**I. Resources**

***Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* by Michael J. Wilkins (Zondervan)**

***Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* by Greg Ogden (InterVarsity Press)**

*“Discipleship appears simple to understand at first glance, yet the more we examine what Jesus was doing with his disciples, the more complex the issues become.”* — Michael Wilkins[[1]](#footnote-1)

*“…some practical handbooks are based upon* ***incomplete****, sometimes even faulty, understanding of biblical teaching.”* — Michael Wilkins[[2]](#footnote-2)

**II. Situation**

*“There is a crisis of discipleship in the American church today. Reams of research confirm the simple observation that in many ways* ***the lives of most professing Christians are not much different from their nonbelieving neighbors****. Like ancient Israel and the church in some periods of history, we have adopted the beliefs, values, and behaviors of the surrounding culture to an alarming degree. Although there are exceptions among individuals and congregations, they only serve to confirm the reality.”* — Thomas A. Tarrants, III[[3]](#footnote-3)

*“We as Christ followers in American churches have embraced values and ideas that are not only unbiblical but that* ***actually******contradict the gospel we claim to believe****.”* — David Platt[[4]](#footnote-4)

*“For many years, 25 or more, the church-growth school has been dominant. I rejoice in the statistics, but we must say it is growth without depth. I believe it was Chuck Colson who said the church is 3,000 miles wide and an inch deep.* ***Many are babes in Christ****.”* — John Stott[[5]](#footnote-5)

*“The problem in our culture…isn’t the abortionists. It isn’t the pornographers or drug dealers or criminals. It is the undisciplined,* ***undiscipled****, disobedient, and Biblically ignorant Church of Jesus Christ.”* — Cal Thomas[[6]](#footnote-6)

**III. Exercise**

1. **My mission in life is:**

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1. **The means by which I execute my mission are:**

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1. **I know I’ve accomplished my mission by:**

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1. **The difference between a disciple and a Christian is:**

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1. **In what period of your life did you experience the most growth?**

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1. **What do you think were some of the key contributing factors?**

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1. **What do you think is hindering you from experiencing that again?**

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1. **Define ‘disciple’:**

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1. **Define ‘discipleship’:**

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1. **Define ‘discipling’:**

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**IV. Discipleship Traditions[[7]](#footnote-7)**

1. **The Learner**

- A disciple is a student

- Emphasizes intense study

- A disciple is a specifically- or specially-trained Christian

1. **The Committed**

- A disciple is a serious believer; implies there are tiers or stages of Christianity

- Emphasizes denial of self

- Discipleship is for an elite, more committed Christian

1. **The Worker**

- A disciple is a minister, an active worker

- Emphasizes Christian service

1. **The Mentor**

- A disciple is one who is in a one-on-one relationship

- Emphasizes older, mature guidance and mentoring

1. **The Accountability Group**

- A disciple is one who holds others (and is held) accountable

- Emphasizes accountability, vulnerability, transparency and confession

1. **The Small Group**

- A disciple gathers in smaller groups of people, anywhere from 3-12, outside of corporate worship

- Emphasizes group learning

*“There is, of course, truth in each of these, because each encourages necessary ways of promoting growth in the Christian life. However, they have often been mistakenly advocated as ways that an individual becomes a disciple: it is often advocated that once a Christian’s life is characterized by one or more of these commitments, the person becomes a disciple. This is the root of much of the confusion about discipleship…”* — Michael Wilkins[[8]](#footnote-8)

**V. Terminology**

1. **Disciple**

*“A disciple is one who responds in* ***faith*** *and* ***obedience*** *to the gracious call to follow Jesus Christ. Being a disciple is a* ***lifelong process*** *of dying to self while allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in us.”*— Greg Ogden[[9]](#footnote-9)

*“A disciple of Jesus is one who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed Jesus as Savior and God, and has embarked upon the* ***life of following*** *Jesus.”* — Michael Wilkins[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. **Discipleship**

*“The ongoing* ***process*** *of growth as a disciple.”* — Michael Wilkins[[11]](#footnote-11)

*“Simply the* ***process*** *of growth into Christ-like maturity and reproduction.”* — Greg Ogden[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. **Discipling**

*“The* ***responsibility*** *of disciples to help one another grow as disciples.”* — Michael Wilkins[[13]](#footnote-13)

*“An* ***intentional*** *relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.”* — Greg Ogden[[14]](#footnote-14)

**VI. Marks of Discipleship[[15]](#footnote-15)**

1. **Proactive Ministers**

- We are not simply to be passive recipients or spectators

- All believers have gifts of the Holy Spirit

*“Ministry that is biblically envisioned calls up images not of the paid priest who is set apart from and above the rest of the body of believers but of* ***ordinary saints****.”* — Greg Ogden[[16]](#footnote-16)

1. **Disciplined Way of Life**

- Only a small percentage invest in spiritual growth practices; many neglect spiritual discipline

- All believers have gifts of the Holy Spirit

*“The fact is that there is now lacking a serious and expectant intention to bring Jesus’ people into obedience and abundance through training.”* — Dallas Willard[[17]](#footnote-17)

