

# The 3 People I Should Ask to Be Part of a Disciple Making Group

Are you convicted that you ought to be making disciples, but you just don't know where to start? The purpose of this article is to identify the type of individual you might ask to participate in a disciple making group. This is written for the follower of Jesus who knows that the mission of Jesus is to make disciples who make disciples. We believe that disciple making is the work of everyone who has decided to make Jesus King (Matt. 28).

## Sizes of Groups

Jesus interacted with various groups during His ministry, with each group playing a unique role. Let's explore these groups in descending order of size:

1. **The Public/Crowd** (5,000+):
  - Jesus dedicated considerable time to engaging with the public, addressing large gatherings and individuals along the way. His intentional words and actions left a lasting impact, regardless of group size.
2. **Social Circle** (approx. 72 people):
  - Within Jesus' social circle, he had close interactions with around 72 individuals (see Luke 10). This group included those whom Jesus sent out in pairs on specific missions. Additionally, there were women who provided care and support to Jesus, forming part of this social circle.
3. **Personal Group** (the 12 Apostles):
  - Jesus selected twelve individuals to be His apostles, forming a more personal group. They were chosen to share in His ministry and teachings.
4. **Intimate/Transparent Group** (the inner circle of 3 out of 12):
  - Within the larger group of twelve apostles, Jesus formed an intimate and transparent group consisting of Peter, James, and John. He invested more time and attention in nurturing their relationship, demonstrating the value of deep connections within the church.
5. **Jesus' Intimate Connection with the Father** (1-on-1):
  - While not the focus of this article, it's essential to note that Jesus maintained an intimate connection with God the Father through the Holy Spirit and prayer. This closeness to God was foundational to His ministry.

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Notice that intimacy with the Father is not the only relationship that is important to the Christian life. Although the follower of Jesus must have a relationship with God through prayer and relational connection, it is not the only relationship that Jesus engages. Nor are the crowds of thousands who are lost the only groups that have importance. As followers of Jesus, each of these spheres of influence becomes important to proclaiming the message of Jesus and for living authentically as His followers.

My (Carl's) experience with churches in North America suggests that the majority of our time and resources focuses on either the close-knit relationship with God and/or the large church gathering. The traditional North American church lacks intentional reproduction. For this reason, it is important to train disciples of Jesus to create **transparent disciple making groups** as Jesus had with Peter, James, & John. Following Jesus' method of disciple making would entail inviting an intimate or transparent group of three. The three invited individuals and the disciple maker become a group of 4 who gather for the express purpose of multiplying disciple makers.

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## Three Types of People to Invite

There are three types of people to look for when praying about starting a disciple making group: those ready to multiply, ready to obey, or ready to talk. Some people we should be looking for are ready to be disciple makers, while others are believers ready to be obedient to Jesus, and still others are seekers ready to talk about following Jesus.

Timothy, Nicodemus, and Cornelius illustrate the kinds of people that are worth spending time with in disciple making. Although these categories and the examples given below give a great framework for identifying individuals, it is important to recognize the power of the Holy Spirit in the work of identifying people. Although we describe three categories below, they should not usurp the power of the Spirit for helping identify whom we need to disciple.

We offer this list to help those who are struggling to identify individuals for disciple making groups. We believe having clarity and a typology of sorts will help people to start the work of disciple making. The disciple maker should not expect to restrict their group to one person from each list, but simply to use the list to help identify the people the Holy Spirit is highlighting.

## 1. Followers of Jesus who are ready to be disciple makers

One kind of person you may ask to join your group is someone *ready to multiply*. These are followers of Jesus who are ready to be disciple makers. Paul noticed a young man by the name of Timothy when he arrived in Derbe and Lystra in Acts 16. He was well spoken of and was from a family with a Jewish believing mom and Greek dad. Paul chose to bring Timothy along on his journeys because he believed he would be a great disciple maker. When considering whom to spend time with in an intentional disciple making relationship, Timothy is a good example.

