**Week 1**

**Strand of Pearls**

**Introduction**

**Matthew 28:19 (KJV)**

***Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.***

Welcome to our strand of pearls! Our aim for this first session is to give you an overview of what we are all about, how to use this discipling tool and the scriptural basis that governs Catalyst Missions Women’s Discipleship. We esteem God’s Word and it is the foundation of this ministry. Every lesson is a pearl of wisdom and filled with Biblical truth. You may be wondering if this is a Bible study. Absolutely, it is. Yet, you will discover that it is more than that.

The heartbeat of this book, and methodology behind it, comes from the Lord Jesus’ last command to His disciples – past, present and future. It’s called the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Because of the weightiness of His final instructions, and the implications of His mission, it is of the utmost importance that we clearly understand Jesus’ intent when He said, “Go make disciples of all nations.”

How did Jesus make disciples? His approach was brilliant, yet, intuitively simple. He invested three full years of His public ministry into 12 ordinary uneducated men. This we know about them by reading Acts 4:13. Jesus was their seminary, His Word their curriculum, and over the three-year period, He did life with them amounting to 26,000 hours. That’s a huge investment.

Knowing that our busy lives will not afford us the luxury of 52 weeks of meetings, and, allowing for holidays and such, we have divided this book into 35 weeks of sessions. Our goal is to commit one-year together covering these Biblical lessons and sharing our lives with one another.

**Lesson One**

To get us off on the right foot, here’s lesson one. Luke, the writer of two books of the Bible, was a meticulous **note taker**. How do we know this? It is obvious when we read the introduction to his gospel in Luke 1:1-4. This labor of love was not for his own scholarship. He wrote it to share the gospel with a Roman official named Theophilus. The second personal letter, the book of Acts, was a discipling letter to his new brother in Christ (Acts 1:1-8). Luke hadn’t a clue that his personal letters to Theophilus would make it into the cannon of the Bible. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit and took great pains in researching and interviewing every living eye witness so that he could accurately compile this information for one person. Think about the treasure trove of truth these two books contain. Imagine all we would miss if he had never written these letters to Theophilus? My point is this: a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who learns God’s truth so that they can give it away. That is not possible if you can’t remember what you hear. A principle tool for learning is as follows: We can remember roughly twenty percent of what we hear, forty percent of what we read, eighty percent of what we write. So, always come prepared to take notes.

**Eight Essential Elements**

The following highlighted alliterated words comprise the eight essential elements that Catalyst Missions Women’s Discipleship employs in the disciple-making process.

1. The process begins with a small group of women who **connect** on a weekly basis to put into practice Acts 2:42,46. This includes, teaching, prayer, and a time of fellowship around a *simple* meal that everyone contributes to. (The meal is optional.) Jesus divided His 12 into 3 groups or 4. Simon Peter, Philip and James, the son of Alphaeus were the leaders of the groups (Mark 3:13-18). When a group grows to 10-12 you should split and start another group of four.
2. Disciple-making takes place in the **contexte** of accountable relationships where we share two things. God’s timeless Truth and our lives. To develop this kind of relationship, we must get to know one another. That is one purpose for the Spiritual Survey. Fill out the form this week and discuss your results with your group next time you meet.
3. This requires mutual commitment on the part of all involved. At the end of this session, if you are ready, fill out the **Commitment** to Discipling Relationship form in the back of your book.
4. The hallmarks of true discipleship are *humility* and *teachability.* Jesus often pointed out to His disciples that He was the disciple of His Father. Their relationship is the ultimate example of humility, submission motivated by love. Read John 8:23-29. Because Jesus genuinely loved and **cared** for His disciples, He modeled this before them, fully expecting them to follow His lead (John 13:1-35). The same is required of us. Read Mark 10:33-45 and Galatians 5:13.
5. The Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul employed the most fundamental learning tools in their disciple-making: reiteration and repetition (John 3:22). Emulating them, through **consistent** **communication,** we are hearing God’s Word, hiding it in our hearts, applying it to our everyday lives, and like them, we will make disciples (Luke 6:39-40).
6. *Strand of Pearls* booklet is broken down into 5 phases. It comprises the first five of nine modules used on four continents for Catalyst Missions Women’s training. Read 2 Timothy 2:2 and 1 Corinthians 4:16-17. The key phrases here are “the *same things* you have heard,” and, “I teach the *same things* in every church.” For this reason, be it Memphis, Tennessee, Bradenton, Florida, Colombia, Nicaragua, Bolivia, the Philippines, or on the Continent of Africa - we all teach the same **curriculum**.
7. Think of your group as a strand of pearls united and connected to The Pearl of Great Price -- the Lord Jesus. Each member is a vital link to the nations (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15). As of now, our strand of pearls spans the globe. We have not fulfilled the Great **Commission** by discipling a person. The imperative command in the Great Commission is to *make disciples* of all nations! By following the pattern of disciple-making that Jesus left us, we are part of bringing to fruition Revelation 5:8-10. Read John 15:16 and 1 Thessalonians 2:19 and discuss the source of rejoicing when Jesus returns.

