

"A desperately needed invitation." JOHN ORTBERG

*Grow Your Faith,
Transform Your Community*

simple discipleship

Dana Allin

The church exists to make disciples. Dana Allin issues here a desperately needed invitation to embrace our assignment with urgent grace and eager hearts. Listen and heed the sound of the trumpet.

JOHN ORTBERG, pastor and author

Helpful discipleship books are being published every month. But this one is different and rare. This book is linked with a very useful instrument that looks at your spiritual growth through the eyes of yourself and others—a 360-degree view. Defined qualities (eight) and characteristics (twenty-one) of discipleship are listed. Through this book and instrument, a person can begin to assess the strong and stunted areas and find joy in serving and in growth. The best chapter might be the one on how to coach someone through the discipleship process. Don't miss this one!

JIM SINGLETON, director of mentored ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

As a US denominational leader during a critical time for the church in this nation, Dana fully understands the strategic significance of discipleship for the credibility and authenticity of the movement that claims Jesus as Lord. He knows that the nondiscipleship of the church undermines everything we seek to do. We must correct this deficit or continue to decline. Pay attention!

ALAN HIRSCH, author of *The Forgotten Ways* and *5Q* and coauthor of *Untamed*

In *Simple Discipleship*, Dana Allin brings together two of my favorite topics: coaching and discipleship. His thesis in this book—that discipleship happens primarily through life experiences and relationship rather than listening to

sermons and reading books—is absolutely right. He also gives the reader practical tracks to run on: specific qualities and characteristics of a disciple, tips for creating a personalized disciple-making plan, and a path to implementation. Dana is clearly writing from a wealth of experience, and our churches would all be stronger if we followed his lead.

BOB LOGAN, coauthor of *The Discipleship Difference* and *Becoming Barnabas*

If it bothers you that the church in North America is overprogrammed and underdiscipled, start reading this book today. Dana Allin delivers on a clear and compelling way forward in a tool that will invigorate and accelerate real disciple making in your church.

WILL MANCINI, founder of Auxano and coauthor of *God Dreams*

Discipleship continues to be one of the biggest challenges of the twenty-first-century church, both in the West and in the East. *Simple Discipleship* is a clear, passionate, and very practical account of who a disciple is and how to go about making one. It is a beautiful and timely gift to the church of the Master Disciple Maker.

REV. DR. MEHRDAD FATEHI, executive director of Pars Theological Centre

Christ's mandate to the church is this: Make disciples. Do you have a method? Dana distills years of Christian leadership into a simple process. This book is a gift to any who wish to live their lives in the likeness of Jesus Christ or help others do the same.

TIM MCCONNELL, lead pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Colorado Springs, Colorado

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*To my wife, Beth, who is a constant example
of what it means to love and follow Jesus.*

*To my children, Micah, Peyton, and Piper,
who fill my life with joy. It is a privilege to be your
father and watch you grow in life and faith.*



Contents

Foreword by Alex Absalom ix

Introduction: The Main Thing xi

- 1 The Essence of a Disciple 1
- 2 Jesus—the Great Disciple Maker 15
- 3 Gospel Identity: *The Center of a Disciple* 31
- 4 Qualities of the Heart: *The Character of a Disciple* 47
- 5 Qualities of the Mind: *The Knowledge of a Disciple* 65
- 6 Qualities of the Hand, Part 1: *The Mission of a Disciple* 77
- 7 Qualities of the Hand, Part 2: *The Ministry of a Disciple* 91
- 8 Designing a Personal Plan for Discipleship 105
- 9 Discipling as Coaching 121
- 10 Strategies and Environments for Discipleship 137

Conclusion 153

Acknowledgments 163

APPENDIX A: *A Simple Discipleship Assessment 167*

APPENDIX B: *Resources to Aid in Discipleship Design Development 173*

APPENDIX C: *Sample Designs 175*

Notes 179

Take the Simple Discipleship Assessment! 181

Foreword

THERE'S AN EXERCISE I LIKE to do early on with church teams that have asked for help in building a disciple-making culture. We apply the four quadrants of a SWOT analysis to answer the big question “When it comes to discipleship in our church, what is going well (**strengths**)? Where is there frustration (**weaknesses**)? Where is there opportunity (**opportunities**)? Where is there confusion (**threats**)?”

It's fascinating how often the lack of a clear disciple-making process appears in the “weaknesses” and “threats” categories. Often, it's the pastor who makes that observation!

