



Chapter 6

RECRUITING A PROSPECTIVE DISCIPLE

There is strong competition today to gain people's allegiance. Many civic minded organizations are attracting people by the score. If it is not the Red Cross or the United Fund, then it is the lodge, the Boy Scouts, the women's club, or a thousand and one other committees, programs and organizations. As if this were not enough, we face the constant secularization of our society with its accompanying materialism. There is the theater, the country club, horse racing, television, football and a host of other sports.

Nowadays if a young man wants to move up the organizational ladder of a corporation, he has to pledge his total commitment to the company. Eight hours a day, five days a week, and good, hard work are just not enough. Go-ahead corporations want the young man to eat, sleep, and breathe their vision or product.

Into this arena of competition step the bold claims of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Today, as always, Jesus is calling for disciples, not just Sunday Christians. His men and women refuse to yield to the lure of the world's system. In the world, yes; of the world, never. This type of a person has only one Lord—Jesus Christ. He and He alone orders the life; He determines where time, money, and other resources are spent.

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we are in the business of recruiting men and women to a life of discipleship. As we do this, there are some basic, though often forgotten principles, that are essential to follow if we are to recruit the

kind of people God can use. Earlier, we discussed certain characteristics or qualities that have to be present in a person's life if he is to be usable in God's sight. Here we want to consider things that the recruiter must implement if he is to get quality people involved in God's work. Again, let me remind you that this is in no way an exhaustive list, but is simply meant to stimulate your thinking.

- ***Recruit to a vision, not to an organization.***

An organization, however great it may be, is never highest in God's value system. God gives a vision. An organization must *serve* this vision. It can never *be* the vision. By organization, I mean any organized work, whether it be a church—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian; a Christian organization—Young life, Youth for Christ, The Navigators, Campus Crusade, Inter Varsity; or a group within a church—the men's fellowship, the women's guild, the young people's gathering.

We do not decide to have an organization and then seek to staff it with a president, vice-president, secretary. On the contrary, we involve ourselves in what we know to be the will of God, and if through that involvement we become numerically prosperous and need to organize, well and good.

The disciple must be careful never to preach faithfulness in order to make his organization more successful. How easy it is to fall into this trap. Our Sunday School attendance begins to lag, so we have a membership drive. From all outward appearances, this is to get people in-

volved in God's work, but more often than not, it has to do with statistics and breaking records rather than majoring on people getting into the Word of God. If we emphasize meeting people's spiritual needs, the chances are that membership numbers will take care of themselves.

Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (John 12:32). John explains in the next verse that this was to signify the type of death the Christ should die. There is, nonetheless, a fundamental truth suggested here—when we, in our ministry, exalt the person of Jesus Christ, men will be drawn to Him.

I once had the privilege of observing a church in upper Michigan. Every year, the pastor, along with the elders, would ask the representatives from each group in the church to defend their right for existence on the basis of two criteria: (1) The legitimacy of their goals and objectives; and (2) the degree to which they achieved these goals and objectives.

If any group did not meet both of these criteria, the elders of the church would disband it. What a terrific idea! If we would ruthlessly apply this practice in all of our churches, it would doubtless contribute to a more vital and healthy fellowship.

The women in a local church decide to pray for the missionaries their church is sponsoring. Once a week they gather for that purpose. The first week they meet in Mrs. Jones' house, and Mrs. Jones prepares for them an assortment of cookies and tea and coffee. The next week they are at Mrs. Smith's house, and she, not wanting to be outdone by Mrs. Jones, does a slightly more elaborate job of preparing refreshments. As the weeks become months, the food preparation becomes increasingly more prominent. More and more time is spent around the table chatting, and less and less time is spent praying. The original purpose for the women's missionary guild was noble indeed, but their vision, which constituted the reason for their meeting, somehow went out of focus.

On numerous occasions in various dormitories and military barracks I have confronted young men with the claims of Jesus Christ. Inevitably, when I meet someone and tell him I would like to talk with him about Christ, his reply will be, "What denomination are you with?" Have we brainwashed the non-Christian world into believing that we are more interested in recruiting people to our particular denomination than we are to the person of Jesus Christ? It is so easy to fall into the trap of asking people to be faithful to pet programs rather than to the will of God. I learned long ago that those we are trying to recruit can tell the difference between the two.

• Do not create the impression that people are doing you or God a favor by being faithful to the cause of Christ.

