

2022-02-18 - *Simple Discipleship* - Dana Allin

*Note: Although I didn't get to submit it prior to writing the reflection for the assessment, I did write the following reading report first.*

Dana Allin has written a book that describes first, a definition for a disciple and how Jesus went about making and teaching disciples. Second, how we are called to love God with all our heart, all our mind, and all our hands (actions).

Third, he then describes the different aspects of a disciple of Jesus, one at a time. There are eight qualities and twenty-one supporting characteristics of a disciple. Less simple than the title

Allin explains that in the few churches that actually have some sort of discernable discipleship "program" or "curriculum", they approach it as if "one size fits all". But Jesus didn't do that! Allin gives multiple examples of how Jesus met individuals exactly where they were in order to invite each one to surrender what they needed to surrender in order to draw closer to God.

He further explains that the purpose of the book and the accompanying assessment is to help people who would like to follow Jesus develop a customized plan for where they have deficiencies and need to grow. The book ends with a description for how to make that personalized plan for growth, including understanding the nature and role of coaching.

As someone who often asks, "What does it *look* like?" regarding almost everything, I think this book is a solid entry in the discipleship universe by helping disciples put flesh on the esoteric bones. For instance, "gracious living" is a great aspiration, but what does it look like? Allin gives the visual of "exhibiting care, humility, and compassion when interacting with others." We all know what that looks like (though a few examples would be helpful).

How might I use the concepts in this book in my ministry?

The first way is a bit subversive. As I thought about whom I would ask to do the 360 assessment, I started writing down a lot of names of people at church. When I read the sample questions, I realized that most people at church wouldn't have thought of most of those activities in terms of being a disciple of Jesus. So I ended up sending a request to fill out the assessment to almost all the church leaders (Elders and Deacons), as well as a few other people. This is subversive because I think it is a way to get them to *think* about what it means to be a disciple when they wouldn't ever have thought of it before! I believe, in most cases, I was introducing the idea, simply by asking them to fill out the assessment. (I don't expect most of them to fill it out, but for any that even look at it, it will have done its job.) Subversive

Second, I did take the assessment and am curious to see where others think I have room for improvement. I am preparing myself, mentally, for the constructive criticism, but you can't ever truly prepare.

Third, I am not convinced about the coaching chapter. While I think it may be useful to develop a plan to address certain deficiencies - much like I took last semester's evangelism course because I knew I had a gaping hole in my understanding, knowledge, and practice - I don't think following that plan with the coaching of another person can replace the intense and intimate relationship-building that happens in one-on-one or one-on-two discipleship. You don't have the

life-on-life examples and you don't have the more experienced voice helping you work through scripture. I would prioritize small group discipleship over coaching, if I had to choose just one.

I do appreciate the reminder that one size does *not* fit all. I am already paying attention to this now with the three women whom I am discipling, and I know Sara took it into account when she was discipling people at OS. The women I'm discipling have different needs and are in different places in their spiritual walk with God. This will be important to keep in mind as I develop this new discipleship ministry, though I'm not yet sure how to address it.

I first read this book a year or two ago, but it was worth revisiting.

Well said