



THE COMPASS

A TOOL FOR DISCIPLERS

The Right Content for Discipleship

As you begin to disciple someone, what is it you want to pass on? What do you want to teach them? As we've already discussed, relationship is a big part of discipleship. But biblical discipleship is not just hanging out with somebody. That's friendship. We've all got friends who we hang out with, but we're not discipling all our friends. Discipleship has to do with meeting a friend for the purpose of taking this person somewhere, taking them toward being a biblical disciple.

To know where you're taking somebody requires some forethought. It's having a picture of where you want to take this person and what things they must learn to get there. What are the biblical truths they need to learn? What kind of character-building needs to happen in their life? What skills do they need for ministry? How must they be equipped?

Consider a football coach who wants his quarterback to lead his team to the Big Ten Championship. That coach has specific things he needs his quarterback to learn. His quarterback must learn how to read defenses and how to make good handoffs. His quarterback needs to know how to drop back in a three-step drop for a quick pass. A good coach doesn't just wing it. He thinks through, "How do I get this person there?"

Two Types of Disciplers

Planners – If you take it to the extreme, the planner is the person who plans everything out in absolute detail. Week One, Week Two, Week Three...You may be that disciplined, and that's great. Just remain flexible and be eager to address questions your disciple may want to talk about that may not fit into your plans.

Wingers – Wingers are the kind of disciplers who just show up and whatever comes out, comes out. This kind of discipleship is when you show up and say, 'So, how you doin? and then they say, "How you doin?" That really works well if the person you're discipling is someone who, every week, shows up with questions. They've got things they want to learn about. Just be sure you fit in the really important things they need to learn, and do not rely on their on-going questions. On the other hand, if you're working with someone who shows up at your appointment without a single question on their mind, being a winger may mean you sit and stare at one another throughout your appointment.

For both types of disciplers, balance is everything. Be flexible, be available, and be thoughtful in planning your time together.

Three Areas of Content

So you've cast a vision of what it means to be a disciple and this person has committed to meet with you. Now what?

1. Focus on their specific needs and goals at this time in their life. Ask questions "What are your goals this semester?" "What do you need?" "What are the issues you're dealing with?" Ask what they feel their strengths and weaknesses are. Jot these down so it will help you understand what they need. This may include not only having quiet times, but struggling with lust, relationships with the opposite sex, relationships with parents.

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They may say, “I just don’t understand the spiritual life,” or “I’m struggling with trials and temptations.”

In these circumstances, focus on their personal walk and their character, the foundation of discipleship. Over Roger Hershey’s thirty years of discipling men, he reports that he has spent more time focusing on their walk and their character than anything else. Spending time developing them in ministry, and learning how to share their faith is also important; but if you do not go after a man or woman’s character and their walk with Christ, their competence as a ministry leader – as skilled as they may be – may take precedence over the development of their character. They may be very skilled, but we have a lot of leaders in the world who are very competent, but lack character. How many historical examples do we have where, in the end, a lack of character undermines competence? The President of the United States can be a gifted leader, but if he lacks character, it will ultimately hurt him.

Make observations in a person’s life. What are the character issues? How is this person doing in the area of pride? That’s often a real issue, especially when campus Christians come out of a church or Christian background. They may think they’ve got it all figured out. And the biggest hindrance to their further development is pride. There are other things – servanthood, being vulnerable and transparent, being judgmental, how they use their tongue to build up or tear down other people. One year, Roger disciplined a man who came from a very legalistic home where his parents guilted him and shamed him throughout his whole life. If this guy was going to have a long-term impact for Christ, he had to understand grace and be freed up from legalism. He and Roger spent much of their time together diving into the Bible to understand grace. That’s what he needed.

2. Pass on your convictions. Make an assessment of the convictions that God has built into your life. You can pull a manual off a shelf and try to teach somebody else’s stuff, but the stuff you will most passionately pass on to somebody are the convictions that God has already built into you. Make a list and brainstorm about the deepest convictions that God has built into your life. Maybe it’s the Spirit-filled life. Maybe it’s grace. Maybe it’s prayer. Maybe it’s holiness and the attributes of God. Maybe it’s the importance of having a consistent quiet time and a passion for the Scriptures. Maybe it’s eternal perspective. If you make a list and talk about the things God has taught you, you’ll do a great job discipling someone.

