

Discipleship “How To” Overview

Here are some questions regarding discipleship that are important to think about.

What is discipleship?

Why should we disciple?

Who should we disciple?

What should we do in a discipleship relationship?

We will not get to all of them today. If you would like Roger Hershey’s perspective on the above questions, then check out “The Compass” at <http://crupress.com/green>, which we will talk about later. Our focus today is on the last question.

So, what do we do in a discipleship relationship? Specifically, what do we do during the appointment time that we have with our disciples? One thing to keep in mind right off the bat is that a discipleship appointment does not need to be meeting with one disciple for an hour and a half a week. We somehow got the idea that this is the way it has to be done. Interestingly enough, discipleship was not modeled this way in the New Testament (although, that does not make it unbiblical to do 1.5 hour long appointments!) We can be very creative with how much time we spend in an appointment, the frequency of the meetings, and number of people we disciple at a time. Group discipleship is a great way to bring more of the body of Christ into the discipleship process, multiply our time, and maximize our effectiveness.

Three Major Components of Discipleship

Here are three major components of a discipleship relationship: This model comes from the Gospel of John where 3 times Jesus says “you will know that you are my disciples by.....” Each time He is talking about a different way you will know you are His disciple. So these are 3 things that Jesus modeled that should be going on in a discipleship relationship.

1. Connection and Accountability

John 13:34-35: ³⁴ “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵Your love for one another **will prove to the world that you are my disciples.**”

Provide an environment of grace and truth. Spend time getting to know the person and relating to them in all areas of their life.

This is the aspect of discipleship that many of us default to or do most naturally. These are the times when we are “hanging out” or “taking time to catch up.” It is the more casual aspect of discipleship, but we shouldn’t overlook its importance. First of all,

there needs to be a relationship of trust, knowledge of one another, and a sense of safety in order for us to do real life-changing discipleship.

Second, fruitful growth can come out of this kind of discipleship. I call this “real time” discipleship because it allows us to meet the student right where they are at, right at that moment. As they share what is going on in their lives, we can bring our experience, wisdom, and the Word to speak into the situation. People learn best when there is a felt need and so this allows us to take advantage of a teachable moment.

Although many disciples will have stuff they want to talk about, we don’t always want their questions and problems to dominate and determine the course of this time. We should be good question askers (as well as good listeners). Asking good questions is important in connecting with the disciple and in holding them accountable. There are a lot of good questions we can ask. For example, we can ask accountability-type questions. We can ask questions about their walk with the Lord, their family life, their relationships, their thought life, the condition of their soul, etc. Remember, connection and accountability is the objective. (Refer to “10 Questions Sheet”)

Something to keep in mind is that this part of the discipleship relationship can often be best accomplished outside of the “appointment.” It is in these more natural environments, when we are experiencing real life together, that the relational side of discipleship takes place. We should do fun things together (surfing, Boomers, whatever), normal things together (cooking, laundry, errands), and hard things together (cleaning up the kitchen after the Welcome Dinner, visiting people in the hospital). I had a discipler who said that you should never do **anything** without one of your disciples. Now, his life was totally out of balance (and yours would be too if you literally did this) but I think we get the point. Do ‘real life’ with your disciples. They learn so much from you when you’re not even trying to teach them.

2. Delivering Content Toward Them Becoming a Christ-Centered Laborer

John 8:31-32 ³¹ Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “**You are truly my disciples if you keep obeying my teachings.**” ³² And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

A key role of a discipler is to take his/her disciple down the road of spiritual growth and development. We don’t just want to respond to what they are going through, but we want to be deliberate about taking them some place. In order to lead someone down the path of becoming a Christ-centered laborer, we need to know two things:

- 1) Where is this person at in his/her spiritual growth?
- 2) Where do we want to take them?

When we deliver content in a discipleship appointment, we want to make sure that it is what the person needs and that it is important to their spiritual development. For example, although it may be interesting to take a new believer through a study on

dispensational eschatology, this really isn't the most important stuff to cover at this point in the journey. Granted, this is an extreme example, but I have seen disciplers cover material that really isn't fitting in lieu of material that is absolutely fundamental.

There are some tools out there that can help us assess where a disciple is at in his/her journey. *Personal Disciplemaking* by Chris Adsit has a section in the back that helps assess where someone is at spiritually. This tool is especially helpful when working with a more mature believer who has been exposed to the basics. Or just looking at the topics in "The Compass" (which we will talk about later) and seeing what they need to learn works great too. The important thing is to figure out where the disciple needs to grow so we can take them there. There are several key areas where we need to develop people in our mission to make them Christ-centered laborers. (NOTE: I believe every area in which we grow and develop is, in a real sense, "spiritual." So, don't get too bent out of shape by these categories.)

Here are the key areas we develop our disciples:

1) **Personal growth and development** (e.g. pride, self-confidence, honesty, integrity, self-discipline, time management, patience, bonding, boundaries, good/bad split, adulthood, conflict resolution, etc.) We want to help students be healthy, Christ-like individuals, so character and emotional health are vital. *Changes that Heal* by Henry Cloud is a great book these subjects.

2) **Spiritual growth** (e.g. prayer, eternal perspective, vision for the world, importance of fellowship, confession, definition of successful witnessing, handling temptation, understanding the role of the Holy Spirit, fundamental areas of theology, scripture memory, etc.)

3) **Ministry skills** (e.g. how to share your faith, how to communicate the ministry of the Holy Spirit, how to lead a Bible study, how to multiply yourself, etc.)

Now, you may look at this list and think, "How in the heckle and jeckle am I going to do all of this?" Well, don't fret, little one, "The Compass" is here to save the day. "The Compass" is an amazing tool for disciplers. The Compass was developed by guys that had been on staff over 25 years, they wrote down their best materials that they consistently took students through year after year. It covers all of the areas and most of the topics I have listed above and more. If you have this one little resource, then you will go far my friend. The Compass is online along with a wealth of other resources at <http://crupress.com/green> click on the tab at the top of the page that says "compass". The Compass was NOT developed to do your work for you, you still need to prepare and take out the stuff you don't like, use the stuff you do like, and add some of your own questions/ verses/ thoughts/ spice.

3) Doing Ministry Together

John 15:8 "**My true disciples** produce much fruit. This brings great glory to my Father."

We don't just want to talk shop, but we want to walk the talk with them. Doing ministry together is a great way to model what we teach. It is also how we can give feedback to them about how they are doing in the area of ministry skills. Some of the things you can do during the appointment are 1) Go sharing on campus 2) Hang out in their target audience together and meet students 3) Help them prepare for their Bible study.

Now, outside of your appointment, the list is endless. One of the most powerful things I experienced was seeing my discipler do ministry in real life situations. Alan would share his faith with everyone that breathed... people on the bus, cashiers, auto mechanics, even telephone operators. It was amazing! I saw how evangelism could be done all the time and in a natural way. How you respond to real life opportunities will be remembered long after many of the other lessons are forgotten. The cool thing is, when you do ministry together you will be putting yourselves on the front line and this is where the action is. You will be in a place where you both need to trust God. And, our faith will grow. Also, they will get a chance to see God use them. Often, disciples will come back from these experiences seeing how God can use them (yes, even *them*).

Discipleship is really a balance of the three components. Some of them we will do more naturally and some of them we will do better than others. We want to do our best to be balanced in all of these. I suggest at the beginning of each quarter you schedule your tentative plan for each week rotating between the 3 discipleship components.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

Which of these 3 areas do you tend to do the most? Which area do you need to focus on more?

Where do you need to grow as a discipler?

How has this hindered your discipleship?

What are a couple of things you are going to do to become a more effective discipler?