





The Shared Life

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# INTRODUCTION

## DEAR WORLD CHANGER...

If you are like most people I talk to, you want to follow Jesus and make a difference. You have dreams of changing the world one day, but you also want to make a difference where you are right now.

If you have ever felt this way, you are not alone. In fact, I've been there myself. I used to daydream about reaching the nations and seeing culture transformed, but somehow at the same time, I felt stuck in the cubicle of my life. But then I discovered something that changed my life for ever:

### **Making disciples makes a big difference!**

In this ebook, I am excited to share some of what I have learned over the past 20 years about making a meaningful impact by investing in a few people. 2000 years after Messiah came to earth, Heaven's best plan to disciple the nations and change the world is still rooted in investing the good news of Jesus into a handful of ordinary people.

I pray that you would be encouraged by your journey through The Shared Life. I know that God wants to meet you in your desire to make a difference for Him.

Blessings,

**Brad Mckoy**

Author, Culture Of The Few

## **DISCIPLESHIP IS NEVER A PROGRAM**

This guide is intended to provide an intro to some of the practical aspects of approaching discipleship through the lens of relationship. It is not comprehensive, by any means. as I take the time to record some of what I have learned, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed by what it really means to invite people into our lives, to follow Jesus with us. It is a real mess without a doubt, but it is so worth it. I pray this blesses your journey.

## **DISCIPLESHIP IS ALWAYS ABOUT POINTING PEOPLE TO JESUS**

Here is my working definition for discipleship:

Discipleship is the process of making an intentional decision to invite someone to journey with you as you follow Jesus. It involves a commitment to follow through on that invitation. It's essence is expressed clearly in 1 Corinthians 11:1 when Paul says imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.



# PREC-E-DENT

noun

'presəd(ə)nt/

an earlier event or action that is regarded as an example or guide to be considered in subsequent similar circumstances.

**From the very beginning of this ebook, I want to be honest with you.**

...I have not discovered the next big secret in discipleship.

...I don't have any clever shortcuts that will make it easy.

In fact, all that I have to offer comes from what I have learned as I have been on a simple quest to find Jesus and follow Him in everyday ways.

Most of the people I talk to have already figured out that there really isn't a program out there that has the ability to produce life long followers of Jesus, but are looking for some way to make a real impact.

That is why precedents are important!

Precedents precede us. When we have the opportunity to look back at history to discover examples, those examples can serve as guides for us.

Let's look at three examples that can serve as guides for us on our journey into relational discipleship.

## EXAMPLE #1: JESUS

The best way to learn the art of disciple making is by looking at the Master Himself.

Why would we look anywhere else?

After all, the way Jesus gave Himself to 12 ordinary men 2000 years ago is still impacting the way we live today.

The Jesus Way of investing in people provides us with a vivid picture of what success looks like in terms of disciple making AND leadership development.

Here are three things to keep in mind as you follow Jesus in the way you make disciples.

### **1. Jesus was specific in who He INVITED to follow Him.**

While the message of the gospel is open to everyone, even Jesus didn't try to disciple everyone on a daily basis. (Mk 3:13)

### **2. Jesus INTENTIONALLY CALLED those HE would send out.**

When Jesus called the twelve to walk with Him, it was with the purpose that they would be with Him until they were ready to go make disciple of the nations. (Mk 3:14-15)

### **3. Jesus INVESTED Himself in His disciples.**

Walking through life with the twelve was more than a missions assignment, He loved them to the end. (John 13:1)

## EXAMPLE #2: PAUL

While Jesus provides us with the absolute best precedent for what it looks like to make disciples, the life of Paul adds so much value to those looking for followable examples.

Let's face it, sometimes it can seem intimidating to try to follow after someone who is sinless and perfect in every way. If you are like me, some of your biggest questions about discipleship come from the fact that you don't have it all figured out. It can sometimes feel risky to welcome others into the unfinished places of our life.

Enter Paul, the one who called himself the chief of sinners.

While there was an undeniable, supernatural call of God on his life, Paul lets us know that his life was full of weak places where the perfect strength of God could be seen.

Following after the footsteps of Jesus, an imperfect Paul left clear instructions to his spiritual son, Timothy, about being intentional to invest in others. 2 Timothy 2:2 reveals how faithful discipleship is passed on to "faithful men who will teach others also."

