

MAKING MORE DISCIPLES

“ And the Lord added
to their number daily those
who were being saved. ”



HOLYHABITS

MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

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MAKING MORE DISCIPLES

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CONTENTS

Introduction	6
UNDERSTANDING THE HABIT	9
Worship resources	10
Group material and activities	23
FORMING THE HABIT	33
Stories to show the habit forming	34
Practices to help form the habit	36
Questions to consider as a church	46
Connecting the habits	47
GOING FURTHER WITH THE HABIT	49
Developing further practices of making more disciples	50
Arts and media	55

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Zimbabwean Fellowship

Birmingham Method



Remember the context

This Holy Habit is set in the context of ten Holy Habits, and the ongoing life of your church and community.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. **And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.**

ACTS 2:42-47

A prayer for the faithful practice of Holy Habits

This prayer starts with a passage from Romans 5:4-5.

Endurance produces character, and character produces hope,
and hope does not disappoint us...

Gracious and ever-loving God, we offer our lives to you.
Help us always to be open to your Spirit in our thoughts
and feelings and actions.

Support us as we seek to learn more about those habits of the Christian life
which, as we practise them, will form in us the character of Jesus
by establishing us in the way of faith, hope and love.

Amen

INTRODUCTION

The Acts 2 community was living out a divine commission given by Jesus to his first disciples.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

MATTHEW 28:19–20

As followers of Jesus today, we share that commission. But how do we do it? You will find ideas in the following material to help you think about and practise this habit. As you prepare to explore and adventure with **Making More Disciples**, here are two thoughts to reflect upon.

The first comes from Roger Walton in his book, *Disciples Together* (SCM Press, 2014). He concludes that for the Christian disciple, **Worship**, mission (which includes both **Serving** and **Making More Disciples**) and intentional community (or *koinonia* – **Fellowship**) are the three primary formative energies. As you journey with Holy Habits, you may find it useful to notice how each of these helps to make new disciples and deepen the discipleship of those already following Jesus.

The second thought comes from many biblical commentators, who note that the kind of Christian community Luke presents in Acts 2 is in itself highly conducive to **Making More Disciples**. As David Watson puts it, ‘it is not surprising with such a community of disciples bound together in love that God added to their number, day by day those who were being saved’ (*Discipleship*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1981, p. 37).



Resources particularly suitable for children and families



Resources particularly suitable for young people

CH4 Church Hymnary 4 (also known as Hymns of Glory Songs of Praise)
RS Rejoice and Sing
SoF Songs of Fellowship 6
StF Singing the Faith

Reflections

Jesus said, 'Go and make disciples' to the first disciples, but the command is for us too. It's not our job to bring people to faith, but we are called to share our faith at school, in our places of work and leisure, and in the communities in which we live.

The word 'disciple' means 'one who learns as they follow'. The first disciples learned to be disciples by living alongside Jesus and watching what he did and listening to what he said. They learned by his preaching and 'doing', but most of all they learned by his 'being'.

We're all called to **Make More Disciples**, and we can do that by *being* disciples, by trying to be more like Jesus, and by living and breathing our faith. We may not all be great preachers, but we don't have to be. People will know when we're speaking with honesty and integrity about our faith. We just need to have the courage to try and not be afraid to make mistakes.

Any event or activity run by the church has the potential to be evangelistic or missional (as does every encounter and every moment of our individual lives) as we share our faith in words or actions, allowing the Holy Spirit to be our Helper and our Guide.

As you explore this and all the Holy Habits, our prayer is that 'day by day the Lord [will] add to [your] number those who are being saved'.

Introduction to the theme

Invite willing children and adults to play ‘Follow my leader’ around the church. Or, if there’s not much space, invite everyone to shut their eyes and think of a good friend. After the game – or while eyes are still shut – ask the following questions:

- What makes for a good leader?
- What makes for a good follower?
- What makes for a good friend?
- How do you know you can trust them?
- When you’ve found a good friend/leader/follower, do you keep them to yourself or do you tell someone about them?
- Why do you think people followed Jesus?

Jesus told his disciples, his special friends, that people would find out about him by the way his friends behaved and by the way they loved one another.

We’re exploring the Habit of **Making More Disciples**. Jesus said, ‘Go and make disciples’, and that can feel like quite a scary thing to do. But if, as we follow Jesus, we can learn to be like Jesus, then people will see that Jesus is someone who makes a good friend, that Jesus is someone worth following. Then more people will become his friends, and there’ll be more disciples.

Disciple-making God,
Help us to be willing to be made into better disciples so that people will see you in us and so that more people will come to know you and your love for all people.
Amen

Further suggestions for worship

Why not get a copy of Bob Hartman’s *Telling the Gospel: 70 stories about Jesus to read out loud* and use ‘A sort of great commission song’ on pages 238–39?

