

## **196 Evangelism: decision–discipleship**

*I'm a little more negative today than I like, but only to point up what I see as a major problem, and only because I think there's a better way; I've seen it in action in my own church, where new people are coming to faith.*

I still want to reach the 95%, and after thinking about 'A passion for life',<sup>[195]</sup> I've formed a picture of two models of 'church' – probably too simplistic, but worth a look?

The model I've been grown up with is what I'd call a decision–discipleship model (DD). We pray for our unsaved friends and family (F&F). We try to get them to 'hear the gospel', once mainly through 'missions' (Billy Graham etc.) but now more friendship-based and course-based, through the massive success of Alpha.

Once someone has made a **decision** they become part of the church, and we have to **disciple** them – and all church leaders know how difficult that is! They have to read the Bible and pray (daily?), come to church regularly, give sacrificially and, if the church is to grow, they need to tell their F&F about Jesus, and get them to come to church or to a mission. (Can you feel the guilt rising?)

For those who take their discipleship seriously, there's not a lot of time for anything other than church, so our F&F circle shrinks to mainly church friends plus unsaved family. Then comes mission time, and guilt drives us to try to find people to pray for, befriend and invite.

That's my experience, but maybe yours is different. Chiefly guilt-driven?

This DD model is centered on DECISION: 'Have you given your life to the Lord?' Only once they are 'in' can they grow in their relationship with the Lord.

What if we turned it round to where the whole thing is centered on Jesus Christ as Lord, with people getting to know Jesus and *growing* into a loving relationship with the Lord? We might call it **following–growing** (FG).

In this model, 'preaching the gospel' is telling the full story of Jesus, introducing our F&F to a person whom we love, to what he did, what he said. And as they catch a sense of our love for them and for Jesus, they can join us on the journey *on their own terms*, but be gradually drawn into that relationship. We're all on a journey, we're all followers of Jesus, all on 'the way'.

This all sounds a bit wishy-washy! Am I going 'soft on sin'? No, but in the DD model, a person isn't allowed to start their relationship with God unless and until they admit they're a sinner!

If we turn it round and focus on God's love for us, focus on who Jesus is and what he did, and what *we did to him*, and how God showed that Jesus is Lord. Don't you think that, if we pray, the Holy Spirit might grow a realisation in the heart of our friend or family member that they don't exactly match up to Jesus' standard?