This beautiful thread of relationships has been going on for generations and is still a big part of God's best plan for discipling the nations.

## EXAMPLE #3: FAMILY

The picture of natural and spiritual family is an important reminder of God's intention for His children to be fruitful and multiply.

From the dawn of creation, the Father has planned for life on this earth to be reproduced after it's own kind. Genesis 1:11 reveals a beautiful discipleship message to us.

***"The tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself..."***

Inside of my life, is a seed that is able to be multiplied into another life. It's not the seed of my own life that has the power to make a difference, but it's the seed of Christ.

Through family, life has been passed on throughout the history of mankind. God's design for family was that out of committed love, new life would flow. Making disciples needs to follow that same design.

The importance of the precedent that family provides us with in terms of disciple making is that it has always God's intention for us to reproduce after our own kind.

As a follower of Jesus, it is normal and natural for me to be a part of reproducing other followers of Jesus.



# THE INTEGRATED LIFE

This might seem like a no brainer,  
but the key to sharing life is...  
**ACTUALLY SHARING YOUR LIFE.**

That's right, one of the biggest practical tips that I can give you in living out relational discipleship is learning to live an integrated life.

This is an essential part of following the Jesus way of disciple making.

SO...

What is an integrated life?

It means learning how to intentionally share our lives with those we are discipling.

CAUTION: This will require altering your life, but isn't that what you signed up for?

Jesus did more than teach his disciples in a class room. He shared his life with His few as they walked and talked, shared meals and prayed together. This type of lifestyle is often uncomfortable, but necessary for cultivating healthy long-term relationships.

Here are 4 areas where you can practice living this out.

## #1 INVITE PEOPLE INTO YOUR HEART

There's nothing worse than being in a relationship that feels like a project. The very best way that you can make sure your relationships don't feel that way is by learning to share the core parts of yourself with those you're discipling.

What does that look like?

It starts with making space in your life to embrace vulnerability.

That's right, it's time to give vulnerability a hug! This is an example of what I mean by altering our lives.

The broken culture of this world trains us to shield our hearts from others - as an attempt to protect ourselves, but God has deposited Himself in your heart. Learning to share your heart will allow God to overflow from your life into others.

Knowing the things that God has distinctly deposited in you, and being faithful to share and grow those things in your relationship with others, will lead to an authentic place of heart connection. This vulnerability will also help others build trust with you, allowing them to feel safe to share their lives with you.

## #2 INVITE PEOPLE INTO YOUR FAMILY

Another great way to build a shared life is by making room for those you're discipling to have access to your family and your other close relationships. I've found that opening up my home and inviting people to know and be known by my family has been one of the most helpful things in building relationships that last.

Our culture is hungry for healthy, loving expressions of family. Your family doesn't

have to be perfect to be a real blessing to others. In fact, you modeling what it looks like for you to follow Jesus with your family, can empower people to imagine what an ongoing lifestyle of following Jesus can look like.

Another reason why sharing your family with those you disciple is important, is that when the rubber meets the road and things get tough, it is important for your family to already have a sense of connection with whoever you're discipling. This is essential to keep people feeling that they are a project, pulling you away from your family. Instead, because of love, we can joyfully pay the price to embrace the mess of discipleship together!

### **#3 INVITE PEOPLE INTO YOUR DAILY PROCESS**

This may be the most practical place to practice the integrated life. Don't be afraid to invite someone to run errands with you or work on a project around your house.

I used to feel insecure about inviting people into my everyday stuff, but have realized over time that some of my greatest discipleship moments have happened while I was doing dishes! It has been so powerful to invite others to sit and chat with me while I take care of my daily responsibilities.

Not only does this allow me to spend more time with those I am discipling, but it is an expression of vulnerability. It's not that I like doing dishes, but it is a part of life.

When I make room to share this part of my life with others, I am acknowledging that doing everyday responsibilities is a part of following Jesus too.