Or you could use this sketch:

Person A is on stage with paper, scissors, and other art supplies and is drawing, cutting, etc. Person B walks on stage.

B What are you doing?

A Oh, I'm making some disciples.

B What do you mean you're making some disciples?

A Well, I heard that Jesus wants me to go out and make more disciples, so that's what I'm doing. See, here's a picture I drew of Andrew and James and John. I started one with Peter and Philip, but it's not done yet. I'm thinking that there needs to be more colour. What do you think?

B I think your drawings are really great, but I'm not sure that's exactly what Jesus meant when he said we should go out and make disciples.

A Oh! Maybe I shouldn't draw them! Maybe I should make them... out of clay!

B Uh, well, that could also be really nice, but when Jesus said we should make more disciples, I don't think he meant that you should make them using art supplies.

A (*Looking shocked*) But what else could it mean?

B I think he meant that we should show people God's love and tell them about Jesus so that more people might follow him, too.

A Oh, I don't know about that. I mean, loving people is all well and good, even though it's not always easy. But telling people about Jesus... that's scary. What if they laugh? What if they make fun of me or think I'm crazy?

B You're right; it can seem scary, and it's okay to be a little scared. God works through scared people all the time. You know, there's a part of the Bible that we call the Gospels, and 'gospel' means 'good news'. And the story of Jesus is good news! All you have to do is show people and tell people about how that good news has changed your life. If people can see and hear that, they may want to follow Jesus too!

A But what if they don't want to follow Jesus just because I told them about him?

B That part's between that person and God. Our job is just to show people and tell people the good news.

A Well, I guess that's not too complicated or scary.

B It might even be easier than that art project you started!

GROUP MATERIAL AND ACTIVITIES

Some of these small group materials are traditional Bible studies, some are more diverse session plans and others are short activities, reflections and discussions. Please choose materials appropriate to whatever group you are working with.

Commissioning and call

Matthew 28:16–20

Welcome everyone and invite them to introduce themselves by saying their names and finishing this phrase: ‘The most exciting journey I ever went on was...’

Thank God for:

- the call of Jesus to follow him
- the adventures of life and faith
- being entrusted with the commission to make more disciples.

Pray that group members will be open to each other, God’s word and the Holy Spirit.

Explain that this is the first of two linked studies – both are important for a balanced understanding. The best-known commission of Jesus to make more disciples is recorded in Matthew 28. However, Mark 16:14–16, Luke 24:45–49, John 20:20–23 and Acts 1:6–8 all record similar challenges.

Read Matthew 28:16–20.

- Read the passage from one translation while others follow in their translations.
- Read the same passage from another, quite different, translation.
- Invite people to say what they noticed/what stood out for them as the passage was read.

Present a very short explanation of the passage (use a good commentary or two for help). Points to highlight could include:

- The context – after the resurrection, mountain, etc.
- The commissioning came after they had worshipped, is directed to the whole group, and not just individuals.
- The authority with which they (and we) are commissioned.
- The core task to which they were commissioned: the making of disciples. In Matthew's Gospel, the making of disciples was the prime objective given to the followers of Jesus. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says to Peter, 'I will build my church.' It is Jesus' job to build the church and ours to make disciples. How often do we assume it is the other way round?
- The imperative of the Greek verb which we translate as 'to make disciples' stresses the urgency and the importance of the task.
- The little word 'Go' is important. Note the disciples were sent to be where people were.
- The call to go to all nations – literally all ethnicities or all people groups.
- The place of teaching and baptism.
- The assurance from Jesus that he will be with us.

Invite conversation around the thoughts you have presented.

Ask people to consider:

- To whom do you sense a call to go?
- Do you feel a calling to work with any particular people groups in your community?
- Are there any particular challenges you might face in responding to this call?
- How might you offer the invitation to others to explore the call of Jesus to follow him (noting the root meaning of the word disciple is one who learns as they follow)?

Finish with your own prayer or one from the prayer section. Sharing the grace together involves all.

ARTS AND MEDIA

There are many films and books containing scenes about **Making More Disciples** which could be used as an illustration in worship. However, it is suggested that the following films and books are watched or read in their entirety and followed by a discussion to go deeper into the topic of **Making More Disciples**.

Films



Evan Almighty (PG, 2007, 1h36min)

A funny but thought-provoking film about one man's attempt first to run from and then obey God despite mockery from non-believers. Evan's determination and influence on others could be a good discussion starter about what it means to make disciples through faithful discipleship.

- What qualities of discipleship does Evan exhibit? Which of these qualities do you see in your own discipleship, and which might you need to work on?
- What struggles does Evan have with discipleship? Have you shared in similar struggles?

