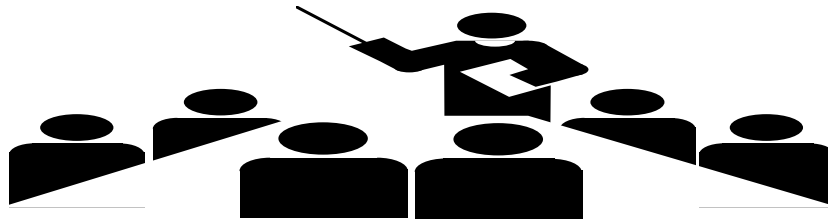
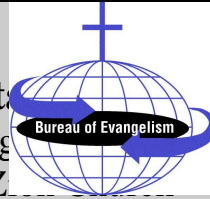


# DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR



Facilitator  
**The Rev. Dr. Darryl B. St**  
Director, Bureau of Evangelism  
African Methodist Episcopal Z  
Charlotte, North Carolina



TOPIC:  
**THE CLASS MEETING: A MODEL FOR MAKING DISCIPLES**  
“MAKING DISCIPLES THE OLD-FASHION WAY”

## DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR

DR. DARRYL B. STARNES, SR., FACILITATOR

### THE CLASS MEETING: A MODEL FOR MAKING DISCIPLES

“MAKING DISCIPLES THE OLD-FASHION WAY”

#### SESSION #1: PLACING DISCIPLE-MAKING AT THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

*Proposition: A Christ-Centered Church places disciple making at the heart of the church and keeps it there.*

#### I. Clarifying the Mission of the Church: Making Christian Disciples (Matthew 28:18-20)

- A. **Evangelism** [the proclamation of the gospel] is the first step in Christian discipleship. (Mark 16:15,16)
- B. **Baptism** [initiation & assimilation into the Church] is the next step in Christian discipleship. (Mt. 28:19)
- C. **Teaching** [training converts to obey Christ] is the crucial step in Christian discipleship. (Mt. 28:20)

#### II. Placing Disciple Making at the Heart of the Church

- A. By making the desire to be saved the primary requirement for probationary membership
  - 1. None should be received on probation until they give satisfactory evidence of their desire to flee the wrath to come and be saved from their sins. (*Discipline* [2000], pp. 26-27)
  - 2. None should be received into probationary membership until they give satisfactory answers to the following questions: (*Discipline* [2000], pp. 338-339)
    - a. Have you have an earnest desire to be saved from your sins?
    - b. Will you avoid all things contrary to the teachings of God’s word and endeavor to lead a holy life?
    - c. Are you purposed to give reverent attendance upon the appointed means of grace?
- B. By making the experience of salvation the primary requirement for full connectional membership
  - 1. None should be received into full connectional membership until they give satisfactory evidence of their saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (*Discipline* [2000], p. 27)
  - 2. None should be received into full connectional membership until they give satisfactory answers to the following questions: (*Discipline* [2000], pp. 340-341)
    - a. Have you saving faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ?
    - b. Do you believe in the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures as set forth in the Articles of Religion?
    - c. Will you cheerfully be governed by the rules of the church?
    - d. Will you hold sacred the ordinances of God?
    - e. Will you endeavor to promote the Redeemer's Kingdom?
    - f. Will you cherish friendly feelings toward all persons?
    - g. Will you contribute of your earthly substance, according to your ability, to support the gospel and the other benevolent enterprises of the church?
- C. By making the continuing commitment to discipleship the primary requirement for being in good standing.
  - 1. None who neglect the means of grace should remain members in good standing. (*Discipline*, p. 111)
  - 2. None who neglect the weekly class meeting should remain members in good standing. (*Discipline*, pp. 34,35)
- D. By making the continuing commitment to disciple making the primary requirement for leadership
  - 1. Stewards and trustees should be appointed and sustained in office on the basis of their ability, desire, and practice of witnessing to the gospel of the kingdom of God in and beyond their environs. (*Discipline* [2000], pp. 161, par. 445; p. 182, par. 491)

