

## **Effective Church Leaders Are Disciple-Makers: Effective Church Leaders Model 2 Timothy 2:2**

**By Bob Young**

*Many church leaders do not know how to develop disciples; even fewer know how to develop disciplers.*

### **Step One: Church leaders must know how to make and develop disciples**

If church leaders do not know how to make and develop disciples, the growth of the church is stunted. A church may be growing in numbers (often by swelling), but the growth will be more rapid and more stable when the church leaders know how to make and develop disciples (by evangelism). If church leaders do not know how to make and develop disciples, they must learn.

In 50+ years of ministry, I worked with many church leaders to help them learn how to make and develop faithful disciples. Those who serve as leaders in the churches – elders, deacons, teachers, ministers, preachers, evangelists, small group leaders – must learn and model disciple-making. In my consulting work with church leaders, I have observed that church leaders who wish to become shepherds rather than administrators are anxious to learn how to make and develop disciples. In the growing churches I have worked with, the elders were actively involved in evangelism.

Most church leaders do not start out as disciple-makers – they have to learn the art of making disciples. I have written often about the need to make disciples. I have encouraged hundreds of church leaders to become disciple-makers. Having made disciples (salvation), leaders must develop those disciples (keep them saved).

Many elders do a good job of caring for the Christians they shepherd, but they are not actively adding to the number of disciples. When elders learn the process of making and developing disciples, the local church will explode. In local church ministry, I worked with elders who were committed to disciple-making and disciple-development. The churches doubled and tripled in 10 years. This is the first step in church leader training. Church leaders must be examples and models. In my mission work and in my church consulting, I aspire to create church leaders who make disciples and help disciples grow spiritually -- leaders who effectively model and mentor Christian living, including outreach.

The problem facing many churches is that making disciples has been institutionalized or professionalized so that only a few people are making disciples. Most commonly, those making disciples are hired staff members. The truth is that few churches are adding 10% or more annually, very few are doubling or tripling every 10 years. Many churches have been convinced that such growth is impossible, or that when such growth happens the church has “gone liberal.”

### **Step Two -- Leaders must learn how to develop disciple-makers**

When a group of church leaders learns how to make and develop disciples (Step One), with leaders exercising the gifts God has given, helping people toward salvation through effective evangelism, shepherding the disciples entrusted to their care so that each member stays connected and involved.... good things happen!

The next step toward becoming a great church is more difficult -- helping church leaders learn how to develop disciple-makers. Church leaders who are not disciple-makers will struggle to mentor and train more disciple-makers. A first characteristic of effective church leaders is that they are disciple-makers. Leaders who have learned how to make and develop disciples have learned addition. Leaders who learn how to develop disciple-makers will experience multiplication!

Rapid, multiplying growth in the church requires leaders who know how to develop disciples who will make more disciples. Leaders must train the members so that the entire church is involved in making disciples. Evangelism is the work of the body. The members of the body must learn how to use their specific gifts in evangelism.

This second step also accelerates the leadership training process -- members who learn how to be disciplers, how to make disciples, and how to develop disciples are on their way to becoming leaders because it is natural to care for and shepherd those you bring to Christ.

### **How a group of church leaders can work toward the “next step”**

In ministry and mission work, I see to help church leaders move toward the next steps in the process of making disciples, developing disciples, and developing disciplers.

- Many church leaders need to be challenged to widen their vision, so they can begin to move to the next level.
- Once church leaders learn how to make disciples, they can move to the next level and learn how to make disciple-makers.
- Church leaders must learn the process – how to be disciple-makers who are producing disciple-makers. Until church leaders model disciple making, few of the members will become disciple-makers. Some members may learn how to make disciples, but few members will learn how to make disciples who will make more disciples.
- Until leaders are making both disciples and disciplers, the church will add rather than multiply.
- Disciples making disciples is wonderful.
- Disciple-makers who make disciple-makers results in incredible growth! (2 Timothy 2:2)

### **Summarizing the role of church leaders in disciple-making**

- An important part of the shepherding process is producing and overseeing disciples.
- An equally important part of the shepherding process is producing and overseeing disciple-makers (Matt. 28:19-20).
- The Great Commission, given to every Christian, teaches that all disciples are to be involved in making more disciples.
- Church leaders lead the charge in making disciples, raising up Christ-followers who are growing spiritually.
- Church leaders must know how to make disciples. They are also called to shepherd those disciples.
- Churches struggle when there are lots of disciples and few disciple makers. What is the solution?
- Church leaders must step up and become, not only disciple-makers and shepherds, but makers of disciple-makers. This will require training, mentoring, and modeling evangelism, so that the disciples are empowered to become disciple-makers.
- Church leaders are called to train disciples who will make disciples.
- Small group leaders produce and oversee disciples.
- Elders are disciple-makers and oversee and shepherd the group of disciple-makers.
- Elders are makers of disciplers.

Here is the challenge to all church leaders.

Your church can grow! Your church can grow rapidly, incredibly, doubling, tripling again and again!

Church leaders: learn how to make disciples, learn how to make disciples who will make disciples, repeat the process again and again so the church can begin the multiply disciples and not merely add disciples.