



**MANI 2021 CONTINENTAL
CONSULTATION ON
TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP**

PRINCIPLES, PROCESS AND PRACTICE

BY

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**What could be the
root cause of
Spiritual Decline
in the
global church?**

Observations on 20th C. Church Pursuit of the Great Commission

1. There was great emphasis on missions and evangelism.
2. There was great emphasis on church growth and church planting, research, etc.
3. The Christian church was the most ***prosperous*** of all world religions in that C.
4. But the challenge of spiritual decline emerged because the Great Commission was not pursued holistically.

The Lord's Great Commission *(Mt 28:18-20)*



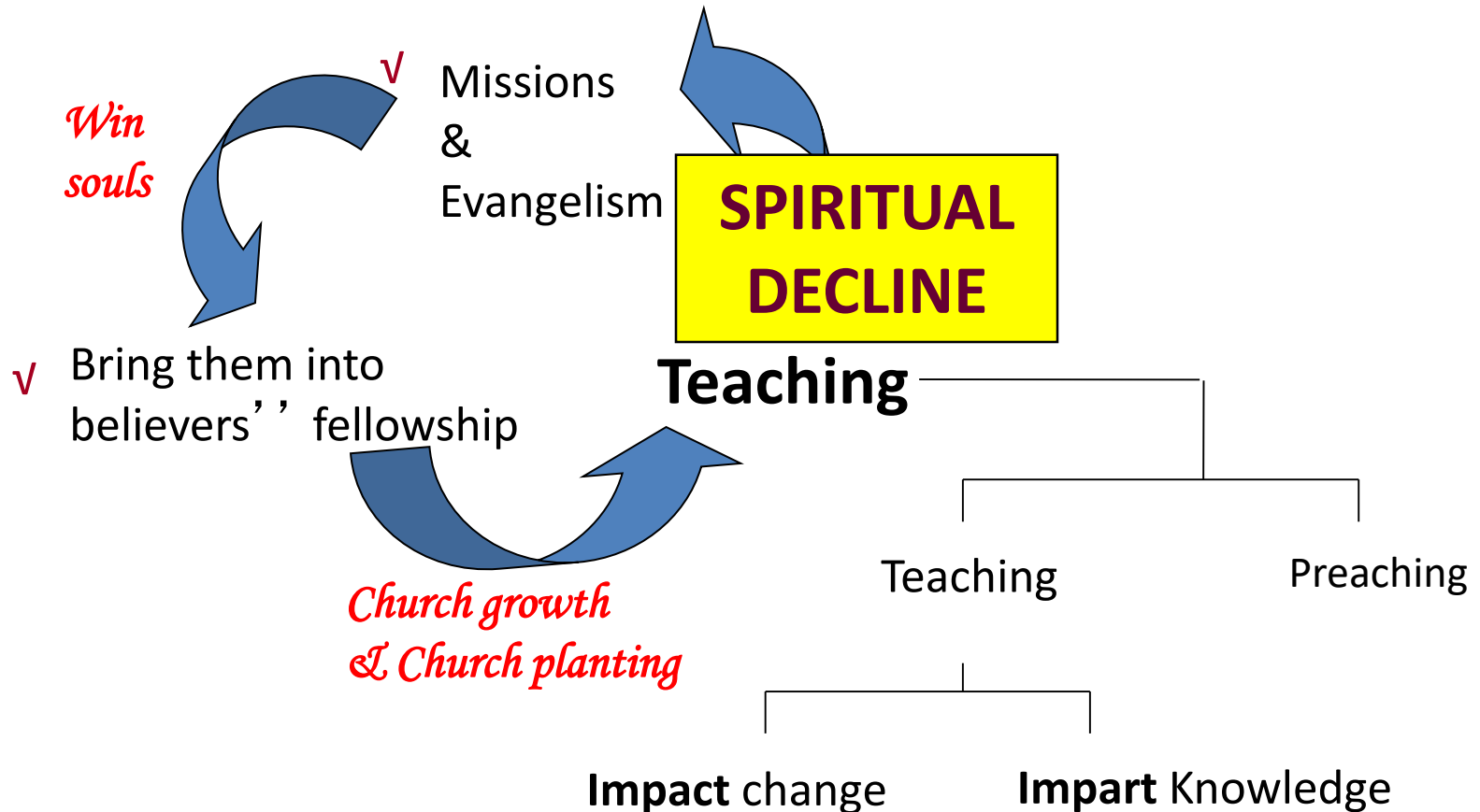
And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

