

NUDGING HEARTS TOWARD HIS

Basic Steps on How to Disciple Others

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Basic Steps on How to Disciple Others

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1. Why do I disciple?

As you prepare to disciple someone, it is important to examine your role as a mentor and the purpose of this relationship. Howard Baker in his book, *Soul Keeping*, lists six qualities of a Spiritual director or a Godly mentor that will help us better understand our calling in this role. These characteristics are ones that he has found in spiritual mentors who have been most beneficial to him in his own spiritual journey. These include: (1) a person of prayer who prayed for me and with me; (2) someone who was able to see God's movements of grace in my life when I could not; (3) an individual who could accept me, just as I am; (4) a person strong enough to challenge me to go deeper with Christ; (5) a person of integrity, mature and passionate in his or her own relationship with Christ; (6) a good listener who could focus on the condition of my soul. (Baker, 144)

Baker's list serves as an excellent guideline when serving as a Godly mentor. How do I measure up? Am I listening well? Am I fervently praying for this person? Am I personally passionate about Jesus? Am I judging them or accepting them?

This list also defines our main purpose in discipling someone; it is to challenge them to go deeper in their relationship with Christ. Baker states that, "For Christians, our lifework beyond leading someone *to* Christ is to know how to lead someone to grow deeper *in* Christ." (Baker, 27) They should be able to walk away knowing Jesus better and experiencing a closer relationship with Him. Prayerfully, this booklet will give you some very basic steps in striving for this result.

2. Who Do I disciple?

First and foremost, **pray** that the Lord will bring the right person(s) to you for discipleship. On four different occasions, I have had students approach me and ask me to disciple them. Two of these students I would have never sought out to disciple, simply because I really didn't know them very well, and I honestly felt like our personalities and interests were very different. I really wondered, "Why did they ask *me*?" But as we met together, God did amazing things during our times together. It was awesome to see our friendship grow and to see them grow in their relationship with Christ. Seek His direction, and He will lead you to the right students. (Or He will lead them to you.)

Chances are pretty good that if you are reading this, you already have someone in mind that you plan to disciple. If you plan to disciple a group, I would suggest that you keep it very small. I believe that three or four students is the largest number in a group you can have in order to maintain individual participation and growth.

Seek and trust the Lord's guidance; He sees the hearts of those that He longs for you to mold.

"...for you alone know the hearts of all men." **I Kings 8:39**

3. When do we meet?

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:25

Once the Lord has shown you who to disciple, then you need to find a day, time and place to meet. It is important to meet weekly in order to establish a relationship, study consistently and stay accountable. I have met everywhere from my own home, to students' apartments, a ministry office, and Starbucks. My times have ranged from 6:30 in the morning, to midmorning, late afternoon and evening. Times and places will vary...get creative! Just make sure it is going to work for effective consistency; trust the Lord to coordinate your schedules. If your day or time is not working, change it. This may eliminate one or more from the group, but this may be the Lord's design. Most often, you will *not* be able to accommodate everyone's schedule; this is another reason for keeping the group small. Pray over your schedules and ask the Lord to orchestrate your times.

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1

“But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hands...”

Psalms 31:14-15

4. What do we study?

...“they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” **Acts 17:11**

It is very important that during the week you and your students are studying God’s Word. Whether you work through a Bible study or examine passages of Scripture, the goal is to dig deep into God’s Word and strive to apply it in your lives during the week. Questions accompanying a study of God’s Word are instrumental in getting the student to participate actively in the study. The questions also assist them in examining his word more deeply and help them in evaluating their own hearts. Reviewing some of their answers to these questions during your weekly meetings with them will also grow your relationship with them, as they open up and share their hearts with you. The questions should not dominate your time together; they should encourage them to *live* God’s Word during the week.

