

LESSON ESSENTIALS

EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

LESSON 7: What an Ideal Disciple Looks Like

Discipleship is a genuine, close and loving relationship between believers that helps them to grow in the Lord. This is true for both mentor and disciple. Examine the relationship presented in this lesson to see how it works.

While pride and self-centeredness bring ruin to any relationship, see how humility and love are the foundation to a strong discipleship relationship.

You might know someone who needs to be disciplined or you may have read about discipleship but wonder how to establish an ideal discipleship relationship in real life? This lesson helps you visualise an ideal discipleship relationship through a case study.

A discipleship relationship is a strong bond between good Christian friends. While it may be a close friendship, it is also usually a relationship where one person is the learner and the other is the mentor.

Most of us have longed for, if not enjoyed, the comfort of a really good friend: someone who knows our most embarrassing moments and yet does not laugh at us; someone who listens patiently to us when we are confused or upset; someone who encourages us when we are down yet is honest enough to point out when we go wrong. Jesus is our best friend, but He has also placed people in a believer's life to be a channel of His love and a source of guidance as the believer grows in the faith. Discipleship is one such relationship. A discipleship relationship is a strong bond between good Christian friends. Not only is discipleship a close friendship, it is also a relationship where one person is the learner and the other is the mentor.

Seventeen year old Matt found such a relationship with 26 year old Rob. Rob's mentor, Paul had once suggested that Rob should help Matt and be his spiritual guide. Matt was actually a little lost at that time, because he had just accepted Christ as his Saviour, and had also felt a little lost in this new church with new faces. So, he felt great having someone like an older brother to look out for him.

Rob and Matt got along quite well; they were good friends. They often met at coffee shops and discussed their problems over a cup. All Rob did was ask questions to get Matt to talk more, and the more he spoke about himself, and answered Rob's probing questions, the more he was able to understand himself. Rob had a way of making Matt see the truth even without giving him a word of advice.

This is the kind intimacy, comfort, and acceptance seen between an ideal mentor and disciple. It is not only close and loving but genuine and informal.

Matt felt so comfortable that he told Rob about his addiction to porn and his unsuccessful attempts to quit. Rob could understand and help Matt as he had gone through the same difficulties and had been helped by his own mentor Paul. In the end, not only did Rob help Matt overcome his addiction, but now they pray for each other, that neither of them will fall into temptation again. It must have taken a lot of humility on Matt's part to open up about his addiction and to seek help, and a lot of humility on Rob's part also to share his own weakness with a younger person. Humility is an essential part of the discipleship relationship. The Bible reminds us in 1 Peter 5:5-6, "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" Only when both mentor and disciple sacrifice their pride

and shame will they be able to mutually help each other grow in the Lord. Yes, an ideal discipleship is two-sided where mentor and disciple can help each other grow. The mentor often has a greater impact on a disciple through the way he lives than through what he says. The disciple also comes with his own strengths and experiences that can contribute to the growth of the mentor.

Rob was able to teach Matt by just being himself. Matt became a good listener by observing Rob as he interacted with him. There are times when Matt is able to help Rob, too. Rob struggled with logical thinking and apologetics and he had friends at work who constantly questioned his faith. Matt on the other hand was interested in apologetics and was well-versed in philosophy. So, Matt sometimes helped Rob logically understand his own faith.

The discipleship relationship has been such a source of encouragement to both Rob and Matt that even today they know that the other is just a call or text away when in need for instant prayer or a quick word of advice.

In a world where people are increasingly feeling alone, discipleship, a genuine and loving relationship between a mentor and disciple, is a wonderful solution. Discipleship brings people together to stand for the Kingdom of God, learning to lean on each other and on God.

Discipleship is a genuine and loving relationship between a mentor and disciple trying together to stand for the Kingdom of God, leaning on each other and on God.

IN REVIEW

- Discipleship is a genuine and loving relationship where believers feel comfortable sharing their experiences, even the most embarrassing difficulties or doubts.
- Actions speak louder than words. A disciple often learns a lot more from observing his mentor's life than listening to his words.
- Discipleship is not one sided in its benefits-- even the disciple contributes to the growth of the mentor
- All good relationships are forged only in the kiln of humility, and this humility helps both mentor and disciple benefit from the relationship.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- What did Jesus have to say about the kind attitude of Christian leaders/mentors ought to have? How did he illustrate this in His relationship with His disciples?

- Can you think of certain hurts or struggles you have had in your own life and how these experiences could help you as you mentor a young believer?

- In what ways do you think being a mentor would challenge you and help you grow as a Christian?

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