TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 19: Choosing a Disciple (9b)

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Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **John 6:70-71**

70 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.
71 He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot,
for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

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

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

1. Phillips suggests we start developing a pre-discipleship relationship with a potential disciple to train. We will learn why this is important for two reasons.

2. Can you state why your trainee must be involved in a healthy functioning body (Church)?

3. We will learn why it is important for a disciple-in-training to feed himself spiritually. That is, to become a missionary to his own soul.

4. Do you personally exercise the five disciplines: study, memorize, meditate, pray and worship (SMMPW)?

5. The author says that a discipling relationship must include commitment and submission. Remember that the purpose of a discipling relationship is to equip one who has died to himself to reproduce a Christ-like character in others.

Step 5*: Read and discuss the Content from the book:*
Chapter 9b per the author – Keith Phillips:

Select Carefully

Jesus demonstrated His commitment to quality selection by choosing only a few men out of multitudes (Luke 6:13). Some who wanted to be with Him were told that they could not (Luke 8:38,39). Those who were overconfident, had the wrong priorities or clung to old affections were excluded (Luke 9:57-62). By concentrating on a few individuals, Jesus resisted the temptation to spread Himself too thin.

When you think you have found a potential disciple, develop a pre-discipleship relationship with him before inviting him to be discipled. Pre-discipleship is training a potential disciple how he "ought to live in order to please God" (1 Thessalonians 4:1 NIV). This relationship has two advantages. It equips him to grow from spiritual infancy through childhood, and it allows you to assess the depth of his commitment.

Pre-discipleship Training

Early converts in Jerusalem were nurtured by "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). |

First, your potential disciple must be incorporated into a healthy, functioning body where he can learn how to be like Christ by watching others and where he can experience the fellowship, love and accountability that he needs.

Further, you must encourage him to build a solid foundation for his Christian life. He needs to let his "roots grow down into [Christ] and draw up nourishment from him..." (Colossians 2:7 LB). This means that he must be equipped to feed himself spiritually through regular Bible study, Scripture memorization, meditation, prayer and worship.

You must work closely with him in each of these disciplines in order to ensure that they become a part of his life. Tell him why he should study, memorize, meditate, pray and worship. Teach him from the Bible how important these are and underscore their value by sharing your experience. Point out that practicing these disciplines is not legalism, but faithfulness. Show him how by sharing one or two ways that you do them. Get him started by doing them with him. Keep him at it. Your example will encourage him to be faithful. Regularly share principles you have learned and are applying. Be available to answer his questions. Hold him accountable for assignments and practical, daily applications.

When your student is faithfully involved in each of these Christian fundamentals without your prodding, your pre-discipleship relationship has been successful.

Close Observation

Pre-discipleship allows you to become better acquainted with a potential disciple. You can monitor his motivation, teachability and commitment to God and decide whether or not to disciple him on the basis of his life, not merely on his words.

It is essential that he incorporate the basics of Christianity into his life and that you know him well before you initiate a discipleship relationship. First Timothy 5:22 warns, "Do not lay hands on anyone too hastily..."

Take the Initiative

If God's Spirit confirms to you and those in authority over you that you should enter a discipling relationship, you must take the initiative. In God's compassion for unrepentant humanity He became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). God took the initiative. When Christ began His discipling ministry, He called each disciple personally (John 6:70).

Issue the Invitation

Explain to your potential disciple that after much prayer and through the counsel of your spiritual leaders, God has led you to invite him to make a commitment to discipleship. Point out how his eagerness to know God, his availability, submissive spirit, faithfulness and vision to make disciples indicate that God has prepared him to be equipped to teach others.

Emphasize that your relationship will require a great deal of time. You will meet together in a structured setting at least three hours a week. He will be held accountable for written assignments, memory verses and regular Bible study. This minimum time commitment must be agreed upon in advance. Then, as he matures, his involvement with you in ministry will gradually increase. He must see his spiritual growth as his top priority.

Share how a one-on-one relationship with a mature Christian will provide quality training and meet his individual needs. Since you will progress at a pace that is sensitive to his spiritual development, he will acquire a thorough understanding of the Christian lifestyle.

Explain the Relationship

The purpose of a discipling relationship is to equip one who has died to himself to reproduce a Christ-like character in others. Explain to your potential disciple that without commitment and submission, yours is not a discipling relationship.

Commitment.

Tell him why you must be committed to one another. Explain that without a prior mutual commitment, you are likely to give up at the first sign of struggle or become discouraged by an indication of weakness. Consequently, you covenant together before God to grow into the fullness of His Son no matter what the cost. Commitment means no turning back, no boundaries, no reservations, no limits.

In 1975 I was flying from St. Louis to Los Angeles when the pilot announced a "serious threat" that a bomb was on board our flight. We made an emergency landing and were told to evacuate immediately. When we shoved the door open, a thin slide automatically ejected from the plane and started to inflate. It shot straight out, parallel to the ground. I hesitated for a moment, afraid to jump, but more afraid not to.

Before the slide even hit the ground, I hurled my body onto this tenuous exit. Words cannot describe my terror! But from the instant I jumped, I was bound by my decision.

Since God demands unwavering faithfulness, the discipleship commitment is as binding as that leap from the plane. Affirm to your potential disciple that once you make this commitment to each other, you are both bound to it. Assure him that your commitment will remain firm even when he stumbles. Explain that he must be committed to watching, listening, following and responding to your direction in order to come of age in Christ. Your unreserved commitment to each other is the foundation of your relationship.

Submission.

Tell your potential disciple why he must submit to you as the one in whom God has invested authority to train him for reproduction. His submission is crucial because without it you cannot exercise authority over him. Christ called His disciples, but before He could begin training them, they had to follow Him.

Be sure your relationship is clearly defined and that your potential disciple understands your respective roles. He needs to know that you are the leader because of your commitment and character, not because of your education or skills. Your leaders should explain to him that your active submission to them qualifies you for leadership. This will launch your relationship on the proper course and help establish your authority.

Your potential disciple must make a commitment to joyful submission. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." How can a leader experience joy if his disciple does not gladly submit to him? Share with your prospective disciple that there is comfort in knowing that you are accountable to God to guide him in his Christian walk and watch over his well-being.

More than anything else, submission means trust. Recently a young man who had experienced a dramatic conversion from drugs and crime through our ministry had an opportunity to share his testimony on national television. I counseled him not to do it at that time. Circumstances prevented me from explaining to him right then the reasons for my counsel. I simply asked him to trust. What a joy it was to me when he instantly agreed, because of his commitment to submission. Later I was able to share with him the danger of pride and the importance of "living out" his new life before premature public exposure.

Explain to your potential disciple that his submission provides security in finding God's will because he has the opportunity to seek your counsel. Assure him that if you do not know the answer, you will ask your leaders and he will receive an authoritative response rather than just an opinion. "...in multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 24:6 KJV).

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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 Philips. 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.

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