

How to Start Growing People

Discipleship, Session Three (Chap. 3)

T / F It's healthy for a person to reach a spiritually level plateau if it's high enough.

Our goal in discipling: "That we may present everyone _____ in Christ." (Col. 1:28)

According to Putnam, what wrong—but common—approach to discipling might cause an entire congregation to be left in spiritual childhood?

Responsibility for discipling has three parts. Briefly outline who is responsible for what. Why are these distinctions important?

God's Part—

My Part—

Their Part—

Five Stages of Discipleship

"It might seem strange to categorize people into spiritual development levels. In the church, we are taught not to judge people, and categorizing people into groups might feel akin to judging them. But that's not what we are doing. Judging implies that we are issuing a final verdict on their character or morality. Instead of condemning them or placing them in a category that they can't move out of, we are seeking to assess their level of spiritual maturity in order to help them move forward and grow." (p. 56)

"We need to remember that no stage of discipleship is more important than any other. Readiness to be used in the mission varies, based on the person's developmental stage, but value does not." (p. 73).

Level 1: Spiritually Dead

Description: no faith, no life in Jesus, unable to change by themselves, comfortable in sin; they perceive themselves to be self-sufficient and in control (see Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13a; Rom. 8:7-8)

Needs: honest friendships, love, clear explanation and example of the Gospel

Phrase from the Stage:

BORN AGAIN! (John 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:23)

new creation/child of God

Level 2: Infant

Description: alive, but not in any way mature; uninformed; can be a new believer or a long-time believer who has stagnated in faith; exciting potential in which new, basic realities are being discovered, but still very needy and self-centered; doesn't know much and has many questions (see 1 Pet. 2:2-3; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 3:1; 14:19-21; Eph. 4:14-15)

Needs: protection, guidance, lots of care and attention of a spiritual parent, truth modeled

Phrase from the Stage:

Level 3: Child

Description: able in some ways, but still dependent; able to speak the language; still self-centered, craves affirmation and approval; beginning to grow in relationship with God and with others (see 1 John 2:12; 1 Thess. 2:10-12; John 13:33; 1 Cor. 4:14; 14:20; Gal 4:19)

Needs: a strong relational connection to a mature believer; guidance in making the transition from dependency to being able to feed themselves; need teaching to make the leap to God-centered, kingdom-focused living

Phrase from the Stage:

Level 4: Young Adult

Description: starting to minister, put the needs of others before their own; they want to serve; learning to be faithful; they see the world as a place that needs changing (see 1 John 2:13-14; 1 Cor. 13:11; 14:20; Col. 4:12; Phil. 3:15; James 1:4)

Needs: a place where they can learn to serve, a spiritual mentor to coach/debrief; need help establishing boundaries and determining gifts and skills; when hurt, they need a place to process the pain

Phrase from the Stage:

Level 5: Parent

Description: actively discipling someone else, solid understanding of the Word, kingdom-centered; mindful of the needs of less mature disciples; not perfect (see 2 Tim. 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:14; 2 Cor. 6:13; 12:14-15; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 2:22; 1 Thess. 2:7-8, 11; 3 John 1:4)

Needs: close peer relationships with other parents, peer accountability, ongoing training, to be encouraged and given permission to develop people to maturity

Phrase from the Stage:

Quotable

“Spiritual parents are not perfect...[but] they are intentional about building their own, personal relationship with Jesus, and as a result they are in relationships for the purpose of discipleship.” (p. 69-70)

“Spiritually mature people fail, but the longer and deeper the walk, the shorter the time period between the mistake and the repentance.” (p. 74)

“It is both comforting and humbling to know that we are all in a process of spiritual growth and that no one fully arrives at the destination of perfection in this life.” (p. 57)

“It’s not the amount of time that passes that marks the difference between mature and immature; it’s what has happened or not happened in a relational discipleship process during that time.” (p. 65)

“A person needs to be only one step ahead of someone else to lead him.” (p. 72)

