

# GOSPEL-BASED DISCIPLESHIP



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## TOPIC 1 A "Dual Perspective" Discipling Model

**Lesson Objective:** As a result of this session, you will be able to articulate the meaning of dual-perspective discipling, and understand its impact on the discipling relationship.

#### I. Introduction

A. Diagram of dual perspective discipling

<u>Core Gospel Concepts (content) + Dual Perspective Discipling (method)</u> = renewing mission Work of the Holy Spirit (in discipler and person being discipled) (outcome)



# B. Unpacking what we mean when we say "discipling others in the gospel."

- 1. When we talk about discipleship we mean a process of walking alongside another person and helping them grow as a follower of Jesus. To do that means that there is a specific content involved (the gospel) and a specific method that shows us how to apply that content (the gospel!).
  - a. We all are "discipling" all of the time. In our parenting, as we work on teams, as we supervise and train, when we spend time with a friend.
  - b. Serge Discipler Training isn't intended to teach you how to take someone through *Sonship*, though it will do that. It's intended to give you a good grasp of the essential gospel content and how to apply that to your life and other people's lives in a wide variety of situations.
- 2. Discipling someone always means helping understand the essential content of the gospel and how that applies to their lives today (gospel content). In Serge Discipler Training we refer to that gospel content as the "core gospel concepts."
- Discipling someone always means helping them grow in their understanding of their sin/need for God as well as how much God loves them (dual perspective method).
  - a. We see this attitude in David's life in Psalm 139:23-24. If we want to receive intimacy with God we need to pray as David did here.
  - b. David is thirsting to know the intimacy with God that he had just written about in verses 1-22.
  - c. If we want to receive intimacy with God we need to pray as David did here. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to show us what the fears and offensive ways are in our heart and life that are blocking intimacy. He desires to grow in both areas.

#### 4. Discipling is different than:

- a. Discipling is different than counseling. Our desired outcome is not merely seeing someone returned to psychological or social health, but seeing them actively engaged in a growing relationship with Christ (something we talk about in terms of "renewing mission").
- b. Discipling is different than teaching. The primary goal of discipling is not to transfer information, or even develop a skill, but to see a person renewed and transformed by



- the gospel. Unlike a teacher who may speak to hundreds of people at one time, discipleship is done individually or in small groups. The discipler is a fellow traveler, not an expert lecturer.
- c. Discipling is different than life coaching. Discipling assumes that specific content will be involved, and it assumes a relational orientation, but it also assumes a spiritual outcome, namely Christlikeness. Life coaching may involve personal growth, and even a skilled mentor who walks with you, but it doesn't have as its goal becoming more like Christ.

#### 5. This is what it looks like when we disciple someone:

- a. We come alongside as fellow strugglers who are seeking to follow Christ.
- b. We have a set content that has been defined by the gospel itself to work through with you.
- c. We ask deeper level questions to help you see places where you are not believing the gospel.
- d. We offer helpful suggestions for how to repent and receive forgiveness.
- e. We help apply the specifics of this set gospel content to the very struggles and situations you are encountering in specific ways, so that you too can learn to "preach the gospel to yourself."
- f. We do this in order to help other believers become more consistent followers of Christ, loving others—especially those who don't yet know Jesus—the way Christ has first loved us. We use the phrase of "renewing mission" to summarize this concept.

#### II. Discipling involves specific content—the gospel.

#### DISCUSS: Which theological concept has been the most impactful for you?

#### A. The gospel is the transforming power of God.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

Romans 1:16-17

- 1. It is this foundational message about Jesus that is necessary for someone to come to faith, and it is this foundational message that is necessary for someone to continue to grow in his or her faith.
  - a. Because the gospel tells us the story of Christ's coming, dying and rising, to say that we need the gospel, is really to say that we need Jesus.
  - b. We need all that is his, and all that he has for us. The process of Christian growth is establishing us more and more firmly in this truth.
- Just as we never outgrow Jesus, or our need for him, so too we never outgrow the gospel or our need for it. We do not need one message before we come to faith (the gospel), and then another message after we come to faith (discipleship or spiritual growth).
  - a. We come with the same needs, to the same Savior, who both saves us and then grows us to become more like him through the same message—the gospel.



b. The gospel is the message of good news that has established us in Christ in the past, it is the message in which we currently stand and are saved, and it is a message that will continue to be central for the rest of our lives. I Corinthians 15:1-2 says, "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain."

#### Notice:

- Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you (totality of Paul's
  preaching is in view by virtue of the acrist indicative middle);
- which you received (that teaching was decisively accepted by the Corinthians in the past; aorist indicative active);
- *in which you stand* (but it is also a past completed action, with ongoing present results that will continue to be true in the future as shown by the perfect indicative active):
- and by which you are being saved (and a continuous action that is being done to us; present passive).

The gospel is the message of good news that has established us in Christ in the past, it is the message in which we currently stand and are saved, and it is a message that will continue to be central for the rest of our lives.

#### III. Discipling involves a specific methodology—the gospel!

#### DISCUSS: Which part of discipling has been the most impactful for you?

We want those that we disciple to really live what they believe. Just as the gospel defines what we believe—about ourselves, about God and about others—so too the gospel defines the way we go about living it out. The gospel is not just the message that we use to disciple others, it also foundationally informs our method for discipling.

Over the years, one of the most effective ways that we have found to keep the gospel central to our discipling method is to *maintain a dual perspective*. Just as when we come to faith we need to see clearly our sin and need for Christ, as well as his love and provision for us, so too when we grow in our faith we need both of these perspectives to continue to grow and deepen.

#### A. First Perspective: Our need is far greater than we know.

- 1. This is true whether someone is meeting Jesus for the very first time or whether we've walked with him for decades.
  - a. Our sin, brokenness and unbelief, which are not just confined to our actions, but deeply rooted in our beliefs, desires, and inward affections, are far greater than we know.
  - b. What seems like a simple thing—holding our tongue when someone didn't do what we wanted them to do—reveals a sinful world of ideas, impulses, and desires without even speaking a word.
- 2. The simple truth is that even as maturing Christians, we are far more needy, broken, rebellious, prone to worship ourselves and other false gods, mistrustful, and desperate to secure a sense of rightness based on our own actions than we would have ever believed possible. Cheer up! You are worse than you think you are!

Serge Grace at the Fray

- a. We can see the pervasiveness of our sin in the fact that we don't "get fixed" (we will never come to a point where we no longer struggle with sin). Instead, we must learn to grow in repentance and faith, so that as the Holy Spirit reveals more of our sin, we can again bring this to Christ and appropriate his forgiveness, righteousness and love for us.
- b. We can see the pervasiveness of our sin also in the expanding edges of the *Cross Chart* for "God's Holiness" and "My Sin." Our situation is more desperate than we often think it is. At the same time, a growing awareness of just how deep, rebellious and subtle our sin is as well as seeing how perfect, holy and righteous God is again serves to remind us that we really are worse than we thought we were.
- c. We can see the pervasiveness of our sin in scripture, where Paul, as he grows and matures in the gospel, sees more of his sin and not less of it:

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

I Corinthians 15:9 (c. 55 A.D., probably during his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey)

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ....

Ephesians 3:8 (c. 60-62 A.D., during Paul's first Roman imprisonment)

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

I Timothy 1:15 (c. 62-64 A.D., during Paul's possible 4<sup>th</sup> missionary journey, but before his second Roman imprisonment and execution)

## B. Second Perspective: God's love for us is far greater than we could ever imagine.

- 1. The gospel reminds us that God loves us with an unending passion and in ways that we can scarcely imagine.
  - a. The cross is nothing less than the God of the Universe, looking at his sinful and God-hating creatures, and saying "I would rather die than live without you," and then taking one flesh, living among us and being willingly killed to pay the penalty for *our* sins, so that we can have *his* righteousness.
  - b. Cheer up! God's grace and love are greater than you can possibly imagine.
- 2. The crucial reminder for us here is that despite the fact that we constantly rebel, live as if we are spiritual orphans, chase after and worship things other than Jesus, and turn away from the righteousness Christ offers in order to build and guard our own records of rightness, these things cannot and do not prevent God from cherishing us as his beloved sons and daughters.
- C. Necessary Context: Relationships are essential for spiritual growth.
  - 1. In order for these two perspectives (seeing more of our sin/need for God and experiencing more of his love for us) to grow in a believer's life, relationships are essential.

Serge Grace at the Fray

- a. Disciples are handmade and not mass produced. As important as good books, biblical preaching, learning in corporate settings, and small groups are, there is *still an essential and crucial place for one to one discipling.*
- b. It is the discipler's job to be sure that the content of the gospel, is being consistently applied in ways that help reveal sin in the lives of those being discipled and to also help those they are discipling to rest more surely in and experience more of God's love for them.
- c. There really aren't any substitutes or shortcuts for this. Jesus spent an enormous amount of time with the disciples, Paul was constantly investing in the pastors he was equipping and sending out for ministry, and newly started churches met in close relationship.
- 2. By having a fellow struggler come alongside to help make clear the meaning and message of the gospel in ways that also follow the pattern of conviction of sin and experience of God's love and redemption from that sin, we are able to take the biblical tenets of our theology and ensure that they are being grounded into the very fabric of people's lives.
  - a. Justification is no longer merely a theological category, but a life giving teaching that is indispensible for loving those who are difficult to love.
  - b. Repentance is no longer a one-time act, or sad necessity that we only consider when no other options are open, but a joyful return to the Father's love and care in places where we have been ensnared by our unbelief.
  - c. Faith can stop feeling like a state of certainty we have to achieve through our own moral perfection and start functioning as a receiving from and resting on Christ so that we step out and reach others with his love and goodness.
- 3. Seeing both our need more clearly and deeply revealed, and experiencing God's love as defined by Christ's love on the cross can be deeply disruptive.
  - a. For those who have a relatively high view of themselves, the act of looking below the surface level of their actions to see what really lurks in their hearts is deeply unsettling.
  - b. Likewise, for those who are more prone to labor under guilt and selfcondemnation, the intensity of love and affection that the Father has for us can seem too good to be true.
  - c. Hence the need to be sure that both of these perspectives are being maintained as we think through the message of the gospel and the crucial role that the discipler plays in this.
- Not only do fellow strugglers and a deeper awareness of our sin help us see our need for the gospel, our involvement in mission that is beyond us helps us see our sin and need.
  - a. **Mission necessarily leads back to renewal.** We often say at Serge that mission work "is like pouring Miracle Gro on all of your sins." This is true whenever the Spirit of God pushes us outside of our own comfort and natural sphere of relationships into places where we are called to love the lost.
  - b. Just as relationships are a vital context of spiritual growth, so is missional engagement. Our engagement with the world outside of our comfort zone, our loving of our enemies, and our bringing good news to the lost will point us back again and again to our needy hearts' desperation for the good news.



