

Guidelines for Discipling

1. What is the purpose of discipling? (See lesson 2-2)

Every person is born with a predisposition toward independence from God. That disposition tends to harden as the child grows into an adult. If the person accepts His gift of salvation, God then begins a process of inward transformation (sanctification). The pace and depth of that transformation process is affected by the understanding and openness of the new Christian. The intent of discipleship (mentoring, “spiritual parenting”) is to help the new Christian to understand **what God is doing**, in order to significantly influence and accelerate that process.

Romans 12:1-2 ... *brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but **be transformed** by the renewing of **your mind**, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*

Colossians 1:28-29 (Paul wrote) *We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **so that we may present everyone mature in Christ**. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.*

2. Targeting (Seeking God's choices as to whom you should disciple)

A. If you want to be an effective spiritual parent (discipler), you need to prayerfully seek God's wisdom for discernment as to which Christian(s) will benefit from your investment of time, energy and possessions. Jesus let His Father make the decision.

Luke 6:12-16 ... *He went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God. When daylight came, He summoned His disciples, and He chose 12 of them—He also named them apostles.*

Note: Sadly, **many** Christians, especially those who have found a comfortable and acceptable Christian lifestyle, **are not overly interested in being mentored** on toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness. If you are considering mentoring a Christian, look for the characteristics in Point 3. If they are not evident, then prayerfully look to the Lord for **His confirmation**, or to provide you someone else who does have a hunger to grow spiritually. There are Christians who would love to have someone take them under their wing to help them grow. **Trying to disciple a disinterested person will usually lead to frustration! If you spend your limited time with a disinterested person, you may be neglecting someone else who sincerely wants to grow.**

Note: **Timing is important. Someone not interested today may be interested at a later time.**

B. Where should we look for Christians to disciple?

1. New believers Since they are now as **little children** in the kingdom, they tend to be spiritually hungry, and need someone to walk alongside of them.
2. Christians who have been living in a desert experience (often for years), who through a God orchestrated **crisis** have found themselves humbled and finally willing to acknowledge that He can manage their life better than they can.
3. Christians who have obviously accepted His Lordship over their life, want to walk with Him, but have either stagnated (or plateaued) in their Christian growth or don't understand how to consistently abide in fellowship with the Lord.

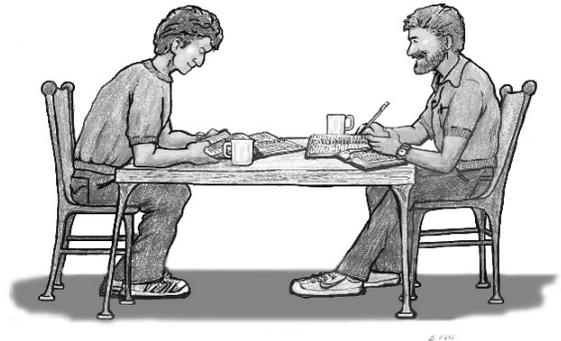
3. What characteristics should we look for in a disciple-to-be?

- A. A spiritual hunger. Are they hungering and seeking after God? (Jesus said) ***those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, for they will be filled.*** (Matt. 5:6)
- A. A teachable attitude. Do they have an openness to Him? Do they see themselves as a learner, apprentice?
- B. A RELIABILITY (DEPENDABILITY). (Paul told timothy) *And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to **faithful** men who will be able to teach others also.* (2 Tim. 2:2) Do they want to apply his truth to their life? Is spiritual growth a priority?

Caution: **It is not good if they think they're doing you a favor.**

4. Suggested guidelines for discipling another person.

- A.
- Arrange to meet together **at least** once each week for about 1½ hours or so. The time can vary depending on their spiritual hunger, assimilation of Biblical concepts, and maturity level.
 - Plan on spending at least **3 to 9 months** with a disciple, meeting regularly.
 - The purpose of the meetings is to explain Biblical truth and principles, and to give the disciple opportunity **to ask** questions, **share** spiritual struggles, and **discuss** related topics.
 - It is important for you to be a thoughtful **listener**; it's the best way to identify gaps in their spiritual understanding.
 - **Be flexible** enough to allow the Holy Spirit to change the direction of the study or conversation, yet **orderly** enough so the time is not squandered on less significant matters.
 - Teach **at the disciple's pace**.
 - The disciple should be encouraged to look to the Lord to apply Biblical principles to his life.
 - A goal is for the disciple to increasingly understand and be able to clearly explain those Biblical principles to others. At some point the disciple should be ready to start mentoring another person, with your assistance.

