

The future of discipleship

by Doug Munton, Pastor, FBC O'Fallon, Illinois

It was Training Union once. SBC churches had a program for discipleship that was almost universally adopted by our churches. It met on Sunday nights and was pretty well attended. There were study course books and diplomas and discipleship had a strong niche. Life was more patterned; routines more constant.

Discipleship for my church- and many churches- has had to change. At FBC O'Fallon, IL, we still have Sunday night discipleship- we've called it Discipleship University and, more recently, the journey. But we also have women's classes during the day, a Thursday morning men's group at 6 am, weekend accountability groups and church wide emphases like [*Immersed: 40 Days to a Deeper Faith*](#). No one pattern is enough anymore.

One thing remains constant about discipleship- it is greatly needed. We still need to learn doctrine. We still need to study bible books. We still need a push towards spiritual depth through small groups.

I don't care so deeply about the method of discipleship, but I do care deeply about the message of discipleship. It needs to be reclaimed and reinvigorated.

The Christian life is about more than making you feel good and helping you overcome your problems. It also includes learning to sacrifice, how to defend your faith and what propitiation means. It involves integrating the Old and New Testaments and why prayer matters and how to share your faith with the stubborn agnostic next door.

I don't care how your church does it, but I do care that your church does it. Discipleship matters to the church. Churches- and that is just another way of saying all believers- need more than some peppy songs and a peppy sermon. They need- and that is just another way of saying you and I need- to grow some deep roots in discipleship.

Let's reclaim discipleship. Give it a fancy name, if you like. Use different times and methods, if you wish. Or just go straight back to Training Union while singing "It Only Takes a Spark" if you can find nothing better. But do something that helps develop discipleship in your life and church.

The future of discipleship- and that is just another way of saying the future of believers and the church- depends upon us making it a priority once again.

November 2013