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HOW CAN A DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY IMPACT A CHURCH?

Before we discuss how a discipleship ministry can impact a church, we need to define what discipleship is. Since the Word of God speaks to all of life's circumstances (2 Peter 1:3), discipleship (or Biblical counseling) is ministering the Word of God to the souls of people. Discipleship begins with presenting the gospel to unbelievers, thus showing them how to be born again. Jesus did this for Nicodemus (John 3:7) and the woman at the well (John 4:13-14). Once a person has a relationship with the Lord, the process of sanctification begins. What is "sanctification" you ask? Sanctification is the process that God uses to conform us to the image of Christ. Romans 8:29 says, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son". Once we have a relationship with the Lord, we are set apart for God's special use and purpose. Leviticus 20:7-8 says, "You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you".

The church, therefore, can be very instrumental in the sanctifying process through discipleship. Sadly, too many churches today have created systems, strategies, and/or programs to draw people in, but the discipleship aspect is missing. Why is this a problem. Because God's Word tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that one of the primary purposes of the church is for the whole church to participate with the Spirit in the transformation of God's people to be more like Christ. This verse says, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit".

So how can the church be involved in discipling? The whole church can be disciplined through the pastor's sermons, through small groups, through various ministries, and through Biblical counseling. Discipleship starts with the pastor's sermons. His sermons are preached to the whole congregation. Preaching, as important as it is, should be considered just the beginning of ministering God's Word. The ministering of God's Word that does not address the specific sins that a person is currently dealing with is not sufficient because it does not fully display the amazing compassion of the God of the Bible. Therefore, more personal issues will most likely arise in small groups and within the various ministries. With the appropriate training, small group leaders and ministry leaders will be able to handle some of the counseling issues, but not all of them. Therefore, individuals who require more intensive discipleship (e.g., Biblical counseling) would be referred to the church's counseling ministry.

Preaching, teaching, evangelism, and counseling are all integral parts that make up effective biblical ministry, and the local church is the instrument God uses to help believers grow into Christ-likeness. Local churches thrive as they become places where counseling takes place. This means that counseling must be included in every facet of ministry and

should be woven into the DNA of the church. God does not just want churches that have counseling centers, but churches that are counseling centers. Therefore, counseling is an essential part of the local church's ministry because it discipless believers into becoming more Christ-like. When we seek to bring the principles and resources God gives us for spiritual growth to every facet of local church ministry, we can be assured that He will bless our endeavors. Our church is committed to being a church that discipless its people through the sermons as well as the various ministries offered.

So how can a discipleship ministry impact a church? It provides practical, relevant help based on sound biblical principles from God's Word that enables believers to be adequately equipped for every good work as it says in 2 Timothy 3:17.

If you or someone you know is struggling with life issues, please contact us for help at watersedgebiblechurch.com. God's Word has the answer. God Bless!