



Learning Community Twelve

Growing Disciples

20-30
minutes

Personal Check-in:

Facilitator Instructions: Ask everyone in the group to select a passage of Scripture that has been personally meaningful for them in the last month. In pairs or as a whole group, take turns responding to the following questions. After the sharing, spend some time praying for one another.

Sharing Questions:

1. What stood out to you from this particular passage?
2. What specific personal application did God challenge or encourage you with?
3. In what ways can we specifically pray for you as it relates to the passage? Is there any other pressing prayer need that you would like to share?



15-30
minutes

Homework Debrief:

Instructions: Below is a list of the homework assignments from the last meeting. Ask each pastor to update the group on how they responded to each of the items. After everyone has checked in regarding the homework, take some time to talk about lessons that are being learned so far. Capture the discussion on a whiteboard or a flipchart.

1. Start a Triad in the next month. Invite one person in your congregation who you consider to be stronger in their faith and invite another person who is on the fringe of the church or may be completely outside of your church. The goal is to find somebody who is in the seeker category. The aim is to find two people who would be willing to begin meeting weekly to go through the Triad format that has been suggested in this module.
2. Read *Shaped by God's Heart* by Mildred Minatrea and complete the Book Review Questions.



30-45
minutes

Book Review Debrief:

***Shaped by God's Heart* by Mildred Minatrea**

1. Reflect on the current member expectations in your church. What changes can you make that encourage a higher threshold for membership (Ch. 3)?

2. On the basis of what you have read and understood in Chapter 4, identify five means through which your congregation will begin to develop and cultivate authenticity within the Body.

3. Discuss the implications of the phrase "We will not teach beyond obedience" (Ch. 5). Predict potential changes in your church if you were to implement this idea.

4. What are some possible implications for your church from Chapter 6 regarding worship?

5. What lifestyle implications (Ch. 7) are there in the statement "Incarnation is always away from self and toward another"? How could your church better prepare disciples for an incarnational lifestyle?



6. If people in your community (Ch. 8) were to say “What you’re doing speaks so loudly, I can’t hear what you’re saying!” what priorities would they attribute to your church on the basis of their observing your actions?

7. Respond to question #3 on page 109 (Reflection and Application) and Peter Drucker’s quote.

8. What are three of the most important insights you gained from reading this book?

9. What action steps do you need to take as a result of reading this book?



45-60
minutes

Case Study Interaction:

Instructions: If a pastor is lined up for this meeting, give him 10-15 minutes to talk about his church. With the remaining time, ask the group to give feedback on the following questions and to spend time interacting with the pastor about the following:

- 1. Please share the prescriptions you received from the Weekend Consultation.**
- 2. What progress have you made toward implementing the prescriptions?**
- 3. What are the most significant challenges you are facing in implementing the prescriptions?**
- 4. Have you done your time study? What did you learn about your use of time? What are you doing to make changes in your use of time? How are you getting these changes rooted in your life for the long term?**
- 5. What leadership skills are you focused on developing? Share your sense of progress and your challenges.**
- 6. Have you built new bridges into the community? If not, why not? If so, how? What are the results so far? How can you improve your vision casting for reaching the community?**
- 7. What are you doing each week to create a sense of urgency? Are you seeing an increase in Sunday worship attendance?**
- 8. What are your plans for the next three months?**



30-45
minutes

Learning Activity: The Four postures of a New Disciple

Facilitator Instructions: Point everyone to the article entitled “The Four Postures of a New Disciple.” Ask everyone to read the article slowly and to highlight ideas that seem important to them. After everyone has read break the group into twos and threes to discuss the questions at the end of the article. If you have time, bring the whole group together at the end to discuss a few of the questions.

The Four postures of a New Disciple

When Jesus walked the face of the earth He wanted to leave an indelible mark on the lives of His followers. Essentially, He had three years to embed a picture of authentic discipleship into the minds and hearts of those closest to Him. These few would be the cornerstone of an emerging movement the advancement of the New Testament Church. Now, 2,000 years later, we must remind ourselves what a true follower of Christ looks like. In other words, what kind of values and convictions does God want etched on the heart of a brand-new believer? What postures of the heart are the DNA of a fresh move of God in our homes, communities, and churches? And lastly, what actions must a faith community engage in to raise up New Testament disciples?

A Posture of Delight

“As I travel, I have observed a pattern, a strange historical phenomenon of God ‘moving’ geographically from the Middle East, to Europe to North America to the developing world. My theory is this: God goes where he is wanted.”

