

JESUS THE VERB

How Discipleship
Builds Creative
Spiritual Connections

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the learners who recognize that some of our comfortable patterns are proving less effective than we hoped and dare to learn new ways, as yet unknown.

May our Lord Jesus Christ guide us in this journey.



Preface

Under construction

Introduction

Something is happening that needs addressing

One close friend, with many years on the path of following Jesus, told me recently: “Lately I seem to be changing from an intellectual/theoretical model of approaching the Gospel toward something more experiential and lived out. This has produced a certain crisis in me because our evangelical churches approach evangelization and discipleship really just from the first perspective.” I take this comment quite seriously. This man has a PhD in advanced science, travels internationally, works in the corporate world, is a deep student of the Scriptures and has laboured for the Gospel for more than 30 years. What are we missing?

I was shocked to read that 7000 people are leaving the church per day in the USA¹, and the dismal rate of job satisfaction for pastors². I won’t even begin to address what is happening to the family, marriage and what are the long term implications of these changes. Things are changing in the dynamic of how our society is working and the role and confidence in institutions.

At the same time 26,000 are joining the church per day in the Majority World. There are indications of wonderful moves of God in parts of the world. If these statistics are accurate, in 20 years in North America Christianity will have all but disappeared and will have moved to the Southern Hemisphere. What do you think of these patterns?

Then there is evident pain resulting from the church experience of some: I asked a group of local church planting candidates in Guatemala what they wanted to learn from a discipleship course we were about to start. They voted on each of the learning objectives they proposed and one of the winners was: **“How to work with people without hurting them by my way of thinking, feeling and behaving.”** This objective struck a common chord that in helping others, we seems to produce casualties. The goal of discipleship is not to steamroll others and is not the way of Jesus when he said “Learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart and you shall find rest for your souls”.

Modernism has suffered from the commodification of spirituality, the industrialization of growth, and the consumerization of God. Hierarchy seems to serve its own interest for the protection and maintenance of the structure and demand service for its progress. We are obsessed with control and liability and political correctness. Postmodernism offers a non-linear, organic approach that can empower people if it does not get derailed in issues as to what is truth.

“Creativity isn’t about what we create. It’s about who we become by sharing what we create” (Ginsberg, 2012). This book, if nothing else, is a most important process for who I become in sharing this learning

¹ (Krejcir, Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline, 2007)

² (Krejcir, Statistics on Pastors: What is going on with Pastors in America?, 2007)

journey. I would rather be found wrong in anything I propose here and in the process learn something than not to attempt to address these issues, and remain unchanged. At least our children will learn from my mistakes. And together we may just find some new forms that better address the changes society is going through.

Why are people disengaged in church?

We quickly blame people for the lack of commitment in the church. I am not sure that is the problem. I believe that people want to engage in Kingdom work but are not convinced that the path they are on will get them there. They have done what they have been told, are filling up with information about God and are experience-starved for something deeper and more meaningful. People are lonely and bored.

This shows up many ways. They are bored of going to meetings and being given volumes of information as if it is the solution. We would be better off working with less information but using it to craft some kind of experience where it becomes activated.

At the same time there is an incredible volume of experience, talents and interests that are not activated in advancing the kingdom. Because people don't see a fit in the pattern of the way they are wired and the way they have experienced "church" they remain disengaged. They build a secular life that fills up their time and remains unattached to their church life.

We long for a gripping challenge that is both biblical and responds to the complexity of our current situation: something with deeper levels of flexibility and learner-driven priorities that will enable building our God experiences in diverse ways.

Don't confuse *what* with *how*

The right '*what*' with the wrong '*how*' will lead to exhaustion, disillusionment and abandoning the purposes of God. The back door of the church will get as busy as the front, at least in Western culture.

It is not for lack of trying. We have been teaching everything we possibly could from the Bible. We hold seminars and conferences; we faithfully expound passages of the Bible; we promote home Bible studies and buy materials by the truckload. Yet we seem to be searching for the silver bullet to make it work. At the same time we must admit that ***what*** the Lord want us to do is relatively clear in passages like the Great Commission: Go and make disciples and teaching them to obey all He has taught (Matthew 28:19,20). There is not much to argue that we are to make learners of Jesus.

How we are to do it is not quite so clear. At first glance the Scriptures do not seem to speak of much else than preaching as THE delivery method: preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2) and faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). But the teaching methods of Jesus involved a lot more than preaching sermons. He would do a miracle, and engage in the response. He would ask difficult questions and then walk away. He would make statements easily misinterpreted and offend some. He would tell a story and get them

to think about it without telling them the answer. He would give an assignment to his disciples allowing them to fail and then let them ask questions etc. The term *experiential learning* begins to describe the dynamic he orchestrated for his disciples.

We can rightly argue that the *WHAT* of God's will has not changed but the *HOW* to learn could be different from 2000 years ago. Just think of the influence on learning with the proliferation of print, radio, postal service, TV, Internet, email, cell phones, smart phones and social media. I have heard that we are exposed to more information in one edition of the Sunday New York Times than was in existence at the time of Christ. We have more information at our fingertips than we know what to do with.

Theology is an exercise in setting Biblical priorities

We should accompany the search for HOW with profound theology reflection, which involves the searching for patterns of truth and their priority in the Biblical narrative. We cannot say that all the Scriptures are of equal priority in disciple-making because we need to know where to start and what to do next. If nothing else, we must reflect on whether we are responding faithfully to what the Bible prioritizes.

Theology is subject to a continual revision for each generation as the world changes. While we may think that our theology is the most advanced in all of history, this reflection has been happening continually since Christ and probably each generation felt they arrived at the most authoritative conclusion. We need to choose our theological priorities carefully.

We need a theology of disciple-making that is not just an “add-on” to a set of other traditional activities of higher priority. Disciple-making is what we are commissioned to do with all else working around that. Perhaps the disciple-making pattern that we suggest does not resonate with you. It is incumbent on each of us to figure out how that is to be done. Suggest a pattern that better summarizes your understanding of what the Bible teaches and join the discussion so we can learn.

Construct a fractal pattern that allows for scale up

So in this book we will use fractals³ to see how they might help us in discovering a biblical pattern for disciple-making. A fractal is a design structure when repeated produces a larger version of itself with the same pattern on all scales.” (Klaas, 2012, p. 14). We will start with the assumption that you know why the pattern in the design (fractal) is essential for scale up (going from small to large scale) and why some of the patterns we have traditionally used in the church scale up very poorly for the discipleship pattern. We must capture the most important Biblical patterns of what discipleship should look like, so it can be

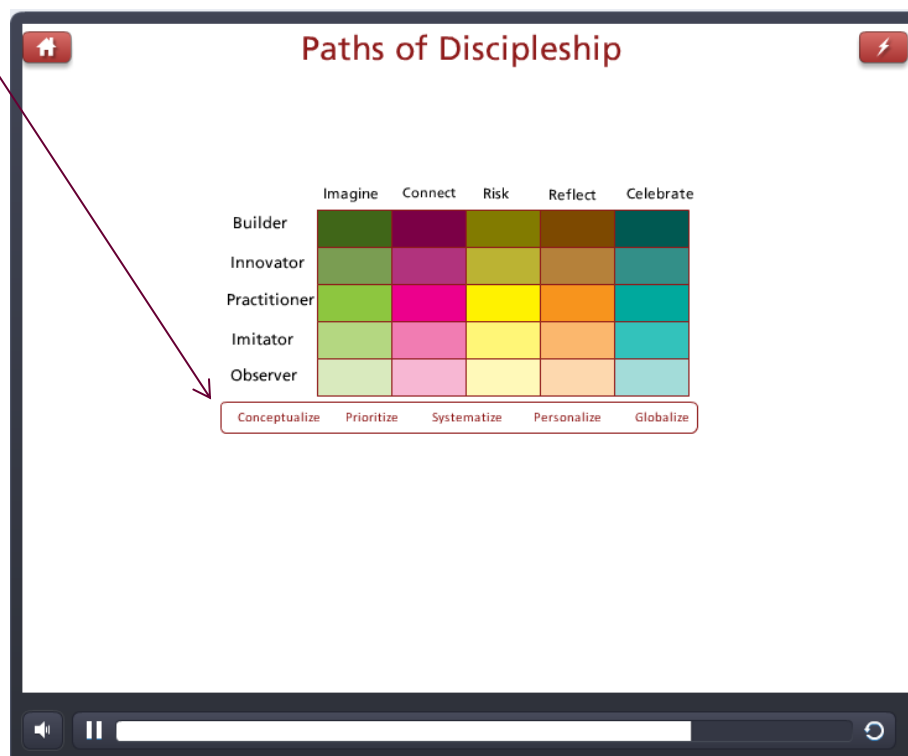
³ If you do not like the word ‘fractal’, use ‘pattern that allows for scale-up’. See for more information: *Fractals and Faith: Patterns for Learning in Discipleship* available from Amazon <https://www.createspace.com/3710701>

scaled up (structures that handle a small number of people to ones that can handle many), without changing the very components that make it effective.

The book will follow five steps to develop the pattern:

1. Conceptualize (Chapter1): what is a disciple
2. Prioritize (Chapter2): choosing the most important things
3. Systematize (Chapter3): providing appropriate levels of challenge
4. Personalize (Chapter4): constructing our own plan
5. Globalize. (Chapter5): mobilize our networks to get the job done

This is followed by the appendices with further explanations and resources. Note the discussion questions in Appendix 5 for group study. This material is also available by computer or portable device at <http://www.networkchurch.ca/paths/> On the website you will find the links to the orientation seminar, that mirrors the content of this book, in the white box below the coloured chart.





Chapter 1: Conceptualize Discipleship

What is Discipleship?

If we don't define discipleship biblically we can do anything and call it making disciples. In this chapter we will look at the following:

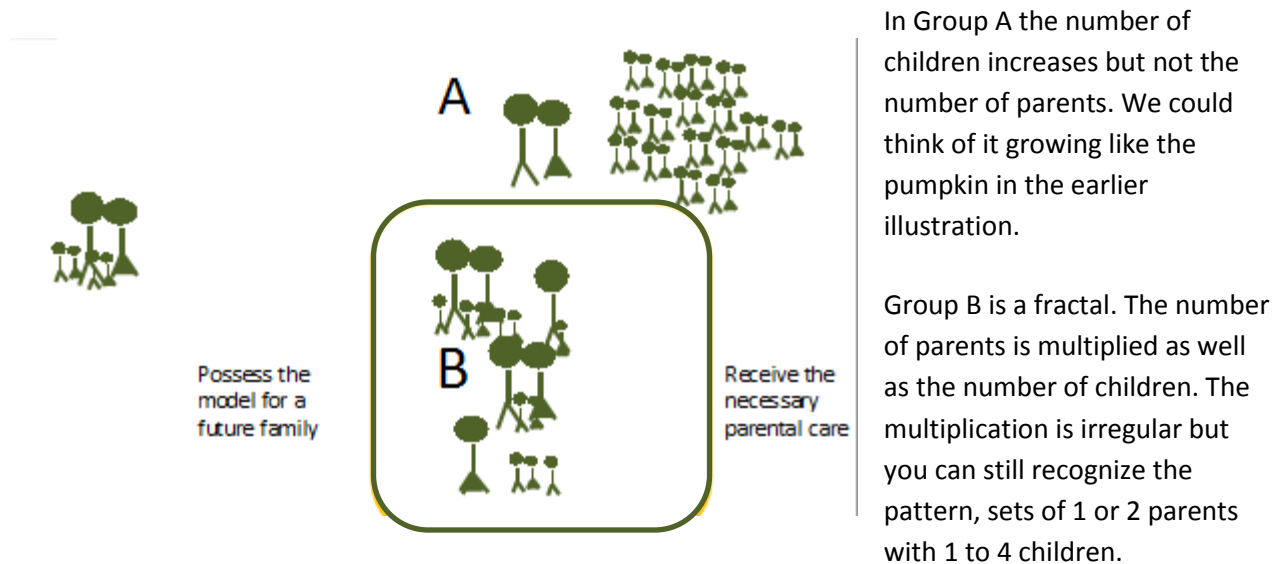
- Examine designs in nature that illustrate the process of multiplication. We will call these designs "fractals"
- Present a pattern used by Jesus called "To be with"
- Determine if the writers of the New Testament used the same pattern
- Outline the discipler/learner interaction to understand their common denominators
- Suggest a way to insert this interaction into the DNA of the church.

According to Benoît Mandelbrot in 1975, "a fractal is a component or design that when it grows into a bigger structure repeats the same degree of irregularity in all scales". This may seem complicated at first but some fractal illustrations will help us understand (Nova, 2011).

The bougainvillea flower is a good example. Every flower stem is like a "Y" and each new flower grows on the "Y" on the arm of the previous one.

A fractal is not something that is just a bigger version of what it was before. It is not like a pumpkin that just grows in size. Nor is it like a single broccoli flower that gets bigger. Remember the phrase "the same degree of irregularity". With broccoli the number of flowers also increase, each one slightly different but still recognizable as part of the whole. This may seem to be a picky point but you will understand why this is critical in the next illustration.

Suppose the family on the left grows as a fractal or not? Which would be better?



Why is group B a better option than group A? This will really affect the care each child gets because there is increased access to parents in Group B. In addition there is a clear model given to each child as to what their future family should look like. In the case of the church the fact that it is more like Group A means that many people do not receive personal care in their discipleship and they have never seen this modelled to them to show them how. They will be forever dependent on someone else to do the parenting. In addition the pastor just can't do the job alone so both pastor and congregation have an impossible job. It is essential that we choose a pattern that offers maximum care to the newcomers in Christ as it will affect the coming generations.