The Apostle John relates an incident that occurred in the ministry of our Lord Jesus. The people wanted to crown Him as their king, but Jesus, sensing that their motives were impure, countered with some honest but hard-hitting observations. John says, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." At this point, Jesus did a rather startling thing. He turned to the Twelve and said to them, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:66,67)

I do not believe that the Lord Jesus was feeling sorry for Himself. No, our Lord Jesus was once again underlining the cost involved in being His disciple.

If we neglect this important principle, we run the risk of recruiting unfaithful men. Deuteronomy 20:8 records God's prerequisites for the men who were to be involved in battle. "And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, 'What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart'"

Getting involved with God has always been on a volunteer basis. Irrespective of how great the need—and the need is great—Christ will not

sacrifice quality in order to gain quantity. As His ambassadors, neither can we.

One day I was asked to preach in one of the churches in the town where I lived. The pastor was to be out of town. As I talked with one of the elders on the phone, I asked if he would like me to teach in the Sunday School as well as preach at the morning worship service. He assured me that this would not be necessary since they had their appointed Sunday School teachers who would do the job.

After the morning service I was standing by the door shaking hands with the members of the congregation as they left when suddenly the superintendent of the Sunday School bustled up to me. With a rather flustered look on his face, he stuffed some materials into my hand, saying, "Here, I would like you to teach the young adults class; Mr. Griffin is not at church today."

I pointed out to him that I had been assured that it would not be necessary for me to teach Sunday School, and for that reason I was not prepared. Turning to leave he mumbled, "Well, if you don't teach, no one else will; and besides, I am not that prepared for the lesson I have to take either!"

So there I stood with the Sunday School materials in my hand wondering how it was that such a thing could happen. I pondered it for some time afterward and finally decided that it was probably the result of something that took place months previously when the superintendent was in the process of recruiting teachers.

One by one, he would ask people to teach a class, and one by one they would turn him down with a statement to the effect that they did not feel qualified.

Now take the example of Mr. Elliott. He did not really believe that he was unqualified when he gave this excuse. If the superintendent had said, "Mr. Elliott, I realize that you are not a qualified teacher, but are rather incompetent in this field; however, because of our desperate

plight, I wonder if you would teach a Sunday School class," Mr. Elliott would have left the church in a rage. No, the excuse he used was his way of saying that he did not want to pay the price of getting involved.

With everyone declining, the superintendent got desperate and began to plead with some of the people. One person eventually conceded, "Well, all right. As a favor to you, I will go ahead and teach."

Now I ask you, with this kind of an attitude, what sort of job is he going to do? His preparation will be haphazard and will probably take place during the commercials as he watches his favorite television programs on Saturday night. And if he does not feel like showing up or if he has some other commitments on Sunday, he does not hesitate to be absent.

Our Saviour feels honored and privileged to have us committed as His disciples, but God forbid that we should feel that we are doing Him a favor in being faithful. Similarly, if we cannot staff our programs with the right kind of people, then we should seriously think about terminating the program. I believe that there is one thing worse than not having any program at all, and that is having a program with the wrong type of leadership.

• ***Grow into business—don't go into business.***

This principle teaches us that we should start small and build in depth rather than concentrate on becoming large and as a result end up being top heavy. When you try to go into business rather than grow into business, you spread your resources thin and dissipate your efforts (see Prov. 24:27).

Let's say that you and I decided that we wanted to go deer hunting together and our objective was to bag as many deer as we could. Early one morning we find ourselves at the edge of a large clearing where 30 to 40 deer are grazing. We have two guns with us, a 30.06 with a telescopic sight and a 20-gauge shotgun.

Excitedly I whisper to you, “Use the shotgun—that way we might hit almost every deer in the clearing.”

“But we won’t kill any of them that way,” you whisper back. “Let’s use the 30.06, for then we can at least get one, maybe even two.”

“Yes, but if you use the 30.06, all the rest of them will get away.”

Here, then, is our dilemma. Do we want the satisfaction of knowing that we hit every deer in the clearing even though it means that all of them will get away? Or, do we want the satisfaction of bringing home one or possibly two deer, knowing that in so doing we left the rest untouched. I am sure that we would be unanimous in our decision to use the 30.06 rather than the shotgun.

