



The Local Church
The Strategy Of The Church



Two weeks ago, we learned that...

[The church is a team.](#)

Last Week we learned that...

[The mission of the team is to make disciples.](#)

Today we will learn the strategy the team should use to make disciples.

Strategy is critical to the success of any team. This is true in the family, business, sports, education, medicine, politics, and the church. The most committed, sincere, genuine people have failed because they have had the wrong strategy.

I am sorry to say that discovering the right strategy can require a lot of trial and error.

Story of my strategy for college.

Story of our strategy for the OKC Storm.

History is full of wonderful stories of successful people who did not give up until they discovered the right strategy.

This has been my experience in the local church. I have known since 1972 that the local church is a team and that the mission of the team is to make disciples. I have also known that the church in the USA was winning many converts but it was not having a lot of success making disciples. I have also known since 1973 that one to one relational discipleship was more effective than just transferring information to people on Sunday mornings and in classrooms. I have been practicing one to one relational discipleship on my own since I was in high school.

But for most of my ministry as a Pastor I did not know how to strategically implement a relational strategy in the local church that practices team discipleship.

I have been practicing this relational strategy of team discipleship for over two years to see if it works. It works!

I did not discover something new. I rediscovered something that is very old.

Jesus provided the relational team discipleship strategy He wanted the local church to use.

1. [Jesus chose 12 disciples to be His team. \(Mark 3:14\)](#)

Mark 3:13-14

13 And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. 14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him....

NKJV

He ministered to multitudes and on one occasion he chose seventy people for a specific mission (Luke 10:1), but He only chose 12 to be the team that He shared life with. Jesus had one to one time with the members of His team. But Jesus did not come and just form isolated one to one relationships. He chose 12 disciples to be His team. He formed a small group. And Jesus was the intentional leader of this team.

2. [Jesus led the team to have a relational environment that practiced team discipleship. \(John 13:34-35\)](#)

John 13:34-35

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

NKJV

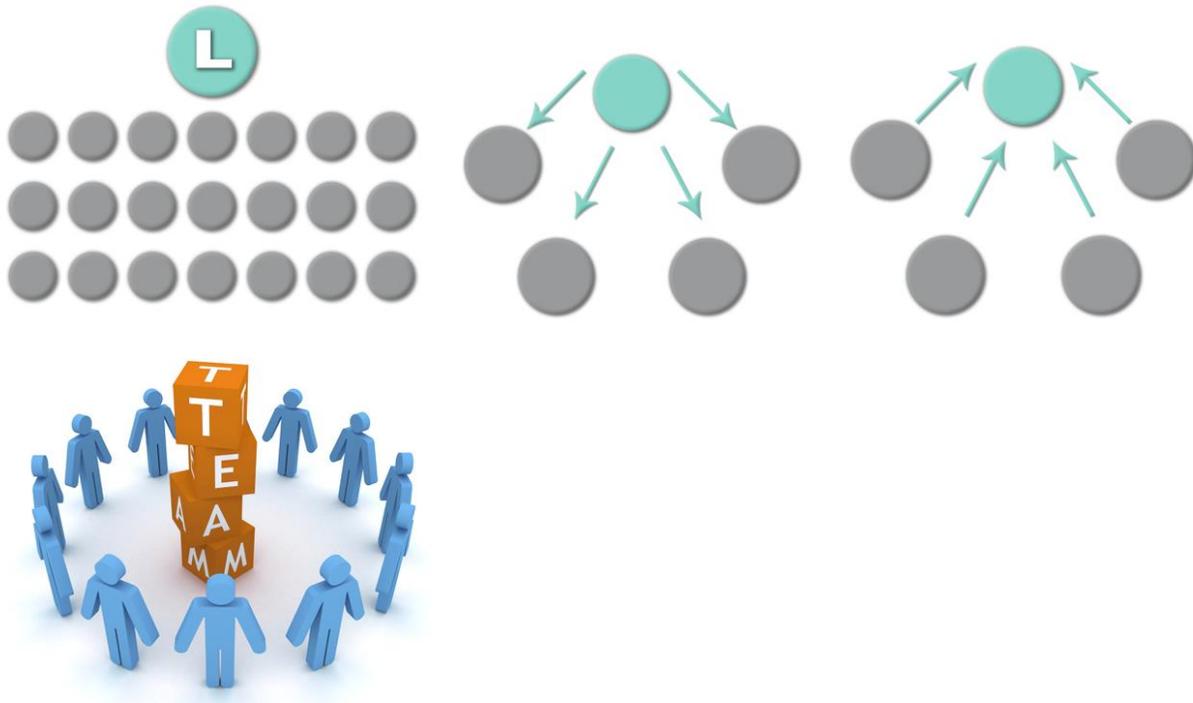
Each member of the team learned from Jesus, their intentional leader. But Jesus created a relational environment so that they would also learn from sharing life with one another.

