

Concluding Thoughts

Building strong discipling relationships takes time and intentionality. As we grow and develop, we learn how to make them stronger. We embrace the practices that help them to grow and reject the ones that hurt or hinder.

LIFE APPLICATION - PERSONAL EVALUATION

Make a list of the unhealthy practices that you have seen in your relationships.

Q: How have these practices affected you?

Q: Have you resolved all hurts and let go of any potential bitterness?

Q: Have you thought through how to avoid these practices in the future?

Q: Have you allowed negative experiences to distance you from ongoing healthy relationships?

Q: What can be done to resolve, forgive, and move forward?

Evaluate (rate yourself) how you believe you are doing with the following healthy practices:

- ___ Walk together
- ___ Openness & prayer
- ___ Serve one another
- ___ Listen & learn
- ___ Build honest and graceful relationships
- ___ Mutual humility
- ___ Accountability

Q: What does this reveal to you?

Q: What can you do to grow from this experience?

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GROUNDED

FOUNDATIONS OF DISCIPLING

CLASS 04: RELATIONSHIP PRACTICALS

A Bible Study

Introductory Thoughts

In this series, we have looked at examples and principles of spiritual relationships. Today we explore the practical nature of healthy spiritual relationships. Because we are addressing practicals, we will look at some "best practices." Many of these ideas have been drawn from modern-day, real life relationships. Not all of these practices are mandated in scripture. However, they are time-tested behaviours that greatly benefit spiritual relationships.

Definition of discipling

The word "discipling" is not very wide-spread among modern-day Christian fellowships. In [Matthew 28:19](#), Jesus called his disciples to "make disciples." In the Greek language, the word used is *mathetes*. This word is a verb that could best be described as not only to learn, but *to become attached to one's teacher and to become his follower in doctrine and conduct of life*. In other words, Jesus was calling us to help others become attached to Him and follow him in life and teaching.

The word *disciple* can certainly be a noun referring to a follower of Jesus.

We are also using the word *disciple* as a verb, referring to the process of helping each other to follow Jesus and his teachings.

In this series, *discipling* is an adjective used to describe relationships that are focused on helping each other to follow Jesus.

UNHEALTHY PRACTICES

Sometimes good intentions can be misapplied. Sometimes our sinful natures can get in the way.

SPREAD TOO THIN

Exodus 18:13-18

Some Christians want to help everyone and commit to too many discipling relationships. This creates stress and makes it difficult to give attention to each relationship, resulting in neglect.

UNWILLING TO ENGAGE

Deuteronomy 10:16, Romans 2:5

Some believe in the concept of discipling but do not engage and make it happen. God calls a lack of action and responsiveness being "stiff-necked."

NEGLECT/LAZINESS/COWARDICE

John 10:12-13

Some lack the courage or love to stay involved with the person they are in a discipling relationship with.

DEFENSIVENESS/UNAPPROACHABLE

Ecclesiastes 7:9, Proverbs 29:1

Some are hard to talk with about personal matters. They get upset or make excuses when confronted.

CONTROLLING/DOGMATIC

Ezekiel 34:4, Matthew 20:25-28

Some people become authoritative in their discipling. Discipling is to be built on love and servitude.

OPINIONS BECOME CONVICTIONS

Romans 14:1, 13

It is important to separate out what is sin and what are opinions. For example, sexual immorality is clearly sin but the colour of the car you drive is an opinion.

LACK OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Proverbs 20:19

When sin is confessed in a discipling relationship, there needs to be confidentiality. If the person hearing the sin feels the need to get input to help their friend, the confessor needs to agree.

UNOPEN

Proverbs 28:13

Growth and spiritual development can only happen with openness. Unconfessed sin will hinder.

CRITICAL/DISTRUSTFUL

Matthew 7:1-5

Discipling relationships must be rooted in love and trust. Criticalness and distrust prevent progress.

HEALTHY PRACTICES

WALK TOGETHER

Mark 3:14, Acts 2:44-47

Experiencing life, holidays, family events, and tragedies is the best way to know and love each other.

- » If married, our spouses should feel comfortable getting help.
- » If we are parents, our kids should know our discipling partners and their families.

OPENNESS & PRAYER

1 John 1:7-9, James 5:16

God gives us the ability to help each other heal. Pray for each other: life, challenges, hopes, dreams.

SERVE ONE ANOTHER

Galatians 5:13-14

Great relationships are built on mutual respect and servitude.

LISTEN & LEARN

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

We all need a place to be heard and understood. We have different backgrounds and cultures. We have had different experiences and respond differently to situations.

BUILD HONEST AND GRACEFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Ephesians 4:25-26, 29-32

We must protect our relationships from dishonesty and bitterness. Forgiveness blankets everything.

MUTUAL HUMILITY

Romans 12:9-10

Even if one person is more mature, no one is better. We mutually show respect.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Galatians 6:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:14

We have a God-given responsibility to warn, encourage, and help each other.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

STAGE	PHYSICAL	SPIRITUAL	SCRIPTURE
Infant/Toddler	0 to 12 years	the basics	1 Peter 2:2-3 , Hebrews 6:1-3
Adolescence	13 to 22 years	learning to give	Hebrews 5:11-14
Young Adult	23 to 39 years	spiritual children	Matthew 28:18-20
Mature Adult	40 to 65 years	character	Titus 1:6-8
Golden Years	66+ years	empower others	Proverbs 20:29

* These are not limiting categories but should help give indications of development