

3 Helping Christians Grow

Juan wondered how Maria always seemed to know just what little Manuel needed and how to provide the right care for his needs. Maria showed Juan a book on infant care written by a noted specialist at the university hospital. Maria's mother had purchased it for her while they waited for Manuel's arrival. The book discussed many of the things a new mother needed to know. Maria also explained that she had spent many hours watching her mother care for her younger brother and sister. Sometimes she babysat them while her mother was away. Thus, Maria learned how to care for a baby from the experiences of others and from her own experience.

Christians need to learn how to nurture spiritual growth—how to promote the spiritual development of others. The Bible reveals a divine method and some divine resources to help achieve the task.

In this lesson you will learn that disciple-making is the divine method for nurturing young believers and that the divine resources include the nature of the church, the ministry gifts, and the Holy Spirit. You will also discover that there are informal and formal patterns of nurturing spiritual growth. As you become involved in the task of disciple-making and utilize the resources God has provided, you will see lives changed gloriously: those you are helping to grow and your own as well. Such is the benefit of nurturing spiritual growth.

lesson outline

A Divine Method

Divine Resources

Patterns of Nurturing Spiritual Growth

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Show how the biblical concept of disciple-making relates to nurturing spiritual growth.
2. Discuss how Jesus made disciples.
3. Explain how the nature of the church, ministry gifts, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit relate to nurturing spiritual growth.
4. Distinguish between informal and formal patterns of nurturing spiritual growth.

learning activities

1. Study the lesson following the study plan given in the learning activities for Lessons 1 and 2.
2. Take the self-test and check your answers with those we have given at the end of the study guide.
3. Carefully review Unit 1 (Lessons 1–3), then complete the Unit Student Report for Unit 1 and send it to your GU instructor.

key words

adherent
emulate
expertise
hierarchy
identification

imbibe
imitation
incentive
interdependent
mimic

revelatory process
sympathetic
technique
unique
vocabularies

lesson development

A DIVINE METHOD

The task of the church collectively and of maturing Christians individually is to help Christians grow spiritually. You have learned that growth is natural and expected, yet there are conditions more favorable for proper growth. In helping Christians grow, we need to learn how to arrange the conditions to facilitate the natural tendency toward growth. The Bible reveals a divine method called disciple-making.

What A Disciple Is

Objective 1. *Show how the biblical concept of disciple-making relates to nurturing spiritual growth.*

A disciple is thought of as a “follower,” as one who follows the teaching of another. The word *disciple*, as it is used in the New Testament, literally means “learner;” however, more is implied than simply being a pupil. The term disciple implies a relationship with another person. Thus, one is a disciple in relationship with a teacher. It is possible for a learner to be guided by a teacher without embracing the teacher’s conclusions and values. But this is not so with a disciple. A disciple learns from the teacher and comes to share the teacher’s attitudes, actions, and values. A disciple becomes an adherent of the teacher. He is devoted to the teacher and desires to become like him. One is a disciple when he binds himself to another to acquire the theoretical or practical knowledge that his model displays. The view of the disciple-teacher relationship is perceived correctly as an informal relationship involving two people: the one living and acting as a model and the other seeking to emulate his example. It is not the same as the formal relationship which exists between a student and his professor.

An apprentice in a trade serves as an appropriate example of what a disciple is. The master craftsman has learned a trade from another who has taught him. He has developed his skills

in the trade under the watchful supervision of the master until he has acquired the expertise that sets him apart as a master. When a person does not have these skills but desires to learn the trade, he joins himself to a master craftsman for some time. He learns by observing the master craftsman and applying what he has observed. He strives to imitate the skill of the master, and thus develops his own technique and skills in the trade. In doing so, the apprentice tends to become like the master who teaches him. He follows the master craftsman's instructional example, and in the faithful application of his knowledge he becomes like the master.

In a sense, the process of disciple-making resembles the development of an apprentice. Because of the nature of their relationship, we can imagine that the apprentice increasingly takes on the characteristics of the master who teaches him. By associating with and by imitating the master, the apprentice learns the style, skills, and knowledge of the master. Similarly, a disciple conforms to the likeness of his teacher. Because Christians are becoming Christlike, they are considered to be disciples of Jesus.

Learned men in ancient times often maintained a group of disciples. Usually these disciples were young learners who associated closely with the scholars to learn from them as well as perhaps to serve their physical needs. The relationship between Eli and Samuel may be understood in this way (1 Samuel 1:21–28; 3:1). Ancient Greek philosophers, such as Socrates, had disciples, and the Jewish rabbis likewise had their adherents. John the Baptist was surrounded by a group of disciples, and so was Jesus. In each case, these disciples were bound to the teacher to learn from him, follow his teachings, and imitate him.

