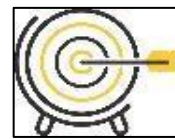
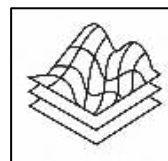


Mission - Culture - Strategy Guidebook

V220606



This guide is to assist your leadership team in rethinking and reforming as described in the book **The Disciple Dilemma**.

The approach is a fairly common one for change behavior in organizations. It happens to be biblical too. But this is a strategic move, not a short program with expedited results. Is it worth it? That's a great question! If you suspect things may not be well in modern day discipleship, keep reading our leaders guide.

ASSESS – AIM – ANTICIPATE - PLAN – EXECUTE - SUSTAIN

The dilemma in the book is whether to accept the modern/traditional way of developing people (discipling) in Christian community as biblical and effective, or to consider the possibility that we need to rethink and reform modern-day discipleship – back to the version Christ gave us. This guide is designed to help leaders explore a potential culture change in discipleship – a rethink about modernity's way versus a biblical model of Christ's discipleship.

The journey begins with this: **Assessing what's going on with us, and around us.** For example, how is our true mission, the mission of discipling, actually doing? This assessment involves understanding our Christian community in ways perhaps not considered before. Are there really non-biblical traditions, like the ones described in **The Disciple Dilemma**, hiding in plain sight among us? Can we see or recognize the symptoms – the corrosive effects of modernity on disciples? Only then, if your community believes the dilemma is real can you think about the change process itself, unwinding the dilemma, how to persuade others to come with you on the journey, and starting that journey. The journey toward our true purpose, of being faithful disciples of Christ.

Why is this process so elaborate? It's understandable to believe education about the specific ways individual disciples ought to think and act would solve things. But training won't really address the disciple dilemma. It is one thing to focus on behaviors and a different thing to work on the foundation of a community for those disciples.

Words can be so easily spoken or stated, but how do we make those ideas come to life in a community? Ah, now, that takes wise counsel and thoughtful choices. Proverbs 4:7 comes to mind: "with all thy getting get understanding." (KJV) This understanding-driven approach means avoiding the perils of assumptions and seeking a comprehension of foundational truths. Two reasons drive the requirement for deeper understanding in your community. One is to see what our traditions are doing to our community right now, unbeknownst to leadership. This is a vital first step to effectively making disciples. The second issue is that your community is unique and sustaining discipleship here must employ the unique strengths and talents of your people. No cookie-cutter programs will do. Athens and Jerusalem are, after all, two different places, two different peoples. Matthew had a very different discipling challenge with the Jews contrasted to Paul and the Gentiles. Programs and structure require local engaged leadership. We have to know the context to sustain a break with the dilemma.

If we are to make disciples, what are we getting ourselves into? The answer, metaphorically, ranges from the kind of challenge you face in changing a light bulb, to doing major renovations on a house. What am I trying to say? If your situation is one or two committed disciples in agreement to pursue a deeper, more biblical personal discipleship, this is going to be more akin to changing a light bulb – more straightforward, quicker, less complex, albeit life transforming. As more people engage and circumstances change, things will get more complex. Renovating a house isn't a one-size-suits-all situation. Each house is different, each person's characteristics are unique. If you're working with a Christian community, like a church, especially one that's been around awhile, and unaware of the effects of the dilemma, the process becomes longer, the need to be thoughtful about change becomes more nuanced, and the unique people, place, issues and surroundings must be well understood.

If you're experienced in strategic planning or organizational culture change, this approach is likely familiar turf. If you don't have that kind of background, no worries, it's still a worthy and biblical endeavor. Consider this approach in a practical illustration—from Jesus:

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Luke 14:28-31

Coincidentally, this count-the-cost assessment is about understanding that discipling costs. If you're all in committing yourself to follow Christ as his disciple, expect the good and bad, the easy and hard. Using this kind of thinking, our suggested path forward, to attack The Disciple Dilemma uses six modules (thinking sections):



Module One: Assessing culture, our discipling, our leadership



Module Two: Aim - The mission of the Church is discipling



Module Three: Anticipate - Understanding the journey's terrain and issues



Module Four: A unique plan



Module Five: Execute - Motivating unique people to join a unique journey



Module Six: Sustain - Get on course, stay on course

If you are going to take on this challenge, there are a lot of things to think about here! One way to approach this Guide is dividing up the material in smaller group breakouts – one group does these questions, another those. I highly advise at least two (or more) people for each breakout, providing preliminary answers to Module One questions. Exempt the senior pastor from being a participant in the small group work and research. His leadership and support is essential but buy in and ownership needs to be established from the beginning. Getting at resources and information to answer these questions may take coordination ahead of time. Then wade in and get first round answers on the table. Don't expect to pull all this together, sort through it, refine it and reach conclusions in one sitting. Get a first cut done in smaller groups. Take a break and reconvene the smaller group to fine-tune answers when they have had a chance to reflect and informally discuss things.

Then, when your smaller groups are ready, reconvene and review as a large group. See what is unfolding. Get to agreement and step back to see what the big picture is telling you—you'll be surprised,. That bigger picture will become especially acute as you get through Module Three. If you stay with it, a true grip on the disciple dilemma and a path forward emerge by Module Four. The journey—starting to implement begins at Module Five and then over time you will want to be using what you've developed in Module Six to stay on course, essentially sustaining the work in the prior five modules. Ready?

