

What About Teaching and Preaching in Disciple-Making Movements?

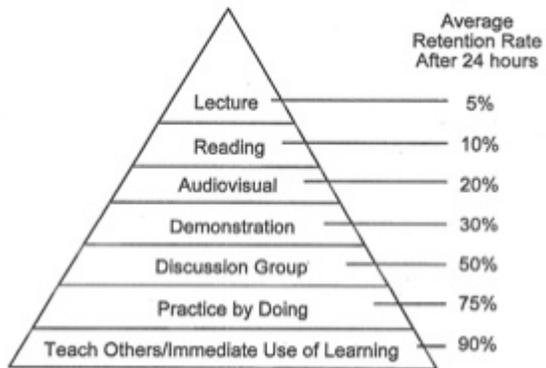
by DAVID WATSON on AUGUST 27, 2013

“What about Teaching and Preaching?” is the number one question I receive when talking about Disciple-Making Movements, the Discovery Bible Study and Discovery Groups (which are inductive and self-correcting through a coaching process); and to the uninitiated, do not appear to have teachers or preachers. There are several aspects to this question I want to explore with you in this post.

A certain percentage of those who ask this question are really saying, “I feel that teaching and preaching are my gifts, and I see no place for me in the Discovery process.” The problem with this response is that the question is focused on the teaching/preacher, not the students who need to know God. I call this the talking-head syndrome. People who have this syndrome think they are such good orators/teachers/preachers that the sound of their voices and the content of their messages will somehow miraculously become permanently imbedded in the minds of those who listen. They will proof text their position, somehow thinking that modern teaching and preaching were the norm in the First Century.

If they would take even a moment to look at the ministry of Jesus or Paul, they would realize that lecturing was a very small part of their ministries. From Scripture, it seems that they would spend days in direct contact with people making disciples for every few minutes of lecture. It is not that they didn't lecture; it is that they didn't just lecture. They prayed together, met needs together, when on ministry trips together and separately, reported what was accomplished, dialogued with each other and the opposition, taught others what they were learning, and obeyed (put into practice) what they were learning. The idea that teaching and preaching were just talking did not even occur to them and certainly was not their usual practice.

The following diagram is from page 95 of [How the Brain Learns](#) by David Sousa, 2001. It is based on research done by the NLT Institute of Alexandria, Virginia.



Note, that if one just lectures, then there is only a 5% retention of information after 24 hours. This goes down even further as more days pass. On the same page, Dr. Sousa also writes, “Lecture continues to be the most prevalent teaching mode in secondary and higher education, despite overwhelming evidence that it produces the lowest degree of retention for most learners.”

Modern teaching and preaching are lecture styles that cannot and do not produce Disciples, regardless of how good the orator feels about his or her skills or content. There is certainly a place for lecture, but it is minor in the overall process of making a disciple.

Disciple-Makers cannot just be teachers and preachers. They must spend significant time with their potential disciples in dialogue, demonstration, encouragement to teach others what they are learning, and exhorting them to obey (do) what they are learning. This is how one effectively moves knowledge and practice from one person to another and one generation to another.

In the typical teaching/preaching setting, listeners are encouraged to do three things.

1. Listen to the Scripture as it is read, which may or may not be heard.
2. Listen to an explanation of the Scripture, which may or may not be understood.
3. Listen to how they might apply the Scripture to their own lives or circumstances, which may or may not be obeyed.

To enhance retention, the teacher/preacher will use lots of examples and stories, and sometimes, guilt. But the reality is that most listeners cannot tell anyone about what they heard unless they took notes and refer to those notes. Within a few weeks no one

remembers anything that was said, unless it was a good joke or story, they told to others several times. There is zero accountability for the content, or the behavior changes it may require. Even the teacher/preacher is hard pressed to tell us in any detail what they spoke about in the last few weeks.

Modern teaching and preaching have failed to produce obedient Disciples of Jesus.

The methodology of Disciple-Making Movements (DMM) was designed to produce the highest levels of understanding, retention, obedience, and reproduction of the process. It all starts with a committed and obedient Disciple of Jesus who is also a Disciple-maker. By the way, one cannot be a committed and obedient Disciple of Jesus and not make Disciples. A Disciple is one who knows and follows (obeys) the teachings of Jesus, which includes the command to “make Disciples”.

