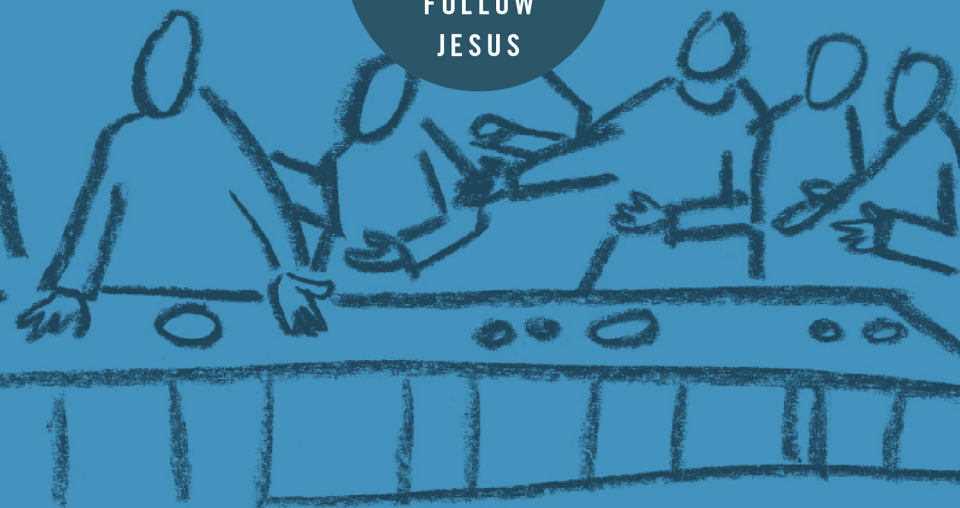


IX 9Marks BUILDING HEALTHY CHURCHES

DISCIPLING

HOW
TO HELP
OTHERS
FOLLOW
JESUS



MARK DEVER

"If you want to move to another level in your spiritual life and leadership, take the time to read this book. It is not just biblical, but practical and readable. The emphasis on the local church and its role in discipling others sets it apart from other books. Read it and share it with others."

Ronnie Floyd, President, Southern Baptist Convention; Senior Pastor,
Cross Church, Springdale, Arkansas

"Mark Dever is known for being a faithful, exegetical preacher of God's Word. But what you may not know is that Mark is an intentional disciple-maker. Whether he's meeting on Saturday with lay leaders over lunch to discuss his application grid for Sunday's message or discussing church polity in his study with a group of young interns, Mark emulates what he expects from others. I believe his legacy will not be just on the pages of the books he has penned, but on the hearts of the men he's invested in personally. Don't just read this book. Implement the biblical principles found within."

Robby Gallaty, Senior Pastor, Long Hollow Baptist Church, Hendersonville,
Tennessee

"I love reading books written by authors who are zealous about the subjects they write about. I often feel like emulating their example even before I get to the last page of the book. If you know Mark Dever, then you know he is a committed discipler. Discipleship oozes out of him. What drives him and how he disciplines others and gets his church members to do the same is what these pages are all about. Prepare yourself for a life-changing experience as you read this book!"

Conrad Mwebe, Pastor, Kabwata Baptist Church, Lusaka, Zambia

"This book convicts, exhorts, and instructs followers of Christ concerning the call to a life of discipling others. It also offers warm-hearted glimpses of this call being answered in the life of a pastor and his congregation. Mark Dever takes us to the Scriptures and roots us in the church, with particular focus on church leaders and careful attention to all. This makes much sense, but we need to be reminded that the process of discipling others is every believer's clear and joyful calling."

Kathleen B. Nielson, Director of Women's Initiatives, The Gospel Coalition

"With simple yet profound insights, Mark Dever takes Jesus's final command to make disciples and teaches us what that means for us and for our churches. By answering our questions—the why, the what, the where, and the how of discipling—Pastor Mark coaches us in how to follow Christ by helping others to follow him, to know the truth, and to live it well. Every follower of Christ needs to read this book! It's the best book I've ever read on discipling."