What Jesus meant by the Great Commission

1. A promise of His “**Power**” (v18)
2. A promise of His abiding ‘**Presence**’ (v20)
3. A defined “**Purpose**” as church responsibility or goal
 - “**MAKE DISCIPLES of all the NATIONS**” (v19)
4. Three commands for realizing the goal, which are:
 - Go... (v19)
 - Baptizing them... (v19)
 - Teaching them... (v20)

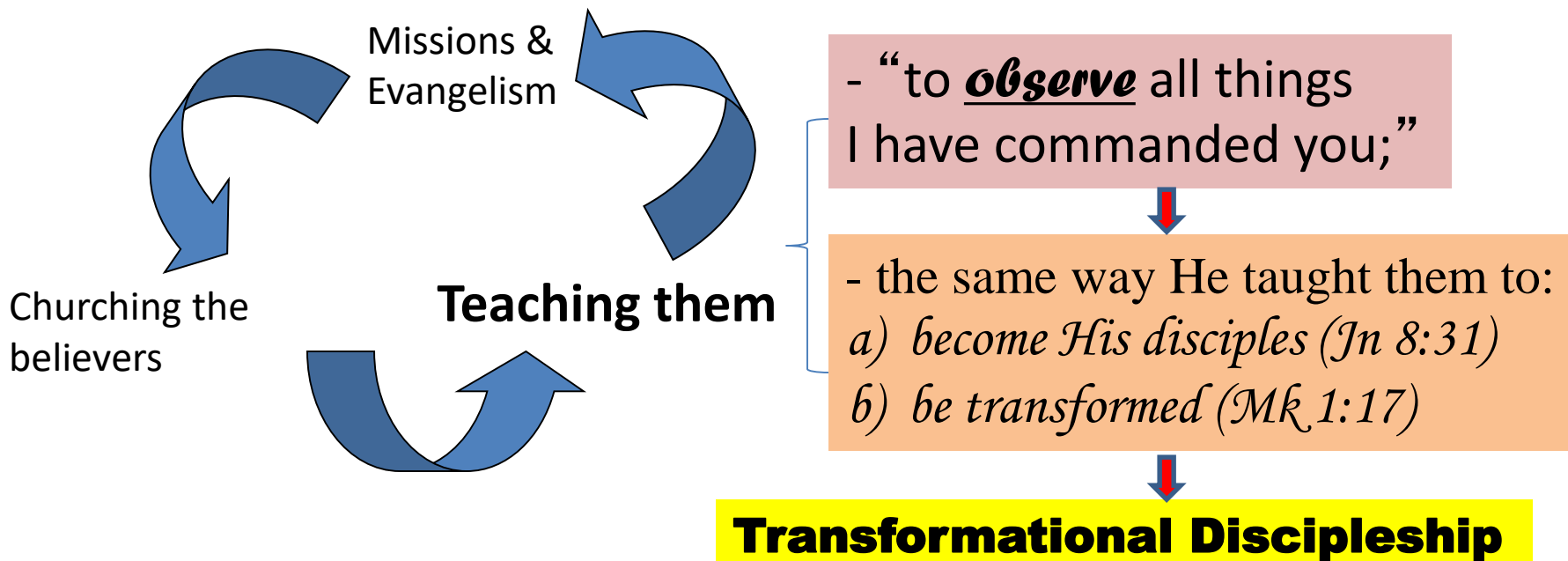
WRONG ASSUMPTION ON TEACHING

A general assumption has been that ‘teaching’ is a very familiar and common activity in every local church. Yes, but we should investigate what really goes on as ‘teaching’ in churches.



Interpreting - “Teaching them...”

Today, the 21st C. church must give an accurate interpretation to the third action step in the Great Commission, just as the 20th C. church did for the first and second action steps.



Discipleship is necessary

- To grow spiritually does not not happen by chance
- The potential to become a 'son' of God, or conform to the lifestyle of our Lord Jesus Christ, comes into us right at the point we truly become born again.
- But it remains dormant in a believer until he/she begins to put it into practical manifestation.
- The process of growing to become like Jesus is discipleship.

- Before His ascension, our Lord commanded that the Church should make disciples for Him.
- A disciple is a believer in Christ who has a steadfast desire to know Him and to grow into His lifestyle, as much as possible (Acts 2: 42; Phil 3: 10).
- Discipleship is thus a systematic process of being taught, and learning and practicing what we should become in Christ Jesus.
- It is the means by which we should intentionally grow to become genuine disciples of Christ.
- But then we should know the purpose, principles, the process and the practice or even the product.