Application

- 1** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a)** The term learner fully describes the word disciple.
 - b)** The term disciple implies a relationship with another person.
 - c)** The disciple-teacher connection exists primarily on a formal level.
 - d)** The teacher becomes the disciple's model in terms of attitudes, actions, and values.
- 2** The process of disciple-making is similar to that which an apprentice undergoes as he seeks to become a master
- a)** because in both cases the one who receives training can be effective only after many years of training.
 - b)** in that the disciple learns by observing, being with, and doing the teacher's bidding.
 - c)** because the nature of both relationships is formal and is characterized by exacting standards.
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The ultimate goal of Christian nurture is to help Christians mature spiritually toward Christlikeness. Another way to state the same thing is to say that the goal of Christian nurture is to make disciples. It is essential to remember that the intended goal is Christlikeness, not my likeness nor your likeness. It is the life of Christ within that is to be matured into a full expression of Christlikeness. The apostle Paul undoubtedly had this in mind when he admonished Philippian Christians to emulate the attitude and spirit of Christ as He addressed himself to His redemptive purpose (Philippians 2:5–11).

This fact may be particularly important if you ever find yourself working with people of a culture different from your own. Your goal will not be to lead these people to become like you by adopting all of your cultural ways and values. Instead, your goal will be to lead them to be like Christ as expressed within their own cultural setting.

Application


- 3** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a)** Mature (and maturing) Christians strive to help other Christians mature spiritually toward Christlikeness.
 - b)** The goal of Christian nurturing is to produce sinless human beings who alone can bring glory to God through their superior knowledge.
 - c)** Leading disciples toward Christlikeness, the goal of Christian nurture, means that Christians everywhere will share the same cultural standards and values.
 - d)** The Scriptures admonish Christians to be models of Christlikeness so that non-Christians and new Christians can see the practical expression of the Christ life in practicing Christians.
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How Jesus Made Disciples

Objective 2. *Discuss how Jesus made disciples.*

Through His public teaching and because of the miracles He performed, multitudes followed Jesus and were called His disciples. They followed His teaching, continually learning from Him. From among these Jesus chose twelve men to enter into a very special relationship with Him. His intention was to make them into apostles—sent out ones. He planned to equip these twelve men as leaders and then send them out to continue the disciple-making work He had begun. This unique relationship continued with the Twelve until Jesus ended them with His Spirit and sent them into the world to preach His gospel. We can learn valuable lessons about the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship in disciple-making by observing the example of Jesus as He taught the Twelve.

Application

- 4** Circle the letter of the best answer based upon the lesson content in this section. The method of disciple-making which Jesus employed was
- a)** that of choosing selectively from among the multitude of would-be followers to get those who were willing to make a total commitment to Him from the beginning.
 - b)** one of recruiting many potential disciples and then eliminating those who did not demonstrate complete dedication to His cause.
 - c)** that of appealing to many for commitment through His public teaching ministry and training a smaller number of disciples to become master disciple-makers.
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Choosing the Twelve

Jesus chose the Twelve so that He could equip and send them out in His service, to make disciples of others. Read Mark 3:14 carefully. Two facts are significant in this context: Jesus called the Twelve first to be with Him and second to send them out in ministry. He wanted to equip them for a life of service to Him. To provide this equipping, He used the discipling method. They would be with Him—enter into a special relationship with Him. They would learn from Him by associating with Him, observing Him, and applying the principles He taught. But the special, close relationship was not the whole objective. The intimate relationship, fulfilling as it was, was the chosen means to the end. The end was equipping for service.

Being With Him

Jesus' reasons for choosing the Twelve to be with Him reflect His goal for them. His goal was not to communicate knowledge alone. Instead, He sought to communicate likeness. Jesus believed that a fully trained person would become like his teacher (Luke 6:40). The word in the original language of the New Testament (*koine* Greek) that is translated "fully

trained” in this verse means to complete thoroughly or to make complete. It carries the idea of making people complete or whole. Therefore, Jesus is saying “When one has been made complete, he will be like his teacher.”

The making of a disciple of Jesus focuses on making one a complete person, a mature believer. Jesus knew that the way to achieve this end was to bring the Twelve into intimate relationship with himself. Then He could be an example to them by doing just what He wanted to equip them to do.