2. The class leaders should be appointed and sustained in office on the basis of their individual evangelistic efforts and their ability to provide sub-pastoral oversight. (*Discipline* [2000], pp. 34-35, 106-107, 296e)

## **DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR**

DR. DARRYL B. STARNES, SR., FACILITATOR

### **THE CLASS MEETING: A MODEL FOR MAKING DISCIPLES**

“MAKING DISCIPLES THE OLD-FASHION WAY”

#### **SESSION #2: WESLEY’S SYSTEM OF INTERLOCKING GROUPS <sup>1</sup>**

##### **The Society: The Cognitive Mode of Ministry**

The Society is another name for the congregation or the local church. It included all of those who were officially members of the fellowship. D. Michael Henderson gleaned the following definition from Wesley’s *Works*:

Such a society is no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other work out their own salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Henderson pointed out that “the primary function of the society was cognitive instruction: it was the educational channel by which the tenets of Methodism were presented to the target population. Those who had been drawn to the Methodist movement by curiosity or by field preaching or by the invitation of a friend were introduced to its particular teachings through society meetings. The methods selected for this mode were as appropriate for large-group presentation as could be obtained in that day and time: lecture, preaching, public reading, hymn singing, and *exhorting*.”<sup>3</sup>

Wesley defined a Methodist as “one who lives in accordance with the method laid down in the Bible.”<sup>4</sup> But in order to live by the methods and principles laid down in the Bible one must know and understand them. The Society meetings, such as Sunday Worship Services (morning and evening), Sunday School, Prayer and Testimony Meeting, Bible Studies, and the other appointed means of grace, were established as means of presenting scriptural truth and having it clearly understood.

##### **The Class Meeting: The Behavioral Mode of Ministry**

Henderson wrote that the “class meeting was the most influential instructional unit in Methodism and probably Wesley’s greatest contribution to the technology of group experience.”<sup>5</sup> He quotes Henry Ward Beecher, the great preacher and Dwight L. Moody, the nineteenth century revivalist, to prove his point. Beecher said, “The greatest thing John Wesley ever gave to the world is the Methodist class-meeting.”<sup>6</sup> Moody said, “The Methodist class-meetings are the best institutions for training converts the world ever saw.”<sup>7</sup> He goes on to explain the specific nature and intent of the class meeting as follows.

Whereas the society was an instrument for cognitive acquisition, almost to the exclusion of any interpersonal dynamics, the class meeting was a tool for the alteration of behavior, to the virtual exclusion of any data-gathering function. The *Rules* specified the basic process as “inquiry” and the subject matter as “how their souls prospered.” There was no room here for lecturing or preaching; the emphasis was clearly on present and personal growth, presided over, not by a professional trainer, but by a fellow seeker. The particular behaviors which the class meeting was aimed at producing were listed in the *Rules*, which provided a sort of constitution for the class meeting. There were three categories of behaviors specified: (1) prohibitions, or things not to do, (2) exhortations, or positive behaviors, and (3) helpful practices to be maintained, which were known as the “means of grace.” These were not conditions of admission, but behavioral targets...<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley’s Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Evangel Publishing House: Nappanee, IN, 1997), 83-126.

<sup>2</sup> Henderson, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Charles L. Goodell, *The Drillmaster of Methodism: Principles and Methods for the Class Leader and Pastor* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1902), p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Henderson, pp. 96, 97.