For another example, I (Carl) noticed that Grant was a young man with a good home. Just like Timothy, Grant grew up knowing and following God. His parents, grandparents, and the leaders at the church where he grew up had trained him well. These things are also partly what made Grant a perfect person to intentionally disciple, because he was ready to grow in disciple making. Since the summer Grant and I spent time together, we have become co-workers in the gospel. Grant now has been training others in the same model of disciple making that we learned together. Timothy was already living faithfully for God, but Paul walked beside him so that he would be a great disciple maker and church planter.

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## 2. Followers of Jesus ready to be obedient to Jesus

Another type of person to look for when starting a disciple making group is someone *ready to obey*. These are followers of Jesus ready to be obedient to Jesus. There is a difference between a Timothy and a Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews and a Pharisee. I (Carl) am making an important distinction that Nicodemus was already a follower of God but was struggling to trust and follow Jesus. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night rather than the day because he was timid to follow Jesus. However, Jesus spent time with him, and he became a follower of Jesus (John 7:50). Moreover, he grew in boldness such that he joined Joseph of Arimathea in asking for Jesus’ body after his death on the cross.

Nicodemus gives us an example of someone who may already have a belief in Jesus, but is struggling to follow Him. We probably have many of these people in our churches—people who grow up sitting in the pews and believing in God, but they need someone to come alongside them and invite them into an intentional disciple making relationship to help them order their daily lives around King Jesus. These individuals are worth spending time with, and they can become great leaders for God’s church.

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I (Carl) have spent a lot of time with a young man by the name of Caleb. Similar to Grant, he also grew up in a wonderful Christian family. He also had heard stories of Jesus, but as we became close it became clear that he needed to be obedient to Jesus’ direction in his life. One way that he chose obedience early on was through a recommitment to God in his life. Another way that he has been growing in obedience is through recognizing answered prayers and reorienting his life through his belief in Jesus as Lord. He has been thinking about his career now in light of his faith in Jesus. He has been working to disciple others and is utilizing an intentional disciple making method. Those like Caleb who believe but need help following are worth spending time with in disciple making.

### **3. Seekers who are ready to talk about following Jesus**

The third type of person to look for in forming a disciple making group is someone *ready to talk*. These are seekers who are ready to talk about following Jesus. An example of this kind of person comes from the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10. In this story, we find a man who wants to know more about Jesus and is searching for Him. Cornelius was a man who gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly. God miraculously worked through an angel and visions to bring the message of Jesus to Cornelius and his family. Peter went and spent time both listening and speaking to Cornelius. He stayed with them for several days because this is the kind of seeker ready to talk about following Jesus.

I (Grant) became friends with BJ because we were teammates on our university football team. Over time, we began to have conversations that went beyond the surface, and BJ demonstrated a humility and openness toward talking about Jesus. Our respect and love for one another continued to grow through these conversations. When I began praying about forming a disciple making group, BJ came to mind immediately, and I invited him.

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Even though he was not yet following Jesus, he was excited for the opportunity to walk together with a couple other men and help each other trust and follow Jesus better. At the beginning of our time with our group, BJ confessed, “I have always believed there’s a God...but I don’t really know God.” However, because he had a heart that was open to exploring what following Jesus would look like, he was a great fit for our group. Today (a year later), BJ is a follower of King Jesus.

# Conclusion

Again, the goal of this article is to help unleash the power of disciple making by helping believers identify types of people that would be worth inviting into a disciple making relationship. We suggest that in transparent groups of 4, people learn from God and from one another. Regardless of which stage we start—no matter who we are or how long we have (or haven't) been a disciple—we can all trust and follow Jesus better. And that's what disciple making is: entering into intentional relationships to help one another trust and follow Jesus better.

Our prayer is that you will take action on the things you have read, listen to the Holy Spirit, pray, and invite others to walk alongside you as you walk with Jesus. The goal in disciple making is not for your glory, but for the glory of God the Father. The work is work that will last forever, for it is the work of the kingdom of God.

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