Jesus' Method

Let's look at the method Christ used. It says in Mark 3:14 that Jesus appointed twelve that they might be with him. The effectiveness of this method was evident even to the enemies of Christ in Acts 4:13:

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

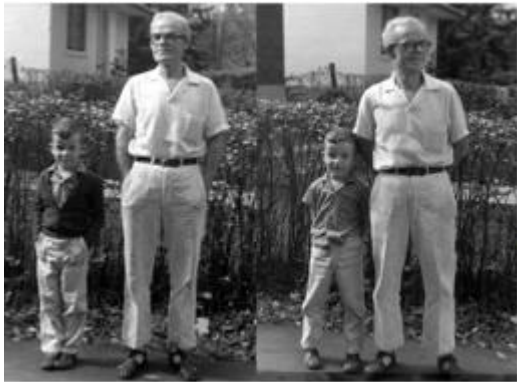
The strategy of "being with" produced an environment where all that Jesus said and did could be imitated by the disciples with the result that these characteristics were evident to everyone else who saw them.

"To be with" is a difficult concept to grasp. For example how much time did Jesus spend exclusively with His disciples and how much time did he spend with the crowds? Let's propose some options:

Did He spend 100 % of his time with the disciples and no time with the crowds or vice versa (we know this didn't happen.) Perhaps he spent 80 % of his time with the disciples alone and 20% with the crowds, or 60/40, 40/60 or 20/80? We may not be sure of the exact proportion but it is clear he spent some time

in a public ministry and sometime investing in his disciples. He had to make choices of time alone with them or being with them in public.

We need to make choices too. This leads us to analyze how we divide the time we spend in public ministry and in discipleship. We can observe, imitate and be a model in the use of time according to Jesus' priorities. We need to think more about this to see how we are doing.



Let's illustrate this principle of imitation with this photo of the twins, each standing beside their Dad. No one gave them instructions on how to stand but in each case they are imitating their father. If his hands were in his pockets or behind his back the boys did the same. When children are "being with" someone they end up imitating them.

This is a New Testament pattern: The model is observed, imitated and then becomes another model. Paul says that he himself is a model to imitate and when this example was passed on to the next generation they became models for others to follow. These form components of the reproduction fractal where the discipler is the model, is imitated by the new comers, who in turn become models demonstrating the same characteristics. The pattern was so effective that Paul said he didn't even have to say anything. (1 Thes. 1:8)

Key words

- Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on (observe) those who live as we do. Phil. 3:17
- You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. ⁷ And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 1Thes. 1:6,7

Observe: *Skopeo* - Think of a 'scope' to help us to pay close attention.

Model: *Tupos* - from the verb "to strike" with a die. (In the photo you see some tools my Dad made from nails that you would strike in order to leave a pattern in the leather. The discipleship model is formed by the experiences of learning, the striking in forming the pattern.



Imitate: *Mimetes*- where we get the word 'to mime'

Example: *Summimetes*- to become an example together.

These are all terms that are consistent with the “to be with” pattern which our Lord used. They form the elements in the design of the fractal that shows us how to make disciples.

The purpose of conceptualizing discipleship is to give us a working model that:

- Is faithful to the Gospel
- Captures the dynamics of what Jesus did with His disciples.
- Shows us the next step of what we need to do
-

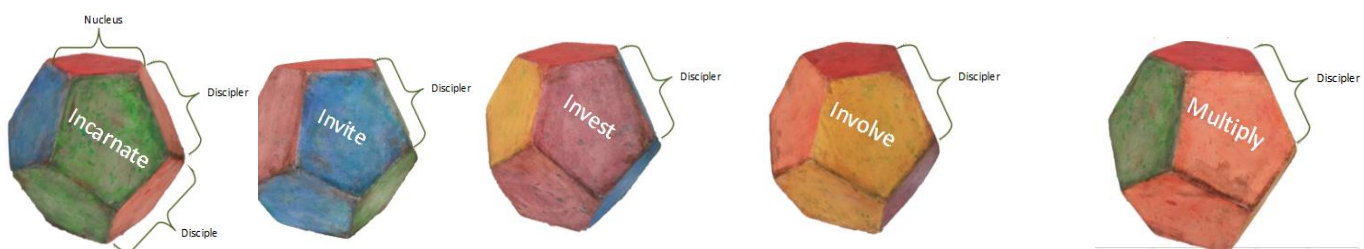
The Jesus is the Kernel

We will use a 12 sided model (called a dodecahedron) to demonstrate the relationships between the discipler and disciple.



The model is built around a central column, the Jesus nucleus. Like the ‘Kernel’ in the operating systems, this is something we can’t change (With Linux you can change anything but the Kernel.) We cannot change the Gospel to make it more attractive or easier for people to accept or more to our liking. We will wrap our discipleship model around this column of the Gospel. This column is of critical importance and without it we would have nothing. It would be impossible to overemphasise how important Jesus is and without Him all of our systems and ideas would be as dust. We will assume this is clear throughout the entire discussion. Everything else hangs on this column and we will build the dodecahedron around it.

The Discipleship Dodecahedron: the Discipler



The top half of the figures represents the activities of the discipler and the bottom half the activities of the disciple. We will look at the top half first.

Incarnation is the starting point of discipleship. It is the only way to “be with” the disciples. Jesus, as the master discipler, started his ministry this way:

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. - John 1:14

Jesus could not have completed his mission without becoming flesh. The discipler has to know how to live in the world of the disciple.

The second step is to **invite**. The first call to the disciples was an invitation to follow the Master. It was neither an automatic or passive response. People would not have gathered around him like that without accepting this invitation. Jesus took the initiative to go, make contact and say “Follow me”.

"To be with" is a costly **investment**. It is not easy or to be taken lightly. There can be lots of pressure. It means a significant amount of time spent together, walking, looking at how things are done, asking questions, preparing and sharing food, confronting needs and failure, praying etc. In short it is sharing life.

Investment naturally leads to **involving** the disciples in ministry. They didn't just stand around and watch Jesus and store the information. In the feeding of the 5000 we see this illustrated. Mark 6 says:

“By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. ‘This is a remote place’, they said, ‘and it’s already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy ... something to eat.’ But he answered, ‘You give them something to eat.’ They said to him, ‘That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?’ ‘How many loaves do you have?’ he asked. ‘Go and see.’ When they found out, they said, ‘Five-and two fish.’

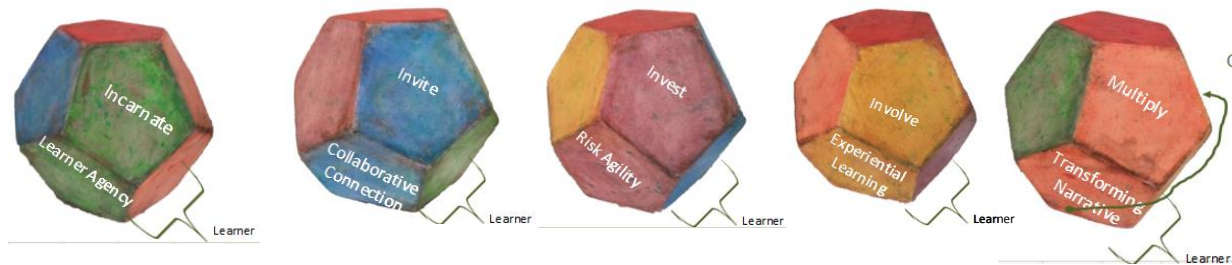
Jesus didn't give them a sermon on how to feed 5000 people, he gave them an assignment. They had to crash against the limit of their own resources, search for a faith solution, fail, repeat the exercise and keep on going.

The result of the process of Incarnate, Invite, Invest and Involve is to **Multiply**. One worker became 11 workers after 3 years of investment and training. This is the pattern that our Lord used to disciple.

Jesus said in Luke 6:40 that, “The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.” This is the roll of the Discipler, as shown in Jesus life, that we must follow.

The Discipleship Dodecahedron: the Learner

Let's look now at the characteristics of the learner, the bottom half of our 12 sided model. What should a learner be like so that she or he can grow to become a disciples-maker?



The disciple is a learner. The first step of learning is the ability to choose. We use the word “**agency**” to describe the decision to draw close to the master to receive something.

- For **Moses** it meant looking at the burning bush to see what was going on and finding himself on holy ground.
- For **Nathaniel** it had something to do with an experience under a fig tree that Jesus referred to.
- For **Paul** it was being confronted with a blinding vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus.

In each case this led to a decision not to stay the same or to be like others but enter into a unique learning experience with God.

To have agency is to choose a better future. Without this choice nothing will change. It is like being given the keys to the car: you can drive whenever you want instead of waiting to have to be driven around.

You can tell when a person doesn’t have agency because they will always say we can’t do something because of someone else and has a victim mentality⁴. We blame the government, our parents, our boss, the pastors, our spouse or our kids. Since these others are the ones who are to blame, we can’t change. We don’t have agency.



Incarnation is the end point of the process of agency. Jesus chose to follow the Father’s will, lay his life down no matter what the cost.

Once a learner has agency, they can receive the invitation of the disciple-maker thus entering into a **collaborative connection**. In Mark 1:18 it says “At once they left their nets and followed him.”.

It is a movement from singular to plural. It is a choice that an individual makes to belong to a community of learners.

For a new-born this is like the connection to the mother. For a new-born in Christ it is to desire the milk of the Word in order to grow. (1 Peter 2:2) How many in Christ have never received personalized help to

⁴ Victimization at first seduces you because the argument is so convincing, then it destroys you because it takes away your power to choose. (Source unknown)

grow by connecting with a disciple-maker? Their spiritual maturity has probably been affected by this lack of connection.

This collaborative connection leads us to take **risks**. Risk is faith put into practice. Faith is more than just a mental agreement to some truth. It is taking action based on the object of our faith and implies risk, Agility is the management of risk and it increases as we mature. A baby learns to sit, crawl, walk, run and jump. Each stage involves certain risks. A disciple handles increasingly difficult risks and becomes more risk agile.

Christ involved his disciples in **experiential learning**. Remember the feeding of the 5000 and how Jesus asked them how much bread they had. This was a school of experiential learning.

Traditionally we have made discipleship into sharing information, but the people of God are hungry for experience in discipleship. Because we have not done that, we have made many spectators and only a few workers.

All this leads to a **transforming narrative**. We move from being consumers of the blessings of the Kingdom, to key players in the service of the Kingdom. We go from 'being the ministry' to 'doing the ministry'. We can say we migrate from the bottom half of the figure to the top. Our story changes when this happens.



What the discipler and disciple have in common

For this first step, both the discipler and disciple share the **Power of One**. Christ changed history and continues to look for people who are willing to be involved in changing the world. We take our first step of growth towards being an ambassador of the Kingdom representing our Sovereign.

The Power of One when connected to others leads us to the enormous **potential of 2 or 3**. Christ said "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). The presence of God is manifest in a special way as a result of this connection. We are fortunate that it only takes 2 or 3 gathered to make this happen.

All investment comes with the price of **risk**. We cannot advance unless we are willing to pay this price. We have to carry the cross. The seed must fall into the earth and die. The discipler risks an investment that may not work. The disciple must deny himself or herself in order to follow. We need to love God more than we love others and even our own lives. It is the price tag, that shows the imprint of the nails.

There is a **process** of transformation. For Christ it lasted 3 years and only 11 of the 12 made it. Yet we want to make disciples in 3 weeks or 3 months. We want to offer discipleship like speed dating whereas disciples need the process of a life experience together.

With determination and sacrifice we reach the prize of **multiplication**. We suffer birth pangs until “Christ is formed in others” (Galatians 4:19). We glorify God because it results in labourers being multiplied for the harvest.

So what do disciple-maker and the learner have in common?

- **Incarnate** comes from the **agency** of the individual and demonstrates the history-changing **power of one**.
- **Invite** comes from the belief in **collaborative connection** and shows the **enormous potential of 2 or 3**.
- **Invest** comes from **risk agility** and the conviction of being willing to pay the **price** to teach or to learn.
- **Involve** comes from the conviction of the value of **experiential learning** in the disciple-making **process** and
- **Multiply** comes from the value of the **transforming narrative** that gives us the **prize** of more labourers and a cause most worthy to be celebrated.

Pause here and reflect if this indeed is so. How did Jesus disciple? What are the beginning steps of the learner that lead to be able to reproduce those characteristics. How you answer that will determine how you go about making disciples.

The Five Verbs of Discipleship

How can we summarize these steps to begin to train others in Jesus method? These steps are to be wrapped around the central column of Jesus. I suggest the 5 verbs of social learning best reflect the ‘with Him’ method of Jesus: imagine, connect, risk, reflect and celebrate.

1. **Imagine:** What does the Lord want to do in your life and mine? How does He want to transform our way of praying, observing, and responding? In Joel 2:28 it says, “He will pour out His Spirit on all people. Our sons and daughters will prophesy, old men will dream dreams and young men will see visions.” What a beautiful picture of the spiritual connection that goes on in our minds as a first step of the Kingdom becoming real.