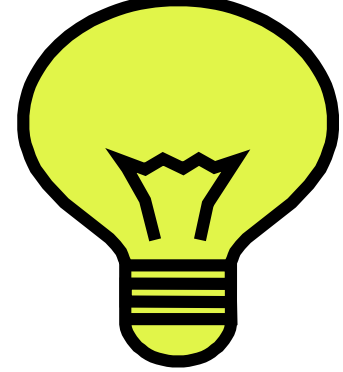
Basic Facts about Apostolic Discipleship

There are four important things which characterized the early apostles' discipleship efforts.

These are:

- a) acting with a clear **purpose**,
- b) being guided by reasonable **principles**
- c) adopting a feasible **procedure**, *and*
- d) having a clear idea of what the **product** should be.

PURPOSE



The following are some of the statements which confirm that the apostles had some convergent goal, reason or objective for their discipleship efforts.

- ★ to ***“present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”***
(Col 1:28)
- ★ to help believers attain ***“the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”*** (Phil 3:14)
- ★ to conform believers ***“to the image of His Son”*** (Rom 8:29)
- ★ to help believers to purify themselves ***“even as He is pure”***
(1 Jn 3:3)
- ★ to prepare believers who are fit for the ***‘rapture’***
(1 Thess 4:16-17)
- ★ *etc.*

Principles that Guided the Apostles' Discipleship Practices

The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ conducted discipleship in ways that transformed the believers' lives to Christ-likeness.

Five fundamental principles that are easily identified, which guided their procedure and practices are:

1. Principle of the **New Birth**
2. Principle of **Biblical Content**
3. Principle of **Holism**
4. Principle of **Spiritual Maturity**
5. Principle of **Timing**

Principle # 1

NEW BIRTH

Only the genuinely born again can be disciplined.

Statement:

A person can only be disciplined after he/she has become genuinely born again through a living faith in Christ Jesus as His personal Lord and Saviour (Acts 2:41f)

Note:

Not all members of a church are born again, and not all who claim to, may truly be so.

Principle # 2

BIBLICAL CONTENT

The Holy Scriptures is the only legitimate source for any transformational or apostolic styled discipleship.

Statement:

There is no legitimate source of content for transformational discipleship, other than the written word of God – the Bible (Jn 17:17; 1 Pet 2:2).

Note:

Selecting and teaching from extra-biblical content may entertain but will never transform lives. Only the word of God has the attribute of *'spirit and life.'*

Principle # 3

HOLISM

Only by teaching the “whole counsel of God” can believers “grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ.”

Statement:

It takes nothing less than teaching the whole counsel of God to produce disciples who are fully grown up into Christ in all things (Mt 28:20; Eph 4:15; Acts 20:27).

Note:

No church or ministry that holds a strong doctrinal bias, can produce genuine disciples of Christ. The best they do will still be limited by the much they excluded.

Principle # 4

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

The ultimate and incontrovertible goal of any genuine discipleship effort is to bring believers to spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus.

Statement:

The unique and exclusive goal of any genuine discipleship is to grow believers to spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus (Col 1:28; Eph 4:13-16).

Note:

Physical age, position in society, activeness in the church, oratorical ability, and such like, are not necessarily evidences of maturity in Christ. Only Christ-like character is.

Principle # 5

TIMING

There is a time frame within which a discipleship package is expected to achieve its defined goal.

Statement:

There is always a time frame within which a discipleship programme is supposed to produce the expected result of spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus, in those exposed to it (Act 11:26; 20:31).

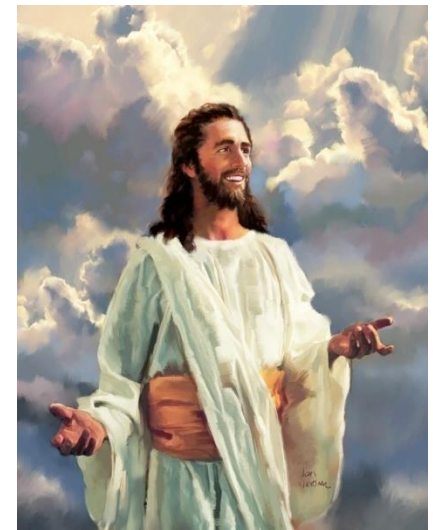
Note:

An indefinite programme can never produce a predictable outcome. Goals are only meaningful to the extent they are defined by time.

DISCIPLESHIP -PROCESS

(Definition)

Discipleship is not just an event. It is the process of facilitating the believer's continuous and incremental development of the characteristics or lifestyle of our Lord Jesus Christ (*spiritual growth*).