Jani Ortlund, Executive Vice President, Renewal Ministries; author,
Fearlessly Feminine and *His Loving Law, Our Lasting Legacy*

"Here is a church-strengthening book full of down-to-earth advice about the nuts and bolts of discipling. Dever's love for Jesus and his people shines throughout, and his firm placement of discipleship within the context and bounds of the local church is vintage Dever ecclesiology. He has a keen eye for pastors, addressing them about their role with warmth and clarity. I was personally challenged by Dever, who himself has a track record of prioritizing discipleship in the midst of all his other responsibilities. If Mark does it, I can do it!"

Grant J. Retief, Rector, Christ Church, Umhlanga, Durban, South Africa

"Dever reminds readers that discipling is a biblical mandate, motivated by obedience to Christ's commandment and love for others, and it is not an effort reserved for a select few. It does not reduce person to projects, but rather it seeks to intentionally develop a relationship with them. It requires time invested in the lives of people who are interested and motivated to follow Jesus. Finally, only truly humble teachers should disciple Jesus's sheep, because 'when a disciple is fully trained, he will be like his teacher.' These emphases and more are contained within this book. Upon reading it, you will most likely recommend it to others. I know I will."

Miguel Núñez, Senior Pastor, International Baptist Church of Santo Domingo; President, Wisdom and Integrity

DISCIPLING

9Marks: Building Healthy Churches

Edited by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman

Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus,
Jonathan Leeman

Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents
Jesus, Jonathan Leeman

Sound Doctrine: How a Church Grows in the Love and Holiness of
God, Bobby Jamieson

Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus, Jeramie
Rinne

Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus, Mack Stiles

Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today, David
Helm

The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ, Ray
Ortlund

BUILDING HEALTHY CHURCHES

DISCIPLING

**HOW
TO HELP
OTHERS
FOLLOW
JESUS**

MARK DEVER

■ ■ CROSSWAY®

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus

Copyright © 2016 by Mark Dever

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law. Crossway® is a registered trademark in the United States of America.

Cover design: Dual Identity, inc.

Cover image: Wayne Brezinka for brezinkadesign.com

First printing 2016

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture references marked NIV are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4335-5122-2

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-5125-3

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-5123-9

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-5124-6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Dever, Mark.

Discipling : how to help others follow Jesus / Mark Dever.

pages cm.—(9Marks: building healthy churches)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-5122-2 (hc)

1. Discipling (Christianity) I. Title.

BV4520.D44 2016

253—dc23

2015031755

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

LB 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

Series Preface	9
Introduction	11
PART 1: WHAT IS DISCIPLING?	
1 The Inevitability of Influence	23
2 Oriented toward Others	27
3 The Work of Discipling	35
4 Objections to Discipling	45
PART 2: WHERE SHOULD WE DISCIPLE?	
5 The Local Church	51
6 Pastors and Members	58
PART 3: HOW SHOULD WE DISCIPLE?	
7 Choose Someone	73
8 Have Clear Aims	83
9 Pay the Cost	87
10 Raising Up Leaders	93
Conclusion <i>by Jonathan Leeman</i>	105
Appendix: Books besides the Bible to Use in Discipling Relationships	115
Notes	119
Scripture Index	121

SERIES PREFACE

Do you believe it's your responsibility to help build a healthy church? If you are a Christian, we believe that it is.

Jesus commands you to make disciples (Matt. 28:18–20). Jude says to build yourselves up in the faith (vv. 20–21). Peter calls you to use your gifts to serve others (1 Pet. 4:10). Paul tells you to speak the truth in love so that your church will become mature (Eph. 4:13, 15). Do you see where we are getting this?

Whether you are a church member or leader, the Building Healthy Churches series of books aims to help you fulfill such biblical commands and so play your part in building a healthy church. Another way to say it might be, we hope these books will help you grow in loving your church like Jesus loves your church.

9Marks plans to produce a short, readable book on each of what Mark has called nine marks of a healthy church, plus one more on sound doctrine. Watch for books on expositional preaching, biblical theology, the gospel, conversion, evangelism, church membership, church discipline, discipleship and growth, and church leadership.