2. **Connect:** How can we connect in 2's or 3's in order to learn? Isn't it great that Jesus didn't say we would have to connect with 200 or 300 in order for this to happen? We can teach people how to connect and then let this happen.
3. **Risk:** We need to encourage these small groupings of people to take risks and through this process deepen our discipleship experience.
4. **Reflect:** We then need to reflect on this process, what worked what didn't. And to measure our actions against what the Scriptures say and learn ways of thinking and being.
5. **Celebrate:** Finally we need to celebrate together. What would Sunday morning look like with a whole congregation celebrating the results of these learning verbs?

One thing we would see is more people excited about what God is doing in their lives. We would also see more people caring for others and helping them grow. The Apostle Paul said "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?" (1 Thes. 2:19)

The dodecahedron model, which you can assemble, is available in Appendix 1. Think about the relationships between the discipler and the learner, what they have in common and the characteristics, which if built into the learner, will produce the end result in the formation of a discipler. It should help a person understand what they need next in their growth.

In the next section we will look at these 5 verbs in more detail and how they can guide us in discipleship.





Chapter 2: Prioritize Discipleship

We can't do everything so pick the best verbs

In the last chapter we looked at the patterns in the discipleship process and suggested that using the 5 verbs of social learning would be a useful tool to build the “being with Jesus” pattern into the DNA of the church. This chapter will look at these verbs in further detail.

In Spanish, Jesus is called “the Verb” so John 1:1 it is translated as “In the beginning was the verb...”. In English we use the noun, “The Word” in this passage which may turn our thinking to something unhelpful. We can practice some contrary actions when we think of discipleship only as a noun.

Traditionally we have made discipleship very info-centric. We often think we need to study a course or book or something printed. While these tools can be helpful, they can dangerously separate truth from relationship, or theory from application. We can amass knowledge which becomes an end in itself. We study about discipleship whereas Jesus commissioned us to teach others to obey what He taught. There is a big difference.

If we can only move from the noun to the verb, we will reframe the pattern. Instead of adding discipleship as the 1000th thing to our overcrowded plate of stuff, we will prioritize a few actions that will make our learning central to our spiritual life. We will engage differently, especially by connecting with others and taking action. We will measure these actions by the Scriptures and we can celebrate the results.

Imagine: People are inquisitive with wonder, curiosity and interest

Imagine is the process God used when He made us in His image. All obedience and faith starts in our imagination then involves our will in carrying it out in actions. It is easier to be passive and let others imagine what God wants for us. It is asking ourselves, why are we here? How does Jesus want to change the world through us?

The process starts in our minds, in our imagination. This does not mean we ‘make stuff up’, but God sows thoughts, gives us the sketch and then asks us to fill in the details. In Genesis chapter 1, it says He made humanity in His image (*imago dei*). Image is the building block of imagination. It is fascinating to

see the first task God gave Adam was to name the animals. He asked him to use his imagination. God could have easily told him the names but He wanted to see what Adam would come up with.

And so today, God impresses us with a verse. He moves our heart. He prompts us to pray. Imagination is the domain where we process these raw materials and from where action is born. We need to unlearn the effects of too much information. We have consumed it like fast food and it dulls the ache for a while. But our hearts are not engaged. We become passive and bored. Our imagination is yearning to be set free to imagine what God might do, as we pray and take risks in that direction. This is so much bigger than learning a set of facts.

Jesus engaged the imagination of the blind man when he asked him “What do you want me to do for you?” Surely Jesus knew the answer but he wanted the man to imagine the possibilities and activate his faith. He engaged the imagination when he told parables, which were not easily solved and people had to think. He used cryptic speech to challenge people’s mindset, like with Nicodemus who wondering how a person could enter again their mother’s womb.

One friend said she spent months thinking about the question “What do you want me to do for you?” It seemed so simple but the longer she wrestled with it, the deeper it penetrated her dreams and hopes.

Imagine is fueled by stimulation, incubation, permission and protection. God can use anything as a point of stimulation: a word, an event, a curiosity, a failure, a verse. This is mixed with time for incubation where thoughts are processed, combined and reconsidered. Permission is necessary to know that as a community we will provide both the freedom to fail and protection from losing our way. Imagination without community can be dangerous.

A fascinating verse on imagine is Ephesians 3:20,21:

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

I am struck by the limitlessness of God’s power, the fact that it is working within us and that it addresses imagination directly. Imagination is found at the intersection of God’s power and His glory. We need to spend time in this neighbourhood and then meet others there which leads us to is our second verb, to connect.

Connect: Learning happens through connection with God and others

Connect is the process that gives us life. It is not good to be alone. We build connection and have the amazing reward of God's presence demonstrated in a powerful way (Matt.18:20). The pathway of connection is God's plan for us to escape from the loneliness of individualism that marks our culture.

The Gospel is about connecting or reconnecting. It starts with reconciliation and being bought back to God by the blood of Christ. This reconciliation reaches outward to people as we (re)connect with others and even with ourselves.

Forgiveness is an essential component of connection but it doesn't stop there. It builds into collaboration: "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed." (Ecclesiastes 4:9 NLT). We become fellow workers with God (1 Cor.3:9) and with others (3 John 8).

"None of us know as much as all of us" is a helpful saying. The sooner I connect what comes from my imagining with another person in prayer, sharing ideas and resources, the quicker I will learn. New possibilities become visible, plans are refined and previous experiences are engaged. Different gifts are expressed. Ideas, even incomplete ones, are combined to become something dynamic. We offer what we are good at and don't have to be perfect in everything. We are stirred up to greater love and action. This is one of the central purposes of fellowship (Hebrews 10:24,25).

Connection needs willingness to change and willingness to contribute. The first contains items as drastic as repentance, a surrender and change based on God's authority. But also it implies an ongoing willingness to learn, a holding loosely of what we know, a letting go of our pet ideas, to embrace new perspectives. A willingness to contribute implies, while not possessing all the answers, we freely give what we have. We offer the best we have, as imperfect as it may be. God uses the "two fish and 5 loaves" to feed multitudes.

Connection is integral to discipleship as demonstrated by the 54 verses of "one-another" commands in the New Testament, half of them expressing in some form "love one another". Without meaningful connection, this commandment can only be theoretical. As the saying goes, "Loving God and the world isn't as difficult, it is my next door neighbour that I can't stand".

Risk: Faith applied with uncertain outcomes

Risk is faith applied with uncertain outcomes. Faith is more than the acceptance of certain theological statements. It is to live for and obey God, guided by the Scriptures, to bring God's love to a hurting world through our service, prayer and generosity. Failure from a human perspective is entirely possible.

Imagination and connection prepare us for risk. Risk is faith applied and creed demonstrated by action. Just as love is impossible without connection, faith is impossible without risk. It is choosing to trust the promises of God instead of variable circumstances or luck. You can't do anything by faith without taking a risk. Risk is taking action, even though we may fear failure, abandonment or the unknown. It is reaching out in love without being loved back. It is giving, serving, taking initiative, persevering, and labouring until Christ is formed in the other and in us.

The story of the four friends taking their paralyzed friend to Jesus (Luke 5:18-20) is a beautiful risk case study. It started in the imagination of one who suggested it to his friends: “What if we could only get our friend to Christ?” Imagining what Jesus could do, led to connecting on a number of levels. They went carrying their friend but the house was packed with people and they couldn’t get in. The risk price tag suddenly inflated. They hadn’t come with ropes and ladders nor with the intention of breaking through someone else’s roof. They cobbled together a plan, used what they had, got themselves and others very dirty in the process and caught Jesus’ attention. Seeing *their* faith, he healed the paralyzed man.

There was no formal teaching on how to do this, no previous example of ministry strategy. Not even any official permission that this act of destruction of property was worth the cost. We would never allow this today. We have become risk adverse instead of risk agile. We would see the Lord doing greater things if we could increase our risk tolerance. Taking risk in community is wonderfully exhilarating and our souls long for this kind of engagement with God and others.

Reflect: The Scriptures, the Holy Spirit and the community as guides

Reflect is the second event in every learning process after the experience itself. To reflect is to bring all our experiences and relationships, hopes and disappointments back to God and listen for His guidance. The Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures, events and other people to teach us.

This process of imagination-connection-risk requires reflection. How are the Scriptures, the collective wisdom of the community of faith and the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit guiding the process? Every faith interaction allows us to learn during the event itself and then thinking about the event afterward. It involves private reflection through our regular devotional times and corporate involvement, probably best through small groups sharing and in discipleship two’s and three’s.

Of course reflecting can start the imagination process. A verse from Scriptures or a teaching can initiate a faith adventure. In reality there is no linear sequence. Imagination, reflection, connection or risk happen in seemingly spontaneous order, with one action provoking others almost simultaneously. During a time of prayer it may occur to us to invite someone else into the adventure, or a promise from the Scriptures comes to mind. Or someone shares a thought that is impressed on our heart. Risk, connection, imagination billow around us as we practice this and we need to find moments of quiet to hear the ‘still small voice’ of God speaking into our situation.

This reflection needs to be made intentional as busy-ness will rob us of this time. Start simply with something like 7 minutes with God where you pray, read a short passage, reread it, pick a verse that stands out and pray. Do it with someone else. An interesting variation, by Neil Cole, is to agree ahead of time on which passages to read during the week and if either of the partners fail to complete the readings, both repeat the readings the next week. This accountability can be very motivating. Cole also suggests increasing the goal to stretch us to something like reading 5 chapters a day. This gives a magnificent overview of Scriptures and becomes a major spiritual objective.

Journaling can be a helpful part of the reflecting process especially with review of the journal monthly or annually. We see repeated themes and the varied way God gets our attention. Journaling need not be only word-based. Drawings and photography can capture the emotion and feelings as a record of our journey.

Celebrate: Responding back to God through the discipleship experience

Celebrate is the act of worship as we experience Him and His will in this world. We celebrate through sharing food and time together, telling our stories and in the practice of the Lord's Supper. We declare our thankfulness for our journey as an act of praise in the experience of knowing Him.

When discipleship becomes a verb there is much to celebrate. Especially as people respond to God's grace, the stories of transformation are inspiring. Because they often 'just don't happen' without some kind of stepping out in faith, some may be left wondering why their spiritual life seems so sterile. They have been spectators for so long that they don't know how to become participants.

While celebration is the fruit of the practice of the other verbs, it can also be a starting point. "Sing O barren one..." (Isaiah 54:1) is a great place to start for those longing for but not yet experiencing having spiritual descendants. This is a wonderful promise to claim that "the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married."

Imagine a faith community practicing these verbs and coming to celebrate together, testimonies shared and new ideas spawned. New connections are made as others are inspired to become engaged in Kingdom activity. It garners a life of its own with the potential of 'going viral'.

Equipping the church with these verbs

"So what do you really want to learn?" is a very important question. Motivation is one of the essential ingredients for making learning happen. Think of your devotional time as a place where God speaks to your imagination through His word. Make it something more than a religious exercise.

Keep your connecting antennae up. You never know when the next person you meet will play a key role in God doing some Kingdom activity and view celebration to include God working amongst His people.

"Big breakthroughs happen when what is suddenly possible meets what is desperately necessary"(Thomas Friedman). Imagine the impact of this verb-oriented discipleship if it could help mobilize the people of God?

We need to view teaching in a different light from the traditional telling/instructional process. Consider this definition: **Teaching is the process of modelling, curating resources, instruction and coaching in**

application.” It looks at outcomes and not just the process.⁵ It is setting up an experiential learning environment and not just telling the answer.

There is one more step needed to be understood before we get to your action plan. In the next chapter we will propose a **systematized approach** to learning these verbs.

⁵ Curating may be difficult to understand, because that is what happens in an art show or museum as to how the items are arranged. In our information-rich culture, curating becomes essential to provide the right resources at the right time. Because of technology, this is suddenly possible as well as desperately needed.



Chapter 3: Systematize Discipleship

Five Levels of Challenge

We have looked at the “being with Jesus” discipleship framework and how this can be expressed through the five learning verbs: imagine, connect, risk, reflect and celebrate. Now we need to see how this can systematically be applied in a faith community.

We might not like the term *systematize* because it sounds like factory automation but we don’t mean that. We define system as *a set of things working together as part of an interconnecting network*. A tree is a system made up of subsystems, like the roots, trunk, branches and leaves. When the New Testament talks of the Body, it is describing a system⁶.

We propose five simple characteristics:

- 1) For every learning verb (imagine, connect, risk, reflect and celebrate), there are **five different challenge levels**, starting from easy to more difficult.
- 2) **People can choose** both the learning verb and the challenge level where they want to engage for their own discipleship growth.
- 3) As a learner it will be your job to **connect with others** both in being a disciple and in discipling. We can facilitate this but we cannot do the job for you.
- 4) **The system learns** from what works through feedback, suggestions and the stories of people like you who are using the components.
- 5) The system can help **visualize** what is happening so it can facilitate the celebration of how discipleship is carried out.

⁶ We use all types of systems. Some are haphazard or not accomplishing what we desire. We might have a discipleship system aimed at helping the new arrivals but it neglects more mature Christians leaving them without a challenge.

Observer

The Observer looks for others who practice learning about God. They search for patterns that catch their interest and demonstrate an attractive learning process. This builds confidence and leads to opportunities to ask questions and discover how to grow.

It is fascinating to watch babies learn. I would love to know how much a baby learns in the first 2 years in proportion to the rest of life. They absorb a vast amount of information, looking around and slowly recognizing patterns in every part of their world. This is coupled with a growing perception of new frontiers, relating their observations to an ever increasing amount of data.

Jesus commanded us to observe the birds of the air, the flowers of the field and the widow giving her two small coins. Abraham was told to observe the stars in the sky. The practice of the discipleship verbs can be observed by the person who wants to learn. All that is needed is to find someone who is a step ahead of you and ask them some questions and watch what they do. It is an accessible option once you know what you are looking for.

