



**Developing a Disciple Making Strategy
for a Healthy Growing Church**
Professional Doctoral Seminar –
PMEV8305/CEDI8305
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Spring Semester, February 9-11, 2026

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*New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants
to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.*

Course Description

This seminar is designed to address the issue of discipleship development in the contemporary church. Emphasis will be placed on identifying biblical descriptions of a disciple and strategies for making disciples. Students will discover, analyze, and develop tools to evaluate the various stages of disciple development in their churches and produce a strategy for moving people to the next step. Students will engage in research, development testing, administering, and interpreting an assessment instrument; book reviews; strategy planning; and creative presentation.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the seminar students should be able to:

1. Identify and support a biblical definition of a disciple.
2. Catalog biblical processes for making disciples.
3. Discover and evaluate contemporary assessment instruments designed to measure congregational discipleship stages.
4. Assess the spiritual development of the congregation she/he serves.
5. Chart the course for disciple-making in his/her congregation.

Textbooks

NOTE: Review the list of assignments before purchasing textbooks. Not all textbooks will be required by each participant in the class. Each participant will be assigned an additional book for review and presentation during the seminar.

Textbooks To Be Read by All Students

The following book will be used as a strategic framework during the class. Seminar participants should become familiar with the specific elements of the strategy process.

- (1) Malphurs, Aubrey. *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Making Disciples*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Each student is to read the following textbooks and to be prepared to integrate their content into seminar discussions and presentations:

- (2) Guindon, Brandon. *Intentional: Living Out the Eight Principles of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2023.
- (3) Early, David and Rod Dempsey. *Disciplemaking Is: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence*. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2013.
- (4) Absalom, Alex and Bobby Harrington. *Discipleship that Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships God Uses to Help Us Grow*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

And one of the following Individually Assigned Textbooks (Professors Will Make Assignments for Specific Books by December 1, 2025).

Chandler, Diane. *Christian Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014.

Cole, Neil. *Cultivating a Life for God: Multiplying Disciples through Life Transformation Groups*. CMA Resources, 1999.

Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, Repackaged edition, other editions are acceptable. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2020. (978-0800739133) Note: This is not the book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, also written by Coleman.

Dean, Jody and Hal Stewart. *Together We Equip: Integrating Discipleship and Ministry Leadership for Holistic Spiritual Formation*. Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2018.

Dodson, Jonathan K. *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Eims, LeRoy. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978.

Gaultiere, Bill and Kristi. *Journey of the Soul: A Practical Guide to Emotional and Spiritual Growth*. Grand Rapids: Revell, 2021.

Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. Colorado, Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006.

Hull, Bill. *Conversion and Discipleship: You Can't Have One Without the Other*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.

Gaultiere, Bill and Kristi. *Journey of the Soul: A Practical Guide to Emotional and Spiritual Growth*. Grand Rapids: Revell, 2021.

Im, Daniel. *No Silver Bullets: Five Small Shifts That Will Transform Your Ministry*. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017.

Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. rev. and ex. ed. Downers Grove: Ill, Intervarsity Press, 2016.

Peterson, Eugene H. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021.

Putnam, Jim and Bobby Harrington. *DiscipleShift: Five Steps to Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Stanton, Glenn T. *The Myth of the Dying Church: How Christianity Is Actually Thriving in America and the World*. New York: Worthy Books (Hachette Book Group), 2019.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's Guide to Making Disciples Through Scripture and Doctrine*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2019.

Wilder, Jim and Michel Hendricks. *The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020.

Willard, Dallas. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. New York: Harper, 2006.

Wilkins, Michael J. *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.

Seminar Requirements

Before the Seminar

- 1. Definition and Strategy.** Students will read the Malphurs text and respond to selected questions from each chapter. The list of questions for each chapter will be available in Canvas by January 12, 2026. Particular attention should be given to answering two

important questions: (1) “What” is a disciple? (2) How do you make one? The report does not have to be in Turabian format but should include a cover page with name, course, date, assignment, etc. Single spacing is acceptable. Answers should be provided in complete sentences. **Due Date: Submit through the Assignment area in Canvas by January 12, 2026.**

2. Talking Points. Each student will read and identify at least seven talking points (key ideas, observations, insights, criticisms, etc.) from each of the four core textbooks (a total of 28 talking points). For each book include a complete bibliographic entry and the talking points for each book. Accompany each talking point with 3-4 explanatory sentences. Use parenthetical citations as appropriate. Please provide a cover page identifying your work with your name, assignment, date, course name, etc. Be prepared to discuss textbooks in class. All textbooks will be discussed during the seminar. Submit through the Assignment area of Canvas. **Due: January 19, 2026.**

