

Mike Palombo Philosophy of Ministry

Ministry Vision

To glorify God by multiplying disciples who abide in God's love and bear the fruit of love for the flourishing of all people and all places.

Ministry Mission:

We reconcile the disconnected with Gospel conversation and demonstration, root them in a Gospel foundation, renew them by Gospel transformation, and release them for Gospel multiplication.

Core Values for Ministry:

- **Abiding in Love:** Because God's love is better than life, we abide in God's love through corporate and personal worship in the Word of God and prayer.
- **Gospel-Empowered Discipleship:** As fellow disciples, we help one another grow in grace by teaching, admonishing, and encouraging each other in obedience that flows from faith in the gospel.
- **Transparent Trust:** As those fully known and fully loved in Christ, we seek to know and be known by others. In our leadership and relationships, we develop trustworthy bonds by cultivating consistency in our actions and words, integrity in our motives, and reliability in our commitments.
- **Gracious Hospitality:** As outsiders welcomed into God's family, we seek to welcome everyone graciously regardless of ethnic, socio-economic, generational, moral, or political differences.
- **Merciful Mission:** As sinners saved by grace and broken people pitied by mercy, we seek to demonstrate and communicate the mercy of Christ to those around us.
- **Servant Leadership:** As servants of our Savior who came to serve by sacrificing for the good of others, we seek to lead by serving those under our care.

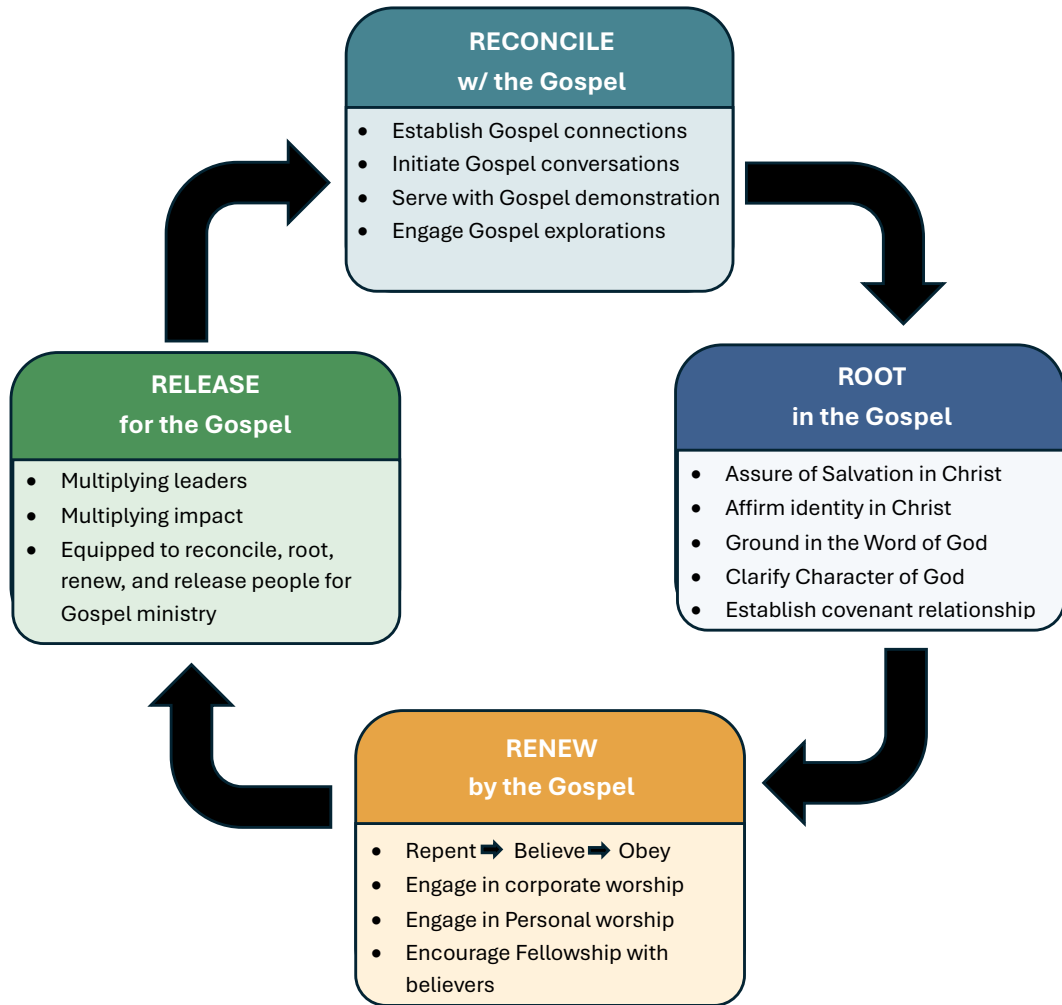
Glorifying God:

