

The
MISSIONARY
DISCIPLE



Going and Growing

Dr. Jacob Youmans



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THE MISSIONARY DISCIPLE

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To Dr. Jim McConnell, boss, mentor, and friend: You started the Director of Christian Education Program at Concordia University Texas in 1999, and you insisted that it be “different.” You did not necessarily use the term “Missionary Disciple,” but you modeled it. Thank you! Enjoy your “real” retirement.

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Foreword

A healthy Christian life cannot be stitched together from a series of disjointed mountain-top experiences. We need a Christian spirituality that endures the shadowy, low-lying valleys and the rocky slopes in between all those glorious summits.

Andrew Byers, *Faith Without Illusions*¹

Growing up as a teenager in Southern California, my spiritual life was a lot like Tarzan, the famous orphaned Disney character brought up in the wilderness. Now to be clear, I was not raised by apes, but I did tend to swing from branch to branch – only in my life, the branches were spiritual mountain-top experiences. Camp, retreats, youth gatherings, and lock-ins: these were my branches. They kept my faith afloat and I would look forward to the next one as soon as the glow wore off from the previous experience. This type of spiritual growth was all I knew and it sustained me for a few years. However, there came a point where I wanted, no, *needed* more. At this point in my life, I had a pastor and some other key spiritual mentors who introduced me to spiritual practices and disciplines. These daily, weekly, and monthly disciplines gave my faith new life and revealed to me that mountaintop experiences were good, but no longer the only source of my once-spotty spiritual growth.

I have learned many lessons about spiritual growth over the years, and many of them are contained in this book – a resource

I wish I had access to several decades ago! What is so fun about the material found in the following pages is that I have had a front-row seat witnessing Jake Youmans live these practices out in his daily life. The man has literally worshiped in churches on every continent (except Antarctica... but I believe he will get there one day soon!). Jake has been part of every type of small group imaginable: in houses, churches, bars, under trees in Africa, and even at the base of the Egyptian pyramids. I have also witnessed him devote time to being in the Word and with God, whether on an airplane, on a walk, or during breakfast. His wisdom and experience with spiritual growth is something I take note of, and often try to emulate in my own life.

The game of baseball is one of the many things Jake and I have in common. We love to watch it and have taken in many games together. Additionally, being diehard fans of the Los Angeles Dodgers has given us some major shared highs and lows over the past few years. There is nothing quite like being at a game surrounded by the sights of beautiful grass, sounds of cheers, and smells of food wafting through the air. However, I believe the best thing about baseball is the strategy and teamwork involved. You never know what will happen, and rarely can one person win the game on their own. Baseball is a fantastic metaphor for our spiritual life, where the unexpected inevitably comes and you can't go at it alone. Over the past seven years, I have had the privilege to work alongside Jake in a team environment. We may not come close to emulating the greatness of the Dodgers, but we are able to lift one another up

and challenge each other when it comes to our spiritual lives. We have gone through hard and unexpected times, but our faith and daily practices have kept us going – knowing that Jesus is ultimately in control. Without these C.S.I. practices in our lives, I am not sure where we would be today.

As I look back to my spiritual upbringing, I would have loved to have something like Jake’s C.S.I. model outlined here in the pages to come! To have the wisdom of sustainable spiritual growth would have been refreshing and challenging in some of my “angsty” teenage years. Spiritual growth has always been encouraged by leaders and churches, but Jake helps us see it in a well-organized way of living. The quote by Andrew Byers at the beginning of this Foreword reminds us that we need a faith which will help us celebrate the good we see in life, but also everyday faith which can carry us through the “shadowy, low-lying valleys and the rocky slopes” that life often brings us. A Missionary Disciple will inevitably have challenges, and needs the spiritual food that the C.S.I. model offers.

May you be blessed by Jake’s work, which has been brought about by so many years of trials, patience, and ultimately, growth. I challenge you to reflect seriously on the questions at the end of each section and to push yourself to engage in the challenges. Spiritual growth is messy and there is no perfect system. Give yourself the grace to fail at times, but also find that friend who will challenge you as you embark upon this exciting journey of growing closer to Jesus and His heart to form you more like Him.

And, may your faith be less like Tarzan, and more like that of a diehard baseball fan whose team will one day win the World Series.

Dr. Grant Carey

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