Imitator

The Imitator has learned to ask questions and practice what has been observed. While it may not feel natural, there is support from others to keep trying. The feedback helps keep the effort sustainable.

An observer grows into an imitator quite naturally. We SEE then DO, often unconsciously. The verb to *imitate* in the New Testament uses the word “to mime”. Again babies do this automatically. They learn more this way than anything that is formally taught.

We can “mime” certain skills and attitudes in discipleship until they become natural and feel like they belong to us. Think of how we learned to ride a bike: we saw others do it, we climbed onboard, perhaps with some training wheels, someone ran alongside then they let go, we fell a few times and then carried on. And if we ever had a chance to teach someone else, we imitated the same method.

Practitioner

The Practitioner is seeking to master learning of physical or social skills, knowledge, attitudes and good habits. No longer is there dependency on someone else to make this happen. Activities are accomplished at a consistent level. There is benefit from helping others in the journey.

The Practitioner of these learning verbs has the necessary skill and ability to disciple in their known environment without requiring the direct support of another. At this point they could benefit from helping another grow and move from needing to be guided to being able to guide.

Innovator

The Innovator takes practiced skills in one environment and experiments with them in another. Or it may be in the same environment that has changed. There is a resilience and willingness to risk and fail. This level requires perseverance and proven character and benefits from a supportive community.

It may be in trying to figure out what works in changing environments such as cross-cultural ministry. Or it may be their own environment that has somehow changed. The four friends taking their paralyzed friend to Jesus became innovators when they realized they couldn't get through the door and figured out a new method of entry.

With today's rapid rate of change, innovators are required and as a community we need to provide support for some trial-and-error ministry until we get this change figured out. People are learning differently as a result of technology, their trust in institutions is changing, their support and connection to community is weaker, their work-week is lengthening and the increase prevalence of the blended family is complicating availability for regular activities.

Changing financial support patterns, the high construction cost of church buildings and the global needs of the Great Commission all suggest the need to consider downsizing some physical structures to better concentrate on discipleship and missions. Innovators are needed but they cannot do their job if the control structures are too rigid.

Master Builder

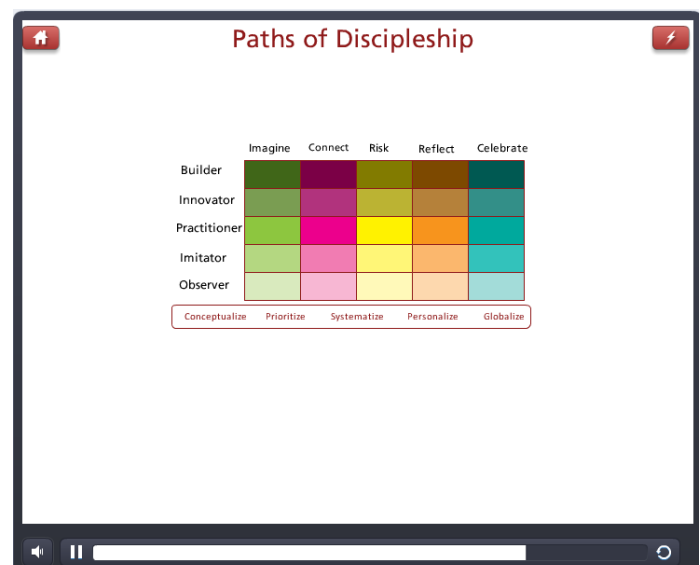
The Master Builder is a leader tested by fire and who learns to speak to issues in the faith community and beyond. There is a recognized authority and ability to build with care and skill in influencing others.

The Apostle Paul referred to himself as a master-builder or architect, which describes a leadership role that speaks to design and strategy of what is taking place. The master builder has a voice that is heard at the community or denominational level.

The Growth Grid

When you combine the five learning verbs with the five challenge levels, you get a rubric growth grid (coloured squares).

This provides a just-in-time learning opportunity that fits the needs of a varied population from beginner to leader. It is massively scalable, which means moving from a small size to a large size



while still maintaining the elements that follow the patterns of “Being with Him”.

It also provides a framework to curate resources that we talked about before. That is the organization and delivery of the right resources at the right time for the greatest likelihood of growth to occur.

Remember this is an artificial growth system, which is much less complex than real life. A simple system can model the process of taking action. This grid is not a new structure to be instituted! Throw it away sooner rather than later, once people get the idea of how to learn for themselves. Then work towards the complexity of real-life discipleship systems.

Now that you understand the concept of discipleship and the expression of this in the 5 verbs of learning with the 5 challenge levels, you are ready for personalizing the process.



Chapter 4: Personalize Discipleship

We have presented the concepts of discipleship and how they are prioritized by the 5 learning verbs and systematized by 5 challenge levels. Now it is your turn to determine what you need to be learning in discipleship. This is where you *imagine* -> *connect* -> *risk* -> *reflect and celebrate* through a whole variety of learning challenges. People could personalize this by simply going to the Bible as a guide and practice these 5 learning verbs. It need not be more complicated than that. In Appendix 3 there is a simple table where you can brainstorm action steps for each verb. Add observations and check your progress. You could practice, study and learn anything using these verbs as a guide.

Guidelines

Some of you would like some coaching so here are some guidelines:

- Think of these activities as training wheels to learn to ride a bike. They are meant to give you the feel of this, not be an exclusive or restrictive curriculum. Think of this as a learning game with challenge levels. At some point you will 'get it', you can punt the training wheels and ride the bike. You may find them helpful to put on someone else's bike or you may figure out a better way to teach them.
- We call this tool the **Paths of Discipleship** because you can start anywhere you want. Read the profile definitions then decide and follow which one fits best for yourself or others. These are just ideas and not biblical standards and are meant to give you a starting place. They are not permanent structures, nor are they meant to generate labels to use with each other.
- Look at the activities suggested for that profile⁷. Some may seem too simple or too difficult. The important thing is to find an activity that is meaningful, where you start learning and applying what you learn. You are in charge of your learning agency so improve your activity in any way

⁷ In the Paths of Discipleship software, www.networkchurch.ca/paths/, the activity options are accessed through the icon that looks like a fork in the road. These are only available inside of the rubric when viewing the profile. There is a tutorial on how to use this software in the box below the table on the home page. At the end of this chapter there are some screen shots that illustrate this further.

you can. If you want an overall view of the challenge levels and action verb profiles see Appendix 2.

- Our goal is to populate each profile with multiple activities, order the choices based on the characteristics of the learners and their preferences and allow people to choose what they find most interesting. The important thing is to start learning experientially.
- All learning will be improved if you can connect with others in the process. This will be one of the lasting benefits in exploring Paths of Discipleship.

Suggested Uses

- **Personally:** Just explore. Decide how you want to use this. It could be anywhere you wish to learn. The activities will lead you to connect with others. But do not use the excuse that you can't find anyone else to partner with to start. Go back to *imagine* if that is the case.
- **In two's and three's:** each one can select their starting point and report together regularly, as reciprocal mentors, sharing discoveries and providing support. Or there could be a more deliberate, discipler/disciple role. Experiment and see what works best.
- **As a small group:** as with two's and three's the group could work on the same starting points or clustered around different areas. The 5 learning verbs are really a way of thinking about growing, allowing faith and creativity, building stronger connections and celebrating.
- **As a congregation:** This option provides for deeper integration of teaching and practice. The sermons can give strategic support and the Paths of Discipleship can provide the tactical⁸. Use the 5 learning verbs to figure out how they can be used in the congregation. If the fractal is accurate, it will provide the guidance you need.
- **As a network:** Supposing that roughly 1/3 of the world is Christian, and even if only 1 in a thousand Christians wanted to build learner agency in the discipling process, that still gives a potential pool of 700,000 learners. If the Lord changed the world through the eleven disciples, surely this is still a sizeable group for learning something together! Let's figure out how to connect so what is suddenly possible addresses what is desperately needed.

A Word of Caution

"We vastly overestimate what can be accomplished in the short run and vastly underestimate what we can do in the long run" (Gord Jones). This change of mentality from a "dependency-building, passive, being-fed" model of church to an "equipping for the works of service in the sphere where each one finds themselves" will take time. Not much will be accomplished in a semester, although Paths of Discipleship

⁸ Strategy is a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim and tactics are the art of disposing armed forces in order of battle and of organising operations, especially during contact with an enemy. (Adam)

could be set up as an option for people to explore. But if a congregation asked themselves “**where do we want to be in 5 or 10 years**” different things could happen.

The reason for the long-run thinking is because we do not build trust that quickly. Learners may not believe they really are entrusted with the goal of figuring out where they need to learn and helping others. Isn't this the pastor's job? They need time to think and to fail at some initial attempts. (You have to fall a few times to learn to ride a bike.) Also to have any meaningful outreach it may take years in some cases to rebuild the eroded trust that has undergone the institutional church. Recently it took me 6 months just to get a police check so I could volunteer in a public institution. (The fact that police checks are now necessary, demonstrate what has happened to trust in the public arena.)

It might take 6 months for a congregation to really understand that this is a serious opportunity. “We are not going to let you off the hook. This is your job. We will provide just-in-time coaching as you journey, but you have to figure out how to grow and how to help others grow.” It might take another two to three years to develop deeply meaningful friendships both inside and outside of the church. As they become involved with the 5 learning verbs, new things will be imagined that never occurred previously. New things will be tried. As the verbs spiral outward we will be changed in the process, new forms and ways of doing things will come to light.

Finally anything truly sustainable will require sustained effort over time. We must be using our limited capacities carefully. We need to connect deeply with some and not just have a superficially connection with many. This takes time and focus. What follows is a description of every square on the rubric in Appendix 2 along with a suggested activity as an illustration. You may wish to browse the remainder of the chapter to see sample activities based on each profile or skip to the next chapter.

The Imagine Challenges

Imagine-Observers: We feel a stirring in our hearts that our experience of God could be much greater. We want to be open to change but are unsure what to do next.

Our challenge may be to get started. Do not fear the unknown as God is already there and ready to make Himself known more deeply to us. Be open to His purposes that lead us on this adventure.

Sample Activity

1. *How would you define and describe your imagination?*
2. *How do you feel God relates to your imagination?*
3. *What activates or dulls your imagination?*
4. *Who in the Bible can you find where imagination seems to play a role?*
5. *List people you know personally where God seems active in their imagination. Perhaps it is just that they seem to “know God” and relate to Him in an attractive way.*

6. *Ask the people the questions listed above and look for commonalities. Examine your feelings about their response.*

Imagine-Imitators: We observe others and are now ready to experiment with imagining under the protection and stimulation of community. We are curious about practices that enable us to grow deeper with Jesus.

Our challenge may be to allow God to really speak to our imagination; otherwise we may substitute genuine experience with collecting information.

Sample Activity

1. *Approach the people on your list from the last activity and ask them if you can join them in something where imagination plays a part. (They might not use the same terms for imagination or they might not be aware of how imagination works.) Activities could include praying, reading the Scriptures, planning activities or practicing some kind of artistic expression. Hint: be clear to put a limit on the time you are requesting, like "Could we meet once or twice for an hour. I would like some feedback based on what I see in your life".*
2. *Begin by imitating something you see them do. It could be something like attempting the way they seem to 'listen' in prayer and then respond or how they take a verse of Scripture and use it. It could be how they get new ideas through journaling. It could be how they have a devotional time. It could be an art project.*
3. *Ask for their observations on what you tried. Tell them what you are learning? What would they suggest for next steps? You could ask to meet again if that seems helpful but be sensitive to their other commitments. Check the Reflection activity column for more ideas.*

Imagine-Practitioners: We are familiar with God speaking to our imagination through the Scriptures, events and people. We desire a greater consistency and depth in the process.

Our challenge may be to expand our tolerance for the discomfort to learn so we don't repeat the same lessons. In helping others, we will learn something about ourselves.

Sample Activity

1. *Review your journal and take an inventory of how you are using your imagination in knowing and serving God? What habits are becoming boring? Where do you feel you need new ideas? What is working for you?*
2. *Make a list of people who you think you could encourage in developing their imagination in knowing and serving God. What questions could you ask them that could be an encouragement in their growth? Set up at least one meeting. And be open to repeat this if they respond. Be aware of what you could learn about your own perspectives as you encourage them.*

3. *Identify a learning project where you would like to launch out. At this point describe the project and what it could involve. Be bold and do not think “of potential problems” as yet. Pray and listen to God. Dare to dream.*
4. *Take some action step on this project. Likely there could be some step in connecting with others although you may feel you need to prepare something first. Set a goal and action date for this step and be mindful how God may be speaking to you throughout this project.*
5. *You might find helpful reflecting on how is this different from what you have done before. What might God be saying to you through this?*

Imagine-Innovators: We are in a flow of imagining with God, wanting to discover a better way to do anything. We benefit from a creative team atmosphere where this can be developed.

Our challenge may be to patiently encourage teams in this practice, allowing others to catch up in order to learn together.

