

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 20: Choosing a Disciple (9c)

Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org (Studies)

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **Galatians 6:1-2**

1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Step 3: Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – **Galatians 6**

Step 4: Questions for Personal Applications and/or Group Discussions:

1. Phillips reminds us that a disciple must be teachable, vulnerable, and open in order to grow spiritually.
2. The author writes that a dead man's only appropriate response to God and to his trainer is joyful and active submission.
3. We will learn the four steps of the process of becoming a disciple-maker who fulfills God's design to expand His Church (Kingdom) through reproduction.
4. Keep in mind when recruiting someone to train that only the Holy Spirit calls people to a discipleship relationship.
5. Defining what is expected is important in any relationship including a discipleship relationship.

Step 5: Read and discuss the Content from the book:

Chapter 9c per the author – Keith Phillips:

Your potential disciple must actively submit to you. Active submission is the opposite of mere acquiescence or passive obedience; it is taking the initiative in areas that affect one's growth. A disciple must eagerly seek his leader's direction in order to be guided to maturity. He must choose to be transparent and vulnerable in areas that might otherwise remain hidden. Ephesians 4:15 says that we all must speak the truth in love so that we will grow in Christ.

A disciple is quick to share his sorrows and failures. James 5:16 teaches, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another...so that you may be healed..." He does not attempt to protect himself by hiding who he is. You cannot bear his burdens unless he shares them (Galatians 6:2). Failure to communicate his struggles demonstrates that he either does not sincerely want to know God's standard or that he does not choose to live by it.

One friend was having a debilitating struggle with lust. The blatant promiscuity of the ghetto had rendered him totally defeated. He had broken so many promises to God to keep a pure heart and a clean mind that he felt like a habitual liar.

Satan fought hard to emphasize that confession would mean losing leadership responsibilities and being severely restricted in his activities. But he knew that to continue without confession, cleansing and victory would destroy his usefulness and lead to reproducing carnality in others. Finally, he realized that he could not win this battle alone.

He determined that he wanted nothing less than Christ-likeness, no matter what the cost. His responsibilities were curtailed, his freedom was limited and his pride suffered a staggering blow. But through close accountability, regular encouragement and much prayer, God gave him victory. Today he is pure and is ministering successfully.

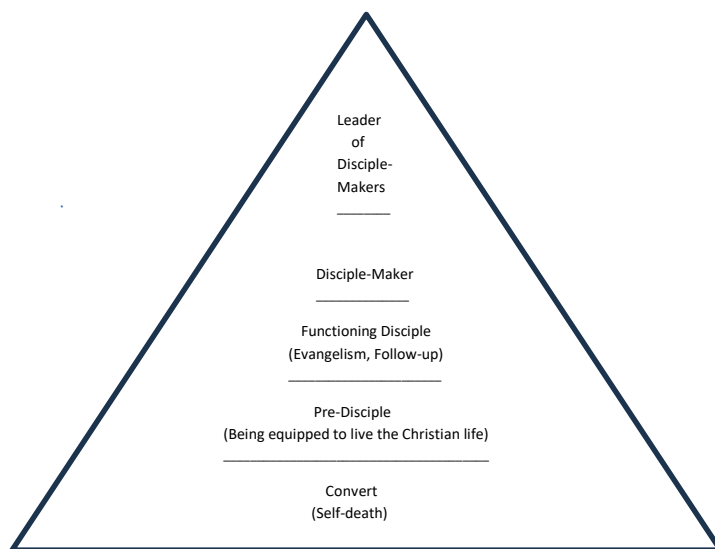
By revealing difficult areas, your potential disciple will perpetuate his own growth and demonstrate his trust in you. The more actively he submits, the better the quality of training he will receive. Active submission is vital to his spiritual health. A dead man's only appropriate response to God and to his discipler is joyful and active submission.

Promise your potential disciple that on the basis of his submission, you will hold him accountable in all areas of his life. Paul held Archippus accountable: "... See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord" (Colossians 4:17 NIV). Every disciple experiences greater growth if he is responsible to another. Privately he can be praised, encouraged, challenged or admonished without stimulating pride or inflicting embarrassment.

The Christian life hinges on discipline, which will be developed in your disciple only as you hold him accountable. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to follow his example of a disciplined lifestyle (2 Thessalonians 3:7). Although many of our new staff had been believers for years, they had not incorporated Bible study, Scripture memorization, meditation, prayer and worship into their daily lives. But when they committed themselves to a one-on-one relationship in which they were held accountable in these areas, a deeper devotion to God and a healthier Christian community resulted.

Communicate the Vision

Be sure your potential disciple understands that he is part of a process. First, his obedience to Jesus' command to follow Him required death to himself. Then, his pre-discipleship relationship equipped him to live the Christian life. You are now inviting him to become a functioning disciple— to be involved in evangelism and the pre-discipleship of another. As he matures in Christ, he will become a disciple-maker, one who actually invests his life in another disciple. Finally, when his disciple begins discipling others, he will become a leader of disciple-makers.



Your relationship is not meant merely to provide spiritual health in your disciple's personal life. No disciple is an end in himself, but a link in God's grand design to expand His Church through reproduction. He will be investing in others the rest of his life.

Let Him Decide

After thoroughly explaining the implications of discipleship, ask your potential disciple to take a week or two to pray about making such a commitment. Do not try to force a positive response. It is very important that you give him the freedom to decide. Only the Holy Spirit calls people to a discipleship relationship. If he is not ready for this commitment, it is best for you to know before you start investing hours in him.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of following each of these steps in choosing a disciple. You may be eager to begin discipling. This is commendable, but eagerness must be tempered with patience—waiting for God's timing and God's person.

Sadly, I admit that at one time or another I have neglected each of these steps, and every time it has short-circuited my ministry. One person demonstrated all of the characteristics of a disciple except faithfulness. Convinced that I could help him with that, I compromised God's standard. Our relationship lingered for eighteen months until his unfaithfulness became intolerable.

Another time I was so certain that a man's heart was right that I neglected to seek God's confirmation through prayer. This "ideal disciple" was gone in two months.

Several people who have asked to be discipled came with impeccable credentials—impressive degrees, lavish recommendations. I used to be too embarrassed to insist upon first watching them live their Christian commitment. But our relationship inevitably turned out to be pre-discipleship, nurturing immature believers in the Christian basics. The danger in this is that the student presumes he is being discipled and is therefore ready to disciple others. This prolongs his death-to-self and reinforces a misconception that his value lies in skills, not character. If you are in a pre-discipleship relationship, call it that, even if you are moving toward discipleship.

One time I initiated a discipleship relationship without defining what would be expected. The individual assured me that he knew what was involved, but he was never submissive. He didn't want to be discipled; he wanted fellowship without responsibility.

I pray that you will learn from my mistakes. If you follow these steps in choosing a disciple, the probability of quality reproduction will be high and the joy that you experience will be immeasurable.

Discipler's Checklist – Choosing a Disciple
☐ I have set a high standard for my disciple.
☐ He desires to know God intimately.
☐ He is available.
☐ He is submissive.
☐ He is faithful.
☐ He seeks to become a discipler.
☐ I have prayed diligently.
☐ I have selected carefully.
☐ I have taken the initiative.
☐ I have issued the invitation.
☐ I have explained the relationship.
☐ I have communicated the vision.
☐ I have allowed him to decide.

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Step 6: *Share personal prayer requests then each person prays for the other's requests.*

Source: The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Phillips. Pub. by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8007-1181-5. Introduction by Robert E. Coleman. Content (except study questions) is taken from the book without revisions. Revised 20261012