Some of these questions will be uncomfortable. The best board and leadership meetings avoid seeking comfort and lean in to ask tough questions. If these questions really amp someone up, take a break. Unpack them later. If no one gets excited or intense, you either are not asking the

right hard questions or you do not have the right people in the group. The journey is far more important than any single question or concern. I don't mean to be trite, but this is Proverbs 27.17 coming to life for you: "Iron, sharpening iron." Use your combined counsel, for the sake of God's disciples.

As with most strategic analysis and planning, use the wise counsel of many to overcome the blind spots of one or two. And make your meetings count. A few suggestions toward that end.

Some common best practices in strategic thinking and planning culture change •

Preposition prayer and fasting ahead of, and often, through this effort.

- The leader sets the date and time and agenda. Open the meeting and keep it moving.
- Publish the agenda a week ahead for what you'll cover in a session. Stay to the schedule.
- As you meet to talk, let your group talk. Resist the temptation to correct thinking —let ideas flow.
- Agree on time limits for participants to talk during the brainstorming.. Thirty second rules often work, say it in 30 seconds and go quiet. Nobody should run five minutes during download sessions.
- If you have more than four people, appoint a timekeeper/gatekeeper, separate from the group leader. A gatekeeper who can notice and tug on the too-quiets and can call time on the too-windys.
- Don't let wallflowers stay silent. Ask them for their ideas. Get them on the table.
- If someone is confused or uncertain, clarify, but do not correct or condemn.
- If something starts slowing you down make a "Parking Lot" list, where you can table the issue and revisit it another time. Progress, not detailed deliberation is key.

Let's get started.

Changing a Christian community (or any organization) takes time, people skills and crucially, understanding your place more deeply than you may think you need to. Don't shortcut the process is my plea. Sometimes you're going to wonder where all this probing and thinking leads to. The process is intentional, and it pays dividends to stick with it. This guide is designed to assist your leaders bring the process to life for your people. In other words, if you invited me to come and help with your journey, I would start here. (Having us come help you is an option you can explore at www.thediscipledilemma.com)



Module One: Assessing culture, our discipling, our leadership

Leadership's views on the dilemma and discipleship. •

Who are the leaders in your community?

- Who has oversight for the mission/vision/values in your community? (Include everyone with authority and influence to act on this issue, not just those in organizational slots. Influential members are included.)
- Who has the formal responsibility for disciples in your community?
- Who are the informal leaders you will need to deal with the dilemma?
- **Do your key leaders believe there's a problem?**
- Do these leaders you named think discipleship is doing fine? Who would say this issue of the dilemma resonates with them?
- **Do any leaders have experience in change management or strategic planning?**
- **How many of your leaders appreciate (can briefly explain) the impact of mission and culture on discipleship?** (Revisit Chapters 11 and 12 for a fuller treatment of this question.)
- **What "sacred cows" exist in your community?** (Not-to-be-questioned traditions, assumptions, people, and dogmas that are specific to your community. Examples could be assertions of "don't question, just do"; "this will ruffle feathers for X, Y or Z"; "nothing is wrong here" or "this is not leadership's problem, it belongs to...[others]")
- **Review the symptoms in Chapter 1** and decide if these (or other) symptoms describe your discipling community.
- **If you don't recognize any of the Chapter 1 symptoms** and trends, is all well for your people? If so, rejoice and share with us how this blessing (avoiding the effects of the dilemma) has come about for your people—a lot of folks are anxious to know.
- **What symptoms would you say are affecting your people?** See the questions in "attributes of our community" [next set of questions] to probe further.
- **In the final analysis, is something amiss?** And does leadership believe addressing the issues matter for your discipling community? **What are attributes of your community?**
- Does your community have **pros-only culture, or member-engaged/pastor-leader coached culture?**
- How, specifically, does your community **seek out and employ disciples** among its laity?

How would people in your community survey on the statement "I am being disciplined by one or two others"? How about on the statement "I am inviting people to evaluate Jesus with me."?

- How would you describe your church (community) demographics? (*See the additional questions and ideas in the Module One “Granular” section of the Appendix*)
- Take a first pass: What early conclusions do you take away in looking at these demographics?
- How do these demographic conclusions connect with the dilemma?

What is your (stated) mission?

- What’s your written mission statement?
- If you asked your leaders what your mission was, what answer(s) would you get? How much convergence/divergence is there between leaders and the written statement?
- If a third party interviewed members/non-leaders in your community, what would your people say is the mission?
- What does your mission statement tell us about your prime purpose as a community of believers?
- How did this mission narrative come into existence?
- How do you know if you’re achieving that mission?
- If applicable - What part of the mission does your pastoral staff get graded on? How are they graded?

How would you describe your culture?

- What do your people think your community expects of them, as members, and as followers of Christ?
- How would you, as leaders, describe the discipleship/discipling situation of the typical member of your community? (*See additional questions in Appendix*)
- Average number of people in your small/home/community groups or classes?
- Do small groups involve 80% or more of your people? Half? Less than half?
- Are small groups, gender-specific groups, youth and Sunday schools the primary relationship systems? Or...?
- What are the top two or three spiritual strengths (traits) of your Christian community? (*Additional questions in Appendix*)
- Your locale: Metropolitan? Urban? Suburban? Rural/agrarian?
- The community’s facilities & organization (*See additional “granular” questions in Appendix*)
- How many adults have surrendered their lives to Christ (non-Christians become Christians) in the past five years in your community?
- What do you know about the discipling of these people since they came to faith?
- How many in your faith community have walked away from their faith (not simply changed churches) in the past five years?
- What do you know about people’s reasons for leaving?

