In the previous article in this series, we addressed discipling (teaching, training, and testing) those less mature to “sit at Jesus’ feet well.” In this kind of encounter, Jesus is the curriculum. It is all about Jesus. Through discipleship we grow in knowing who Jesus is, actually seeing what He is doing, hearing and recognizing what He is saying, identifying and testing what He wants, and believing His promises for empowerment. In this article we will continue our conversation about discipleship and disciple makers.

Every Christian is, by definition, a disciple of Jesus. Each is to be personally discipled — that is adopted and parented — until they have been taught to obey everything Jesus commanded. To be born (again) spiritually is to enter into an entirely different life. This new life in Christ is very different from the pre-Christian life. Each new Christian needs increased personal attention and support not unlike that given to a newborn baby.

In the preceding article, disciplers (especially the most important disciplers — parents) were challenged to establish weekly, one-on-one appointments with each child. These appointments give each discipler the opportunity to learn to listen and to ask wise and caring questions. These questions will focus on the disciple’s activities, their relationship with others, and their relationship with Jesus.

With sensitivity and permission, ask heart-opening questions. You want to know your disciple’s heart responses: their thoughts, emotions, desires, and motives related to life events. Here are some excellent questions that will move the conversation forward:

What did you do when…?
What did you feel when…?
What were your thoughts when…?
What did you want when…?
Why did you do what you did?

When your disciple tells you something positive about his or her actions and reactions, celebrate with them! Communicate honor and delight. Let your disciple know that he or she is hearing and responding to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and “representing” (representing) Jesus, because every good and perfect idea and action is from God!

If your disciple tells you something negative about his or her actions or reactions, communicate profound grace. You may want to say, “I love you no matter your struggle,” and communicate partnership with them by saying, “This is not your challenge alone; it is our challenge, since I am with you to help you learn from your challenges and to continue to grow in your faith.”

When your disciple is willing to be transparent about their less-than-Christlike thoughts, desires, and motives, keep asking questions like:

“What do you think about your response – thoughts, words, acts, and motives?”
“What would you do differently if you could do it over again?”
If his or her evaluation and response is what you believe Jesus wants, then celebrate it. If it is less than what you think it could or should be (less than Christlike), then keep asking questions. One good follow-up question could be, “Would you like to know what I think?” If he or she does not want to know what you think, then honor their desire. Don’t share your opinion. Recognize that you have more relational work to do before they are willing to open up. Wait until he or she is more open and hungry for more transparent and truthful dialog.

If your disciple is interested in what you think, share your thoughts. Then ask, “What do you think about my perspective on this issue?” Now your disciple is evaluating your perspective in your presence. This is a very important step in the discipleship process. This conversation can be life-altering, if the dialog is free of judgement and rejection. Ultimately, the goal is to sensitively move them to see that what Jesus says about an issue is more important than what they think about an issue.

Here a few questions that will move the conversation in that direction:

- Do you know what Jesus thinks about your thoughts and actions?
- Based on what you believe Jesus thinks, how do you think Jesus would have you respond in this situation?
- Do you agree with Jesus?
- Will you commit to thinking Jesus’ thoughts and doing His will?
- Will you tell Him your agreement and commitments?

When the conversation gets this far, you have led your disciple to Jesus. Authentic discipling leads growing disciples to Jesus over and over again.

All parents are called to raise their children, biological or adopted. Similarly, all Christians are called to partner with Jesus by helping to give birth and raise spiritual children. As we mature, we are called to help bring others to maturity.

Of course, we are discipling our children by simply being together. Our actions and conversations disciple them informally. Our actions and conversations are like seeds. Those seeds, for better or worse, reproduce themselves in the lives of those around us. Thus, the parent’s greatest work is to personally grow in Christlikeness, so the seeds we plant produce Christlikeness in our children.

Discipling is all about Jesus. Through discipleship we grow in knowing who Jesus is, actually seeing what He is doing, hearing and recognizing what He is saying, identifying and testing what He wants, and believing His promises for empowerment. Disciplers, both physical and spiritual parents, need coaching in order to effectively disciple others — so that every Christian knows how to sit and learn well at Jesus’ feet.

Hal Perkins is a senior pastor, nationally known speaker, and author of five books.

1 Matthew 28:20
2 2 Corinthians 5:17
3 My book, Discipled by Jesus, unpacks some of the differences between living the old, flesh-governed
life and the Spirit-led life.

4 John 10:27

5 James 1:1

6 Remember the story from the preceding article.

7 See previous article in this series