The subject matter of a class meeting was personal experience, not doctrinal ideology or biblical information. The only place where conceptual data impinged upon the class process was the struggle which individuals underwent in internalizing or applying or incorporating some biblical ideal into their lives. The collective goal toward which the classes pulled was the attainment of personal holiness, or what Wesley called “perfect love,” or the character of Christ. As new converts took up these goals for themselves, they were nurtured in the encouraging context of an affirming group, all of whom were in various stages of the same quest.<sup>9</sup>

The society and the class meeting were linked together in three very significant ways. First of all, the class was a subdivision of the society and its leaders were appointed by the leaders of the society and were accountable to them. Secondly, the functions of teaching and behavioral transformation were tied together by the design of the two groups—the class meeting incorporated into the lives of its members what had been taught in the society meetings. Thirdly, active participation in the class meeting was the condition for membership in the society. No one could attend the closed meetings of the society without regular class meeting attendance.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike many of the other functions of Methodism, the class meeting was mixed in terms of sex, age, social standing, and level of spiritual maturity. The class, which consisted of about twelve persons, met in homes or in small rooms built next to the Methodist chapel for that purpose. The meeting would begin promptly at the stated hour with a short hymn. The leader, who served as a sub-pastor in the system, would then “state the condition of his or her own spiritual life... give a short testimonial concerning the previous week’s experience, thanking God for progress and honestly sharing any failures, sins, temptations, griefs, or inner battles.”<sup>11</sup> This set the example, and controlled the tenor of the session, because all the members of the class had to participate. The class leader was responsible also for establishing an atmosphere of acceptance, commitment, trust, and understanding, as each member reported his or her progress. Henderson identified ten elements, which explain why the class meeting was at the center of the transforming methodology of Methodism:<sup>12</sup>

1. It furnished the environment in which cognitive concepts could be experimentally or experientially tested.
2. It served as a purging or pruning instrument to keep “dead wood” out of the society.
3. It was a training ground for leaders.
4. It was a point of entry capable of incorporating large numbers of new people quickly.
5. It financed the movement through penny collections.
6. Its accounting system provided a constant and immediate record of the strength and size of the movement.
7. It forced 100 percent mobilization and participation of the membership.
8. It gave every member a voice in the affairs of Methodism.
9. It allowed people to practice speaking their inner feelings.
10. It provided the milieu for resolving conflicts within the society by immediate face-to-face confrontation.

In an article that he wrote in the *Armenian Magazine*, John Wesley explained in detailed the purpose and intent of the classes and the class meeting:

The particular design of the Classes is, – to know who continue as members of the Society; to inspect their outward walking; to inquire into their inward state; to learn what are their trials; and how they fall by or conquer them; to instruct the ignorant in the principles of religion; if need be, to repeat, to explain, or enforce, what has been said in public preaching; to stir them up to believe, love, obey; and to check the first spark of offense or discord.

To inquire whether they now believe; now enjoy the life of God; whether they grow therein, or decay; if they decay what is the cause; and the cure; whether they aim at being wholly devoted to God; or would keep something back; whether they take up their cross daily; resist the bent of nature; oppose self-love in all its hidden forms, and discover it, through all its disguises; whether they humble themselves in everything, are willing to be blamed and despised for well doing, account it the greatest honor, that Christ appoints them to walk with himself, in the paths that are His own.

To examine closely whether they are willing to drink of *His cup*, and to be baptized with *His baptism*; How they conquer self-will, in its spiritual forms; see through all its disguises of themselves; consciousness of their own vileness and nothingness; How they improve their talents. What zeal they have for doing good, in all they do, or suffer, or to receive from God. Whether they live above it; making Christ their all, and offering up to God nothing for acceptance, but his life and death; whether they have a clear, full, abiding conviction, that without inward, complete, universal holiness, no man shall see the Lord. That Christ was sacrificed for us; that we might be a whole burnt sacrifice to God; and that having received the Lord Jesus Christ, will profit us nothing, unless we steadily walk in Him.

I earnestly exhort all leaders of classes and bands, seriously to consider the preceding observations, and put them in execution with all the understanding and courage that God has given them.

J. Wesley<sup>13</sup>

### **The Band: The Affective Mode of Ministry**

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 107.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp. 111, 112.