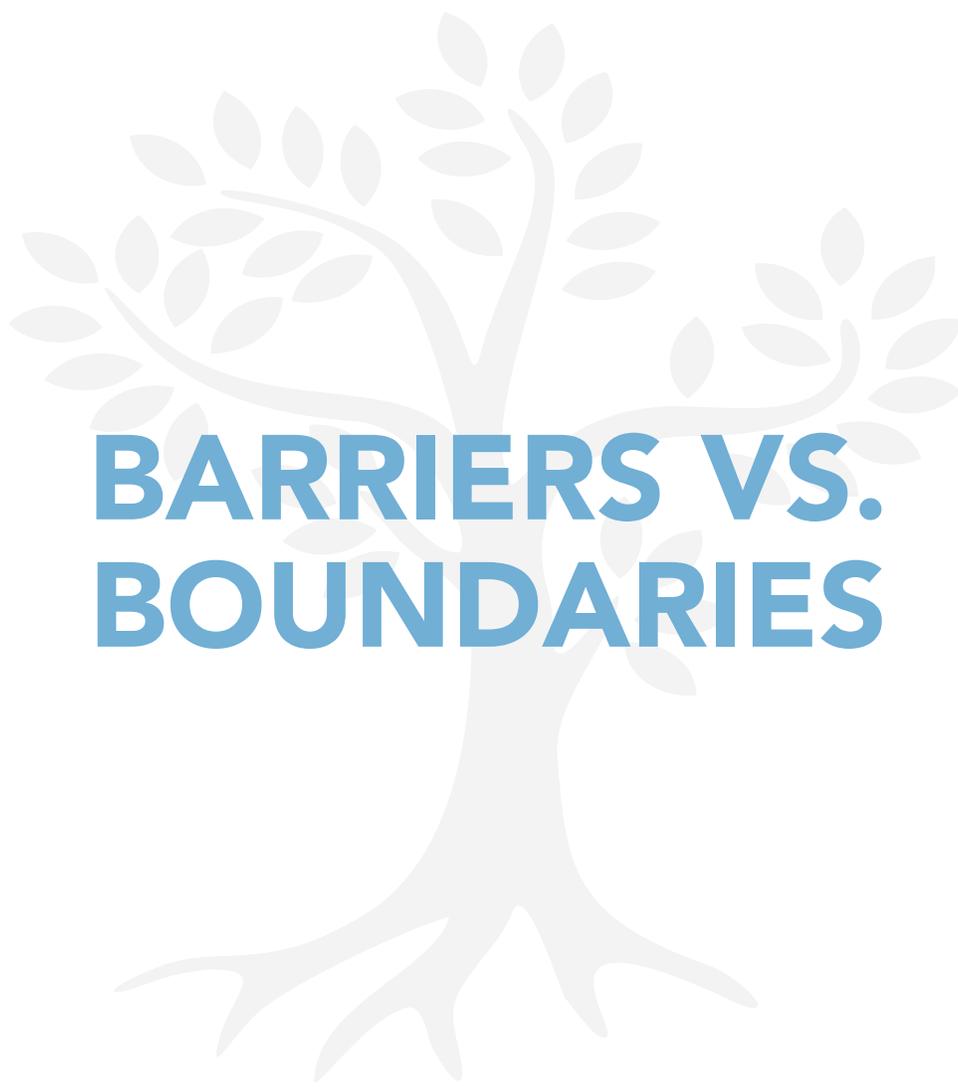
Remember, Jesus taught His disciples while they journeyed through the activities of life. These everyday moments often impact people far beyond classroom teachings or platform moments.

## #4 INVITE PEOPLE INTO YOUR DREAMS

In the same way that sharing your heart gives people access to your life now, sharing your dreams invites them into your future.

There is most likely a strong connection between the dreams that you carry and the deepest desires of your heart. Psalm 20:4 teaches us there is a connection between what you carry in your heart and your God given purpose.

That means that the journey to seeing clear dreams and desires form in your heart. Learn to share the prayer-dreams of your heart with people in a way that allows them to feel like you've invited them to participate and shape those precious things together with you. This is essential because it empowers people to envision a long lasting journey with you.



# **BARRIERS VS. BOUNDARIES**

“We need to talk... We need to establish some healthy boundaries.”

Have you ever experienced one of these conversations?

Whether you were the initiator or the recipient, these chats are often difficult. In fact, I would say that many people are terrified by the thought of having an awkward, uncomfortable conversation with someone they are disciplining. That is why it can seem easier to settle for the more distant, safe confines of programs and formulas.