Jesus wanted to imprint himself indelibly upon the Twelve. They must imbibe His spirit, share His passion for lost people, and long for His Father’s will to be done on earth as in heaven. He understood the dynamics of intimate association: to be like Him they must be near Him, feel His compassion, sense the depths of His love, and experience His grace. Being with the teacher results in becoming like Him. Being in His presence progressively transforms us into His likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). Being with Jesus, then, does more than produce people who know the mechanics of disciple-making; it produces a burden, a commitment to His cause, and a desire to see His will accomplished.

Application

- 5** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE completion. According to the foregoing content, Jesus chose the Twelve
- a)** because He knew that it was impossible to train large numbers of people effectively.
 - b)** to develop a hierarchy of leaders in the church and thus establish effective church government.
 - c)** to make disciples of them and equip them for service.
 - d)** to develop a succession of leadership that would be centralized in the birthplace of Christianity.
 - e)** to prepare them to make disciples of others.

- 6** Circle the letter in front of each correct response. According to our discussion, being with Jesus was important for which of the following reasons?
- a)** Jesus knew that complete persons would be like their teacher.
 - b)** Jesus knew that a fully-trained person would develop the tendency to think independently without regard for other disciples.
 - c)** Jesus knew that to be fully-trained, people must have long and consistent exposure to formal, classroom education, rigid discipline, and a long period of apprenticeship.
 - d)** Jesus knew that being with a teacher resulted in the disciple becoming like his teacher.
 - e)** Jesus knew that an intimate relationship produces likeness between a disciple and his teacher.
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Teaching Them

Jesus' involvement with the Twelve, while it can be considered correctly as a teaching-learning relationship, was not a typical school or classroom situation. A typical one-hour class setting would have been insufficient. Jesus and the Twelve lived together. They shared life's experiences. They interacted on the lessons the Master taught and reacted continuously to life situations which demanded the application of their knowledge skills.

Sometimes Jesus taught and the Twelve listened. They asked questions, seeking clarification concerning His teaching, and He responded gladly to their inquiries. In this environment of trust, Jesus fostered a spirit of openness. And in the course of time these twelve men developed a willingness to expose themselves to Him and to each other.

On many occasions the Twelve observed Jesus as He dealt with people. Often they imitated what they saw Him do. Frequently, however, His words and actions amazed them and they wondered at the wisdom, grace, and power He demonstrated (Mark 4:35–41; John 8:1–11). These occasions

that seemed incomprehensible made an indelible impression on the Twelve, and they pondered them long after their Teacher was gone. On some occasions Jesus deliberately included them in His actions, and thus they learned through practice.

The relationship which the Twelve had with Jesus involved responsibility. In accepting His call, the Twelve acknowledged His leadership role and committed themselves to obey Him. It was mutually understood that they were under His authority. Initially, the degree to which they were committed to Him was questionable; however, following the Resurrection and the Day of Pentecost, none could doubt their total obedience to Him. His challenge became their battle cry—a battle cry that still inspires contemporary disciples of Christ (Matthew 28:19–20).

Jesus taught the Twelve and they learned; however, His teaching was different from what many practice. It involved interpersonal relationships and interaction within their restricted group, as well as with people in a wide variety of real-life experiences. Jesus was the example which they sought to imitate. His purpose was to equip them for ministry by making them whole. They must be alert to the issues that concerned all people: equity, social justice, civic responsibility, poverty, loneliness, sorrow, fear, and death. They must see, as He saw, the extent of human need (Matthew 9:35–38). Their field was not limited to religious matters; it was as broad as the needs of the world (Matthew 13:38).

In some respects Jesus' instruction of the Twelve was similar to classroom teaching. For example, the Sermon on the Mount resembled a well-illustrated lecture. At other times He initiated questions that provoked discussion, such as a classroom instructor might (Matthew 16:13). He made use of proven instructional methods and techniques. In other respects His approach was informal (Matthew 19:13–15) and life-oriented (Matthew 19:16–26). Yet it must be recognized that the approaches Jesus used were appropriate for His goal: to make disciples, to nurture wholeness.

Application

7 Circle the letter in front of the statement which does NOT give one of the methods Jesus used to teach the Twelve. Jesus taught the Twelve

- a) by example and through shared experiences.
 - b) by requiring them to apply the truth they had learned and by their implicitly obeying His directives.
 - c) as He answered their questions and explained truth more fully to them.
 - d) primarily through formal classroom interaction.
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Commissioning Them

Not only did Jesus select the disciple-making for His own ministry, but He also commanded Christians to make disciples. Read Matthew 28:18–20 and observe the central feature of the resurrected Christ’s challenge to His disciples: “Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . and teaching them.” The initiative lay with His followers: they were to go. The nature and extent of their mission was clear: making disciples of all nations. The method involved baptizing and teaching. It is expected that Christians will go to share their faith. As they go, they are expected to make disciples. Thus, our Lord passed His method of disciple-making along as the model after which His followers were to pattern their efforts. The following discussion indicated what is involved in performing this central task.