The highest goal of all of discipleship is to bring glory and praise to God. The church glorifies God through its gathered worship and by making and training disciples. All of life worship happens when equipped followers of Christ grow to be like him and reflect His character in all spheres of life. As disciples become equipped to make other disciples God receives more glory, worship, and devotion through a multiplying increase of followers of Christ.

Multiplying Disciples:

Jesus called his followers to make disciples of all nations as they go across the world baptizing people into the covenant community and teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:18-20). Disciple makers develop mature disciples who also can teach others all that they learned. In 2 Tim. 2:1-2 Paul says, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Timothy saw a model of Paul's teaching and was taught directly by Paul. Paul charged Timothy to entrust that teaching to faithful men who would teach others. Through this process, disciple makers hope to multiply their impact to successive generations of disciple makers that reach the nations.

The disciple maker primarily leads by equipping those he disciples to grow in maturity and serve on mission. Paul says that a church leader’s calling is to “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” (Eph. 4:12). We equip flourishing disciples by reconciling the disconnected with Gospel demonstration and conversation, rooting them in a Gospel foundation, renewing them by Gospel transformation, and releasing them as servant leaders for Gospel multiplication. See chart below for key actions under each category:



Multiplying Disciples: Multiplying Leaders

Releasing servant leaders for Gospel multiplication requires directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. First, we must give direction by clear teaching on what Scripture calls us to be and do. Then we must coach them by giving them practical tools and a lived example so they know how to do it. Next, we lend them support and accountability as they attempt to lead out of what they learned. Finally, we delegate and send them out as competent kingdom leaders who equip other leaders by directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Throughout we pray for them that God would ultimately “equip them with everything good that they may do His will by working in them that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb. 13:1).¹



¹ Randy Pope, *Insourcing: Bringing Discipleship Back to the Local Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 2013), 36-41.

This work of disciple development especially applies to the officers who lead the congregation through modeling and servant leadership. Pastors equip elders to shepherd the discipleship movement by feeding the Word of God, leading, caring, and protecting the flock through regular admonition and, when necessary, church discipline. Pastors equip deacons to facilitate the discipleship movement as servants by coordinating works of service inside and outside the church, managing the budget, meeting tangible needs, and safeguarding the unity of the church.

Officer training seeks to develop elders and deacons in six key areas: communion with Christ, conviction in the Bible, character, community, calling, and competency to lead. I typically do this in a two hour weekly meeting. For the first hour we develop Biblical conviction through the Westminster Confession of Faith. The additional hour we focus on communion with Christ, character, community, calling and competency to lead throughout the semester.

As a leader my responsibility is to convene, collaborate, and coordinate kingdom work. The leader discerns the Lord's will to redeem the brokenness of people and places through collective seeing, collaborative planning, and coordinated serving. Leaders should know the makeup of their fellow leaders and labor together to mobilize each person according to their unique designs, personalities, and gifts. The leader should have a level of preparedness with both insight into the church's strengths and weaknesses and the community's brokenness and opportunities. The church equips and releases men and women to serve according to their God-given gifts for building up of the church and reaching the community.

The leader does not know everything he needs in order to lead. Rather, he must be sensitive to his team, able to listen, and adapt according to the collective wisdom of the group. There is a level of improvisation needed for good leaders to lead in a team as they chart together new paths based on their collective wisdom.

