

HOW TO

# MOBILIZE YOUR CHURCH



Moving People From  
*Sunday Service* into  
*Ministry Service*

Study Guide



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# HOW TO MOBILIZE YOUR CHURCH

**Outline for Series**

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## INTRODUCTION

This seminar addresses one of the most asked questions among pastors: “How can I get more people involved and serving in ministry?” As you will see, the answer integrally relates to God’s ultimate plans for our churches and the many people in them—as well as for our own lives.

At a pastors’ seminar not long ago, a gentleman in the audience did put a troubling, yet revealing question to me. I do not know if he was a pastor, but I assume he had at least a close relationship with church leadership. That is why the question floored me: “You use the word disciple in a manner unfamiliar to me,” he began. “I’ve only heard it used as a noun before today. What do you mean by the verb *to disciple*?”

I thought at first, he was intentionally setting me up as a way of graciously encouraging me to explain my material more fully. However, he looked too puzzled and sincere to have a hidden agenda. Possibly, I read too much into the question. Likely, he was more familiar with the language of “teach all the nations” from KJV or “make disciples” instead of simply “disciple.”

Hopefully, my shock at his question did not register on my face or in my voice. I knew first-hand how easy it is to neglect discipling in favor of the more pressing demands of public-ministry, but I could not help wondering if the lack of disciple-making we all acknowledge in the Church of Jesus is due to a fundamental misunderstanding of more than terminology. Disciple as a noun, not a verb, focuses our thoughts on an after-the-fact disciple, not on how they got that way.

### ***Process Thinking***

How we think about something determines, to a large extent, what we end up thinking about it—and what we do about it. For instance, if we imagine that “church” is essentially a series of events, meetings and activities taking place at a building, our focus will be on that building and those programs. Of course, we want people to attend and be helped by what happens on site, but most of the evaluation of *church* will gauge success in terms of attendance during designated hours. If, on the other hand, *church* is seen as a process of tending to people, getting to them and at them, success gets measured in terms of transformation and development in their lives.

The same can be said of “*leadership*.” Rather than being defined by where a person stands (in front, on a platform, etc.), it can better be seen as a process of tending to the many intangibles in ministry (casting a vision, charting a course, building credibility, nurturing people, etc.). Church isn’t over when the lights are finally turned out, and neither do real leaders ever finish leading; they are perpetual processes.

Success, then, cannot be measured merely by the number of people who attend church, but by what percent of those who attend are actively engaged themselves in the ongoing process of church—leading others to Christ and deeper into His ways. Since our personal journey with the Lord is spoken of as a developmental process—walking, maturing, growing—it makes sense that all ministry, whether corporate or individual, ought to engage that process in others.

That is why discipling and mobilizing people are so closely linked; the better we understand how to mentor individuals, the better we will grasp how to enlist those people in the grand enterprise of impacting the world through our churches.

### ***Disciple and Mobilize***

Among the many pastors and church leaders with whom I interact, a subtle misconception seems to keep popping up: pastors are praying for disciples rather than developing them. Leaders wait for mature disciples to miraculously appear in church, forgetting that disciples are not sent from Heaven but made on earth.

And that is precisely where mobilizing your church comes into play. We are desperate for more ministry workers, not only for our church programs, but also to more effectively reach out to the surrounding world. Could it be that a merciful

and kind God is giving us the biggest clue imaginable—linking His most basic assignment for us with our most obvious and continuous need? We need more workers; He wants more disciples. Hmmm. What would happen to our thinking if we connected our primary frustration with our primary mandate?

Discipleship, like church itself, is a process, an active ongoing shaping of one person by another, enabling the disciple to develop in ways he or she probably could not develop alone—or, at least, not as quickly. Its goal is to “*present every man complete in Christ*” (Colossians 1:28), and its means include both public and private admonition.

### ***How to Mobilize your Church at a very Practical Level***

That’s the focus of this seminar. We’ll discuss principles and practices, thoughts and techniques to help us better accomplish the primary assignment left to us by our King. It won’t be a “quick fix,” a follow-the-formula type of solution. Mobilizing people and making disciples is an engrossing, all-engaging activity of the heart and of the mind. It forces shifts in priorities, time allocations and basic orientations towards ministry. Therefore, it will require a rethinking of our entire approach to ministry.



I. "Why You Alone?"

A. Jethro's Advice (Exodus 18:13-27).

1. Disciple.

- a. "Teach them the statutes"—principles and understandings to live by (Exodus 18:20a).
- b. "Make known to them the way in which they are to walk"—reference points and guidelines (vs. 18:20b).

