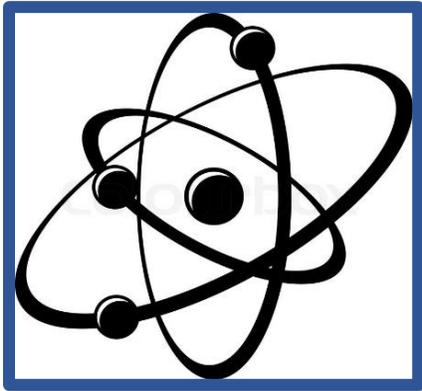


TEN DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP
– MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
– THREE RELATIONSHIPS THAT HELP ME MAKE AND SUPPORT DISCIPLES
– THREE LIFE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE ME AS A DISCIPLE
– THREE AREAS OF STEWARDSHIP

By Bob Young

“A plan for helping Christians create communities where people bear one another’s burdens and care for one another in times of trouble”



After I establish a healthy relationship with my God, three essential areas of my discipleship are my relationships, my life-principles, and my stewardship. I divide my relationship responsibilities into three areas – family, close friends, and all people. Three major life-principles that orient my life are serving, resting, and working. My stewardships involve how I use “my self, my situations or opportunities, and my stuff—a not so fancy word for my resources.” My relationship with God provides a center point around which the other three areas revolve.

The figure at left illustrates how I visualize my discipleship using this model. The center point is my relationship with God.

The three points that are part of orbits represent relationships, life principles, and my stewardships. In each of these orbits, I identify three dimensions of my spiritual life as listed above.

The first and overarching question every Christian must ask is this,

HOW AM I GROWING PERSONALLY WITH GOD? This question orients all of life. It does not matter how much one accomplishes in the other parts of life if the relationship with God is askew. Godly spiritual leadership in the church demands constant attention to the vertical relationship with God. Leadership in the family, community, and other social structures of the society is strengthened by my relationship with God.

Developing healthy relationships is an essential part of biblical discipleship. In the area of relationships, three questions summarize my discipleship.

HOW AM I GROWING PERSONALLY IN RELATIONSHIP WITH MY FAMILY? The first social structure in which God intends us to share burdens and care for one another is the physical family. It is not surprising that the New Testament notes that an effective church leader is an example of healthy family relationships, with one’s spouse and with one’s children.

HOW AM I GROWING PERSONALLY IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY CLOSEST FRIENDS? I am thankful that across the years I have developed friend relationships that keep me focused on God. Close friends provide accountability. Church leaders cannot effectively share leadership without healthy friendships. Church leaders must ask themselves, how am I growing in the context of shared church leadership? How are the leaders of my church growing together?

HOW AM I GROWING IN MY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS – BOTH CHRISTIANS AND NON-CHRISTIANS? As I disciple of Jesus, I want to be active rather than passive. I want to pursue people with the passion of Jesus. Most often, I would prefer to sit back, relax, listen and learn. God calls me to a higher response. In the church, I am part of a highly interdependent, interconnected body. I want to know others well enough to pray for them.

These three questions are especially important for church leaders. Leaders must model healthy discipleship. Church leaders are models of personal spiritual growth, healthy relationships, active pursuit of others, and knowing others well enough to pray for them. If church leaders are not examples of spiritual depth, healthy relationships, active evangelism, and personal prayer, these dynamics will not be developed in the church.

Three life principles are an essential part of biblical discipleship. In this area, three questions summarize my discipleship: serving, resting, and working.

HOW COMMITTED AM I TO SERVING OTHERS? Jesus' model of service is the basin and the towel. Jesus said that the one who serves all is the greatest. My discipleship depends on my willingness to serve.

HOW WELL DO I MANAGE MY NEED FOR SABBATHING? The need for times of rest is not highly valued in our busy society. The Bible suggests that rest precedes work—the evening and the morning were the first day. The Hebrew day began at sundown. The typical US model is the reverse—I work hard so I can have a vacation. I work hard and then go home to relax.

HOW SERIOUS AM I WHEN IT COMES TO WORKING? The Bible values work. In my Christian life, how serious am I about doing those things that will move me closer to God and make me more like Jesus?

These three principles are extremely important for church leaders. In these areas, leaders must model healthy discipleship—providing examples of serving the least, planning activities in the local church that encourage sabbathing, and modeling commitment. If church leaders are not examples in these areas, these dynamics will not be developed in the church.

My stewardships revolve around three areas, each an essential part of my discipleship: self, situation, and stuff.

I MUST MANAGE MY SELF. This area includes my creativity, my thinking, my abilities and skills, my health. Discipleship demands that I get self under control.

I MUST USE WELL MY SITUATION AND CIRCUMSTANCES. In this area, I include my time, my opportunities, and the various situations God brings into my life.

I MUST MANAGE MY RESOURCES FOR GOD'S GLORY. Resources also include time, but can be expanded to include financial resources, human resources, and the rest of the "stuff" God puts in my life.

These three areas of stewardship are important for church leaders. In these areas, leaders must model discipleship—how life is lived, personal development, seizing opportunities, and generously modeling the use of personal resources. If church leaders are not examples in these areas, these dynamics will not be developed in the church.

For church leaders, here is a question that summarizes these dimensions: **WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR CHURCH-WIDE DISCIPLESHIP?** This question relates both to the local church body and to the church universal. As shepherds of the flock, church leaders must constantly evaluate and facilitate discipleship development. How can a local church implement a carefully thought out discipleship strategy? What are the key areas of discipleship? How can we make disciples who make disciples? How can we develop disciples who care for and support one another?