

# Wesleyan's Foundations



## THE MASTER'S PLAN

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## WESLEYAN FOUNDATIONS OF THE MASTER'S PLAN

**T**he Master's Plan is driven by the Great Commission of Jesus, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). It is the mission of the Church of the Nazarene is compelled by the Great Commission. Our mission is, "To Make Christlike Disciples in the Nations."

In February of 2007 the Board of General Superintendents released this powerful mission statement for the Church of the Nazarene. Prior to that time, I know of no one who could have quoted the mission statement of the church. Now, wherever we go in the world the mission is clear. We are to make Christlike disciples in Aguascalientes, Anshan, Amajuba, Arawa, Arequipa, and Arkansas. All over the world, in every nation, we know exactly what the assignment is for every local church, for every follower of Jesus; it is to reproduce the Christian faith and walk in the life of another person.



Dr. Jerry Porter, general superintendent, often asks questions like, "Who is discipling you? Who are you discipling?" Another way of expressing the thought is, "Who is investing in you? Who are you investing in?" A similar question is, "If everyone makes disciples like you make disciples, what will the church look like?" Others may ask, "Who is your Paul and who is your Timothy?"

In order to fulfill the mission the Lord Jesus assigned us we must intentionally obey the Great Commission. We must focus on helping believers reproduce their faith walk with Jesus in the lives of others. As followers of Jesus we should also seek to know, understand, and imitate his methods.

In the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition there is a system that enables us to equip our people to be disciples who make disciples who make disciples. We do this in obedience to the commission of Jesus. Nazarenes call it, "The Master's Plan." I invited you to consider the Wesleyan Foundations of the Master's Plan and the profound implications it has for your ministry.

When it comes to intentionally helping others follow Jesus more closely, John Wesley provides an exceptional model. God used John Wesley and his

brother Charles, to revolutionize 18th century England profoundly reshaping and changing the society's values, habits and character. The revival literally saved England from going through the same deadly revolution that happened in France. Beyond the ministry of Jesus, I believe John Wesley's system is one of the most significant models for disciple-making in the history of the Christian faith. It is a local model that has gone global. John Wesley declared, "The world is my parish." We need a global model today.

## A WESLEYAN DISCIPLEMAKING SYSTEM

John Wesley, his brother, Charles and the team of spiritual giants God grew around them, evangelized a decadent cultural totally reshaping 18th century England by creating and perfecting a system that reproduced fruitful disciple makers.

As authentic followers of Jesus we passionately desire to bear much fruit. Jesus said, "*Herein is my father glorified, that you bear much fruit, proving yourselves to be my disciples.*" (John 15:8)



John Wesley (1703 – 1791)

Any system that bears lasting fruit to the glory of God should be a reproducible system. That means focusing beyond our own personal growth and nurture. It means intentionally helping those around us follow Jesus more closely. As Mike Henderson suggests, the best way to do that is just "*one conversation at a time.*"

Many of our current methodologies are inwardly and narrowly focused on our individual and personal spiritual growth. Wesley had a reproducible system that focused on helping others grow in knowledge and obedience until they became reproductive followers of Jesus. Wesley realized that a movement to turn the masses into authentic disciples, not only in England but the entire world, would require a system that could be quickly repeated anywhere in the world.

Consider these questions: Is discipleship authentic if it does not reproduce? What if our present models rely on delivering content without accountability? Do we think, if we dispense the information and knowledge, then our listeners will learn and do?

The reality is, our fellow believers do not truly grasp the gospel story

until they are able to teach it to someone else. Perhaps you have heard people ask, “When do we learn our lessons best? The answer is, “When we have to teach it to someone else.”

The Master’s Plan recognizes this fundamental principle of holistic development by building it into the life of a new believer from the beginning. A new convert is taught the expectation that he or she is going to become a leader of leaders. This method is not new or difficult. It is founded on sound doctrine, proven methodologies and practical accountability. To effectively make disciples who make disciples we must intentionally equip them to teach others.