Local churches exist to display God's glory to the nations. We do that by fixing our eyes on the gospel of Jesus Christ, trusting him for salvation, and then loving one another with

Series Preface

God's own holiness, unity, and love. We pray the book you are holding will help.

With hope,
Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman
Series Editors

INTRODUCTION

For years my wife has had to endure my reluctance to ask for directions. You see, I know myself to be gifted with a natural sense of direction! Of course, that means my confidence sometimes outpaces my knowledge of the right way. As she says about me, “Always confident, sometimes right.”

I am not alone in wanting to plow my own furrow. People love Robert Frost’s words, “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” Henry David Thoreau remarked, “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.” And William Ernest Henley famously declared, “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.”

It’s not just the poets and writers who love their independence. The population at large is disengaging from their clubs, civic associations, and local churches, says Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*. The now-common sight of family members texting friends while ignoring each other at the dinner table explains Sherry Turkle’s title *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. And more and more people are choosing to live alone, notes Eric Klinenberg in *Going Solo*.¹

Klinenberg writes,

Introduction

In 1950, for instance, only 4 million Americans lived alone, and they accounted for less than 10 percent of all households. Today, more than 32 million Americans are going solo. They represent 28 percent of all households at the national level; more than 40 percent in cities including San Francisco, Seattle, Atlanta, Denver, and Minneapolis; and nearly 50 percent in Washington D.C. and Manhattan, the twin capitals of the solo nation.²

And this trend is not only in America. In Stockholm, Sweden, 60 percent of all households have just one occupant, according to Klinenberg.³

What's going on? Klinenberg finds that in many places residents increasingly value space less and nearness to amenities—stores, restaurants, and gyms—more. The singletons, as he calls them, are reshaping everything to be more convenient to them. Communal commitments, however, must be detachable and temporary.

Today is the day of iPhones and iPads, iTunes and—let's just say—the whole i-life. But is there any space in the i-life for the *we*-life of Christianity?

At the heart of Christianity is God's desire for a people to display his character. They do this through their obedience to his Word in their relationships with him and with each other. Therefore he sent his Son to call out a people to follow him. And part of following the Son is calling still more to follow the Son. Then, in their life together, these people display the *we*-life of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Together they demonstrate God's own love, holiness, and oneness.

His Son therefore gave this last command before ascend-

Introduction

ing to heaven: *go and make disciples* (Matt. 28:19). The lives of these people, in other words, should be dedicated to helping others follow Jesus.

That's the working definition of *discipling* for this book: helping others to follow Jesus. You can see it in the subtitle. Another way we could define discipling might be: discipling is deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ. *Discipleship* is the term I use to describe our own following Christ. *Discipling* is the subset of that, which is helping someone else follow Christ.

The Christian life is the disciplined life and the discipling life. Yes, Christianity involves taking the road less traveled and hearing a different drummer. But not in the way that Frost and Thoreau meant. Christianity is not for loners or individualists. It is for a people traveling together down the narrow path that leads to life. You must follow and you must lead. You must be loved and you must love. And we love others best by helping them to follow Jesus down the pathway of life.

Is this how you've understood Christianity, and what it means to be a Christian?

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Before we can disciple others, we must become disciples. We must make sure we are following Christ.

What is a disciple? A disciple is a follower. You can do that by following someone's teaching from afar, like someone might say he follows the teaching and example of Gandhi. And being a disciple of Christ means at least that much. A disciple of Jesus follows in Jesus's steps, doing as Jesus taught

Introduction

and lived. But it means more than that. Following Jesus first means that you have entered into a personal, saving relationship with him. You have been “united with Christ,” as the Bible puts it (Phil. 2:1, NIV). You have been united through the new covenant in his blood. Through his death and resurrection, all the guilt of sin that is yours becomes his, and all the righteousness that is his becomes yours.