But Peter writes that we should love one another deeply, from the heart because we are born again. It is hard to love deeply when maintaining distance is our primary concern.

We are called to grow real connections with each other in purity and sincerity.

The problem with thinking that I need to protect myself from getting too close to people, of course, is that the relational gap that keeps me from being hurt by people, also makes it difficult for me to impact them.

## **SO... WHAT SHOULD WE DO?**

Before we go on, I need you to know that I am not against establishing boundaries. I think they are imperative to building healthy long-term relationships!

The problem is that most of what we call boundaries are actually barriers, and are often established as a reaction to something not going well. We know that discipleship is messy, so we can't act surprised when the mess happens.

The thing is, when the mess happens, it never feels good. If we have not prepared ahead of time, the instant that the messiness starts, it will feel unhealthy. But often in discipleship, the mess is a part of the forming and transforming of new life in the hearts and lives of those that we are pointing to Jesus.

So, every mess is not unhealthy!

But...

Don't mistake what I am saying. Sometimes we do find ourselves in unhealthy situations or relationships. When you do, ask for help. Never stay isolated in an unhealthy place. Reach out to a leader for wisdom on how to navigate the situation.

But for now, let's focus our energies on growing Godly, healthy relationships instead of avoiding unhealthy ones.

Let's look at how I am defining boundaries and barriers.

Then we will look at how to make sure we are establishing the right things in our relationships.

**BARRIERS:**

Barriers are meant to keep other “unhealthy” people away from me. I build barriers when I am drained or afraid that I will be taken advantage of.

**VS.**

**BOUNDARIES:**

Boundaries are established for the health of my heart and my relationships with others. I build boundaries because I value others and I want to make sure that pure love can grow.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE...**

As you can tell by my working definitions, I have some pretty strong feelings about how I am using these words.

Barriers are used to separate and divide in a way that builds exclusion.

Boundaries provide clear definition that allows life to grow in a healthy way.

I recently spent some time looking at Scripture to see what God had to say about this topic. While God has a lot to say about boundaries, there is not as much “barrier” language used in the telling of God’s story, and what is mentioned is often not very positive. Here is an example.

***But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... (Ephesians 2:13-14)***

Sometimes, constructing boundaries to keep me safe from unhealthy situations may seem like the only way out of a bad situation. When you are in a bad situation, I pray that God would give you wisdom on how to handle it - but mostly, I want to encourage you by pointing out how setting Godly boundaries can reduce your need to build barriers.

Boundaries are biblical. We should embrace them.

Let’s look at how they can help us build healthy discipling relationships.

## **BUILDING GODLY BOUNDARIES...**

Many books could be written on establishing godly boundaries, but for the purpose of this eBook, let me point out three things that will help you in your relationships.

### **1. Don't Wait! Establish Boundaries at the Beginning.**

Much of what I have learned about how God establishes boundaries, I have learned from the way He created the world. He always seems to establish boundaries at the beginning, before there are problems.

The creation story is as much about boundaries as it is about creating. God separates light and dark, sea and sky, sea and land. In Proverbs 8, Wisdom was present "at the beginning, before there was ever an earth"... when God set limits to the sea so that the waters would know where to go.

Don't wait to set expectations of what sharing life and following Jesus together should look like. Make it a part of your invitation to journey together.

### **2. Establish boundaries to keep things healthy.**

This is a vital part of establishing healthy discipling relationships. If we wait until we are in the midst of unhealthy relationships to establish boundaries, it will most likely feel like we are trying to disconnect from people instead of grow in relationship with them.

Think about how different it will feel for you and for those you are discipling if you are able to communicate the value of wanting to make sure you grow a strong relationship **INSTEAD** of someone feeling like they are having a breakup conversation.

For me, establishing boundaries upfront will include me expressing how excited I am to follow Jesus together. I also include my commitment to my wife and daughter. Here is an example of one thing that I would say:

*“The way we follow Jesus as a family means that I try to be responsible and honoring as a dad and as a husband. If my wife calls while we are together, I will stop and answer to see if she needs anything. I just want you to know that up front...”*

### **3. Make your boundaries clear.**

This probably seems obvious, but it actually is one of the most important things you need to know. Be clear in sharing the expectations you have with those you are discipling, and then try to consistently follow through with those things.