Expressions: Making a difference (2011, 185min in 28 individual stories)

This resource includes 28 stories of new forms of church **Making More Disciples**, to inspire and challenge.

- What new form of church might be needed in your area to reach people that existing churches struggle to reach?



Finding Nemo (U, 2003, 1h40min)

A father's quest to find his son provides opportunity to talk about love and friendship and what it means to make friends with Jesus.

- Who might be the Nemos in your local community? What does Nemo's father's journey say about how you might find them?

Jesus the Hero (see below, 15min)

First in a series of seven DVDs (www.sharejesusinternational.com/product/the-jesus-series-boxset).

A narration of Jesus' life by Andy Frost, director of Share Jesus International.

There is no age classification, but the graphic scenes of crucifixion may limit appropriateness. Suitable for


churches and small groups as an aid to discussion on the qualities of a hero.

- Would you describe Jesus as a hero? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

Man Dancin' (also called *Kerrigan's Passion*) (15, 2003, 1h53m)

An ex-convict is forced to join a passion play as part of his parole. He finds religion, and the passion play becomes all too real as he comes into conflict with his past life of organised crime – amidst a cast of unlikely disciples whose lives are changed by their encounter with the gospel. Contains violence and difficult themes.

- Being a disciple is about following someone who stands for something – for example peace, justice or love. Kerrigan attracts a crowd – what would it take to do that in your neighbourhood?
- How attractive is it to stand up for what is right?
- What might a passion play look like in your context, if it were to involve people unfamiliar with the church?

 **Toy Story 3** (U, 2010, 1h43min)

This third story in the trilogy follows the group of toys and the joy and disappointment of their friendships.

- What does the film say to you about what it means to be a friend

of Jesus, and the depth of that friendship?

- What does the film say to you about repentance and forgiveness, and their place in **Making More Disciples**?

Books: fiction

Are there people in your church or local community who would like to discuss some of these books at a book club? Guidance on how to form these is widely available online, and you could also ask denominational training officers for help.

 **The Enormous Turnip**

A traditional tale about sharing, available in various versions (for instance the beautifully illustrated Russian take on the story, *The Gigantic Turnip*, Aleksei Tolstoy, Niamh Sharkey, Barefoot Books, 2006).

- Discuss how and why the turnip was finally removed from the ground. Then explore whether there are things that happen at church that people would be happy inviting their friends to. If not, can something be planned?

The Keys of the Kingdom

A.J. Cronin (Bello, 2013, first published by Victor Gollancz, 1941)

The story of Father Francis Chisholm, an unconventional Scottish Catholic

priest who struggles to establish a mission in China.

- How do Father Chisholm's methods question or challenge the way you think about **Making More Disciples**?

The Man Who Planted Trees
Jean Giono and Michael McCurdy
(Peter Owen, 2008, 14th edition, originally published 1953)

An allegorical tale of one shepherd's long and successful single-handed effort to plant seeds to reforest a desolate valley over many years. He never gives up. When challenged, he replies that in time they will grow into mature trees. Many years later, a forest has grown and people come to see the sight. This book was adapted into an animated film by Frédéric Back in 1987, which can be watched online.


- How might we intentionally sow seeds of the gospel? What should we do while waiting for the seeds to grow?

Mr Rosenblum's List: or Friendly Guidance for the Aspiring Englishman
Natasha Solomons (Sceptre, 2010)

His eccentric ways and ambitions drive Mr Rosenbaum to attempt ever more extraordinary challenges. Amusing with an underlying serious theme – how to be accepted in a foreign land. The book could stimulate


conversation about our aims in life and the values we choose to guide us.

- How do you welcome those for whom this country may be a foreign land?

 **The Secret Garden**
Frances Hodgson Burnett (originally published by Heinemann, 1911)

A spoiled girl who learns to love life, people and nature and makes a difference in their lives. A story which shows the ripple effect that change can make.

- How do the characters in the book grow and change through being with each other?
- How have we grown and changed through knowing Jesus?
- Is there someone we could tell our story to?

 **You are Special/You are Mine**
(Wemmicks series) **Max Lucado**
(Candle Books, 2004/2005)

Both these stories are about being part of the community and the fact that you don't need to do particular things or have particular things in order to be loved by God – an important part of becoming a disciple.

- What does this story tell us about God's love?
- How could we share this message (perhaps by retelling the story) with someone else?

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HOLY HABITS is an initiative to nurture Christian discipleship. It explores Luke’s model of church found in Acts 2:42–47, identifies ten habits and encourages the development of a way of life formed by them. These resources, which include an introductory guide, have been developed to help churches explore the habits in a range of contexts and live them out in whole-life, missional discipleship.

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