Assessing current culture in your Christian community

- [Prior question from Module One] How many people are there in your Christian community?
[Prior question from Module One] How many leaders are there in your Christian community that could be considered disciplers?
- If you divide total people by leaders (disciplers), what's the ratio? How does that ratio compare with Jesus model of one-on-one? Or even one-on-twelve?
- How many one-on-one (or at most one-on-three) discipling relationships exist in your community? Who are they? Why do they exist (who launched them)?
- Are equipping activities (i.e. small groups, classes, membership, ministries, missions) the core discipling system(s) in your community?
- Do your leaders have discipling mentors? What percentage of leaders answered yes to that question?
- Do your leaders have one or two people (not including family) they are interactive with about their faith, such as weekly or more often? Percentage answering yes?
- Do your leaders mentor anyone spiritually? Percentage answering yes?
- For the yes answers in the three questions above, who and how does this? What's the process? Is it a useful template for others to follow?
- What conclusions do you draw looking at the percentages for these leadership numbers above?
- How common are invitations by your leaders to individual non-Christians about investigating Christ and his claims?
- Based on answers to the questions above, what grade (A, B, C, D, I) would you give yourselves as leaders in your awareness of the state of individual disciples in your community?
- What grade would you assign for leadership's personal participation in the discipling culture?
- Would you rate personal discipleship as a strength or a weakness among your community's leaders?
- Take a first pass: What conclusions can you take away from looking at these culture questions?
- How do these culture conclusions influence the dilemma?



Module Two: The mission of the Church - discipling

Aiming for the true mission of Christian community

Consider the point made in Chapter 12: Discipleship is *the* mission of all Christian communities.

- Based on a biblical review of discipling, what does your leadership team conclude are the key attributes of making disciples and sustaining those disciples? (See Chapter 10 for more information)
- After your experience with The Disciple Dilemma, do you have a narrative about how your people should think and live as disciples, different than what is exists today?
- For many traditional communities, the mission requires a transition from member “equipping” thinking (described in Chapters 3, 4 and 11, and the next bullet) to biblical discipling relationships of ones/twos/maybe threes.
- Study groups, fellowship groups, classes and activities are traditional discipleship equipping programs. Yet biblically, equipping is not the primary means of making and being disciples. What do you see in Scripture to support or refute that assertion?
- Important contrasting question: If fellowship and study groups, Sunday schools, worship services and mission trips are excluded from disciple development, what else might be foundational for biblical discipling?
- Is discipleship just one of several mission priorities for Christian community, or is it the cornerstone to all other activities of the community?
- How much of a change is there between your present day mission and the one discussed in the Disciple Dilemma?
- How aware, really, are your people about your mission? If you’re about to modify your mission, how does that work in your community—who and what is critical for acceptance and embrace?
- What have you concluded your mission now ought to be? And what symptoms do you expect to see surfacing if your people pursue that mission passionately in the next 6 months? Year? Two years?



Module Three: Understanding the journey's terrain and issues

Understanding the “terrain” to choose the best route in addressing the dilemma:

Why is this important? Breaking the grip of the dilemma requires a change. In effect, it is a journey. The route should be planned out, and the way, like the story of *Pilgrim's Progress* may not be simple or straightforward. Sustainable change comes about by understanding the terrain—the organization, circumstances, leadership and your people. In other words, the things pulling and pushing on your community's disciples moving out on this new journey.

What are our strengths? (Things we are good at, have capabilities in and we control)

Our weaknesses? (Things we are not so good at, have few/poor capabilities in and we control)

What opportunities around us? Ahead of us? (Things we do not control, but can help our mission)

What threats can impede us? (Things we do not control, and would hinder/halt our mission)

Seriously consider doing a “SWOT” review for this module. Discipleship benefits mightily from leaders who understand an organization's true pros and cons. Leaders can lead more effectively, gain results more comprehensively and of course, flourish discipling using the things favorable, while avoiding the pitfalls uncovered. *(If you're not familiar with SWOT, see the fuller explanation and examples in the Appendix.)*

If you do this analysis well, you can apply what you already learned in Module One and add in the influences of the world around your community. This is another example of gaining understanding that often simply lies vaguely perceived, at best, out on the fringes of our assumptions, . Use this analysis to see more clearly than you might imagine where God has placed your community's gifts and opportunities. This work, done well leads you where your most useful efforts and focus might go. Take a break for a week or two after you complete this section.