Sample Activity

1. *List things you have done that have shaped you as an innovator. What got you started? What happened? What fueled the process?*
2. *Where do you long to see innovation? Is it because of some change in a familiar environment or something entirely new? What doors does God seem to be opening? What is the evidence of that? How are these confirmed by circumstances and others? What resources are you willing to put into this? See (Ginsburg, 2013)*
3. *Where in the Scriptures do you see innovation expressed in times of change and what role did the individual play? Think of the pivotal people like John the Baptist, or the Apostle Paul or Jesus Himself. Think of issues the early church faced? Were all the opinions homogeneous? How did they process this? How did God guide them? How could you apply these principles?*
4. *Where is your project truly innovative? How is it likely to be resisted? How is it building into who you are and the gifting and calling that God has given you? What patterns are observed?*
5. *How can you build a team around this imaginative project? (See connecting activities)*

Imagine-Builders: We are in a flow of imagining with God, wanting to discover a better way to do anything. We benefit from a creative team atmosphere where this can be developed.

Our challenge may be to patiently encourage teams in this practice, allowing others to catch up in order to learn together.

Sample Activity

1. *Review these Cambridge MBA lecture notes (MBA, 2012). Which of these creative methods are you familiar with and muse on how you have used them in your life and ministry?*
2. *Do a web search on creative thinking / imagination and list 5 to 10 useful resources. Evaluate these resources according to Scriptural principles.*

3. *List areas where you need to apply imagination in your leadership and determine which resource you will use to help you. Determine who you will report to, who you can involve in your project and what your action steps will be.*

The Connect Challenges

Connect-Observers: We do not want to journey alone and want to learn how to connect with others in learning from Jesus. We are tired of superficiality yet are not sure how much we can trust others who say they follow Jesus.

Our challenge may be to take small steps that are sincere and sustainable. Do not expect others to respond immediately because they too need time and space to learn.

Sample Activity

1. *What do you find easy and difficult about connecting with others?*
2. *Draw a “connection tree” of those in your life. It is like tree trunk with branches and the branches represent family, friends, workmates or any other categories you might have. You might do it thinking about a certain question like “People who encourage me.” Or “people who I want to encourage. Or “people who are important to me”.*
3. *Look up “active listening” on the Internet. What is it and how is it done?*
4. *Look around for people who seem good at connecting. Observe how many questions do they ask others in a conversation and what are the types of questions. Look at their body language. How are they standing? What do they look like they are feeling during the conversation? How do they express interest? What do these people have in common and what are their differences? Especially look for the way they take appropriate risks in the relationship.*

Connect-Imitators: We may still feel uncomfortable connecting with others, but we are willing to try. We desire coaching from fellow learners as we begin to practice what we observe.

Our challenge may be to find our authentic style while we practice things that may not feel natural.

Sample Activity

1. *Have a conversation with someone on your list of good connectors about how you are learning to better connect with people and that you have noticed their ability in this area. You would like to hang around them a bit and practice what you see them doing and perhaps get their feedback.*
2. *Try asking people questions, actively listening and see how many questions you can ask to get to know the other person. If you can do this with one of your good connecting friends observing, ask them later for suggestions on questions they would have asked or whether you asked anything inappropriate.*

3. *Keep your eyes open for the way Jesus asked questions. Someone counted it up and found out that Jesus asked 183 questions and only answered 3. He asked 307 questions after the other answered the first question. What does this tell you? Is there anything to imitate in that example?*
4. *Think about where you need to imitate initiative in connecting, planning, calling, inviting, or taking the first step. How much do you wait for others to take the initiative?*

Connect-Practitioners: We have established a relaxed and genuine interest in others and warmly care for people as we share life. We ask good questions and are active listeners. People like being with us.

Our challenge may be to more deliberately connect with others so they can benefit and grow. We may need to be careful not to resent the constant initiative required to reach out.

Sample Activity

1. *Prayerfully review the list of people in your connection tree (see connecting observer) and ask God to speak to you about how you are doing? Is there someone you had promised to do something for and need to complete it? Are there some who could use a phone call or a chat together? Does the Lord bring anyone else to mind?*
2. *Do a web search for “the one-anothers” in the New Testament and look over the list and ask “what am I good at?” and “where do I need to grow?”.*
3. *Is there someone you could encourage by sharing this activity and thinking together about these commands?*
4. *Do a web search on the difference between open and closed questions. Keep a list of the really good questions you come across? What makes a question bad?*

Connect-Innovators: We are troubled by the deep isolation in our society and long to discover new ways for others to experience God’s love in a deeper way. We have many new ideas; more than we can hope to practice.

Our challenge may be to not overload others with the expectations of what we think God wants us to do.

Sample Activity

1. *Read “I once was lost: What postmodern skeptics taught us about their path to Jesus” (Doug Everts, 2008)*
2. *Are there ways you can help build trust, curiosity, willingness to change that leads to active seeking and commitment. While this is addressed to people seeking Christ, think about how it could help anybody grow.*
3. *What is something new you can learn and apply from this book? How does this resonate with your knowledge of the Scriptures or is there a potential conflict?*

Connect-Builders: We deeply value how life comes through connection with God and others and understand the sacred trust this represents as leaders.

Our challenge may be to constantly teach the “to be with Him” discipleship path while still taking the time to practice it ourselves and demonstrate the process.

Sample Activity

1. *Read through the Sermon on the Mount from the perspective of what it teaches about connecting. How is did Jesus model this teaching as a leader?*
2. *Do a web search for “transparent leader” or “authentic leader” and identify some resources worth investigating. You may choose to focus on a book to study, or a broader survey of what is out there. What are the pro’s and con’s for transparency in leadership. Is this really necessary? Was Jesus like that?*

The Risk Challenges

Risk-Observers: We want to move into action with God but are unsure where to begin. We want to act on our desire for change to really experience God in the midst of life.

Our challenge may be to not make this a purely intellectual pursuit. We want to be in control, but sense that risk calls us to a new level of trust.

Sample Activity

1. *Who do you know, both in the church and outside of the church, who took some kind of risk? What characters in the Bible seemed able to take risks and what do you know about them? (The paralytic and his 4 friends is a good place to start, Mark 2:1-12)*
2. *From observation or from conducting an interview, consider the following: What does risk mean? Do you consider yourself above-average in being able to take risks? What motivates you to do that? What do you think are the enemies of taking risks? What does risk-taking contribute to your life? What part does Jesus play in risk-taking? What Bible verses help you take risks?*
3. *Review your notes and write a summary of what you observe.*

Risk-Imitators: We observe others taking faith risks and we want to seriously engage in kingdom adventure. We want someone to run alongside our bikes and not let go too soon.

Our challenge may be to ask for help in specific areas where we are ready to engage and take the leap.

Sample Activity

From your observation of risk-takers what are some things you could imitate on a smaller scale?

Can you discuss your ideas with one of the people you interviewed? What Bible verses encourage you to take risks? Read Hebrews 11. Who in that chapter seemed to take the most risks? What is the relationship between faith and risk taking?

You have been taking a risk if you talked with someone already about taking a risk. If risk taking is like a muscle, how do you exercise it? Consider the quote: "Each time we take a risk, we become more able to take a risk". (Brené Brown). Why or why not do you think that is true?

Take a bold step of risk by imitating something you saw in others. This does not mean, imitate exactly what they did, but imitate some aspect of the spirit of adventure, loss of control and trust in God that you observed. It is better to take a definite small step than to endlessly try to find something really challenging but not take that step.

Tell someone what happened and what you learned.

Risk-Practitioners: We know how to take risks but we tend to err on the side of 'comfort'. We love to have a backup plan in case God doesn't do what we hoped.

Our challenge may be stretch our faith and go out on the limb more so that our learning is genuinely covering new ground and including others in the adventure.

Sample Activity

- 1. Although you are stirred up by others' example in taking faith risks, you have taken enough risks by now that you can initiate and carry through an idea. Think about the risks you have taken. (List them.) What has worked? What has helped you? What could you have done differently?*
- 2. Imagine hearing the people talking at your funeral as they discuss the risks you have taken. What would you like to hear them say? What things might they say that you would regret?*
- 3. Now ask God to show you a step of faith you can take. Don't worry about it having to be too great. You are not trying to impress anybody. You just want to take a step of God that pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). Do it and see what happens, then tell somebody about it.*

Risk-Innovators: We long to find the frontier of risk in the Kingdom and have no shortage of imagining how we would like to see things improved or people mobilized.

Our challenge may be to take action and not just criticize the system. We also need help to sustain what we start.

Sample Activity

This is where things could get very interesting. Ask God to make you aware of an area of risk that is a new experience in your life. This is not to be hurried into but clear steps need to be obeyed. In your times of prayer about this, review Scriptures and notes in your journal, looking for common themes where God has been speaking to you. Review what you have identified in the imagining exercises and share and pray together with some from your connecting experience.

*Bono describes these ideas as **your Moonshot**, as something “of infinite possibility, doing the things everyone says can't be done”, something that “renews your sense of adventure and purpose.” (Bono, 2005)*

Your risk may involve some complicated steps and the involvement of others. Before committing anyone else remember that this needs to be negotiated and their input may help your plan evolve in something more robust and sustainable.

Write out your moonshot to fit on a page. Include key verses of Scripture. Consider doing a draft and then letting it sit for a few days and revisiting it. Share it with others who are important in your life.

Risk-Builders: We want to facilitate the process of the church reaching the world and be a blessing that challenges the darkness. We are tired of mediocrity in ourselves and in others.

Our challenge may be to not use people for our ends, yet help stretch them by our personal example and practical equipping to become all that God intends

Sample Activity

How do you steer a community in risk taking? Your community could be your immediate family, a small group, a congregation, a business or a denomination.

What Biblical principles do you know that speak of risk? Do a word search at biblegateway.com for the word ‘risk’.

What does the business literature say about risk management? Lots of church literature discusses reducing risks. How do we keep from going into ‘safe mode’ while still being safe? (In computer terms, safe mode is a reduced capacity running state that is used to avoid problems.)

How are you incarnating risk for the people you are trying to lead? What questions do you have and how can you connect with other leaders to discuss these?

The Reflect Challenges

Reflect-Observers: We are curious about the spiritual aspects of events and conversations as they happen, but we feel blocked in understanding what they mean, their relative importance or what to do or say about them.

Our challenge may be to break through these barriers by spending time reflecting on what has been seen in order to discern the "what" and the "so what".

Sample Activity

1. *Who do you know who seems to have a dynamic relationship with God and how do you think they developed it? You might think of some example from the Bible or people you know. If you don't know anybody, pray that God will allow you to meet some people like that.*
2. *What do you look for as the most important characteristics of a dynamic relationship with God? Make a list of a few that seem important to you. How do these characteristics relate to the 5 verbs of learning (Imagine, connect, risk, reflect, celebrate)?*
3. *Begin a practice of seven minutes with God. It is five simple steps and you can start anywhere in the Bible, but if you have never done it you might want to start in one of the Gospels or in Psalm 1.*
 - a. **Pray** that God will speak to you as you read.
 - b. **Read** a paragraph or chapter of the Bible
 - c. **Reread** it slowly with a listening heart
 - d. **Pick a favourite verse.** (Writing it down can help to remember it, include why you chose this verse.)
 - e. **Pray** that God will give you strength to use this truth.

Reflect-Imitators: We notice the pattern of more experienced believers in their ability to discern spiritual themes, events and conversations. We try these patterns and reflect on their spiritual meaning and impact.

Our challenge may be to become consistent in the discipline of reflection and to find what is most helpful to interpret all of life through these disciplines.

Sample Activity

1. *From the list of people you identified in the Reflecting Observer, ask the following questions:*
 - a. *What do you do in your devotional time with God (prayer and the reading/study of the Bible). If there is a method, what are the details of how you practice that?*
 - b. *How do you relate what you read to what you are experiencing in your walk with God?*
 - c. *Could we practice a couple of devotional times together so I could learn how to do this?*
 - d. *Do you have suggestions for things I might try?*
2. *Think about the above experience. How would you summarize the characteristics of a dynamic relationship with God? Which of these are you practicing or would like to practice?*
3. *Think about your experience of imagining, connecting, risking, reflecting and celebrating. What can you imitate that you have observed in others? As you do this, observe what your authentic style of relating to God is.*

Reflect-Practitioners: We have sufficiently practiced the discipline of reflection to make it a habit, a natural response, even under trying circumstances. We consistently pause and ask the question - "what are we seeing and what does God want us to learn, say or do about it?"

Our challenge may be avoid ruts and look for new ways to improve and include others in the growth process.

Sample Activity

1. *Here is a method of meeting with another believer called the DNA Dyad where two people work on building their relationship with God around:*
 - a. **D**ivine Truth
 - b. **N**urturing Relationships
 - c. **A**postolic Mission
2. **D:** *A mutually defined Scriptural reading goal for the week. If either misses, both repeat the readings. The goal should have a 'commanding presence' in our week, big enough to stretch us but something not overwhelming.*
3. **N:** *Five Questions for Growth to refer to in your time together:*
 - a. *How have you sensed God's presence since we have last met?*
 - b. *What do you think He is teaching you?*
 - c. *How have you been responding to what he has said/shown you?*
 - d. *What risks have you taken for God?*
 - e. *What sin do you need to confess?*
4. **A:** *Individually pray Luke 10:2 daily and see what happens. (Set phone alarm for 10:02)*
5. *Practice the **DNA Dyad** with someone else. Consider reading through the whole Bible.*
6. *This is available on a printable card: <http://www.devedinternational.net/nwc/DNA.pdf>*

Reflect-Innovators: We look for new ways to notice, reflect and integrate life with God into everything. We are driven by a desire to improve the process and deepen authentic spiritual engagement both in ourselves and others.

Our challenge may be to raise the perspective from the individual to an overarching group level and to keep it simple.