Jesus gave this commission to make disciples shortly before He returned to heaven. By it He committed to His disciples the responsibility to carry on the ministry He began. In making this commission, Jesus included both the task to be done and the method by which it should be done. He made disciples of the Twelve and then commanded them to go to all nations to make disciples. He sent them out to repeat what He had done to them.

Since this Great Commission is the final teaching of Jesus to His disciples before He went back to heaven, we may conclude that disciple-making is the divinely intended method for

helping people grow toward Christlikeness. Christian nurture involves making disciples.

Application

8 Match the specific aspect of the commission (right) with the appropriate activity it was meant to generate (left). Answers may be used more than once.

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| ... a | The method by which disciple-making is to be accomplished | 1) Go |
| ... b | The work of believers in the world | 2) Make disciples of all nations |
| ... c | The initiative for disciple-making | 3) Baptizing-teaching |
| ... d | The extent of believers' work and witness | |

9 Circle the letter in front of the statement which completes correctly this sentence: Disciple-making is accepted as the divine method for Christian nurture because

- a)** it is logical and easy to accomplish.
- b)** the Twelve knew that it was the most natural way to gain a following.
- c)** it was the method commanded by Jesus.
- d)** it was a familiar system which all Jews understood, acknowledged, and supported.



DIVINE RESOURCES

The Bible reveals that God has given some divine resources to help accomplish the task of nurturing Christian growth. In this section you will consider three important divine resources: 1) the nature of the church, 2) the ministry gifts, and 3) the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Nature of the Church

Objective 3. *Explain how the nature of the church, ministry gifts, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit relate to nurturing spiritual growth.*

Jesus began to build His church during His earthly ministry (Matthew 16:18). The church includes all Christians: those who join themselves to Jesus, seek to grow to maturity in Him, and give expression to the germ of spiritual life He has given them (1 Corinthians 1:1–2).

The church is a living organism. This fact is seen in the Scriptures by the often-used comparison to a body. With this in mind, read carefully Romans 12:1–8, 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, and Ephesians 4:11–16, observing the nature of the church from the illustration of the body.

A body is made up of many different parts. Each part has a particular function. Every part is important because no other member can perform the function of another. The members are interdependent upon each other. If one part of the body fails to develop properly, the whole body is affected adversely. The body cannot be whole and function as it should unless every member functions as it was designed to operate. Because of the interdependence of the various parts of the body, the strength of the whole body comes to the aid of an underdeveloped or sickly part.

You may know of someone who has been badly burned or wounded in some other way. Without proper care the injury can quickly become infected. The result may be that the person becomes very sick. At this point the whole body comes to assist the wounded member, initiating the process of healing, for the healing process is the concern of the whole body. Therefore, after a person has successfully overcome a serious infection, his whole body, not just the affected part, is weakened and needs rest. This is because the strength and resources of the whole body come to the rescue of the weakened part.

In the body of Christ—the church—the strength and resources of all the members become a resource to help underdeveloped or weakened members achieve health, wholeness, and maturity. Weaker or less mature members can draw strength from stronger, more mature members of the Body.

The nature of the church—an organism of interdependent parts, which mutually strengthen the body—is a valuable resource in helping people grow toward spiritual maturity. The fact that the church is a loving community composed of people who love, care, and give sympathy is a valuable asset in nurturing spiritual growth. Properly, Christian nurture is a ministry of the church which seeks to lead converts into active, meaningful relationships within the local church, the expression of the body of Christ in a given place.