Module Four: A unique plan

After you've had a break from drafting and revising the Module Three thinking and analyzing, **it's time to start putting conclusions on the board, and a plan into action.**

- Reconvene again to rehearse what you've learned so far. Don't rush, don't railroad one another. But get to a consensus. Then, lay out the strengths (S's) and opportunities (O's) to find what fits together. As an example, say there are a significant number of business people in your community (a strength) and a lack of business innovation and development assets in your community (an opportunity). Disciples who are professional business and development people can be engaged to help connect to the local area people with such an asset as a way to invite people to check out things, in this case disciples serving others. This is a strength/opportunity merge. These types of S/O moments are your greatest leverage points to build strategy around. Likewise, decide what weaknesses (W's) you will work on to eliminate. Now Put the W's and T's together. Here are your most logical "stay away" conclusions. For example, if finances are suffering (a weakness), interest rates are rising (a threat), those two paired together tell us starting a new building would not be wise.
- How do your strategies connect to the mission you now adopt to make and to be biblical disciples? Be cautious about pursuing strategies that do not directly contribute to that objective. The reason we say that you need to stay focused on disciples is because IF you are effective in becoming a discipling community, all the other ministries and missions and volunteerism and tithing come with the deal. Without true discipleship, all these things are just passing fads and *the old symptoms will soon be back.*

What should we make of all this review and analysis? Here are the main points:

- Get your mission clearly defined and lock in on it. Fine tune your discipling mission to utilize the people and things God has granted you.
- Do you understand the times, the issues, the challenges and options facing your community?
- How might you combine your S's and our O's to lean in to your best strengths and opportunities against the disciple dilemma's causes?
- How do you improve over time on the internal issues hindering discipleship (W's)?
- What should you be thinking about and doing differently if the T's are real, to avoid them or minimize their effects on discipleship?
- Build a rough script for a reformed culture that brings that mission to life. What is a culture? It's what you want your people to be doing when you're not around, both to remember and to want to do on their own going forward. And importantly, this culture, done well, replicates itself perpetually.
- As a pump-primer, parts of a biblical culture script could read like this:

- 1) Our people are being immersed in the biblical mandate to each learn to be a disciple, a bondservant/doulos, fully surrendered to Christ. We understand this taking-up-the-cross includes our loss of self-determination as secular thinking regards self-determination, shedding personal destinies and fantasies for the fuller calling of Christ.
- 2) Our people are motivated to make use of their specific talents given by Christ in the workplace, civic and regional life. And our general talents for general ministry in all other arenas as they are so led as servants. Our people understand Christ's discipleship as very good for them personally, and for all of society and can explain that. Our people are biblically competent, articulate and focused disciples as Christ has so equipped them. They will continue to develop and pursue Christ as long as they live.
- 3) Our people, including staff, are not solo disciples. We all have mentors and we all have team mates, perhaps many not even in our specific community, but real and present with our people weekly or more often in full view of our lives. It is rare that one of our people would be left out as a "lone wolf", or abandoned to figure things out on their own if they are a member of our community.
- 4) Our people invite other people to evaluate Christ. Our people live and develop alongside people they disciple. Our people are capable of explaining who is Christ and what it means to be a disciple, to outsiders as well as members of community.
- 5) Our people understand disciples are the building blocks of our community's worship, praise, ministry, missions and impact on society and the world. We will press on, for the rest of our lives in this journey as long as Christ shall allow.

Questions your leadership has to answer

- How do you put very small clusters (one-on-one/twos) together in your specific community?
- We are not disciplers like Jesus and Paul. With that obvious statement, what now? How do you move forward with granular, relational discipleship using imperfect people?
- Have you communicated enough to be confident your people – all of them – so they know what is going on about discipling just as much as you do?
- Will you just wing the counterpunch to the dilemma and throw people together, hoping it sticks? Will you run profiling or big data to aim at ideal matching? Or will you use what you've learned about your strengths and weaknesses to develop the best next steps – perhaps that could mean training leaders, or perhaps a few "pilot" discipleship groups. Who goes first? Do you just try it out on the youth groups? Is it intergenerational? What does your analysis of your community show you? What does your prayer and fasting lead you to do? Go do it.
- Finalize your mission under God's leading, including fasting and prayer, to be a force for discipling in your community's strengths and opportunities.

We've "uploaded" by learning about issues, pros, cons, and tentative summary thoughts by deep diving your community – its culture, leaders, people, issues. **Now the "take-out" (what to do) can begin.** Draw conclusions from all this thinking and S/O and W/T thinking, then **boil the**

conclusions down to relevant “what we will do” thinking. (*Examples for this are also located in the Appendix*)

Does this process to understand your community, and to begin addressing the disciple dilemma specifically for your community make sense to you? If not, please reach out to us at www.thediscipledilemma.com to talk through your challenges and questions.

So where are we?

You’ve worked through four of the six modules. If these four steps took you six months to get through, you’d be moving at a fast clip. **And here’s what should be surfacing for your leadership team’s consideration:**

- We clearly see the biblical aspects of individual discipleship.
- We are aware of our community’s discipling situation, and the symptoms of the dilemma facing us.
- We are more aware of what our current culture is doing to support or hinder discipleship, as Christ taught it.
- We see the need to change / return to / hold on to our mission.
- We are aware of the divergences between our culture and the mission
- We have a sense of what it takes to recapture biblical discipling here.
- We have a grasp/notion/plan of a biblically discipling culture – a replicating, inviting and developing discipleship culture.
- Module Five will help us develop a plan to communicate and persuade the rest of our community to come with us on this discipleship change journey.



Module Five: Motivating unique people to join a unique journey

The aimpoint: Establishing muscle memory toward true discipleship in your people by way of a focused mission, a changed culture, and motivated leadership. The result is personal discipleship, outward facing invitational living, discipling teamwork, continuous learning and sanctification across your community.

Communication: Are you prepared to clearly explain the dilemma to people?