**Conclusion and Instructions**

This concludes our first session. Take a moment to discuss and review the main points we covered today. If the Lord leads, sign the commitment form and spend some time together in prayer. Until we meet again, our homework is as follows: Fill out your Spiritual Growth Survey, read the three-page explanation of Phase One and memorize Matthew 28:18-20.

**Week 2**

Phase One

Proclaim the Gospel

**1 Corinthians 15:1-5 (NET)**

***Now I want to make clear for you,brothers and sisters,the gospel that I preached to you, that you received and on which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received – that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raisedon the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.***

Welcome back! Before we start our next session, to get to know one another better, we will spend some time reviewing our Spiritual Growth Surveys. The rest of our time together we will cover the introduction to Phase One and learn acronym for the gospel Story of the Bible.

The cornerstone upon which we build our lives is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saving faith starts there. For this reason, we always begin the discipling process by sharing the gospel narratives found in Phase One. As a side note: if you have seven weeks to introduce the gospel, *The Good News for You* by Charles Brock is an excellent tool. Not only is it available in many languages, but also it cost only $1.00! It is widely used to saturate entire countries. You can order it at [www.churchgrowthinternational.com](http://www.churchgrowthinternational.com).

Upon entering a new town, Jesus and Paul would go into the synagogue first. So, when sharing the gospel and looking for someone to disciple, the church is a good place to start. You may be wondering why we start there. First, we are following Jesus’ pattern. Second, just because someone is religious, or a member of a church does not mean that they are saved See the lessons titled Perishing in the Pew). Furthermore, you can’t assume that anyone has heard the true gospel. Hence, the lesson in this book from 1 Corinthians 11:1-4 titled Promised to One Husband. The last lesson in Phase One is a tool for spiritual examination -- “Signs of Life.” The purpose is to gain conformation and assurance that we have ben born again.

Believers need to consistently hear the gospel message. Lost people must hear the gospel to be saved (Romans 1:16). And, those who are saved, need to be sharing the gospel with the lost (Psalm 68:11). The gospel stories in Phase One are intended to do just that. Below are the three main goals and lessons contained in Phase One.

**The Main Goals for Phase One:**

* Proclaim the good news of Jesus.
* Gain assurance of salvation.
* Equip believers with gospel messages.

**Phase One lesson order:**

* The Gospel of the Three Crosses
* The Well Who Came to the Woman
* Alabaster Box
* Perishing in the Pew
* Signs of Life

**The Greatest Story Ever Told**

Often, we think of the Bible as a collection of stories compartmentalized in individual books. In fact, it is one long story—the greatest story ever told. Being a disciple of Christ and a disciple-maker means that you are a lifelong learner. The truth we learn becomes like living water. It flows to us and then through us into the lives of others. Recently, I had one of those watershed meetings with Betsy Killins, the Women’s Global Coordinator for Downline Ministries. In addition to sweet fellowship and wise insight on how to minister cross-culturally, she taught me a simple acronym (AMPEC) that encapsulates the Bible narrative. While the story could be simplified in just a few sentences, I have included several key passages that allow us to see how the story pertains to the Great Commission. As Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, what I received from Betsy, I gladly give to you. Here it is.

**Anticipation**

The word genesis means beginning. The beginning of time and space and all of creation was recorded in God’s big story called the Bible. The first book Genesis is the beginning of time. Yet, even before time, God was. One of His self-titles is, “the Beginning” (Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 44:6, 48:12; Revelation 1:8, 21:6). From Alpha to Omega, A to Z, cover to cover and everything in between, there is One hero in the Bible. The mystery of who the Creator was is **explained** in John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15-19 and Hebrews 1:1-3,10.

In the beginning, God made a good and perfect place called the Garden of Eden. When all was ready to sustain their lives, He made Adam and Eve in His own image --they were the crown jewels of His creation. The word image means to shadow or shade. He made them to be in an intimately close relationship with Himself (they were His disciples). He inaugurated the first family when He officiated their wedding. It was paradise because God was there with them.

For their own good, He gave them only one rule—don’t eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All was good, and right, and perfect. Then, Adam and Eve rebelled against God and broke the one rule. From that moment on, everything was suddenly changed from very good to horribly bad. The two had to leave the presence of God in paradise.