I suspect most of us realize the need for a clear, robust, flexible, reproducible process for growing disciple-making disciples of Jesus in our context. It is usually in the practical implementation, however, where systems break down.

Part of the problem begins with our misunderstanding of what it means to be a disciple, and thus how we go about making them.

Discipleship is not primarily an exercise in information transfer (although, of course, in our discipleship we are to use our minds and intelligence to the utmost degree!). It is not a syllabus to master but rather a friendship to experience more deeply. When Paul says, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”

(1 Corinthians 11:1), he reminds us that the biblical picture of discipleship is a journey far more than it is an event, and it requires other followers of Jesus around us, since the Christian faith is always lived out in community.

This is where the genius of Dana’s book comes in.

Through the big idea of growing disciples in heart, head, and hands, we gain a framework for teasing out our thinking and practices. As he describes eight qualities and twenty-one supporting characteristics of a disciple—supported by a fabulous assessment tool—we are given clarity of language to review our personal (and our churches’) disciple-making efforts.

There are so many helpful and practical ideas in this book. While it can’t possibly answer every question (because it’s your job to incarnate these ideas into your specific situation), Dana gives a robust set of tools to help you build a healthy process for making disciples who are growing and going with the gospel.

A hugely gifted, experienced pastor and pioneering national leader, Dana Allin brings an uncommon breadth of insight and understanding. He is a dynamic man of God who loves Jesus with abandon and passion—someone you want to follow into the mission field! I can unambiguously confirm that he lives this out personally: Recognizing that their first disciple-making focus is their children, Dana and his wife, Beth, are raising a family of world changers.

I’m privileged to speak and work with many national leaders, and Dana is the real deal. Please read and engage in this book, plundering the ideas and suggestions to strengthen and deepen your own—and your church’s—disciple-making practices!

ALEX ABSALOM

cofounder of dandelionresourcing.com and churchinnovationlab.com

INTRODUCTION

The Main Thing

“IF I AM HONEST, I’ll admit that I don’t really know how to make disciples.” I remember when those words came out of my mouth. I had been in the pastorate for almost a decade, and despite sermons, programs, Bible studies, and small groups, many of the people I pastored weren’t becoming more deeply devoted followers of Jesus Christ. For all of my effort, I wasn’t able to make disciples—the primary task to which Jesus calls us!

There were some good things happening in the church, of course. Some people were growing, and others were coming to Jesus. For that, I was thankful. But the fruit seemed random and relatively disconnected from any strategic effort.

I was somewhat relieved when I read the book *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth* by Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson. Churches that had much larger budgets and staff than mine, and preachers who were more eloquent than myself, also seemed to be treading water in the area of discipleship. It gave me comfort that I was not the only one facing this challenge. However, relief quickly turned to

sadness: The church in the United States was, by and large, missing the mark.

Today, leaders are less afraid than they were back then to admit that their churches are not doing a great job of making disciples. Leaders don't necessarily post to Facebook or tweet the sentiment. But leaders of congregations of various shapes, sizes, and denominations express disappointment over the quantity and quality of disciples being developed in the ministry.

We all know that the core task of our congregations is to make disciples. We all know the great commission in the end of Matthew 28 is to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations," and we know that making disciples means to teach people to "observe all that [Jesus has] commanded." We indicate this sentiment in mission statements such as "To make disciples who make disciples" or "To know Christ and make Him known" or "To love God, love others and make disciples." There is no lack of knowledge or agreement that our core task as individuals and as a church is to make disciples. So why aren't we doing it? Why aren't we fulfilling the main task of the church?

ASSEMBLY-LINE DISCIPLESHIP

One of the greatest inventions in manufacturing was the establishment of the assembly line. This ingenious approach allowed a person on an assembly line to have one job that they repeated thousands of times a day rather than many jobs that they repeated less frequently to achieve the same end: a finished product. The line was filled with hundreds of people

with individual jobs. Products could be made quickly and consistently every time.

In the name of making disciples efficiently, we have adopted an assembly-line mind-set to create disciples in our church. We have made assumptions, probably without a lot of thought, about how to adopt speed and efficiency into our disciple-making process, with the anticipated outcome of mass production. We assume that, like building a car, making disciples is a linear process. For example, we expect that weekend worship can produce many disciples.