Whereas the society meetings focused on cognitive instruction, and the class meeting aimed at behavioral change, the band facilitated affective redirection. The band differed from the class meeting in many other ways. They were not mixed groups, but members of the bands met together according to sex, age, and marital status. Participation in the bands was voluntary not compulsory. They were made up of persons “who professed a clear Christian commitment and who desired to grow in love, holiness, and purity of intention. The group environment was one of ruthless honesty and frank openness, in which its members sought to improve their attitudes, emotions, feelings, intentions, and affections. It could be said metaphorically that the society aimed for the head, the class meeting for the hands, and the band for the heart.”<sup>14</sup> The rules of the Bands were clearly stated.

The design of our meeting is to obey that command of God, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed “(James 5:16). To this end, we intend:

1. To meet once a week, at the least.
2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
4. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed; and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting.
5. To end every meeting with prayer suited to the state of each person present.
6. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.<sup>15</sup>

In order to get their feelings and attitudes out in the open, Wesley proposed the following set of starter questions:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?<sup>16</sup>

The following questions were not only read to the band member before admission, but they were frequently reiterated in band sessions when the process began to bog down or the participants refused to be completely open:

1. Have you the forgiveness of sins?
2. Have you peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Have you the witness of God’s Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God?
4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?
5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?
6. Do you desire to be told of your faults?
7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults; and that plain and home?
8. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear concerning you?
10. Do you desire in so doing, we should come as close as possible; that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
11. Is it your desire and design to be, on this and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise and without reserve?<sup>17</sup>

### **The Select Society: The Training Mode of Ministry**

The select society was a “select company of men and women whom Wesley had hand-picked from among the most faithful Methodists. The purpose of this group was to model or exemplify what Methodism was all about, especially the perfecting of the human spirit, and it was to provide a training experience in the doctrines and methods of Methodism. The select society was an elite corps of those enthusiasts who had worked their way up through the ranks of class meeting, society, and band and were considered by both their peers and the leaders to be the standard-bearers of the movements.”<sup>18</sup> The members of the select society served as the leaders of the bands, leaders of the classes, or as local preachers. Unlike the other groups, the select society had no rules, or leader, or prescribed format. “Wesley encouraged a freewheeling and open discussion, especially on matters of significance to the direction and policies of Methodism. He welcomed criticism of the system and of his own place in it. He made it clear that in this context the participants would hammer our strategy for the societies and have a major voice in the decision-making process.”<sup>19</sup> Henderson wrote that although there were no rules for this mode of ministry, there were three “Directions,” two of which were guarantees of the unity of the group:

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, pp. 117, 118.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, pp. 118, 119.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pp. 120, 121.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.121.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

1. Everything said was in absolute confidence.
2. In all “indifferent matters” or inconsequential opinions the members would agree to submit to and abide by the arbitration of the senior minister.
3. Everyone would contribute what they could to the common stock.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Penitent Band: The Rehabilitative Mode of Ministry**

The penitent band “was specially designed for those who lacked the will power or personal discipline to live up to the behavioral demands of the class meeting but still had a desire to overcome their personal problems.... The instructional hierarchy of groups needed some alternative route for those with serious social dysfunctions.<sup>21</sup> Henderson made this statement about this mode of ministry which was ahead of its time:

The primary goal of the penitent band was to restore its members to the mainstream of the society and its regular channels of growth. Apparently they were successful in a number of cases. Then penitents met on Saturday nights (even the scheduling was designed to keep them out of their old haunts), and the minister in charge selected whatever measures were necessary to deal with their moral problems, primarily alcoholism. In fact, this group, in its rigorous format and stringent means for personal reform, is very similar to Alcoholics Anonymous.<sup>22</sup>

Although some of the modes of ministry discussed above began to wane after the death of John Wesley, their value remains undeniable. Those who take seriously Christ’s mandate would do well to revive and employ these modes of ministry.