For example, it is important to establish that gossip will not be a part of your journey together. Communicate that clearly, but then hold yourself accountable to follow through on that. You will avoid the confusion and frustration of blurry boundaries by carefully communicating what matters to you.



# INTENTIONAL INVESTMENT

Make disciples intentionally.  
It is part of living life on purpose.

I sat in the booth of a local burger joint a bit confused. I was a senior in high school and a leader from my youth group was trying to speak into my life. But what he said didn't make sense to me at that moment.

It still doesn't today.

He told me that he had been accidentally discipling me. I have to admit that I was pretty unfamiliar with the concept of discipleship, but it just didn't sound like something that should be done accidentally.

In fact, I would say that intentionality is the most important key to living a lifestyle of disciple making. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the apostle Paul lays out the importance of intentional investment in 2 Timothy 2:2.

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

I want to share 6 areas where it is important to be intentional.

## #1 BE INTENTIONAL WITH WHO YOU ARE INVESTING IN:

One of the biggest hurdles in making disciples is actually getting started with someone. But where do you start?

I would encourage you to take some time to pray about who you should be spending time with.

Proverbs 16:15 has been a great help to me in figuring out how to discern who I invest in. In the light of the king's face is life, and his favor is like a cloud of the latter rain.

Learn to recognize God's favor on relationships and follow that favor!

Remember, this is not a program. It is a relationship. Don't try to invest in everyone. Build a connection with someone you can intentionally follow Jesus with.

## #2 BE INTENTIONAL WHAT YOU ARE INVESTING IN:

Make sure that you start your relationship by investing the essentials of what it means to follow Jesus to those you are discipling. Start with reading the stories of Jesus together. It is important that you point people to the actual life of Jesus.

It is also important to impart what you know that God has entrusted to you. Paul knew there was something that he had invested into Timothy. He told Timothy to pass that on!

Ask God for clarity on what He has entrusted to you so you know what to invest in others.

### **#3 BE INTENTIONAL WHEN YOU ARE INVESTING:**

Discipleship costs us something. There will always be a price to pay in terms of time and energy, so it is good to recognize that before you begin.

Don't allow the threat of the cost defer you to a more convenient time. Make room in your normal, everyday life to make disciples. It's important.

With that in mind, be aware of the season you are in, and invest according to that season, but beware when you go for long seasons without having time for discipling relationships.

### **#4 BE INTENTIONAL WHERE YOU ARE INVESTING:**

This probably doesn't sound to spiritual, but it is intensely practical. While I have discipling relationships with people who live away from me, my primary focus is to disciple people that I can follow Jesus with together.

While there are exceptions to this, make sure that there is someone that you are discipling that lives in proximity to you. This is essential for actually sharing life.

In my experience, I can coach people from across the country, but usually, in a discipling relationship, there is some amount of value in living close enough to disciple someone in everyday ways. Again, this is not a hard and fast rule, but a

practical guide to help you invest your life towards long lasting fruit.

### **#5 BE INTENTIONAL WHY YOU ARE INVESTING:**

For the vast majority of those reading this eBook, your desire to make disciples and change the world is directly connected to your love and commitment to Jesus.

With that said, it is important to examine our hearts to make sure that our heart motives are to see Jesus receive glory and those we are discipling be loved and led. It is easy to allow ourselves to get addicted to being needed by someone.

This is UNHEALTHY for many reasons, but primarily because if we allow making disciples to become centered in ourselves, we will fail to really point people to Jesus.

### **#6 BE INTENTIONAL HOW YOU ARE INVESTING:**

This is probably more important than you think! As we are investing in people, we want to invest in a way that allows people to imagine themselves investing in others.

This was an essential part of the way Jesus lived. He called twelve, ordinary, untrained men to follow Him. Even though He was the perfect Son of God, He modeled a simple, reproducible lifestyle that He told his disciples to use as the blueprint for discipling the nations.

Keep this in mind for those you are in relationships with. Make disciples in a way that empowers them to disciple others. that empowers them to disciple others.



# RELATIONSHIPS ON THE MOVE

# LOOKING TO JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER

Do you remember the beginning of this eBook? I mentioned that the best way to make disciples is the Jesus way. I still believe that He was and is the best place for us to learn how to make a big difference in the world as we invest in a few people well.

