



An MOT for disciples of Jesus

TN91 Training Notes series: Planning

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We are used to the idea of appraisals for staff or even annual reviews for a team as part of good people-management. Training Notes TN17 on this website offers a series of questions to ask at such times.

We are also used to the idea of an MOT for our cars to check they are safe and working well. These consist of a number of tests; the vehicle needs to pass each one.

I was recently approached by a prayer triplet of three male friends who wanted to know if the review or MOT principle had been applied to Christian discipleship. Could I advise a resource they could use to check up on their lives as followers of Jesus Christ? What a great question!

I was not sure that much had been written in this area, so thought it worth trying to prepare something myself. Here is what I came up with (edited and improved from the first draft I gave them) as an example of how the management concept of review or appraisal (or MOT if you prefer) could be applied to living for Jesus as opposed to staff performance or strategic plans.

This version has 14 tests, and each test is introduced with some biblical passages (which need to be read) followed by four questions. These are based on the idea of an annual review and assume this exercise is best carried out in a small group context (such as a prayer triplet) although you can try it on your own too.

There is plenty of material here so a group might try just one test at one session. But taken as a whole the idea is to cover what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

It is deliberately challenging because discipleship should be challenging. And having prepared this material, this writer is particularly conscious of his own inadequacy set against this high standard. See what you think.

1 **The test of following**

Disciples are, by definition, followers of a leader. Jesus told his first disciples to follow him (Mark 1:16-20; Luke 9:23-24) and to be with him (Mark 3:13-15).

- What time have you been spending with Jesus this past year in the rush of a busy life?
- What changes if any do you need to plan for the year to come?
- How have you grown as a Christian in holiness, in your prayer life, in new discoveries about yourself and God's love for you?
- Where might he lead you in the coming year, even if out of your comfort zones?

2 **The test of learning**

Disciples are, also by definition, learners from a teacher (John 13:12-17). We are taught to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) and expected to study the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-12).

- What have you learned over the past year about the basics of your faith and how have you increased in your knowledge of Scripture?
- What has been your pattern of regular Bible reading, Scripture teaching and other Christian reading?
- What changes have you made, or what developments are you seeing, as a result of such teaching this past year?
- What in particular do you want, or need, to learn in the coming year?

3 **The test of love**

Disciples are marked out by their love for God and for each other (John 13:34-35; 21:15-17; 1 John 4:7-12).

- How passionate are you about your relationship with Jesus?
- How well do you appreciate the good news of God's love for you through the cross and resurrection?
- How much do you love (being committed to) your brothers and sisters in Christ and intercede for them in a disciplined way, both in your church and globally?
- What kind of actions would result if your love were to grow and so what do you need to do about this over the coming year?

4 **The test of character**

Disciples are to display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; see also John 15:5-8; Colossians 1:9-12).

- Bearing in mind the Galatians examples are not alternatives but nine parts of one fruit, which are the three you most need to work on over the coming year?
- How will you do this in each case?
- Who can help you assess whether your character is growing more Christ-like and when will you ask for their help?
- How has your character stood the test of times of difficulty you may have had to face in the past year?

5 **The test of temptation**

Disciples are not to love the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4-8) and are to put on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-13).

- What is the area of life that you most fall short of God's standards in or where you most frequently need to ask for forgiveness?
- What can you do to fight temptation in this area over the coming year?
- To what extent do you have ambition for Christ's glory more than for personal advancement?
- Are you prepared to be vulnerable about all this with one or two other Christian friends and, if so, how?

6 **The test of community**

Disciples are part of the body of Christ and belong together for worship and communal life (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Hebrews 3:12-13).

- How regular are you at your church's gatherings for worship and at celebrations of Holy Communion?
- To what extent do you play a full part in the life of your church, without staying within tight-knit groups, in supporting its ministry and encouraging its members?
- How open is your home to others in need and in offering hospitality, especially to those who cannot pay you back?
- What changes do you need to make in the coming year to develop in your practical community life?

