



# MAKING DISCIPLES...

**The final words of a famous person are often very profound. How much more so with Jesus! His final command in Matthew 28 was “Go and make disciples of all nations”. In the Greek text, the main verb in this sentence is not “go,” but rather “make [disciples]”. The main thing that Jesus wants us to do is to make disciples.**

The making of a disciple does not come about just by conversion or even by baptism – a disciple is made by that new convert being taught everything that Jesus has commanded us. Even though Jesus preached to thousands

at a time, His greatest impact came from His close, intimate and intentional discipleship of a few carefully chosen individuals.

One of Interserve International’s stated priorities is to ‘develop a culture of discipling and mentoring’. Interserve views discipleship as being at the very heart of mission, because it is discipling and mentoring that will transform individuals and empower the church. As Paul Bendor-Samuel, the International Director of Interserve, writes: “Discipleship starts with our own

relationship to Christ. It reminds us humbly that we are on a journey that is – as yet – incomplete. We are invited to join God in His mission and to join His people wherever they are in their missional calling.”

That sounds great in theory but how do we put it into practice?

C.T. Studd wrote: “There’s many a slip ‘twixt the call and the ship” (or nowadays we might say “There’s many that wane between the call and the plane”). Many students and On Trackers get fired up for mission while in the 18-25 age group but before long they have a student loan to pay off, they start their career, marry, have children, take out a mortgage, and so on. The vision of working overseas can easily fade away unless it’s continually fanned into flame and clear progress is being made towards it. Intentional discipling and ‘mentoring for mission’ can really help with this, especially at the crucial stage of people in their 20s.

One way that Interserve is seeking to disciple and mentor enquirers is through the Mentoring for Mission networks that have been set up in several countries (the UK, Holland, Switzerland and New Zealand). Interserve provides serious enquirers and former On Trackers with someone to walk alongside them in their journey in missions, to help prepare them for living and serving overseas. If enquirers are mentored well, it helps them to focus and be intentional about their missions journey.



Simon in the UK, for example, is a medical student who has been mentored for the past three years. He did his medical elective in Pakistan through On Track and is now working towards going overseas as a doctor in the Muslim world. His mentor (a returned Interserve Partner) is intentionally mentoring him for mission and together they have produced a tailor-made 'personal development plan' which identifies areas Simon needs to grow in while he waits to go, such as befriending Muslims in his local area, and learning how to disciple believers from a Muslim background. This intentional discipling and mentoring is helping to maximise his learning opportunities and preparing him well for serving overseas.

Alice was involved with asylum seekers and felt the call to serve in mission overseas, but she wasn't sure where the Lord was leading her. With the help of a mission mentor (another Interserve Partner) walking alongside her in her journey, she explored different countries and openings and, within a year, went to serve as a long-term Interserve Partner in Central Asia.

However, it's not just the enquirers and On Trackers that we want to see mentored in Interserve, but also all of the Partners, whether new or very experienced. All of us are lifelong learners and need to keep growing in our discipleship and in effectiveness for the Kingdom. We all need to be challenged and nurtured to personal spiritual growth, because intimacy with God

leads to personal transformation, which leads to empowered service.

My desire is that all new Partners will have a mentor – either a more experienced Interserve Partner or a national believer or even someone from a different agency – and then they, in turn, will mentor newer Partners or On Trackers. For more experienced Partners, peer mentoring may be a good option, with either fellow workers or national believers. Returned Partners also need mentoring, and the cycle is completed when they become mentors for new enquirers. We all need to keep growing in our faith and becoming more useful in ministry... it would be great if everyone had a 'Paul' and a 'Timothy' – in other words, have a mentor and be mentoring someone.

Discipleship and mentoring can play a key role in helping people grow and reach their potential for God and become more effective in ministry. Think about your own situation. If you don't yet have a mentor, is there someone you could ask? And is there someone God is calling you to disciple and mentor?

Let me encourage you with a final example of what discipleship can achieve. Most people, when they think of Ethiopia, would consider it to be a

receiving country – that is, mission workers are sent to there, not from there. But in an exciting new development, Interserve has entered into partnership with several churches in Ethiopia, to help disciple and mentor interested church members for overseas mission service. And two Ethiopian families have reached the stage where they are now actively preparing to move to Bangladesh to serve as long-term Interserve Partners. Once in Bangladesh, the families will also be provided with mentors to help them adjust to the different culture.

Discipleship truly does transform individuals and empower the church. What a privilege it is to be able to invest ourselves in other people's lives. ☞

*Rachel is from the UK, and is the Mentoring Coordinator for Interserve International.*