2. Delegate.

- a. "Select and position people"—arrange for shared leadership (vs. 18:21).
- b. "Let them judge the people at all times"—the front lines for personal ministry and nurture (vs. 18:22).
- c. After they have done their best and could not handle, they could bring to Moses—"every major dispute they would bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge" (vs. 18:22,26).

B. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:7-20).

1. Lead people to repentance and obedience (2 Timothy 2:25).

- a. Seeing how different their works are compared to the Lord's.
- b. Learning truth "on the heels of spiritual reconsiderations." The curriculum is supposed to be simple and doable, not intimidating.
- c. A discipler is someone who sets about to teach others to obey what he or she has been taught and has obeyed (Romans 6:17).

## II. Discipleship Hindrances.

### A. Limitations of an Academic Model.

1. Student and Teacher      Vs.      Student and Mentor.
2. Information                      Vs.      Transformation.
3. Evaluation, Grading      Vs.      Development, Changing.

### B. Limitations of Transactional Leadership.

1. It is based on “deal-making” and trade-offs.
  - a. Appeals to felt needs and convinces people there is something in it for them—keeping everyone happy.
  - b. Fosters co-dependence between pastor and followers—rather than a true partnership to make a difference in the world.
  - c. Hinders leader from teaching life-altering truths.
2. A consumer mentality resists discipleship because it threatens to “go elsewhere” whenever it feels unsatisfied or unappreciated.

### III. Discipleship: A Process of Invitations.

#### A. Invitation to Observation.

1. Be open and vulnerable, talking openly about the issues and realities of life.
  - a. Welcome people into your life, as you would invite them into your house.
  - b. Impart not just words, but our very lives (1 Thessalonians 2:8).
2. Communicate the common composition of everyone—including yourself.
  - a. Pseudo-spirituality destroys true discipleship.
  - b. Elijah was a man like us; Jesus was clothed in flesh (James 5:17).
  - c. All temptations are common to humankind.
3. Share the patterns of life and thoughts you utilize in navigating your spiritual journey.

#### B. Invitation to Obedience.

1. Be honest about the dealings of God in your life, and demonstrate accountability to those you are leading.
  - a. *Little things*—like not using exact words when quoting someone or being sure to pay for Styrofoam cups.
  - b. Eager welcome for others’ perspectives to counterbalance the “*deceit of my heart*” (Jeremiah 17:9).
2. Provide historical sketches and stories about past convictions—pivotal times and seasons when you learned various truths.

- a. Give examples of current events and present arrests—places and issues about which Jesus is speaking to you.
- b. Demonstrate radical obedience in the midst of normal, everyday life.
  - i) With normal language, humor and cheerfulness, communicate spiritual possibilities for everyone.
  - ii) Avoid all semblances of religiousness and otherworldliness.

C. Invitation to Significance.

- 1. Nothing is more shaping in someone’s life than love, acceptance and belonging. AGAPE is passionate in welcoming and honoring people.
  - a. AGAPE is God’s motive and means for working with people.
  - b. People live with rejection and low self-esteem; our privilege is to counter those lies.
- 2. Offer people an opportunity for greatness through participation in something with real purpose.
  - a. If our church has no great purpose/vision, then we cannot invite people to greatness in our church.
  - b. We get to think more highly of them than they do of themselves.

#### IV. Vital Aspects of Successful Discipleship.

##### A. Discipling Communicates Promise.

1. "Follow Me, and I will make you into something other than what you have been thus far" (Matthew 4:19).
  - a. It is proactive, and it implies doing something for people that they cannot necessarily do for themselves.
  - b. It hints at transformation, not just information.
2. "I know who and what you are today, but I also know who and what God intends for you to become. That is how I will relate to you" (John 1:42).
  - a. The New Covenant has little interest in who/what people have been; its focus is on their *becoming*.
  - b. Discipleship separates people from their "stuff" so that they can let go of what hinders them.
3. "I can look into your heart and discern your motives" (John 1:47).
  - a. Discipleship looks beneath the surface at what is going on in minds and hearts.
4. "I will show you things in the spiritual dimension that you have never seen before" (John 1:50-51).
  - a. Discipleship helps open eyes to the full scope of God's love and power.
  - b. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear..." (Mark 4:9).
5. "I want you to be with me so that I can prepare you to be sent forth from me" (Mark 3:13-14).

