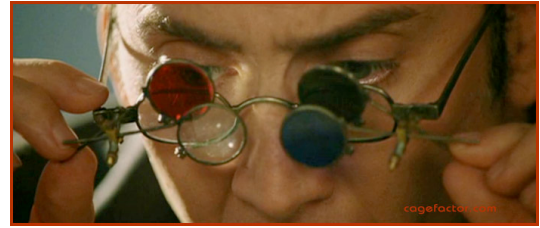


Two-by-Four

A Discipleship Strategy of Lake Forest Church

In the movie *National Treasure*, Benjamin Gates (Nicholas Cage) discovers a pair of glasses invented by Ben Franklin. They are the secret for discovering the most important clue to the National Treasure. The glasses have four colored lenses. Gates learns that both eyes have to be open and looking through all four lenses to find the next clue.



This is great imagery for describing Lake Forest's strategy for discipleship. We define a disciple of Jesus Christ as "a person who is in a life long journey of being apprenticed to Jesus". We define discipleship as "the lifelong journey of taking on the beliefs, practices and virtues of Jesus." Below is a strategy for enabling disciples at LFC to grow in their journey and a tool to enable them to intentionally move forward.

We hope to enable every person who calls Lake Forest home to keep both eyes open (more and better disciples) and look through all four lenses (Know Jesus, Grow in Jesus, Show Jesus, Go in Jesus) as they journey. Our prayer is Hebrews 12:2: *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Both Eyes Open: More and Better Disciples

There is a temptation to identify growth as a church through keeping one eye open. For many, growth is predominantly defined by "adding more people-making more disciples". For others, growth is predominantly defined by "making mature followers-making better disciples". There is a natural tendency to favor one eye over the other. Our call from Christ himself is to keep both eyes open; to make more and better disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

At times we feel like we have to close one eye to clearly see through the other. Other times there is a tendency to think that someone else should look through the other eye and we should only look through the one. Yet for all disciples of Christ, we are called to look through both eyes. The "more" and the "better" do not compete against one another but work together to grow the Kingdom.

Four Lenses:

To continue shaping the atmosphere for more and better disciples, it's important to understand that many things Jesus said and taught His disciples came at different periods in their journey. He did not give his disciples *too much too soon or too little too late*. Jesus' words to Peter in John 21:22 illustrates as well that each disciples journey was unique: *Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!* While their journey's looked different, he called each one to put on the same lenses.

● KNOW Jesus is the Good News through the Scriptures and in Community.

Tracking His call to the first disciples, Jesus' call was to follow Him and He would give them a new direction in life (Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:10)--*Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men*. Already fishermen, Christ was calling them to fish for something greater. He took what they already knew and gave them a different angle to approach it. He was changing the way they saw and approached the world. He helped them to see a greater purpose in life, the purpose for which they were created. He invited them to KNOW Him and by KNOWING Him, He gave what they already knew, new meaning.

There were primary avenues Jesus took His disciples down in order to KNOW Him:

- 1) To Know Him as the “good news”- (the “gospel” that he was the Messiah)
- 2) To Know Him through the Scriptures
- 3) To Know Him in Community

These were the three avenues that would give them a new world view—a kingdom view. As they sat under His teaching of the Scriptures and lived in Community with Him and the other disciples, they came to more fully understand that He was the Messiah. In this environment, He reshaped all the things they had learned and redeemed all of their false thinking: *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.* (Romans 12:2)

Most of Jesus’ first year(s) with His new disciples was spent in these three avenues (Matt 5-8 & Luke 5-9). It was a time for them to KNOW His love for people and to understand why He had come. It was not a time of doing nothing else, but it was purposeful in KNOWING Him as the Savior. *It was not too much too soon.*

GROW in Jesus Intellectually and Introspectively.

Over time, Jesus invited them to GROW in new ways. He did not let them shuck off the good news of Him as Messiah as an elementary stage of spiritual growth to now be left behind. In fact, “the gospel” took on new meaning as He invited them into deeper avenues of KNOWING Him. Part of their GROWING came as they made new discoveries intellectually. They watched Him perform miracles while renewing their understanding of miracles; they heard Him teach, while gaining new insight into the Scriptures; they experienced Him in culture and learned to engage it with truth—all the while learning that Christ is truth. In all of this, their attitude toward culture was being renewed. They had opportunity to ask questions, to experience His word in action, and to GROW in their intellectual discovery. It’s important for disciples of Christ to grow intellectually in the areas of love, life, leadership and theology—*to love the Lord with all our mind.*

Jesus also introduced them to new practices such as prayer (Luke 11), being still and watchful (Luke 12), fasting (Matt 9:14-17), loving the poor (Matt 25) and Sabbath (Matt 12). Each practice was to help the disciple to become more aware of the Father in Heaven and to look introspectively at the nature of their own heart, soul and mind. Part of their maturity was to allow Christ to develop what they felt, valued, honored, hated, feared and believed. It was to allow Him to heal shame, loneliness, ways they self-protected, and other emotional scars. A disciples growth is shaped more fully as they allow the Lord to shape their entire heart and soul.

