

# The Training Methods of Jesus

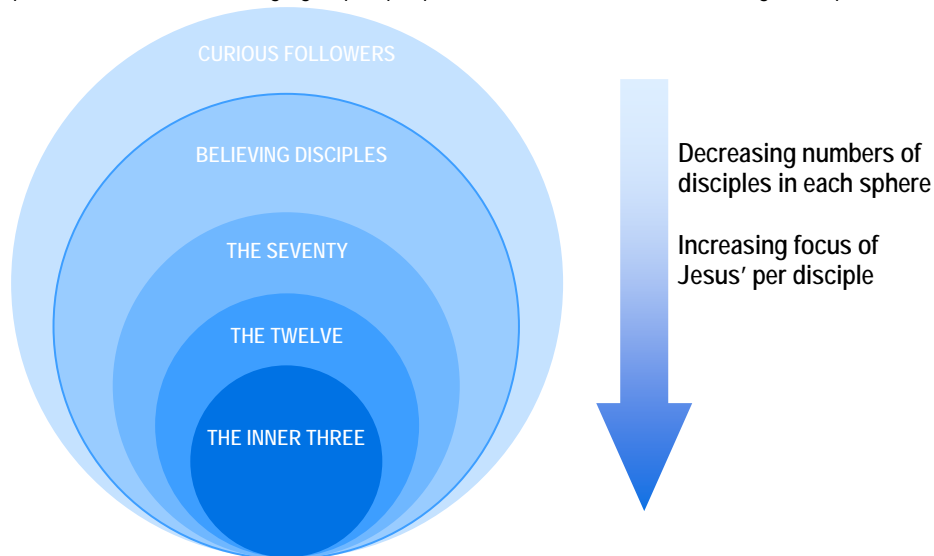
## *Getting An Overview Of The Entire Process*

In a previous article, "The Missing Link", we presented the biblical basis for a holistic approach to training people for ministry that impacted the Head, the Hands, and the Heart. Further, we stipulated that the Missing Link in many training programs was the Hands: developing skillfulness to **do** ministry in addition to the academic knowledge alone that characterizes so much of the curriculum offered in Bible colleges and seminaries.

Jesus modeled this approach in the training of the 12 Disciples. A careful study of the Gospels uncovers additional principles for leadership development that should be of tremendous help to any local church committed to leadership development.

### ***JESUS' FIVE SPHERES OF DISCIPLESHIP***

When someone says "Jesus' disciples," we often think of the twelve. The truth is that Jesus had thousands of "disciples," but over time this large group of people diversified into five different stages of spiritual development:



#### **1. CURIOUS FOLLOWERS**

Jesus had thousands of Jewish adherents who followed Him as a prophet, and were evaluating whether He was the Messiah. They were a crowd of curious unbelievers, but because they were following him, they were called "disciples." Over time, Jesus' teachings and the specter of persecution made them choose for or against Him. After the miracle at the wedding in Cana, some of Jesus' disciples believed in Him (John 2:11). When his teachings became difficult, in John 6, other "disciples" turned away and followed him no more (John 6:64, 66).

#### **2. BELIEVING DISCIPLES**

Jesus had thousands who listened to His teachings, believed in Him (John 2:23, 4:39-41, 7:31, 8:30) and became true disciples. A number of years later, the residents of Antioch began to call these disciples "Christians," and the name has stuck with us since then.

#### **3. THE SEVENTY**

Jesus chose seventy people and sent them out in twos to do preparatory evangelism in the towns to which he was coming (Luke 10:1).

#### **4. THE TWELVE**

Jesus committed himself to being a mentor to twelve men for three years. He "appointed twelve, that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach . . ." Mark 3:14 (NKJV). See also Luke 9:1-2.

## 5. THE INNER THREE

Jesus seemed to draw Peter, James, and John into more protracted discussions and to reveal things to them that he did not reveal to others. For instance, Jesus asked these three to join him when he healed Jarius's daughter (Mark 5:37), when he was transfigured (Matthew 17:1-2) and when he was in deep anguish in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). They were the first great leaders of the early church.

### **JESUS' FOCUS – THE TWELVE & THE THREE**

Thousands believed in Jesus and committed themselves to Him. But Jesus did not commit himself to *all of them*. John tells us that during the Feast of Passover, “many believed in His name when they saw the signs that He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men....” (John 2:23-25 NKJV).

Jesus entrusted Himself to a smaller group of disciples, His emerging leaders, those who would lead the early church after He had returned to heaven. Though many were focused on Him, He focused on a small group whom the Father had given Him to equip for ministry (John 17:6).

### **KNOWLEDGE ALONE IS INSUFFICIENT**

When we mention “church-based leadership development,” the tendency of many church leaders is to envision the traditional Western style of education – classrooms, lectures, tests, etc.