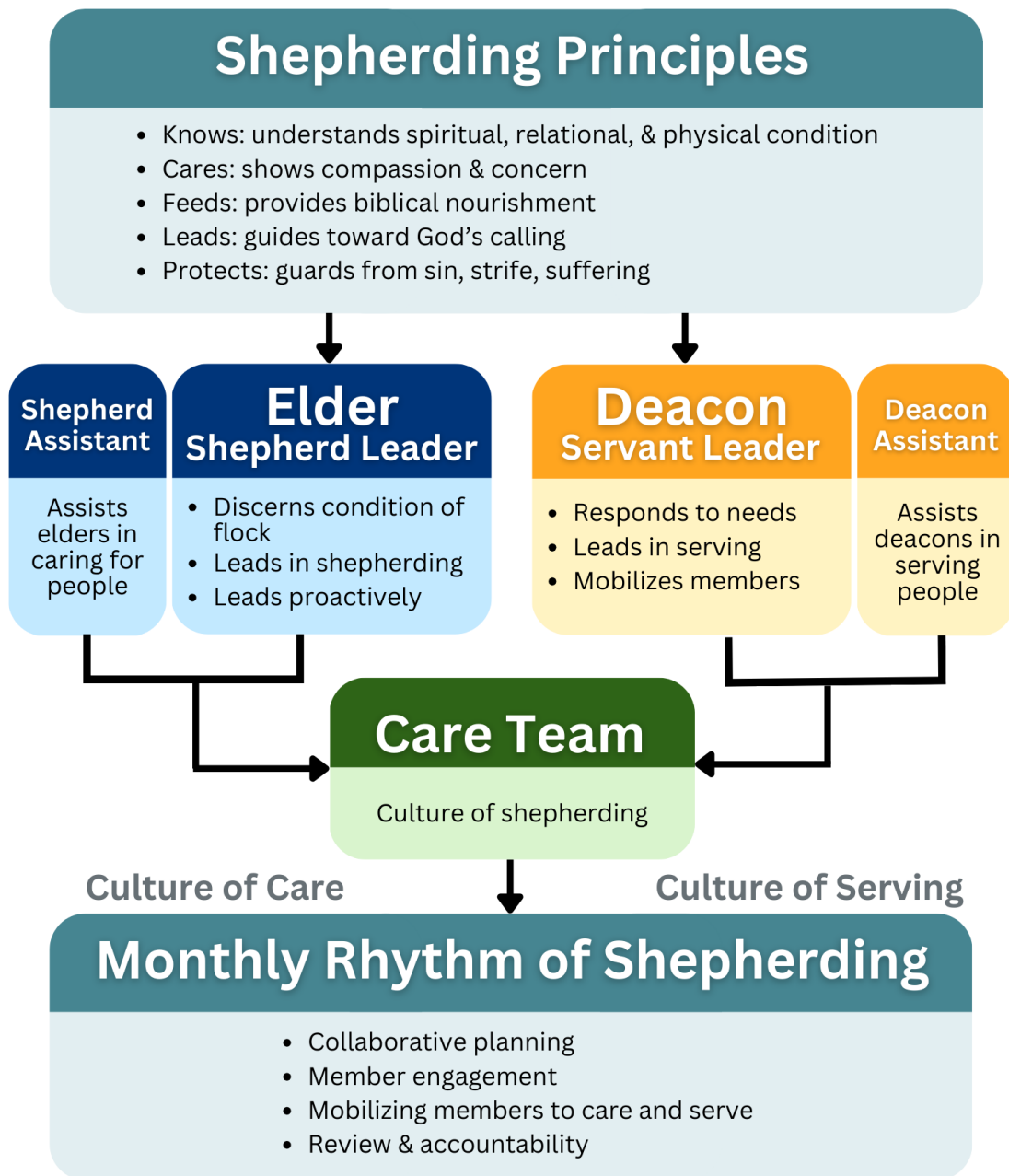
I would best describe my leadership style as insightful, visionary, and collaborative. As mentioned above, I believe the leader needs to have specific insight regarding the problems and opportunities at hand. He needs to be able to help his team navigate the way through these challenges in collaborative dialogue. But at the end of the day, the leader takes ultimate responsibility for the failures of the organization and regularly gives credit to the gifts and grit of the team that worked together to accomplish the objectives. I believe it is critical that a leader build trust, facilitate difficult dialogue with the team, engage rigorous and respectful debate, arrive at consensus and committed decisions, and ensure accountability toward fruitful results.

Multiplying Disciples: Shepherding

Elders and deacons collaborate together in order to shepherd the flock of God and create a culture of caring and serving. The Lord has made Elders overseers of the church which he purchased by the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28). They oversee the church by caring for the individual and community needs of God's people. With discernment they admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted and help the weak (1 Thess. 5:14). As Shepherd Overseers, they exercise oversight through organizing the care of God's people.