Our ministry should have a pulsating rhythm to it of thrust and conserve. First, recruit a small band of men and then throttle back and build deeply into their lives. It is only after you have properly disciplined them that you should thrust out again into another program of recruitment. Do not seek to involve yourself with more people than you can adequately handle.

• ***Tailor the job to the person rather than the person to the job.***

We must be extremely careful not to recruit people to use them. Our goal should be to help them, and people can usually tell the difference.

When the Lord Jesus met the rich, young ruler, He told Him to give away his wealth to the poor and then come and follow him. The Saviour was not trying to use the young man by asking him to lend support to the ministry, but rather was trying to meet his need—the first step being to divorce himself from his inordinate affection for wealth.

Prayerfully determine what the person you are helping needs and then help him in that area rather than finding out what he can do best and

asking him to do that. The time will come when we will want to maximize his gifts and abilities, but in the initial stages of the discipling process, we must major in his needs. Our Lord Jesus is far more interested in what a person is than in what he can do. “It is for you to be—it is for God to do.”

• ***Discipleship must take into consideration the development of the whole man.***

Development implies training. Someone might well say, “I thought we were discussing recruitment at this point, not training.” We are, but we must remember that in the Christian life, unlike other pursuits, recruitment and training go hand in hand. Let me illustrate.

When a young man is recruited into the Marine Corps, the first person he meets is a very polite, friendly officer who expounds to him all the virtues and advantages of the Corps. After the recruit has signed on the dotted line, he is sent to boot camp, and there meets the meanest, ugliest, most unpleasant man on the face of the earth, his drill instructor. The recruit’s initial reaction is, “What in the world have I gotten myself into?” But by then it is too late. There is absolutely nothing the recruit can do about it. The drill instructor could not care less how the recruit feels about him, the training process, or the Marine Corps in general. He is involved in training only, not recruitment.

This is not so in the Christian life. The Bible teaches that our involvement in Christ’s army is strictly on a volunteer basis—a man can leave anytime he wants. Recruitment, therefore, to discipleship must continue during the training process. We continue to recruit the would-be disciple to Christ by showing him that we are seeking to help him develop in every area of his life.

For the sake of simplicity, let me suggest that development can be categorized into three areas: teaching, training, and building. I will define teaching as the imparting of knowledge, training as the imparting of skill, and building as the imparting of character. The development

of our disciple must include all three: teaching, training, and building.

Suppose we want to teach our man to do evangelism. We sit him down and show him the various techniques, such as the ones we saw in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman. He learns how to open a conversation about Christ. He memorizes key verses on the various aspects of the Gospel. He may even master two or three illustrations that can be used when witnessing to someone. Having taught him these things, have we accomplished our job? No, for he has never gone out and talked to anyone about Christ.

So now we need to train him. As the two of us go out to do evangelism together, both of us are fearful, he more than I, so I promise that I will begin the conversation; all he needs to do is observe. We do this a number of times until gradually I begin to involve him in the conversation with me. As he becomes increasingly more comfortable and proficient, he takes more and more of the conversation himself. Finally he is doing all the talking, and I am only observing. He can now lead a person to Christ as well as I can—maybe better. Is my job of imparting evangelism to him now finished? No, not yet.

Suppose that after all this your man has no heart for evangelism? Suppose that in his theology he believes that God will save whom He will save and let perish whom He will let perish, and that, since in the final analysis evangelism is God's work, not man's, there is no need to get involved in evangelism. If this is the case, then he will cease to evangelize the day we part company.

One final factor is necessary for his development, the building process. Here we seek to change the man's sense of values, and thereby ultimately to affect his whole personality. You can see that the farther we go in the development process, the more difficult the task becomes. Building is far more difficult than either teaching or training. How do you build into a man's life? How do you go about influencing personality? Here are some suggestions.

- *Do a Bible study on the subject. Help him see God's perspective on the matter.*

- *Create an environment in which the desired character trait is evident. If he stays in an environment in which evangelism is evident, then the chances are he will embrace it as a conviction of his own.*

- *Most important, pray it into his life.*

Scripture says that Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Here we see the four areas of our Saviour's development as a young man:

- Wisdom—the intellect
- Stature—the physical
- In Favor with God—the spiritual
- In Favor with Man—the social.

When we recruit men and women to become disciples of Jesus Christ, we should think of their development in these four areas. This does not mean that we have to be an expert in each of these areas in order to train a disciple. Our job is not to accomplish the whole task but to see that it gets done.

