

THE RIGHT CONTENT FOR DISCIPLESHIP

#6C

As you begin to disciple someone, what is it you want to pass on? What do you want to teach them? As we've already discussed, relationship is a big part of discipleship. But biblical discipleship is not just hanging out with somebody. That's friendship. We've all got friends who we hang out with, but we're not discipling all our friends. Discipleship has to do with meeting a friend for the purpose of taking this person somewhere, taking them toward being a biblical disciple.

To know where you're taking somebody requires some forethought. It's having a picture of where you want to take this person and what things they must learn to get there. What are the biblical truths they need to learn? What kind of character-building needs to happen in their life? What skills do they need for ministry? How must they be equipped?

Consider a football coach who wants his quarterback to lead his team to the Championship. That coach has specific things he needs his quarterback to learn. His quarterback must learn how to read defenses and how to make good handoffs. His quarterback needs to know how to drop back in a three-step drop for a quick pass. A good coach doesn't just wing it. He thinks through, "How do I get this person there?"

- **Two Types of Disciplers**

1. **Planners** – If you take it to the extreme, the planner is the person who plans everything out in absolute detail. Week One, Week Two, Week Three... You may be that disciplined, and that's great. Just remain flexible and be eager to address questions your disciple may want to talk about that may not fit into your plans.
2. **Wingers** – Wingers are the kind of disciplers who just show up and whatever comes out, comes out. This kind of discipleship is when you show up and say, 'So, how you doin? and then they say, "How you doin?" That really works well if the person you're discipling is someone who, every week, shows up with questions. They've got things they want to learn about. Just be sure you fit in the really important things they need to learn, and do not rely on their on-going questions.

For both types of disciplers, balance is everything. Be flexible, be available, and be thoughtful in planning your time together. We have chosen a curriculum that is easily reproduced. Even if you don't feel very adequate to lead someone else in their relationship with God, this plan is easy to follow. And remember, the relationship is the most important part of your time together, not the curriculum conversed!

- **Three Perspectives on Growth**

1. **God causes the growth.** Every discipler needs to embrace and internalize 1 Corinthians 3, when Paul is talking about his and Apollos' ministry to the believers in Corinth. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." Paul had gone and preached the Gospel in Corinth. Apollos came after him, and preached more of the Gospel, helping the new believers grow. But Paul emphasizes that neither the one who plants, nor the one who waters, is anything. God causes the growth. God will work through you. Create an environment of growth. Build a

relationship, get them into the Word, and give them ministry. But God the Holy Spirit needs to work in their heart. There are disciples who may never grow significantly or take off spiritually. We could beat ourselves up for not saying or doing the right things, but as a discipler, you step out in faith, do the best you can with what you know, and leave the results to God.

- 2. God will use the whole body in their discipleship, not just you.** In other words, the full weight of their growth doesn't rest on what you do with them individually. That's why we have a church with numerous opportunities for further growth and service. As a discipler, invite your disciple to be part of the larger community of believers. You don't want that person to become dependent on you. First – because you don't possess all the spiritual gifts. Second – you don't have all the biblical knowledge there is. Third– you don't have the answers to all their questions. Be honest about your limitations and include your disciple in the larger body so others can speak truth into his life in an area that you may not have touched on. The pressure is off when you realize that God is going to use you, but he's going to do it in the context of His entire church.
- 3. Each disciple is responsible for his or her own growth.** You're responsible for creating an environment of growth. But each disciple is responsible for their heart's response to God. Teach them the Word and help them get plugged in at church, but if they don't respond, that's their issue. Love them, pray for them, bring them along. But realize that in discipleship we do not have authority to make any person do anything. You can be a mentor and a guide and a shepherd. You can lovingly try to take them toward Christ and His word, and encourage them to follow Christ. They've got to make their own decisions about their spiritual growth.

Discipleship is such a privilege. By being involved in someone's life, you can impart spiritual perspective and truth and wisdom that will shape the rest of their life. You can invest your time in all kinds of things. But there is nothing like helping a person's whole life be transformed. We can be ministers of life transformation. We can be ministers that change people's eternities. That's how significant discipleship is. That's a worthwhile investment!

Questions for Reflection:

- 1. Do you tend to be more of a planner or a winger? Explain:**

- 2. How can you overcome the weakness inherent in your style of discipleship (planner or winger)?** _____

- 3. What is the single most important part of discipleship?** _____

- 4. Which of the three perspectives on growth meant the most to you?**