- a. The goal is not to simply gather people, but to ready them for their eventual, permanent departure.
  - b. “Love, mend, train, send...” (The Coastlands).
6. “I will teach you how to speak to people and how to deal with demons” (Mark 3:15).
- a. *“Our battle is not against flesh and blood”* (Ephesians 6:12).
  - b. Tools of our trade are *“divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses....”* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).
7. “Knowing you will betray my confidence, I still appoint you to ministry responsibility” (Mark 3:19).
- a. In the face of certain disappointment and betrayal, discipleship invests heavily in others.
  - b. If you work with volunteers, you will occasionally be disappointed, but it is worth it.



v. Tools and Intentions of Discipleship.

A. Discipling must be:

1. Intentional.
2. Relational and voluntary.
3. Progressive.
4. Open and vulnerable.
5. Releasing and empowering.
6. Restorative.

B. Verbal Tools in Jesus’ Discipling:

1. Parables to explain the ways of God in easy-to-grasp analogies.
2. Questions to press the real issues in any situation.
3. Warnings to point out traps, wrong responses, or dangers.
4. Facts to “tell it like it is.”
5. Admonitions to be reminders of helpful things we’ve forgotten.
6. Encouragements to give hope about the future if we obey.
7. Rebukes to put an immediate end to storms, foolishness and sin.
8. Forgiveness to release from condemnation and to point to a future free from our past.

## VI. Why Pastors Don't Disciple.

### A. The Past.

1. Personal betrayals and hurts suffered at the hands of trusted people.
2. Dropped balls and poor performances by previous disciples.
3. No personal experience at, themselves, being disciplined.

### B. The Present.

1. Macro-ministry needs and time-demands keep pastors too busy.
2. Other priorities crowd discipleship out of their agenda.
3. A pseudo-servanthood mentality “does everything for others.”
4. Viewing church as a production rather than as a process ends up putting too much reliance on events.

### C. The Future.

1. Fear of the cult label—having followers or devotees.
2. No long-range plan that can only be realized by mobilizing disciples.
3. Seeing the job as getting the job done instead of getting people “done.”
4. Insecurity at not being needed by everyone for everything.

## VII. Things to Keep in Mind About Discipleship.

### A. Avoid the Dichotomy of:

1. Curriculum or spontaneous lessons.
2. Public services or smaller gatherings.
3. Groups or individuals.
4. Structured meetings or informal life-settings.
5. Responsive interaction or pro-active initiation.
6. Care for people or development of people.

### B. The Purpose of Discipling People:

1. To increase their love (1 Timothy 1:5).
2. To build them up (2 Corinthians 10:8).
3. To mature them and present them to God (Colossians 1:28).
4. To teach them so they can, and will, teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).
5. To give them life-patterns to follow (2 Thessalonians 3:9).
6. To explain how God’s administration works (Ephesians 3:2; 1 Corinthians 12:28).
7. To serve their spiritual progress, joy, and faith (Philippians 1:25; 2:17).
8. To establish them by imparting spiritual gifts (Romans 1:11).

9. To shape their inner-being to be more like Christ (Galatians 4:19).
10. To challenge their thinking (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).
11. To equip (mend) them to be servants (Ephesians 4:12).

## VIII. What Disciples Need to Flourish:

### A. A Conducive Environment.

1. Being welcomed and honored (agape).
2. Being loved for who they are, not for what they can do.
3. Being believed in and trusted more than they believe in or trust themselves.
4. Knowing they are accepted and loved so they do not need to fear instruction as reproach.
5. Being given safe opportunities to hear of others' mistakes and to confess their own faults and failures.
6. Being encouraged into feeling that they can succeed against sin, and in ministry.
7. Feeling supported and approved of when they step down from ministry.

### B. Multi-Dimensional Instruction in Effective Discipleship:

1. Theology and doctrine (systematic).
2. Bible study methods and tools.
3. Answers to questions.
4. Questions to answer.
5. Being exposed to facets of Kingdom life that they do not already know.
6. Being asked to do what they do not think they can do—getting stretched beyond their comfort zone.

7. Receiving guidelines for thought, attitudes, and behavior.
  8. Being free to talk about situations/assignments so they learn from others.
  9. Being encouraged to discover/understand their unique gift mix, including its inherent vulnerabilities.
  10. Being encouraged to hear God personally and to act on that prompting.
  11. Getting scriptural confirmation or challenge to their thoughts.
  12. Being trained to always ask what the Lord is doing and not focus so much on what the devil or people are doing.
- C. What Only Others Can Give Them:
1. Having others seek their best so they do not have to seek it themselves—having someone look forward to their future.
  2. Seeing role models in real-life situations:
    - a. People who are living out the principles taught.
    - b. Mentors who are accessible to questions.
    - c. Leaders who are open about the true issues.
  3. Receiving personal ministry (counsel, prayer, etc.) to deliver them from their “stuff.” Having someone stand beside them through their traumas and problems.



