TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 23: Discipleship is Relational (10c)

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

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **Ephesians 4:25-27**

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin;
do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

Step 3: *Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter* - **Ephesians 4**
Link: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&version=ESV

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

1. This session covers the qualities of Patience and Honesty.
   Patience: Patience is being slow to anger. It is a trademark of a disciple-maker.

2. It takes Chirst-like patience and time for disciples and the trainers to develop Godly character. That is, to become like Jesus who they must see in you.

3. Honesty: We should not expect perfection in our disciples. We should expect honesty.

4. Your disciples will start sharing their own struggles and hurts as well as victories and dreams if you can be intimate and share yours as well.

5. Listening intently to your trainee showing that you truly care for them. But if you are more occupied with yourself, you will communicate just the opposite.

Step 5*: Read and discuss the Content from the book:*
Chapter 10c per the author – Keith Phillips:

Patience

Patience means being slow to anger. It is faith in action, not passivity. Patience compels you to extend grace toward your disciple without compromising God's standard. It prevents bitterness. Patience is a trademark of a disciplemaker.

Jesus began with unqualified men who needed to be prompted and encouraged each step of the way. It took a long time for His disciples to develop godly characters, but the Lord kept working with His men until they became like Him. He never gave up on them. He endured the brashness of James and John, the fickleness of Peter and the doubting of Thomas. That was patience.

God promises to give His children this same Christ-like patience (Romans 15:5). Disciple-makers must wait for God's timing and direction. Your disciple may be afraid of people, he may resist change or struggle with priorities. These obstacles can be overcome as he watches you and as the Holy Spirit works in his life. But you must be patient.

It takes a long time to make disciples. In the ghetto we may spend six months building a friendship with a person and then an additional six months before he makes a commitment to Christ. We may spend a year nurturing this new believer and then another three years discipling him to the point of reproduction. Nevertheless, five years of investment in one person is well worth the effort if he becomes a reproducing disciple.

The first time we met Virgil was shortly after he broke our windows and robbed our women's staff home in Los Angeles. That was seven years ago. Today he is being trained to disciple others. Not one of our staff regrets this time investment.

In the ghetto most of us have prayed for and invested time in people who later rejected Christ. But we do not become discouraged. We keep on. "God Himself has given us this wonderful work and so we never give up. We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but we don't give up and quit. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going" (2 Corinthians 4:1,8,9 LB).

Neither skepticism nor opposition should deter your commitment to invest in your disciple. When your patience is tested, affirm your faith in God's sovereignty by claiming Philippians 1:6: "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Honesty

The basis for every healthy relationship is honest communication. This is built on your commitment to one another and the knowledge that transparency is for your own good. Ephesians 4:25 instructs us to lay aside falsehood and speak the truth. Your relationship will not grow unless both you and your disciple communicate openly. You must be aware of each other's needs and feelings. Do not expect your partner to be perfect, just honest and genuine.

I know of nothing that better fosters honesty than the intimacy of a discipleship relationship. Many believers are ashamed to share their struggles or anxieties, afraid that their most private burdens will be transformed into gossip. But your disciple knows you will guard his reputation. He can confidently talk with you about anything because he is secure in your love for him. "...perfect love casts out fear..." (1 John 4:18) so that we may "walk in the light..." (1 John 1:7). Your disciple must communicate anything that may affect him, the body or his ministry even when he does not feel like it.

Encourage honesty in your student by communicating yourself, by listening and by being open to criticism.

Communicate yourself.

If you honestly share your struggles, hurts and disappointments, as well as your victories, dreams and accomplishments, your disciple will soon share his own. If you make a mistake, admit it, but always do this with a view toward building the kingdom and strengthening his character. Your openness will communicate, "I'm teachable and I trust you." It will inspire honest communication.

Several years ago Joan had a close friendship with a fine man. People assumed they would get married, but God revealed to them that they should not pursue the relationship. Joan's teenage Bible students were anxious to know why the relationship ended and how she felt. Even though it was painful, Joan rehearsed the principles God had taught them and confided her struggles—the hurt, the loneliness and even the fear of remaining single. Her girls were amazed by her openness. Joan trusted them to minister to her!

Joan's transparency during that crisis powerfully communicated her love for her girls. This freed them to share their struggles. By watching God work in Joan's life, they became confident in His power to meet their needs. Today, four of them are functioning disciples.

Do not lose your disciple's respect, however, by destructive sharing. Some immature Christians stumble or justify their sins because of their leader's failures. Others become insecure or lose confidence in their leader if he appears weak. If you have any doubt about sharing something, check with your leaders first.

It is unfair to expect your disciple to carry too many of your deep concerns. Overcommunication, even if it is pure and truthful, can cause him to become proud or discouraged. Jesus told His disciples, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Be sensitive to God's guidance regarding what and how much to share.

Listen.

When your disciple talks to you, concentrate on what he has to say. Your undivided attention proves that you care. If you are preoccupied with how you will respond instead of listening intently to his thoughts, you will communicate disinterest. Indicate that you understand by both nonverbal and verbal affirmation. Ask probing questions that will encourage his openness. But do not interrupt him. "A wise man holds his tongue..." (Proverbs 10:14 LB).

Be open to constructive criticism.

Demonstrate trust in your disciple by encouraging constructive criticism. Listen carefully when your disciple shares criticism. Consider his ideas. He is in a unique position to mirror your strengths and weaknesses and enlighten you about how your personality projects things you may not intend. Apologize for your mistakes and then affirm your commitment to work at correcting them. Periodically, consult your disciple to see if the weakness he brought to your attention is improving. Thank him for his interest. "It is a badge of honor to accept valid criticism" (Proverbs 25:12 LB).

Mary Thiessen, our Los Angeles women's director, is a gifted teacher. She works hard to pass on her skills to her disciples by critiquing their teaching. But recently one of Mary's disciples approached her with a problem: "Your correction makes me so nervous that I can't teach well when you're around." Mary graciously accepted this constructive criticism and now tempers her suggestions for improvement with honest praise for her disciple's accomplishments. Mary's openness strengthened their relationship.

The one qualification to giving or receiving criticism is that it must be responsible and sincere, not destructive. Do not play games with each other. Do not joke or try to rid yourself of a frustration at the expense of the other. Jesus warned that "...every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

If the criticism is emotionally charged, set a time to meet later so you can both think through the situation. James 1:19 teaches, "...But let every one be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."

If conflicts in your relationship result from personal opinion or preferences, listen and discuss. Be considerate and flexible. First Peter 4:8 says, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." You can be united even while you are working out differences if you are both seeking God's will. Never give up under the guise of "personality clash" as though such a problem were insurmountable. Difficult relationships purify and sharpen us (Proverbs 27:17).

When your disciple knows he has the freedom to correct you, he will listen and act upon your correction. Proverbs 15:31 promises, "He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise."

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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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