Philip Yancey, Christianity Today, February 5, 2001

A sixteen-year old boy is taken captive by raiders and sold into slavery. Desperate with loneliness, hunger, and cold, he cries out to God for deliverance and is answered. He goes on to pioneer one of the greatest missionary movements the world has ever seen. An obscure Augustinian monk agonizes over what it means to be made right with God through faith. His is an intensely personal struggle out of which the Protestant Reformation is born. A young minister returns from the mission field, a failure in his own eyes, devoid of the experience of God’s loving acceptance. His heart is “strangely warmed” by the grace of God and one of the most significant awakenings in modern history shakes Britain and spreads worldwide.



Patrick of Ireland, Martin Luther, and John Wesley—we remember them as powerful historical figures through whom God renewed the Church and transformed the world. We honor them as heroes of the faith. We forget they began as broken men crying out to God for an encounter that would change their lives. Out of their personal encounters with God, these transformational leaders went on to renew the Church and to shape the world in which we live.

Scripture reminds us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. The tell-tale sign of life transformation in a new believer is a delight and fervor toward God. It's a love and a sense of devotion not of this world that sprouts up in the human heart. Jesus made it clear that He expected His disciples to love God with all of their mind, heart, and strength, not so much out of a sense of obligation, duty, or responsibility, but out of a desire to please God.

As a heart is set on fire by God, He demands our obedience. New believers must be grounded in the truth that following Jesus requires that we obey Him. The sooner a new follower of Christ clears that hurdle the better. With that in mind, a community of faith must model what obedience looks like and must walk as a babe in Christ through the challenges of making Christ the Lord of their life. A posture of delight puts into practice the simple notion, "What does God's Word say and what must I do today to obey what it says?" We need not make it any more complicated than that. If we can empower new Christians to become self-feeding believers than we have set them on a healthy, lifelong trajectory toward spiritual maturity.

A passion for God is the creative, dynamic means by which God renews His Church in its mission. Zeal alone is not enough, just as romantic love alone will not sustain a marriage. Passionate spirituality provides the energy, the creative force, the power that unfreezes individuals and groups and mobilizes and sustains them in mission. This then is the starting place for a new disciple—a life-long heart for God. From this foundation, the Lord can do amazing things in and through the life of a Christ-follower.

A Posture of Blessing

New believers need to be shown how to embrace a second posture, a posture of blessing. Christianity is based on the premise that we are to give our lives away. Jesus came to serve, not to be served. Following Christ must be shown in our actions as well as our words. A fallen world is aching to be affirmed, to be loved, and to be shown the transforming power of the Gospel.



From day one, a new disciple should be encouraged to lay his or her life down for others. Being a blessing to others is a privilege and a sacrifice. Jesus made it clear to His followers that dying to self was the only way to truly “live.” A posture of blessing opens up a new disciple to a world of ministry opportunities and to learn what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Studies have shown that new Christians are far and away the most effective evangelists. They still have a social network of unbelievers and they have had a fresh encounter with God. Faith communities must do whatever they can to empower new disciples to boldly take the Gospel into their webs of friendships and contacts. The Gospel travels powerfully through lines of relationships and young Christians have unlimited potential in advancing the Kingdom of God. The simple question for a new disciple must be, “Who does God want you to be a blessing to by sharing the Good News?” In this, we sow seeds of the Great Commission that if watered and nurtured will grow roots of great depth. These fledgling followers of Christ will become men and women who want to be laborers in the harvest and to help rescue others from the Kingdom of Darkness.

A Posture of Embrace

The third posture can be summed up in the phrase, “It’s all about people, stupid!” We can get so distracted by the stress and pressure of life that we lose sight of the fact that people are what really matter. New followers of Christ will develop this conviction if they have experienced the posture of embrace from others first. Therefore, connections to other believers are an essential component of healthy discipleship. A new believer must realize early on in the journey that he needs others. We are commanded to love our neighbor out of the love that God and others have poured into us.

Most people, when meeting someone new, internally, ask “How interested are you in getting to know me?” People want to know that they will be listened to and drawn out. This is characterized by conversations that show you really are interested in who a person is and how life is going for them. Being curious and asking questions is a wonderful way to show someone that you are interested in their world.

A posture of embrace is also based on a conviction that sometimes we need to take action. What are some practical and tangible ways for you to show love toward someone? Where is a need that can be met? Is there a hardship or trial that someone is going through? How can you go out of your way to help shoulder a burden?



