



DIAGNOSING THE NEED

In our curriculum, conferences, books, and articles, we have embraced an ill-defined discipleship process. Though sincerely motivated, most miss the target and produce inferior results.

RATIONAL/BEHAVIORAL MODELS ARE SIMPLY NOT WORKING!

They start at the wrong point which guarantees a wrong result. In theological terms, they are rooted in anthropology (the nature of man) instead of pneumatology (the nature of the Spirit). These models call on the disciple to *know* and *do*—rational knowledge (learning, memorization, coursework) and behavioral activity (how to act, what to do).

- Knowledge and behavior are essential but do not transform!
- Knowledge stops short of the Holy Spirit's destination of loving God and loving others.
- Behavioral effort (doing more or behaving better) cancels grace and creates Pharisees.

What's missing is the imperative of life in the Spirit, experiencing the presence and the power of the living God.

- Do we have the courage to STOP, BACK UP, and START AGAIN with *ministering to the Lord* and *loving our God*?
- Must we deconstruct discipleship as it exists today, exchanging rational/behavioral models for relational/experiential models?
- Doctors diagnose patients from empirical evidence; then they assign a treatment.
- Rule One: If the treatment is killing the patient, stop the treatment. *Church, our treatment is killing the patient.*

DISCERNING THE SOLUTION

This Spirit-empowered, relational framework would propose a transforming journey for all ages and stages of spiritual development, where the Holy Spirit leads us in a relational journey with God's Son, God's Word, and God's people.

Spirit-empowered discipleship will require a lifestyle of:

- Fresh encounters with Jesus. – John 8:12
- Frequent experiences of Scripture. – Psalm 119:105
- Faithful engagement with God's people. – Matthew 5:14

“Walk while you have the light lest the darkness overtake you” (John 12:35).

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND! RELATIONAL OUTCOMES

The ultimate goal of discipleship relates to the person of Jesus—to Christ-likeness. Models based upon *knowing* and *doing* are incomplete, lacking the empowerment of a life of loving and living intimately with Christ. Spirit-empowered discipleship outcomes must be relational and impossible to realize apart from a special work of the Spirit. Thus a Spirit-empowered discipleship outcome of *listening to and hearing God* is both relational and requires the Holy Spirit's work.

BEGIN AT THE RIGHT PLACE! LOVING GOD, LOVING OTHERS

Relevant discipleship does not begin with doctrines or teaching, parables or principles, church polity or stewardship, but with *loving the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength*. It's this life of loving intimately that the Spirit calls us to and empowers us in. Reconsider the words of Jesus to make disciples of all nations—teaching them to observe ALL I've commanded—and then recall that this same Jesus has already declared we should begin with the greatest commandment (Matthew 28:19–20; 22:37–40)!

AN AGE-STAGE PROCESS: EXPLORE—EMBRACE—EXPERIENCE—EXPRESS TRUTHS OF THE FAITH

Critical to faith formation is that our first encounter with Jesus, His Word, and His people is not our last!

40 Spirit-Empowered Faith Outcomes have been identified and organized around:

- L1–10 Loving the Lord
- W1–10 Living His Word
- P1–10 Loving People
- M1–10 Living His Mission

A Spirit-Empowered Disciple —Loves the Lord Through...

L1. Practicing thanksgiving in all things

“Enter the gates with thanksgiving” (Ps. 100:4). “In everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:18). “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Cor. 6:10).

L2. Listening to and hearing God for direction and discernment

“Speak Lord, Your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:8–9). “Mary...listening to the Lord’s word, seated at his feet” (Luke 10:38–42). “Shall I not share with Abraham what I am about to do?” (Gen. 18:17). “His anointing teaches you all things” (1 John 2:27).

L3. Experiencing God as He really is through deepened intimacy with Him

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:4–5). “Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice” (Isa. 30:18). See also John 14:9.

L4. Rejoicing regularly in my identity as “His Beloved”

“And His banner over me is love” (Song 2:4). “To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6). “For the Lord gives to His beloved even in their sleep” (Ps. 127:2).

L5. Living with a passionate longing for purity and to please Him in all things

“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord—he who has clean hands and a pure heart” (Ps. 24:3). “Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him” (John 8:29). “Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him” (Job 13:15).

L6. Consistent practice of self-denial, fasting, and solitude rest

“He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do” (Matt. 16:23). “But you when you fast...” (Matt. 6:17). “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10).

L7. Entering often into Spirit-led praise and worship

“Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me...” (Ps. 103:1). “Worship the Lord with reverence” (Ps. 2:11). “I praise Thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth...” (Matt. 11:25).

L8. Disciplined, bold, and believing prayer

“Pray at all times in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18). “Call unto me and I will answer...” (Jer. 33:3). “If you ask according to His will—He hears—and you will have...” (1 John 5:14–15).

L9. Yielding to the Spirit’s fullness as life in the Spirit brings supernatural intimacy with the Lord, manifestation of divine gifts, and witness of the fruit of the Spirit

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:8). “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). See also, 1 Peter 4:10, and Rom. 12:6.

L10. Practicing the presence of the Lord, yielding to the Spirit’s work of Christ-likeness

“And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His likeness from glory to glory which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). “As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, O God” (Ps. 42:1).

A Spirit-Empowered Disciple— Lives His Word Through...