Being a disciple of Christ, in other words, does not begin with something we *do*. It begins with something Christ *did*. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). He loved the church and therefore gave himself up for her (Eph. 5:25). He paid a debt that he didn’t owe, but that we owe, and then he united us to himself as his holy people.

You see, God is good, and he created us as good. But each of us has sinned by turning away from God and his good law. And because God is good, he will punish our sin. The good news of Christianity, however, is that Jesus lived the perfect life we should have lived, and then he died the death we should die. He offered himself as a substitute and sacrifice for everyone who will repent of their sin and trust in him alone. This is what Jesus called the new covenant in his blood.

So Christian discipleship begins right here with the acceptance of this free gift: grace, mercy, a relationship with God, and the promise of life eternal.

How do we accept this gift and unite ourselves to him? Through faith! We turn away from our sins and follow after him, trusting him as Savior and Lord. At one point in his ministry, Jesus turned toward a crowd and said, “If anyone would

Introduction

come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

Our discipleship to Christ begins when we hear those two words and obey them: “Follow me.”

Friend, if you would become a Christian, regardless of how any other teacher you have heard puts it, listen to Jesus. He says that being a Christian involves denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following him. The fundamental response to God’s radical love for us is for us to radically love him.

To be a Christian means to be a disciple. There are no Christians who are not disciples. And to be a disciple of Jesus means to follow Jesus. There are no disciples of Jesus who are not following Jesus. Ticking a box on a public opinion poll, or sincerely labeling yourself with the religion of your parents, or having a preference for Christianity as opposed to other religions—none of these things make you a Christian. Christians are people who have real faith in Christ, and who show it by resting their hopes, fears, and lives entirely upon him. They follow him wherever he leads. You no longer set the agenda for your own life; Jesus Christ does that. You belong to him now. “You are not your own,” Paul says, “You were bought with a price” (see 1 Cor. 6:19–20). Jesus is not just our Savior—he is our Lord.

Paul explained it this way: “And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Cor. 5:15 NIV). What does it mean to die to self and live for him? Don Carson has said, “To die to self means to consider it better to die than to

lust; to consider it better to die, than to tell this falsehood; than to consider it better to die than to . . . [you name the sin].”

The Christian life is the disciplined life. It starts by becoming a disciple of Christ.

WHY DISCIPLE?

But the Christian life is also the discipling life. Disciples disciple. We follow the one who calls people to follow by calling people to follow. Why do we do this? For the sake of love and obedience.

Love. The motive for discipling others begins in the love of God and nothing less. He has loved us in Christ, and so we love him. And we do this in part by loving those he has placed around us.

When a lawyer asks Jesus what the greatest commandment is, Jesus begins by answering, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). What God wants most of all is for all of you to love him—all your ambitions and motives, your desires and hopes, your thinking and reasoning, your strength and your energy, all of this informed and purified and disciplined by his Word.

In fact, the comprehensiveness of your devotion to God will be demonstrated by your love for those made in God’s image. The lawyer may have asked for one command, but he got two: “The second,” said Jesus, “is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (v. 31). To omit the second command is to miss the first. Love for God is fundamental to love for neighbor. And

Introduction

love for God must express itself in love for neighbor. It completes the duty of love.

God's love for us starts a chain reaction. He loves us, then we love him, then we love others. John captures all this: "We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:19–21).

Any claim to love for God that does not show itself in a love for neighbor is a love of a false god, another form of idolatry. In these verses Jesus and John reconnect some of the links broken at the fall.

Discipling others—doing deliberate spiritual good to help them follow Christ—demonstrates this love for God and others as well as anything.

Obedience. But tied to our love is our obedience. Jesus taught, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15; see also 14:23; 15:12–14). And what has he commanded? "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19–20). Part of our obedience is leading others to obedience.

Jesus's final command was not to urge his disciples to armed resistance to Rome, or seek revenge on those who killed him. Rather, Jesus looked at his followers, and told them to make disciples, not just be disciples.