1. **Affects All of Life**

- Faith should not be kept private

- Many believers compartmentalize their lives

*“There is a disconnect for many Christians when it comes to seeing ourselves as representatives of the kingdom of God in what we spend most of our time doing—our jobs.”* — Greg Ogden[[18]](#footnote-18)

*“Surely this gospel evokes unconditional surrender of all that we are and all that we have to all that he is.”* — David Platt[[19]](#footnote-19)

1. **Countercultural Force**

- Many believers live lifestyles no different than non-believers

- We are called to be in but not of the world

*“The church is not immune to the diseases of individualism and consumerism dominant in American society.”* — Greg Ogden[[20]](#footnote-20)

*“The fact that the proportion of non-Christians who affirm these [worldly] values is equivalent to the proportion of Christians who affirm these values who hold similar views indicates how meaningless Christianity has been in the lives of millions of professed believers.”* — George Barna[[21]](#footnote-21)

1. **Church is Essential**

- Many view the church as optional and don’t see the need

- The church is central to God’s plan

*“The goal is not just for us as individuals to follow after Christ but to join together in communities of faith…****we need community*** *in order to follow Christ radically.”* — David Platt[[22]](#footnote-22)

*“To be a follower of Christ is to understand that there is* ***no such thing as solo discipleship****.”* — Greg Ogden[[23]](#footnote-23)

*“Disciple making involves inviting people into a* ***larger community of faith*** *where they will see the life of Christ in action and experience the love of Christ in person.”* — David Platt[[24]](#footnote-24)

1. **Biblically Informed**

- Biblical literacy is very low; many believers are biblically ignorant

- The twin disciplines of prayer and Bible reading should dominate every disciple’s devotional practice

- According to Barna Research, four of ten people actively involved in Christian discipleship relationships believe that there is no such thing as absolute truth

*“Americans revere the Bible—but, by and large, they don’t read it.”* — George Gallup[[25]](#footnote-25)

1. **Shares Faith**

- Many believers are intimidated when it comes to personal witness

- Only a small percentage of Christians actively witness; others lack the confidence and/or motivation

*“Fewer than one in five [Christians] said that they knew a non-believer well enough that they could share their faith with an individual in a context of trust and credibility.”* — George Barna[[26]](#footnote-26)

*“Every saved person this side of heaven owes the gospel to every lost person this side of hell. We owe Christ to the world…”* — David Platt[[27]](#footnote-27)

**VII. Myths**

1. **Christian ≠ Disciple**

*“A disciple of Jesus is one who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed Jesus as Savior and God, and has embarked upon the life of following Jesus.”* – Michael Wilkins

1. **Discipleship is simply another ministry of the Church**

*“Furthermore, in this more wholistic understanding, discipleship is not just one aspect of the church’s mission, but* ***it encompasses all that the church does****. Discipleship is the ministry of the church in helping all believers in their discipleship to Jesus and reaching out to bring non-Christians to Jesus to become his disciples.”* — Michael Wilkins[[28]](#footnote-28)

**VIII. Personal Reflection - The Call to Discipleship[[29]](#footnote-29)**

1. **Setting a New Priority - *Luke 9:57-62***

- Christ must be our first priority; he must be the center of our lives

- We must make Christ not only our Savior, but also our Lord

- You cannot just settle for the “fire insurance” without complete devotion and submission

1. **Finding a New Identity - *Luke 9:23-25***

- We must lose ourselves in order to find ourselves

- We will find ourselves in service and submission to Christ

- Some things happen only as a byproduct; identity is one of them

1. **Living a New Mercy - *Luke 9, 12***

- We cannot change our identity without a radical experience of mercy, mercy and love

- Reason and willpower are not enough

- The desire for an object of absolute love in unquenchable

*“Only when your heart experiences love from a new source beyond anything it’s ever known before will your heart start to move toward that source, and begin to be deeply changed.”* — Tim Keller

1. Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid., 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Thomas A. Tarrants III, “The Transforming Impact of True Discipleship,” *Knowing & Doing* (Spring 2011), 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2010), 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Stott, quoted at the Eastbourne Consultation [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cal Thomas, Interview, *Christianity Today* (April 25, 1994) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Michael J. Wilkins, “Discipleship for Changing Times and Ministries,” *Knowing & Doing* (Spring 2011), 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid., 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid., 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Greg Ogden, “Transforming Discipleship” (Falls Church, VA: C.S. Lewis Institute, Sept. 19, 2008), seminar [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 23-37 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1998), 315 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Platt, *Radical*, 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 31 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. George Barna, quoted in Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1988), 169 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Platt, *Radical*, 205 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Platt, *Radical*, 97 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. George Gallup and Jim Castelli, *The People’s Religion* (New York, NY: Macmillam, 1989), 60 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Ventura, CA: Issachar Resources, 2000), 62 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Platt, *Radical*, 74 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Wilkins, Discipleship for Changing Times and Ministries, 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Timothy J. Keller, “The Call of Discipleship,” *Knowing & Doing* (Winter 2011); includes Keller quotes [↑](#footnote-ref-29)