However, if we stop and reflect on our own development as disciples, we will probably find that our growth didn't come from an assembly-line process. Usually, our growth has come through a combination of personal time with the Lord and interactions with mentors and other disciples, experiences and opportunities that stretched us and caused us to grow. We may have been particularly touched by a few sermons, but they weren't the primary factor in our growth as disciples.

JESUS KEPT IT SIMPLE

When Jesus made disciples, He used some simple principles to develop the people around Him. These principles and processes were so simple that they could be used with people of any educational level or socioeconomic class, from highly educated religious leaders like the Pharisees (John 3) to a man who had just been healed from a thousand demons (Mark 5). These principles were then repeated from generation to generation. What developed was a movement of faithful and mature followers of Jesus.

While Jesus didn't outright list these principles for making disciples, they can be deduced as we observe His interactions and see these patterns repeated in the interactions of Jesus' followers. We even see these principles being utilized all over the world in places where there is exponential growth in the quality and quantity of disciples.

And yet, in the modern Western world, we don't see much of a movement. We have a lot of what would be considered advantages for discipleship: freedom to assemble as large groups in worship, access to information that increases in volume more rapidly than we comprehend, seminaries and educational institutions, and a growing number of organizations that offer a plethora of discipleship books, curricula, and programs. These are wonderful privileges, and they absolutely have their place. I wonder, however, if at times this richness of resources has actually muddied the waters of discipleship. Do we sometimes miss the ultimate purpose of the great commission: helping people become more in love with Jesus and more reflective of His character in the world? Have we made discipleship more complicated than it needs to be?

A SIMPLE PROCESS

The first section of this book is a high-level view of the nature of being a disciple. We will examine the great commandment—the love of God with head, heart, and hands, with a corresponding love of neighbors—to consider what, at the fundamental level, characterizes a disciple. We will then look at the foundational approach of Jesus toward His disciples. This examination will

help contrast Jesus' approach with the way in which we consider discipleship in our congregations.

The second section of the book takes a deeper look at what it looks like to follow Jesus as someone who loves God with head, heart, and hands. We have identified eight qualities and twenty-one supporting characteristics of a disciple. These have been mined from Scripture and articulated with the help of a variety of experts in the field; they will help disciples consider their personal spiritual health as followers of Jesus. An accompanying simple discipleship assessment will help us get feedback from people in our lives. This invaluable tool will encourage us to see ways in which we have matured and help us uncover areas where we might give more concentrated effort. The result will set the stage for a personal plan for discipleship. (There is more information about the simple discipleship assessment in appendix A. You can also find a code printed on the inside cover of this book that will allow you to take the assessment for free.)

The third section of the book will help you design a personalized process through which you can grow in specific areas of discipleship. As this plan develops, it will include personalized activities for engaging with God and others. This practical and experiential plan will encourage growth in knowledge of the truth. As these elements come together, they will foster personal maturity.

The fourth and final section will help leaders within the congregation incorporate simple discipleship principles into the larger structure of the congregation. Congregations may want to implement simple discipleship into small groups or a Sunday school program, in missional communities, or in

one-on-one discipleship. This section will help a congregation create an environment conducive to multiplying disciples.

Incorporating what is presented in *Simple Discipleship* can be both easy and difficult in your church context. On the one hand, *Simple Discipleship* doesn't require you to change your structure, spend a lot of money, or hire additional staff. *Simple Discipleship* will, however, be challenging, in that structures will likely change and leaders will need to rethink their assumptions in light of this new emphasis on making disciples.

My experience has been that incorporating this type of simple discipleship into the church is a welcome addition. Lay leaders are hungry for a simplified approach to disciple making, one that retains a robust vision for mature disciples. We all want to understand what a disciple is, to know where God is calling us to grow, and to flourish in our personal discipleship. If we can clear the clutter from our vision for discipleship, we will see disciples growing in number and maturity in our congregations, our ministries, and our communities.

CHAPTER 1

The Essence of a Disciple

JULIA WAS COMPLETING her last quarter of seminary and applying to different pastoral positions within her denomination when she received a call to a small congregation only an hour away from her school. She was thrilled to begin pastoring this congregation that was just shy of a hundred members and averaged about seventy people on a Sunday. This was an older congregation, and Julia saw lots of potential to reach its surrounding neighborhood.

Shortly after she got to the church, the church council discussed what should be her most important priorities. Four of the six elders expressed the need for the church to reach younger families; they were glad that Julia and her husband were at the church. But then a member of the church council

timidly raised his hand. “What good,” he said, voice trembling, “is a full church when nobody is growing? We need to focus on helping people become disciples of Jesus first—then we can figure out how to bring more people in.”