- [The team learned from James and John that true greatness in God's Kingdom is being a servant of all. \(Mark 10:35-45\)](#)
- [The team learned from Peter that only Jesus has the Words of eternal life. \(John 6:66-69\)](#)
- [The team learned from Thomas that faith in God should not be based on what they see with their eyes. \(John 20:24-29\)](#)
- [The team learned from Judas Iscariot how easy it is to fall away and betray Jesus. \(Matthew 26:14-16\).](#)

The team did not grow spiritually just by hearing Jesus transfer information to the multitudes or by hearing Jesus teach their team. They grew spiritually by sharing life and truth with one another in a relational environment.

They practiced what we call team discipleship.

We call it learning in a circle rather than learning in rows.



The same relational environment existed in the early church. It was not logistically possible for the early church to be together 24/7 like the 12 disciples and Jesus. But after Pentecost the Apostles strategically implemented a way for relational team discipleship to be practiced. The people did not grow spiritually just by hearing the apostles teach the multitudes. They grew spiritually by sharing life and truth with one another as they met together in homes.

[Acts 2:46-47](#)

[46](#) So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and [breaking bread from house to house](#), they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, [47](#) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

NKJV

After the church dispersed outside of Jerusalem, the records that we have in Acts and in the Epistles of their regular assemblies describe those assemblies in this way.

- [The team met in homes. \(Romans 16:5; I Cor. 16:19; Philemon 2\)](#)
- [The team ate the Lord's Supper together \(I Cor. 11:20-34\)](#)

The Lord's Supper was a meal that included the memorial of breaking the bread and drinking the cup.

- The team shared truth with one another. (I Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:16; Hebrews 3:13)
- The team was transparent with one another (Gal. 6:2; Col. 3:9; I John 1:7; I John 1:9; James 5:16)
- The team encouraged one another (I Thess. 5:11)
- The team served one another (John 13:14; Gal. 5:13)
- The team was affectionate with one another (Romans 16:16)
- The team was faithful to one another (Hebrews 10:25; I Peter 4:8)
- The team prayed with one another (James 5:16;

The team worked as a team in an incredible relational environment to make each other into mature disciples of Jesus. Is it any wonder that they called each other brothers and sisters?

They changed the world.

Jesus told His disciples that the world would know that they are His disciples by how they loved one another.

John 13:34-35

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

NKJV

This commandment cannot be followed explicitly in a worship service on Sunday morning or in a class that meets once a week.

This commandment can only be fulfilled in a small group that has a relational environment and practices team discipleship.

We have divorced the strategy of Jesus from the commandments of Jesus and expected to get the same results as Jesus!

Is it any wonder the people of the world are not seeing how we love one another.

The meetings of the church should be more like an AA meeting where each one of us is honest about our struggles and we learn from one another how to be like Jesus during our struggle.

So what do you need to do about it? You have an important role on this team. And the great thing about your role with this model is that it is reproducible for everyone.

- You can fulfill your role on this team even if you are not spiritually mature.
- You can fulfill your role on this team even if you are not a teacher.
- You can fulfill your role on this team even if you are old.

1. When you are older, you need team discipleship to help you make a difference.
2. When you are older, you need team discipleship because of the new challenges you face.
3. When you are older, you need team discipleship because it gives you the opportunity to share what you know with those who are younger.

- You can fulfill your role on this team even if you are very busy.

Even though we you may not live in the same neighborhood with your team, modern technology makes it possible to carry on relationships with your team every day.

What are you going to about it?

- Some of you have never accepted the mission of the team as your mission. You need to accept your mission.
- Some of you have not joined a team.

You have joined the team of the local church but you have not joined a team within the team. You need to join a team.

- Some of you have joined a team but you treat your team like your gym membership.

You attend once a week for the exercise but you are not connecting with your team members relationally. You need to become intentional about connecting with your team. To get connected relationally, you must share life. You have to share truth. You must consistently follow the “one another’s.”

What are you going to about it?