Elders seek to organize proactive care of the congregation collaboratively along with deacons and other members. I prefer to divide the church across multiple elders so that each member has a specific elder, deacon, and community that cares for them. To ensure coverage of as many people as possible, the elders and deacons may enlist teams of members to assist in shepherding and serving. Men and women work together on these teams, utilizing their unique gifts to assist the elders and deacons in the work of ministry.

Shepherding Care Team Model



Abide in God's love

“⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10). In God's great love for us, He sent His Son to atone for our sins and provide a loving connection with Him. Since Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, we stay vitally connected to Him and abide in His love through personal worship in Word of God and prayer. Apart from this loving connection, we can do nothing. But in this loving connection, we bear much fruit (John 15:5).

In Christ's finished work, we have forgiveness in our struggle, direction for our life, and love that sustains us. Because Jesus lived, died, and rose in our place, the penalty of our unrighteous deeds has been paid, and we have received the perfect righteous record of Jesus (Rom. 3:20-26). There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because the sin which condemns has been forgiven (Rom. 8:1). We have become more than conquerors through Christ who loved us, and we are assured that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:37-39). Having been declared righteous by the sacrifice of Christ, we are becoming more righteous in our daily life and practice (Heb. 10:14).

Jesus not only justifies us and offers us a new record, but He also reconciles us and gives us a new relationship with the Father. All who have received the work of Jesus have received the right of adoption into the family of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-3). Being adopted as children of God, we no longer fear that God may cast us off. We live under the sure acceptance and awareness that our Father loves and provides for us (Rom. 8:15-16, 28-32). Obedience flows out of this secure identity of a child to the Father. We do not obey to earn love, but in response to love. We reflect the holy love of God that we have received (1 Peter 1:13-15).

Jesus reminds us that abiding in the fullness of His love results in the fullness of our joy: “⁹As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love... that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:9-11). In our discipleship, we remind one another that God's commands are not a burden, but the pathway to abundant joy.

Love-focused discipleship has a covenantal shape. God has committed Himself in covenantal relationship to His people through the substitutionary work of Jesus. He is our God, and we are His people. He promises to bless His people and to discipline those he loves that they might be more conformed to His likeness (Heb. 12:7-11). God provides the blessings of eternal salvation, regular provision, protection, and intimacy in the presence of the Spirit. As recipients of the covenant, we respond in faith and obedience as we cultivate a relationship with the Father.

Abide in God's Love: Building abiding disciples

Abiding in God's love informs how we build into the lives of other disciples. In 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, Paul writes, “¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” We build up disciples according to the grace of God, from a foundation rooted in Jesus. Because the Gospel is the foundation of all our growth, we never move past our need for it. We continue to disciple people through the implications of the Gospel: our justification, atonement, adoption, and our identity as children fully embraced by God.

We must resist building on any other foundation apart from Christ. We don't build on the foundation of moral performance and legalism because we often break the law. Our moral shame makes us feel more condemned than loved. We don't build on the foundation of shifting emotions because our desires fluctuate and we rarely desire what is best for us. We may forsake Christ for whatever feels more convenient or desirable in the moment. We don't build on the foundation of cultural norms because the ways of the world may distract and direct us away from the ways of God. God calls us to serve as a light to the world and not hide in the darkness.

Instead, on Christ the solid rock we stand. All other ground is sinking sand. In all of our discipleship, we build upon the rock of our salvation and the steadfast love of God which endures forever.

Abiding in God's Love: Worship

We gather on the Lord's day each Sunday to be rooted and renewed in Christ-centered worship. The Word of God guides our order and practice of Sunday morning worship. Colossians 3:16-17 says "16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Every week we practice the Gospel story through intentional step-by-step, love-shaping practices called liturgy. The order and content of these practices move us from adoring God's greatness, to confessing our sinfulness, to restoring joy in our forgiveness, to redirecting our life by God's Word, to pleading for God's help, and to devoting our lives to God's mission, all by God's grace (Is. 6:1-8)! As we participate in these practices, God roots us and grounds us in love so that we might have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. In this way Christ-centered worship fills us with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-19).

These practices of worship form a dialogue between God and His people. He initiates an invitation to worship, we respond in praise. He forgives us in the Gospel, we respond in confession. He assures us of pardon, we respond in thanksgiving. He teaches us His Word, we respond in affirmation of faith, praise, and prayer. He provides resources, we respond in offering our lives to Him. He sends us out with His benediction, we respond by living on mission.

