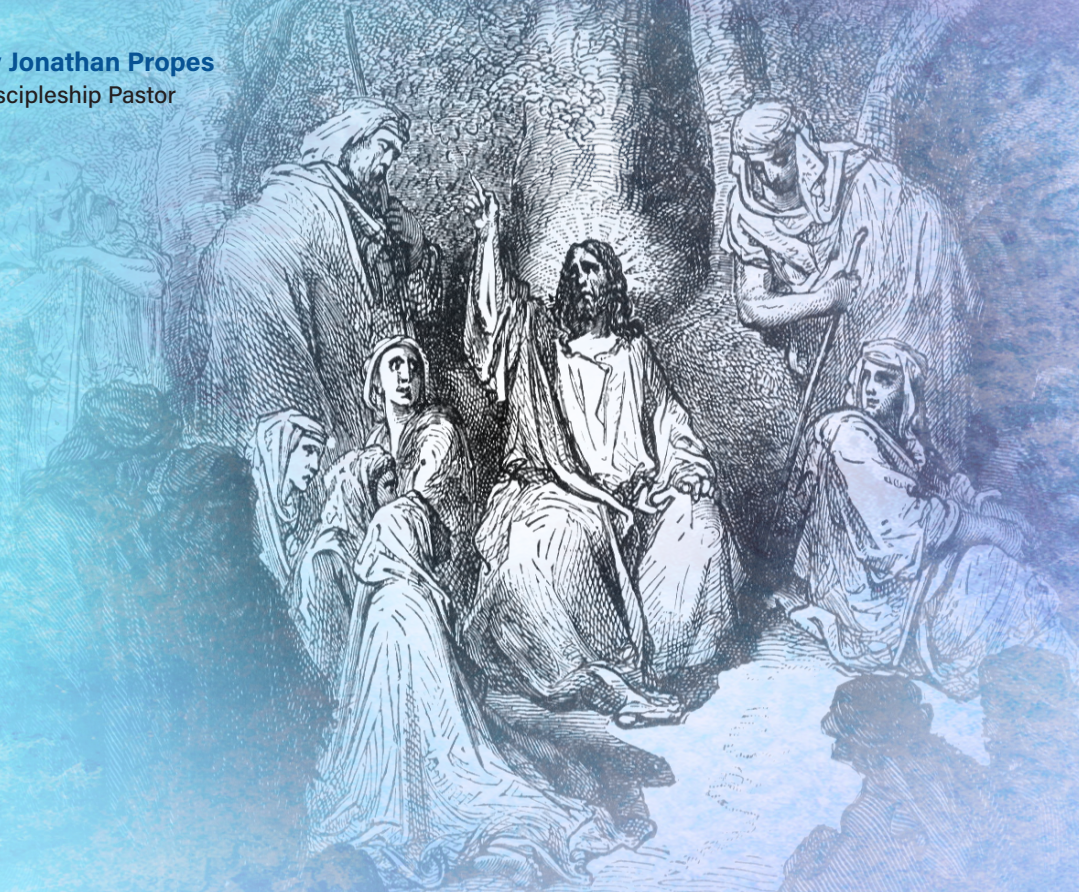


# DISCIPLESHIP IS FOR *EVERY* BELIEVER

By **Jonathan Propes**  
Discipleship Pastor



A basic Google search for the word **disciple** yields countless pages of results. The term disciple is used more than **250** times in the Gospels and the book of Acts. It refers to a **student** or **apprentice**. Disciples in Jesus' day would follow their rabbi wherever he went, learning from the rabbi's teaching and being trained to do as the rabbi did. It's impossible to be a disciple or a follower of someone and not end up like that person. Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).



Discipleship is a widely-used word associated with a variety of definitions related to growing in our Christian faith. Bill Hull, author of *Disciple-Making Church*, defines discipleship as “the intentional training of disciples, with accountability, on the basis of loving relationships.” Robby Gallaty, author and Senior Pastor at Long Hollow Church in Hendersonville, TN, builds on this definition in his book, *Growing Up*. He defines discipleship as “intentionally equipping believers with the Word of God through accountable relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to replicate faithful followers of Christ.”