This is where the body of Christ complements you in the disciple-making ministry. Draw on the experience and expertise of a variety of people. As you work with your Timothy, your job is simply to see that he gets all the help and attention that he needs—just as a parent does with his child.

- ***There must be a proper balance between love and rebuke.***

There is probably as much said in the Bible about love as about any other one subject. God's disposition toward us is one of love, and He expects our disposition toward others to be the same. You will remember that the Lord Jesus called love one of the marks of discipleship, for He said, "A new commandment I give unto you,

that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one for another.”

But this love must be blended with rebuke. Possibly one of the greatest weaknesses in the body of Christ today is that we have surrendered our responsibility to discipline one another. Solomon in all his wisdom was directly to the point on this subject when he said, “Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Proverbs 27:5,6).

A personal friend once shared with me that his application from Bible study was to pray that God would cause at least one person each week to rebuke him on some area of his life that needed attention. That’s quite a challenge, isn’t it?

“Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee” (Proverbs 9:8). Quite often, the reason people do not rebuke us is that they are afraid of our response. They are afraid we will take it in a negative way, and they do not want to have their friendship or relationship with us jeopardized. So, when they see things amiss in our lives and want to help us, they are constrained to keep quiet because they suspect that we are “scorners” rather than “wise men.”

When was the last time somebody came up to you and pointed out something wrong in your life? If it has not been for quite awhile, it is certainly not because your life is above reproach. Things need correction in your life just as they do in mine. The only way people will call these areas to our attention is if they realize that we are truly wise people who will recognize that any rebuke they administer is done in love.

People are drawn into discipleship by giant doses of love. But if love is to come across as biblical love, it must be blended with rebuke. The kind of people God can use are those who respond to such a blend; Jesus cannot use people who feel sorry for themselves when corrected.

• ***You recruit a man to discipleship by being his servant.***

The mark of leadership is servanthood. Chesty Puller, considered by many as “Mr. Marine,” stated once that the Marine Corps needed men who could lead, not command. A commander tells people what to do; a leader shows people what to do by personal example.

This is definitely one of the toughest aspects of the discipling process. All of us like to be pampered and waited upon, but few of us like to roll up our sleeves and wait on others. Yet, this is precisely how people are recruited to the cause of discipleship. Few things are as impressive as seeing a person voluntarily serve others.

Men, when was the last time that you served your wife by helping to do the dishes, or did some other job that needed doing around the house? When was the last time you helped your children by making their beds or by tidying their rooms for them?

All of us who know God’s Word like to be called servants, but none of us want to act like servants. As a Christian when you call me a servant, you pay me one of the highest compliments I can be paid. When you treat me like a servant, I feel insulted. We all want to be called the servants of Jesus Christ, yet we resist like crazy acting like servants of Jesus Christ.

• ***You reproduce after your own kind whether you like it or not.***

This is one of the most sobering truths in the Bible. Many cannot and will not identify with the Apostle Paul when he says, “Be ye followers of me.” We piously say to ourselves and our disciples, “Paul may have been able to say that, but I certainly could never say that. Don’t follow me, follow Jesus Christ.” The fact of the matter is your disciple will follow you whether you want him to or not.

When you begin to help a person in the Christian life, he will follow you just as naturally as a young child follows his parents, and more

likely than not, he will become what you are, not what you say. I have seen this again and again in the Christian life. The leader may preach repeatedly that people ought to be involved in evangelism but unless he himself is involved in it, the chances are very remote that his people will be involved. Many illustrations in Scripture bear witness to the fact that you reproduce after your own kind. Abraham passed his wife off as his sister in order to save his skin (Genesis 20:2). His son Isaac did the same thing (Genesis 26:7). The Bible tells us that Eli, the high priest, did a poor job in raising his sons (1 Samuel 2:12-17). He reproduced this quality in the life of his protege, Samuel (1 Samuel 8:1-5).

It is imperative, therefore, that you major on being the kind of person you want your disciple to become. You can know for certain that you will reproduce what you are into his life. That is why this book began with the chapter, "The Kind of Person God Uses." In order for these qualities to be in the life of your disciple, they must first be in your life.

If you suspect for a moment that the essential qualities of a disciple are not in your own life, then this is where everything must start for you. Go back to chapter 1 and begin by implementing qualities of godliness into your own life.