3. Book Summary: Each student will complete a summary and critical review with application of a book from the Individually Assigned Textbooks list. Students are expected to create a four-page summary using the template supplied by the professor and available in Canvas. Each summary should include a brief summary of the book, key ideas and principles, strengths and weaknesses of the author’s position, points of agreement and disagreement. The application portion of the summary (pages 5-6 of the template) should be related to the student’s personal ministry context and should identify at least five potential application points. Headlines and bullet points should be cited on the reverse side with adequate space for notes by class members. Each student will be expected to present his book review to the class. **Due Date: Summaries are to be submitted in the assignment area and posted in the designated Discussion Board thread in Canvas by Due Date: January 26, 2026.**

4. Curriculum Review. Each student will conduct a search of current discipleship curricula and select one for a review. The final curriculum choice should be approved by the seminar instructor(s). **Please email Dr. Tolbert for approval before beginning your work (mtolbert@nobts.edu).** First come, first served with curriculum selections. Review the curriculum using the following criteria: biblical integrity, objectives, content, delivery method, appeal, reproducibility (not copying but process), and leader training. The review will be submitted through Canvas and made available to all students through the Discussion Board. Pictures can be added for emphasis and communication. Brief summaries, lists and bullet points are encouraged. Dedicate one segment to a general criticism. Each student will be expected to make a brief presentation to the class. Preparations should be made prior to the seminar as no time will be allocated. In addition to submitting the curriculum review in the Assignment portion of Canvas for evaluation, reviews are to be posted in the Discussion Board in Canvas for access by other students by **January 26, 2026.**

5. Disciple Making Assessment. Students will conduct a survey of their congregation (entire congregation or representative sample) using the survey questions in Appendix D of *Strategic DiscipleMaking*. Student will write a brief report (1-2 pages single spaced)

of their findings to be presented during the seminar. **Due Date: Submit through Canvas by February 2, 2026**

During the seminar

6. **Seminar Participation:** Students are expected to be active participants in all sessions of the seminar. Students are expected to contribute with meaningful dialogue during the seminar. **Seminar Presentations:** Each student will be expected to make two presentations (assignments 3 & 4) during the seminar as well as interact with discussions of textbook readings.

Note: The seminar actually begins with the receipt of the syllabus and continues through the material completed after the three-day component. The seminar does not consist only of the three-day session time component.

Following the seminar

7. **Application of Disciple-Making Strategies.** Each student will evaluate his current church or ministry setting utilizing the ideas and principles discovered and discussed during the seminar. In this post-seminar assignment, the student will present possible strategies and implementation plans for their church or other ministry context. Evaluation will be approximately 6-7 pages, double-spaced, written according to the most current Turabian edition regarding footnotes, headings/subheadings, margins, pagination, cover page, etc. **Due Date: March 11, 2026.**

Evaluation of the Grade

Assignment 1: Definition and Strategy	15%
Assignment 2: Talking Points	10%
Assignment 3: Book Summary	15%
Assignment 4: Curriculum Review	15%
Assignment 5: Disciple-Making Assessment	15%
Assignment 6: Seminar Presentations/Participation	10%
Assignment 7: Strategy Report	20%
Total	100%

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

The seminar will be offered in person and through video conferencing. The session on Monday, February 9 will be 1:00pm – 7:00pm. The sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday, February 10 and 11 are scheduled for 8:00am – 4:00pm. Appropriate breaks will be taken for lunch and chapel.

DIRECTED STUDY ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to all assignments in this syllabus, Students completing the course as a directed study will complete the following assignments:

1. **Read and respond** to each of the summaries posted in the Discussion board. (10 total).
A one-page response/reaction to each summary for total of 10 pages.
2. **Spiritual Development Assessment.**
 - a. Students will acquire and evaluate 3 instruments designed to measure the spiritual development of a congregation from the attached list, or by proposing other(s).
 - b. Students will select and administrate at **least two** of the assessment instruments (see bibliography) designed to measure the spiritual development of a congregation. Students will collect data on a random sample of church members/attendees. Students may select an assessment instrument from the attached list or propose one of their own. Findings will be reported in a 2-3 page paper on each assessment tool.
 - c. Students should write a comparison of the two instruments and their efficacy as for use in the local church. The comparison report should be typed, double-spaced, and 2-3 pages for each instrument/process. **Due Date for Extra Directed Study Assignments: March 18, 2026.**

