

3 Ways to Revive Discipleship

It looks like the church is making great inroads into people's lives, but ...

A lot of good things are happening in churches across America. We're in the thick of summer, and if this summer holds consistent with recent summers:

- Over two million teenagers will attend a Christian camp like Centrifuge
- Almost three million kids will attend a Vacation Bible School.
- 72,925 kids will accept Christ as a result of VBS.

Over a twenty-year period, Southern Baptist churches have baptized 7.1 million people.

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Robby Gallaty (Photo by Van Payne)

Robby Gallaty, pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, recently shared that last statistic at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Over seven million people

have come to Christ! Yet during that same twenty-year period, 6.5 million people stopped attending church.

7.1 million enter. 6.5 million exit. In spite of our evangelistic efforts and statistics, the church is not growing. Gallaty said, "Our convention could be twice as large as it is today if we would have simply engaged the people we just baptized."

It looks like the church is making great inroads into people's lives, but there are too many exit ramps.

This isn't just a Baptist problem. It is an issue for the whole evangelical church. So what are we missing?

Discipleship.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descended on the believers, Peter preached an incredible sermon, and—BAM!—three thousand people were saved (Acts 2:41). Just a short time later that number had grown to five thousand (4:4). And it didn't stop. The church continued to grow.

What made the difference? The obvious answer is the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit, but the young

church had four key ways in which the Spirit worked. Immediately after those three thousand came to Christ in Acts 2:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (2:42).

That. Was. Significant.

1. They were taught God's Word.
2. They invested time in being with God's people. They *shared* their common faith in Christ.
3. They centered this fellowship in Christ.
4. They prayed continually, an act of ongoing dependence upon Christ.

I recently told the church I am pastoring that, if for some odd reason, they couldn't attend both the worship service and a Bible study group, choose the Bible study group.

What? And miss my wonderful preaching?

Yes. There is a direct correlation between involvement in a small group Bible study and spiritual growth ... and sharing the faith .. and ministry. I want my preaching and exposition of God's Word to move people toward a deeper walk with Christ, but it is the interaction with a group of other believers—as in a Bible study group—that discipleship flourishes.

- If you're not in a disciple-making group—a small group or Sunday School class—get in one. This week.
- If you're already in a Bible study group, great. Bring someone with you who is not in a group. Play a part in encouraging their discipleship.
- Better yet, start a new group. New groups reach new people, and by organizing and facilitating a new group, God will use you in a great way in the discipleship and growth of others.



Want to see discipleship take off?

1. **Get in a discipleship group. Now.**
2. **Bring someone with you.**
3. **Start a discipleship group.**

Let's revive discipleship.

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