Transformational Discipleship is Life-long

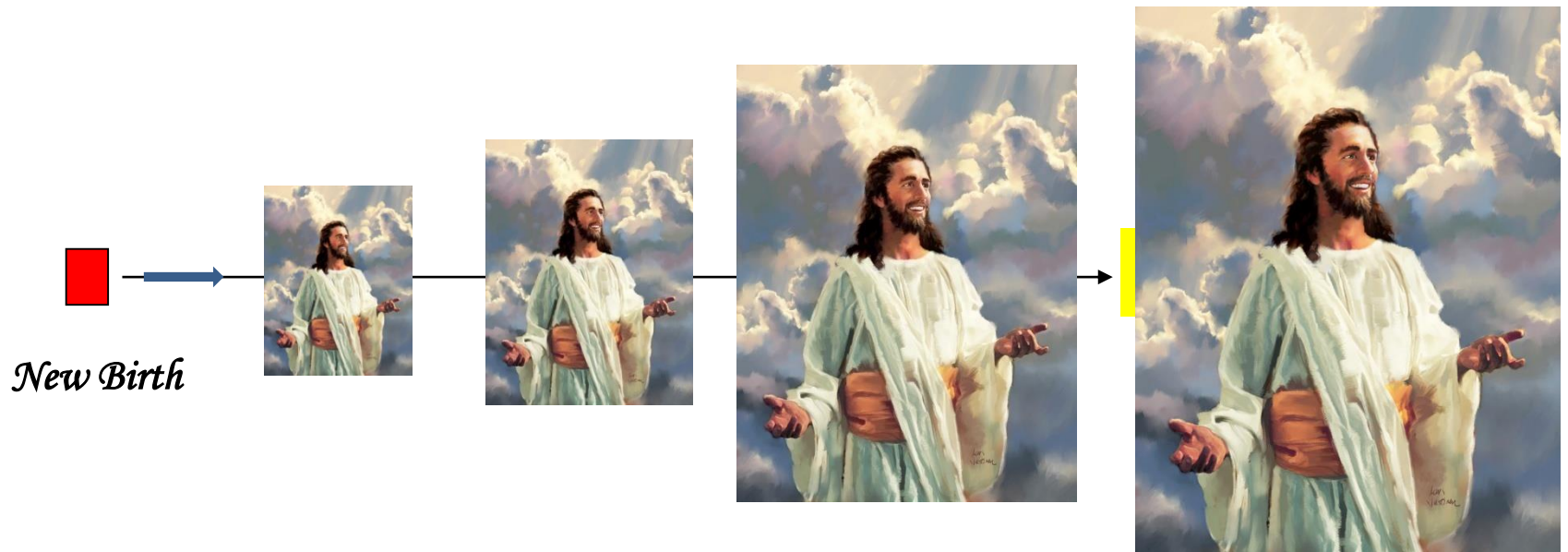
Effective Discipleship begins from the point a person becomes truly born again. It is a life-long experience (Acts 21:16 *Mnason*). No person graduates from being a genuine disciple (Phil 3:10). It continues till we ultimately meet our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven.