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (4050816-8189) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu or My.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. Canvas@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Canvas Learning Management System (Faculty/Students/Staff) Canvas.NOBTS.edu.
3. [Video Conferencing Help Desk](#) - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Video Conferencing NOBTS classrooms (On and Off-Campus)
4. TelephoneHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS On-Campus Phone system.
5. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests in the Flex classrooms and for general technical questions/support requests. If you are not sure who to contact, use this email address!
6. [504.816.8180](tel:504.816.8180) - Call for any technical questions/support requests. (Currently available Mon-Thurs 7:00am-9:00pm & Fri 7:00-7:00pm Central Time)
7. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Disability Accommodations

Accommodations for students with disabilities are determined and approved by the Assistant Dean of Students for Student Affairs. If you, as a student, believe you are eligible for accommodations but have not obtained approval please contact Conner Hinton immediately at chinton@nobts.edu or 504-816-8246. Students must complete the Accommodation Request Form and provide documentation of their disability. The Assistant Dean of Students notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of those accommodations. While not required, students and faculty members are encouraged to discuss details of the implementation of individual accommodations. The seminary reserves the right to consider each request for special accommodations on a case-by- case basis pursuant to the criteria enumerated above

Selected Bibliography

- Anderson, Keith R. and Randy D. Reese. *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Barna, George. *Growing True Disciples*. Ventura, CA: Issachar Resources, 2000.
- Boa, Kenneth. *Conformed to His Image*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Eims, Leroy. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.
- Fryling, Alice, ed. *The Disciplemakers' Handbook*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989.
- Goldsmith, Malcolm. *Knowing Me Knowing God: Exploring Your Spirituality With Myers-Briggs*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.
- Hahn, Todd and David Verhaagen. *Generation Xers After God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
- Hanks, Billie and William A. Shell, eds. *Discipleship: Great Insights from the Most Experienced Disciple Makers*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*. Nappanee, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1997.
- Hendricks, Howard. *As Iron Sharpens Iron: Building Character in a Mentoring Relationship*. Chicago: Moody, 1999.
- Henrichsen, Walter A. *Disciples Are Made, Not Born*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1974.
- Hull, Bill. *The Disciple-Making Church*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1990.
- Lamb, Richard. *Following Jesus in the Real World: Discipleship for the Post-College Years*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.
- Laurie, Greg. *Discipleship: The Next Step in Following Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Strategy 2000: Churches Making Disciples for the Next Millennium*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Resources, 1996.
- Marsh, F. E. *Discipler's Manual*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980.
- Morton, Scott. *Down to Earth Discipling*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003.
- Ortberg, John. *The Life You've Always Wanted*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

Petersen, Jim. *Lifestyle Discipleship*. Colorado Springs: Nav Press, 1993.

Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997.

Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On The Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002.

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. San Francisco: Harper, 2000.

Wright, N.T. *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Selected Assessment Instruments

Personal Spiritual Inventory, by The Barna Research Group, Ltd., 2000.

(Cost information available at the Barna website, www.barna.org)

GrowthFinder Assessment, Church Teams Ministries

(Information available at www.churchteams.com/GrowthFinder.asp -- the assessment should be done with at least 10 people in your Church to become oriented to this process.)

Discipleship Pathway Assessment (http://www.lifeway.com/Product/spiritual-formation-inventory-P005216492#product_description). The Discipleship Pathway Assessment is an online assessment tool that provides individuals or groups with the ability to assess their current spiritual maturity using eight biblical signposts. Knowing where you are is the first step toward taking proactive steps in your discipleship.

The Discipleship Pathway Assessment is based on extensive ongoing research and is an updated version of the Transformational Discipleship Assessment (TDA). This online assessment can be purchased for an individual, small group, Sunday School class or even an entire church (bulk discounts are automatic). If purchasing for a group, change the quantity of assessments to match the number of individuals who will be taking the assessment. When you complete your purchase, there will be an “activate membership” link that will appear on the confirmation. Click that link and it will show you your passcode and where to go to register.

The Christian Life Profile Assessment Tool Workbook: Developing Your Personal Plan to Think, Act, and Be Like Jesus, Updated Edition (2015). Randy Frazee. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2025.

“Is Your Church Riding the Acts 6:7 Train? Assessing Our Progress in Growing an Intentional Disciplemaking Culture.”

Simple survey from Navigator Church Ministries to assess a church’s progress toward developing a disciple making culture. Available from navigatorschurchministries.org.

Christian Character Index 360.

www.assess-yourself.org Click on Assess Your Christian Character.