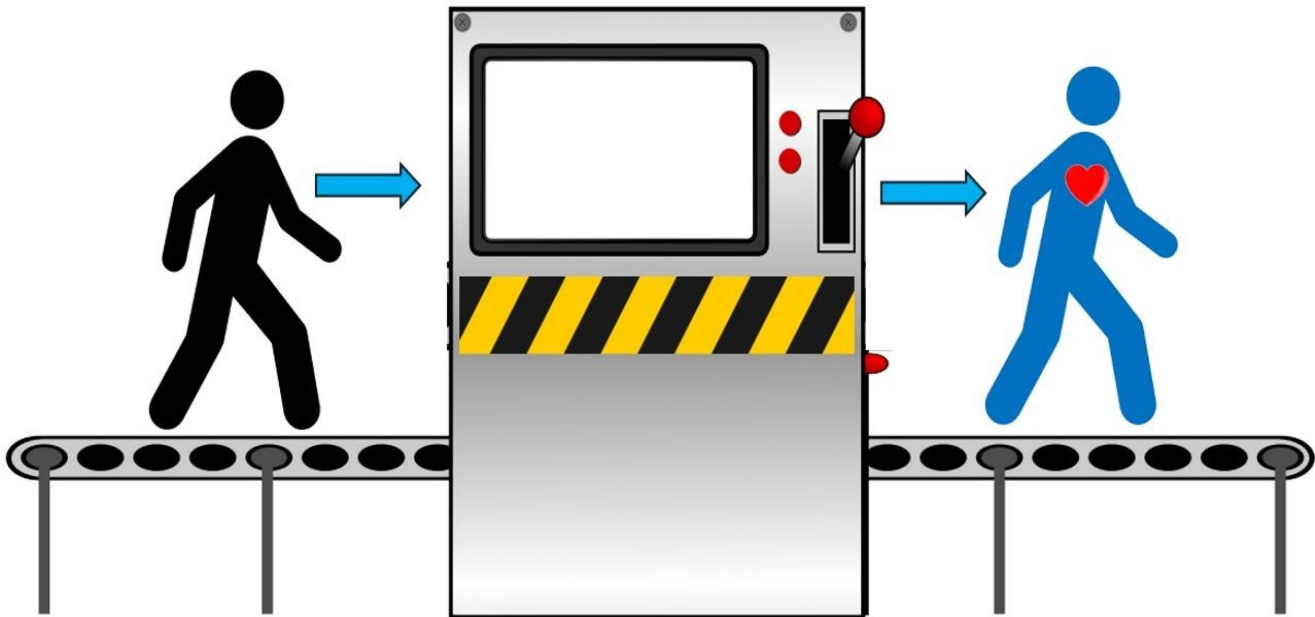


The Relational Discipleship Strategy of The Connection Church

The Connection Church is all about people because we're in God's business, and people are God's business! So, when it comes to making disciples, we believe in the importance of relationships. The goal in making disciples isn't just helping people to acquire information but to experience transformation.

"Go and make disciples!" This was the command Jesus gave His church in what we call "The Great Commission":