## EQUIPPING THE LAITY

The Church, in Wesley’s day, had developed a strong dependence upon the clergy to do most of the works of ministry. Wesley realized the Methodist disciple-making movement would never impact the masses if he relied solely on the professional clergy. Confronted with the shortage of ordained clergy to lead the disciple-making movement, Wesley instinctively began to develop a group of lay preachers on his own.

He established strong relationships with key lay leaders. He inspired their hearts, fired their imaginations, and even wrote their sermons. *Wesley’s 52 Standard Sermons* were designed to be repeated many times



Wesley preaching outdoors.

not only by him, but by those he trained. God used the Wesley’s to raise up an army of more than 650 lay preachers. Together they changed the spiritual life and culture of England. Could the Master’s Plan be a disciple-making system that God will use to revolutionize your life and ministry? What if your culture and society desperately needs a spiritual renewal like 18th century England?

George Whitefield and John Wesley were the best known spiritual leaders of their day. They led the great awakening of 18th century England. By all accounts Whitefield was the better preacher. Thousands would throng to hear him proclaim the gospel. However, when Whitefield died, there were no discipleship groups, no churches, no Sunday Schools, and



George Whitefield (1714 – 1770)

no reproducible system to conserve the converts he won and to perpetuate his life's work.

In the years after John Wesley's death in 1781 more people were saved, sanctified, disciplined, trained and sent to the missions than he trained and sent throughout his lifetime! What was the key to that multiplication? Could it be that Wesley imitated the principles Jesus used?

John Wesley understood the importance of building a disciple-making system within the movement of God's Spirit in England. He spent more time with just a few key leaders who in turn were able to spend more time with other faithful leaders, who spent more time teaching other faithful leaders.

What happens to our ministries when we fail to develop a reproducible system that continues to advance after we are gone? George Whitefield testified honestly, *"My brother, Wesley, was wiser than I. The souls that were awakened under his care, he enjoined in classes. This I neglected and my people have become a rope of sand."*<sup>2</sup>

## THE NAZARENE CHALLENGE

If all we do is preach and start churches without building into each church an internal discipleship structure, our gains will become a rope of sand. The present reality for most churches is they lack an integrated system for evangelism and discipleship. What can we learn from Wesley? Could we pursue an adapted disciple-making plan similar to the plan he used in 18th century England?

The amazing British revival was not based on, nor succeeded through Wesley's gifts, but it was based on the Holy Spirit and the power of God to transform lives. Wesley simply worked to refine a system that fit the needs and resources of that day. It was God's sovereign movement. One of the tools God used was Wesley's discipleship system. As the Spirit of God is moving in our world today, is it possible that He is lifting up a disciple-making system that fits our present needs and resources? Imagine the global impact if every Nazarene could answer the questions, "Who is discipling you?" and "Who are you discipling?"



## WESLEY'S SYSTEM OF INTERLOCKING GROUPS

In the last part of the 18th century, Wesley's system consisted primarily of three connecting and inter-related groups within Methodism. Significant similarities exist between Wesley's methods and The Master's Plan widely used today. The Master's Plan proceeds through a four step process for new believers. The steps are identified as:

1. **Win**
2. **Consolidate**
3. **Disciple-Teach**
4. **Send.**

Wesley's system of interlocking groups included (1) the society, (2) the class, and (3) the band.

The entry point into the system was the society meeting. It was like a congregation, where the members came together primarily for teaching and instruction. Attendance was free and open to all, but a ticket, signed by Wesley, was required to attend. In the Master's Plan, an "encounter" serves as the entry point for disciple-making. Membership in the society was contingent upon a commitment to weekly participate in a class. Accountability was built into the system.



The second level for Wesley involved the class meeting. It met weekly and numbered about 10 to 12 people. The purpose of the class was to train a believer in his or her development toward godliness, teaching the believer what to avoid, what to pursue, and giving helpful practices that Wesley considered a means of grace. Developing the leaders of those classes was high on Wesley's priority list and it is very similar to the Master's Plan approach today. Wesley required each of his lay teachers to weekly visit each class member. They were to check on the condition of their soul and then collect a penny for the poor. If their class member did not have it, the teacher was to supply it. The open group of the Master's Plan reflects a similar role in discipleship development.

