

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 21: Discipleship is Relational (10a)

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

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **1 Peter 1:22-23**

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

Step 3: Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – **1 Peter 1**

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

1. The author suggests eight qualities that help us develop a healthy relationship with our disciple/trainee.
2. The first quality is “warmth” which is an attitude of love and gentleness for your trainee.
3. It is important to tell your disciple that you love him/her. Find ways to express your love so they will know your acceptance and love is genuine.
4. Remember that your actions speak louder than your words. Words are essential and important but actions are more important.
5. Phillips writes that gentleness requires tact with is a keen perception of the right things to say in the right way at the right time which requires Godly wisdom (James 3:17).

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

Chapter 10a per the author – Keith Phillips:

Discipleship Is Relational

Discipleship is a life-on-life encounter. It is not merely a series of meetings or a set course of study. It is essentially relational—an investment of all that you are in another person. Your success in reproducing the fullness of life you have in Christ in your disciple will rise or fall according to the strength of your relationship. Let me suggest eight qualities that will help you develop a healthy relationship with your disciple.

Warmth

Warmth is an attitude of love and gentleness conveyed through a blend of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Your love for one another is the most significant indicator of your love for Christ. First Peter 1:22 encourages Christians to love each other warmly with all their hearts. Unselfishness, servanthood and commitment constitute love and distinguish your submission-authority relationship from partnerships in the world.

Love seeks what is best for one's brother. It evidences itself in genuine concern. Paul said to Barnabas, "...Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are" (Acts 15:36). Your disciple is a friend, not a spiritual project. Listen to his hurts and comfort him in sorrow. Adopt his interests, concerns and joys as your own. Be sincerely interested in people and events which affect him.

If you serve your disciple joyfully, he will know you love him, and will respect you and seek your leadership. Paul said, "And I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls..." (2 Corinthians 12:15). Sacrificial love will inspire your disciple toward the mark of becoming "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:4).

Your love for your disciple is grounded upon your commitment to him. It transcends emotional feelings. Many of Christ's disciples abandoned Him and others denied that they knew Him even while He was dying for them. But Christ's commitment to them was unwavering: "...He loved them to the end" (John 13:1). Paul's love made him "willing to be forever damned" if it would save his people (Romans 9:3 LB). Love motivates you to go the second mile with your disciple, to extend yourself in order to encourage and build him. It transforms a judgmental, abrupt or demanding spirit into forgiveness, forbearance and understanding.

Listen to the apostles' expressions of love to their spiritual children: "Having thus a fond affection for you..." (1 Thessalonians 2:8); "For I long to see you..." (Romans 1:11); "...I have you in my heart I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:7,8); "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (3 John 4).

Never be ashamed to tell your disciple that you love him. Recently I phoned Norm Boswell in Newark, some 3,000 miles away, and simply said, "I love you." Norm was astounded and thrilled to find out that that was the only reason for my call. Susie surprised her disciple with a bouquet of flowers. Mary unexpectedly picked up her disciple from an appointment, just so she wouldn't have to walk home in the rain. Affirm your love to your disciple.

However, explain that love also requires that your relationship not be exclusive. Death-to-self includes putting limits on cherished friendships for the sake of God's kingdom. Both of you must give and relate freely to others. Your relationship must be Christ centered, not self-centered.

Gentleness enhances your leadership. Paul was gentle "as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7). Your sensitivity to your disciple's feelings will stimulate his growth. He must have the assurance that your love for him will not be affected by his faults and humanness. Paul exhorts, "Now accept the one who is weak in faith..." (Romans 14:1).

One evening I was with a disciple who seemed unusually nervous. After a few minutes he tearfully confessed: "I lied to you." A month earlier he had told me that a man with whom I wanted an appointment was unavailable. Now he acknowledged that he had forgotten to call and had been afraid to tell me the truth.

I think he expected me to respond with hellfire and brimstone. I thought for a moment and then apologized for conveying such a demanding spirit that he had been afraid to admit his error. I assured him that our relationship was more important than any engagement and that my love for him was not affected by what he did or failed to do. He later shared that my acceptance of him that evening was the most significant factor in his believing that God could use him to make disciples.

If you speak of Christ's unconditional love and then show disgust when your disciple admits sin, your actions deny your words. Your life should communicate, "I love you. I'm on your side."

Gentleness requires tact, that keen perception of the correct thing to say or do without offending another. It allows you to remain true to your principles without triggering your disciple's defense mechanisms. Proverbs 15:23 (LB) observes, "...how wonderful it is to be able to say the right thing at the right time!"

Tact requires godly wisdom. James 3:17 teaches, "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy."

A few years ago one of our staff members was transferred to another city. Upon her arrival she immediately pointed out many of the faults of that city's ministry and suggested how it could become more effective and efficient. The staff in the new city responded defensively, rejecting carte blanche everything she said.

Even though this young lady had the practical knowledge and experience that could have greatly benefited her new ministry, she lacked the skill of tact. She should have postponed threatening questions about their lives and work until they knew that she loved them. A barrage of questions is often interpreted as interrogation. People become defensive when others shoot holes in everything they are doing or suggest vast changes too quickly.

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness" (Psalms 103:8). Your Christ-like warmth guards the validity of the gospel. It stimulates the respect and openness of your disciple.

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

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

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