### **The Reasons for the Effectiveness of Wesley’s System**

D. Michael Henderson identified and discussed four primary reasons for the effectiveness of John Wesley’s instructional system.<sup>23</sup>

#### **I. The Foundational Principles**

- A. Human nature is perfectible by God’s grace.
- B. Learning comes by doing the will of God.
- C. Mankind’s nature is perfected by participation in groups, not by acting as isolated individuals
- D. The spirit and practice of primitive Christianity can and must be recaptured
- E. Human progress will occur if people will participate in “the means of grace.”
- F. The gospel must be presented to the poor.
- G. Social evil is not to be “resisted,” but overcome with good.
- H. The primary function of spiritual/educational leadership is to equip others to lead and minister, not to perform the ministry personally.

#### **II. The Group Strategies**

- A. Hierarchy of interlocking groups
- B. The point of entry in the system is behavioral change (followed by affective, aspirational, rehabilitative)
- C. Constitutional Authority
- D. Groups graded by readiness of participants
- E. Total participation and mobilization
- F. Instrumented group activities
- G. Exclusion (by ticket) for non-compliance
- H. Individualized care
- I. Multiple accountability
- J. Separation of cognitive, behavioral, and affective functions

#### **III. Leadership Principles**

- A. Lay Leadership.
- B. Appointed Leadership, not elected.
- C. Leaders were recognized and trained, not made.
- D. Qualification by faithfulness.
- E. Practice in appealing to action.
- F. A combination of local and trans-local leadership

#### **IV. Supplemental Instructional Aids**

- A. Concept formation by hymn singing.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 123, 124.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pp. 127-160.

- B. Penny collections.
- C. Inexpensive mass publications.
- D. Primary schools for the poor.
- E. Economic development projects for the poor.

## **DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR**

DR. DARRYL B. STARNES, SR., FACILITATOR

### **THE CLASS MEETING: A MODEL FOR MAKING DISCIPLES**

“MAKING DISCIPLES THE OLD-FASHION WAY”

#### **SESSION #3: IMPLEMENTING THE DISCIPLE-MAKING PROCESS**

*Proposition: Holding effective Class Meetings is a vital part of implementing the Disciple-Making Process*

#### **I. Understanding the roles of the pastor, the people, and the disciple-making process**

- A. The pastor should be devoted to the following:
  - 1. The ministry of the word and prayer (Acts 6:1-7)
  - 2. The training and deployment of leaders [disciple makers] (2 Tim. 2:2)
  - 3. The equipping of the saints (Eph. 4:11-12)
  - 4. The management of the ministry (1 Pet. 5:1-5)
- B. The people should be devoted to the following: (Eph. 4:11-16)
  - 1. Ministry (12)
  - 2. Spiritual growth (13-15)
  - 3. Pastoral care (16)
  - 4. Church growth (16)
- C. The disciple-making process produces dynamic witnesses for Christ.
  - 1. Mature disciples
  - 2. Responsible disciples
  - 3. Reproducing disciples.

#### **II. Understanding the priesthood of all believers** (1 Pet. 2:9, 10)

- A. As priests we have the authority to pray: to go to God on behalf of people. (9)
- B. As priests we have the responsibility to evangelize: to go to people on behalf of God. (9)
- C. As priests we have the privilege to testify: to share with people how we became God’s people. (10)

#### **III. Having a genuine commitment to multiplication, not just reproduction**

- A. Reproduction: Making Disciples
- B. Multiplication: Training Disciple Makers

#### **IV. Using the small group as the primary means of disciple making**

- A. It provides an environment where peers can help us keep our commitments.
- B. It provides an environment where we will be accountable and responsible how our souls prosper.
  - 1. How am I prospering in my prayer life?
  - 2. How am I prospering in my personal study of God’s word?
  - 3. What are my areas of struggle?
  - 4. What are my areas of victory?
  - 5. How am I prospering in my personal witness? [word, deed, or sign]
  - 6. How am I prospering in my personal ministry?

- C. It provides an environment where we can be trained to do outreach ministry.
- D. It provides an environment where we can do pastoral care.