Introduction

Jesus makes no distinction between those to whom this commission was given, and those to whom it wasn't given. He promises his presence to all Christians, as Pentecost would soon show. And that promise extends to the end of the ages, long beyond the apostles' lives. Throughout the rest of the New Testament, all Christians would undertake this work according to their abilities, opportunities, and callings. This Great Commission is given to all those who would be disciples of Jesus. This command is given to every believer at all times.

Discipling is basic to Christianity. How much clearer could it be? We might not be his disciples if we are not laboring to make disciples.

DISCIPLE WHERE AND HOW?

Yet there is one more thing to notice about this final commandment of Jesus. It's where and how he would have us disciple. We are to make disciples among all nations through our churches.

Among all nations. Before telling his disciples to make disciples, he tells them he has received all authority in heaven and earth, and that they should "Go." Jesus's authority is universal, and so is his concern. And the universality of his authority and concern lead to the universality of our mission: we go to all nations. Disciple-making is not just the preserve of Israel or the Middle East or of Africa. Christianity is not only for Europe or Asia. Christ has all authority, and so we go to make disciples of all nations.

Through our churches. After telling the disciples to make disciples, he tells them how—through baptizing and teaching.

Introduction

Yes, the individual missionary or evangelist goes out into the world, into the office, into the school, into the neighborhood, whether on this side of the globe or the other. But the ministry of the ordinances and the ministry of teaching primarily occur through churches. Churches fulfill the Great Commission, and discipling is the work of churches.

Good fellowship and discipling can occur outside of the context of church membership, to be sure. But through the church's ministry of baptism and the Lord's Supper we recognize one another as believers. And that lends a spiritually beneficial accountability to the discipling relationships. Through the church's and the elders' ministry of teaching, Christians learn to obey everything that Jesus commanded.

The first place Christians should ordinarily look to be disciplined and to disciple is through the fellowship of the local church both gathered and scattered. David Wells has observed, "It is very easy to build churches in which seekers congregate; it is very hard to build churches in which biblical faith is maturing into genuine discipleship."⁴

CONCLUSION

The goal of this book is help you understand biblical discipling and to encourage you in your obedience to Christ. Biblical discipling, as I said, is helping others to follow Jesus by doing deliberate spiritual good to them. And biblical discipling largely occurs in and through churches. It's easy for Christians today to miss this.

So when you attend church on Sundays, do you only look for what you can get, or do you also look for ways to give? And

Introduction

how do you use your meals and spare time throughout the week? Do you strategize for evangelism or for ways to build up other Christians?

Maybe you've thought that you really need to be discipled before you can disciple. It is certainly crucial to be a disciple. But Jesus gave the command to make disciples to you. And part of being a disciple, in fact, is to disciple. Part of growing in maturity is helping others grow in maturity. God wants you to be in churches not merely so that your needs are met, but so that you will be equipped and encouraged to care for others.

Christianity—the religion of the Bible—is not for the rugged individual, the self-made man who needs no one else. It's a religion for disciples of Christ, followers who lead others to do the same.

Part 1

WHAT IS DISCIPLING?

THE INEVITABILITY OF INFLUENCE

God's characteristics or "attributes" tell us what God is like. And theologians divide his attributes into two categories: communicable and incommunicable. Communicable attributes may be communicated, or shared, with us. Think of God's love or holiness. We, too, can be loving and holy. His incommunicable attributes, however, are those qualities that only he possesses. Think of his omnipresence (he is everywhere) or omniscience (he knows everything).

One of God's incommunicable attributes is that he is immutable. He doesn't change. We change. He does not.

WE ARE CHANGEABLE CREATURES

Perhaps you are thinking, "You don't know what a creature of habit my husband is!" It's true. I don't. Yet I promise you that, however deep the ruts of habit are in your husband's life, we humans are always changing.

We are born, we grow, we age, we die. All this is change. We learn things we didn't know, and we forget things we did know. We become more godly, or less. All this, too, is change.

DISCIPLING

And of course circumstances affect us—sometimes for good, other times for ill.

God doesn't change; we do. We are by nature changeable and changing creatures.