#### IV. Our discipling method doesn't actually work...

(without the ongoing and essential ministry of the Holy Spirit!)

It's a curious thing that while most Christians say they believe in the Holy Spirit's existence, in reality, they don't expect him to do all that much. We take a very different view. (cf. Galatians 4:4-7)

# A. Without the Holy Spirit actively at work in the life of the discipler and in the lives of those being discipled, nothing much happens.

- 1. The type of whole person life transformation that the New Testament prescribes simply cannot be achieved through human means, good theology, or well-developed methods (even though we're keen on all of those things!).
- 2. Just as it took the mighty working of the Holy Spirit in regeneration to change us from enemies of God who were enslaved to our sinful passions into beloved sons and daughters of the Great High King, so too it requires his ongoing, powerful work to enable us to really rest and live out of this new identity.
- 3. Where we can only see doubt and mistrust as a result of our life circumstances, the Holy Spirit can see clearly where we do not believe the gospel, and has the power to renew our faith.

#### B. The Holy Spirit needs to be at work in the life of the one being discipled.

- 1. To illuminate scripture and make it understandable so that we hear God speak to us.
- 2. To give us faith to be able to receive what God is saying at a heart level.
- 3. To show us where he sees our sin, even when we have been blind to it.
- 4. To convict us of our sin in ways that will lead to genuine repentance.
- 5. To wage war against our flesh and protect us from the spiritual battle that rages.
- 6. To cry out "Abba, Father" in our hearts when we are downcast or discouraged by our sin.

#### C. The Holy Spirit also needs to be at work in the life of the discipler.

- 1. To help us see where he most desires to work in another person's life.
- 2. To establish us in the gospel (instead of our skills, experience or reputation as a discipler).
- 3. To do all the things listed above in #2!
- 4. The importance of the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be over emphasized.
- 5. When it comes to making ourselves and others more like Christ, he is the infinite power source and transforming agent.
- 6. Our role is largely to keep bringing people back to places where he can most easily and directly work in their lives.
- 7. Discipling requires constant prayer and listening to see where the Spirit is at work.

# V. Why is "Renewing Mission" the Desired Outcome Instead of "Christlikeness"?

"Renewing mission" is simply the way we have chosen to unpack the term "Christlikeness" based on how the New Testament describes growth in Christian maturity.



#### A. Becoming more like Christ involves laying down our lives.

- 1. Actually becoming more like Christ, i.e. not just doing some of the external actions that he did, but wanting what Jesus wanted, delighting in what Jesus delighted in, loving and pursuing others the way Christ loved and pursued them—in a very real sense follows his example and command to lay down our lives for the sake of others, particularly those who do not yet know him.
- Unlike some efforts at discipleship, our emphasis is not merely external change or a shallow obedience to the law that included only outward actions. Discipleship is not about moral reformation, nor about serving God out of an unending sense of duty.

# B. Discipleship in the NT assumes continuity between how we receive Christ initially and grow in him subsequently.

"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith." (Colossians 2:6-7a).

- It is this daily preaching the gospel to yourself, seeing again the enormity and insidious subtlety of sin and unbelief, and returning again to the present power of Christ's completed work on the cross, which has definitively answered our sin, that the Holy Spirit uses to transform our hearts, minds and desires internally, and to empower our actions and intentions externally.
- 2. This daily renewing is not merely for our benefit, but for the benefit of others, particularly those who do not yet know Christ as their Savior.
- 3. As we step out in our renewed faith and repentance (renewing) to love others (mission) we again have our brokenness and sinfulness revealed.
- 4. We cannot love others the way Jesus calls us to through our own abilities and strengths. However, by repentance and faith, we can put ourselves in a place of dependence on the Holy Spirit and submission to Christ so that he can work through us.
- 5. When we experience God's overwhelming love for us, despite our sin, the normative response described in the NT is to move out toward others in love. Likewise, as we move out in love toward others we realize how needy and broken we are, and come to the cross anew, experiencing Christ's renewal.

#### C. "Only faith working through love" counts for anything. Galatians 4:6.

- 1. Faith working through love includes reaching the nations, neighbors, outsiders, and strangers. It calls me to exercise faith in expressing:
  - a. Love for the relationships God has given me.
  - b. Love for the church where God has placed me.
  - c. Love for those who don't know him in the world / Love for my enemies.



#### The Difference Between Discipling Models

A discipling strategy that majors on externals tends to produce self-centered Christians who are either proud when they perform well or depressed when they can't measure up.

A discipling strategy that focuses on inner transformation, which then produces external actions, tends to produce people who are Christ-centered because they see how much they need Jesus every day. Properly understood, grace motivates us to obedience from grateful joy—and, we obey to make *him* look good, not ourselves.

	The TRY Model (seen at its worst)	The BELIEVE Model (seen at its best)
The Main Focus	Behaving (the <i>outside</i> of the cup); change at the <i>fruit</i> level; "getting my act together"	Believing (the <i>inside</i> of the cup); change at the <i>root</i> level; obedience from the heart
The Chief Goal	Outward holiness, discipline	Love (I Tim.1:5; Gal.5:6; Mt.22:40)
The Power	Human effort (Gal.3:3); moral willpower; "To obey, I <i>try.</i> "	Faith in Jesus supplies the Spirit (Gal.3:5); "To obey, I <i>trust</i> ."
The Dynamic	Buck up! Try harder; get committed. "I'm a disappointment."	Believe more; submit; trust. "I am God's child."
The Principle	My obedience to God leads to a relationship with Him.	My relationship with God leads to obedience to Him (Jn.15:5)
The Motivation	Duty. Guilt. Pride. I am determined to be right and look good.	Love. I am passionate for the glory of God.
Holiness Is	Keeping the rules; doing more for God and doing it better.	Loving as Jesus loves as I believe the Gospel more (Jn.13:34; Rom.13:8f).
"The Flesh"	I assume that my flesh can be conquered through self-discipline.	I know that my flesh never loses its power, but Gospel faith conquers it.
The Discipler	Must model success and competence; must appear strong and well-disciplined.	Models repentance, "I will boast in my weakness so that the power of Christ my rest on me." (2Cor.12:9)
The Disciple	We're "Dudley Do-Right" and "Suzie Sunshine"—perfect models of how to do more and do it better.	Since I'm the chief of sinners, I'm a big repenter—loving, bold, gracious, and full of faith (1Tim.1:15).

Adapted from Serge's "Grace 4 Life" by Johnny Long.



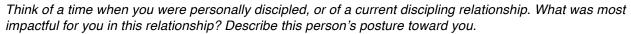
EXERCISES AND APPLICATION
EXERCISE 1:  Describe the formal or informal discipling relationships you are currently in.
What percentage of the time are you working through specific content (e.g. of curriculum, inductive bible study, reading a book)?
What percentage of time are you simply talking about current circumstances and how the gospel applies to them?
EXERCISE 2: What implications might Psalm 139 have for discipling?

#### **EXERCISE 3:**

What particular theological concept has been the most helpful for you, and why?



#### **EXERCISE 4:**



In your experience of being mentored or discipled, what types of actions, behaviors, or statements have you found unhelpful? Why do you think you experienced these as such?



## **TOPIC 2** Dual-Perspective Discipling in Practice

**Lesson Objective**: As a result of this session, you will disciple others from the posture of one who comes alongside.

#### I. Introduction: The Danger of Having It All Together

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

Philippians 2:3 (NLT)

#### A. Can You Think of A Time When...

Think of a time when you desired to have a good reputation with someone. How did that change the way you related to them?

Give group 30 seconds to think of an example. Invite them to share. Be ready with your own 1-minute example.

#### B. The Basic Posture of a Discipler is that of a Fellow Struggler

#### 1. Our Needs and Their Needs are the Same

It is easy for us to find our identity and worth in what others think of us. That's especially true when it comes to discipling someone else.

When we enter into a discipling relationship it will be tempting for us to want to come across as someone who has it together, or has mastered the topic. We may be reluctant to share our own stories of weakness and neediness out of fear that others will think less of us. Or worse, we may subtly give people the impression that their sins and their struggles are so bad that people will try to hide their real issues from us.

The truth is, we—precisely **as** disciplers—are fellow strugglers, who are in need of the same gospel and the same grace of which those we disciple are in need. We need the reputation and righteousness of Christ to be applied to our own hearts first, before we can extend it to others. The more we are living out of the righteousness of Christ instead of our own, the more likely we are to effectively disciple others.

#### 2. Paul's Example to the Corinthians

Paul gives a picture of what a discipling relationship looks like when he says:

But that does not mean we want to dominate you by telling you how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy, for it is by your own faith that you stand firm.

2 Corinthians 1:24 (NLT)

This is the mindset we need to have when we disciple others. We never have it all together. We are *always* in process. We are working together with others as continual fellow strugglers, so that their faith can be built up.



It is particularly important to establish this posture when others have put you on a spiritual pedestal (as a pastor, or missionary, or "mature believer.") You can't help them "from above" but you can be used by God a great deal "from alongside."