New Birth

Ultimate Maturity

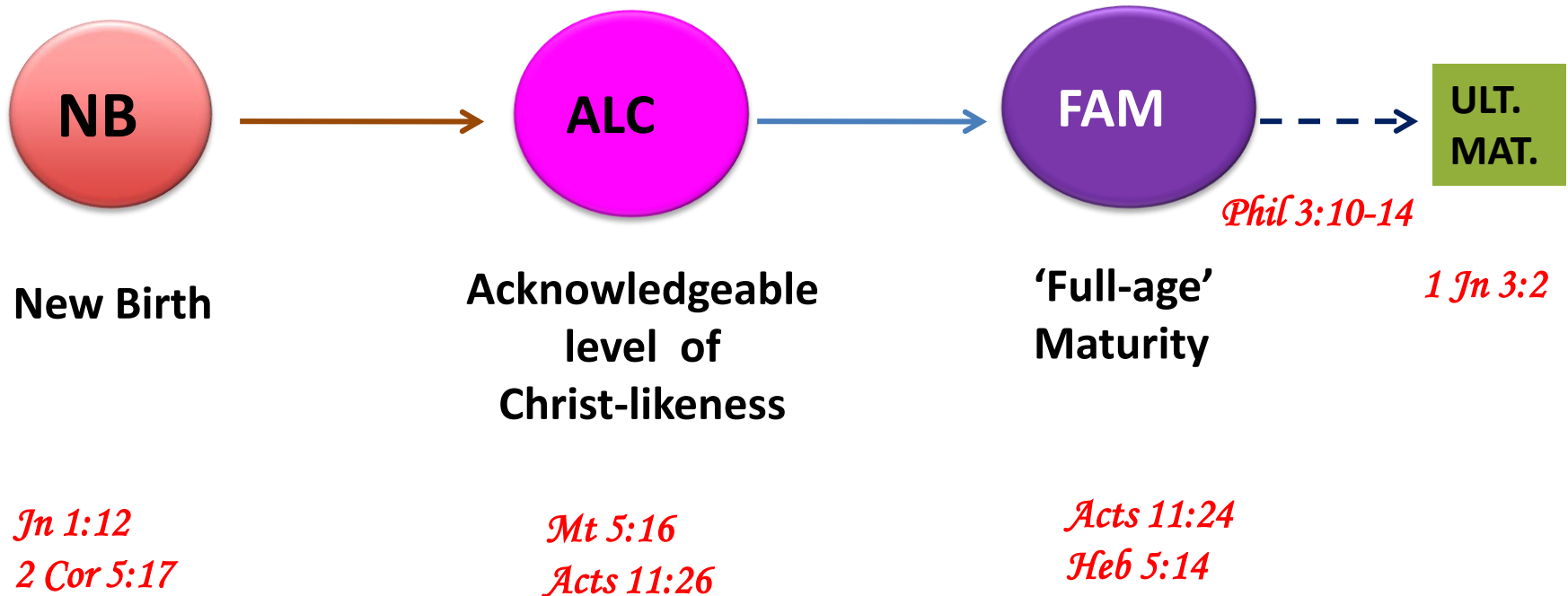
Conceptualizing Spiritual Growth



Spiritual growth is a progression of manifesting increasing measures of Christ-likeness

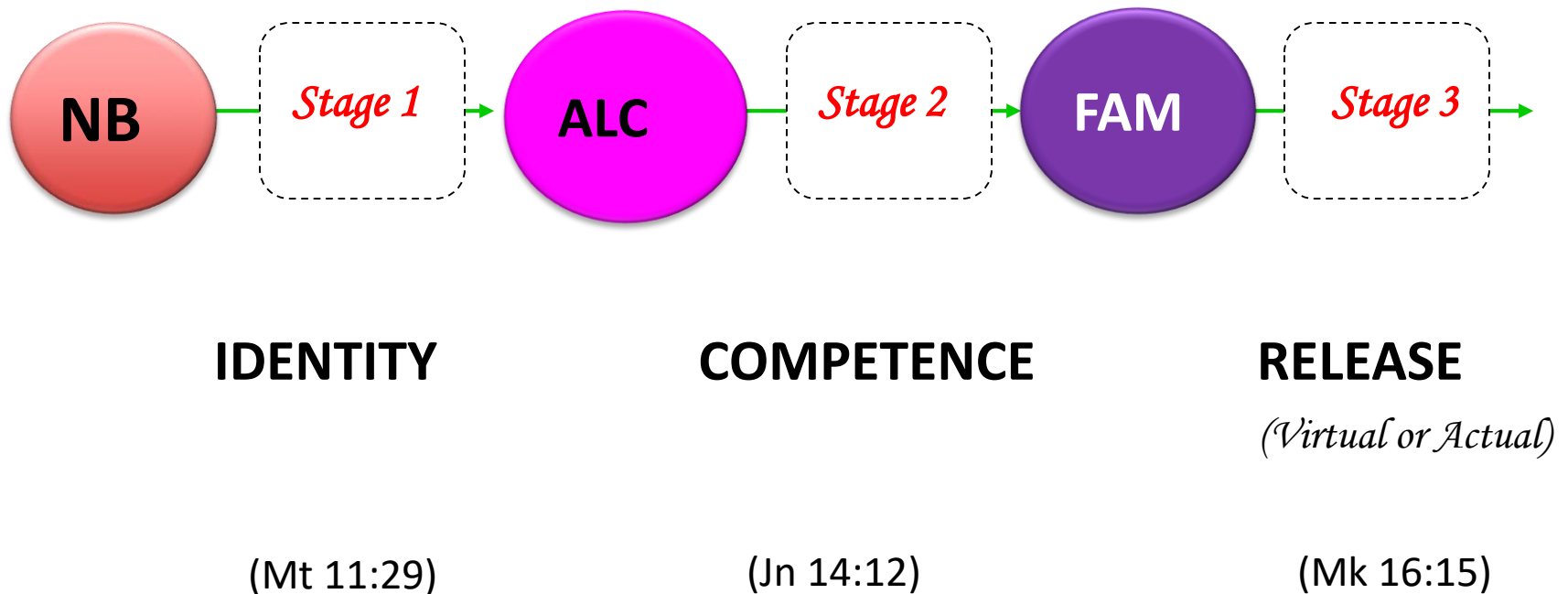
Significant Points in Spiritual Transformation

