

Story of Discipleship



DISCIPLESHIP CONFERENCE 2021

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Objectives

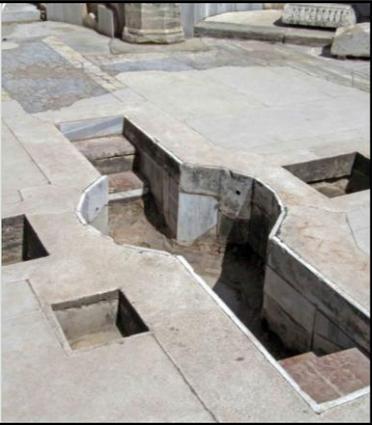
- First Things
- Discipleship and Entry into the Early Church
- Macrina: Disciple of Saints
- Discipleship among our Cousins Today
- Notable others

First Things

- I don't agree with everything.
- I am inspired by most of this.
- You do the sorting of the good from the bad.

Discipleship & Entry Into the Early Church

Baptism in the Early Church



- Baptism of high value.
- Baptism required preparation.

Are You Ready for Baptism?

- Are you willing to listen to right doctrine?
- Do you know right doctrine?
- Are you willing to be corrected in your daily life
- Has your daily life changed?
- So . . . teachable spirit and right doctrine and right practice.

How were so many people brought to readiness??

Discipleship!

One Example

- Bishop Cyril, 4th Century**
- Catechumens and catechesis (could last years)
 - “Those being enlightened”, final weeks
 - Lent, with Baptism on Easter
 - Or just “disciples”

The Mentor

- Evangelize
- Bring the potential disciple to church leadership to start the process.
- Answer questions, provide accountability.
- Vouch for the disciple’s readiness for baptism.

Church Leadership

Teaching and training in doctrine and practice.

The catechism/creeds.

And it apparently “worked”

Between AD 30 and AD 300, tremendous growth numerically:

- From <200 to >5mil?
- Territorially: Europe, Asia, and Africa
- Influence in the ancient world

But wait!!!

- Instant baptism in Acts:
 - Mostly Jews or God-fearers
- Perhaps lengthier time as the Church become predominantly Gentile
- Infant baptism not until late 100s, then contested until perhaps the 500s.

So . . .

"The Early Church grew rapidly using rigorous, comprehensive discipleship of the whole convert"
Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*



Macrina the Younger, Discipler of Saints (4th c.)

https://vatopaidl.files.wordpress.com/2009/07/0032_11.jpg

Macrina and Family

- Top left - brother Bishop Gregory of Nyssa
- Top right - brother Bishop Basil the Great
- Bottom L-R:
 - Gregory, Macrina, mother Emmelia, brother Bishop Peter of Sebaste, Basil

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregory_of_Nyssa
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basil_of_Caesarea
<http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2012/07/st-macrina-gifts-sister-of-all-basil.html>



Macrina's Amazing Life

C. AD 330-379

Father died young.

She helped run the family estate.

Founded a monastery.

Subject of books written by her brothers.

Discipler of her family, especially her brothers.

Her Brothers' Careers

- Bishops
- Nicene Creed (The Trinity)
- Eastern Christian Liturgy (worship program)
- Monastic foundations (rules)
- Other major theological writings and influences
- Basil and Gregory, together with Gregory of Nazianzus, are the Cappadocian Fathers

But Behind Them, Macrina

- Macrina taught Peter and Gregory skills, faith, and doctrine.
- Persuaded Basil to use his talents for Jesus.
- Conversations with all of them steered the direction of their thought.
- The brothers themselves freely and explicitly credit Macrina, their mentor and teacher, literally.

Gregory's Praise

- Turned Basil from pursuing worldly praise with his education and eloquence, to pursuing Jesus.
- Taught through words and living example, speaking and encouraging as they lived together.
- "Right up to her last breath she philosophized with a lofty mind on the convictions she had formed from the beginning about the life here below. All this seemed to me to be no longer of the human order."
- Is Socrates to Gregory's Plato in *On the Soul and the Resurrection*.
- Historian: Gregory views his sister as an abundant fount of theological wealth coursing through, shaping, and nourishing the Christian tradition that he has received . . ." (Chick and Hughes, 172).
- Famous book, *Life of Macrina*.

So . . .

- The Early Church grew rapidly using rigorous, comprehensive discipleship of the whole convert.
- Macrina is a female example of how one person's discipling of others—through close, daily life-teaching—can have profound influence on the development of the Church.

Conservative Anabaptists

Who Are They?

Began as the "radicals" of the Reformation in the 1500s.

Hallmark: radical discipleship, no matter the cost. *Nachfolge* and *Gelassenheit*.

Believer's baptism.

Nonviolence and religious tolerance.

Separation of church and state, and church and society.

Who Are They Today?

- Amish
- Brethren
- Bruderhof
- Hutterites
- Mennonites of all stripes.
- Apostolic Christian?



Not
This



Anabaptism & Discipleship

Some verbal
teaching.

Mostly living
together.

Education (Amish)

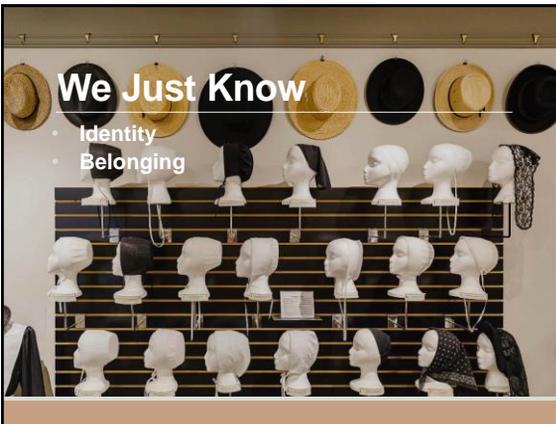
- Structured around socialization of Anabaptist values (community, nonviolence, submission).
- Small classes so teachers have strong oversight.
- Particular attention to social misbehavior.
- Parental reasons for private Amish schools: “engage in activities more directly supportive of the lives they would lead as Amish adults.” (Hurst and McConnell, 144)

Education (Amish)

- “Real wisdom and know-how come from experience rather than from mere ‘book knowledge.’” (Hurst and McConnell, 163)
- Do everything in Gemeinde (community) and family.
- This explains technology choices . . . there are easier ways to live, but those ways separate us.
- This is discipleship, not the mere conveying of information.
- Learning this way requires discipleship; it is built on discipleship.

We Just Know

- Identity
- Belonging



We Just Know

NICKEL MINES PA 2006



Effective?

Very high rates of generational continuity.
One of the fastest growing religious groups in America.
Not just because of discipleship.
And there are dangers . . .

We Just Know



MY OWN EXPERIENCE
WITH A CONVERT



POWERFUL AND
DANGEROUS

So . . .

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Macrina is a female example of how one person's discipling of others—through close daily life-teaching—can have profound influence on the development of the Church.

Conservative Anabaptists are an example of how discipleship can be extremely effective in communicating non-data.

Other Examples

Paul reasoning through Scripture. (Acts)

I am of Paul, I am of Apollos. (rabbi-disciple?)

Monasteries (centers of discipleship).

Augustine and Ambrose - personal discipleship