## IX. A Diagnostic Look at the Total Church.

### A. Mission.

1. How important are the people of your congregation in your Mission Statement?
2. What will happen to them as they help carry out that mission?
3. What will happen through them while doing so?

### B. Vision.

1. How compelling is it?
2. What have you seen for your church's future, and where are the people in what you see?
3. What motives are you tapping in order to draw your people toward that desired future?

### C. Culture.

1. How does your church culture encourage volunteering? How are you shaping the elements of the culture to promote servanthood?
2. What has been modeled? What stories do you tell?
3. What are the rites of passage in your church? What do the elders do?

### D. Atmosphere.

1. How welcoming, fun and trusting does your church feel to individuals in it?
2. What do your people think you think of them?

3. How easy is it to fail? Is your church a team sport like football or an individual sport like track?
4. How normal are shortcomings? Is perfection important? What is the focus of your “pursuit of excellence?”

x. Necessary Leadership Mentalities.

A. Toward People.

1. Loving them.
2. Asking God’s heart for them.
3. Having greater ambition for people, rather than for yourself.
4. Believing that the Body has many parts—each as important as another.
5. Being eager to discover their unique giftings and why Jesus called them to your church.
6. Wanting to relieve their burdens.
7. Wanting to fulfill their desires in ministry and releasing them to those callings, assignments and aspirations when appropriate.

B. Toward Serving.

1. Most real ministry is ordinary and rather menial, not spectacular.
2. Serving expedites a person’s growth and maturity more so than does listening to a sermon.
3. Serving connects people to the church and to one another.
4. Serving—if done in a properly arranged setting—is addictive and habit-forming.
5. People should never be allowed or encouraged to serve out of guilt, frustration, legalism, bitterness or martyrdom.

6. Serving for most people is a series of successive approximations. Keep them moving to the next step after they hand off their current responsibilities.

C. Toward Reality.

1. Time is more precious today than it was 200 years ago.
2. Kingdom advance and harvest are inextricably connected to mobilizing people.
3. Volunteers need vision and momentum.
4. People agree to serve mostly on the basis of personal relationship with or appreciation for the one who asks them to serve.
5. People are wired to respond positively to encouragement and affirmation.
6. As with all human beings, volunteers will likely disappoint you sooner or later.
7. It takes more time, initially, to train a volunteer than it does to do the job yourself.
8. It is very difficult for volunteers to oversee other volunteers. Volunteer managers require long-term training and a “proving” process to succeed.

## XI. Why People Don't Volunteer.

### A. General Feelings (not Well-Defined or Articulated).

1. Not much is happening—no activity or momentum. Status quo and routine. What difference will it make if I do volunteer?
2. Somebody else is taking care of things. They can manage without my involvement.
3. There aren't many choices about where, when or how to serve. I wish there was something I was good at or that appealed to me.
4. Guilt and condemnation. Pressure. Burden. Responsibility. It seems so heavy and thick. “I feel so guilty; I better do something for a while.”
5. Serving is just a way others in the church try to impress the leader. Those who serve do it to “get in” with the pastor. The leader always asks the same people to do everything.

### B. Feelings About or From the Leader.

1. No enthusiasm or excitement on the part of the leader for the particular project or for the overall direction of the church.
2. Lack of example in serving by the leader—ceremonial leaders.
3. No appreciation or thanks expressed by the leader during or after the work.
4. The volunteer duty is something the leader doesn't want or like to do.
5. The people are treated like those who are capable of only mindless tasks or dot-to-dot ministry.

C. Feelings About Themselves.

1. Fear of failure or fear of rejection (disapproval).
2. No hope of success or completion—endless, week after week duty.
3. No sense of interpersonal connection—isolated and lonely.
4. Past efforts have been unappreciated or redone by the leader.