#### II. Understanding the Role of the Discipler

#### A. Disciplers are Those Who Are...

All good disciplers have two things in common. They see their own need daily and they walk beside people rather than preaching at them or using guilt or manipulation to get them to change.

#### 1. ...Still Growing

To disciple well we need to be continually growing in:

- a. our awareness of our own sin,
- b. experiencing the Father's love for us,
- c. and loving other people well.

#### 2. ... Able to Come Alongside

To disciple well we need to cultivate an attitude of someone who is coming alongside, as a fellow struggler, rather than as someone who comes down on them.

That doesn't mean that we won't have to "say hard things in love" to people. But we often preface these comments by pointing out a similar sin and struggle in our own lives.

#### B. Disciplers Are Not...

#### 1. ... Spiritual "Gurus" Who Have it All Figured Out

The gospel we communicate to others is the same gospel that we need every day. We face the same struggles they face, and we encounter the same temptations they do. You need to resist the temptation to think of yourself (or let others think of you) as someone who "really has something to give."

Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out.

Galatians 6:1 (Message)

#### 2. Sunday School Teachers

As we use scripture in discipling, we want to help people not just learn the content of passages, but also how to interpret the Bible from a gospel paradigm. Gospel discipling isn't about just getting people to be able to find the right passage, but helping them to learn how to read every passage in a Christ-centered, grace-motivated way. Sometimes we call this "reading scripture with a gospel hermeneutic."

By using our own personal experiences and examples we want to help others learn to see how much more needy they are and how much greater the gospel is than they could have ever imagined.

#### 3. The "Sin Police"

We are not here merely to point out others' sins or confront them with wrongdoing, though at times good discipling certainly does that.



Rather, we want people to learn how to appropriate the riches of the gospel in areas where they are struggling. If those we are discipling are being "crushed" by their sin, and left in that place, we aren't doing our jobs very well.

#### 4. Spiritual Change Agents

We are not in charge of their spiritual life or their relationship with Christ.

We are instead very dependent on the Holy Spirit, who is really the one working the heart transformation. The Holy Spirit who alone can convict of sin and make people righteous, works ours and others' transformation.

And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT)

#### C. Important Distinctions Between Discipling and Counseling

Serge has a high value for Christian counseling and for many people it is a much needed way of understanding and addressing significant issues in their lives. However, while there are some similarities between counseling and discipling, we understand our role to be different than that of Christian counselors.

Counseling	Discipling
"There is something wrong in my life. I need help dealing with this issue or pattern."	"As a follower of Christ, I'm called to grow deeper in my relationship with him. I may or may not have 'something wrong' in my life at the moment."
Past sin (including family of origin issues, abuse)	Present sin
Restoration to mental health	Spiritual vitality that includes missional engagement
Specific training in emotional trauma	Specific training in spiritual renewal and growth
Internal or interpersonal conflicts	Loving other people in my life, with or without conflict present
Presupposes no particular content that is being taught	Specific content based on scripture

When we disciple someone we may discover that this person has an issue that is beyond our ability. For example, a woman feels far away from God and we learn that she was sexually abused. This deep wound has damaged her ability to know and feel God's love for her. She would likely benefit from Christian counseling, and a good discipler should refer her to a qualified counselor to address these issues.



What is the difference between discipling, mentoring, coaching, and spiritual direction? When these ways of working with people are focused on helping them grow closer to God and respond to his leading, the words can be used interchangeably.

Mentoring implies an older or more experienced person helping another person. Coaching implies helping somebody reach his or her goals. Discipling for some implies direct instruction on the basics of how to live a Christian life and attaining intimacy with Christ.

We use the term discipling to describe how we work with others to help them grow spiritually. People who do similar work use terms such as spiritual direction or spiritual coaching. These are interchangeable labels. We tend to stick with the simple term discipling.

# III. Discipling From a Posture of "Coming Alongside" vs. "Coming Down On"

#### A. Our Own Need Shapes Our Posture

We all sin in similar ways. Paul reminds us that:

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience....

I Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)

In order to be effective disciplers, we need to communicate this to the people we are discipling. That's why we use the word "posture." In order to really convince someone that you are a fellow struggler, you need to convey this with your attitude, your tone, the words you choose to use, by deliberately being "unshockable" by what people reveal, and learning to ask questions and share your own struggles instead of just making pronouncements.

Hearing this attitude from their discipler makes it easier for a disciple to embrace his or her own sin patterns. So we want to be sure we communicate this to our disciples.

#### B. Helpful Language: Coming Alongside Type Comments

One of your greatest assets as a discipler is your own brokenness. God not only wants to forgive your sin and free you from it, but also redeem it by using it to help others grow deeper in the gospel.

An attitude of coming alongside could be indicated in comments like these by the discipler (see chart on the following page):

Coming Down on Someone	Coming Alongside Someone
You are so harsh with your wife!	When I hurt my wife by my harshness
Can you see how resentful you are?	When I resent my teammate (spouse, kids) it always feels justified.
Why are you so impatient with your children?	I always have an excuse for why I am so impatient with my children.
Don't you see how your need to look good is hurting you?	When I am driven by my reputation to look good



The reason you can't forgive this other person is because you are so blind to your own sin.	When I am having a hard time forgiving someone, I need to ask myself
You are such an angry person! (And it's killing the people around you!!)	A lot of times I can't see the effect of my own anger until I see how much I've hurt those around me.
You are going to have to get over how much you gossip.	The reason I enjoy gossip is
You really need to keep on having your prayer times even if it is hard.	Having a consistent prayer life has always been difficult for me as well.

#### B. Discipling skills shaped by the "Coming Alongside" posture

- 1. The posture of "coming alongside" shapes everything we do as disciplers. Three specific areas where we see this played out is in...
  - i. ...our listening
  - ii. ...our crafting of questions that endeavor to reach a heart level
  - iii. ...and the sharing of our own lives with those we disciple.

#### C. Gospel Discipling is Both Transformational and Missional

Gospel discipling understands that each of our hearts is like a continent upon which the gospel has landed. The gospel has begun to advance into enemy territory but our problem is that we have so many unreached people groups still inside our heart that need gospel transformation. The problem is compounded because each of us loves our native ways too much.

Each day we can easily live more like an unbeliever than a believer. So I need to see that my own heart is still a mission field. As I learn how to apply a gospel hermeneutic to my needy heart first, I will grow in my effectiveness in showing others how do the same for themselves and for those whom they are trying to reach.

This approach helps us to have a missional perspective for gospel advancement for ourselves, our disciples and the nations.

#### IV. Conclusion

Effective disciplers are:

- Loving and caring
- Transparent and authentic
- · Respectful, patient, kind and gentle
- Repentant

Effective disciplers are continual fellow strugglers who come alongside others who are also continual fellow strugglers. The gospel always has new territories to advance to in our hearts.



## Exercises and Application

#### EXE

<b>EXER</b> (	Think	: c of a time when you desired to have a good reputation with someone? How did that change way you related to them?
2.		t fears and desires do you have as a discipler? Where do you see the temptation to want to ect or preserve your reputation?
3.		k of a time when someone came down on you as you opened up about sin in your life. pare it to a time someone came alongside you as you shared your struggle.
EXER	SISE 2	
<b>Dir</b> "co	ection me alo	ns: Look through the following common discipling situations and try to come up with some ongside" ways to respond to each of them. See if you can both use helpful language as well by a way in which you have similar struggles (even if on the surface they look differently).
		n the context of a discipling conversation, the person you are talking with confesses a persistent struggle with (lust, internet pornography, gossip etc.).
	•	Where do you have a similar connection point in your own sin/brokenness?
	•	Where are you likely to struggle in being able to move toward this person in their sin?
	•	What could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?
		A wife is very harsh with her husband and children. You can see how much this hurts and wounds them, and you know you must address the issue.
	•	Where do you have a similar connection point in your own sin/brokenness?
	•	Where are you likely to struggle in being able to move toward this person in their sin?



	•	What could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?
3.		er several conversations with someone the Spirit reveals that is an idol heir lives, but that they cannot really see that yet.  Where do you have a similar connection point in your own sin/brokenness?
	•	Where are you likely to struggle in being able to move toward this person in their sin?
	•	What could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?
	•	what could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?
4.		hout ever having witnessed it first hand, you have a sense that the man you're rking has deep-seated anger and often loses his temper.
	•	Where do you have a similar connection point in your own sin/brokenness?
	•	Where are you likely to struggle in being able to move toward this person in their sin?
	•	What could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?
5.		spite your assurances that God really, deeply loves the person you are discipling, y almost always respond by saying, "I'm awful. God would never really love



6.

7.

someone like me." You know that they are having a hard time really receiving by faith the truth of God's love.

uic	e truth of dod's love.
•	Where do you have a similar connection point in your own sin/brokenness?
•	Where are you likely to struggle in being able to move toward this person in their sin?
•	What could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?
so	person you are discipling is describing a conflict that they recently had with meone. They cannot (or will not!) see the role that their own sin is playing in the nflict and how it is preventing reconciliation.
•	Where do you have a similar connection point in your own sin/brokenness?
•	Where are you likely to struggle in being able to move toward this person in their sin?
•	What could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?
СО	person has asked you to disciple them, but you can tell right away that they nstantly minimize their sin or seem really indifferent to it when you point it out.  by can you help them go deeper without simply making them feel condemned?
пυ	w can you help them go deeper without simply making them leer condemned?
•	Where do you have a similar connection point in your own sin/brokenness?
•	Where are you likely to struggle in being able to move toward this person in their sin?



	•	What could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?
8.	is t Ho	spite repeated attempts to help someone see the ways in which their "shark" heart taking bites out of others, they still blame shift and make excuses. You sense the ly Spirit is asking you to be bold and really walk through the different levels of sin u are seeing and the ways it is hurting people around them.
	•	Where do you have a similar connection point in your own sin/brokenness?
	•	Where are you likely to struggle in being able to move toward this person in their sin?
	•	What could you say to demonstrate a come alongside posture to this person?