- Start small! Pick a few thought leaders in your community and bring them aboard first.
- Migrate slowly outward to incrementally reach the rest of your community.
- Think about your rollout to the few, then to the many:
 - How to explain the dilemma's trends and symptoms in Christian communities?
 - How to help people see how the dilemma affects their families, their friends and of course, future generations.
- Explaining the gap, the space between what discipleship is today, and biblically, what it ought to be. • Unaddressed, where does the disciple dilemma take your Christian community?

Are you ready to make a concise and clear case for a new mission and culture?

- How to explain a compelling view of a "disciple's life," understandable to people using traits such as the ones outlined in chapter 11?
- Can you paint the picture in words that describes how you want your community to look in the years ahead, to reinforce discipleship and to sustain itself?
- How will your traditional activities and events be reconfigured as disciple-centric systems and programs? Said another way, how will your Christian community's life become a gateway toward discipling instead of a gate blocking it?
- What motivates people to be disciples in your community?
- What to do about the believers who refuse to come along?
- Why is this good for your Christian community? The individual? The nation? The world?
- How will you team up people?
- How will you keep the community from reverting back to programs and staff-centrism and solo discipling?

How effective is your communication?

- In pursuing this, what best serves your community in avoiding rumors and mythologies?
- Who needs to know first? Who are the influence leaders?
- How will you communicate this so people "get it" and can explain your thinking and your approach? • How will you set up communications as two-way events versus one-way diktats?

Are you ready for the objections?

- Who are the dissenters and informal leaders?
- Do you understand what your dissenters think, fear, and hope, and do you understand them so well that you can explain their view, so that they'll agree that you understand their point of view?
- How will you describe the new culture? What will be expected for participants? How will you grandfather in the uncooperative, or help them move on? For new arrivals, what will be the set expectations going forward?
- Who might be marginalized, or fear their status loss in this kind of change?

Will you prove you believe in this discipling mission by personally living it out?

- Will you live it as an individual, not simply as the leader architecting a change?
- Will you constantly talk it up (in personal talk, not just sermons), so that people start completing your sentences? Will you do this again and again?
- As a leader, will you step out of simply managing, and get into relating to people, explaining to (many) people what's up? Get in their shoes? Understand their issues?

A disciplined and gradual communication and invitation to everyone •

How will you ensure that everyone understands the new way?

- How will you ensure that people generally don't feel exploited or coerced?
- How long will the new expectations be simple aspirations? When will they become soft requirements? When will they become hard requirements?
- What means will you faithfully apply to induce conformity to the culture?
- What will you do about rebels?



Module Six: Staying on course

- **Communication failure – the number one way off course:** Consistent communication – staying on plan and message is the key to staying on a plan. Muscle memory, like traditions, come with repetition. Make your repetitions the good traditions, communicated enough to stick. (You can never stop communicating the mission and culture. When you do, the dilemma is on your doorstep.)
- **Tyranny of the urgent – the great mission diluter:** Remember to manage the NOT main things, but never let them distract you from leading in mission and culture.
- **An undefined culture slowly reverts back to the old ways:** When leaders stop rehearsing mission, culture, catechisms and Christ the arc will bend back to secular and material traditions. Guaranteed.
- **Inconsistent leadership and turnover = Mission amnesia:** When you hand over the keys for your own leadership role, be sure you've trained well your own disciple for the chair. Be sure they get the mission and the culture, the relationships and the personal obligation as a leader/disciple down cold.
- **Periodic assessments – how are we doing?** Stop and smell the mission statement occasionally. Take a walk through the community and its people and activities. What's going on out there? "LBWA" Leadership by walking around pays big dividends, and usually, comes with at least a few surprises. Get out there. Then bring people together periodically and....you guessed it...talk mission and culture... *Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.*
"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
"And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and

by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— Deuteronomy 6:1-14

APPENDIX

More granular questions to promote thinking

- About your culture

Sample SWOT Analysis and Conclusions

Chapter by Chapter Study Guide (Did we get the point of that Chapter?)

Additional “more granular” questions to help you think about your community:



From Module One:

- How would you describe your community’s (a.k.a. church) demographics?
 - Let’s look at the region you live in:
 - ✦ A Bible-belt town?
 - ✦ Christian minority among other dominant religion(s)?
 - ✦ A deeply secularized area?
 - What ethnicities are in your Christian community?
 - ✦ How does your Christian community compare to the US 2020 Census? [57% White, 19% Hispanic, 12% Black, 6% Asian, 1% Native American, 2% Other 3%]
 - We are concentrated toward one or two dominant ethnic groups -
 - We are roughly in line with national statistics on two or more -
 - Gender breakdown in your community is what (% Adult male & female)?
 - How does that breakdown compare with demographics in your local area?
 - Age breakdown? (Such as % under 16; 16-25; 26-40; 41-65; 66+)
 - ✦ Is your community multigenerational outside of worship, or does it tend to silo by age/stage outside of worship activity?
 - Our people are generally blue-collar and trades people, or white-collar executives, or collegiate, or...?
 - We are a giga/mega (2,000 plus)...or large (500-2000)...mid-size (200-500)...small (under 200)
 - We are a single location church; or a multi-location
 - We are X% live worship and Y% virtual
 - Our best estimate is that we lost/gained X% during the 2020 pandemic year - What happened to giving in raw dollars from year ended 2019 to year ended 2020?
 - Per capita give in the past five years: Up or down?
 - Average age of membership past five years: Up or down?
 - When was this Christian community founded?
 - How many pastors, group leaders, staff and elders/deacons/trustees do you have?
 - How many years has the senior staff been with you?
 - How many years have your other leaders been in leadership roles?
 - Our teaching style is exegetical; emotive; justice and cause based; works-centered
 - Do people look to their pastors more to have biblical answers to issues and complex situations, or do your people tend to learn and apply well on their own?
 - When someone in your community surrenders to Christ as Savior, what specifically is their development as a disciple versus development as a member? Is anyone specifically

assigned to them as their spiritual team-mate? If so, how do you know discipleship is underway for the new believer?