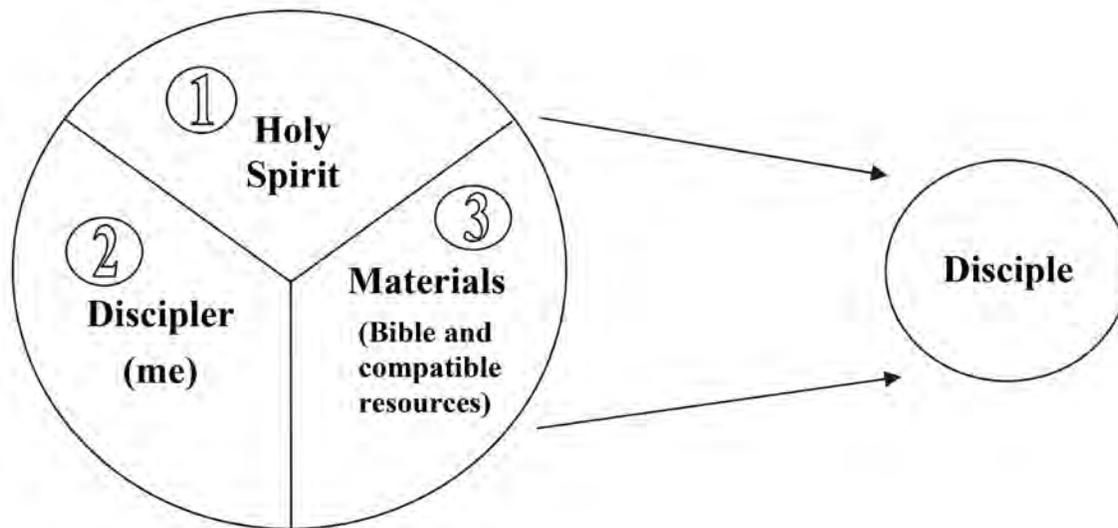


NOTE: We don't want to imply that these lessons are the only valid ones. Christians have been disciplined over the centuries using different portions of Scriptures. The **mentoring** and **nurturing** aspects are crucial. We believe the **concepts** presented in these discipleship lessons need to be **understood** by the disciple if you expect healthy growth and maturity.

- B. Seek to teach them **Biblical principles** to live by, not just Biblical knowledge. We don't want to simply convey an academic perspective of these discipleship materials or the mentoring process.
- C. Make sure the disciple understands that you are **available** through the week. Even after your formal discipleship time is completed, you should plan to continue being available for the disciple, as you regularly monitor their spiritual growth.
- D. Regularly **pray for** the disciple, and **with** the disciple.
- E. Remember you are a **role model** for the disciple. **Include** the disciple in your spiritual life when appropriate.
- F. Your goal is to lead them into **dependence on the Holy Spirit**, and independence from you. We should expect the typical Christian, if correctly disciplined, to become a "spiritual reproducer".

***THE DISCIPLE WON'T CARE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW,
UNTIL THEY KNOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE!***

Essentials for Discipling (Role descriptions)



The discipler needs to count on the HOLY SPIRIT to:

- ① a. **Orchestrate encounters** with others who need to be disciplined.
 b. **Create spiritual hunger** in the person to be disciplined.
 c. **Guide** the discipleship process.
 d. **Give wisdom, discernment** and **clarity** to you as a discipler.
- ② The DISCIPLER is responsible to:
 - a. **Pray** and look to the Lord with **expectation**.
 - b. Continue in fellowship (**abide**) with the Holy Spirit.
 - c. **Study** the Word and **seek** to be prepared as a usable vessel. (2 Tim. 2:15)
 - d. Be **available** to be used as a vessel by the Holy Spirit.
 - e. **Cooperate** with the Holy Spirit as a partner in **His** work.
- ③ The MATERIAL that is used should:
 - a. Emphasize the disciple's need to be looking to the Lord to reveal Himself through His Word, the **Bible**.
 - b. **Progressively** address the **needs** of a new Christian (as in building a house). (See 2-1, Point 10)
 - c. Focus the disciple's attention on his/her **relationship with the Lord**, rather than on external behavior.