## **TOPIC 3** Best Practices for Discipleship Programs in Churches

Over the years Serge has helped numerous churches, church plants and campus ministries—both in the U.S. and cross culturally—develop and strengthen their disciple making ability. While every context is unique, there are some lessons that seem to apply broadly to most situations. The following list of best practices captures these insights.

#### 1. Disciples are hand made, not mass produced. (1 to 1, or 1 to very small group)

- Think of discipling as a relationship to be kindled (between the disciple and Christ primarily; you and the disciple secondarily), instead of a program to be completed or a class to be attended.
- As you think about which materials to use, how to structure your discipling ministry, and
  who to involve in it, make a commitment to support this "hand made" model right from the
  beginning. As your church grows and your needs change be sure to stay focused on
  keeping direct, person to person, discipleship at the core of your church.
- Randy Pope's book, Insourcing: Bringing Discipleship Back to the Local Church, offers a
  good rational and overview of what this "hand made" model looks like, even for a large
  church.
- 2. When it comes to discipling, never sacrifice relationships for "efficiency." Even though programs, classes, books, and training can all have a role to play, the most effective discipling takes place through mentoring relationships.
  - Our experience with thousands of pastors, in greatly varying contexts and cultures, has
    demonstrated that no matter how large you grow, or how busy you are in church planting,
    making room to personally disciple/mentor others will pay the longest lasting and biggest
    dividends. Full stop.
  - As the pastor you should always have a group of men you are pouring your life into.
     Some of them will become your elders, fellow pastors, future church planters. Others will engage their families, vocation and neighbors differently as a result of learning how to live out the gospel.
  - As your church grows, and more demands are made on your schedule, it's easy to let
    discipleship be relegated to a program or adult education type classes. Resist this with
    every bone in your body. You as the pastor/shepherd need to be personally involved in
    discipling others, and creating a system where those you have already discipled are able
    to personally mentor others.
- 3. A good discipler shares their own life, including their struggles, failures and repentance—with those they disciple.
  - Sometimes as pastors, we feel like we need to be the "perfect example" of Christian growth. The good news is that not only do you not have to be perfect, you have someone else who is—Jesus! It's your job as a discipler to show people how to come to Jesus and keep coming back to him even in the midst of struggles and failure.
  - Most people can pick up the standards of obedience from Scripture and reading books.
     But, what is sorely lacking in most churches is how to respond well when we act in unbelief and disobey God's leading and commands. We naturally try to hide our sin. We cover up, we misdirect, we minimize because we know that we have failed.

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- Learning how to repent and grow in faith is desperately needed in the life of every believer. But, it has to be learned by seeing someone else do it first and then getting a chance to try it themselves. The chief thing a discipler brings is his or her own need for Christ. Being willing to show how progress is made in the gospel by revealing their own flaws, weakness and struggles and how to move toward Christ in faith in light of them is the hallmark of an effective discipler.
- Paul gets at this in II Corinthians 1:24, where he states: "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm." Discipling isn't a position of power of command; you work alongside of the person sharing your own life and struggles; you do this for their joy in Christ; and the process of maturing happens by faith, enabling others to stand firm in Christ.

#### 4. Make the gospel the centerpiece of your discipling relationships.

- Learning how to live a life of repentance and faith, with constant dependence on Christ as we reach out to love others, is the center of discipling. If you get this right, you can miss a lot of other good things, and you'll still be doing well. But if you miss this, no matter what else you do, you're going to have weak, quarrelsome disciples.
- For example, bible knowledge, spiritual disciplines and the means of grace are vitally important in the growth of a believer. Once a gospel foundation is laid, they are crucial for helping us hear the Father's love for us anew each day. But without a gospel foundation, they easily become rote activities, or worse, measuring sticks by which we try and gauge spirituality. Focus on helping people practically experience and live out the gospel; work in the other topics and issues as appropriate.

## 5. The pastor can't disciple everyone, so encourage (insist) that those you disciple also find others that they can disciple.

- As you invest in others, they need to be investing in others (cf. II Timothy 2:2). They don't have to have everything perfect in their own lives to be ready to start discipling others. In fact, it's much better if they don't!
- Discipling someone else drives home the lessons that you've been learning. It lets us
  practice repentance and faith in front of someone, and thus helps us see where we aren't
  getting it right. It's what drives us back to the gospel and deeper into the word. So for
  your sake—and the sake of the folks you have discipled—get them into a relationship
  where they can invest in someone else relatively quickly.

**Note:** Discipling should be done 1 on 1, or 1 to small group. But once this process is underway, training them to disciple others can and should be done in groups. Getting people together who are all working to see others grow in Christ gives them a chance to ask questions, learn from each other, share answers and insights from your perspective. This is where your church should invest its "program" time—discipler training. That way you'll have enough disciplers to keep the actual discipling to the 1 on 1 or 1 to small group format.

#### 6. Never let mission be disconnected from discipleship.

• It's easy to see discipleship as "what we need for ourselves" and outreach as "what we give to others." Our hearts naturally move this direction, and churches that become program-driven often split these areas of ministries out. It's a fatal flaw though, because the process of discipleship is the process of seeing the gospel worked more deeply into your own life as you bring that same message to others. You need the same thing that unbeliever needs—Jesus! And you get it the same way—through the gospel!



Normatively the most consistently effective means of evangelism comes through relationships where life is being shared. Focusing on the gospel means that you can enter the conversation by revealing your own need and struggles. You can invite others into this conversation. Sooner or later they'll ask how you deal with the struggle—and at that point you can point yourself to Jesus and let them watch. Evangelism is largely preaching the gospel to ourselves and letting other people overhear us as we do it. Discipleship is therefore the crucial foundation for evangelism, and evangelism helps us see our own need for Jesus as we reach out to love others.

Serge offers extensive mentoring and training opportunities for those who would like to deepen their own experience of living out the gospel and/or become more proficient in discipling and training others. For more information, visit us at Serge: Mentoring (www.serge.org), or contact:

- Lindsay Kimball at <a href="mailto:lkimball@serge.org">lkimball@serge.org</a> for more information on Discipler Training.
- Jeff McMullen at <a href="mcmullen@serge.org">jmcmullen@serge.org</a> for more information on Mentored Sonship.



## SUPPLEMENTARY READING Active Listening

#### I. Introduction

#### A. The Importance of Listening

Where are some places in life where it might be important to be a good listener? What are the consequences in these areas of not listening well?

#### B. What is "Active Listening?"

#### 1. A Working Definition

Active listening is the process of communicating concern, care, curiosity, creativity, commitment and connection by intentionally, proactively listening to another person. It is essential for growing trusting relationships that will invite people to change and grow in the gospel.

#### 3. What You Bring to the Table

a. This lesson may give you some additional information about skills and some ideas for better interactions. However learning to understand how your own heart and your own story impact the way that you listen will be far more valuable than any training or technique we can give you.

Learning to listen carefully to your own story and your own heart is an essential first step to learning how to listen to others more deeply.

b. Who is one person in your life who would say you are a good listener? What can you learn about listening from your experiences with this person?

#### C. Putting Ideas into Practice

#### 1. Content = Ideas to Come Back to as You Grow in Active Listening

The content that we present here is really a "stockpile" of ideas that you'll need to keep coming back to over time as you grow in becoming a good listener. You can't digest it all in one gulp.

#### 2. Learning Opportunities = Ways to Practically Try Out the Content

Along the way we'll also highlight "Learning Opportunities" which are chances for you to try out different ways of putting the content into practice. Like any skill, active listening requires repeated, intentional actions, which over time start to become more natural and automatic.

#### II. Elements of Active Listening

#### A. Who is Involved in Active Listening?

Within the context of discipling, active listening requires us to listen to three different people at the same time. We need to listen to:

- · the person speaking or being discipled;
- · our own hearts;
- the Holy Spirit, who will be speaking to our own heart issues as well as leading us in what to say to the person we are discipling.



#### B. What is Involved in Active Listening?

Think of a time in your life when you remember that someone really 'heard' you, when you felt that someone was listening to you...

- How did you know you were heard?
- What was the impact?
- · What was happening? What was not?

#### 1. Active Listening is:

- a. Hearing not only words, but also emotion and meaning.
- b. Understanding some of the context in which the words are spoken.
- c. Knowing what might make it difficult for you to listen or hear correctly.
- d. A skill that grows as well as a gift that God gives.

#### 2. Active Listening is not:

- a. Taking in information so you can say the right thing back.
- b. Attempting to make the person "feel" heard.
- c. Formulating the right answer in your head while they are speaking.
- d. Having an agenda for the lesson or the person and trying to make your response fit your plan.

## C. Learning to Listen to Both the Context *and* the Content of What is Being Said

Active listening involves listening to both the **context** of what is being said as well as the **content** of what is being said.

#### 1. Learning Opportunity: Learning to Listen to Context

Context implies that you are listening not only to the words you hear but also the way in which the person speaking understands them to be true. This requires thinking about what is said, how it is said and the context of the speaker. Context includes the current moment *and* what you know of the overall context of the person speaking.

#### Case Study: Context

Even a simple factual statement can have very different meanings depending on context. In this exercise we are going to take an imply statement and then change the context several times to help demonstrate how important it is to understand the life context of those we disciple.

Imagine that you are starting to disciple a couple or having a conversation with a couple and in the first session the husband says, "Oh, we are pregnant."

- What might be your first response?
- What do you know about them?
- · What might you not know?
- · How would their context impact your response?

#### Context Change 1:

• What would you say if you knew the wife was 45?

#### Context Change 2:



What would you say if you knew they were in a huge financial crisis?

#### Context Change 3:

 What would you say if you knew they had just been working through infidelity in the marriage?

#### Context Change 4:

What would you say if one of them is excited but the other person is unsure?

#### Contest Change 5:

 How would the number of children they already have, a history of health problems, struggles with infertility or miscarriage change what you would say?

