

# THE RIGHT COMPONENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

#6D

What makes for quality discipleship? What are the things within a discipleship relationship that produce real growth and make for an enjoyable, satisfying discipleship experience? The four Gospels offer fascinating answers when you consider two things: What did Je-sus impart to His disciples, and how did He do it? He imparted to them His compassion for the lost and the necessity of servanthood. He demonstrated the importance of His relationship with the Father, and even how to pray. Now consider how He did that – how He imparted these things while teaching in a large group setting; how He told stories to illustrate the kingdom of God; and how He modeled ministry at the very feet of His disciples.

Mark 3:13-14 describes Jesus' method of discipleship: "...He went up to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach." Jesus selected these twelve to spend the next two and a half years with Him, to go wherever He went, and to eventually be sent out into the ministry. Jesus' example is the very nature of discipleship we hope to model. Here are two primary components of quality discipleship.

## • **1st Component – Relationship-Building**

The number one thing that Jesus did was get involved in people's lives. When you disciple someone, you're not taking on a project, you're investing in a person. Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, a passage where Paul talks vividly about his heart for the people in whom he invested in the city of Thessalonica. "Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the Gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us" (v. 8). These believers at Thessalonica weren't just a crowd of people; they weren't just objects or a project. These were people who Paul deeply loved. No matter how spiritually gifted you may be or how much theology you may know, "People won't care how much you know, until they know how much you care."

### **Here are five ways to build discipleship relationships:**

- 1. Learn to ask questions** – When you're diving into someone's life, move beyond the superficial questions and more deeply into "soul" questions, like, "What's going on in your soul today?" "How are you doing in your walk with God?" "What are you learning from the Lord?" Ask questions about his or her family. "What was it like at home?" "What were your parents like?" If you have someone who grew up in a home where their father verbally abused them, then that'll probably tell you something about what they may need in their life. If you're discipling someone who was sexually abused, that's something in their life that you're probably going to want to work on with them. Ask questions about the whole person, not just their ministry, but questions about their whole life.
- 2. Learn to listen** – It's just as important that we learn to listen as it is to ask questions. One of the things that can make you a notoriously bad discipler is if you sit down with someone and go over your agenda of ten things you want to tell them. You may want to come in with a couple of specific things in mind that you want to communicate. But, first and foremost, you've got to listen to what's going on in their soul. If you're meeting with your disciple, and they've just had a horrible conversation with their spouse, but you've planned to dive into some other topic, you'll probably miss something that needs to be processed. Sometimes we have to shut up and simply listen to where the other person is.

3. **Spend relational time together** – Discipleship should include more than just weekly meetings for Bible study. Have him over for dinner, play sports together, and do things that they would enjoy. This way they see your life outside a discipleship setting.
  4. **Learn to be an encourager** – Did you ever notice how much people like to be encouraged? Did you ever notice how much you enjoy being around a person who encourages you? That's an art, a skill. Learn to praise someone for the qualities that God is building into their life. Learn how to identify the good things in a person's life and how to praise and affirm them in a healthy way.
  5. **Demonstrate vulnerability** – If you're vulnerable and open about what's going on in your life, if you share your struggles and temptations, it's going to be easier for the person you're discipling to be open. If you come across as a perfect disciple who doesn't have any issues or problems, then they're going to feel that what it means to be a disciple is that they have it all together just like their discipler. No one's got it all together. So be real and honest about what's going on in your life.
- **2nd Component – The Word of God**  
Quality discipleship involves getting the Word of God into someone's life. We know what Romans 12:2 says – “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” Don't be conformed to this world be changed, be transformed. But how? By getting the Word of God in your life, by renewing your mind with the Word of God.

**Here are three reasons why the Word of God is key to discipleship:**

1. **God's Word produces life transformation** – People don't change unless the Word of God changes their thinking and changes their perspective on life. Life transformation comes from the Word.
2. **God's Word builds convictions for a lifetime** – We don't want people to walk through a discipleship program for a few weeks and then to feel they've arrived. We want them to see that these things come from the Scriptures and to have the Word of God build a deep, internalized conviction to live out biblical discipleship for the rest of their lives.
3. **God's Word is the truth** – Every one of us has lies in our belief system, and those lies need replaced with the Truth of God's Word. How do we get the word of God in their life? Here's the good news: you impart God's perspective on life more often than you think. You impart God's perspective when you're hanging out together over food or you're sitting around just talking about life. Biblical truth just starts to come out. You start talking about God's perspective on dating relationships, God's perspective on money, and what makes you happy. As you involve your disciples in the larger body, they'll get the Word of God in their lives when they sit in church and hear a good talk. The responsibility isn't just yours. As you involve them in the larger body, the Word of God comes into their lives.

Healthy discipleship involves both components – building relationships and studying the Word of God. The challenge is to balance them and periodically evaluate which component needs improvement. There is no perfect discipler. Just remember from our perspectives on growth that it is God who brings growth in all of our lives. Our responsibility is to be faithful to build into those God has placed in our care.

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. Which of the five relationship building components needs the most work in your life? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Which of the three reasons for utilizing God's Word is most exciting for you to help someone understand? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Do you error more on spending too much time coaching God's Word or in investing in the relationship? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What could you do to bring balance to your discipling relationships?  
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