Application

10 Match the Scripture reference with the church/body concept. Some concepts may have more than one Scripture reference.

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| <p>... a The exercise of one's gift is limited only by the degree of his faith and the needs of the body.</p> | <p>1) Romans 12:1–8
2) 1 Corinthians 12:12–27
3) Ephesians 4:11–16</p> |
| <p>... b The gifts or ministries in the body of Christ were given to prepare God's people for service, unity of faith, knowledge of spiritual things, and spiritual maturity.</p> | |
| <p>... c The body of Christ is made up of interdependent parts, each of which is important to the function of the body.</p> | |
| <p>... d The fact that one has and exercises spiritual gifts calls for humble thanks, not pride of possession.</p> | |
| <p>... e Body ministries produce spiritual stature and discrimination, plus knowledge of body needs and how to help meet them.</p> | |
| <p>... f The body of Christ is a sympathetic unit; therefore, what concerns or affects one member affects the whole body.</p> | |
| <p>... g God has appointed various ministries for the church.</p> | |

- 11** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
- a)** The church is a living organism composed of many interdependent parts.
 - b)** In the church each member is expected to mature and function independently of all other members.
 - c)** In the church stronger, more mature members are a resource from which weaker, less mature members can draw understanding, care, and strength.
 - d)** If any part of the body of Christ fails to develop properly the whole body will suffer.
 - e)** The goal of Christian nurture is to develop the individual; it is not concerned with his relationship to the local church.
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The Ministry Gifts

God has given each believer a gift (or some gifts) to be used for spiritual ministry in the body of Christ. Four biblical passages teach that Christians have received such enablement for ministry: Romans 12:1–8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11–16; and 1 Peter 4:10–11. Study these Scriptures carefully. They contain a whole philosophy of ministry. The following statements form a summary of the important truth they teach:

1. Every believer receives one or more of the ministry gifts.
2. These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit.
3. Not everyone receives the same gift nor should he or she seek to exercise the same ministry.
4. The body needs the proper exercise of all the gifts.
5. The gifts are equipment for effective Christian service.
6. Proper exercise of the gifts results in the upbuilding of the body.
7. Individual believers are interdependent members of the body; therefore, they have a responsibility to all the other members of the body.
8. The gifts are to be exercised in the spirit of Christian love.

Proper exercise of the various ministry gifts results in the upbuilding of the whole body. In this way the ministry gifts help the spiritual growth of the different members. The church is a mutually ministering body. Each gift contributes to the edification of others. These ministry gifts are resources for the nurturing and upbuilding of Christian life. In this broad, general way the ministry gifts nurture spiritual growth.

Specifically, it should be observed that teachers are God's special gifts to the church. God has placed them uniquely in the church to nurture the spiritual life of others. Teachers bear special responsibility to help other Christians grow toward wholeness in Christlikeness.

Application

12 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement which explains how the ministry gifts nurture spiritual growth.

- a) The purpose of the ministry gifts is to enable some parts of the body of Christ to function for the benefit of the rest.
- b) The ministry gifts serve to upbuild the body of Christ.
- c) Since each believer has some ministry gift, he can minister to others and help them grow spiritually.
- d) God put teachers in the church to form a unique class of people which has special authority to teach the Bible.
- e) God put teachers in the church to nurture the spiritual growth of others by teaching God's Word to them.

13 According to the Scripture references and discussion in this section, each believer has what responsibility concerning the exercise of his or her gift? Each believer

- a) may use or refrain from using the gift as he or she pleases.
- b) is challenged to exercise the gift for the common good.
- c) must judge whether or not his or her gift is worthy of use as compared to the gifts of others.



The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

When Jesus gave His command to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), He promised His presence and power as enablement to accomplish this task. This order and the matter of the Holy Spirit’s relation to the Twelve were given to the disciples shortly before the Crucifixion. As charter members of the early church, the Twelve were representative of all those who would subsequently respond to the gospel. And what the Spirit’s relation was to them He will be to us also.

All newborn Christians need spiritual food (instruction) to grow. We lack spiritual understanding, spiritual appetite, and the incentive to learn spiritual truth. But we have the Holy Spirit, the Counselor and faithful Teacher, who stands ready to supply each of these and many other needs.

You discovered in Lesson 1 that the Word of God is the foundation of Christian nurture. The Scriptures, which reveal God’s nature, plan, and will for humans, are quickened by God. Second Timothy 3:16–17 and 2 Peter 1:20–21 disclose the Holy Spirit’s role in superintending the process of Scripture writing. First, the Spirit revealed the mind of God to the men He chose to record His truth (1 Corinthians 2:10–15). This revelation disclosed things to them they could not have known otherwise. As they wrote, the Holy Spirit guided and helped them, inspiring them to write exactly what God wanted them to write. While He employed their vocabularies, learning, and experience in the process, what they wrote was God’s Word, not their own. This enablement is referred to as inspiration and means literally “God-breathed.” Thus, God revealed His whole plan to us by His Spirit, and this we have in the sacred Scriptures.