#### 2. How to Gather Context

Learning to become aware of context and gather needed information is essential if we are going to hear both the context and the content of what a person is saying. Here are some helps:

- a. Don't assume you know their story.
- b. Ask ongoing questions, resist and even refuse to make assumptions or think you "have them figured out."
- c. What presumptions and presuppositions might be at work as:
  - ...they tell their story?
  - ...you listen?
- d. What is their hermeneutic? What is yours?
  - A hermeneutic refers to how you will interpret what you hear.
  - It is important for you to know something of your own ways of thinking. Your theology, your story, and your current experience all can influence how you listen and either cloud or clarify your 'lens'.
  - Example: What is your lens when you approach another person? How do the following "default lenses" change the way you are likely to hear someone?
    - People are basically good.
    - o People are basically bad.
    - People don't change.
    - We are worshippers, made in God's image, crowned with glory and honor.
    - We are more sinful than we can imagine and made more righteous than we will ever understand.
  - What basic framework of gospel truth about persons should be in place when you disciple someone? How does this "challenge" your default lens?
- e. Remember context changes because of life events and gospel heart change.

#### 3. Learning to Understand Your Own Context

- a. Ask the Spirit for a growing awareness of how you are feeling/your heart response before you speak. The better you know yourself and your own story, the easier it is to spot when your own presuppositions are at play.
- b. Learn to recognize your own triggers (words, tone, action, events).

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- Triggers may cause you to be alarmed or to avoid what is being said. They are things that may be connected to your story, your family, your theology or what happened to you vesterday.
- Examples of common triggers:
  - o Positive or negative words that make you take notice
  - A tone of voice that impacts you
  - o Particular body language you pay attention to
  - o Certain kinds of stories that 'pull' you
  - o Ideas, topics, things that might alarm you
  - A recent event in your own life that may be setting you off (car accident; getting a ticket, etc.)
  - o Things you commonly try to avoid (pain, shame, sorrow, conflict etc.)
- These skills require in the moment and ongoing processing.
- Take time to be sure about what the words spoken mean to the person speaking them and what they mean to us.
- For both the one listening and the one speaking there should be a steady growth in our understanding of context.
- c. Helpful question for the ongoing process of understanding your own context:
  - What is your lens (hermeneutic) as you approach another person?
  - What presuppositions do you bring based on your hermeneutic?
  - What other personal presuppositions do you bring that may or may not be a part of that framework?
  - How is your default personality part of your lens?
  - How is your own personal story part of your lens?
  - How is your journey in the gospel part of your lens?
  - Where are the places where you know you need growth in the gospel?

When you are mentoring or discipling someone, once or twice during the discipling process attempt to clarify what you know about the disciple in the same manner. As you continue to grow in knowing the other person, you will develop a greater context for them as well.

#### 4. The Importance of Being Curious

It is easy to lose our curiosity in a discipling relationship. We may feel that we've "heard it all before" or that we can really understand the person or issue simply because it sounds similar to previous situations. *Curiosity is required in order to become a good discipler.*Certainty may be dangerous.

The benefits of keeping our curiosity alive are important:

- Curiosity leads to questions instead of premature judgments.
- Questions lead to interaction and a growth in knowing the person.
- Curiosity cures our fear of silence.
- · Often we miss being curious because we have too much to say.
  - Do you ever catch yourself interrupting?
  - o What does that say about how you are listening?



#### 5. Hearing Content

It is important to be sure that you know what you heard others say and affirm that you have heard them. Often it helps when we communicate back to the speaker, acknowledging that you have heard their words, asking questions to clarify what you think you have heard.

#### 6. Restating Content

Restating content is about communicating understanding of the facts and the situation. When you are restating content it is initially important to use some of the words the person has used. When you have clarified, you may restate the details and summarize using your own words.

It is always helpful to come to agreement about what you think is being said rather than proceed assuming you know what is being said.

#### Examples:

- "I think I heard you say that when you arrived at church you were already angry about what had happened in the car" versus "So you were angry when you got to church!"
- "Could you talk about that some more? I want to be sure I understand how you are thinking about this."

#### D. Paying Attention

As basic as it seems, it takes concentration to truly pay attention. This is particularly true if you are working at a distance with someone you are discipling.

Body language, eye contact, facial expression, head nods, body posture, space, style of speech, silence, no interruptions, reassuring tone of voice, space (in conversation and in person) are all important ways we can let someone know we are paying attention to them.

 Think of someone you know who really listens. What do you see, hear, experience from them?

#### E. Reflecting Feelings

#### 1. Taking Care to Reflect Accurately

Reflecting feelings refers to communicating that you understand the other person's feelings. Often this involves the repeating or rephrasing of a statement, identifying feelings

On the surface it may seem easy to listen to the situation and then respond using feeling words.

Examples (you can brainstorm more):

- "You feel discouraged today."
- · "You felt ashamed afterwards."
- "You were thrilled to have been invited."
- "So you were pretty upset by those comments."

But *are\_*these statements your interpretation of their feelings? Are you listening, or putting words in their mouth? Instead of making the statement, it's often helpful to ask a question:

- "What were you feeling?"
- "How would you describe what you were experiencing when...?"
- "You seem..."



#### 2. Helpful Reminders

- a. Think in terms of expanding what they are saying based on more questions and less assumption.
- b. Clarity in this is important because you may think you are connecting with them over something quite different than what they are describing, so a more tentative phrase allows for expansion.
- c. Not every feeling has to be reinterpreted and restated.
- d. You can always come back to something if or when it resurfaces. *When things are important they will come up again.*

#### F. Capturing Meaning

Capturing meaning is about communicating what the other person is struggling to express in words. It is helping them say what they are trying to say.

This may be something that is a new thought to them or something that is a new feeling or experience and therefore they struggle to find the right words. For example, when we first express fear, anger, or conflict that we have never put words into before, we often don't know what words to use.

**Caution:** The temptation here may be to speak on their behalf rather than patiently invite them to find words to describe what is going on. We have a tendency to 'bail people out' with our words because we don't have patience to wait. When in doubt, choose to wait or ask a question that allows them to further express what they are thinking.

#### **III. Improving Your Active Listening Skills**

#### A. Evaluate Your Active Listening Skills

Everyone has things that get in the way of being a good active listener.

Circle 3 things that might be a roadblock for you as a listener:

- 1. Lack of engagement on the part of the discipler possible causes: fatigue, boredom, anger, anxiety, or unbelief.
- 2. Being more concerned with your own response than curious about the disciple's response.
- 3. Focus on sharing how you have learned the answer.
- 4. Environmental distractions.
- 5. Day to day distractions (vs. being able to debrief before and after the appointment).
- 6. Having just learned something new or had a powerful spiritual experience.
- 7. My last experience with this person.
- 8. Asking too many closed questions.
- 9. Talking too much.
- 10. Not allowing silence.
- 11. Urge to disclose your personal story or knowledge.
- 12. Giving too much advice.
- 13. Discouraging an intense expression of feeling.
- 14. Feeling discouraged about your own ability.
- 15. Is my body showing me places where I feel tense? Why? How can my body help me evaluate my listening skills? (e.g. a pit in your stomach; muscle tension; shallow or rapid breathing)



How would you know the 3 things you circled were present? Remember to ask others about your listening and also ask the Holy Spirit. They can help you see what you can't see yourself.

This is not a list to conquer but a process to embrace. Jesus wants to use the process of discipling others to make you more like himself! Seeing those places where we need to grow in an ongoing way of seeing our need for Jesus and an opportunity to depend on him more.

#### B. REPRIP—Preparing to Listen Better

- **R** Remembering Where You've Been
- **E** Entering In
- **P** Pondering
- R Responding
- I Inviting
- P Praying

**Remembering Where You've Been** – It is important to take a little time to disconnect from what is happening in your own life and reviewing the past session for yourself.

**Entering In** – Connecting, getting caught up with where they are, what has happened in their life and heart since the last time you talked.

**Pondering** – Asking the Spirit for a calm heart that can think while listening.

**Responding** – With questions and answers, remembering that curiosity and content are both important and each has an impact. A reminder that our discipling isn't the same as "teaching" or "lecturing."

**Inviting** – Inviting them to participate in something that you see God might be doing in their heart vs. just an assignment or what they need to comprehend.

**Praying** – Believing on their behalf. Hoping for them before they even know it is possible.

Ideally you should try and spend about 15 minutes doing this before you begin your session, though sometimes we may get less than 5 minutes to do it. If you are meeting in person, take some time in the car or before you open your office door. If you are meeting via distance, block off the time before you talk. This is an opportunity to invite the Spirit to be with you and work in the life of the person you will be discipling.

#### C. Growing in Our Understanding of Ourselves

#### 1. Understand Ourselves

Good listening requires ongoing growth in:

- Knowing the reality of our own story and our own heart
- Knowing our strengths and weaknesses (and not only from our own evaluation of ourselves)
- Where do we get this information?

Growth in the gospel invites us to continual repentance for our own unbelief. We are more sinful than we ever imagined and more loved and enjoyed than we can even believe! God's grace is at work in both our weakness and our strength.



#### 2. Understanding Our Impact on Other People

All of us have a unique impact on others. In a discipling relationship this impact can be exaggerated. The Spirit invites us to grow in our understanding of our impact on others. Here are some good areas to invite him to show us where we may be impacting those we disciple, even if we don't realize it.

- Our strength we may run over someone.
- Our emotional neediness we may use others to fill us up.
- Our fear of confrontation we may avoid speaking truth when it is hard to do so.
- Our fear of facing the truth about ourselves makes it difficult to receive feedback and may lead us to deny reality.
- Our unawareness or refusal to acknowledge interpersonal anxieties, anger, disconnection, confusion, fear, sadness, withdrawal, and can make us a lethal weapon, damaging others and our own hearts as well.

#### D. Knowing What You Don't Know

As we listen we are often comfortable with what we know, but good listeners are very aware there is much that they don't know. What often gets in the way of our listening is coming from a stance of knowing we have a formula or equation or experience of how God's grace can and should be applied.