Since believers are transformed “from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18), it will be helpful to visualize scripturally consistent points which indicate the attainment of some significant levels of this ‘glory.’ Consider the following:



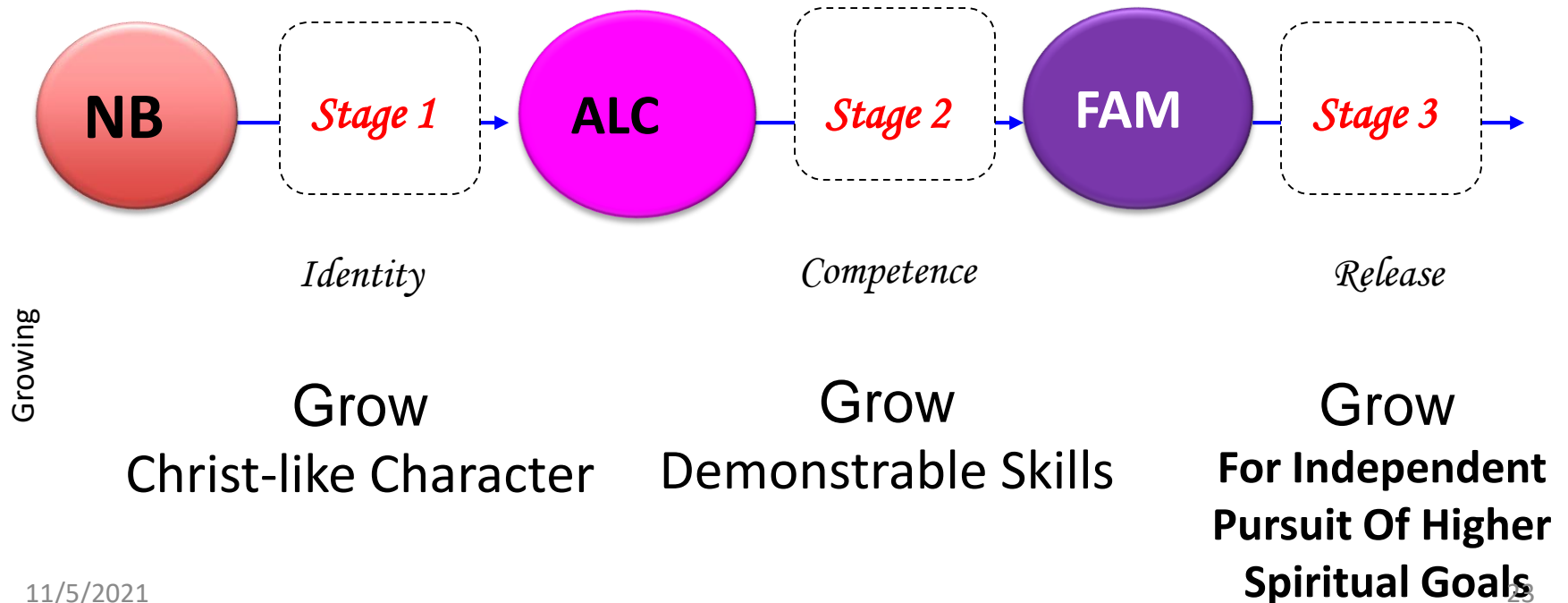
Three Critical Stages in Transformational Discipleship

From the foregoing, we can deduce three primary and sequenced stages in an apostolic styled transformational discipleship process.



Growth Goals / Requirements for the Stages

Transformational discipleship is a responsibility which a local church must take up in a systematic way (*i.e. ordered stages*), so as to achieve some predictable results.