The DMM process is:

1. A well-trained Disciple is sent to a new area to start work. (Teaching and practice is involved)
2. The Disciple practices his/her life in the new community, being conspicuously spiritual while meeting felt needs in the community. (Felt needs may include business)
3. The spiritual life and ministry of the Disciple attracts those who may be spiritually seeking.
4. Casual Discover Bible Studies are introduced, and the seeker is encouraged to share these with family, friends, neighbors, and workmates. For example: I verbally introduce a passage of Scripture and ask the seeker what he/she thinks. Then I ask them to share it with family/friends/neighbors/workmates to see what they think. The person who engages the process and introduces me to their family/friends/neighbors/workmates is called a Person of Peace. (These studies may be on a variety of topics of interest to the audience: family, parenting, debt, wealth, and etc.)
5. As interest in the topics increase, there comes a time when it is appropriate to move from an informal to a formal Discovery Bible Study within the context of a

Discovery Group. By this point the Disciple-maker should know who the spiritual leader of the group is. It may or may not be the Person of Peace.

6. The Disciple-maker then approaches the spiritual leader of the family/group/neighbors/workmates and suggests that he/she should lead the group in discovering more about God.
7. Upon acceptance, the Disciple-maker begins a relationship with the spiritual leader and coaches him/her to lead a Discovery Group. Coaching includes teaching and the practice of skills until they are perfected.
8. The Discovery Group takes people from not knowing God to falling in love with Jesus. Later, the same process is used to master any topic in the Bible. It establishes the DNA of the emerging church.
9. Here is an outline with the DNA elements in parenthesis:
 - Ask: What are you thankful for this week? (Prayer/Worship)
 - Ask: What has stressed you out this week? What do you need for things to be better? (Intercession)
 - Ask: What are the needs of the people in your community? (Ministry)
 - Ask: How can we help each other with the needs we expressed? (Ministry)
 - Ask: What did we talk about last week? (Review/Accountability)
 - Ask: Did you change anything in your life as a result of last week's story? (Accountability/Obedience)
 - Ask: Did you get a chance to share the story with [the person they identified]? (Accountability/Evangelism)
 - Ask: We identified several needs last week and planned to meet those needs. How did it go? (Accountability/Ministry)
 - Say: Let's see what the Bible teaches us this week. Read this week's passage. (Scripture)
 - Ask for someone to retell the passage in his or her own words. Like they were telling a friend who wasn't there. (Understanding/Evangelism)
 - Ask the Group: Do you agree with their retelling? Is there something they added or left out that they shouldn't have? As long as the group doesn't miss a key component of the passage, continue. If they miss something, read the passage again. If someone states something that isn't in the passage, ask, "Where did you find [what they said] in this passage?" Reread the passage, if necessary. (Priesthood of Believers/Group Correction/Understanding)

- Ask: What does this passage teach us about God?
(Discovery/Scripture/Priesthood of Believers)
- Ask: What does this passage teach us about humanity?
(Discovery/Scripture/Priesthood of Believers)
- Ask: If we believe this passage is from God, how must we change?
(Discovery/Scripture/Obedience/Priesthood of Believers)
- Ask: Who are you going to share this passage with before we meet again?
(Evangelism/Replication)
- Ask: When do you want to meet again? This is a practical question. You will never get someone to commit to a 26-week study. But, you can give them the option to meet again next week. If they are really seeking and if the meeting is filling a need, they will tell you they want to meet again.

10. This process is repeated every week until the group becomes Believers and then Disciples in obedience to the Word, which will include baptism and is when we consider a church to be established. Maturing of the church continues with new Bible studies designed to take the church to reproduction.

Now, let's revisit the learning pyramid.

1. Lecture (teaching) takes place between the Disciple-maker and the seeker who will lead the group.
2. Reading the Scripture for the next lesson takes place between the Disciple-maker and the seeker who leads the group.
3. Reading to the group/listening to Scripture takes place in the group.
4. Demonstration of the process takes place between the Disciple-maker and the seeker who leads the group, and the group practices it weekly.
5. The group is led in discussion of the Word using the questions given by the Disciple-maker. Note that the group leader does not teach, but simply leads a discussion around the Word of God.
6. The seeker/leader and the group practice the process weekly. They also practice what they have learned with others inside and outside the group.
7. Every week the group members are encouraged to share/teach other what they are learning and to put into immediate practice (obey) what they are learning.

I hope you can see how every learning process is taken advantage of in the development of the Disciple-Making Movement methodology.

Now, let's compare the traditional method of preaching/teaching to discipleship to Disciple-making.

Traditional	Disciple-Making Movements
Scripture	Scripture
Explanation	Understanding
Application	Obedience

Our purpose is not to just teach or preach. Our purpose is to teach and preach with our words, our lives, and our practices in such a way that others can do the same as they imitate us in their groups and among their family/friends/neighbors/work. More than explanation, we want understanding. More than application, we want obedience.

Teaching and preaching are much more than lectures that exhort people to change their behavior. Real teaching and preaching are part of a Disciple-making process that engages the lives of a community and bring real hope and change to that community. Success is found when the community does the same thing again with others. The real teacher in this process is the Holy Spirit, as seekers are taught to listen and learn from God as they are guided in exploring Scripture.

Blessings!

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