It seemed that all would be lost. Yet God always had a plan. One day, He would make a way for them to come back home to Him. He gave a promise that a son would be born who would who would bridge the gap between God and sinners (Genesis 3:1-15, 17:3-6, 18:18; Isaiah 7:14, 9:2-7, 53:1-12). From **Genesis to Malachi**, the entire Old Testament pointed to One who the prophet Haggai called Him “The Desire of all nations.” For approximately four thousand years they **anticipated** His arrival. We find the **explanation** for all of this in the New Testament books of 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Romans and Galatians 3:6-9.

**Manifestation**

How patient and long-suffering God must be! After 4000 years of God speaking about this One, and 400 years of silence, God spoken word was **manifest** in the person of His Son. A virgin gave birth to a baby boy in a stable in Bethlehem – just as it was written (Isaiah 7:14, 9:2-7; Micah 5:2-5 Matthew 2:6; Luke 2:1-14). He lived a perfect sinless life for thirty years, and then they killed Him—just as it was written in Psalms 22 and Isaiah 53. But on the third day, He rose again to life —just as it was written. You can read this part of God’s big story in the New Testament gospels written by **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John** (John 3:16, 10:16; 1 John 1:1-5; Luke 1:1-5, 23:1-56, 24:1-53).

**Proclamation and Multiplication**

Reversing the curse of Babel, the Lord Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to His disciples so that they could **proclaim** the good news to the nations. And so, they did. All Jesus’ followers went everywhere proclaiming to everyone that Jesus the Christ had come, lived among us for thirty years, and then died and rose again on the third day—just as it was written. Everyone who would repent of sins and trust in Him could live forever! You can read about this in Luke’s discipling letter to Theophilus – the book of **Acts**. Read Acts 2:1-5, 8:27-40, 13:47-48, 14:21-22; 19:7-10.

You see, disciple-making is about building people who will go and spread God’s name and fame to all nations. In other word, they will multiply the gospel! The linchpin of God’s plan to bless all nations is through obedience to the Great Commission.

**Explanation**

The signs that pointed to Jesus were everywhere in the Old Testament (the only Bible in that day). God’s plan was so intricate, mysterious, and mind-boggling that grasping it required a lot of **explanation**. That’s what all the epistles from **Romans to Jude** are about. In Ephesians 3:1-16, we have an **explanation** of God’s glorious plan to have one multiethnic family. To find our place in the story of the ages, we need to step back into eternity past, before time began. In God’s pleasure and sovereign will, He included you and me in His plans (Ephesians 1:4, 2:10). Read Romans 1:16, 3:9-12, 22-23, 6:23, 10:9-18; Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-18.

**Consummation**

God saves the best for last. The greatest story ever told ends witha wedding. Jesus showed John, His beloved disciple, how the story ends. He wrote it in the book of **Revelation**. The Lord Jesus will have all His children living with Him in paradise. For now, He is preparing a home in heaven for them. There will be no death, or crying, or pain there. When His name and fame reach the ends of the earth, then God and His people will live happy ever after. Will you be part of making that happen? Read Revelation 5:9-13; 7:9-12; 22:1-27**.**

The proclamation of the gospel that was recorded in the book of Acts continues today. Our aim is to **proclaim** the gospel in a way that is God-centered, Jesus-exalting and Holy Spirit empowered. If we can achieve all that, then we can find ourselves in God’s big story. The **consummation** will not happen until the gospel has been proclaimed to the end of the earth. In the meantime, … where are we in God’s story line? We are in the age of **proclamation** of the gospel, **explanation** of God’s big story and **multiplication** as we are going through our lives making disciples of all the nations. Our strategy to accomplish that is woven throughout this book.

**Conclusion and Instructions**

This concludes our second session. We are off to a good start! Take a moment and read and discuss Romans 1:8, 10:9-18. Suppose you are sharing the gospel with someone who has never heard it, or unfamiliar with the Bible. There are many cultures around the world that have no Bible or written language. They are oral learners. That is to say, they learn through story-telling. That’s how Jesus taught. To follow His lead, and master the skill, here is an exercise. In groups of two, put together a condensed gospel story from the above acronym. Make it simple enough to use in sharing God’s story on a child’s level of understanding. Your memory verse for this week is Romans 1:8.

Next week, we begin our gospel lessons with the Gospel of the Three Crosses. Read this lesson and answer the questions at the end. Also, make note of any questions or comments. When we meet next time, we will discuss the questions and practice reciting our memory verse for this week— Romans 1:8. Here is a suggestion. Write your memory verse on a card and carry it with you. Then you can share this good news by asking anyone who is willing if they will to look at the card as you “practice” saying it. That’s *Proclamation.*