Over the years, I have seen a real need for discipleship studies to be used for this particular purpose. So I have compiled some studies in a workbook form that I have used in some of my own mentoring relationships: *The Aroma of Christ* and *Above Reproach*. My prayer is that these books would serve as a guide to assist those in their discipling relationships. These studies take the student deeper into studying God’s Word, and deeper into the character of a disciple of Christ. They also provide self-evaluating questions to encourage personal application of God’s Word. These are just two examples of studies that you may like to walk through together.

Three important factors to consider when choosing discipleship material:

1. Make sure that the primary focus is on God’s Word, the Bible, and not just someone else’s opinions or theological beliefs.
2. The emphasis of the study should be on growing closer to Christ and building Godly character. Discipling someone means that they are “in training” to be like Christ.
3. There has to be some form of application along with studying God’s Word. Answering self-evaluating questions along with studying God’s Word helps to apply His word on a personal level.

“Jesus stands beside me and teaches me in all I do to live in God’s world. He shows me how, *in every circumstance, to reside in His word* and thus be a genuine apprentice of His—His disciple indeed.” (Baker p. 14)

5. Pray!

“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.”

I Thessalonians 1:2

Pray that God will work in the hearts of your students by the power of his Holy Spirit. It is He, not us, who will convict and change hearts. Ask every week as you meet together, “How can I pray for you? What areas are you struggling in that I can strengthen you through prayer?” Write it down and be committed to pray for these things. This is where the most powerful change will take place.

Call during the week to follow up on their prayer requests. (“How was your test? Dr.’s appointment? Interview?”) They will know that you are walking with them and supporting them when you are actively involved through prayer. Follow Jesus’ example in **John 17:6-19** as He prays for His disciples: *“Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me...My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one...Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*

“They were helped in fighting...because they cried out to him during the battle. He answered their prayers, because they trusted in him.” **I Chronicles 5:20**

6. Be accountable

Be sure to ask the tough questions. Ask about the areas of temptation that they have mentioned to you. (i.e. “Are you and your boyfriend staying sexually pure? How are you handling/healing from your eating disorder? How are you coping with your parents divorce?”) Your role is not to be a counselor, but to continually point them to God and his Word. So ask them weekly about their time spent with God in His Word and in prayer. (“Have you been consistent in your time with the Lord? What do you feel like He is teaching you?”) Remember, this time, more than anything, is about strengthening their relationship with Him. The other areas will change as they move closer to the heart of their Savior.

It is important to remember not to judge them. Turn the focus away from them and on to the Lord and His sufficient grace, gently nudging them closer to Him. If they move closer to Him, his Holy Spirit will convict them in time where it is needed. Do not water down the Truth; simply point them to it.

“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

Romans 14:12

7. Do Something Fun

Occasionally, do something just for fun. Go to a movie, shopping, bowling, a concert...etc. so that your relationship is not always on a serious level. Following Christ is exciting and fun, and He wants us to enjoy life together. This is a time to relax and build your friendship with them.

“God gives us richly all things to enjoy.” **I Timothy 6:17**

8. Share Your Life

“We love you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.” **I Thessalonians 2:8**

This is the very essence of discipleship. More than anything, your student wants to observe your life: where you have been, how you have grown, and how God has remained faithful in your life. It is important for you to share your life, if you want them to share theirs. Not only do you need to share your past journey with them, but also your present life and circumstances as well. They want a visible example of Christ to watch and to imitate.

“You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord...” **I Thessalonians 1:5-6**

As you share your life, make sure the focus is not on you, but God. In *all* circumstances, point to Him, experiencing life through your relationship with Him. As much as possible, live life in front of them, focused on Christ, and be a visible example of Jesus. This is the way that Jesus trained His own disciples: “To be His disciple then was to be with Him, to learn to be like Him...His disciples heard what He said and observed what He did. Then, under His direction, they simply began to say and do the same things.” (Baker, 13) Always remember, the aim is Jesus; the disciples we make are His not ours.

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”
I Corinthians 11:1

Work Cited

Howard Baker, *Soul Keeping* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1998), pp. 13, 14, 27, 144.