I find that leaders intuitively know that growing intentional, authentic connections with people is what really matters, as opposed to programs and formulas. Yet, in the midst of this knowing, there can be a hesitancy to go off-script because relational discipleship sounds scary and unpredictable.

For some, choosing to make disciples through relationship might just sound like hanging out and drinking coffee with the hopes of something good happening.

But that is not what I am talking about.

So, in learning to disciple relationally, and not through programs, here are 4 important truths to keep in mind.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER...

**1. Relational Discipleship does not mean that we don't share a vision or goals for where we are going.**

It means that we have made it our commitment to follow Jesus and loving those we are discipling our clear priority.

Make sure to clearly define some goals for your journey together. These goals

should be established together to help the person see their relationship with Jesus as an ongoing relationship.

### **2. Relational discipleship means that we are sharing our Jesus Journey in real life.**

That means learning to be in the Word together, and then learning how to walk out the Word. It means being able to pray together and play together.

One of the most important things that I do with new followers of Jesus is to practice hearing the voice of God together. This is essential in helping them grow a relationship with Jesus with you without becoming dependent on you.

When you share life with people, you model what a relationship with Jesus in front of them that allows them to grow their faith even when they are not with you.

### **3. Relational Discipleship includes not only casting nets, but also mending nets.**

In Mark 1:18-20, Jesus calls James and John to follow Him. Differently from when Jesus called Peter and Andrew, who had been casting their nets, James and John who were mending their nets.

I believe that this is a stunning picture for us, because the Greek word for mending nets in Mark 1 is the same word that is translated as equip in Ephesians 1.

The process of carefully mending nets is what makes fishermen ready for the next big catch. Sometimes it is easy to think that the fantastic “fishing stories” of our evangelistic exploits is what disciple making is all about. But mending nets is just as important.

When we keep pointing people back to Jesus in their mending process, it models

discipleship for them, and actually equips them to point other people to Jesus. And that's a big part of making disciples that actually feel empowered to also make disciples!

### **4. Relational discipleship is based on a love that meets people where they are with a vision to see them become all that the Father intended them to be.**

Jesus loved His imperfect, rag-tag group of disciples to the very end. Not only did He equip them, but then He entrusted them and commissioned them to disciple the nations. This kind of love is not afraid of equipping people while there are still in process.

I want to highlight the importance of the equipping process by passing on something that I learned when I was in my early twenties. I call it the equipping cycle, and it has been a huge help to me over the years

## **EQUIPPING CYCLE**

### **1. I DO**

This is the essential piece. Equip people out of what is natural for you because you have been practicing it. People can spot a phony, so don't try to equip someone in what you don't know. (Be willing to be humble and learn together.)

### **2. I DO, YOU WATCH**

Because there is authenticity in my life, when I invite you to follow Jesus with me, I model what it looks like to follow Jesus AND make disciples. I am equipping you in the process.

### 3. YOU DO, I WATCH

It is important to be very intentional here. It is important that as you begin to gain some confidence / authenticity in your walk with Jesus, that you hear me encouraging you to invite others to follow Jesus with you.

In this part of the process, I am going to be walking right beside you, encouraging you to lead and allowing you to make mistakes. But you will know that you are not alone as you step out.

