

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study Guide

EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 6: HOW TO BE A DISCIPLER

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Exploring Discipleship. This series of lessons studies the spiritual formation of a follower of Jesus Christ – the process referred to as discipleship. The discipleship process occurs after someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ, beginning with a desire to live out God’s plan for their life. When we undertake the task of helping a new believer to grow in their faith, we are said to disciple them. This material will benefit anyone wanting to disciple others, especially those who are practising evangelism, following up with new believers and helping them grow in their faith. Discipleship is the duty of every believer, especially those in spiritual leadership!

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.



EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

LESSON 6: HOW TO BE A DISCIPLER

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The purpose of this lesson is to highlight some errors and successes made in a mentor/disciple relationship. You will discover what it takes to cultivate a positive discipleship relationship.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Relationships of all kinds take effort and care – a discipleship relationship is no different. Keeping the points in this lesson in mind will help you avoid major problems and potentially improve the quality of this relationship. Not every discipleship relationship will last, and sometimes two people are just a poor match for each other. You might also have a disciple learn and grow and then all of a sudden walk away from their faith! This can be heartbreaking, but it is important not to be hard on yourself. People make their own choices. Being prepared for realities like this will ease some fear and apprehension. Relationships will not always be perfect, but we can work on making them as successful as possible.

GETTING STARTED

1. Do you feel ready to disciple someone? What do you need to learn, practise or experience before you will feel ready?

2. It is said that 'actions speak louder than words'. How is this true in a mentor/disciple relationship? How does this make you feel?



STUDY

❖ **DISCIPLESHIP REQUIRES DEDICATION:** Christians who are growing in their faith should be involved in sharing the Gospel as well as helping others grow in their faith (especially those they have led to Christ). Discipling someone takes planning and dedication. We cannot effectively spur each other on to deeper relationships with God unless we are willing to offer our time and abilities long term. There are some things to personally consider as you undertake this relationship:

- **Prepare Yourself:** Effective discipleship is accomplished with thought and preparation. What are some things you can do to prepare for effective discipling?

Your own preparation may involve reading and studying a book of the Bible, preparing a list of frequently asked questions about Christianity and researching appropriate responses, or choosing some Bible study material to work through with them. You should show up to appointments with a plan.

- **Rely on God:** You must rely on God throughout the discipleship process, not only on your own words and ability. This can be a struggle for many of us, but it is necessary when doing His work. When do you find it difficult to rely on God?

- Being prepared and relying on God might seem to be contradictory in a sense. Why are both important? What would happen if we only did one without the other?

❖ **WHAT TO DO WHEN DISCIPLING:** Here are some helpful points to remember when discipling. Read each point, and then look up any verses listed. Write down what you learn from them.



What to Do:	How to do it:	God's Word Says:
Pray Often	It is important to pray privately for the person you are discipling, but it is also important to pray together with the person. Remember, the person you are praying with might be uncomfortable at first.	<i>1 Thessalonians 1:2</i>
Walk the Talk	Make sure that you have examined your own life before you set yourself up as an example to others. You can 'undo' the power of your words if your life is contradictory!	<i>Luke 11:29-41, Luke 12:1-3</i>
Be Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak	In order to understand someone, you need to listen to them first – really listen and not just wait until it is your turn to speak. Be careful with your words. You may end up listening more than speaking, but your words will have more wisdom if they are delivered carefully.	<i>James 1:19</i>
Work Together with God and Others	As tools in the hand of God and partners with our leaders, we must work in unity and rely on God for results.	<i>1 Corinthians 3:7-9</i>
Be Vulnerable	It's okay to share your own trials as long as the discussion remains focused on God and your advice remains Biblical in nature. It might be hard to admit your weaknesses, but it is important that the person you disciple sees you as a real person with real struggles, and to know that it is a normal part of our Christian life.	<i>James 1:2-5</i>

- ❖ **WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN DISCIPLING:** There can be dangers in discipleship relationships. The following points should be taken into consideration.



- **Cross Gender Discipleship** – Discipleship requires an ongoing relationship and some vulnerability. A male/female discipleship relationship is not a good idea. If you cannot avoid such a situation, prayerfully consider discipling someone together with your spouse or with a friend that you could bring into the meeting. In group situations there may be both males and females participating, but people tend to be less vulnerable and personal in their sharing in such situations.
- **Do not exhibit an overbearing sense of control** – Remember that discipleship is a two way relationship. The person being disciplined by you should feel comfortable to share anything in their own time. Your goal is to have them lean on God and rely on Him rather than on you. Setting up a schedule for them and giving them too many rules to follow does not allow them to rely on God.
- **Do not be afraid to correct your disciple** - Sometimes a mentor or discipler will feel uncomfortable telling someone that they notice sin in their life. On the one hand, you want them to feel convicted of sin on their own and to lean on God for guidance through these situations. However, you also want them to be aware that others notice their sin. Use the Bible as your guide. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us: “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” Humility and love will go a long way in this area.
- **Do Not Allow a Disciple to Rely Only on You** – The goal of discipleship is that the student grows in their faith and is able to teach and disciple others. They should be taught how to study the Word of God for themselves, find a Christian community to belong to, and eventually lead others. They should not rely on you for their spiritual food, but on the Word of God. The discipleship relationship should only last for a time. While you may remain lifelong friends, the purpose of the relationship should change.
- For each of the above items, write down what problems could occur in a discipleship relationship if that advice is not heeded?

❖ **FRUITFUL WORK:** The outcome of a healthy discipleship relationship should always be to draw the person closer to God and strengthen them in God’s Word. Just like evangelism requires time and patience, so does the act of discipleship. And just like you can make mistakes when sharing



the Gospel, you can also make them while discipling a person. Consider the tips in this lesson when engaging in a discipleship relationship, and be willing to be taught by God as you go!

IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Discipleship requires dedication – discipling someone takes preparation as well as reliance on God.
- ❖ When discipling someone we ought to pray often, and also be careful of our ‘witness’ – what our lifestyle says about our faith. We represent Jesus in all that we do.
- ❖ We should be slow to speak and quick to listen, able to be truthful and vulnerable, and seek wisdom from God instead of men.
- ❖ We must exercise caution in discipleship relationships. Be careful of the circumstances of the relationship so that it remains healthy for both people, and continually glorifying to God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the list of things to do might be hardest for you? Being a good listener and being vulnerable are difficult for many people. How can you practise this?

2. Can you think of other important things to do or not do when discipling others?