How would you describe your culture?

- How would you, as leaders, describe the discipleship/discipling situation of the typical member of your community?
 - High staff awareness of all members and their discipling situation
 - ✦ Or, we rely on small groups and classes to provide close discipleship
 - ✦ Or, we rely on significant family and independent discipleship
 - ✦ Or, very few in our community have one-on-one/two teamed relationships in discipling
 - We have an intentional process to partner and team disciples together
 - High and well known expectations for one-on-ones/twos in teamed discipling relationships
 - High expectations in the community for staff, leaders, members to have mentoring and teamed discipling friendships - How does discipling actually work here?
 - ✦ Who leads the way?
 - ✦ Who would be the “poster children” of best-practices for discipleship in your community? Why?
 - ✦ How does discipleship begin with your people?
 - ✦ Who is involved in this kind of discipling? Who is not involved? Why?
 - ✦ How does that discipling compare with what we think Christ taught about discipleship?
- Small/Home/Community group culture
 - Average number of people in your small/home/community groups or classes?
 - Do small groups involve 80% or more of your people? Half? Less than half?
 - Are small groups, gender-specific groups, youth and Sunday schools the primary relationship systems? Or...?
- What are the top two or three spiritual strengths (traits) of your Christian community?
(Additional “granular” questions in Appendix)
- Your locale: Metropolitan? Urban? Suburban? Rural/agrarian?
- The community’s facilities & organization
 - We own our gathering place // We lease // Borrow // Nomadic - Your worship community:
 - ✦ On campus typical headcount
 - Mega/Giga (>2,000)
 - Large (500-2,000)
 - Medium (200-500)
 - Small (<200)
 - Startup /Plant (TBD)

- ✦ Virtual (estimated) headcount
 - Under 10% of on-campus headcount
 - 10-50% of on-campus headcount - > 50% of on-campus headcount
 - Your financial situation:
 - ✦ Receipts On plan; Ahead; Behind
 - ✦ Spending On plan; Ahead; Behind ✦ Reserves: Building; Dwindling; None - Your staffing situation:
 - ✦ Senior staff in place and expected to remain so // Absent one or two key roles; or expect imminent departure(s)
 - ✦ Headcount about right // Headcount high // Open slots to fill - Worldview: Progressive? Traditional? Conservative?
- Categories: Protestant Mainline or Evangelical? Catholic? Emergent?
 - ✦ Our community is doctrinally in line with the predominant thinking and culture of our legacy denomination or thought leaders - Distinctives - What sets us apart locally (may be more than one):
 - ✦ Reformational/Free-will/5th Amendment?
 - ✦ More Traditional / More Contemporary? Pentacostal? Charismatic? Independent?
 - ✦ Denominational – or Independent?
- How many adults have surrendered to Christ in the past five years as part of your community? What do we know about the discipling of these people since they came to faith?
- How many in our faith community have walked off on their faith in the past five years? What do we know about their reasons for leaving?
- What are the top two or three spiritual strengths (traits) of your Christian community?
 - Excellent worship and praise
 - Liturgy and high church
 - Spreading the gospel is the core here
 - Regional or global missions
 - Family and fellowship focus
 - Local ministries
 - Knowledge, learning and sanctification
 - Experiencing the Holy Spirit
 - Individuals in one-on-ones/twos discipling relationships
 - Purity, in keeping the secular world at bay



Example: How to use SWOT to address the dilemma

SWOT is a tool, corporately and biblically (referring again to Luke 14.28-31) to help understand pros, cons, good and bad things that can impact decisions. And SWOT is crucial in developing and utilizing talents of people. This is especially important addressing the disciple dilemma.

Start SWOT with a brainstorm. Think of the things you came up with in Module One about your community that gave you pause – whether wonderful things, or concerning issues. Now build on those issues. List out things as a group that concern or excite you looking not only at your Christian community, but the area you live in, the times you live in, the global things that touch your community, or might. This becomes a brainstorm list – let the ideas flow. Remember not to stifle creativity right now – let the ideas flow, refine later. (Examples of Issues to consider are listed below in “Sample Analysis”) The more work you do here, the easier it is to surface your “SWOT”. Most of the issues you list will eventually fall into one (or more) of the four categories of S, W, O, or T. More on that in a moment. What’s SWOT, you ask? Read on.

The *S* and *W* of SWOT stand for strengths and weaknesses. Strength and weakness issues are things that a community has the ability to control. The strengths idea means “we’re good at this” (like an affinity to operate a particular ministry). Weaknesses mean we’re not strong or not made better by these things in our control. (An example of a weakness might be a church in significant financial debt.)