In a sense, though, we share in this revelatory process, because the Holy Spirit illuminates and explains these truths to our hearts also. However, He does not come to reveal new truth to us, for God’s truth has been revealed finally, personally, and objectively in Christ. Experience shows that an outward revelation of truth is inadequate, because our knowledge always precedes our application

of the truth. We just do not do by nature the things required to grow spiritually (Romans 7). But the Holy Spirit, who is the Teacher, carries on the ministry of Jesus as His representative on earth. And just as He illuminated the minds of the disciples and reminded them of the truth Christ taught them, so the Holy Spirit illuminates the truth of the Scriptures to us. He brings new understanding, new comprehension, and new illumination. However, He does more than show us the truth; He brings us into the truth, helping us put it into action, making it real and significant in our lives. In this way Christ dwells within us and we carry on Christ's work in a way that glorifies Him. Thus, the Holy Spirit instructs us through the Word and nurtures us toward Christlikeness.

Moreover, the Spirit teaches us by inward illumination. He speaks to our hearts by His own personal influence and prompts us at certain times to do certain things. On occasion He convicts us when we have said or done something that is not consistent with true Christian character.

He teaches us in response to our sincere hunger for truth as we pray. He is the inerrant, the incomparable Teacher. Significantly, the Holy Spirit uses us to help others grow as we fill the office of teacher (Ephesians 4:11–12). As you teach God's Word, the Holy Spirit will enable you to understand this truth. Since He is present in every teaching-learning situation, you can be confident that He will help you communicate God's truth effectively. Then those you teach will receive the truth which nurtures spiritual growth. His divine energy strengthens and supports those who teach and those who receive spiritual truth.

Christian nurture is unique because of the Holy Spirit's ministry:

1. He caused God's Word to be written.
2. He helps us understand God's truth.
3. He empowers and enables us to communicate God's truth.
4. He helps us apply truth to our daily lives.
5. He prompts, influences, and convicts or reprovcs us.

The Holy Spirit is present to help both the teacher and the learner. The result is that Christians are nurtured, equipped, and empowered to grow toward Christlikeness.

Application

14 Read each of the following Scripture references concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit and respond to the question associated with each.

a) Matthew 28:18–20 and Luke 24:49. What promises are given in these verses?

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b) Acts 1:4–5, 8. What command is given and why?

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c) John 14:15–18, 26; 15:26. In His absence Jesus promised to send the to be with His followers forever, the The Holy Spirit was to be sent in Christ’s name to the disciples all things and to them of the things Christ has said to them. He was to about Jesus.

d) John 16:13–15. List the things Jesus said the Holy Spirit would accomplish when He came.

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e) 1 Corinthians 2:5–15. What does the Spirit do in this instance and why?

15 Match the specific ministry of the Holy Spirit (right) with its appropriate description (left).

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| <p>... a Activity in which the Holy Spirit corrects one for doing or saying something inconsistent with Christian conduct</p> | <p>1) Revelation
2) Inspiration
3) Illumination
4) Conviction or reproof</p> |
| <p>... b Activity by which one is borne along by the Spirit so that He says what God wants said</p> | |
| <p>... c The act through which the Spirit discloses the mind, will, or purposes of God which could not otherwise be known</p> | |
| <p>... d Activity by which the Spirit enlightens believers concerning the work of Christ and prompts and directs their lives progressively toward Christlikeness</p> | |
| <p>... e Activity of the Spirit by which one learns what God has in store for him or her</p> | |

16 In your notebook, explain briefly how the Holy Spirit nurtures spiritual growth.



PATTERNS OF NURTURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Objective 4. *Distinguish between informal and formal patterns of nurturing spiritual growth.*

The church collectively and believers individually are challenged to nurture spiritual life, helping people develop toward Christlikeness. In many churches this task of nurturing has been centralized in a Christian education program or department. Other churches have tended to view this

ministry of disciple-making a bit differently, believing that nurturing arises out of the regular ministries of the church and the informal associations provided by the church. While approaches to Christian nurture differ, the fact remains that Christian nurture requires both formal and informal methods.

Regardless of the approach, God's Word is the spiritual food which nurtures spiritual growth. Intimate, caring Christian relationships also promote spiritual growth. Communicating the truth of God's Word is often done by more traditional, formal approaches to teaching-learning. Relational teaching is accomplished through more informal techniques, in which a more mature Christian associates with less mature Christians and becomes an example to them. The less mature Christian learns by identification and imitation. We, then, can say that the ministry of nurturing spiritual growth requires both informal and formal patterns.