This man’s statement caused a robust—and, at times, heated—discussion. Some members argued that the church was great at making disciples. Look at how many of their members had been at the church thirty years! Surely these were great models of what a disciple was. Other members challenged this assertion: Yes, the church had many members with longevity, but were these members really growing as disciples?

As the meeting progressed, Julia reflected on her seminary experience and realized that she never gained a clear understanding of what a disciple was, let alone how to develop one. The meeting ended with the council concluding that one of the next steps would be to develop a working definition of a disciple—including some characteristics that they hoped would be produced in a disciple through the ministry of the church.



One of the biggest challenges associated with developing a culture of discipleship is a lack of a clear, mutually-agreed-upon understanding of a disciple of Jesus. When a church doesn’t have a unified vision around the characteristics and nature of a disciple, it will likely have a challenge making disciples. As is often said, if you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time. A church can have a mission statement centered around making disciples, but if the nature of discipleship is

unclear or there are competing visions of what it means to be a disciple, the church will never fulfill its mission.

At the foundation of this book are eight core qualities and twenty-one subordinate characteristics of a disciple. These qualities and characteristics will be further unpacked and given biblical support in chapters 3 through 7, but for now, we will take a thirty-thousand-foot view of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Our definition is based first and foremost upon the great commandment found in Matthew 22:34-40.

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Just prior to this passage, the Sadducees, a group of Jewish leaders who didn't believe in resurrection, tried to give Jesus a problematic scenario to prove that there is no resurrection. Jesus, as always, gave a response that they didn't expect, and they went away speechless. It is then the Pharisees' turn to try to trip up Jesus. They want to see Him diminish aspects of the law by lifting up one part of the law over the others. So, in a patronizing tone, they ask Jesus to name the greatest commandment.

Jesus' response is again unexpected. He answers the

question not by lifting up one of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5; instead, He elevates what is known as *the Shema*, which means “hear” in Hebrew.¹ It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”²

To this general command, He adds a second part to the command from Leviticus 19:18, indicating that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Then He says, “On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” Some translations, like the NIV, use the word *hang* rather than *depend*, which underscores that these two commandments are like a skeleton: Other commandments and prophetic statements from the Scriptures become the flesh. Jesus is not elevating one commandment over the others; rather, He calls these commandments the greatest because they encompass God’s call on our lives.

If we test Jesus’ statement, we find it to be true, of course. We can’t break any of the other commandments and still have kept the great commandment from Matthew 22. If we love God with our whole selves, then we will worship Him alone, we will honor His name, and we will keep the Sabbath. If we love our neighbors as ourselves, we will not commit adultery, we will not lie, we will not steal, and so on.

If all of God’s desires for our lives can be summed up by the great commandments, then perhaps this verse is foundational to our understanding of discipleship. In this command, Jesus lifts up three aspects of ourselves with which we are to love God. We are to love Him with

- our whole hearts;
- our whole minds (or, as this book will say, “head”); and
- our whole might (this book will use “hands,” that is to say, our actions).

LOVING GOD WITH OUR WHOLE HEARTS

The Greek word for “heart” is *kardia*.³ From this word, we derive many medical terms, such as *cardiologist*; however, just as we use the word *heart* to convey something more than just the muscle that pumps blood through our body, so the Jews and the Greeks had deeper meanings as well. The heart is symbolic for several aspects of our lives.

The heart can symbolize our inner passions, desires, affections, and longings. An example of this use of the term *heart* is when Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:19-24, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” In verse 21, He says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The heart can also be symbolic for our interior lives with God and our closeness to Him. In Matthew 15:8-9, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13, saying,

*This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*

Jesus and Isaiah are illustrating that some people were good at appearing to be close to God. In reality, however, external facades masked a disconnect between the people and God.

A final usage of the word *heart* is to describe one's character and integrity. In Mark 7, Jesus has been having heated interactions with the Pharisees over the nature and importance of their cleanliness rules. Jesus' accusation is that the Pharisees are elevating their own traditions above the commandments of God. He goes on to say that having clean hands does not actually make a person clean; we are not made unclean by things outside our bodies—rather, our impurity comes from within. Jesus makes His point in Mark 7:21-23:

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.