The *O* in SWOT is usually labeled opportunity, while the *T* stands for threats. These are issues and events *not* within our control, but they do impact the mission. In a business environment, opportunity examples might be a competitor quitting. Ironically, the pandemic is a kind of opportunity as people take time to reflect on what matters, perhaps seek help, perhaps look to Christ. You can’t control these things, but they help serve a mission.

Threats are also outside our control, but they’re destructive to mission. An example of a threat to a church: Financially prosperous times can be a threat. Why? Prosperity distracts disciples, as people prosper and drift away from following Christ, thinking personal meaning can be bought with rising fortunes.

As you may realize, some of these SWOT factors can fit in both brackets of, say, a strength and a weakness, such as having terrific facilities (seen as a strength), and the upkeep and cost of those terrific facilities (seen as a weakness).

Do not forget to consider people in this analysis. Who will be your greatest allies in this journey? (A strength) Who will be least in favor, or present challenges and strife going forward? (A weakness) Think about regulations (like pandemic lockdowns) and cancel culture and politics and wokeism that can all get tangled into the journey, or stop the journey altogether. How do these kinds of issues affect things in your neck of the woods?

Using a SWOT process would go something like this:

- Identify the global or big issues challenging your mission of helping people become and be disciples (i.e., pandemic, racism, recession).

- Think about the big issues and challenges to begin to answer the question “How does that issue benefit (or not) getting at our mission, breaking free of the disciple dilemma?” Try to separate the issues out into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Favorable issues that you can control are strengths—such as a motivated cadre of men or women who want to pilot your new discipling mission. Negative issues you need to control better (like a displaced mission) are weaknesses. Things you cannot control—like local growth or the pandemic—go in the opportunity column if favorable, or the threat column if not.
- Take a break for a few days when you’ve drafted your SWOT—then reconvene and tune up the list. Get to know it well. Review it critically on a regular basis, like once or twice a year, to realize what’s changed.

Here’s an example of SWOT, this one being how a community could begin addressing the disciple dilemma by realigning a culture of discipleship during a pandemic. Remember the main thing in all of this: How to move your community from where it is, closer to Christ’s model of discipleship. Said another way, making the real mission of discipleship come to life in the revising culture you lead.

Global issue: a pandemic, with no certain outcomes, negatively affecting our access to people – believers and non-Christians alike.

Examples of Issues:

- Pandemic
- Economic uncertainty
- People living in isolation, despair, and fear
- People moving away from (moving to) here
- Church attendance restricted
- Classes and outreach are online only
- Our five-year history of adults coming to Christ is....
- People who used to attend here are off the grid, what happened?
- Local ministries locked down
- Giving is off
- At-risk and elderly members indefinitely isolated
- Facilities underused
- Staff and leaders potentially infected and disabled

Examples of Strengths:

- People: Staff is engaged, using video and house calls to teach and reach
- People: We have a cadre of people who want to engage on the disciple dilemma
- Facility: We have resources to run video and virtual for the foreseeable future
- Financial stability: we have x months before we are cash critical
- Volunteerism: People are asking how to help and be involved

- 80% or more of our people deeply and profoundly understand discipleship's call and implications
- 80% or more of our people deeply and profoundly understand Lordship and surrender
- 80% or more of our people are not muted about inviting people to come alongside them to meet Christ
- The main things ARE the main things here • Do you/your key leaders have close connections with 80% or more of your people?

Examples of Weaknesses:

- Symptoms of the disciple dilemma in our community are....
- We have little visibility into how our people are serving inside or outside our walls
- We have no staff or system to help us pair up people in close discipling
- The NOT main things clutter our thinking and doing
- No real discipling culture exists here (We don't know what to do)
- Many here believe membership equals discipleship
- Many here fit the descriptors about having little or no group, prayer or sanctifying relationships and interaction
- People's busy lives push back on a personal (and teamed) discipleship culture
- Deeply held tradition of growth, or programs or pastor-led culture
- Debt and expenses versus current giving are out of line
- Our resources are too thin to serve our community
- Opposition to any change to the current mission statement
- If your community is a mega-community, is it personal and relational? How do you know?
- Is your administration bureaucratic or deeply responsive? Staff-centric or participative? How do you know?
- Group (>3) discipleship weaknesses:
 - Low comprehension of discipleship by congregants, hence unaddressed
 - Growth, or control of growth makes for target fixation, displacing discipleship
 - Statistics like growth, conversions and baptisms mistaken for success or discipleship
 - Big capital requires big money, big talent, big facilities to sustain, displaces discipleship
 - Small churches can get overwhelmed in survival mode
 - Growth is capital intensive, and can displace discipleship
 - Focus on attractional, educational, missional or prosperity missions
 - Conversionism is mission diversion
 - Size (>~1,000) are "impossible to drive relationships" (See Keller quote in the book)
 - Big and small churches struggle with leadership and staff intimacy with people
 - Hiring headcount to disciple can be overwhelming
 - Most members do not like the relational risks in discipleship
 - Western Christians view size as credibility