Abiding in God's Love: Preaching

The preached word sets the trajectory and lays the foundation for the overall discipleship of the whole church. The preached sermon testifies to the gospel of grace through the proclamation of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:18-21). I teach expositionally through books of the Bible, alternating through Old Testament and New Testament texts. The preacher walks the text verse by verse and paragraph by paragraph, unfolding the unsearchable riches of Christ throughout the Bible.

In Colossians 1:28, Paul sums up the task of preaching: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." Since the Bible is the very Word of God, the preached sermon should teach, rebuke, correct, and train the congregation in righteousness. Most importantly, the sermon makes us wise for salvation in Jesus Christ, showing how Christ fulfills the principles, patterns, and promises of God, and bears all the guilt, shame, and punishment our sin deserves (2 Timothy 3:14-17). Trusting in Jesus, disciples grow in obedience that flows from faith and become more complete in knowledge, full of goodness, and competent to instruct one another (Romans 1:5 & 15:14).

I prepare my sermons by explaining the key principle, problem, gospel focus, and gracious response in the text. I clarify the main point of the text in a clear principle statement that provides the focal point. I expose the human problem in living out this principle in actions, affections, and vices. I mine the text to show how Jesus fulfills the principles, patterns, and promises of God while bearing the punishment of sin. Finally, I conclude the sermon with direct, Spirit-empowered applications which are relevant across different demographics and life situations. Illustrations visualize the text through stories, word pictures, and cultural connections relevant to explaining the points. In the sermon, I offer both Christians and non-Christians the opportunity to repent and believe in the Gospel for salvation and further assurance in Christ.

Bear the fruit of love

When disciples abide in the love of God, they overflow with a love for people and create communities that bear the fruit of love. In Colossians 3:12-14 Paul clarifies how a Christians' fundamental identity has changed so that they have put on a completely new self that is being renewed after the image of its Creator. These love filled people who live in loving community learn to share love with one another. This community consists of people from different national/ethnic/religious heritage who are unified because Christ is all and in all. Being united to the loving savior, they are bound together in His love as the most significant commonality.

Paul then clarifies how grace centered communities relate to one another: “¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony,” (Col. 3:12-14).

The specific community of the family, the community of the church, and the broader community of society provide the social contexts where discipleship happens. God has entrusted the biological family as the primary influence for discipleship as one generation commends God's works, His Word, and His great name to the next generation (Psalm 145:4-7, Psalm 78:1-8, and Deuteronomy 6:4-9). The church as a community of covenant families is called to spur one another on to love and good deeds as they regularly meet around the Word of God, prayer, and the sacraments (Hebrews 10:24-25). This happens through gathered worship, but also through other discipleship gatherings centered on the Word of God and prayer. These biological families and the spiritual family of the church then multiply impact in the society as Christian families and members of the church live out the Gospel and share it where they live, work, learn, and play.

A disciple maker must have a clear picture of what it means to grow in maturity. Maturity in Christ assumes that all growth flows out of a loving union with Jesus where the disciple embraces His love and is willing to be taught by Him, “²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness,” (Eph. 4:22-23). Paul encourages Christians to grow in maturity by putting off those practices which characterized the old, corrupted life of sin inherited from Adam's original sin (the old self). Before becoming like Christ, the disciple seeks an ongoing renewal of the mind that he might discern truth and beauty from a whole heart transformed by Christ. Then the disciple puts on those practices which characterize the new life of righteousness and holiness of God and embodies the character of Christ (the new self).

Growing in maturity means growing more in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. So then, growth means a comprehensive growth in the image of God. “²⁶ Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ ²⁷ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