In some respects, Christianity has largely bought into the Western secular view that educating the head equals training the person. We have become a concept-oriented faith, and many believers somehow think that knowledge equals spirituality, that education is sufficient to make us godly people.



The moral failures ripping through evangelical circles today are stern reminders to us that though a leader's head may be full of theology, his heart may be far from the Lord. Missionaries return from the field frustrated because their skills in connecting God's truth to needy souls has never been developed. Church leaders mustn't just start classes. They must focus on the heart and hands as well.

### **HOW JESUS DISCIPLED THE TWELVE & THE THREE**

Advanced discipleship is not accomplished merely through preaching, teaching, or a one-on-one Bible study. Jesus was a mentor to the twelve – a personal **trainer, tutor, and teacher**. He lived and traveled with the twelve; His life was intertwined with theirs, and theirs with His. The Gospels give repeated testimony to the fact that He prepared the twelve in three different ways.

#### **PRACTICAL LEARNING**

Jesus disciplined the twelve through practical experiences during their travels. He had them baptize new believers (John 3:22, 4:1-2); they cast out demons, albeit not always successfully (Matthew 17:14-21), and Jesus used those opportunities to teach them even more. He said, “follow me,” and for three years they had “hands-on” ministry training.

#### **PRIVATE LEARNING**

Jesus disciplined the twelve through personal discussions as well. In Luke 11, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, like John taught his disciples. Jesus gave them a sample prayer and added a couple of parables to open their understanding about real prayer. In these private and personal times, He dealt with **heart issues**. He confronted selfish ambitions (Mark 9:33-35), tested their affections (John 21:15-17), and affirmed what they had learned (Matthew 16:13-17).

## PUBLIC LEARNING

Jesus disciplined the twelve through public teaching when He addressed larger groups. In Luke 12, Jesus was teaching a large crowd, but Peter wondered whether Jesus was speaking to the twelve or to the crowd (v. 41). Jesus' teaching was new, fresh, and authoritative. After listening, their heads were filled with **new information and questions** (Mark 13:4).

## THE MENTOR'S UMBRELLA

As a mentor, Jesus' method of training the twelve was multi-faceted. It was more than an academic education. Because it was comprehensive, it was focused on only a few. Jesus had twelve men for three years – that's an average of 4 per year ... and he was God!

To follow Jesus' example, our training of the emerging leaders God has given us should likewise be multi-faceted. The mentor's work is therefore an umbrella of related activities to develop the hands (ministry skills), the heart (godly character), and the head (biblical and theological knowledge) of an emerging leader.

<b>PRACTICAL LEARNING</b>	<b>PRIVATE LEARNING</b>	<b>PUBLIC LEARNING</b>
<b>THE HANDS</b>	<b>THE HEART</b>	<b>THE HEAD</b>
<b>I AM HIS TRAINER</b>  I coordinate his on-the-job training in various ministries. He can assist me or other teachers and workers in order to learn.	<b>I AM HIS TUTOR</b>  I serve as his personal shepherd, advisor and counselor. We talk together and do things together.	<b>I AM HIS TEACHER</b>  I facilitate his serious study of theology and the Scripture, normally in a public class-type setting. I can teach or line up others to do so.
<b>HE MUST DEVELOP INTERPERSONAL &amp; MINISTRY SKILLS</b>  He needs experiences in <i>personal ministry</i> (i.e., in evangelism, counseling, etc.), in <i>local church ministry</i> (i.e., serving, teaching, organizing, preaching), and in <i>cross-cultural ministry</i> .	<b>HE MUST DEVELOP GODLY CHARACTER &amp; VIRTUE</b>  He needs to spend time conversing and working with a godly mentor to understand the heart issues of ministry and Christ-likeness. He needs to have his questions answered.	<b>HE MUST DEVELOP BIBLICAL &amp; THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE</b>  He needs a sound education in the New and Old Testaments, theology, practical ministry and church history from sources inside the church or coordinated from the outside.

## ***THE LOCAL CHURCH: GOD'S PLAN FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT***

Before the advent of seminaries and Bible colleges, servant leaders for ministry were trained in and sent out by the local church. In many parts of the world this is still being done either because there are no seminaries or because the local church leadership realizes that it is their biblical responsibility to train emerging leaders, either by themselves or in partnership with an institution of higher learning.

This is a tall order, to be sure, but it is achievable; it is being done by churches in the United States today. If you would like to know more about church based leadership development, BMW has three workshops that will take you and your leadership team through a process of discovery, planning, and change management to get you there. More information on these workshops can be found at [www.biblicalministries.org](http://www.biblicalministries.org).