Informal patterns involve nurturing spiritual growth through activities other than traditional schooling methods. The relationships Jesus established with the Twelve, the way He approached the task of making disciples of them, is an excellent example of the informal pattern of Christian nurture.

The relationships which exist in the body of Christ, the exercise of the mutuality of ministry as each uses his ministry gift for the development and welfare of all other members, clearly show that the church is equipped for the relational teaching that is characteristic of informal patterns of Christian nurture.

Formal patterns of nurturing Christian growth are intended more for communicating facts and information. Learning Bible content, doctrinal information, and material that can be classified as knowledge can be taught well through formal patterns. Formal patterns closely resemble schooling. In the process of making disciples Jesus sometimes used traditional, formal patterns of teaching information. He did not use a schoolroom as the setting, but He did make use of the approach and is considered to have been masterful in its use. While the goal of Christian nurture is not a head filled with facts and knowledge but a life

lived with Christ as the center, some factual information must be learned. Classes, seminars, and similar activities are excellent means of transmitting knowledge to less mature Christians. This knowledge becomes an agent of change, enabling Christians to increase in spiritual stature and become more Christlike.

Effective Christian nurture will include both informal and formal patterns. If you are helping another Christian grow spiritually you will want to build an intimate relationship with him. You will want to model the Christ life in such a way that he can see an example of how it is meant to be lived by watching you. You will also want to help this person understand biblical and doctrinal truth. You may find yourself teaching classes in the formal tradition of education. Christian nurture involves both informal and formal patterns. Neither alone is sufficient. If you are helping Christians grow spiritually, you will need to make use of both patterns.

Application

17 Distinguish between formal and informal patterns of nurturing spiritual growth, placing 1) in front of formal examples and 2) in front of informal patterns.

- ... **a** Jesus' method of nurturing spiritual growth was accomplished by being with the Twelve.
- ... **b** Paul admonished Timothy to be an example or model of Christian life.
- ... **c** Pastor Berg gives a series of studies to those who are seeking to become more mature. Students have assignments and are expected to be able to discuss the lesson content in class.
- ... **d** Pastor Devon has his congregation organized into small groups for monthly meetings, where they can have fellowship, pray, or study as they feel led.
- ... **e** Paul states that he was thoroughly trained in the Law under Gamaliel.



self-test

1 The biblical concept of disciple-making is related to growth and development in

- a)** an indirect way, since one is of primary and the other of secondary importance.
- b)** no way: one can only make disciples out of the spiritually mature.
- c)** the sense only that both are spiritual matters.
- d)** a direct way, for as one becomes a disciple and develops spiritually he becomes like his Master.

2 Disciple-making is similar to the process by which an apprentice becomes a master because (according to this lesson)

- a)** a disciple acquires the skills of the teacher by imitating his teacher's theories and ideas.
- b)** the disciple learns by conforming to the likeness of his teacher, growing spiritually in the process.
- c)** a disciple cannot be effective until he has served for years as an assistant.
- d)** the disciple must select only the best teacher if he is ever to become a mature teacher himself.

3 The purpose or goal of disciple-making is to help people grow toward

- a)** spiritual self-sufficiency.
- b)** adequacy in social life.
- c)** Christlikeness.
- d)** the apostolic model.

4 Jesus nurtured spiritual growth, according to Mark's Gospel, by having the Twelve with Him and sending them out so that they would be

- a)** equipped for service and seasoned in the application of disciple-making principles.
- b)** near enough to be corrected when they made mistakes.
- c)** under His influence and thus incapable of thinking or acting on their own.
- d)** tutored adequately in both theory and practice and thus able to conform to current educational practice.

5 The nature of the church is a significant resource in nurturing spiritual growth because

- a)** only institutional strength and resources can meet the vast amount of human need.
- b)** its organizational structure is necessary to dispense the specific growth materials needed by individual believers.
- c)** the church is an organism of interdependent parts which lends body support, strength, and health to each part.
- d)** the church collectively, and not members individually, has been given the assignment of nurturing spiritual growth.

6 Ministry gifts nurture spiritual growth as

- a)** a broad range of believers exercising various gifts is able to minister effectively to the growth needs of developing believers.
- b)** a few members of the body of Christ exercise gifts for the benefit of many developing members who do not possess gifts.
- c)** some select believers develop stature and status in the body of Christ, exercising their gifts from time to time.
- d)** one responds to the prompting of the Holy Spirit: if he responds, he is rewarded by spiritual growth; if he does not he won't merit such growth.

