for others and

investing all of ourselves into developing a few others into mature followers of Jesus Christ?

### Third Interview – Eric Taylor

**Pastor Name: Eric Taylor**

**Affiliated Church: Journey Church**

**Churches Website Address: [www.Journeytogether.net](http://www.Journeytogether.net)**

#### Interview Questions:

1. *How do you define "disciple" or "discipleship" for your church? A disciple is simply a follower of Jesus.*
  - Discipleship is the process in which we help people take steps to become more like Jesus.
2. *How do you “make disciples” (strategies, methods, materials used, etc)?*
  - We have a relational approach to discipleship and spiritual formation. We take Paul’s words to Timothy in 2Tim 2:2 very seriously where it says “the things you’ve heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” This method of discipleship, a more mature believer takes a less mature believer and helps them become more like Jesus and repeats the process, thus multiplying the impact exponentially. There is also an element of personal responsibility involved. We believe we are created with a hunger to know God and we want to create resources and opportunities for Christ Followers to seek to become more like Jesus individually. The old proverb holds true here, “if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day,

if you teach a man to fish, you feed him for lifetime.” We want to help people learn to feed themselves spiritually through practicing the disciplines like prayer, bible study, bible memory, fasting, serving, sharing their faith, etc.

- Our strategy includes connecting people in Growth Groups so they can learn and be discipled in the context of small groups. We also have as a part of our commitment time in our worship services a process of “next steps” they can take to become more like Christ. Ie- memory verse, joining a growth group, etc. We also have resources available to help them take their next step individually- ie-Bibles, bible reading plan, etc.
- We are about to enter into a new spiritual formation plan with Monvee. It’s a new web based personal/individualized growth plan where we will be able to help people be successful at growing in discipleship individually.

### ***3. How do you know if you have been successful?***

- Obviously, growth group attendance should increase, but that is a cosmetic measurement that shows results are happening. The best indicator of success is multiplication--seeing people investing in others lives who invest in the lives of others.

### ***4. What advice would you give to an emerging (just getting started) minister?***

- Be a sponge, learn from many different sources, but KNOW WHO GOD HAS WIRED YOU TO BE – develop your own style of leadership and ministry and don’t try to become the next Rick Warren, Francis Chan, Ed

Young, or Andy Stanley. God already has one of those... He called YOU to ministry because He has a unique and specific calling that only YOU can accomplish.