Being Deliberate About Discipleship-PRACTICE

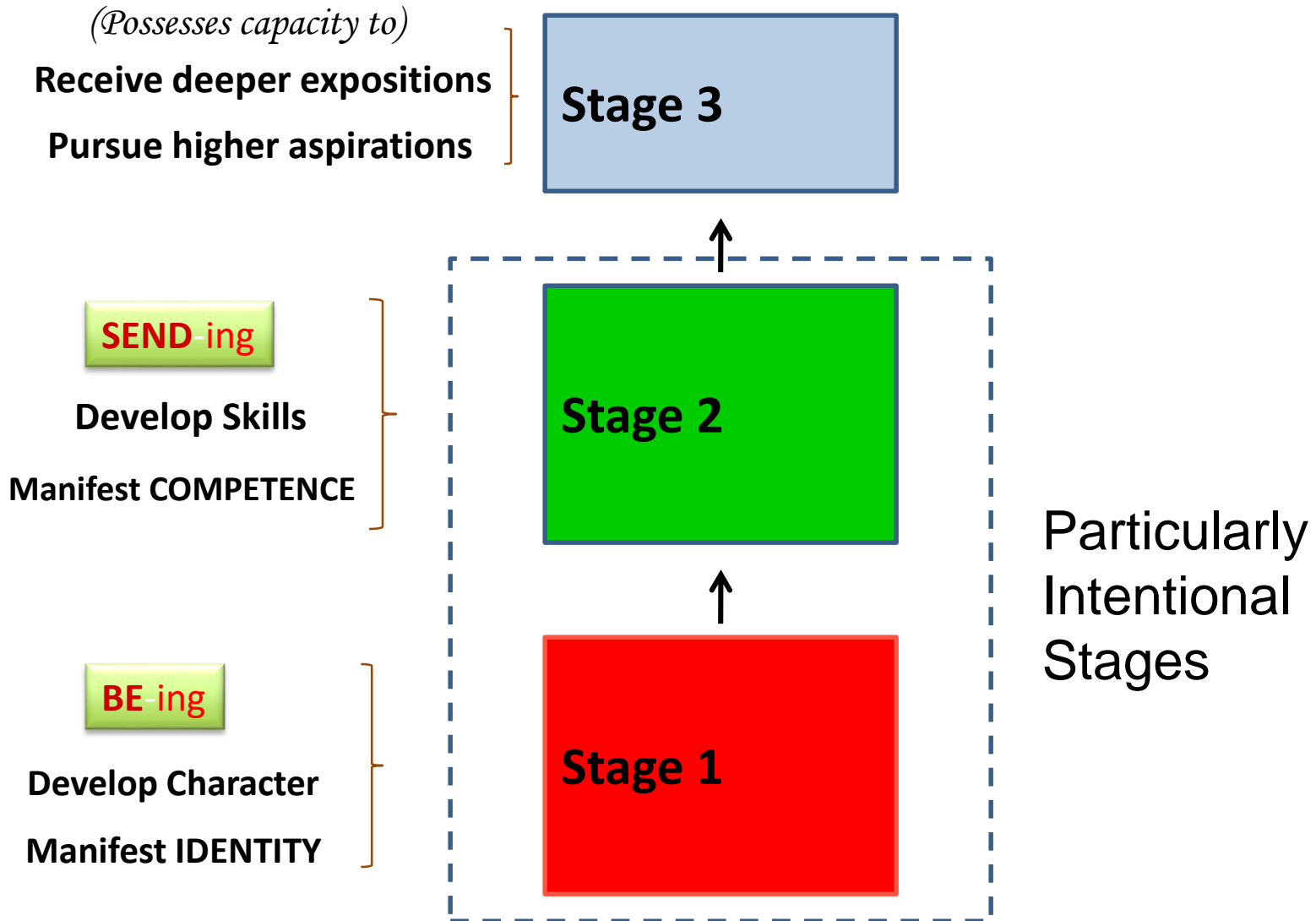
Church leaders should accord importance to what the Master regarded as very important, which are, **Being**, and, **Sending** or **Doing** (Mark 3: 14).

Our first responsibility is to 'make' believers to 'BE' or become like Christ in lifestyle / character, as much as possible.