The first two lenses can be summarized by the first greatest command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Matt 22:37)

SHOW Jesus as Servants and Salt.

Another part of their journey was to be invited to SHOW Jesus. They were called to show Him to one another by serving. He called them to love each other, to serve each other (Luke 13). Serving was a response to the love and grace they had been given through Jesus and was not about “getting busy”. They had been invited to join in the eternal story and partner with Jesus in Kingdom purposes (Phil 2). This is a critical part of Jesus’ prayer for His disciples in John 17. It’s the call of Paul on the Church in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. We too are to discover how we are uniquely gifted and use those gifts to serve one another and build the Church.

They were also called to SHOW Christ through the flavor of their life—to be salt. Salt was used to illustrate durability, fidelity and purity. Jesus called his disciples to be people committed to peace, faithful in relationships, and pure in motive and action. They were not to simply act like Him outwardly but were called to a deeper inner practice; lived out by daily making choices of peace with humbleness, high integrity and moral ethics (Luke 14). The way they approached the things of the world was to be different. Our journey as disciples of Jesus is to serve one another and to be the salt of the earth; SHOWING Christ to all who are around us.

○ ***GO in Jesus as Missionaries to our Culture and to the World.***

Jesus didn't give his disciples *too much too soon*, yet he also didn't give them *too little too late*. Preparing them was for one purpose: to call them to GO. He told them at the beginning that his goal was to make them fishers of men. His last call to them before going to the right side of the throne in heaven was to GO (Mark 16:15-19, Matthew 28:19). But well before that, he sends them into the world to teach them how to engage the culture (Matthew 9:35-11:1; Luke 9). It was their turn to engage their culture with love, justice, mercy and the fullness of the gospel of Jesus. He then pulled them back together to evaluate, to develop, and to continue to KNOW and GROW in Him.

This is why He had prepared them. His time with them was not to only have them KNOW Him, to GROW in Him, and/or to simply SHOW Him. The preparation was ultimately to call them to GO to all nations, teaching others to KNOW, GROW, SHOW and GO! Acts 1:8 tells us they will be His *"witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* He called them to GO first into their culture and then to the rest of the world.

As disciples of Christ, we have to keep the focus that the point of KNOWING Jesus, GROWING in Jesus, and SHOWING Jesus, is in order to GO in the name of Jesus, inviting others into the Kingdom. Being a better disciple of Jesus opens the door to making more disciples of Jesus.

The last two lenses can be summarized by the second greatest command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."(Matt 22:39)

A Lost Focus:

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus called his disciples to GO while looking through both eyes and all lenses. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells the disciples they will be His *"witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Yet as you follow the early church, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. They built the church in Jerusalem but no further. Similar to the tower of Babel in Genesis, God's call was to go into the entire world, yet they stopped and built a tower to celebrate and protect themselves. In both situations, God scattered by way of hardship. For those in Genesis, he destroyed their tower and scattered them. For the early church, the Church came under heavy persecution and they *"were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria"* (Acts 8:1). The church was not to just stay put in Jerusalem, but to go to Judea, Samaria and to all nations. They had one eye closed and lost focus.

I remember becoming a follower of Christ on Sunday morning at age 16. The following Wednesday night, I was going door to door with my pastor, asking people, "do you know if you died tonight that you would go to heaven? My pastor asked me to lead the time; telling people many things I didn't even understand. It was *too much too soon*. I was the victim of a one-eyed pastor—make more disciples.

I've also watched many believers be extremely burned out because the Church has only been focused on what it can get out of that person to keep the machine running. Plug them quickly into ministry; get them busy, we have to have them serving; yet without understanding of why and how to serve. They too have had one eye open—more disciples.

As a church, it can be easy for us to give *too much too soon* and long for new believers to quickly know all the answers, lead ministries, and even know how to share their faith and to pray. Much of this is to keep the organization

running, to keep adding more and more. But we must not move too quickly into these areas without first taking the time to develop in them a heart to learn the Scriptures, a desire to have their world views changed and an understanding that for a time, simply being in the body of Christ is good.

At the same time, I've watched the Church give *too little too late*; never calling disciples to GO into greater ministry, to begin to be fishers of people. The Church can be tempted to build a consumer mentality in disciples, always looking to the Church to give them more and more. The Church has to call them to GO. It's part of Discipleship. We need not be surprised if hardship has to come on their lives to finally get them to GO. We need not be surprised if hardship comes on the Church if we don't call them to GO. In God's mercy and love, he will open both eyes.

Also, we lose focus if we see the lenses as needing to be put on in a linear progression. Each lens is put on in an organic manner. In fact, each area calls the other area to develop and take on new shape; to be lifted up and put down in a new manner. The journey of walking with Christ is to constantly have each area be shaped in new ways and grow in new ways. Each lens takes on new focus as another lens is put on.

