



# SESSION THREE: BEST PRACTICES AND PITFALLS

## **SESSION TOPICS**

- The 3 components of quality discipleship
- Common pitfalls
- Other tips and best practices

## The three components of quality discipleship

In Session 2, we looked at the qualities of a good disciple. Now let's look for a moment at your role. There are 3 essential ingredients for successful disciple-making:

- 1 A strong relationship**
- 2 The word of God**
- 3 Doing ministry together**

Let's look at these in a little detail.

### INGREDIENT #1: A STRONG RELATIONSHIP

When you disciple someone, you aren't taking on a project, you're investing in a person. To do this well, you will need to:

- **Learn to ask questions** – “What's been consuming your thoughts lately?” “How are you doing in your walk with God?” “What are you learning from the Lord?” Ask questions about the whole person, not just their jobs or spiritual disciplines.
- **Learn to listen** – Respond to what you hear before you move into the discussion you planned for the session. They may need help processing an issue or acting on truth rather than emotion. Remember, to help them grow spiritually, you have to meet them where they are and work from there. Listening well and asking good questions is essential.
- **Spend relational time together** – The deepest bonds are made both face-to-face and shoulder-to-shoulder. In other words, find things to do together outside (but not in place of) your weekly meeting. Have them over for dinner, attend a sporting event, or do a service project in your community. Let them see your life outside a discipleship setting.

- **Be an encourager** – In 2005, the National Science Foundation published an article noting 80% of our thoughts in any given day are negative. We need people who help us identify the good things in life and who will praise and affirm us in a healthy way. Make it a point to remind them who God says they are. Point them to the promises, strength and grace God offers to empower a life that brings Him glory.
- **Be transparent** – If you're vulnerable and open about what's going on in your life, it's going to be easier for the person you're discipling to be open. If you come across as a perfect disciple who doesn't have any issues or problems, they won't find you relatable and may struggle with seeing themselves in a disciple-maker role.
- **Advocate for** – As you get to know the person you're discipling, it's natural for you to want to help them. Make available your resources, your bookshelf, your network of contacts, ... whatever God has given you, use it to help them.
- **Coach them** – Train them with the diligence and perseverance of a coach expecting changes and results, but be careful about dispensing advice. Try to ask questions that will help them think through the issue and lead them to search God for direction. Coach them on how to get to the answer rather than giving them the answer yourself. (CBMC offers an excellent Leadership Coach Training seminar that you might consider.)
- **Love them** – Even when they disappoint you and especially when they fail, show patience and encouragement as you help them identify what went wrong and establish a different path forward. When you listen, forgive and encourage, you are demonstrating that they have value in God's eyes and in yours, and that you still believe in them. This speaks volumes.

## INGREDIENT #2: THE WORD OF GOD

Quality discipleship involves getting the Word of God into someone's life. Here are three reasons why the Word of God is key to discipleship:

- **God's Word produces life transformation** – People don't change unless the Word of God changes their thinking and changes their perspective on life. Life transformation comes from the Word.
- **God's Word builds convictions for a lifetime** – You may only be in their lives for a season, so help them build a deep, internalized conviction to live out biblical discipleship for the rest of their lives.
- **God's Word is the truth** – What seems good and right is sometimes a distraction or lie from the enemy. (See Proverbs 14:12) This is only revealed as we digest the truth of God's Word.

Keep in mind that helping someone mature in their faith is not completely up to you. Encourage them to be active in their church small group or a ministry like Bible Study Fellowship or CBMC that also puts them in God's word and helps them apply it to their lives.

## INGREDIENT #3: DOING MINISTRY TOGETHER

**The Christ-filled life is attained by faith and through obedience. When we put into practice those things we know and believe, our knowledge becomes experience which then becomes our witness. This is where apprenticing comes in.**

Effective discipleship involves doing ministry together. When the apostle Paul invited Timothy in Acts 16 to be his disciple, he didn't say, "Hey, let's go through this material together and I'll teach you everything I know, then you'll be ready for ministry." Instead, Paul said, "Timothy, come with me," and Timothy joined Paul on his journeys. He learned by going with Paul.

## It could look like:

- Talking with others at the gym or some local hangout
- Showing them how to initiate a conversation, build rapport, and transition into the gospel
- Serving together in a way that allows you to give encouragement to those being served
- Tag-team a devotional or co-facilitate a small group meeting

The **MAWL model** is so important for the growth from disciple to disciple-maker.

**M**  
**A**  
**W**  
**L**

**Model** (they watch you)

**Assist** (you do things together)

**Watch** (you watch them)

**Launch** (they become the disciple-maker)

Healthy discipleship involves the three components we've discussed in this session – building relationships, studying the Word of God, and doing ministry together. The challenge is to balance all three and periodically evaluate which components need more attention.

For most people, discipleship doesn't come naturally. It's learned by doing it. Building relationships and studying God's Word may be easy for you. Ministry is usually the most difficult because it means stepping out in faith and bringing another person along with you. But if we do not embrace all three of these essential ingredients, we rob people of the joy of discovery, of personal growth, and of seeing God work in the people and situations around them.



## Potholes to look out for

Here are a few common issues that will lead to discipleship fizzle:

- **Self-importance** – We take pride in our effort to influence a younger Christian. We are tempted to think that through our time, knowledge, and experience, we have changed the life of another person. *For I have worked harder ... yet it was not I but God who was working through me by His grace.* (1 Corinthians 15:10b NLT)
- **Self-reliance** – We lean so heavily on our materials that we forget to turn to God for insight and direction. We give answers instead of leading them to God in prayer. We forget to ask, “What is God doing in their life?”
- **Program-minded** – We place too much emphasis on completing a workbook or study, overlooking some of the immediate and general struggles they may have. Be flexible and remember the goal is spiritual maturity – helping them establish a firm knowledge and application of God’s Word to their lives.
- **Sense of failure** – Discouragement when we don’t see growth or freedom from a particular sin. Or perhaps when they seem to lose their appetite for discipleship and your meetings become sporadic. Remember, you are only one means of God’s work in their life.
- **Business consultant** – Your meetings become focused on issues with their work rather than helping them grow in Christlikeness. *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.* (Matthew 6:33 NLT)
- **Personal counselor** – If the issues are deep and old, and if it’s clear that they need help beyond your level of experience, then help them connect to a counselor and hold them accountable for following through.
- **Dependency on you** – The person you are discipling does everything you ask, but nothing on their own. They eat your fish rather than learning to fish. The MAWL model is the cure for this.

## Practical hints when discipling someone

- Pray before each meeting
- Prepare – review notes from your prior discussions; organize what you plan to cover this time
- Repeat all things – have them summarize to you the key points from your discussion
- Assign them reasonable work to do between meetings
- Take them with you as much as possible – let them see you apply your faith to everyday life
- Inspect their follow-through – hold them accountable for their goals and commitments
- Use as many pass-on’able illustrations as possible – a picture is worth a thousand words
- Be transparent – share your failures and your victories, your confidence and your insecurity
- Encourage them as a friend, don’t instruct them like a professor
- Meet them where they are – tailor your time to meet their need
- Keep pointing them to Christ and His Word

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the 3 components is the easiest for you to wrap your arms around? Which do you find the most intimidating?

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2. Who has helped you grow the most as a Christian? What do you remember most about your time together?

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