

Discipleship

How then shall we live?

Outline

1. Operative theology: the present praxis
2. Normative theology: the biblical basis
3. Strategic theology: action steps

What are we doing?

OPERATIVE THEOLOGY

Philosophy

- The lowest common denominator is the assumption that active participation in the life and programmes of the church will automatically result in spiritual growth.
- Few had a clear definition of what "disciple" means, and only one had an intentional strategy for nurturing believers and leaders based on a clear vision of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- No church surveyed had a formal discipleship or Bible school programme, i.e. a systematic plan for teaching a biblical worldview to its members.

Home Cells

- It is generally assumed that discipling takes place through home cells (exception: in dangerous areas).
- In some churches cells are Bible study groups, while in others they are fellowship groups.
- In some churches the cell leaders decide what to do or teach in the group, while in others content is prescribed or provided by the pastors.
- The selection of cell leaders is largely based on who volunteers. Only two churches had a rigorous process for selecting and training cell leaders.

Popular Programmes

- All churches have some sort of membership class, which serves to induct potential members in the vision, values, and beliefs of the church.
- Half the people surveyed reported that their church has attempted a formal mentorship programme, but not one of these was still running. They simply "did not work".
- There seems to be a widely held assumption that people grow through involvement in missions trips, outreach projects, social ministries, and so on, though there is little infrastructure for training in these roles.

Children and Youth

- Most churches run fairly traditional programmes for youth and children, typically a Friday night youth group and a Sunday morning children's ministry.
- Some churches had youth pastors, but only one had a children's pastor.
- Well-resourced churches may use a formal curriculum for their children's church.
- The selection of children's and youth workers is mostly on a "whosoever will" basis.

Teaching

- Expository preaching characterises some churches, and may be viewed as the primary means of shaping believers' worldview.
- Aside from preaching, I found no evidence of an intentional strategy to help believers develop a biblical worldview and a kingdom value system.
- Few leaders seem to be trying to help ordinary Christians "do theology". By doing theology, I mean thinking biblically about daily life in order to answer the questions "what shall we do?" and "how shall we live?"

What does "discipleship" mean?

NORMATIVE THEOLOGY

The CT Commitment

The CTC calls for

1. whole-life discipleship

"We need intensive efforts to train all God's people in whole-life discipleship, which means to live, think, work, and speak from a biblical worldview and with missional effectiveness in every place or circumstance of daily life and work" (Part II, Section I, 3, C).

The CT Commitment

The CTC calls for

1. whole-life discipleship
2. harnessing the arts

"Bringing the arts back into the life of the faith community as a valid and valuable component of our call to discipleship" (Part II, Section I, 5).

The CT Commitment

The CTC calls for

1. whole-life discipleship
2. harnessing the arts
3. respecting diversity

"We should avoid the tendency, when we see God at work in unexpected or unfamiliar ways, either (i) hastily to classify it and promote it as a new mission strategy, or (ii) hastily to condemn it without sensitive contextual listening" (Part II, Section III, 4).

The CT Commitment

The CTC calls for

1. whole-life discipleship
2. harnessing the arts
3. respecting diversity
4. disciplined leaders

"Above all we must replace self-interest and greed with the biblical teaching on self-sacrifice and generous giving as the marks of true discipleship to Christ" (Part 2, Section V, 5).

The CT Commitment

The CTC calls for

1. whole-life discipleship
2. harnessing the arts
3. respecting diversity
4. disciplined leaders
5. character formation

"Some leadership training programmes focus on packaged knowledge, techniques and skills to the neglect of godly character. By contrast, authentic Christian leaders must be like Christ in having a servant heart, humility, integrity, purity, lack of greed, prayerfulness, dependence on God's Spirit, and a deep love for people" (Part II, Section IV, 3).

The CT Commitment

The CTC calls for

1. whole-life discipleship
2. harnessing the arts
3. respecting diversity
4. disciplined leaders
5. character formation
6. Bible teaching

"Some leadership training programmes lack specific training in the one key skill that Paul includes in his list of qualifications – ability to teach God's Word to God's people. Yet Bible teaching is the paramount means of disciple-making and the most serious deficiency in contemporary Church leaders" (Part II, Section IV, 3).

Leadership Lament

- Lausanne III laments the lack of proper disciple-making as a key contributor to the lack of godly leadership in the church.
- Training leaders to be godly is the wrong way around. We should be appointing as leaders those who already display evidence of *mature discipleship*.
- Many approaches to leadership training focus on packaged knowledge and skills, to the neglect of godly character formation.
- Bible teaching is of paramount importance in discipleship, and yet many leaders are neither *taught* nor *able to teach*.

Leadership Lament

"We strongly encourage seminaries, and all those who deliver leadership training programmes, to focus more on spiritual and character formation, not only on imparting knowledge or grading performance, and we heartily rejoice in those that already do so as part of comprehensive 'whole person' leadership development."

Matthew 10:24-25

Matthew 10:24-25

- A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be **like his teacher**, and the servant like his master.

Luke 6:40

- A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully **trained** will be **like his teacher**.

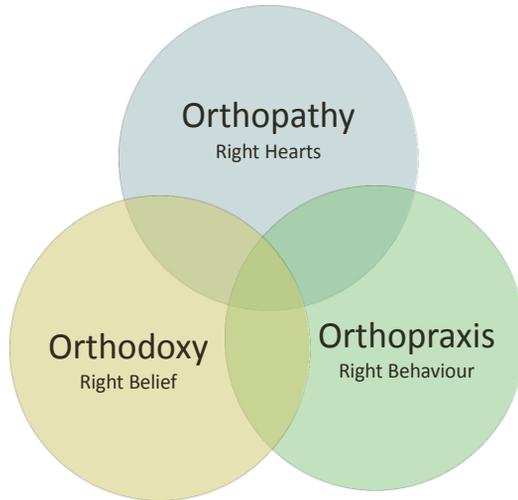
Matthew 28:19-20a

Therefore,	[inference]
go	[step]
and make disciples of all nations,	[GOAL]
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,	[means 1]
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.	[means 2]

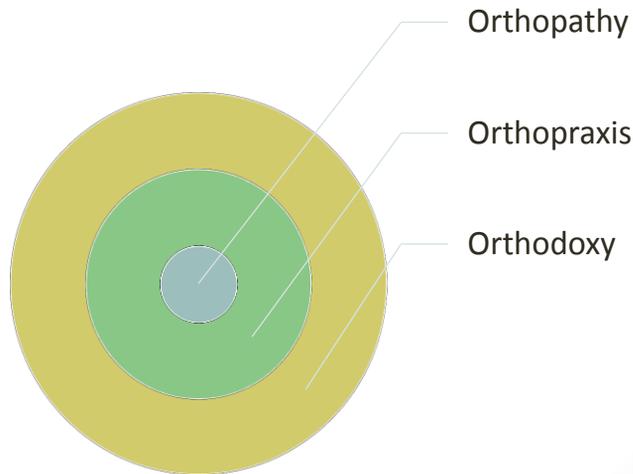
John 8:31-32

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you **abide in my word**, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Holistic Discipleship



Holistic Discipleship



What then shall we do?

STRATEGIC THEOLOGY

Questions for Discussion

1. What should a reformation of biblical discipleship look like in the South African context?
2. How might such a reformation impact the philosophy (why?), content (what?), and methods (how?) of discipleship?
3. What action steps are necessary with the domains of local churches, mission agencies, and training institutions to reform the praxis of discipleship in South Africa?