## XII. Reasons Why People Do Volunteer.

### A. The Leaders.

1. The leaders are excited about what’s happening around the church in general and about the specific service opportunity being presented.
2. The leaders go before the people in both attitude and example of servanthood—picking up cups, doing the little things, “following the lower road.”
3. People love and respect leaders who love and respect them. Being treated this way makes them want to help leaders.
4. Established relationship with the leaders enables those leaders to tell the people that serving is good for them, and it enables the people to follow the instruction.
5. The leaders act as coaches and cheerleaders, alternately telling the people they can do it, and then telling them how.
6. The leaders are easily accessible—for help when stuck, for clarification and for brief personal ministry.

B. Friends in Church.

1. Gratitude for what the church (people) has done for their family (spouse, children) gives people an incentive to serve.
2. Watching others serve and hearing them talk about what they did gives people hope that they “can do it too.”
3. The sense of family—everyone belonging and pulling together—makes people more inclined to volunteer.
4. Personal invitation from someone they like or admire is usually enough to get people to say “yes.”
5. The invitation process—to sit together next week, to go to an activity, to come to dinner, to attend ICU, to help serve—casts volunteering as an opportunity, not an obligation.
6. Once people discover that “serving is the birthplace for deeper relationships,” they begin to anticipate the next opportunity to serve.
7. Most people are fairly starved for good friends and meaningful conversation. Serving with others provides both, and it bonds people together and encourages for deeper conversations as they experience the joy of serving others.

C. The Atmosphere.

1. Being involved (serving) must be made to feel fun and appealing.
2. Positive upbeat communication makes people want to serve.
3. There is a place for everyone, and people are encouraged to find their unique niche of fulfillment.
4. Progressive exposure makes it seem like everyone serves; it is a normal experience, not a big deal.

5. There is no caste system—no untouchables or exalted personages, no peons or nobles. When church is run like a co-op, people serve more.
6. The positive, happy attitude of “those who have gone before” is contagious.
7. The constant testimonies of “I’m going to ask Wendy to help me,” and “I helped Meredith arrange the supply closet,” make serving as unconscious as breathing.
8. When a lot is happening and people have several choices for involvement, the activity translates into excitement and willingness to serve.

D. Values of the Church Culture.

1. Behind the scenes activity is stressed and applauded over and over.
2. The noble place of servanthood, as a basic principle of Christian living, leaves the choice to serve between each person and God—not between the leader and the people.
3. The values of change and stretching beyond self-imposed limitations tend to reduce people's fear of failure and reproach.
4. Emphasizing for the sake of others makes serving very popular and very fulfilling.
5. Accountability leads to lots of casual questions about, “What ‘ya been up to?”
  - a. When there is the feeling of complete freedom for volunteers to stop their service assignment without any stigma or pressure to continue, they are more willing to begin—and to continue—serving.

### XIII. Opportunity for Significance.

#### A. People want to be needed.

1. They want to be more than an “anyone-will-do-how-about-you” recruit, so the statement “I really need your help,” spoken by one volunteer to another member of the church, is almost irresistible.
2. The more people feel a sense of ownership in the whole church and in a specific ministry project, the more they are willing to do for both.
3. People want to leave their signature on things. They want to express their unique style and personality in their service.
4. Making a significant contribution, and having that contribution noted and appreciated by someone they want to please, builds tremendous self-esteem in people.
5. People want stimulating involvement—an opportunity to participate in something bigger than themselves, something that they believe will make a real difference if done.
6. Helping people pause and reflect back on what they have accomplished trains them to gain hope and satisfaction in the next volunteer work process. People love “the final reward of seeing what they have done.”
7. When volunteers feel like they are key players on the team, rather than solo players or benchwarmers, they tend to put out more effort in serving.

#### B. Other Keys to Mobilizing People in Ministry.

1. Mobilization is a crucial part, but only a part, of the nurturing process.

2. People whom we have nurtured/mended are more willing to mobilize at our request than are people in whom we have invested little.
3. Be convinced that serving is more helpful to them than it is to us. The benefits of serving are highly underestimated by most pastors and lay-people.
4. Make clear what is expected of them. Be as specific as possible about responsibilities, goals, tenure and accountability. This does not necessarily entail formal job descriptions.
5. Determine what kind of person each volunteer is, and what kind of support or accountability process they will need in order to succeed.
6. Encourage volunteers and staff to have/develop an apprentice whom they can mentor.
7. Cast their role/ministry/service in light of the whole vision of the church. How will their mobilization help accomplish the institutional mission?
8. Trust them. Communicate that trust in what you do, what you say, and how you say it.
9. Mobilize people in areas of their interest, gifts or calling whenever possible, and show them how the job fits who God has designed them to be.
10. Give volunteers a sense of future and hope.