

## Disciples who make Disciples

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When I was eighteen years old, my youth pastor Greg Hammond broke our youth group into small groups of three to five people. He asked us to write down a number, either a one, a two, or a three. These numbers were to signify where we were in our spiritual walk at that time. A one meant that we felt confident enough to lead a small group. A two was middle of the road and a three meant I am in no way ready to lead, I need some help with my walk. He divided us up into groups of 5 where as there was a one, a two, and three 3's. I wrote down that I was a two and was partnered with four other men from my youth group. This was my first experience in a discipleship group, and it was life changing for me.

My group consisted of people I knew and was friends with. We had spiritual talks, but we had never dug into our faith like we were about to. Over the next few months we memorized scripture, shared our lives with one another and held each other accountable to things we struggled with in our life. That summer we went to Pensacola beach and went to the Brownsville revival together. After all we were seeking God together, we knew God was doing something down there and we wanted to be a part of it. As life progressed, our group unfortunately was divided. Some of us got jobs, while others went on to college. This accountability group was life changing for me, but one thing was missing from it. We were not being taught or training others to be disciples that went out and made disciples.

Two years ago, God put on my heart that I needed Christian men in my life to hold me accountable like I had when I was 18 years old. Making friends at church might seem like an easy task but it can be tough. It was for me at least, as while I knew so many people, I didn't

really feel like I had true friends. Truth be told, I was being a spectator as it is described in the book *No more Spectators*. I reached out to Jason and told him that I wanted to start an accountability small group. At that time a man by the name of Mike Powers had just reached out to Jason about doing something very similar. Jason arranged a meeting for the three of us to meet and I believe it was a God appointment. Mike shared with me a book by Robby Gallaty called *Growing Up*. The truth is I knew that I needed discipleship and accountability, but I didn't have a structural guide or way to get there. This book was the blue print that we used to start our small group which would eventually be called Iron Men.

Disciple ship takes commitment. Being part of the Iron Man small group is a lot different than being part of another small group at Refuge church. While most small groups only last a few months, our small group lasts up to two years. This timeline comes from the *Growing up* book but is also repeated many times in the videos and books that we read through our course. Men that take part in the Iron Men group are required to sign a discipleship agreement. This agreement explains the expectation of confidentiality, commitment, and dedication that is expected to be a part of the group.

The discipleship groups are no larger than five men and no smaller than three. The purpose of this size group is to promote relational Christianity, where we can be involved directly with each other. We start by going through the discipleship book learning what it means to be a disciple and clearly state at the beginning that we are training disciples that will go out and make disciples. Replication by discipleship is much greater than that of what one man or evangelist could do. For example, if a group of 5 go out and each start their own group and then those five go out and start a group the result is much higher than any one person could do after a number of years. This fact is also repeated throughout our course video and publications.

Discipleship requires confrontation. This is probably the hardest aspect of the group for me. While we are there to grow closer to Jesus and love one another, it can be hard to call to light something

that someone may be struggling with in their life. While it is important for us to hold one another accountable, we must do it in love. We can never think that we are better than someone or look down on another person that we are discipling. If we do, then we have just let the sin of pride invade our own life.

Scripture memorization and studying the word of God is something that we must do as disciples of Christ if we want to experience everything that God has for us. Psalms 1:1-2 says “Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night.” The word of God is our weapon against the enemy. We are foolish if we do not learn as much as we can so that we can stand against this world and the attack of our enemy.

Finally, as disciples we must share our faith with others. We can not stand on the sidelines as spectators because we are to afraid of what people might think. Bonhoeffer says that in order to experience true Joy as a Christian we have got to be completely sold out to Jesus not letting anything get in the way of that. We must live lives that bear fruit as evidence that Christ is our savior and proactively be involved in sharing the Gospel of Christ to the lost. Once we lead someone to Christ, we must then train them to be a disciple who makes disciples.

I will continue to disciple others and be discipled myself through the Iron Men small group that I was able start with Mike Powers at Refuge church. It has been a blessing in my life, and I am excited to see what God will teach me through the continuation of this group.