

Do you get it? Do you see how these eight priorities objectively demonstrate the four characteristics of Jesus?

"Identity"

- Exalting God
- Behaving godly

"Maturity"

- Growing in faith
- Managing life's resources



"Community"

- Belonging to a small group
- Serving others

"Ministry"

- Sharing God's message
- Reproducing disciples

Think of it like this. When you take a new baby to the doctor for a check-up, he doesn't just take a look at the baby and say, "Yep, he's growing just fine." No. The doctor will weigh and measure your baby every time you take him in, because these measurements are objective tools for knowing if a child is healthy or not. A doctor has an objective example to follow, not merely a subjective idea.

The eight priorities of a disciple give us an objective model of what it means to make disciples. How are you doing at demonstrating these eight priorities? Are you growing? Are you healthy? Are you looking more and more like Christ?

THE PATTERN

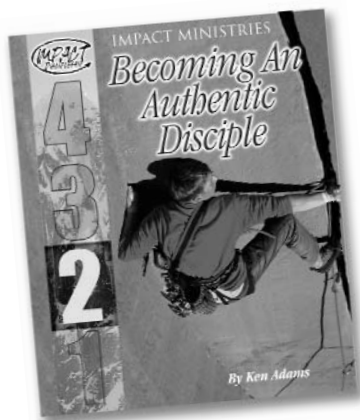
As a child I used to watch my mom as she laid out a pattern for a dress on the dining room table. She would pin the pattern to the fabric, and then she would cut the cloth around the pattern and sew it together to make a dress. My mom never had to guess at the dimensions of a sleeve, waistline, or collar. The pattern was always perfect.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul makes a bold statement. He says, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." How could Paul be so bold? Paul's confidence came from the pattern he was

following, not from himself. The pattern Paul was following was Christ. Paul's characteristics and priorities were the same as those of Christ's. Paul was being what Jesus was – a model disciple.

So, what are you being? Are you following the right model? If someone followed you, would they end up looking more like Christ?

If you want to fulfill your mission of being the disciple God wants you to be, I encourage you to set aside the next twelve weeks to study the characteristics and priorities of Christ. In ***Becoming an Authentic Disciple***, you will discover the pattern that God wants you to follow.



You can order a copy of ***Becoming an Authentic Disciple*** by contacting Sandy at Impact Ministries. Don't miss a great opportunity to grow!

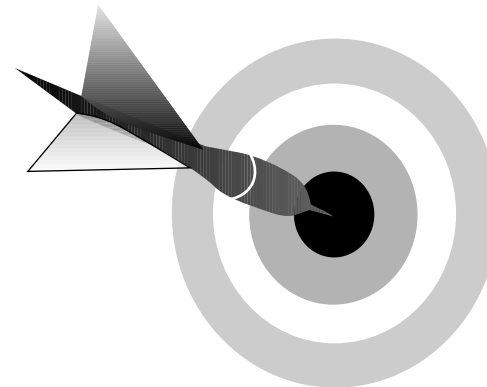
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FOLLOWING AN AUTHENTIC MODEL



by Ken Adams

When I was about ten years old, my father brought home a dart board for me and my brother. I guess he figured that we would stop throwing sharp objects at each other if he gave us something else to throw at. Over thirty years later I still have that dart board hanging in my basement. It now has thousands of holes in it and the bull's eye is virtually non-existent.

You see, for over thirty years, somebody has been throwing darts at that board and every time they do, the goal is the same: hit the bull's eye!

I share that story with you to illustrate a point about God's church. During the last thirty-plus years, I've been a member of several different local churches and each one seems to have a different target. They all seem to have a different bull's eye.

I believe the inability to define our target is one of the biggest weaknesses in God's church today. Imagine how ineffective a clock factory would be if they did not know their target. A clock factory exists to produce clocks. It does not exist to have a great safety record, a balanced budget, a clean showroom, or a beautiful building.