- W1. Frequently being led by the Spirit into deeper love for the One who wrote the Word**
"Love the Lord thy God—love thy neighbor; upon these two commandments deepens all the law and prophets" (Matt. 22:37–40). "I delight in Your commands because I love them." (Ps. 119:47). "The ordinances of the Lord are pure—they are more precious than gold—sweeter than honey" (Ps. 19:9–10).
- W2. Being a "living epistle" in reverence and awe as His Word becomes real in my life, vocation, and calling**
"You yourselves are our letter—known and read by all men" (2 Cor. 3:2). "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). "Husbands love your wives—cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word" (Eph. 5:26). See also Titus 2:5. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord..." (Col. 3:23).
- W3. Yielding to the Scripture's protective cautions and transforming power to bring life change in me**
"I gain understanding from Your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path" (Ps. 119:104). "Be it done unto me according to Your word" (Luke 1:38). "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word" (Ps. 119:9). See also Col. 3:16–17.
- W4. Humbly and vulnerably sharing of the Spirit's transforming work through the Word**
"I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame" (Ps. 119:46). "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2).
- W5. Meditating consistently on more and more of the Word hidden in the heart**
"I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:12). "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14).
- W6. Encountering Jesus in the Word for deepened transformation in Christ-likeness**
"All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). See also Luke 24:32, Ps. 119:136, and 2 Cor. 1:20.
- W7. A life explained as one of "experiencing Scripture"**
"This is that spoken of by the prophets" (Acts 2:16). "My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life" (Ps. 119:50). "My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws at all times" (Ps. 119:20).
- W8. Living "naturally supernatural," in all of life, as His Spirit makes the written Word (*logos*) the living Word (*Rhema*)**
*"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word (*Rhema*) of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Ps. 119:105).*
- W9. Living abundantly "in the present" as His Word brings healing to hurt, anger, guilt, fear, and condemnation—which are *heart hindrances* to life abundant**
"The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy..." (John 10:10). "I run in the path of Your commands for You have set my heart free" (Ps. 119:32). "...and you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). "For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).
- W10. Implicit, unwavering trust that His Word will never fail**
"The grass withers and the flower fades but the Word of God abides forever" (Isa. 40:8). "So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth, it will not return to me empty" (Isa. 55:11).

A Spirit-Empowered Disciple— Loves People Through...

P1. Living a Spirit-led life of doing good in all of life—relationships and vocation, community and calling

"...He went about doing good..." (Acts 10:38). "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men" (Luke 6:35). See also Rom. 15:2.

P2. Startling people with loving initiatives to give first

"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38). "But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'" (Luke 23:34). See also Luke 23:43 and John 19:27.

P3. Discerning the relational needs of others with a heart to give of His love

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29). "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). See also Luke 6:30.

P4. Seeing people as needing BOTH redemption from sin AND intimacy in relationships, addressing both human fallenness and aloneness

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). "When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house'" (Luke 19:5). See also Mark 8:24 and Gen. 2:18.

P5. Ministering His life and love to our nearest ones at home and with family as well as faithful engagement in His body, the church

"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). See also 1 Peter 3:1 and Ps. 127:3.

P6. Expressing the fruit of the Spirit as a lifestyle and identity

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..." (Gal. 5:22–23). "With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied; He will be satisfied with the product of his lips" (Prov. 18:20).

P7. Expecting and demonstrating the supernatural as His spiritual gifts are made manifest and His grace is at work by His Spirit

"In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19). "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also..." (John 14:12). See also 1 Cor. 14:1.

P8. Taking courageous initiative as a peacemaker, reconciling relationships along life's journey

"...Live in peace with one another" (1 Thess. 5:13). "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (Eph. 2:14). "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. See also James 5:16 and Eph. 4:31–32.

P9. Demonstrating His love to an ever-growing network of "others" as He continues to challenge us to love "beyond our comfort"

"The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).

P10. Humbly acknowledging to the Lord, ourselves, and others that it is Jesus in and through us who is loving others at their point of need

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).

A Spirit-Empowered Disciple— Lives His Mission Through...

- M1. Imparting the gospel and one's very life in daily activities and relationships, vocation, and community**
"Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us" (1 Thess. 2:8–9). See also Eph. 6:19.
- M2. Expressing and extending the kingdom of God as compassion, justice, love, and forgiveness are shared**
"I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43). "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to you" (Ps. 51:12–13). See also Mic. 6:8.
- M3. Championing Jesus as the only hope of eternal life and abundant living**
"There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved" (Acts 4:12). "A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). See also Acts 4:12, John 10:10, and John 14:6.
- M4. Yielding to the Spirit's role to convict others as He chooses, resisting expressions of condemnation**
"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment..." (John 16:8). "Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Rom. 8:34). See also Rom. 8:1.
- M5. Ministering His life and love to the "least of these"**
"Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me'" (Matt. 25:45). "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).
- M6. Bearing witness of a confident peace and expectant hope in God's Lordship in all things**
"Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!" (2 Thess. 3:16). "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Col. 3:15). See also Rom. 8:28 and Ps. 146:5.
- M7. Faithfully sharing of time, talent, gifts, and resources in furthering His mission**
"Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God" (Col. 1:25). "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more" (Luke 12:48). See also 1 Cor. 4:1–2.
- M8. Attentive listening to others' story, vulnerably sharing of your story, and a sensitive witness of Jesus' story as life's ultimate hope; developing your story of prodigal, preoccupied and pain-filled living; listening for others' story and sharing Jesus' story**
"...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15). "... because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again" (Luke 11:24). (Mark 5:21–42). (John 9:1–35).
- M9. Pouring our life into others, making disciples who in turn make disciples of others**
"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19–20). See also 2 Tim. 2:2.
- M10. Living submissively within His body, the church, as instruction and encouragement, reproof, and correction are graciously received by faithful disciples**
"...and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Eph. 5:21). "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). See also Gal. 6:2.