

HOW TO RELEASE
A MISSIONAL MOVEMENT BY
DISCIPLING PEOPLE
LIKE JESUS DID

BUILDING A DISCIPLING CULTURE

STUDY GUIDE

MIKE BREEN



Building A Discipling Culture: Study Guide

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Printed in the United States of America

Cover Design: Blake Berg

Layout Design: Jason Zastrow

Editors: Beccy Beresic, Sally Breen, Jason Zastrow, Robin Zastrow

ISBN: 978-0-9998981-1-6



3DM Publishing

3dmpublishing.com

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WHY DO WE USE LIFESHAPES?

Welcome to the *Building a Discipling Culture Study Guide*! We designed this guide to help you grasp, explore, and go deeper with the major concepts presented in *Building a Discipleship Culture*. The book was first published in 2005 and has gone on to become a global bestseller. Before diving in, we feel it's important to understand where and why this book was originally conceived. It came out of frustration and desperation that accompanied trying to disciple people who had little or no education, people who would traditionally never open a book and read it.

The following *LifeShapes* were designed to help those who had the least access to training yet wanted to grow in their understanding of Jesus and the Bible. The simplicity of the shapes allowed for easy understanding. The *LifeShapes* prevented the overwhelm and intimidation that can accompany text-centric methods. They could be shared on a napkin over coffee or a brown bag over lunch. You can read more about how our culture regularly communicates through shapes

or memes in Chapter 5 of *Building a Discipling Culture* or in my book on communication, *Speak Out: Awakening Mission and Discipleship through Private and Public Communication*.

In this guide, we have attempted to make it again accessible and straightforward. It can be used by anyone, anywhere, and at any stage in their journey of faith. We pray that you will find many uses for this guide so that every disciple can be equipped in building a discipling culture in their homes, workplaces, school, and coffee shops.

Something of note before you begin: this study guide is not intended to be a leadership guide or a huddle companion. If you choose to use it that way, great! But it's best to be used in small groups, prayer triplets, house churches, or anywhere in between.

This guide does not go through *Building a Discipling Culture* exhaustively, but serves as an introduction through the key *LifeShapes*:

- The Matrix: Invitation & Challenge
- The Circle: Learning from Life
- The Triangle: Deeper Relationships
- The Semi-Circle: A Balanced Life
- The Square: Multiplying Life
- The Pentagon: Personal Calling
- The Hexagon: Definitive Prayer

It's our greatest joy to release this guide 32 years after *Building a Discipleship Culture* and the *LifeShapes* were conceived in the hard and desperate environment of the inner-city Brixton, UK where we poured ourselves out serving. Enjoy!

+M

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THE MATRIX: INVITATION & CHALLENGE

Building a Discipling Culture: Chapters 1 & 2

How do we make disciples? Whether in the big or the small, in our everyday relationships or in our churches and denominations, the question of how we make disciples is at the core of every other question we ask in the church today. Which is as it should be since Jesus' commission to the church is to make and multiply disciples!

The church seems to be changing fast. What used to work isn't working any longer. While Christendom is crumbling around us, the call to make disciples still remains. In the wake of this crumbling, the church faces a discipleship problem. As leaders, our focus easily becomes on building the church ourselves, through all sorts of means of our own invention. But Jesus is the one who said he will build his church. Jesus' Plan A for building the church is discipleship. There is no Plan B.

How, then, does Jesus model discipleship? Jesus models discipleship through **invitation** and **challenge**.

Invitation is about being invited into a relationship where you have access to a person's life. Jesus' disciples had full access to him. Challenge is about the call to live into your identity as a son or daughter of the King. When accepting the invitation, you also accept the challenge that comes with it.

Is it that simple? Yes, it is that simple. Making disciples doesn't have to be complicated. However, that doesn't mean that discipleship isn't hard. Both invitation and challenge require intentional leadership.

Effective leadership means a leader invites disciples into relationship and challenges them to change. The interplay between invitation and challenge will influence the culture you lead. Lack of intentionality in both invitation and challenge leads to three different kinds of leadership cultures:

- Low invitation and low challenge leadership creates an **apathetic culture**. We call this **boring**.
- High invitation and low challenge leadership creates a **cozy culture**. We call **chaplancy**.
- Low invitation and high challenge leadership creates a **discouraged culture**. We call this **stressful**.

Following Jesus' model, we can be intentional about balancing invitation and challenge: high invitation and high challenge leadership creates an **empowered culture**. We call this **discipleship**.

I use *The Invitation and Challenge Matrix* to help leaders understand the reality of the types of cultures we create in our churches.

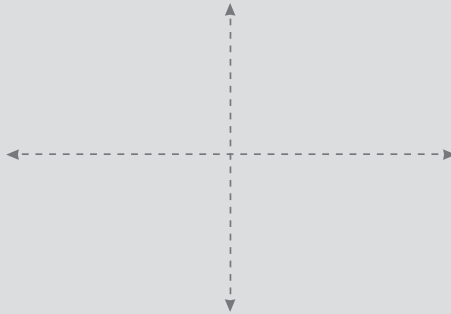
THE MATRIX: INVITATION & CHALLENGE

THE MAIN IDEA:

Imitate Jesus' way of balancing invitation and challenge in your life and with those you lead.



BUILD THE MATRIX:



STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Define the following terms in your own words.

Invitation:

Challenge:

2. Give some examples of each invitation and challenge in Jesus' life and ministry.

Invitation:

Challenge:

5. How might have you helped in creating the culture you described above?

6. What is something you can do to begin to balance both invitation and challenge?