Sample Activity

We use the expression "hearing God's voice" or "God spoke to me" sometimes in quite a casual way. Most of us don't audibly 'hear' God although that could certainly happen.

Take some time to reflect on the ways God has spoken to you. What happened as a result?

Example: I remember when I was alone in the house and was just waking up when I heard a voice say 'Yes!' I sat bolt upright in bed, although I may have been dreaming, it sounded like a real voice, one with great authority. My first thought was that voice has to be obeyed. I didn't know what to do, but went to a usual prayer meeting. It started with someone reading the verse: 'For no matter how many promises

God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.’ This really got my attention and I started to pay much closer attention to the promises in the Bible.

What would be a truly innovate thing you could do in reflecting on how God is working in and through you? Consider art, a writing project, an extended time with God, a new reading plan etc.

Report back to others who share your interest.

Reflect-Builders: We are able to step back and look for the big picture how God directs His people. We seek to build reflection into community life and develop strategies to move larger numbers of believers through this growth process.

Our challenge may be to raise other builders to ‘go to scale’ in the leadership process and lead the community through *genuine* spiritual experiences.

Sample Activity

1. *How do you lead a congregation or group of people in the reflexive process of measuring our lives, actions and learning against the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Sometimes we just dump the information instead of leading them through the experience of hearing God and taking action. Review what you feel about this, your current practices. Imagine Jesus speaking to you. What would He say?*
2. *Do a web search on ‘corporate reflection on God’ and look for some ideas. Try to find the top 5 resources you could share with someone else.*
3. *Then try to express in your journal writing what you believe about this. What are your expectations? Should everyone hear from God? Is it the leader’s responsibility to hear and tell others? How are you being an example? Who can you discuss this with?*

The Celebrate Challenges

Celebrate-Observers: We want to experience the joy of knowing Christ in our everyday lives and long to experience a vibrant community of faith that is genuine and not forced.

Our challenge may be to practice celebration in the reality that life is difficult and others are present in the community not just to help meet our own needs. We need to begin a radical journey of celebration.

Sample Activity

1. *Who do you know who is good at celebrating? What makes a good party? Make a list of these people and how they celebrate. How do you like to celebrate? How does that compare to your experience of God in worship?*
2. *How do you imagine Jesus at a party? Read John 2:1-11. Observe Him at the wedding and describe what seems different about the way He celebrated?*

3. Read *"The Kingdom of God is a Party"* by Tony Campolo⁹. What stands out to you? What longing does it raise in your heart? Why is it important to celebrate small advances as well as large ones?

Celebrate-Imitators: We watch others celebrate and it is time to get involved. We want to learn from those who can walk with us in the experience. We want it to impact our daily lives.

Our challenge may be to keep God first and our praise genuine and not focus on technique.

Sample Activity

1. Go to the list of people you made in the Celebrating Observers and ask them the following questions:
What makes a good party? How did Jesus celebrate? What do you do to celebrate in your relationship with God? How is worship a celebration or is it something else besides just celebration?
2. Practice something you observe. It may be something in personal worship, thanksgiving for steps taken and blessings enjoyed, a new freedom in corporate worship, a decision in how you relate to worship in the church etc. Imitate someone without feeling like you have to be like that always. What can you learn from that experience?
3. What questions do you have about worship and celebration? Who can you discuss these with?

Celebrate-Practitioners: We are worshippers in spirit and truth who bring our learning experiences into the community of God. We feel occasionally that we just go through the motions.

Our challenge may be to learn discernment because there are many voices ready to tell us what to do. We don't want to be distracted from a pure love and devotion to Christ.

Sample Activity

- 1) Reflect on how you are practicing Celebration in your life as a whole. Do you feel God is there cheering you on? Are you aware of His presence and joy in you? Look up the following passages and rate how they are currently demonstrated in your life:
 - The joy of the Lord is your strength... Nehemiah 8:10
 - In all things give thanks... 1 Thessalonians 5:18
 - Be anxious about nothing... Philippians 4:13
 - I belong to my beloved and his desire is for me: Song of Songs 7:10
 - Though the fig tree should not blossom....yet will I rejoice in the Lord: Habakkuk 3:17,18
- 2) What do you bring to worship when you go to church? Do you feel generally you are critical, passive, moderately joyful or ecstatic? How is your attitude conditioned by those around you?

⁹ (Campolo, 2009)

- 3) *How could you daily live a life of celebration while still facing the reality that life at times is difficult? Spend some time waiting on God and ask Him how you can tune up your life of celebration. How does this affect your leaning about God?*

Celebrate-Innovators: We are aware of new ways to celebrate God in the midst of his people. We bring fresh perspectives into unexamined routines to raise engagement and hope.

Our challenge may be to give people enough room to grow and provide the right amount of stretching; otherwise we may scare them away.

Sample Activity

- 1) *Think for a moment how different church traditions worship? What makes you comfortable or uncomfortable? To what extent is that a reflection of your preferences and to what extent is it a struggle whether God 'likes' that type of worship? Thank God for the diversity of His body. Pray for someone from a different church tradition and ask that God will bless their life and worship.*
- 2) *What does it mean to you to worship in spirit and in truth? John 4:24*
- 3) *Think of some innovative ways you can bring celebration into your daily life and to those around you? Pick something to try and observe what happens. Journal your observations.*

Celebrate-Builders: We have a vision of a people of faith who engage the world and bring them to God in an ever expanding circle of worship.

Our challenge may be to accept the diversity of the Body at various stages of maturity and belief, while still leading them to learn to follow Jesus as His disciples.

Sample Activity

1. *Imagine being with the group of people from Faith's Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11) and think about their individual circumstances, the suffering they went through, their vastly different cultural experiences and you get to spend a day with them, you can ask them anything you would like and you will lead them in a time of celebration. What would you ask and what would you do to lead them?*
2. *Now think about the people in your circles of influence. How are they similar and different to the above group? What would these friends say about your lifestyle of celebration and the influence it has on their lives?*
3. *Reflect on your experience on the Paths of Discipleship. What do you celebrate? What would you like to see improved? What would God have you do to help disciple all nations?*

In the next figure there are some screen shots of the Paths of Discipleship tool. By selecting a coloured square you see a profile of a learner and then sample activities that can be chosen.

You personalize your discipleship by selecting a starting spot on the coloured chart, read the profile and browse the selected activities until you find one to work on.



We have looked at the concept of discipleship, its' priorities and systems, and how you can get involved. In the next section we will see how our discipleship can be globalized.



Chapter 5: Globalize Discipleship

Why do we care about the whole world?

God commanded Abraham to count the stars to show him how numerous his descendants would be (Genesis 15:5, 6). This was an earthshaking command because it gives us a vivid picture of God's intention across history and at the same time presents to us a divine challenge. As joint heirs of Christ, we can enter into the magnitude of this promise for ourselves (Galatians 3:29). Have you asked Him for an inheritance of the nations? For some things in prayer, we have not because we ask not (James 4:3).

The fractal we choose will determine the effectiveness of scaling up.

All this fuss about patterns may seem like an arduous effort to get to this point.

- We studied Jesus' methodology in making disciples which we called "To be with Him"..
- We looked at how we have changed that methodology and it results in problems with scaling up.
- We proposed the use of 5 learning verbs as a fractal design that could emulate this methodology to reproduce labourers.

A fractal is good if at every level it helps us answer **what to do next**. So we should expect that the 5 learning verbs fractal will help learn:

- as a disciple
- how to disciple someone else
- to coach a team of disciple-makers
- to lead a disciple-making church
- to influence a disciple-making denomination
- to make disciples across cultures
- to participate in a global disciple-making movement to fulfill the Great Commission.

This is a lot to expect of any ministry design and quite frankly, I am sure that this fractal is inadequate. However we may only find what is adequate by becoming mindful of the problem, attempting what we know and proposing something better.

Jesus commanded us to disciple the nations. This raises diverse issues. In Canada, God is bringing the nations to us although we still need to 'go', by becoming people, who care, serve and communicate with others. There are parts of the world where the growth in Christianity is so great that brand new believers

are leading churches without having received any training. We can help bring discipleship resources and coaching.

We mentioned the crisis in the Western church of people leaving. Could the fractals we use and lack of discipleship be contributing to the boredom and disinterest people face? We may be praying that God will send a revival here. What would happen if there was a massive response to the Gospel, and we were not prepared? This would probably result in the new believers not being adequately cared for.

How to get the job done:

We need a new term to describe an aspect of the church. We have been participating in something without knowing what to call it. I don't mean the one with services, buildings, pastors and programmes. Rather it is when you go on a mission's trip with others that are not all in your local church; when you read an author who is not of your denomination; when you attend a conference, youth group or prayer event that ministers more broadly than your tradition, when you are with family and friends who may never belong to your local church but you have a chance to fellowship or to witness. Some churches try to do it all themselves, and would resist these kinds of connections. We will be much further ahead if we can learn how to use them well. More and more believers are drawing on resources world-wide and ministering back into them.

Let's call these connections 'Network church'. It is something that is:

- **Uniquely personal:** No one's network is exactly like mine or yours.
- **Potentially global:** we can potentially minister to someone who is on the other side of the world.
- **Mostly invisible:** we are unaware of where these networks run and who they touch.
- **Adaptive, changing, and participatory:** it is yours to use as you wish and tomorrow it will be different.
- **Potentially the best resource available** to get the discipleship job done. If we can mobilize these networks, there are no church programmes anywhere that could scale-up as effectively. These networks are the hidden giant to get the job done but only if they can be mobilized and guided. (I deliberately avoided the use of the word 'controlled'. These networks cannot be controlled or else their mobility and effectiveness will be seriously reduced.)

How can we contribute to the globalization of discipleship? We can use our networks to:

- Become the best disciples we can be. By practicing this type of learning and helping others, our example can tell a new story. People will see the theory put into practice and be challenged to try it.
- Connect our networks together so that other people and ministries can share resources and benefit from ours. Recommendations are the catalysts of connection.
- Become mindful of how much we are investing in each part of the 5 verbs of social learning: imagine->connect->risk->reflect->celebrate. Observe the interaction between the verbs and whether we are giving our attention to the things that really matter.

Network Church: Turning Discipleship into a Verb

- Map out our networks of relationships. Are we caring for people as we should? Where has God uniquely placed us that no one else in the world could be the voice, the hands, the heart of God to these people in the same way?
- Become an evaluator of the paths of discipleship materials and the software. Search for more and better resources to offer to whoever needs help in discipleship. Give suggestions on how to improve a lesson. Be as specific as possible with as much details as possible. Set up a group to do an online or face-to-face orientation on how to use the tools. Translate resources into another language.

We started this chapter talking about looking at the stars. Star gazing has been an activity of humanity since the dawn of civilization. We have made patterns out of the stars and named them. In the Book of Job there are references to Orion and Pleiades (Job9:9, 38:31.). The clusters reminded some of a hunter pursuing the 7 daughters of Atlas (Wikipedia). And although these figures are mentioned in the Bible, the star patterns of hunter and a group of women are our invention. God made the stars then let us draw the pictures. The stars are fixed, the pictures we draw of them are changeable.

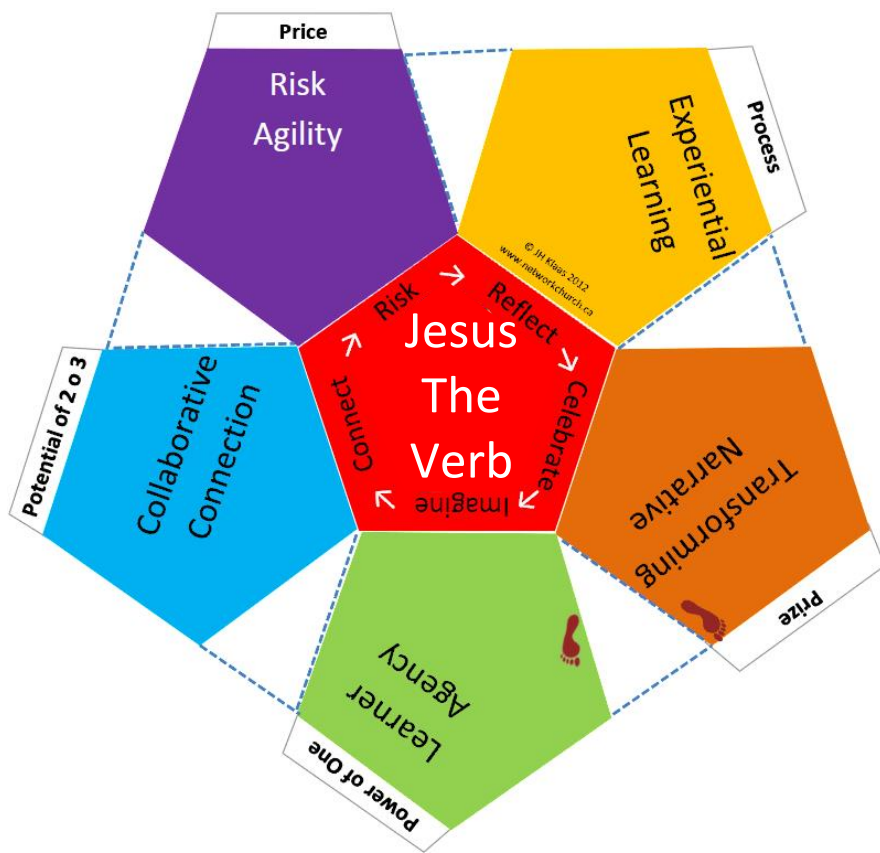


Imagine a church that mobilizes networks “to be with Him” in order to disciple the nations.