A Posture of Multiplication

The first three postures naturally lead to the fourth posture the posture of multiplication. When a new disciple is living these postures intentionally and with conviction, he is on a course toward investing in the expansion of God's work. The training, equipping, and mentoring of a new disciple is critical at this juncture. Up to this point they have learned to love God, to love other believers, and to love unbelievers. Now, they need to learn about their unique role in expanding the Kingdom of God.

We must have our sights set on the development of workers for the harvest and not simply "consumer" Christians. Churches and faith communities are always in need for more and better leaders. With this in mind, a posture of multiplication will address this shortage over time. We need to help a new disciple answer the questions, "How can I help others grow in the grace and knowledge that I have been blessed with? Whose candle does the Lord want me to help light?" New believers must see that they have a key responsibility in helping to raise up the next generation of disciples.

Living Out the Core Four

The four postures of a new disciple that we have explored are not mutually exclusive. The postures feed off one another in a synergistic manner. Faith communities that seek to embed these postures in the life of new followers of Christ will be cultivating the DNA of a healthy and reproducing Christian. We will see Christians who have a lifelong delight in the Lord, who seek to bless rather than simply be blessed, who embrace others with a selfless love, and who want to leave a legacy of a multiplied life

Discussion Questions:

1. Which ideas from "The Four Postures of a New Disciple" stood out to you and why?
2. What principles from the article are you most challenged by and why?
3. What would stand in the way of you discipling new believers in this way?



15-20
minutes

Learning Activity: Applying the Four Postures

Facilitator Instructions: Allow individuals about 10 minutes to personally work through the “Applying the Four Postures” worksheet. Pair people up to share their responses and to pray for one another.

Applying the 4 Postures

Posture	How can I improve personally in this posture?	How can I help a new disciple improve in this posture?	What implications do the postures have for my church?
Posture of Delight			
Posture of Blessing			
Posture of Embrace			
Posture of Multiplication			



**5
minutes**

Homework and Wrap-Up

Facilitator Instructions: Close out the session by highlighting the homework assignment.

Homework Assignment:

1. Take the Missional Practice Survey on pages 185-194 of *Shaped by God's Heart* with your leadership council or similar leadership group between now and when this Learning Community meets next. Write up a one-page report on the discussion and implications of your interaction over the survey and the results.
2. Read the book entitled *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough* by Elmer L. Towns and answer the Book Review Questions.



Book Review Questions

***Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough* by Elmer L. Towns**

1. Which specific ideas regarding fasting do you find most helpful from the book?

Please be specific about what you found helpful.

2. Which of the nine fasts do you feel drawn to try and why?

3. As you consider fasting, what is one hurdle you need to clear in your own mind and heart? What obstacles would need to be removed for you to engage in fasting more regularly?



4. Use the space below to summarize in one sentence the purpose and focus of each of the nine fasts Towns argues for:

5. What are some of the primary physical benefits you will derive from fasting?

6. In the next six months, what ideas from the book would you like to implement?

7. What are two quotes from the book that you find helpful?



LC Evaluation:

Date:

Location:

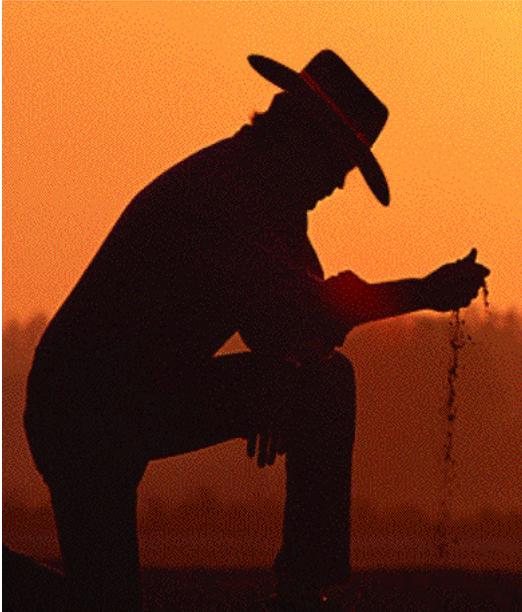
Questions:

1. What did you like most about the homework from the last Learning Community?

2. What did you like least about the homework from the last Learning Community?

3. How could we improve today's Learning Community experience?

4. How can we give you additional support for developing leadership skills in your own life and helping your church turn outward?



Me and the Harvest

1. How committed have I been to praying for people who need Jesus?
2. What have I done in the past month to help someone move closer to Christ?
3. What changes do I need to make in the next month to find time to be more outreach focused?
4. How did I keep the fire burning for outreach in our church this past month?
5. What have I learned about the community needs in this past month that our church could be poised to meet?
6. What's the most important outreach oriented action step I can take in this next month?