- Members want concierge service and little involvement
- Members relying on the pros to handle the heavy lifting
- Members passivated as spectators or clientele
- Laity engagement can be threatening to professional staff
- Small groups & Sunday schools often mistaken for discipleship
- Discipleship competes with myriad priorities in most communities - Thinking sermons carry more freight in discipleship than they may
- Small church weaknesses:
 - Scarce talent
 - Demands on staff are overwhelming
 - Stress & loneliness for staff
 - Entrenched power players
 - “Pastors make disciples, not us” (What we pay them to do)
 - Survival > mission
 - Status quo > obedience
 - Mission thinking is uninteresting
 - Greying out membership
 - Big growth surges swamp the church
 - Pastoral expectations on their lives, their kids, their visitation, etc
 - Using payroll as coercion or weaponized leverage - Change is for coins, not a church issue - Where did the young people go?
 - Same leaders after 20 years. // Great! // Awful!
 - Bible study is not my job
 - Let the Pastor go. // Why can't we keep a pastor?
 - House church logistics and operations and sacraments
- Big church weaknesses:
 - Hitting metrics: budgets, baptisms, programs, seminars, planning
 - Staff to member ratios
 - Staff churn & turnover
 - Insulating staff from too many intrusive people
 - Unforeseen stuff, like Covid
 - Meetings
 - More staffing needed to manage staffing
 - Social media liabilities and distractions
 - Members going rogue
 - Classrooms and facilities inadequate // cost too much
 - Staff overhead: policies, training, time requirements
 - Automating relationships with members to free up staff
 - Delegating discipling down to small groups and hoping it works
 - Losing relationships to size and automation

- Why are we stalling out growth? // Why greying out?
- Why giving stalling out
- Why is communication so tough?
- New visioneering // New core values (and how well members uptake it)

Examples of Opportunities (things that encourage seeking Christ, or being disciples):

- In the pandemic, many people are searching for hope and meaning.
- In the pandemic, people’s lives are a bit quieter, able to hear and engage more thoughtfully
- Isolated people want live connections with other people.
- People are seeking live gatherings.
- People are seeking hope for identity, authenticity, and justice in a troubling time.
- Some are seeking worship, but not in a crowd, and not on a video feed. • The New Testament compels us to relate to people and build relationships
- Disciples own the reason for hope that transcends all circumstances.
- Disciples of Christ, connecting as real friends with people, are very different from “normal folks” because of *agape*, as salt and light.

Examples of Threats:

- Churches in traditional settings are perceived as archaic, and irrelevant.
- Church campuses are often seen as impersonal.
- The pandemic appears to thrive in indoor gathered settings.
- Video-conferencing technologies can placate people’s quest to connect with Christians.
- Pluralism—with Christianity dumped in the same boat with Islamism, Mormonism, Wicca, Atheism, etc., confusing or numbing people.
- Churches seen as archaic, or oppressive power, or just a fad or brand or myth.
- Church campuses seen as impersonal. • Christians seen as no different from anyone else in society.

In the next section you can see these SWOT elements coming together, to drive thinking, then strategy and ultimately, start unwinding root causes of the disciple dilemma.



Module Four: An example of a path forward (a Plan) emerging from a SWOT review in order to address the disciple dilemma.

Let’s take this thinking and **boil it down to relevant strategy**. This is *not* to say that if we were together talking through all this in your leadership team, the following are the only valid conclusions. This is just an illustration of bringing SWOT together:

- (Example) The issues we surfaced gave us a view of what people are after. The strengths and opportunities analysis show us that people want real hope, through real connections with

people, unlike the talking heads and caricatures. People are wondering, “Do you know something that offers hope?” They don’t want to be made a ministry project. They want relationships.

- (Example) We can summarize our strength-and-opportunity thoughts this way: No one’s better equipped to do real relationship than a true disciple of Christ, pandemic or no. Getting to know individuals is precisely what Christ wants disciples to do. Which leads to people (eventually in relationships) wanting to know why you’re the way you are. All that’s Bible 101, right?

We’ve “uploaded” learning about issues, pros, cons, and tentative summary thoughts. **Now the “take-out” (what to do) can begin:**

- (Example) Conclusions begin to bubble up: We don’t need to be constrained to on-campus and gatherings to be the body of Christ – to be disciples. Disciples, as ones and twos can get out there, be disciples in the world around us, operating . That can take form and shape in a hypothetical “scrimmage”: For our church to be Christ’s relevance in all this turmoil with nervous and despairing people, we have to retool from allowing the campus activities to displace disciples connecting to people out there. Connecting and relating at an individual level doesn’t need an auditorium or sanctuary or big gathering. Maybe a PhD is nice, but it’s definitely *not* necessary. Listen. Relate. Be friends. Our relationships with people next door, with people who serve us in stores, and with coworkers can go deep during pandemic situations. It can happen in the neighborhood, or work, or among friends.
- (Example) Because a pandemic can so easily choke down traditional church growth and participation for a while, elders and pastors and small group leaders will need to get deeply relational with all the individual members of the church. Teach them that what we were made for is to make disciples in the external world. That strategy includes the resources of the church, maybe even the staff as coaches, but every individual disciple should be teamed up with another live and engaged disciple to get on the field to play ball, whether pairing for work, community, or hobbies. A pandemic can force the game away from the traditional playing field we call church. Disciples are now the individual voice of Christ to a lot of fretful and discouraged people—and some cocky ones—all looking for hope.
- (Example) Another strategy bubble forms in this discussion around people who want to worship live, but who don’t yet want to go to big gatherings. So house church extensions of our church become a strategy possibility. In house churches, relationships and disciples can be made too. And in gathering in small house churches, disciples can stay beautifully linked with the main church body in giving, ministry work, and missions.