The third level of equipping involved teachers meetings with teachers. Wesley called them “bands.” This was a closed group for the most developed disciples. They passionately pursued the disciplined life and held high standards of accountability to each other. Wesley believed in the necessity of brothers asking brothers piercing and perceptive questions. In those close conversations of high accountability, Wesley believed, his disciples gained spiritual growth and insight. Wesley expressed it this way:

*“For after all our preaching, many of our people are almost as ignorant as if they had never heard the gospel. I speak as plain as I can, yet I frequently meet with those who have been my hearers many years, who know not whether Christ be God or man. And how few are there that know the nature of repentance, faith, and holiness! Most of them have a sort of confidence that God will save them, while the world has their hearts. **I have found by experience that one of these has learned more from one hour’s close discourse, than from ten years’ public preaching.**”<sup>3</sup>*



These highly relational bands of closed-group discipleship in Methodism, characterized by high levels of commitment and accountability are very similar to The Master’s Plan of closed accountability groups used around the world today. There must be more to disciplining than just preaching from

the pulpit or teaching in a classroom. Accountability is not optional for effective disciplining. Jesus did not require his disciples be smart, but he did insist they be obedient.

## CONTEMPORARY WESLEYANS

To be Wesleyan in spirit and practice involves thinking and acting like a Wesleyan. The Wesley’s were pragmatic and would try just about anything to reach people for Jesus Christ. Charles was an educated musician with a taste for the high church, but he put aside his preferences. He chose instead to write hymns to the melodies of the drinking songs bellowed in the low-browed English pubs of the day. Wesley was single-minded about the



mission and told his lay preachers, “*Preach in as many places as possible. Start as many classes as possible. But do not preach without starting new classes.*” Wesley would not consider bringing someone to faith and then abandon them to the tricks of the enemy. He wrote, “*I was more convinced than ever that the preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer.*”

Making Christlike disciples in the nations is nothing new. Obedient followers of Jesus have been pursuing that mission ever since He assigned it. We do not need to re-invent the wheel. We need to implement global disciple-making principles. When these global principles are applied they result in an effective fulfillment of the mission. To the degree that we learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in building and delivering Wesleyan-Armenian-Holiness disciple-making systems, we will see long-term changes in the habits, practices, and the character of Nazarene disciples around the world. Nazarenes will spend more time with Jesus, listening and learning from His Holy Spirit. They will become more like Him, walking as He walked, thinking and speaking like he did. The foundational discipleship principles of daily prayer and engaging in His Word, living in the Spirit of Jesus and building intentional relationships of accountability will result in the multiplication of disciple-makers all over the world. Uniquely adapted and applied to the circumstances of each setting, these global principles bear much fruit in the lives of disciple-makers.

George Hunter III said, “*We do not honor our founders by blindly perpetuating in a changing world what they once did nor by hijacking their tradition and imposing something culturally alien; we honor them by doing for our time and culture what they did for theirs.*” It is only in the development of fresh thinking and fresh actions through adapting and implementing global principles that we will achieve the mission. The Master’s Plan is a Wesleyan adaptation of a Biblical model and strategy for making Christlike disciples in the nations.

## **WESLEYAN SCHOLAR ROBERT COLEMAN**

The Master’s Plan is a fresh movement God is using all over the world and it all started with a Wesleyan Theologian, named Robert Coleman, a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary. Dr. Coleman’s scholarly interests include the theology of evangelism, revival and the lifestyle of the Great Commission. Dr. Coleman is a prolific author, having written hundreds of articles and 21 books,

though he is best known for *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Translations of one or more of his books are published in 109 languages, with English editions alone exceeding 7 million copies. In 1963, Robert Coleman published, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Since then there have been more than 39 editions published. Surely, that qualifies as a classic.

Dr. Coleman's work has been the basis for more than 30,000 churches (including 3,000 in North America) of 125 different denominations, who are implementing its model of making disciples. The Master's Plan is an authentic effort to be a contextualized relational disciple-making system based on the principles and methods John Wesley used 250 years ago that, in turn, followed the methods of making disciples taught to us by our Master: Jesus of Nazareth.

## CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE AND THE MASTER'S PLAN

General Superintendent, Dr. Jerry Porter has been a key voice in calling the church to intentional discipleship. He has pleaded with the church around the world to seriously consider how we answer the questions, "Who is discipling you and who are you discipling?" Thousands have heard him urge leaders to, "Spend more time with fewer people," just as Jesus spent more



Miami Bethany's evangelistic service.

time with the few, teaching them, developing, and walking with them. Fruitful disciple-makers intentionally develop lay leaders so that they too may become fruitful disciple-makers. There is not just one discipling system in use today. Multiple variations of Wesley's disciple-making system

have been developed and are in use today. Hal Perkins, life-long disciple maker reminds us, "*When pastors have experienced the relational component of being 'adopted' (discipled), they can then select and adopt their disciples who they disciple relationally.*" We must help those building disciple-making systems to be disciple makers. It requires more than just a manager or even a disciple of systems. Discipling in Christlikeness, holiness, servant-hood, reproduction, etc., requires relationships. Spending more time with fewer people is essential.

The most effective model for the Master’s Plan is the House of Prayer Church of the Nazarene in Cali, Colombia. After struggling to survive in the first 12 years of pastoral ministry, Pastors Adalberto and Nineye Herrera began to passionately seek God’s direction for the church. They developed and implemented what they call the Master’s Plan. Over the last 25 years the church has grown from an average of 31 each Sunday to literally thousands every Sunday attending the Cali church. Today the Cali church has over 12,000 members with more than 800 active discipling small groups.



Responding to the call of salvation.

Pastors Obed and Noemi Jauregui, of the Betania Church of the Nazarene in Miami, Florida has experienced growth in the last 15 years from 42 members to over 1500 members. Pastor Obed has led in implementing the Master’s Plan with Wesleyan adaptations to raise a church of leaders. The leaders of the Betania Church disciple new believers to become leaders of leaders. Built into the DNA of each new believer is the understanding that they will become a leader who will be continually helping someone else follow Jesus more closely, just one conversation at a time.

The Master’s Plan is an exceptional tool that district superintendents and pastors from California, Texas, Illinois, Florida and other states are aggressively implementing. Various Wesleyan adaptations of this explosive disciple-making model are now being contextualized and Nazarene field-tested around the world.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE MASTER’S PLAN

The Wesleyan-adapted disciple-making system has six basic components that are completely reproducible and readily adapted to fit each cultural context.

*The system begins* with a powerful weekend of spiritual rebirth, revival, healing, wholeness, freedom from the burden and bondage of sin of the past, and entire sanctification with the Holy Spirit. It is called an “Encounter”. Thousands have testified to the powerful impact the encounter with

God had on their spiritual lives. Bathed in prayer, from beginning to end, the Encounter intensely focuses on God at work in their lives as He transforms and renews persons seeking God.

*Secondly*, following the encounter experience, the spiritual momentum is maintained and developed with weekly follow-up classes. For the first 90 days the new disciple is trained in evangelism and the fundamental disciplines of the Christian faith; including daily prayer, the Word, and training how to share their faith.

*The third component* consists of engaging the new believer in a small group. It is open to all. It is similar to a vibrant Sunday School class or small group that can meet anytime, anywhere. In the open group new believers have a



chance to share their testimony, study the Bible, invite their friends and eagerly pray for evangelistic opportunities to lead someone to faith in Christ. This is a nine-month curriculum of basic Bible teachings.

*Throughout the year* of intense training the relationship with the mentor is the fourth component. This step involves one-on-one coaching and mentoring. It is this long term relationship that monitors the spiritual growth and progress of the new believer. Often the mentoring is in connection with a larger group of up to 12 who meet as brothers or sisters of accountability.

*The fifth component* of the Master's Plan is the closed accountability group of up to 12. This is the group that helps each other follow Jesus more closely. They encourage and affirm each other as they grow and develop their spiritual gifts within the Body. They learn how to hold each other accountable for their walk with Christ. As a new believer learns through the first year of the new disciples' course, they will invite, win, and consolidate their friends into the open group of evangelism and bible studies. This leads to the sixth step.