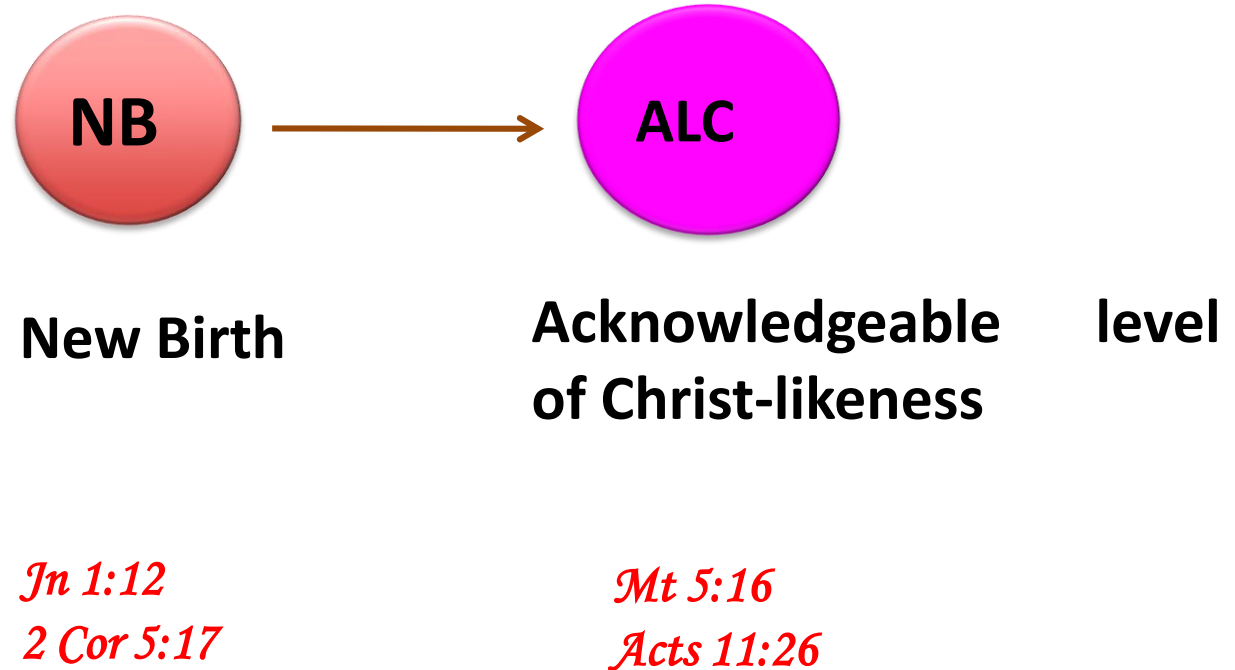
The second responsibility is to equip them so that they can go anywhere as Christ's witnesses *i.e.* as kingdom change agents or impact makers.

To achieve these goals, we must be very deliberate about what we plan, and how we execute it.

Intentionality of Stages



Analyzing Components of Stage One



Why Focus on Stage One?

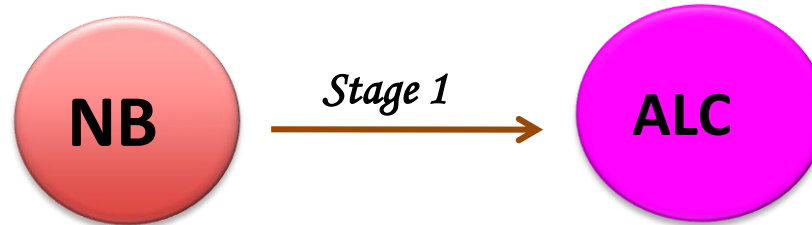
*We shall focus attention on **Stage 1** of our discipleship process for the following reasons.*

1. It seems to be the most neglected stage of discipleship (*Mt 7:22-23*).
2. It is crucial for a stable and sustainable growth of subsequent stages (*Luke 6:47-49*).
3. Our Lord Jesus started with developing a godly lifestyle in His disciples (*Mt 5 - 7*).
4. *So must we.*

Comparing Natural and Spiritual Growth

	<i>Natural Growth</i>	<i>Spiritual Need</i>	<i>Challenge</i>
1	Has a child been born?	Need to ascertain genuineness of 'born again' claim.	How can one be born again?
2	What do we start feeding the new child with?	Need to feed a convert with spiritual milk, as a new born baby.	What is the first spiritual food for the newly born again?
3	What are the agents / causes of death or disability in our society which we must protect the new child from?	Need to 'immunize' a convert against any spiritual hazards likely to threaten his healthy growth to spiritual maturity.	What characteristics in our society and culture are harmful to the spiritual stability of the believer?
4	What specific foods should a child be given to enable his continuous healthy growth?	Need to feed a convert with appropriate 'solid food' (spiritual) to enable his growth toward a stable and healthy manhood.	What do we teach the believer to enhance his spiritual growth?
5	How do we know that a child has grown to become a man?	Need to ascertain when a convert begins to consistently manifest features of an acknowledgeable level of Christ-likeness.	What are the characteristics of spiritual maturity?

Deriving Components (*Courses*) of Stage 1



1. New Birth (Sin *to* Assurance of salvation)
2. Spiritual Milk (Heb 6:1-2)
3. Peculiarities (Tit 1:12-13)
4. First Steps in Spiritual Growth (Acts 2:42-47)
5. Growing in Love (Agape) (2 Pet 1:5-7)
6. Features of Spiritual Maturity (Eph 4:13-16)

Developing Content for Stage 1 Transformational Discipleship

In practice, attention is always focused on Stage 1 of the discipleship process for the following reasons:

1. It is the most neglected stage of discipleship
(Mt 7:22-23)
2. It is crucial for stable and sustainable growth of subsequent stages *(Luke 6: 47-49)*.
3. Our Lord Jesus started with developing a godly lifestyle in His disciples *(Mt 5 - 7)*.
4. So must we.