Things we may not know:

- We don't know how God will open our hearts in order to hear who they are and what they need.
- They don't know how God will open their hearts to hear the Spirit calling them.
- Sharing knowledge can lead to transformation but we don't know how the connection that is created by giving another a place to be known and understand will impact truth.

#### E. Receiving and Depending vs. Dispensing Content

As you listen to someone you are discipling, are you offering a place for them to be known and understood or have you become intent on imparting knowledge that must be known? Are you listening enough to know who the other person is, or just so that you can give them "this information that I know that they need?"

When we feel eager to be "telling" during discipling, the goal of our "giving information" should be about creating a space where the Spirit can move and where discovery happens vs. just us feeling like we've deliver the needed content.

It's so much easier to just give the content though, isn't it? What is it about us that we have to be in a place of certainty with others? The real test of good listening is a willingness to be often overwhelmed and always dependent on the Holy Spirit.

Think of a person whom you believe thinks you are a good listener. What is one thing you would like to improve about how you listen with this person?



#### IV. Caring for Your Soul as You Care for Others

#### A. The Impact of Listening on Our Own Lives

We are impacted by what we hear. It is not easy to walk through deep gospel struggles with others and that experience can easily overwhelm us if we do not pay attention to them.

Diane Langberg's thoughts on this are helpful:

What are some of the things that might impact us? Grief, suffering, story, anger, unbelief, the reality of evil, the power of the Enemy, the waxing and waning of faith, the strangeness of God. In the name of Jesus and for the sake of his people, we choose to connect with the consequences of evil in others lives. Not only must we wrestle with evil personally, but I find that mine often blinds me to yours and yours can find mine.

As we listen to suffering, doubt, unbelief, grief, how might we be impacted? Langberg continues, We don't like it. We are afraid of it. But we are drawn into a never-ending attempt to make sense out of things. Suffering is an awful problem and essentially an unexplainable mystery. Suffering rarely makes sense. Suffering rarely seems just. Suffering in and of itself is not good.

Diane Langberg, Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997. p. 233-243.

Disciplers are vulnerable to secondary stress. We are vulnerable to spiritual struggles—both ours and the impact of those whom we disciple. We may find our voice silenced. We may feel isolated. We may feel powerless. All of these feelings must be attended to and not ignored or covered up.

#### B. The Importance of Debriefing

Debriefing is an important way to both pay attention to the cost that listening has for us as well as offload some of it's burden and pressure on us. Here are some helpful things to remember:

- Debriefing happens with the Father as we pray, as we lay our burdens and the burdens of those we minister to at his feet. It is not our job to carry those loads, but to surrender them to him.
- Journaling is a helpful way to download what we are processing, worrying about, needing
  to pray about. It also allows you to track progress or come back and review concerns
  from time to time to see how God has been at work.
- Having an older, wiser partner to debrief with is always good. This may be a supervisor if
  you are in ministry, or a close friend who can maintain confidentiality. Either way, having
  someone who will care for you, challenge you to believe, and ask a few probing questions
  is helpful.
- Processing the impact of what you are hearing with someone who is able to help you
  work through it is often helpful. This maybe a counselor or close ministry colleague. In
  discipling we will hear and respond to things that will reveal more about us and our story.
  Some issues will be harder for us to deal with. We may need help surviving the "shock"
  of what we hear in some cases.

Debriefing also can help you know when someone else needs to be made aware of information you have gained via discipling. In general, anytime you find out something that indicates the person you are discipling is a danger to themselves or a danger to others, you need to tell someone else who can follow up appropriately. Having a person who can think through that process with you is often helpful.



#### C. Rhythms of Intimacy

The disciplines of worship, prayer, truth, study, rest and personal mentoring are crucial in the life of a good listener. Listening is not passive. It requires much of us and it costs something, particularly if we are working with a number of people at one time. In order to be refilled it is essential that you build in time to rejuvenate your own intimacy with and dependence on Christ.



### supplementary reading Asking Disruptive Questions

#### I. Introduction

It's fairly easy to identify and name the surface sins in our lives. But to pinpoint the heart sins we struggle with is more difficult. We need help from the Holy Spirit and one another to show us what we have not yet seen clearly about our sin and need for Christ.

Sometimes in discipling you can see the sin and unbelief at work in the hearts of those you are discipling more clearly than they can see it in themselves. As disciplers we can be equipped to compassionately ask questions to those we are mentoring in order that they might simultaneously have a deeper awareness of their sin and a greater experience of the riches of the gospel.

#### II. Characteristics of the Discipler's Heart

#### A. Compassion

- 1. The first use of disruptive questions
  - a. Simple, powerful questions Genesis 3:8-9:

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

We find the first use of disruptive questions by God in Genesis 3 when he calls out to Adam and Eve in the garden. His approach is compassionate and to the point: "Where are you?" and "Who told you that you were naked?" and "What is this that you have done?"

b. Exposes lack of faith and sin

These simple and powerful questions were instrumental in exposing Adam and Eve's sin and lack of faith, and led to their hearing the first announcement of the gospel in Gen. 3:15.

Our words are not neutral (we speak on behalf of the Lord or ourselves). They are powerful and can either build up or tear down others. Many of the questions we ask in our mentoring have the potential to expose peoples' lack of faith and sin. That is why it is important that when we ask disruptive questions that we are mindful of the shame and guilt that might arise when peoples' sin and unbelief is exposed. It should make us compassionate, merciful and patient with people as they share the fine china of their lives.



#### **B.** Encouragement

#### 1. Meant for the good of the person, not to shame

Effective questions are meant for the good of the person; they are not designed to embarrass but to open doors and invite the disciple to grow in his/her gospel understanding.

Good Examples: "Could you tell me a little more about that?"

"Why do you think it is so hard for you to accept this truth of the gospel?"

**Bad Examples:** "Why do you do that? There has to be a reason."

"Why can't you just believe the gospel?"

#### C. Gospel Amazement

#### 1. Inviting, not judging

As mentors, our calling is to not just help people see their sin but to be amazed by the gospel. We aren't asking questions to beat people up or shame them. Disruptive questions are meant to be redemptive. We want those we are mentoring to be drawn deeper into God's story – his extravagant love for them, a deeper awareness of His righteousness and calling He has placed on their lives.

**Good Examples:** "What is the look of your Heavenly Father as he looks at

you right now?

"What can you do to change God's opinion of you?"

**Bad Examples:** "You know the right thing to do. Why can't you just do it?"

"If you know it is sin, why don't you just stop it?"

#### **II. Characteristics of Disruptive Questions**

#### A. Disruptive Questions are Clarifying

#### 1. Good questions can help clarify a situation:

Good questions give us insight into who people are and how they understand themselves, the Lord and the world. They can also help those we are mentoring to organize their thoughts and feelings in such a way that they can clarify for themselves what they are struggling with and failing to believe about the gospel.

a.	Examples of good clarifying questions
	I would like to understand a little more what you are saying. Can you tell me what you
	mean by?
	What seems to be the trouble?
	What do you make of?
	How do you feel about?
	What concerns you the most about?
	What seems to be the problem?
	What seems to be your main obstacle?
	What is holding you back from?
	What do you think about doing it this way?
	What do you mean by?
	Tell me more about ?

#### B. Disruptive Questions are Open-ended, not yes/no

1. Open-ended questions examine the process:



Good open-ended questions can be effective in helping those we mentor to process their current spiritual state and help them clarify what God is teaching them about themselves. Thoughtful, concise open-ended questions can be an effective means to help others discover their need for Jesus.

**Example** – "Jeff, what do you think Jesus is showing you about Himself through this disappointment?"

### 2. Open-ended questions engage the heart:

Open-ended questions are meant to help those we are mentoring to explore what is happening beneath the surface. Open-ended questions help to get at the motivations of people's hearts and help expose peoples' beliefs, allegiances, hopes and dreams in order for the gospel to be applied.

**Example –** "How does your fear of your boss reveal what you most want from him?"

### 3. Open-ended questions assume a spiritual battle:

Yes/no questions can minimize and over simplify the internal struggles happening in peoples' heart between the flesh and the Holy Spirit. When we disciple we operate from the assumption that the flesh and the accuser are active and in conflict with the Holy Spirit. Openended questions help expose and clarify the battle people are in that we are mentoring.

**Example** – "Can you tell me more about how your thirst for other people's approval causes you to not love your sister well?"

## C. Disruptive Questions are Probing, not leading

### 1. Driven by curiosity:

- A good question is driven by curiosity much like a detective who is trying to
  understanding the pieces of evidence found at a crime scene. We try not to jump to
  conclusions, but ask questions to gather data to better understand who people are and
  what they are struggling with.
- We do not want to share our conclusions about what a person is struggling with. We
  want to help them discover the answer to their struggle on their own with the Holy
  Spirit's help.
- We try to avoid asking obvious questions.
  - Exception—Sometimes we will ask an obvious question to one spouse, so that the other spouse can hear what their partner is feeling.
  - Example: "Barbara, I hear what your husband is saying. But, what do you think?"

**Good Example:** "That's really interesting. Could you tell me a little more about that?"

**Bad Example:** "I know what you are saying and I do the same things.

Why don't you do this? Have you thought about handling it this way?"

### 2. Help explore our hearts:

Our desire is to help others explore what idols, self-generated righteousness and spiritual orphan mentality is running their hearts. We believe that God has started a good work within the person we are mentoring and we want to the join our Father in exploring what God might be doing to draw this person closer to Himself.



Good Examples: "What were you telling yourself the moment before you picked up the

phone to call him?"

"How does your fear of being late reveal your own battle with self-

generated righteousness?"

Bad Examples: "If you see that you are acting like a spiritual orphan, can't you just stop

and trust Christ?"

"Why can't you just get over your people pleasing?"

## D. Disruptive Questions are Specific, not general

### 1. Focus on the data presented:

Focus on the behavior and thinking that is clearly there in what the person is telling you.

A good question is meant to open a door into what drives their heart.

