

## **Taking the Next Step: Learning How to Evangelize and Disciple Others** **Edited and expanded by Bob Young**

[original article by Angel Manuel Hernandez Gutierrez]

One learns by doing. Therefore, the only way to train people in practical discipleship matters is to help them develop specific actions by which they can experience and live out the teaching. This is “practicing what you preach.”

Theology is given power in the development of actions that correspond to the belief system. Teachers must accept that they are also models. Once correct beliefs are in place, development of a correlating life and action is essential. Teaching is not just mental—teaching is to be applied. Teaching has not “taken hold” if there is no learning, and there is no learning if there is not subsequent practice of the principles taught. One sister in Christ put it this way: “If your doctrine doesn’t change the way you live, why have doctrine?”

The *Hispanic American Mission Dictionary* says, “The theoretical doctrine does not constitute a true theology, but needs to be given effect in the action.” Kingdom leaders seek correct beliefs coupled with correct actions. Jesus rejected the Pharisees because they said and did not do (Matt. 23:3). The Word of God must be practiced. Jesus blesses those who hear and put into practice his teachings (Matt. 7:24-27). A person who is not both hearer and doer of the Word is like one who forgets what he has seen after looking at himself in a mirror (Jas. 1:22-25).

Many churches seek ways to improve and increase evangelism efforts. The only way to train people in evangelism is to help them learn and develop specific actions—to experience and live out the teaching. Training occurs best when the actions are seen. People learn to evangelize by watching others evangelize. Church leaders who want to train the local church in evangelism must themselves be evangelizing and providing an example. Jesus taught by how he lived. When his disciples heard him pray, they wanted to know how to do it. They asked him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). Jesus did not give them theory—he gave them specifics. He demonstrated prayer.

Many churches seek ways to improve discipleship efforts. How can new Christians be strengthened in the faith? Most people learn best by observing. The best discipleship efforts bring together new Christians and experienced Christians. In one church, we developed a discipleship program so that every member was in a small group and every small group had a church leader in the group. The result was that the church doubled in attendance in less than a decade. Small group attendance exceeded attendance at the assembly.

Applying the same principle, effective mission work must help the “locals” learn how to live and practice the Christian life—empowering them, training, mentoring, and facilitating. The best mission work will be done by those who are already on the scene. Reaching out with the gospel is best done by the local church—not by visitors who come to spend a few days from 1000 miles away.

Whether in evangelism, disciple development, or mission work, the principle is vital. Help people combine learning and practice. Provide practical living examples.