7 **The test of service**

Disciples are gifted by the Holy Spirit for service for the common good (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; and note John 13:12-17).

- What gifts have you been employing for others' benefits this past year?
- What have you invested in the membership of your church to benefit the whole community (through your service)?
- What gifts do you need to work on to test, to develop or to use more in the coming year?
- Where do you need advice and help and how will you go about seeking this?

8 **The test of witness**

Disciples live in this world but belong to the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:1-12; John 15:18-19; 1 Peter 2:11-17).

- In what ways does your life reflect the value-system of the Kingdom within a worldly culture that is increasingly opposed to this?
- How are you working this out in your workplace, in your social networks and in your family, especially if they are not Christians?
- In what ways might others see Jesus in your life?
- What changes do you need to make to stand firm against the tide of this world's culture?

9 The test of disciple-making

Disciples are to make other disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 4:8-12; 1 Peter 3:15).

- How many times this past year have you been able to speak about your faith to someone who is not yet a Christian?
- How many not-yet Christians are you in touch with whether at work or in your local community who might be open to your sharing your faith in some appropriate way and how could you increase that number?
- How are you encouraging other disciples in their faith?
- What can you do as a group to encourage each other on in this area over the coming year?

10 The test of time

Disciples are to use the gift of time with care and gratitude, living with the expectation of the return of Jesus Christ as Lord (Ephesians 5:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; 2 Peter 3:11-12).

- How well are you using every 24 hours in terms of each of work (whether paid or at home), commitment to family and others, recreation and rest?
- How well do you use Sundays as your day of rest (or your day off if another day)?
- Are there areas of your life where you waste time unnecessarily (such as over-indulgence in watching TV or on social media)?
- What actions do you need to take this coming year to demonstrate a balanced and disciplined use of this gift of time?

11 The test of generosity

Disciples are to sit lightly on ownership of property, cars, possessions and money and to live simply, employing what wealth they have for the benefit of the poor and the spread of the Gospel (Matthew 6:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; 1 Timothy 6:6-11).

- How well are you seeking to live simply, caring for the world you inhabit?
- Are you using whatever wealth you have wisely and generously, giving time and money to enable the good news to be preached and God's kingdom to come both in the UK and globally?
- How are you growing in your knowledge of missionary endeavour throughout the world?
- How might you reconsider your use of possessions and levels of giving in the coming year?

12 The test of suffering

Disciples are not to expect easy lives (John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:3-7).

- If your year has been hard for you, have you managed to cling on to your relationship with Jesus and not give up hope?
- Who can help you in difficulties and pray with and for you, whether within your church or not?

- Are you prepared to be honest and vulnerable to others about difficulties you experience?
- What can you do to help others who are struggling in similar ways?

Choose either 13 or 14

13 The test of marriage *(if applicable)*

Disciples are to be faithful to their spouses and manage their children well (1 Timothy 3:12 – applied to deacons). Upping the stakes somewhat, husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25).

- How healthy is your relationship with your spouse: practically, emotionally, sexually?
- How well are you meeting their needs and coping together with the stresses of life?
- How excellent are you as a Christian role model for your children (if applicable), whether they follow your example or reject it?
- What can you do to be a better wife/husband and parent in the coming year, whether married to a believer or not?

14 The test of singleness *(if applicable)*

Disciples are to seek to follow Christ, who was himself single, in whatever state they find themselves (1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Hebrews 13:5-6).

- Are you able to keep your discipleship alive and healthy with contentment even when longing for a partner or grieving for one who is with you no more?
- Are you able to form deep friendships and serve others, looking to Christ for your daily needs?
- How excellent are you as a Christian role model for any children you have in whatever are your present circumstances, whether they follow your example or reject it?
- What actions might you take this coming year to live a life of service to others, living in contentment?

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index> then TN91. See also Training Notes TN17, *Suggested questions for an annual review*, TN87, *What to look for in your leaders*, TN132, *What you look for in your Minister*, and TN142, *Values create a culture*.

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication and Administration. File TN91 under Planning.

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