**Good Example**: "Why did you raise your voice with your wife when she said that?"

**Bad Example:** "Why did you get angry?"

### E. Disruptive Questions are Simple, not complex

 A simple question has much more power than a complex one in helping those we are mentoring to express themselves.

• We want to ask the question as plainly as possible to minimize confusion.

**Good Example**: "What do you think your heart is looking for when you misuse your

tongue?"

## F. Disruptive Questions are Nonjudgmental, not accusatory

### 1. Inviting:

• We don't ask questions in a shameful or accusatory way. But, we are inviting people to talk with us about the topic.

 A good question will ultimately encourage others to share openly and freely without fear of condemnation.

Good Example: "Bob, I am just thinking out loud. But, I would love to hear your thoughts

on why you might be bitter about not getting the promotion?"

Bad Example: "Bob, it's obvious you were not supposed to get the job. Why can't you

accept God's will?"

### 2. Attitude as a fellow struggler:

Have an attitude that assumes that we all struggle in similar ways.

Good Example: "George, I am no different then you. I struggle with lust too. Would you

be willing to share more in depth what your struggle with lust looks like

and what you have found helpful?"

### G. Disruptive Questions are Based on their story, not yours

### 1. Work within their story:

Work within and stay focused on the person's story

Don't get sidetracked onto your story in the conversation

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 Pivot off of the other person's homework, or what they have just said and ask an openended question.

**Example** – "Laura, you just mentioned that you get down on yourself when don't get straight A's in all your classes. What does getting down on yourself look like?"

 The best open-ended questions cause the person to "work" with the Holy Spirit to come up with an answer.

### 2. Timing:

Knowing when to ask the right question is a matter of timing and understanding the
person. You need to be able to discern whether it is worth risking the relational capital to
ask the person a particular question. Here are a couple of "heart check" questions you
might internally ponder before you ask a question.

"Is this an appropriate question to ask at this point in our relationship?" or "By asking this question will it help this person draw closer to Christ?"

### H. Disruptive Questions Assume that the flesh and the devil are very active

There are several ways that you can expose the work of the flesh and the devil in a person you are mentoring. Open-ended questions are one way that you can help others investigate where people may be blind to their sin.

### 1. Examples:

- How is this sin impacting your relationships?
- What is your process for thinking about this?
- What areas of the gospel could be helpful in this particular battle with your flesh?
- · Why do you think it is so hard for you to believe that the Father loves you just as you are?

## III. Types of Questions to Avoid

### A. Don't ask questions to which the answer is obvious.

As humans, we are content to live our lives on the surface and not examine why we do
what we do. The point of asking questions is to get those we are mentoring to dig below
the surface and examine their beliefs, motivations and desires. When we ask obvious
questions it keeps the focus on the surface and not the heart. As mentors we should try
to avoid asking obvious questions as much as possible.

### B. Don't ask rhetorical questions solely for dramatic effect.

Sometimes in our mentoring we want to make a specific point. In situations like these it is
easy to use rhetorical questions to emphasis a point. However, using rhetorical
questions for dramatic effect doesn't always serve those we are mentoring, and can often
come across as patronizing.

**Example:** "Bob, I am thinking you only say those things to your wife to provoke a response from her, right?"

### C. Don't ask questions that inhibit discussion.

Some of the questions we can ask can sidetrack the flow of the conversation and aren't
necessarily helpful. That's why it's important to be sensitive to the Spirit when we are
talking with others. Simply questioning our motives and asking ourselves, "Why do I feel
the need to ask this question right now?" or "Is this question going to hijack the



conversation?" can be helpful in discerning whether asking certain questions could inhibit conversations.

### D. Don't ask questions that aren't open-ended.

- Closed-ended questions expect people to answer a specific way.
- It can keep people from answering honestly about what they really believe and what they struggle with.
- Examples of closed-ended questions "Are you sad?" "Are you angry at God?" "Are you believing the gospel?"

### E. Don't ask questions where you've already formulated the answer you want.

- Our calling as mentors is not to set people up and have them reach the conclusion we
  want them to come to. We want the Word of God and the Spirit to bring about conviction
  and transformation in people's lives.
- Sometimes we can ask questions to make us feel better about ourselves. We can use
  questions to make us look better, cover up how we might have blown it in a discipling
  conversation, etc. We need to always be mindful of why we are asking a particular
  question.

## IV. Disruptive Question Examples

### A. Tested questions

- 1. Heart diagnostic questions:
  - i. Sin revealing questions:
    - a) What do you think your heart is looking for when you misuse your tongue?
    - b) How has your rule keeping given you a sense of righteousness?
    - c) Why do think our desire to be right is so much stronger than our desire to be forgiven?
    - d) How do these idols undermine your desire and ability to love?
    - e) What are some of the root sins that lie beneath that sin?
    - f) What does your heart want to require of them before you forgive them?
    - g) What does friendship with the world look like in your prayer life?
    - h) Where are you playing it safe or avoiding God's call because of your worries about being a failure?
    - i) How does your desire for control eventually disappoint you?
    - j) How does this way of relating keep you safe, protected and invulnerable?
  - ii. Repentance and faith questions:
    - a) How does your self-pity block your ability to receive the gospel?
    - b) What do you need to receive by faith from the gospel to put these idols to death?
    - c) What is it in your heart that the Holy Spirit needs to change that you are unable to change?
    - d) How have you avoided constructive conflict and genuine peacemaking?
    - e) What do you think genuine repentance would have looked like in that situation?
    - f) What is your role in repentance and how can you cultivate a lifestyle of repentance?
    - g) How do you find yourself growing in dependence on the Holy Spirit on this issue?
    - h) How will you keep the gospel fresh for yourself?

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- i) What will be the biggest struggle for you in keeping the cross chart paradigm operating in your in life?
- 2. Gospel at work in our relationships questions:
  - a) Ask this person in an inviting way: How does my use of these laws make you feel?
  - b) Why don't you ask your spouse for insight into how your sin impacted them, rather than asking for forgiveness?
  - c) Ask your spouse or close friend: If there one thing about me that you could change what would it be?
  - d) What would it look like for you to give yourself up for this person?
  - e) What truths and promises do you need to remind yourself of as you move toward this person who you are having trouble loving?
  - f) What irritates or disturbs you most about this person that you need to forgive?
  - g) What is the big log in your eye compared to the speck in theirs?
  - h) What specific riches of the gospel do you need to receive by faith in order to love this person well in these situations?



## supplementary reading Sharing Real Life Examples

### I. Introduction

- A. As mentors, we operate from an assumption that those we mentor struggle with the same temptations and sins that we do: "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience" (I Corinthians 10:13a, NLT). The outgrowth of this coming alongside posture, and application of the gospel to our own hearts, is the freedom to share stories of how the gospel is intersecting with our own personal struggles and sin issues.
  - 1. Sharing real life examples of our own struggles with brokenness and sin provide an opportunity to help others understand the dynamics of sin at work in their lives and the power of the gospel to change and transform them.
  - 2. Our attitude needs to be one of repentance, not one of trying to be authentic, so that their heart is grabbed by their own need for the gospel.
  - 3. We will need much wisdom from the Holy Spirit as we share examples so that our dependence is on him and not on how effective our example might be.
  - Let's take a closer look at some specific reasons why we use real life examples in our mentoring, how to share real life examples effectively, and what examples we should avoid sharing.

## II. The practice of sharing real-life examples

- A. We see in the scriptures how God uses stories about himself to orient his people to know who he is and how to live as his followers in the world.
  - 1. Most of the time telling someone they need to believe the gospel isn't very effective. They need a couple of examples to get it. Real-life examples help us to be oriented to how the gospel works in our lives and the ways it moves us outward in the world.
  - 2. Here are some specific ways we can use personal stories/examples in our discipling:
    - a. Real life examples help others examine the motivations of their hearts.

      Stories can act as a mirror for us to better understand the motivations that drive us. When we share our personal examples that illustrate our motivations (struggles with fear, anger, lust, etc.), people are given a compass to better understand what their own motives are and how they are manifested in our thoughts, feelings and actions.

## b. Real life examples take them deeper.

We tell personal examples about our need for Christ so others might feel the freedom to explore their own need for Christ and be equipped to take the gospel into the dark corners of their own lives.

### Real life example:

"Bob, you aren't alone in your struggle with impatience towards your kids. I find it can be difficult for all of us as parents."

### c. Help them tell their stories.

People are not only reluctant to share the brokenness and sin in their lives, but also lack the Biblical categories to describe what they are struggling with. Hearing someone else



tell their personal examples can help those we are mentoring be able to identify and understand similar struggles in their own life from a gospel perspective.

### d. Show them how to discover sin and Christ in the details of their lives.

The temptation in telling our stories is that we will either focus too much on our sin and not enough on the cross or we will talk so much about the "victorious Christian life" that we minimize the ongoing battle we have with sin. A strong personal example is able to articulate what the sin is and how it plays out in a particular situation as well as how the cross transforms our sinfulness.

### e. Sharing real-life examples are a powerful tool for taking people deeper.

A simple example can deliver a wealth of meaning.

### B. When we share real-life examples...

## 1. ...we come alongside others

We do not mentor others as gurus or experts in the faith, but as fellow pilgrims in the gospel. We share personal examples/stories out of our personal need for ongoing forgiveness, grace and transformation. Here are some characteristics of what coming alongside others involves.

### a. Assuming we are common sinners with common temptations

At the core, all humanity struggles with the same heart issues (e.g. unbelief, control, approval, fear, etc.) even though these heart issues might manifest themselves in different ways.

It's important for us to share our struggles with anger, harshness with our spouse, bitterness towards a session member, apathy and indifference towards the spiritual state of our unbelieving neighbor. Examples like these are common among all of us but are not often talked about.

Example of coming alongside others:

"I too struggle with the fear of failure. It happened to me recently so I am very familiar with what you are going through."