At Dawson, we equip believers to grow as disciples of Jesus because the Lord's commission and our calling is to make disciples of all nations. We see this picture in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20: *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.”*

In *Gospel Centered Discipleship*, author Jonathan Dodson labels the Great Commission as the Gospel Commission and highlights its three important aspects: Go, Baptize, and Teach.

**GO** – This is the missionary aspect. Every believer is to participate in taking the Gospel to others.

**BAPTIZE** – This is the relational aspect. Every believer should instruct all who believe upon Christ to announce their relationship with Him and His people through the symbolic act of baptism.

**TEACH** – This is the rational aspect. Every believer is to teach others about Jesus and how to follow Him.

Why do we see so little discipleship taking place in the Church today? Do we really believe that Jesus commanded His early followers to make disciples but wants the twenty-first-century Church to do something different? Francis Chan, a widely-known Bible study author and pastor, addressed these attitudes regarding discipleship when he said, “We have moved so far away from Jesus’ command that many Christians don’t have a frame of reference for what discipleship looks like.” Likewise, Robby Gallaty responded to the same concern by stating, “In order to make disciples, we must first be disciples.”

As a disciple of Jesus, we already have what it takes to offer discipleship to our friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors. Discipleship is not about being an expert. It’s about passing on to others what you are learning as you grow in your own relationship with Jesus. A seminary degree or Christian leadership position is not a requirement to “go and make disciples,” as Jesus called us to do in the Great Commission. All you need is to be who God created you to be and recognize that you have what it takes to grow in Christ and help others do the same.

We must remember there is a difference between teaching and discipleship. Giving Jesus greater lordship of our lives doesn’t happen from simply listening to sermons or reading books. It must be followed with obedience. We need to be doers of the word, not just hearers.

In her book, *Ordinary Discipleship*, author Jessie Cruickshank provides us help with a better understanding of how we learn. Neurologically speaking, “head knowledge” and “heart knowledge” are two distinct types of long-term memory: semantic and episodic. Semantic memory is your collection of data, facts, and concepts. Episodic memory includes procedural memory or muscle memory. As you can imagine, semantic memory is easily forgotten, but episodic memory is a much stronger memory system because it is interconnected with empathy, compassion, and other social emotions. It is also integrated with our body systems, like heart rate or fear response. Episodic memory is the only memory system that can project into the future and answer the question, “How can I apply this to my life?” Semantic memory cannot do that.

Knowing this information helps to explain how discipleship can be very difficult when only teaching through lecturing—which goes straight to the semantic memory system. Expecting head knowledge to become heart knowledge is not how God created us to learn. Discipleship takes place best in a biblical community where we can have conversations centered on the truth of God’s word and integrate those truths into our daily lives.

Do you have a desire to form a disciple-making relationship with others? Let me encourage you with these three practical steps:

#### STEP 1: PRAY

The Holy Spirit will bring people to your mind who have a desire to begin a disciple-making relationship. As you pray, keep the following in mind: Like attracts like. People naturally move toward those who seem helpful. You may be attracted by a person’s personality, spirituality, ministry skills, or experience.

#### STEP 2: SCHEDULE ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS

Sit down face-to-face with people who have a desire to grow in their faith and invite them to participate with you in a discipleship group.

#### STEP 3: FORM YOUR GROUP

Schedule a time with a member of the Discipleship Team so we can help you with the structure of your group and provide you with helpful discipleship resources.

These steps have helped me in my journey as a disciplemaker. I share them here in hopes they will also help you.



**JONATHAN PROPES** was born in Kentucky and grew up in Tennessee. He holds a Master of Divinity from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has previously served churches in Kentucky, Illinois, and Tennessee. He is married to Elaine and has two children, Mary Beth and Ben.