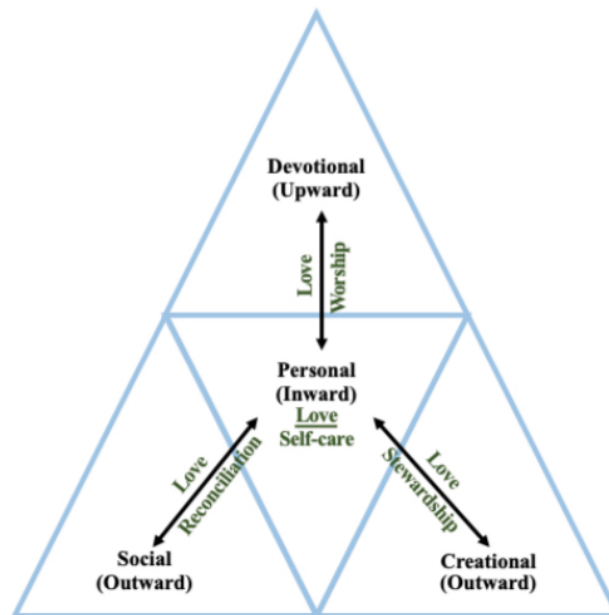
Maturity means growing progressively in the four key relationships as image-bearers: In love toward God, ourselves, our community, and creation. We need to help people develop **devotionally** (upward: in worship to God), **personally** (inward: in self-care and character development), **socially** (outward: in reconciliation to people), and **creationally** (outward: in stewardship of the physical world). See below:

Discipleship Growth Spheres

Study of God, Habits of Grace, Church: God's character, Spirit reliance, Gospel centrality, Covenant Theology, Doctrines of Grace, Five Solas, Union with Christ/Identity in Christ, Bible study, Prayer, Sacraments, Worship, Idol replacement

Mission, Family, and Relationships: Evangelism, Mercy/Justice, Discipleship, Family, Marriage, Sexuality, Child Raising/Discipling, Fellowship, Communication, Conflict management

Vocation, Environment Care, Culture, Politics, Economics: Spiritual leadership, Job skills, Workplace integration, Spiritual gifts, Talents, Abilities, Creativity, Creation care, Finances, Stewardship, Cultural Intelligence, Social/Systemic Justice

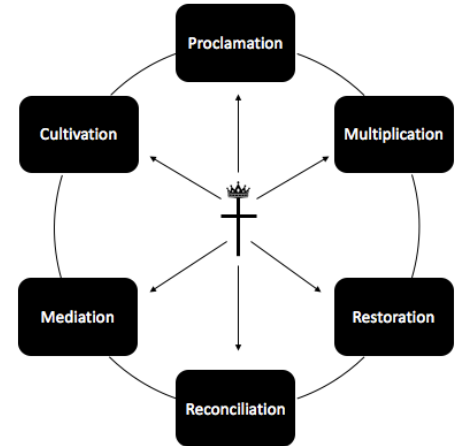


Character, Physical, Emotional, Intellectual: Fruit of the Spirit, Beatitudes, Fitness, Dieting, Physical Health, Emotional Health, Self-awareness, Intellectual Worldview

Flourishing Mission:

Disciple makers equip disciples to live on mission. Jesus clarified aspects of His mission by quoting from Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:18-19. “¹⁸The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Isaiah 61 clarifies other aspects of this mission to the exiles to include the physical labor of rebuilding (61:4) and ministerial care of priest (61:6). You could sum up Jesus' and our mission on earth as one of proclamation, multiplication, restoration, reconciliation, mediation, and cultivation. The disciple maker equips disciples in this mission by teaching about the mission in the scriptures, equipping them in basic skills and tools, living missionally with the disciples, and debriefing about the missional engagement.

1. **Proclamation:** To preach the Gospel of the kingdom and forgiveness of sin (Luke 24:46-47).
2. **Multiplication:** To equip disciples to grow in maturity and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).
3. **Restoration:** To seek the healing and restoration of people suffering physically and spiritually (Matt. 4:23-25).
4. **Reconciliation:** To seek unity and peace among different people groups divided by culture or conflict (Eph. 2:11-22).
5. **Mediation:** To pursue justice and mercy among the marginalized, voiceless, hurting, and poor (Luke 4:17-22).
6. **Cultivation:** To do good work for the glory of God and the good of creation (Gen. 1:26-28).



What effect does discipleship have on the world? It results in the flourishing of all people and all places. As individual people more thoroughly reflect the image of God, those people begin to shape their family to better reflect God's image and therefore to flourish as a family. When families embody the image of God in the community where they live, it brings about the flourishing of human communities because they live, work and play in ways that bring blessing to the community. When communities are impacted by humans bearing God's image, all of creation including nations of people, other nonhuman creatures, and the entire environment experiences flourishing. They benefit from the faithful stewardship and extended love of the community. Disciple makers disciple with this end goal in mind: Glorifying God through the comprehensive flourishing of all creation!