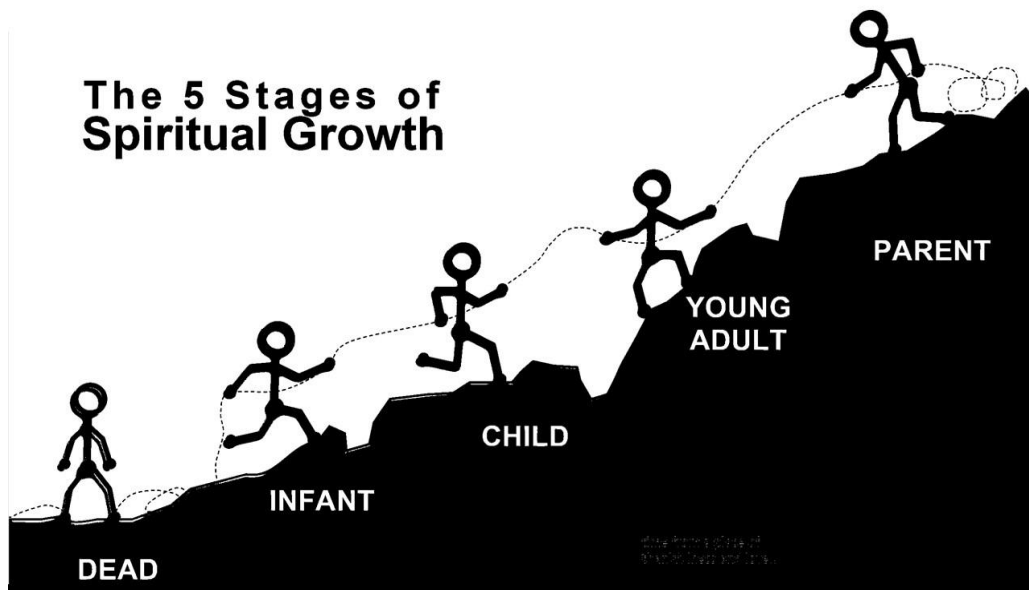
"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" - Matthew 28:18-20



Notice that based on our Lord's command, disciple-making begins with bringing unbelievers to faith in Christ and leading them to become fully devoted followers of Christ. Which is why we say that our Connection Groups are to be "Disciple-Making Machines."

Obviously, Jesus's approach to making disciples was very intentional and all about relationships. It must also be the approach of every Connection Group leader.

Jim Putman, in his book, *Real Life Discipleship*, shares how we can use our relationships with people to discern where they are in their relationship with God. He encourages leaders to listen for "the phrase from the stage" to discern where a person might be at spiritually, so they might then be encouraged to take their "next step" in their walk with Christ. The goal is to lead unbelievers to Christ and then develop them into fully devoted followers of the Savior, becoming disciples who can make disciples of others. There are five stages of spiritual growth that we need to lead people through in helping them to become a disciple who makes disciples.



Stage One: Spiritually Dead. The next step this person needs to take is, obviously, that of trusting Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Through relationship with such a person, they will be heard to say things that will alert you to their unbelieving status, so that you might know how to best present them with the Gospel and encourage them to place their faith in Christ.

Stage Two: Spiritual Infant. This person is spiritually alive through faith in Christ and has now been born again. But they are ignorant of how to go about living the new life they have in Christ. They need to understand the unique way Christ has commanded us to profess our faith in Him, which is baptism. They need to learn about prayer, about how to meet with God daily through a personal quiet time, about how to study the Bible, etc.

Stage Three: Spiritual Child. This person could be a new believer, but they could also be an older believer who has never matured in their faith. As one listens to the “phrase from the stage” they will be able to pick up on the fact that this believer’s attitude is basically selfish. Like a little child, whose first words are “mine” or “no” when they speak, their focus is on themselves, not others. Sadly, because too many churches have no strategy for doing discipleship, too many congregations are filled with these spiritual brats. This person needs to learn about the value of service and sharing in the work of the Lord.

Stage Four: Spiritual Young Adult. This believer, like a physical young adult, is eager to prove themselves. They want a chance to show they can be trusted. They are ready to serve. They are characterized by an attitude of being “God focused” or “others focused.” This is a believer who is a good candidate to be a co-leader in a Connection Group. Because before one can lead others, they need to be able to lead themselves. This believer has matured in the faith and is walking with Jesus daily.

Stage Five: Spiritual Parent. We do not identify this believer as a “spiritual adult,” because not all adults reproduce themselves. No, this is a disciple who is focused on making disciples, so they are a “spiritual parent.” They are intentional in their relationships so they might be used of God to discern where people are at spiritual and be used of God to take their next step in the process of becoming a fully devoted follower of Christ, a disciple who makes disciples. This is the ideal person to serve as a Connection Group Leader.