Added to that, we live in a world marked by serious spiritual conflict. Peter knew the world pressed in on his readers: "They are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you" (1 Pet. 4:4). Paul observed that the ruler of the kingdom of the air "is now at work" in the disobedient (Eph. 2:2). That's why he exhorts us not to be conformed to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2).

Augustine, the fifth-century African pastor, described this spiritual conflict as a clash between two cities, the City of Man and the City of God. And both cities want to recruit us for their work. The underlying reality here is, humans can be changed—positively and negatively.

WE INFLUENCE AND ARE INFLUENCED

Another way to say this is, we human beings are open to being influenced.

Just the other day I walked down to my bank—the same bank that my friend Matt introduced me to when I moved to my neighborhood twenty years ago. Then I walked from there over to the place that cuts my hair—the same place that Matt introduced me to when I moved to my neighborhood twenty years ago. Matt showed me what he did, and so I started doing that. Matt *discipled* me in how to live in our neighborhood. Here I am twenty years later able to find my own way to the

bank and the place where you get a haircut. Remember what Jesus said: when a disciple is fully trained, he will be like his teacher (Luke 6:40).

In fact, I want to take this one step further: all of us inevitably will be influenced by others, and we will in turn influence others. “Bad company ruins good morals,” says Paul (1 Cor. 15:33), and “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (5:6). The people around you *will* influence you, for better or worse. And for better or worse you in turn *will* affect the people around you. An absentee father influences his children even in his absence. None of us is an island.

HOW WILL YOU USE YOUR INFLUENCE?

The only question that remains for you is, how will you use your influence?

Maybe you didn’t think of yourself as having influence, but you do! You are created in God’s own image, and God is so weighty that even the impress of his image bears weight. Your life impacts the people around you, even if you’re at the bottom of the totem pole, or you don’t feel respected by the people around you.

Consider how Peter instructs the servants of unjust masters or the wives of unbelieving husbands (1 Pet. 2:18–20; 3:1). He knows that both possess influence by their faithfulness. Wives of non-Christian husbands, Peter says, can win those husbands “without a word by the conduct” of their lives. And the example for each is Jesus Christ. Through his suffering, he brought healing and life (2:21–25).

In other words, you will have influence through the gifts

DISCIPLING

that God has given you in creation. But more than that, you can have gospel influence, and amazingly, making a gospel impact in people's lives doesn't come only through your strengths, but also through your weakness. God does this so that his power would be displayed through our weakness and he would receive all the glory (see 2 Cor. 12:9).

So, again, you *have* influence. How will you use yours? When you step out of the hallway of this life into the room of eternity, what will you have left behind in the lives of others?

According to the Bible, a disciple of Christ disciplines others by helping them to follow Christ. Is that how you are exercising your influence?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO HELP OTHERS BECOME MORE LIKE CHRIST?

In this concise guide, pastor Mark Dever outlines the who, what, where, when, why, and how of discipling—helping others follow Jesus.

Following the pattern found in Scripture, this book explains how disciple-making relationships should function in the context of the local church, teaching us how to cultivate a culture of discipling as a normal part of our everyday lives.

“If you want to move to another level in your spiritual life and leadership, take the time to read this book.”

RONNIE FLOYD, President, Southern Baptist Convention; Senior Pastor, Cross Church, Springdale, Arkansas

“If you know Mark Dever, then you know he is a committed discipler. What drives him and how he disciplines others is what these pages are all about. Prepare yourself for a life-changing experience as you read this book!”

CONRAD MBEWE, Pastor, Kabwata Baptist Church, Lusaka, Zambia

“Every follower of Christ needs to read this book! It’s the best book I’ve ever read on discipling.”

JANI ORTLUND, Executive Vice President, Renewal Ministries; author, *Fearlessly Feminine* and *His Loving Law, Our Lasting Legacy*

MARK DEVER (PhD, Cambridge University) serves as senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, and president of 9Marks. He has authored more than a dozen books, including the best-selling *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, and speaks at conferences worldwide.

**This volume is part of the 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches series.*

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY / CHURCH LEADERSHIP