The church exists to "make disciples." In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus has commissioned us to make disciples. He did not commission us to build great buildings. He did not commission us to run great programs. He did not commission us to make everyone happy. He has commissioned us to make disciples of "all nations." Aiming for any other target is sin!

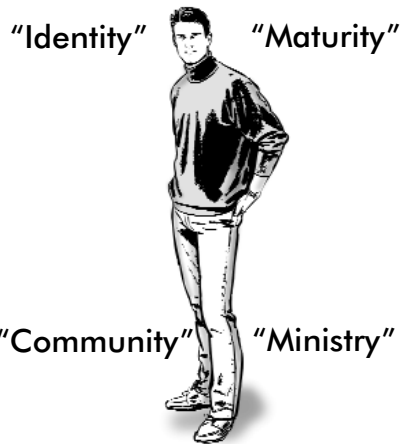
THE DISCIPLE MODEL

Jesus did not tell us to "make disciples" and then leave it up to us to define what a disciple looks like. He gave us the model. **He** was the model! In Luke 6:40, Jesus said, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." Wow! The target has been defined. The bull's eye never changes. The end product is crystal clear. Jesus has commissioned us to make disciples, of all nations, who look just like Him. Jesus is the model for what all disciples, of all time, should look like.

LIKE TEACHER, LIKE STUDENT

Have you ever noticed how a man and woman who have been married for a long time actually begin to look and act alike? If they have a dog, even the dog begins to resemble them!

Looking like our teacher, Jesus, is the goal of every disciple. The longer we walk with Christ, the more His characteristics should be our characteristics. Over time, we ought to look more like Jesus and less like us.



When you examine the life of Christ, you soon discover that there are four major characteristics that describe His life. All four of these characteristics were not only true of Jesus, but they were also true of His disciples. Let's take a look at these four Christ-like characteristics.

"Identity" is the characteristic of a life that constantly identifies with our heavenly Father. Everything Jesus did points to His Father instead of Himself. Jesus always brought attention to God the Father. When we follow Christ's model, our lives "identify" with the Father.

"Community" is the characteristic of sharing life in the context of close fellowship. Jesus chose to surround Himself with a small group of fellow followers whom He could share life with. When Christ is our model, community will be a characteristic of our lives.

"Maturity" is the characteristic of spiritual growth and development. Jesus modeled the importance of spending time in the Scriptures and in prayer. When Jesus is our model, maturity will be a mark of our lives.

"Ministry" is the characteristic of helping others. Jesus ministered to others by sharing God's love and by building disciples. When Jesus is our model, we will practice ministry.

Now that you know the major characteristics of Christ, there are two questions worth asking. First, do you understand what the target is? Second, are these characteristics true of you?

MEASURING BY PRIORITIES

To say I have the characteristic of "maturity" can be a very *subjective* statement. To say that I meet with God one hour each day and memorize one verse of Scripture each week is a very *objective* statement.

In order to help us objectively measure the right characteristics in our lives, we need to use a handful of very specific priorities. I want to identify eight specific priorities that give us a tangible picture of the characteristics of Christ. All eight of these priorities were true of Jesus. All eight of these priorities can be found in Christ's disciples. All eight of these priorities describe the New Testament church. All eight of these priorities ought to be true of you!

1—**"Exalting God"** - Jesus showed the characteristic of identity by always exalting His Father. He always gave God the glory for everything He did and said.

2—**"Behaving godly"** - Jesus' attitudes and actions always identified Him as God. His character was different in order to make a difference.

3—**"Belonging to a small group"** - Jesus' commitment to twelve men demonstrated the characteristic of community in His life.

4—**"Serving others"** - When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, it left no question about His love for those He shared community with.

5—**"Growing in faith"** - Jesus demonstrated the characteristic of maturity through His commitment to prayer and the Word.

6—**"Managing life's resources"** - The way Jesus managed His life was evidence of the characteristic of maturity.

7—**"Sharing God's message"** - Jesus did ministry by being a witness to the world. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

8—**"Reproducing disciples"** - The characteristic of ministry was demonstrated by the way Jesus made disciples.