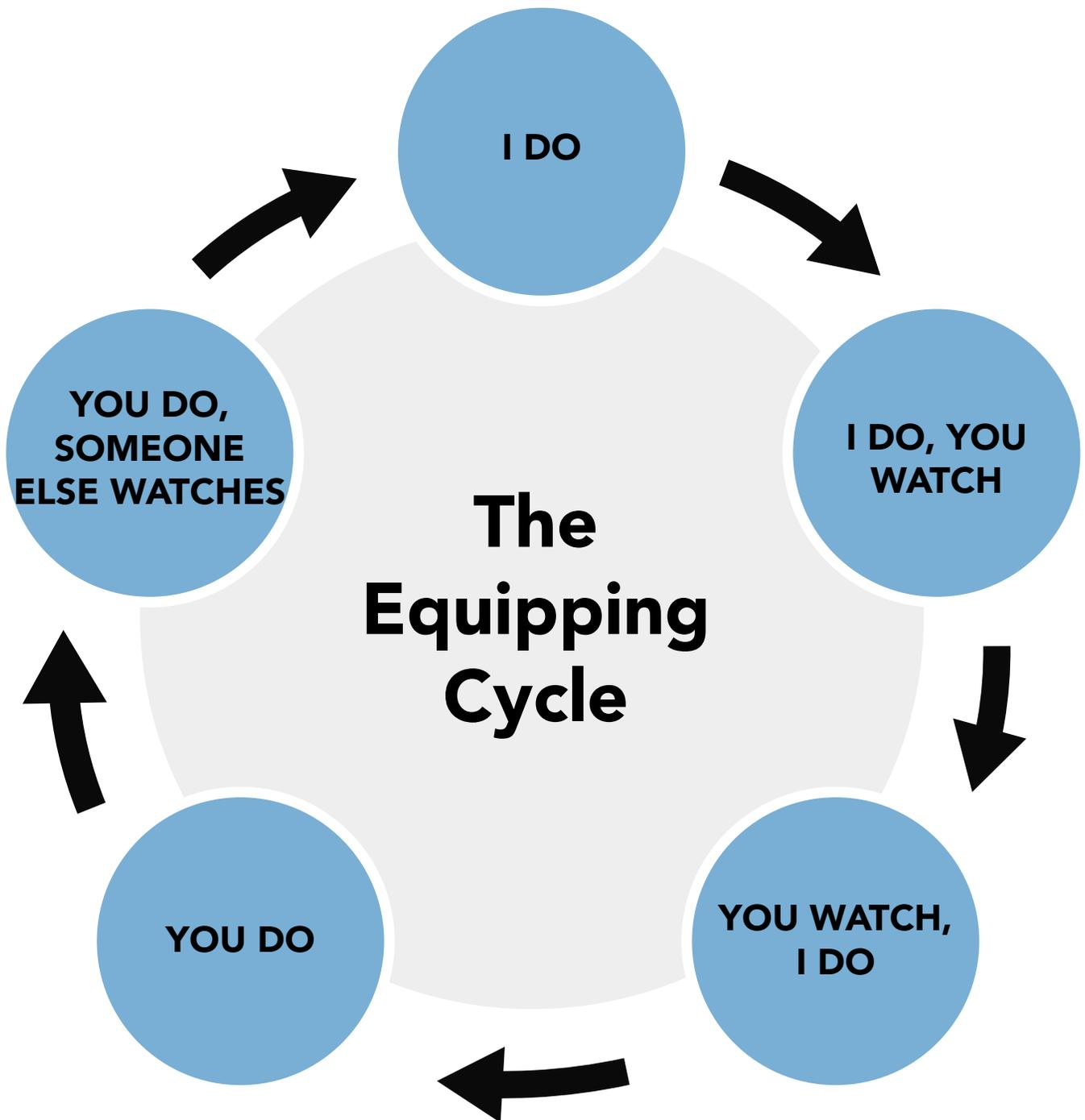
### 4. YOU DO

Even though I am still in a committed relationship with you, there comes a point where I will step back and allow you to lead your relationship without me. This is important because it makes sure that you don't become dependent on me being with you to be confident.

### 5. YOU DO, SOMEONE ELSE WATCHES

I have not equipped you until you are confident to walk this out with someone else. I am still committed to follow Jesus with you, but now you are actively discipling and equipping others as a part of your everyday journey with Jesus.

### REPEAT



# CONCLUSION

## SHARING = EXCHANGE

I hope that your journey through The Shared Life has been an encouragement to you. As we bring this to a close, I wanted to leave you with one last thought about sharing.

Learn to practice giving and receiving in your discipling relationships. As we have already said, nobody wants to feel like a project, and no one wants to feel like they are in a one- sided relationship.

This means practicing exchange. Look for ways that God is working in the life of the ones you are discipling and celebrate it by allowing your life to be impacted by it.

Practice asking for prayer. Ask questions about what your friends are learning in their time in the Word and then LISTEN. It can be a heavy load to try to always have something to give to people all the time.

Remember the value of OVERFLOW. Allow God to overflow from your life to others, BUT also value the overflow from their lives to yours. I pray blessings and abundance on your journey.