Do you know what discipleship is? It’s passing on your disease. It’s taking whatever germs of conviction you’ve been infected with, and breathing them all over somebody. When you spend time with a disciple at your appointment, when you’re hanging out downtown having pizza, breathe all over them what God has done in your life. They will catch what you’ve got. That’s discipleship.

3. Cover content that is foundational to everyone’s Christian walk. There are certain principles that every believer really needs to have as a good foundation over the course of their development. The staff of Cru has developed a tool called The Compass [You’re probably reading from it right now]. It includes the most critical foundational topics that every believer needs to internalize and understand biblically. It is certainly not exhaustive. But these are some of the key topics in which we want every student who is a part of this movement to be disciplined. This is a tool – available at centerfieldproductions.com – that you can use as you sit down and think through your disciple’s development.

It’s laid out under the motif of “walking by faith, communicating your faith, multiplying your faith.” There is flexibility with this tool. Discern where your disciple is, and select what to work on. You are not locked into a box and you do not have to cover each item in the “walking by faith” section before moving on to the next section. You can bounce around and choose topics that are needed at the time. What we do want is for everyone to be taught and to understand these foundational “walking by faith” truths over time. You’ll want to start there.

How does the tool work? You’ll load The Compass, click on the topic of choice and a trainer will be available on that particular topic. If you click on holiness, you’ll see a very transferable tool that will take you to passages of Scripture, explanations, ideas. Study it, then go to your appointment and walk through the concepts with your disciple. It isn’t a fill-in-the-blank worksheet. Print out the material, learn it yourself, and then pass it on by teaching. Walk them through passages and, ideally, share from your own life what God has done related to these particular topics, bringing in other Scriptures, your own wisdom, and everything you know about this topic, as well. If they are dealing with a certain issue that this tool doesn’t tackle, go after that and bring your own wisdom to bear. This tool is simply a guideline for the benefit of your disciple’s growth.

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Three Perspectives on Growth

Let's conclude with three final perspectives on the growth of your disciples. If you feel great pressure as a discipler, come back to these perspectives to relieve yourself of that undue pressure.

1. **God causes the growth.** Every discipler needs to embrace and internalize 1 Corinthians 3, when Paul is talking about his and Apollos' ministry to the believers in Corinth. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." Paul had gone and preached the Gospel in Corinth. Apollos came after him, and preached more of the Gospel, helping the new believers grow. But Paul emphasizes that neither the one who plants, nor the one who waters, is anything. God causes the growth. God will work through you. Create an environment of growth. Build a relationship, get them into the Word, and give them ministry. But God the Holy Spirit needs to work in their heart. There are disciples who may never grow significantly or take off spiritually. We could beat ourselves up for not saying or doing the right things, but as a discipler, you step out in faith, do the best you can with what you know, and leave the results to God.

2. **God will use the whole body in their discipleship, not just you.** In other words, the full weight of their growth doesn't rest on what you do with them individually. That's why we have a movement where students can hear the Word of God and get fellowship. When they come to the fall retreat, Christmas conference, summer project, or just a Cru social, they're surrounded by other believers. As a discipler, invite your disciple to be part of the larger community of believers. You don't want that person to become dependent on you. First – you don't possess all the spiritual gifts. Second – you don't have all the biblical knowledge there is. Third – you don't have the answers to all their questions. Be honest about your limitations and include your disciple in the larger body so others can speak truth into his life in an area that you may not have touched on. The pressure is off when you realize that God is going to use you, but he's going to do it in the context of a larger movement of people.

3. **Each disciple is responsible for his or her own growth.** You're responsible for creating an environment of growth. But each disciple is responsible for their heart's response to God. Teach them the Word, invite them to a fall retreat, but if they don't respond, that's their issue. Love them, pray for them, bring them along. But realize that in discipleship we do not have authority to make any student do anything. You can be a mentor and a guide and a shepherd. You can lovingly try to take them toward Christ and His word, and encourage them to follow Christ. But let's be clear. Cults make people do things. We are not a cult. We are a movement of Christians who want to help people grow, and point them toward the Lord. They've got to make their own decisions about their spiritual growth.

Discipleship is such a privilege. By being involved in someone's life, you can impart spiritual perspective and truth and wisdom that will shape the rest of their life. You can invest your time in all kinds of things. But there is nothing like helping a person's whole life be changed for the next fifty years. We can be ministers of life transformation. We can be ministers that change people's eternities. That's how significant discipleship is. That's a worthwhile investment!

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