*Step number six* is to help each newly trained disciple-maker who has completed the first year of study to develop their own small group of up to 12; teaching, coaching, mentoring, and helping them to make disciples who make disciples.

## BEYOND SUNDAY

Most churches have believed that if a person attends worship regularly and participates in a small group or Sunday School Class, they will automatically grow and reproduce their faith.

### **How is that working for us?**

A small group is effective only when the disciple-making process is intentional, systematic, and accountable. A disciple needs to learn the basics of their faith, the disciplines of obedience, and the life in the Spirit as taught by the Bible. Simply teaching the truths from the pulpit or class lectern does not in itself develop a mature reproducing Christian.

A system of accountability is necessary to maximize the effective growth of a believer. How can you hold 30 or 40 people in a church or class accountable for their daily walk? How can you personally contact them weekly? In our complex lives and schedules, it is difficult. However, is it possible that you could hold 2 or 3; 5 or 6; 11 or 12 accountable? You could contact them on a regular basis. What if Sunday School classes and small groups larger than 12 are not nearly as productive as the smaller group? Once a class reaches 12 wouldn't it be wise to start a new class so that it could continue the development of accountable relationships?

The point is we must teach Nazarenes worldwide there is no instant Christlikeness as a disciple. Paul told Timothy that godliness comes through discipline and training. Practicing daily spiritual disciplines – habits that include a quiet time, scripture memorization, prayer, witnessing, and service – opens believers to the means of grace through which the Holy Spirit works to transform and mature our character. Who is holding you accountable for your daily walk and personal growth with the Lord? Who are you holding accountable for their daily walk in Christ?

Thousands of wonderful Nazarenes filled with good intentions try hard to make disciples. Week after week, well-meaning pastors and teachers tell people repeatedly what they should do. But week after week, month after month, year after year, they do not seem to mature into the habits of a daily walk with Jesus. Is it because we have not given them a Wesleyan system to train them for godliness? Is it because we have neglected holding each other accountable? If we are serious about Christlike disciple-making in the nations, then we must arrange our lives around activities and training in the practice of the spiritual disciplines of prayer, the Word and making

disciples. We must move beyond Sunday to everyday. We must move beyond membership to discipleship. We must move beyond dispensing information and knowledge to requiring obedience. We must move beyond programs to intentional relationships that make disciples into Christlike disciple-makers.

The Mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to Make Christlike Disciples in the Nations. That is your mission. That is my mission. That is our mission. What system are you using to intentionally pursue the fulfillment of your mission?

## JUST A FEW QUESTIONS

Who is it in your life that loves you so much, they pray for you every day? They pray that you will be Christlike. They love you so much they would lay down their life for you and are willing to ask you hard questions. They love you too much to let you get by with being un-Christlike, so, they hold you accountable.

Who is it in your life that you love so much, you pray for them every day? You pray that they will be like Jesus. You love them so much you would lay down your life for them and you ask them hard questions. You love them so much you won't let them get by with unChristlike attitudes and habits. You hold them accountable.

Let me ask, "Who is discipling you? Who are you discipling? Who are you investing in? Who is investing in you? Who are your two? Who is your Timothy? Who is your Paul?"

*Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8).* I encourage you, live in obedience to the Master, prove yourself to be His disciples.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Henderson, D. Michael, *Making Disciples, One Conversation at a Time*. Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2007

<sup>2</sup>{2 2 Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley's Class Meeting: a Model for Making Disciples*. Nappanee, IN, Evangel Pub. House, 1997, p. 30}

<sup>3</sup>Wesley's Works, Emory, ed. vol 5, p. 213-124

<sup>4</sup>JW, *Journal* (Aug 25, 1763)

<sup>5</sup>Hunter, George III., *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, Abingdon Press, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Web links: [http://www.godrules.net/library/wesley/274wesley\\_h11.htm](http://www.godrules.net/library/wesley/274wesley_h11.htm) and <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/baxter/pastoriviii.iii.html>.

Both sites have good search engines for words and phrases that will help in subsequent discipleship studies.





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