Notice that this list of sins includes both items that are visible and items that are invisible to the outside world. The external, visible sins are things like theft, murder, and slander. The internal sins, which may not be visible to others, are things like pride, coveting, and evil thoughts. When we were developing the simple discipleship assessment and engaging in the validity studies, some of the individuals taking the assessment realized that they didn't have people in their lives who knew them deeply enough to answer these questions. Some of these participants had been in small groups for years and yet still didn't have people who really knew them. Because some of these matters of the heart can easily be hidden from others, it is important that we develop relationships where people know us intimately and have access to

see the things that might be hidden from our normal sphere of connectedness.

Three of the eight core qualities we identify in *Simple Discipleship* pertain to matters of the heart. These qualities are discussed at length in chapters 3 and 4.

LOVING GOD WITH OUR WHOLE MINDS

The second aspect to the great commandment is that we are to love God with our whole minds. There is a little bit of a change in the way Jesus quotes the Shema in Matthew 22:37. In Deuteronomy 6:5, Moses uses the wording *heart, soul, and might*, but in Matthew 22:37, Jesus says *heart, soul, and mind*. The challenge in interpretation is that *might* and *mind* are two very different concepts: *Mind* has to do with our intellect, and *might* pertains to our physical nature.

The reason for the apparent discrepancy in the parts with which we are to love God is that the word *soul* can also have a variety of nuanced meanings. Over the centuries, the particular aspects of *soul* that have been emphasized are varied. In the Hebrew understanding, which is the understanding present in the Shema, the aspect of *soul* that was emphasized was what we would normally classify as the characteristics of the mind. In the Greek understanding of the word *soul*, the emphasis was placed more on physical acts of doing, where we are to love God with our actions—or, as we will say throughout the book, “qualities of the hand.” So in essence, in the Shema, Moses is saying that we are to love God with our hearts, minds, and actions, and in Matthew 22:37, Jesus is saying to love God with our hearts, actions, and minds. For the

purposes of this book, we will focus on the concept of loving God with our minds.

The ability to engage our minds in our love for God is a wonderful gift. The Lord has given us His Word not only as a means of connecting with Him but also to learn who God is and identify His purposes in the world. We learn who He has created us to be and what our mission is. In Romans 12:2, Paul tells us that the way in which our whole selves are to be transformed is by the renewing of our minds. As we engage our minds and let His Word and truth saturate our thought processes, we will be transformed individuals for the Lord.

Many times in Scripture, the Lord calls His people to have a better understanding of His Word and to pass on the truth of His Word to others. Perhaps one of the best passages to illustrate the expectation that God has for us to grow in our understanding of God's Word is Hebrews 5:11-14. The author of Hebrews writes in the previous verses about how Jesus is from the priestly order of Melchizedek. Then he stops, almost midthought. It is as if he realizes that by continuing on this line of thinking and giving his explanation, he would just cause greater misunderstanding among the people, because they didn't have the capacity to understand. The author writes,

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.

But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

In this passage, there is clearly the understanding that God expects our minds to grow. He has the expectation that we grow in our knowledge of His Word, that we grow in our ability to process deeper theological truths, and even that we all have the ability to teach other people. He uses the analogy of a move from milk (the basic doctrines of the Word of God) to solid food (deeper theological truths). What a great analogy that we can easily understand. We all know that babies need milk and they are unable to chew or swallow solid food.

I think of the growth of my own son, when he needed only milk or formula for the first couple of months. Then, after a few months, we would put a little bit of the first stage of rice food in his bottle with a bigger nipple. A few months later, he was eating pureed baby food that he could mush around in his mouth and swallow. The next thing I know, I am enjoying a rib-eye steak with my twelve-year-old son. Now, my son still enjoys milk—it helps the meatier food go down more easily, and he likes the taste—but people would look at him (and us) funny if he was still bottle-fed. And yet we don't bat an eye when people in our churches are only able to take in the basic elements of God after being Christians for more than a decade.

Core quality 4 examines the characteristic of the mind, our ability to know the Scriptures, and our capacity to continue engaging in His Word. These aspects will be fleshed out more completely in chapter 5.

LOVING GOD WITH OUR WHOLE MIGHT

One of the first sermons I ever preached was on serving God. A lady came up to me after the sermon and said, “That was a great sermon. I want to start serving God when I retire in ten years.” God’s Word, however, is abundantly clear: We are all to engage in His mission and purpose in the world.