➤ In the human physical realm there are three **OBSTACLES TO REPRODUCTION**:

- a) **physical immaturity,**
- b) **a health problem, and**
- c) **lack of physical intimacy.**

➤ Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators (navigators.org), has suggested that the same three obstacles can hinder spiritual reproduction.

- a) **Spiritual immaturity** – Due to being a newer Christian, or due to lack of spiritual growth.
- b) **Spiritual health problems** – Due to unresolved issues between the Christian and the Lord, and/or lack of correct spiritual understanding.
- c) **Lack of spiritual intimacy** – Due to busyness and/or other activities or things that infringe on the Christian's intimacy with the Lord.

Recommendations for Effective Discipleship

A disciple has the goal of becoming like the teacher.

(Jesus said) *A disciple* (apprentice learner) *is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.* (Luke 6:40)

1. For the newer believer there is usually a significant emphasis toward **behavior modification**. Therefore, we should focus the believer's attention on his relationship with the Lord, since **inward transformation will produce the behavior that pleases the Lord**. Our goal is for him/her to learn **to habitually seek God's approval**, rather than man's approval. (Rom. 12:1-2) (John 12:42-43)
2. As a spiritual baby, every new believer should be given personalized individual attention during the **critical formative period** of their new life with the Lord. **CAUTION: Be careful to not interpret the new believer's enthusiasm as an accurate indicator of spiritual well being**, since this initial openness and hunger has a tendency to fade if not developed during this window of opportunity.
3. Biblical training should be **orderly and progressive** in nature, rather than random. Due to the new believer's unfamiliarity with the Christian life, random information **tends to be archived** rather than applied. It is also very easy for the newer believer to unknowingly have gaps in their understanding of essential concepts. (Illustration: steps in building a house) (1 Cor. 3:10-15)
4. Disciples should be treated as **apprentices**, rather than as students simply seeking Biblical knowledge. As in any purposeful apprenticeship, there is a need for a significant amount of committed time and energy. **Individual training is slower but tends to be deeper**.
5. One-on-one training (spiritual parenting) should be **balanced** with corporate training, just as in any normal family. **Neither one should be considered optional**. One weakness of corporate settings is many times there is **no requirement** for serious interaction or dialog that addresses the individual spiritual needs of the disciple.
6. Serious consideration should be given to the inclusion of the following major components of discipleship, namely: 1) **Commitment**, 2) **Modeling**, 3) **Individual Attention**, and 4) **Teaching**. Use **1 Thess. 2:3-13** as a model for personal discipleship. It incorporates the major components of "spiritual parenting".
7. Every believer should be seen as a **potential discipler**, and trained toward that end. There is no special spiritual gift for discipling, just as there is no special gift for witnessing. The command to make disciples was given to the universal church, not just to a few specially trained or gifted individuals. If human couples raised offspring at the same ratio as Christians spiritually parent new believers, the human race would probably be considered an endangered species.
8. At minimum, the disciple should **understand and be able to explain to others** an Overview of the Christian life, as well as the concepts of "lordship", "sanctification", "abiding" (walking in the Spirit), "the Rewards Ceremony", etc.
9. The spiritual health of a Christian church should not be measured primarily by the activity of its leadership. A better indicator is the **spiritual reproduction and growth** that is occurring as a result of the main body of believers being equipped for the work of service. One should ask, "if the leader(s) were removed, **would the body of believers be spiritually mature enough to continue to grow and spiritually reproduce?**" (Eph. 4:11-16)

*A Measure of Success is Indicated When the Believer
You Are Discipling is Functioning as a Discipler.*