During a “Discipled by Jesus” gathering, a mother of a 13-year-old boy reported that when she attempted to “disciple” her son by teaching him, he merely rolled his eyes. My wife, Debbi, said, “You have been teaching him for years. What would happen if you started listening more? Could you teach less and ask more questions?”

At the next meeting, the mother reported this very uncommon story. When she picked her son up from school, he was greatly upset because of some unkind things kids at school had said to him. She started to launch into her habitual tirade of how he should think and respond. But she caught herself, remembering Debbi’s suggestion to ask questions.

So, she tried. “What did the kids say?” Without thinking, he blurted out his emotion-packed answer. The mother thought, “What do I do next? No lecture. More questions.” After a moment of silence, she asked, “And how did you feel when they said those things?” Again, her son poured out his feelings, to such an extent that this formerly aloof 13-year-old fell onto his side and rested his head on his mother’s leg. Shocked, his mother wondered to herself, “What do I do now? Hmmm … keep asking questions.” So, after a few moments, the only thing she could think of was to ask, “What is the best way I can help you when you are feeling so much pain?” His instant reply, “Just keep asking me questions.”

In this article, we will start exploring a second process to formally disciple our natural and spiritual children. This process, through listening and asking good questions, makes the child THE CURRICULUM. (In the October 2017 SDMI Connection newsletter article, Jesus was described as THE CURRICULUM. Disciplemakers, including parents, were to teach, train, and test their disciples — including children — to spend time with Jesus, answering five questions that empower growth in knowing, seeing, hearing, obeying, and believing HIM!)

Now, in this article, we discuss part 1 of another “formal” discipling process. It is equally advantageous, equally essential. In this process, the disciple (child) is the “CURRICULUM” … that is, the parent/disciplemaker diligently studies his/her child.

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1 For full description, see my book, Discipled by Jesus
2 This article summarizes one of my discipling methods. There are many methods; this one has been very valuable in helping others deal with hard challenges in following Jesus. See my book If Jesus Were A Parent, Chapters 5-7.
The aforementioned experience of the mother and her 13-year-old is quite abnormal. Seldom will that kind of sudden, open-hearted communication occur without formal training (discipling).

**How can the disciplemaker (parent) make the disciple (child) the CURRICULUM?**

Establish consistent formal times to be with your “disciple” to study her\(^3\), to KNOW her, by “hanging out” together. This normally requires a regular, on-the-calendar, appointment ... like a date. It might start in a variety of ways ... at a store to buy shoes or ice cream, or at a game or concert; but it ultimately looks like having coffee or coke, face-to-face ... at a private place in meaningful conversation ... usually NOT at home. From age 3 on, I established and sustained a weekly appointment with each of my four children, working on what is described below.

The appointment is NOT a time to teach, but a time to LISTEN and LEARN about the life and heart of your disciple. It is not a time to "pour into a life," but a time to ask and listen and know. It is a "listening structure" to train and to test!

**How?**

Truly LISTEN!\(^4\) Purposefully and strategically ask good questions with great care and sensitivity! The atmosphere must be “I love you! I want to know you!” Your disciple (child) must not FEEL that this is a superior speaking to an inferior. The child must not feel that you have the answers and the child does not. You are genuinely seeking to secure information you may not have about your disciple. You are asking questions to find out the facts of their experience. Your MOTIVE is love. TONE is everything!

1. Ask questions about your disciple’s life since you last met.
   a. “Can you remember some of the good things that happened since our last meeting?”
   b. “Were there any particularly hard things you went through last week?”
2. Questions might include asking about any or all of the following known specifics:
   a. “Would you like to talk any more about last week’s conversation?”
   b. “What was it like staying overnight at your friend’s house?”
3. Questions (sooner or later) need to be about relationships (love for God, for people):
   a. Friends: “What is going on with the girl who made fun of you last week?”
   b. Jesus (assuming child is committed to following Him): “Can you remember any good things that happened in your time alone with Jesus this week?”
   c. Ministry (assuming conversion): “What good happened when you attempted to serve Mom this week?”

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\(^3\) Feminine pronouns will be used to refer to either her or hin
\(^4\) James 1:19
Here is a big help to “keep asking questions.” Often you will have an important truth “burning” in your mind in response to what your disciple (child) says. You will be “tempted” to teach. You can hardly wait to “pour into” her life.

If you understand (as Jesus did) that it is a powerful teaching tool to ask questions, you can be “quick to listen and slow to speak.” How? Think about how you could ask an open-ended question\(^5\) to find out what your disciple (child) already knows or thinks about the truth you want to tell them. Empty them of what they might know before asking permission to pour what you know into them.

This, and more specific questions and strategies to make your disciple the CURRICULUM, will be discussed in the next article. (To be continued.)

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

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\(^5\) one with many possible answers, not just a “yes or no”