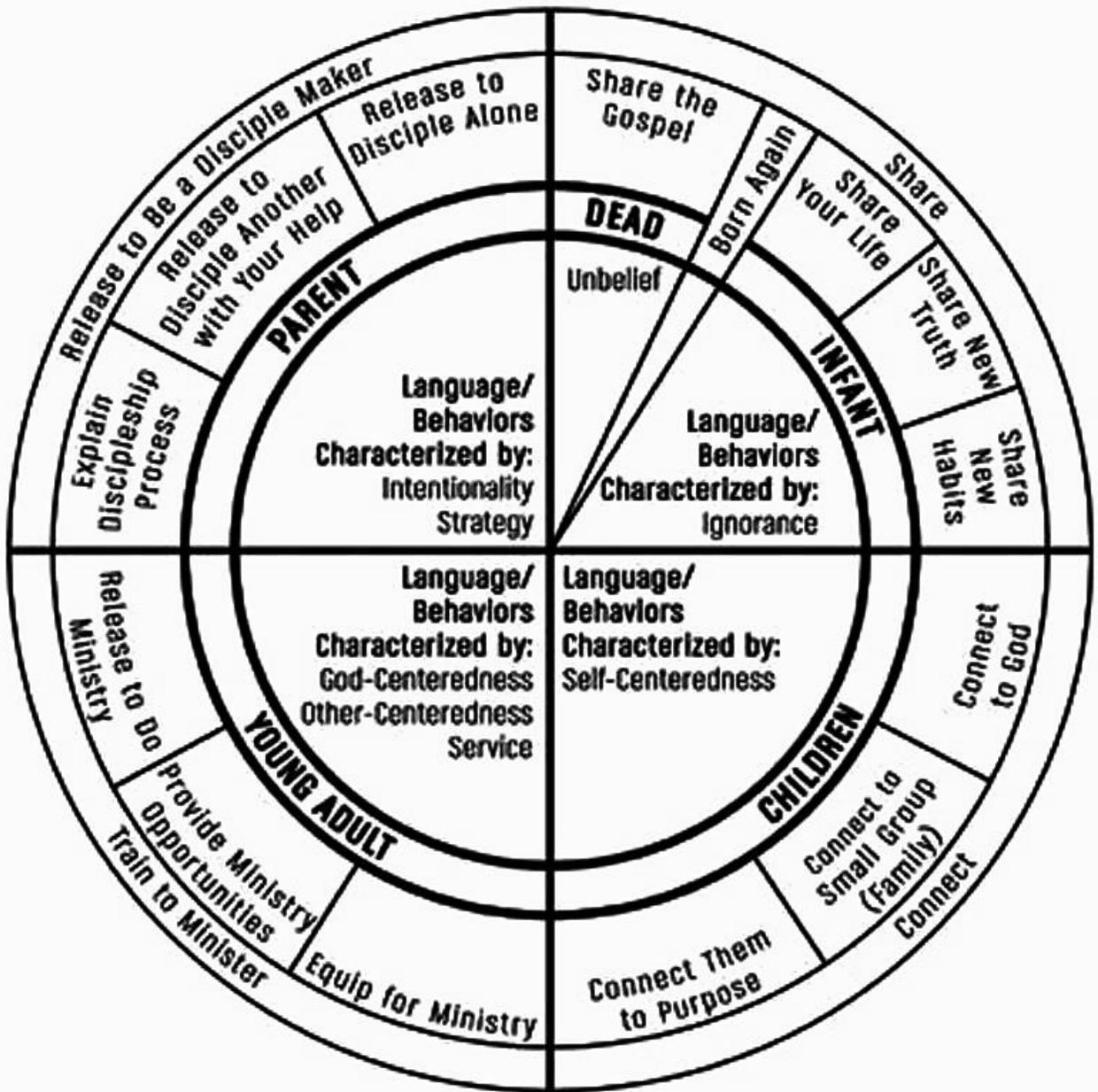
Discussion/Application:

Where do you think you are in the five stages of discipleship?

Do you want to grow? What are your developmental needs/expectations?

Where do the Sacraments fit into this model?

Is the ministry of the church developing people unto maturity or only to a point?



The Five Stages of Discipleship

Source: *DiscipleShift*. Putman, Jim and Bobby Harrington. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.