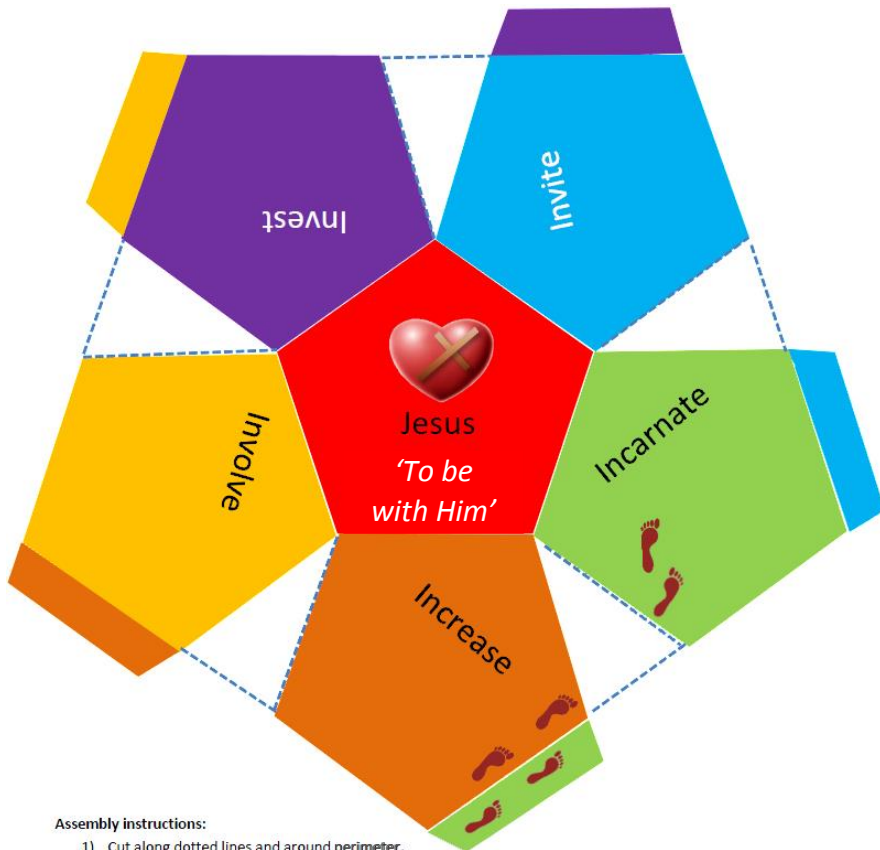
Today we can draw a picture of networks that touch every corner of the world. The 5 verbs of learning can develop these while remaining completely faithful to the Scriptures. We release these networks and continually analyze and reflect on what we are doing. We look for patterns that facilitate scaling up to reach the nations. Let us use what is suddenly possible to accomplish what is desperately needed.

Your ideas, discussion and suggestions are crucial to learning how to disciple all the nations.

Appendix 1: Paths of Discipleship Tool

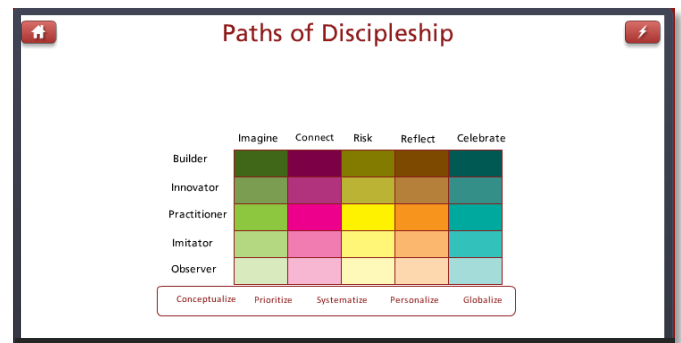


1. **Conceptualize:** Define Jesus' method to make disciples and develop a tool to help follow that pattern. The dodecahedron on the left describes the dynamic of His "To Be With Him" method for a discipler and learner. Turn discipleship into a verb instead of an information transfer.
2. **Prioritize:** Choose 5 verbs of social learning to approximate Jesus' methods: imagine, connect, risk, reflect and celebrate.
3. **Systematize:** Develop 5 challenge levels to learn to practice the verbs: observer, imitator, practitioner, innovator and builder.
4. **Personalize:** Develop a profile of a learner where each challenge level meets each social learning verb. Offer a choice of development activities. These can be carried out individually, in pairs, as a small group, congregation or network.
5. **Globalize:** Use the 5 verbs of social learning to scale-up to reach the nations. Web tool <http://www.networkchurch.ca/paths/> This tool is designed to move a congregation from the information age into the age of connection.
6. **These 5 steps** are developed in a 60 minute **seminar** (see links below the coloured table).



Assembly instructions:

- 1) Cut along dotted lines and around perimeter.
- 2) Fold at every border. Glue white triangles underneath adjacent figure and coloured tabs above the corresponding colour on the other half.



Appendix 2: Paths of Discipleship Conceptual Map

<div>Verb</div> <div>Challenge</div>	<p>Imagine is the process God used when He made us in His image. All obedience and faith starts in our imagination then involves our will in carrying it out in actions. It is easier to be passive and let others imagine what God wants for us. It is asking ourselves, why are we here? How does Jesus want to change the world through us?</p> <p>Our challenge may be to be transparent ourselves since we are perceived as experts and may want to defend our reputation. Authenticity is costly.</p>	<p>Connect is the process that gives us life. It is not good to be alone. We build connection and have the amazing reward of God's presence demonstrated in a powerful way (Matt.18:20). The pathway of connection is God's escape from the loneliness of individualism that marks our culture.</p> <p>We deeply value how life comes through connection with God and others and understand the sacred trust this represents as leaders.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to constantly teach the "to be with Him" discipleship path while still taking the time to practice it ourselves and demonstrating the process.</p>	<p>Risk is faith applied with uncertain outcomes. Faith is more than the acceptance of certain theological statements. It is to live for and obey God, guided by the Scriptures, to bring God's love to a hurting world through our service, prayer and generosity.</p> <p>We want to facilitate the process of the church reaching the world and be a blessing that challenges the darkness. We are tired of mediocrity in ourselves and in others.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to not use people for our ends, yet help stretch them by our personal example and practical equipping to become all that God intends.</p>	<p>Reflect is the second event in every learning process after the experience itself. To reflect is to bring all our experiences and relationships, hopes and disappointments back to God and listen for His guidance. The Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures, events and other people to teach us.</p> <p>We are able to step back and look for the big picture how God directs His people. We seek to build reflection into community life and develop strategies to move larger numbers of believers through this growth process.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to raise other builders to 'go to scale' in the leadership process and lead the community through <i>genuine</i> spiritual experiences.</p>	<p>Celebrate is the act of worship as we experience Him and His will in this world. We celebrate through sharing food and time together, telling our stories and in the practice of the Lord's Supper. We declare our thankfulness for our journey as an act of praise in the experience of knowing Him.</p> <p>We have a vision of a people of faith who engage the world and bring them to God in an ever expanding circle of worship.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to accept the diversity of the Body at various stages of maturity and belief, while still leading them to learn to follow Jesus as His disciples.</p>
	<p>The Master Builder is a leader tested by fire and who learns to speak to issues in the faith community and beyond. There is a recognized authority and ability to build with care and skill in influencing others.</p>	<p>We desperately long for the church to enter into imagination as God intends. We sense a prophetic call to challenge people to move from amassing information about God to experiencing Him.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to patiently encourage teams in this practice, allowing others to catch up in order to learn together.</p>	<p>We are troubled by the deep isolation in our society and long to discover new ways for others to experience God's love in a deeper way. We have many new ideas; more than we can hope to practice.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to not overload others with the expectations of what we think God wants us to do.</p>	<p>We long to find the frontier of risk in the Kingdom and have no shortage of imagining on how we would like to see things improved.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to take action and not just criticize the system. We also need help to sustain what we start.</p>	<p>We look for new ways to notice, reflect and integrate life with God into everything. We are driven by a desire to improve the process and deepen authentic spiritual engagement both in ourselves and others.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to raise the perspective from the individual to an overarching group level and to keep it simple.</p>
	<p>The Innovator takes practiced skills in one environment and experiments with them in another. Or it may be in the same environment that has changed. There is a resilience and willingness to risk and fail. This level requires perseverance and proven character and benefits from a supportive community.</p>	<p>We are in a flow of imagining with God, wanting to discover a better way to do anything. We benefit from a creative team atmosphere where this can be developed.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to expand our tolerance for the discomfort to learn so we don't repeat the same lessons. In helping others, we will learn something about ourselves.</p>	<p>We have established a relaxed and genuine interest in others and warmly care for people as we share life. We ask good questions and are active listeners. People like being with us.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to more deliberately connect with others so they can benefit and grow. We may need to be careful not to resent the constant initiative required to reach out.</p>	<p>We know how to take risks but we tend to err on the side of 'comfort'. We love to have a backup plan in case God doesn't do what we hoped.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to stretch our faith and go out on the limb more so that our learning is genuinely covering new ground and including others in the adventure.</p>	<p>We have sufficiently practiced the discipline of reflection to make it a habit, a natural response, even under trying circumstances. We consistently pause and ask the question - "what are we seeing and what does God want us to learn, say or do about it?"</p> <p>Our challenge may be to avoid ruts and look for new ways to improve and include others in the growth process.</p>
	<p>The Practitioner is seeking to master learning of physical or social skills, knowledge, attitudes and good habits. No longer is there dependency on someone else to make this happen. Activities are accomplished at a consistent level. There is benefit from helping others in the journey.</p>	<p>We are familiar with God speaking to our imagination through the Scriptures, events and people. We desire a greater consistency and depth in the process.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to allow God to really speak to our imagination; otherwise we may substitute genuine experience with collecting information.</p>	<p>We observe others and are now ready to experiment with imagining under the protection and stimulation of community. We are curious about practices that enable us to grow deeper with Jesus.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to find our authentic style while we practice things that may not feel natural.</p>	<p>We observe others taking faith risks and we want to seriously engage in kingdom adventure. We want someone to run alongside our bikes and not let go too soon.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to ask for help in specific areas where we are ready to engage and take the leap.</p>	<p>We notice the pattern of more experienced believers in their ability to discern spiritual themes, events and conversations. We try these patterns and reflect on their spiritual meaning and impact.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to become consistent in the discipline of reflection and to find what is most helpful to interpret all of life through these disciplines.</p>
	<p>The Imitator has learned to ask questions and practice what has been observed. While it may not feel natural, there is support from others to keep trying. The feedback helps keep the effort sustainable.</p>	<p>We observe others and are now ready to experiment with imagining under the protection and stimulation of community. We are curious about practices that enable us to grow deeper with Jesus.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to allow God to really speak to our imagination; otherwise we may substitute genuine experience with collecting information.</p>	<p>We observe others and are now ready to experiment with imagining under the protection and stimulation of community. We are curious about practices that enable us to grow deeper with Jesus.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to allow God to really speak to our imagination; otherwise we may substitute genuine experience with collecting information.</p>	<p>We observe others taking faith risks and we want to seriously engage in kingdom adventure. We want someone to run alongside our bikes and not let go too soon.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to ask for help in specific areas where we are ready to engage and take the leap.</p>	<p>We notice the pattern of more experienced believers in their ability to discern spiritual themes, events and conversations. We try these patterns and reflect on their spiritual meaning and impact.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to become consistent in the discipline of reflection and to find what is most helpful to interpret all of life through these disciplines.</p>
	<p>The Observer looks for others who practice learning about God. They search for patterns that catch their interest and demonstrate an attractive learning process. This builds confidence and leads to opportunities to ask questions and discover how to grow.</p>	<p>We feel a stirring in our hearts that our experience of God could be much greater. We want to be open to change but are unsure what to do next.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to get started. Do not fear the unknown as God is already there and ready to make Himself known more deeply to us. Be open to His purposes that lead us on this adventure.</p>	<p>We do not want to journey alone and want to learn how to connect with others in learning from Jesus. We are tired of superficiality yet are not sure how much we can trust others who say they follow Jesus.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to take small steps that are sincere and sustainable. Do not expect others to respond immediately because they too need time and space to learn.</p>	<p>We want to move into action with God but are unsure where to begin. We want to act on our desire for change to really experience God in the midst of life.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to not make this a purely intellectual pursuit. We want to be in control, but sense that risk calls us to a new level of trust.</p>	<p>We are curious about the spiritual aspects of events and conversations as they happen, but we feel blocked in understanding what they mean, their relative importance or what to do or say about them.</p> <p>Our challenge may be to break through these barriers by spending time reflecting on what has been seen in order to discern the "what" and the "so what".</p>
					<p>We want to experience the joy of knowing Christ in our everyday lives and long to experience a vibrant community of faith that is genuine and not forced.</p> <p>Our challenge may be practice celebration in the reality that life is difficult and others are present in the community not just to help meet our own needs. We need to begin a radical journey of celebration.</p>

The definitions in the top row and left-hand column are visible in the discipleship app by clicking on the corresponding titles on the table. The table contents correspond to the coloured squares in the online table where you will find a selection of activities for each profile.

Appendix 3: Learning Path Worksheet

The worksheet is a large rectangle divided into four quadrants by a central square. The central square is labeled **Celebrate** at its top center. Each of the four quadrants is labeled with a word in its top-left corner: **Imagine** (top-left), **Connect** (top-right), **Reflect** (bottom-left), and **Risk** (bottom-right). The lines connecting the central box to the outer boxes are red, while the outer boxes themselves have a light blue background. The central box has a light blue background and a red border.