Christianity is not a spectator sport. I heard it said once that oftentimes, life in the church is like a professional football game: thousands of people in the stands who desperately need exercise and a few people on the field who desperately need rest. Somehow, the church in the West has decided that participating in the work of God in the world is only for people with extra time on their hands.

There are two ways we engage in God’s mission in the world. First, there are some things that we are called to do regardless of the specific gifts and callings that God has given us. For example, all of us are called to care for orphans (James 1:27), feed the poor (Matthew 25:35), and make disciples (Matthew 28:19).

The second way we are called to serve is by using our individual gifts to fulfill the specific ministries that God assigns us. One of those passages is 1 Corinthians 12, which gives some examples of the types of gifts that God has given to believers for building up the church. Paul’s point is that all of these gifts must work together in order to fulfill God’s purposes—no gifts or roles are more important than others. Ephesians 4 discusses the unity of the body and the different roles that are present within it: apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher. Paul then says that the only way the whole body of Christ, the

church, will be healthy and fulfilling its purpose is if each part of the body is functioning properly.

The final four qualities in the discipleship profile are related to loving God with our strength or actions. Quality 5 is related to our ability to take the posture and attitude of Jesus as we engage in the contexts where God has placed us. Quality 6 looks at our ability to engage others in discipleship, which includes sharing our faith with nonbelievers and then helping other believers grow into maturity. Quality 7 looks at our ability to commit to the Christian community, by being devoted to the mission of a congregation and having a closer community of believers who help one another grow. Finally, quality 8 is related to understanding and living out the specific ministries that God assigns us. These four qualities of a disciple are articulated more completely in chapters 6 and 7.

DISCIPLESHIP OUT OF BALANCE

It is easy for a disciple to be out of balance in these three general areas of discipleship—loving God with our whole hearts, minds, and might. Every believer will more naturally gravitate toward certain discipleship qualities and characteristics that align with his or her spiritual gifts. Particular churches and denominations will tend to emphasize one or two of these areas over others. It is important, therefore, to examine our personal discipleship to see if we are in balance. It is also helpful to examine our churches' approaches to discipleship for the same reason.

If a church emphasizes helping disciples love God with their hearts and minds but negates loving God with their hands, the

church will become doctrinally pure and have a robust devotional life but will likely be insulated from the outside world. In this situation, individuals might selfishly think that the church exists to meet their spiritual needs and not focus on God's mission in the world. An example of this attitude might be the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. Jesus says He knows their deeds, and they are neither hot or cold. This refers to the two streams of water that went into Laodicea: one from Colossae that was cold and refreshing and one from Hierapolis that was hot and healing. They both served purposes, but by the time those waters came to Laodicea, they were lukewarm and gritty; people would drink that water and immediately spit it out.⁴

If a church emphasizes loving God with the heart and strength but minimizes loving God with their minds, then the church will be passionate and action oriented but might not focus on making new disciples. In this scenario, the church might become more like a humanitarian organization that seeks to do good in the world. An example might be the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2:18-29: They are affirmed for their good deeds, and yet their theology is off. They tolerate false teaching to accommodate the larger community.

If a church emphasizes helping disciples love God with their heads and hands but minimizes loving God with their hearts, then the church might begin to function out of obligation and duty rather than joy. In these situations, a church can become very concerned about correct theology and getting people saved but fail to move people into a loving relationship with the Lord. An example of this scenario might be the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7. This church

had great theology—they could test those who claimed to be apostles and find them doctrinally false. They were doing good things in the community, and the society was changing. Yet Jesus said that they had lost their first love. They lost their loving relationship with God. They were functioning purely out of duty and not out of being joyfully connected to the Lord.

It is crucial for a church to have a clear picture of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. If the fundamental purpose of the church is to develop disciples, then an understanding of what it means to be a disciple is crucial. This book suggests that disciples are, at the root, those who love God with their heads (minds), hearts (souls), and hands (actions). In the next chapter, we will look at the way Jesus developed disciples.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Of the three overarching ways we love God, which do you most naturally gravitate toward? Head—loving God with our minds? Heart—loving God with our passion and character? Hands—loving God with our actions? Explain.
2. Looking at the same three areas, which might you shy away from? Why?
3. Who do you know that is a good example of living out all three areas well? Where do you see them living them out?

SIMPLE DISCIPLESHIP

4. Where does your church or small group tend to put more focus? Where do they focus less?
5. Who are three to seven people that you could ask to take the discipleship assessment on your behalf?