7 Which statement does NOT represent one of the ways the Holy Spirit nurtures spiritual growth?

- a)** He gave us God's Word and helps us understand it.
- b)** He moves us to obey our own will.
- c)** He helps us communicate God's truth and also apply it to our daily lives.
- d)** He prompts, convicts, and influences us in our daily lives.

8 The formal patterns of nurturing Christian growth are characterized by

- a)** little or no structure and a one-to-one student/teacher relationship.
- b)** rigid structure and very little flexibility in approaching the teacher-learning situation.
- c)** the use of traditional educational methods which are often associated with classroom situations.
- d)** the association of teacher and learner on a relational basis.

- 9** The informal patterns of nurturing Christian growth are characterized by
- a)** a loose or careless approach to the learning situation with a disregard for formal, traditional learning methods.
 - b)** the casual approach people employ in transmitting knowledge.
 - c)** reliance on example apart from learning factual information, which may contaminate pure character.
 - d)** personal associations and relationships, modeling or identification, and activities.
- 10** Of formal and informal patterns of nurturing Christian growth we can say most accurately that
- a)** formal patterns work best for mature Christians while informal patterns are best for less mature Christians.
 - b)** effective Christian nurture will include both patterns, for each has an important function in the growth process.
 - c)** traditionally, formal patterns have been used exclusively; however, today the informal approach is considered best.
 - d)** large, organized groups use formal patterns to the best advantage; whereas, smaller ones find the informal approach best.

Before you continue your study with Lesson 4, be sure to complete your unit student report for Unit 1 and return the answer sheet to your GU instructor.

answers to study questions

- 9 c)** it was the method commanded by Jesus.
- 1 b)** and **d)** are true
- 10 a)** 1) Romans 12:1–8
b) 3) Ephesians 4:11–16
c) 2) 1 Corinthians 12:12–27
d) 1) Romans 12:1–8
e) 3) Ephesians 4:11–16
f) 2) 1 Corinthians 12:12–27
g) 1) Romans 12:1–8 and 3) Ephesians 4:11–16
- 2 b)** in that the disciple learns by observing, being with, and doing the teacher’s bidding.
- 11 a), c), and d)** are true.
- 3 a)** and **d)** are true
- 12 b), c), and e)** are true
- 4 c)** that of appealing to many for commitment through His public teaching ministry and training a smaller number of disciples to become master disciple-makers.
- 13 b)** is challenged to exercise his or her gift for the common good.
- 5 c)** and **e)** are true

- 14 a)** That He would be with them always and that He would send what the Father promised to clothe them with, heavenly power.
- b)** They were to stay in Jerusalem until they received the Father's promised gift, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's coming on them would enable them to become Christ's worldwide witnesses.
- c)** Counselor, Spirit of Truth, teach, remind, testify
- d)** He would guide His followers into all truth, not speak on His own, speak only what He hears (that is, He would faithfully represent Jesus), reveal future events, and glorify Jesus by teaching Jesus' followers His words.
- e)** He searches the things of God. This He does so that He may reveal to us what God has provided for us. His teaching gives us spiritual discernment and helps us mature spiritually.
- 6 a)** Jesus knew that complete persons would be like their teacher.
- d)** Jesus knew that being with a teacher resulted in the disciple becoming like his teacher.
- e)** Jesus knew that an intimate relationship produces likeness between a disciple and his teacher.
- 15 a)** 4) Conviction or reproof
- b)** 2) Inspiration
- c)** 1) Revelation
- d)** 3) Illumination
- e)** 1) Revelation and 3) Illumination. (The Spirit discloses the Word of God and in so doing the believer is illuminated or enlightened.)
- 7 d)** primarily through formal classroom interaction.

16 Initially the Holy Spirit was the agent of revelation, communicating God's truth to man. Since Christ's first coming, He serves as the Counselor, the ambassador, of our Lord to all believers. He illuminates Christ's words to our hearts. He quickens us to receive enlightenment from God's Word, reproves us when we do or say things inappropriate to Christian conduct, checks us when a course of action may be harmful, teaches us, and influences us for good. In addition, He enables us to teach others, giving us both divine wisdom and insight into the truth so that we can help them grow and mature spiritually.

- 8 a** 3) Baptizing-teaching
b 2) Make disciples of all nations
c 1) Go
d 2) Make disciples of all nations

- 17 a** 2) Informal
b 2) Informal
c 1) Formal
d 2) Informal
c 1) Formal



Growing and Learning

Lessons

- 4** Discovering and Doing
- 5** Developing and Learning
- 6** Like Teacher, Like Learner
- 7** Guiding the Learning Experience