Many will enter the journey with Christ through an emphasis on any of the four areas. Example: For some, they will begin the journey with Christ through a passion for social justice. The church's desire should be to focus that passion with the lens of understanding Christ as the gospel, with a heart for the Scriptures and a need for community. It's taking the "GO" and adding the "KNOW". And imagine, as this person's GO stays on track, how powerful it will be as they learn to KNOW and GROW and SHOW. It's the apostle Paul's story.

We are tempted to be something other than a disciple of Christ if we just put on one lens:

To only KNOW Christ tempts us to be consumerist.

To only GROW in Christ tempts us to be legalist.

To only SHOW Christ tempts us to be moralist.

To only GO in Christ tempts us to be activist.

But to put on each lens is to live as a disciple of Christ.

Implementing:

It is the LFC leadership's responsibility to develop adult, youth and children environments around Worship, Community, Ministry, Discovery and Outreach (the Arrow). It is our desire that each area would invite the individual ministry partner to take responsibility to construct their own unique combination of participation in these church environments. It is also our responsibility to ensure that each environment creates multiple healthy and challenging avenues in which people can take baby steps or great leaps to KNOW, GROW, SHOW and GO as disciples of Jesus.

The above is simply the strategy for helping all who come into the body of Christ at LFC to move intentionally in their journey. The success will come only from God's blessing on it and from us being faithful to calling people into it and people faithfully seeking Christ within it. Our desire is that this would be a common language for all leadership in our church and a method for helping shepherds in our church talk with the flock about their journey with Jesus. It is also a way for the Elders of LFC to evaluate how we are being shaped as a church, a way for every ministry to evaluate its mission, and every ministry partner to be purposeful in their pursuit of Christ as Lord and Savior.

We pray that God might give us wisdom as to all the ways this may direct us to continue to keep both eyes open.

Rev. Mitch White

Lake Forest Church Discipleship Pastor

• **Lake Forest Church Discipleship**

❖ **KNOW Jesus is the Good News through the Scriptures and in Community.**

- **Good News:** *Jesus Christ, God's Son, became fully human when he was born to the Virgin Mary. He was fully human and fully God. He lived a perfect life in place of our imperfect lives; died, as our substitute, the death we deserved to die because of our selfishness; and physically rose from the dead. He offers us full life by the promise of his own resurrection. He then ascended into heaven and today is our representative, intercessor, and advocate with God the Father. He is redeeming all things to His Father, "making all things new."*
- **Scripture:** *The Bible is God's completely true Story about who He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. It was given by God to human writers and so reflects their backgrounds, styles, and use of language. The Bible is the final and infallible authority on all matters to which it speaks. Because it is God's Story, it is our best avenue for Knowing Christ.*
- **Community:** *We were each created for relationship and we live this out by involving ourselves in community with other believers. The bible teaches that we are to be in relationship with one another as Christians. The author of Hebrews explains why: "Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching." We were each created for relationship and we live this out by involving ourselves in community with other believers.*

❖ **GROW in Jesus Intellectually and Introspectively.**

- **Intellectually:** *We aspire to be a community of learners – people who know they haven't 'figured it out' yet and are hungry to grow as people before God. Jesus encouraged his disciples to be learners, students of the Scriptures but also students of their culture, their history, of love, life, leadership, and theology (right thinking about God).*
- **Introspectively:** *The Bible calls people to disciplines/practices such as fasting, prayer, worship, loving the poor, stewardship, celebration, and meditation. These Spiritual Practices train us to allow the Lord into our interior and opens doors for us to bring what we feel, value, honor, esteem, love, hate, fear and believe before Him to heal.*

❖ **SHOW Jesus as Servants and Salt.**

- **Servants:** *Serving is a response to the love and grace we have been given through Jesus and not about "getting busy". We have been invited to join in the eternal story and partner with God in Kingdom purposes. The Bible puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 12:27: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." God has equipped each of us with unique gifts to build and serve his church.*
- **Salt:** *Throughout the Bible, salt is used to illustrate the follower of Christ as one of durability, fidelity and purity. We are people committed to peace, faithful in relationships, and pure in motive and action. Putting on these practices of Christ does not mean to simply act like Him outwardly. It involves a deeper inner practice lived out by daily making choices of peace with high integrity and moral ethics. How we carry ourselves when no one is looking is a practice that shapes our inner being.*

❖ **GO in Jesus as Missionaries to our Culture and to the World.**

- **To our culture and to the world:** *A natural expression of realizing the depth of love God has poured out on us is to pass this good news onto those that are on our front porch. To share the hope that Christ gives with those that don't know this hope is to be caught up into the purpose of Christ coming: "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world". This is the Missio Dei. To do this in a manner that tells the good news of Jesus in word and deed, mercy and grace, and with faithfulness and justice is the call of every disciple.*