### 2. ...we share our personal examples, we don't preach at them

We open up our lives to those we mentor in a way that communicates vulnerability and a teachable spirit so they might be invited into what God is doing in our unbelief and struggles. It's from this disposition of our own need of the gospel that we share, not lecture about our ongoing need of grace.

## 3. ...we share personal examples in a welcoming way that encourages others to share their stories

The humility that comes from the gospel causes us to see ourselves as the person in the mentoring relationship who is most in need of God's transforming grace. This type of humility fosters a welcoming spirit for others to share personal examples with candidness and vulnerability.

An example of how to invite others to share their story:

"Mark, you seem to identify with our common struggle with self-condemnation. What does self-condemnation look like in your life?"



## III. Guidelines for sharing real-life examples

A. Our stories are meant be an avenue of communicating God's truth, not a stumbling block to the person you are telling. The purpose of sharing personal examples is not for us to bear our souls but to invite others into the story God is writing.

### 1. Share your own personal example, not an example about others

A general rule of thumb is to share your own stuff - your personal reactions, thought patterns and/or emotions. Don't point out how your friend, teammate or your spouse sinned.

An example of sharing about others:

"Frank, I understand your struggle with gossip too. My wife recently "asked" her friend for prayer about the pastor's son who was recently arrested for drinking. My wife wasn't suppose to tell anyone about it, but she simply had to ask for prayer from her friend."

### 2. Don't embarrass yourself

Candidness is an important part of sharing personal examples, but being inappropriate in the name of honesty can embarrass you and others. You can authentically communicate the important truths of a story/example without specific details.

An embarrassing/offensive example:

"On Sunday mornings when I stand up to preach, I always lust after Betty Sue who is sitting in the front row."

It's one thing to admit that you struggle with lust; but it's another to admit the details of how this is played out. We don't want to share in a way that undermines your credibility to be trusted.

#### 3. Don't tell stories that may be too offensive

We need to always be thinking about the type of impact our example will have on those we are telling it to. It might be helpful to ask ourselves a couple of questions before we share our example.

How will this person receive my example? Will they be uncomfortable, shamed or grossed out by my example?

B. **Share relevant details.** In a personal example we can share too many details that make the story long, convoluted and confusing. Or we can share a story with too few details that makes the example shallow, trite and irrelevant. The trick is being able to discern what details help illustrate the purpose of the example.

### 1. Admit to your sinfulness but omit the choice of words you used

It's best to omit inappropriate language when you share a real life example. For some people, inappropriate language is a stumbling block and they will tune out what you say after that. The goal of sharing real life examples is to help people draw closer to Christ, not be offended by us.

Right way to talk about harshness:

"I was really harsh with my son for not picking up his room. I could see in his eyes how my cutting comments deeply wounded him."

Wrong way to talk about harshness:



"Recently, I was harsh with my kids too. I came down hard on my son for not picking up his room. I told him, 'You can be so lazy sometimes, why don't you pick up your stuff?' I could see in his eyes how my comments deeply wounded him."

#### 2. Don't make them uncomfortable.

We need to be mindful of who are audience is (age, gender, spiritual maturity, trust level, etc.) and be able to gauge what is an appropriate example for them to hear.

### 3. Others should relate to our personal examples

Everyday life and ministry examples that are common to us all (i.e. your reaction to getting cut off in traffic, the way you react to team conflict, parent/child interactions, etc.)

### C. Be Brief

### 1. Share enough to show the sin.

We want people to see a snapshot of your sinful heart (your reactions, thought patterns, feelings, etc.) that communicates how you are struggling with sin in a particular moment.

### 2. Get there quickly.

It's easy to spend so much time setting up an example that you get lost in the details of the example. Learning to tell the essence of the story is the hardest work, but also the most powerful part of storytelling.

### 3. We tell personal examples to make a point, not so they can get to know us better.

A byproduct of us sharing our personal examples is that people will get to know us better. However, the primary purpose for telling personal examples is not for people to know us better, but for others to draw closer to Christ.

### 4. A personal example can be trivial

Every personal example doesn't have to be about a life-changing event that has happened to us. Often the best personal examples are from the mundane moments of daily life – a fight with a child, a conversation with a missionary, a conflict at work, etc.

### 5. Recent personal examples are powerful

We can usually explain recent personal examples with a clarity and passion because they are fresh in our minds. This is often lost when we recount past examples.

Example of a brief and powerful story:

"You know the tip jars at coffee shops? The other day I was about to tip the barista for her service, I had the dollar in my hand and I was about to drop the money in the jar; when all of a sudden the barista turned away from me to make another person's drink. I promptly slipped the dollar bill back into my pocket. Why? Because I wasn't going to give her a tip unless she recognized my generosity. I am continually amazed how my heart will seek approval in the eyes of anyone apart from the approval I have in Jesus."

### D. Reveal Internal Dynamics

#### 1. Show the sin and where it goes from there

Explain how your sin manifests itself in a particular way in your personal example. For example, you had a fight with your friend:

Explain how your anger manifested itself. Did you yell or were you silent? Describe how your anger impacted your friend. Were they hurt? Did they yell at you?

### 2. Explain what was going through your mind



In telling a personal example it's helpful to explain what we were thinking and feeling in that particular moment. Giving others a glimpse into the inner workings of our world helps others better understand why they react the way they do.

### 3. Share the details of the inner struggle

People often have a difficult time articulating and embracing their own inner struggle. Sharing our spiritual struggles helps others pinpoint the war that is happening in their lives.

### 4. Identify the root sins under the surface sin

The natural tendency is for us to focus on our surface sin (i.e. angry outburst, worry, jealously, etc.). A good personal example will articulate the root sins that manifested under the surface (i.e. control, fear and unbelief).

## 5. Demonstrate how to repent and receive grace

When we share personal examples of repentance and faith from our own lives, we can help others get the "feel" of what repentance and faith looks like in theirs.

### 6. Explain how the gospel moves us to love others.

When we share personal examples, it's important for us to articulate how our internalization of the gospel changes how we engage difficult people and face challenging circumstances.

#### E. Invite them to share.

1. Telling our stories of sin and grace provide a platform for others to open up and share their personal examples.

Sometimes people just need to be given permission to share their stories. Other times people need to be drawn out and asked a couple of questions to begin sharing.

### 2. Here are a couple of questions to invite people to share their personal examples.

In what ways can you relate to the story I just shared?

What are the circumstances that you are currently facing in your life that reveal your unbelief and sin?

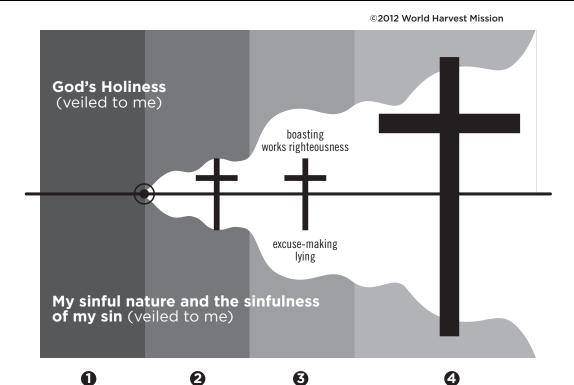
If there is one thing you could change about yourself what would it be? Why?

## 3. We share real-life examples to help others understand how Jesus is at work in the midst of their stories.

Sharing real-life examples is powerful way for people to not only examine their hearts but to draw closer to Christ.



## APPENDIX Cross Chart



# Before Conversion

The holiness of God, my sinful nature, and the sinfulness of my sin are veiled to me.

## After Conversion

I have a limited, fluctuating, but growing awareness of both God's holiness and my sinfulness.

# Adjusting the Record

I resort to dishonesty and performance to bridge the gap when my belief in the gospel does not keep pace with what I know of God's holiness and my sin.

## **Boasting in the Cross!**

As I daily believe the gospel, the cross bridges the gap; I rest in my identity in Christ and his righteousness, which enables me to own up to God's holiness and my sinfulness without trying to adjust the record. Now, by faith, I am empowered and freed up to love God and my neighbor.



## APPENDIX Orphans vs. Children Chart

#### THE ORPHAN THE SON/DAUGHTER Lacks a vital daily intimacy with God ☐ ☐ Feels freed from worry because of God's love for you Anxious about friends, money, □ □ Learning to live in a daily partnership school, grades, etc. with God Feels as if no one cares about you □ □ Not fearful of God ☐ ☐ Feels forgiven and totally accepted Lives on a success/fail basis Needs to look good ☐ A daily trust in God's sovereign plan for your life Feels guilty and condemned □ □ Prayer is a first resort Struggles to trust things to God □ □ Content in relationships b/c you are accepted by God Has to fix your problems ☐ ☐ Freedom from making a name for yourself Not very teachable □ □ Is teachable by others Is defensive when accused of error ☐ ☐ Open to criticism b/c you rest on or weakness Christ's perfection Needs to be right □ □ Able to examine your deeper motives Lacks confidence ☐ ☐ Able to takes risks—even to fail Feels discouraged and defeated ☐ Encouraged by the Spirit working in $\square$ Able to see God's goodness in dark Strong-willed with ideas, agendas, and opinions times Solution to failure: "Try harder" □ □ Content with what Christ has provided Has a critical spirit (complaining ☐ ☐ Trusting less in self and more in the and bitterness) Holy Spirit Tears others down $\square$ Aware of inability to fix life, people, and problems A "competent analyst" of others' $\square$ Is able to freely confess your faults to weaknesses others Tends to compare yourself with others □ □ Doesn't always have to be right Feels powerless to defeat the flesh □ □ Does not gain value from man-made "props" Needs to be in control of situations □ □ Experiences more and more victory and others over the flesh Looks for satisfaction in "positions" ☐ ☐ Prayer is a vital, ongoing part of the Looks for satisfaction in "possessions" | Jesus is more and more the subject of conversation Tends to be motivated by obligation ☐ ☐ God truly satisfies your soul and duty, not love

from <u>Gospel-Centered Life</u>, 2012, World Harvest Mission.