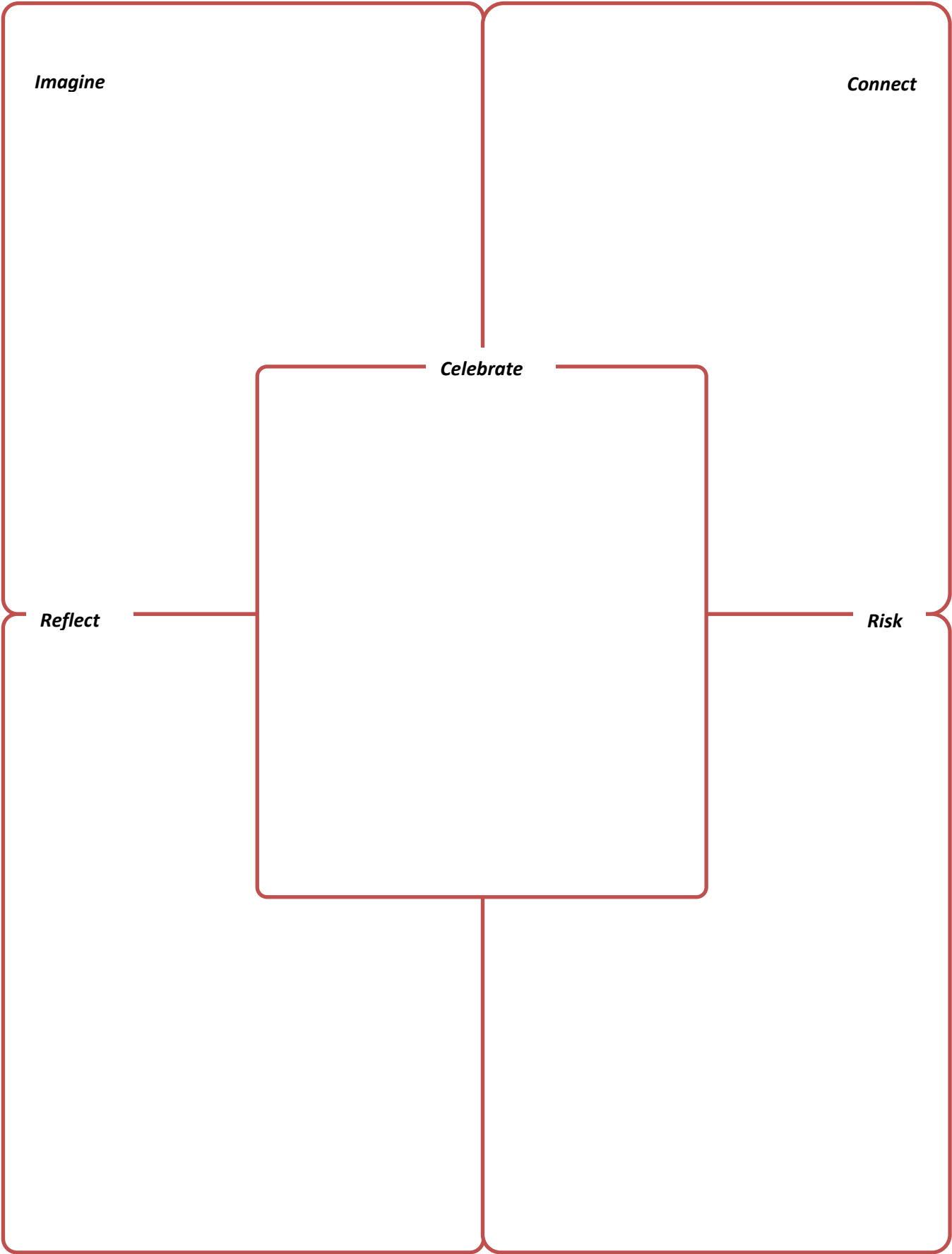
Imagine

Connect

Celebrate

Reflect

Risk



Appendix 4: Paths of Discipleship Tool

How this discipleship tool is unique:

- It allows people to start wherever they want and is for all levels of maturity. It is not just the ABC's but can include any maturity level.
- It is not information-based 'shovelware' but centers on experiential learning which engages the learner, builds community and mobilizes a Jesus and Bible centred ministry.
- It is highly scalable because it contains numerous options where whole congregations could be released to explore, learn and celebrate together.
- It allows for the development of themes. As long as the ideas followed the 5 verbs of social learning (that seek to approximate the "to be with" strategy of Jesus: imagine, connect, risk, reflect and celebrate). The themes could really be varied such as: missions trips, life after retirement, prayer ministry, street ministry, health challenges, aging parents, having teenagers, looking for work etc. These themes would be stacked into the app. A short user survey could help select their areas of interest and these resources then would be ordered according to their preferences.
- It does not need high levels of control but can be monitored to track progress, determine what is helpful and improve the resources according to user feed-back.

The Paths of Discipleship is under continuous revision. Future plans for development include:

- A method for recording your plan and the plan of people you may be discipling so you access the resources more easily. At present it is difficult to remember where you have been.
- A user survey that will be used to make a learner profile and offer the best options based on learning preferences and other factors.
- Tracking activity choices to visualize what the community is working on.
- Capturing feedback. Every activity will have a response button to tell us a story, give a suggestion or ask a question. (We invite you to respond to other's comments as well. We will need all the help we can get.)
- We will be adding more resources for each profile in the table.
- You may be feeling a nudge from God to develop a theme. As you can see from the rubric, there are the 5 learning verbs and 5 challenge levels. You could write a short exercise from observer to leader for each of the 5 verbs as it relates to your area of interest. I can't imagine all the possible themes. This potential could help disciple tens of thousands of believers. Talk to us if this is of interest.
- Turning this into a game that can be played for an hour then discussed.

Appendix 5: Questions for Discussion:

Chapter 1 **Conceptualize Discipleship**

1. What does “He chose 12 to be with Him” mean to you? How can we do that today? Why do we call it a fractal?
2. What comments do you have about the family fractal on page 16? Can a church be like example “B”? What does the pastor need to do for that to happen?
3. What are things we teach by imitation in the church? (Both good and bad?)
4. Can you think of aspects of Jesus’ method that does not fit into the “Incarnate->Invite->Involve->Invest->Multiply” model?
5. In what way does the sequence “Learner Agency->Collaborative Connection->Risk Agility->Experiential Learning->Transformative Narrative” capture the disciple’s journey to become a disciple-maker? What is missing?

Chapter 2: **Prioritize Discipleship**

1. Do you feel that the 5 learning verbs “Imagine->Connect->Risk->Reflect->Celebrate” are an adequate design to reproduce a multiplying discipleship model? List its’ good and weak features.
2. What are the dangers of ‘imagine’? How does the faith community help reduce the potential for disaster?
3. In what way are church programmes good at ‘connect’? What is the best way to equip people in the ability to connect?
4. Should a church be concerned about everyone taking risks in Jesus’ name? How does a church take adequate precautions for liability, insurance, loss of goodwill if something bad happens?
5. ‘Reflect’ and ‘celebrate’ are perhaps the more customary domains of church life. How does the practice of the 5 verbs together make a difference?

Chapter 3: **Systematize Discipleship**

1. What other system would you propose instead of the 5 challenge levels? How could this be made into a game?
2. What dangers are there in using labels for profiles like *Observer*, *Imitator* etc? What terminology could we use instead?
3. To observe is a safe activity and is an easy place to start. Imitator can have such a negative connotation? Children learn this way. Do we as adults?
4. Why do we tend not to encourage innovation? Should we?
5. Can anyone become a Master Builder or is this some kind of calling for special people?

Chapter 4: **Personalize Discipleship**

1. Where do you find yourself on the Discipleship Paths Rubric? What is your purpose in wanting to use this tool? What type of suggested activities interest you? How could they be improved?
2. List some names of people that you would like to encourage. Where are they in the rubric?
3. Do you think everyone needs to work on the same thing at the same time in a discipleship dyad (two people), in a small group or congregation?
4. Can you think of different ways we prefer to learn? What activities in the church help or hinder those preferences?
5. How could this transform the pastor's role if this type of learning takes place? Where do the other gifts fit in that are mentioned in Ephesian 4? What would happen if these were all mobilized in equipping us to practice the learning verbs

Chapter 5: **Globalize Discipleship**

1. What do you think we need to get the job done of making disciples of all nations? What is working globally? What isn't?
2. How do you promote the "be with him" values for scaling up to the church as a whole without losing the example of the way Jesus did it?
3. Describe your network? Map out the significant relationships in our life, work and ministry. Where do you see God working? What unique role do you have with these people?
4. How could you imagine networks joining together to get the job done? What are the risks and benefits?
5. What happens if we try to control this? Can we?

Appendix 6: Gifting & Discipleship

I am curious to know how the five-fold gifting in Ephesians 4 relates to the discipleship learning process. I will first quote at length a helpful summary by Alan Hirsh¹⁰ and then suggest how it relates to Paths of Discipleship. I have reordered the gifts from how they appear in Ephesians to match the verb order we are using.

Prophets know God's will. They are particularly attuned to God and his truth for today. They bring correction and challenge the dominant assumptions we inherit from the culture. They insist that the community obey what God has commanded. They question the status quo. Without the other types of leaders in place, prophets can become belligerent activists or, paradoxically, disengage from the imperfection of reality and become other-worldly.

Evangelists recruit. These infectious communicators of the gospel message recruit others to the cause. They call for a personal response to God's redemption in Christ, and also draw believers to engage the wider mission, growing the church. Evangelists can be so focused on reaching those outside the church that maturing and strengthening those inside is neglected.

Apostles extend the gospel. As the “sent ones,” they ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next. They are always thinking about the future, bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing leaders, networking trans-locally. Yes, if you focus solely on initiating new ideas and rapid expansion, you can leave people and organizations wounded. The shepherding and teaching functions are needed to ensure people are cared for rather than simply used.

Teachers understand and explain. Communicators of God's truth and wisdom, they help others remain biblically grounded to better discern God's will, guiding others toward wisdom, helping the community remain faithful to Christ's word, and constructing a transferable doctrine. Without the input of the other functions, teachers can fall into dogmatism or dry intellectualism. They may fail to see the personal or missional aspects of the church's ministry.

Shepherds nurture and protect. Caregivers of the community, they focus on the protection and spiritual maturity of God's flock, cultivating a loving and spiritually mature network of relationships, making and developing disciples. Shepherds can value stability to the detriment of the mission. They may also foster an unhealthy dependence between the church and themselves. (From *The Forgotten Ways: Developing Apostolic Imagination and Practice in Western Contexts*. Used with permission)

I wonder if we can put this into the terminology of the 5 verbs.

¹⁰ Used with permission.

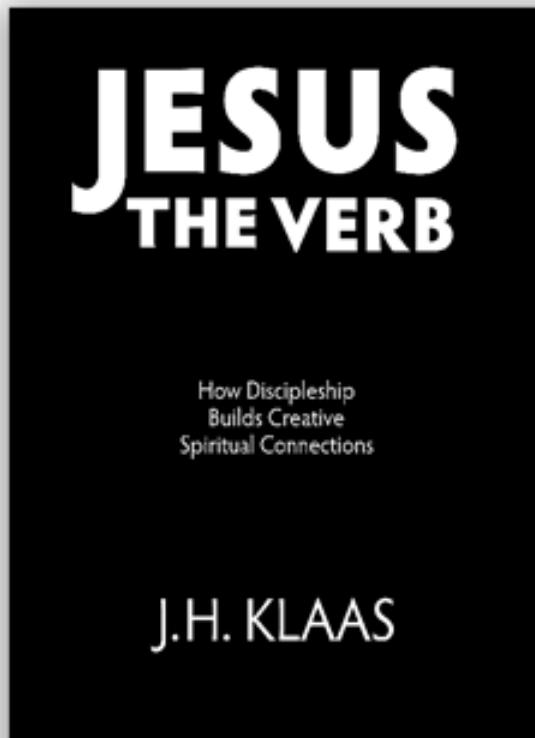
- Prophets imagine
- Evangelists connect
- Apostles risk
- Teachers reflect
- Shepherds lead the community in celebration

I am not saying that is the full scope of these gifts or that believers cannot practice these verbs unless they have these gifts. I am simply wondering if people with these gifts would be particularly useful in equipping others in learning associated with these verbs.

I recommend the APEST test by Alan Hirsh. For a fee you can get a 360 test where your own gift evaluation is compared to up to how 10 friends' and colleagues' view your gifting. (Hirsch). This can be very informative for a ministry team to be able to equip in the use of the social learning verbs.

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Jesus the Verb (John 1:1 in Spanish) shows us how to use highly relational discipleship to build creative spiritual connection with God and others. This is experiential learning at its best and not just providing a data set of Biblical information.

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- Demonstrate how imagination, connection and risk move us from theory to experiential growth
- Provide useful tools and practice to personalize learning

We shape our tools then our tools shape us. – John Culkin



For over 35 years **Jim Klaas** has been a follower of Jesus Christ and a labourer in making disciples in Latin America and Canada. He has authored several books and courses, has a Master in Education and directs an online Discipleship Institute in Spanish. He is passionate about everything that helps adults learn and believes that Jesus Christ is the answer to our deepest longings. He is co-owner of DevEd International, an educational technology consulting business.



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