

Wednesday, July 16, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part 1 of 10)

Clearly Jesus commanded us to “make disciples of all nations.” (See Matt. 28:18-20) Many people talk about discipling, and classes are taught on the subject. The truth is that *true* disciple makers are in rare supply. In this 10 part series we will put forward ten characteristics of a biblically based disciple maker.

#1 He maintains a consistent vine-branch relationship with Christ

- **He chooses to be under the pruning discipline of the Father** : “...Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (Jn. 15:2b). It is God’s intention to purge the disciple’s life of all dross so that he become complete in his mental and moral character; spiritually fit like an Olympic athlete, “attaining the whole measure of the fitness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13b). We are talking here about a painful process of sanctification: “...Endure hardship as discipline...that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Jn. 15:2b; Heb. 12:7a, 10b, 11).

QUESTION : Are you willingly surrendering to the Father’s discipline in order to become a more effective laborer in his harvest field?

• **He is being cleansed by the word of God**: “...You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you” (Jn. 15:3b). Hence, he is a vessel God can use: “In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (2 Tim. 2:20, 21). (See Eph. 5:26)

QUESTION : Are you regularly experiencing His cleansing as a result of consistent exposure to the Word of God?

• **He maintains an intimate relationship with Jesus that results in abundant, lasting fruit that glorifies the Father** : “Remain [reside] in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:4, 5). (See Jn. 15:8,16)

QUESTION : Have you resolved to spend *whatever* time necessary with Jesus in prayer and intake of his Word to cultivate intimacy with him? If so, the fruit will naturally happen on the Master’s time table.

He is vitally united to Christ, whose word is alive in his heart. Thus, God answers his prayers that are in agreement with the Father’s plan : “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you....This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (Jn. 15:7; 1 Jn. 5:14). (See Jn. 15:10)

QUESTION : Do you consistently petition God for answered prayer in accordance with His will?

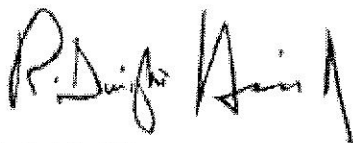
• **He loves others as Christ loves us**: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends...I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn. 15:12, 13; 10:11).

QUESTION : Are you in love and willingly sacrificing your life for those you seek to disciple?

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, July 23, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #2 of 10)

#2 He is equipped in God's word

If we entertain any ambition to effectively disciple people, it is imperative that we take informed and disciplined measures toward mastering the word of God. After all, *"the Scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work"* (2 Tim. 3:17 - Phillips Trans.).

From my personal experience, and from a life time of observation, the true laborers are those who engage in serious, systematic study of the Scriptures. They work diligently at committing to memory critical passages not only for their own lives but portions that enable them to effectively minister to others. As Paul wrote to Timothy, *"Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth"* (2 Tim. 2:15 –Amp.)

As God's ministers, it is our responsibility to:

- Present the word of God with total integrity: *"We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."* (2 Cor. 4:2).
- Be everlastingly at it: *"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine..."* (2 Tim. 4:2,3a) (See Ecc. 11:1-6; 2 Tim. 2:24-26)
- Be vigilant because:

- *"Ignorant and unstable people [will] distort [the] Scriptures, to their own destruction"* (2 Pet. 3:16b).

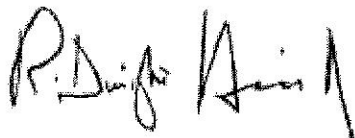
- Charlatans will seek to profiteer off of the word of God: *"...Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit..."* (2 Cor. 2:17a).

Training people to get the word of God into their lives is no simple task. It involves patience, time, and struggle. It also involves helping them make a major change in their lifestyle by totally re-ordering their priorities...All necessary in building into them the discipline of spending regular time with God in meditation and prayer; time in systematic study of the Scriptures, and time developing the discipline of cultivating a regular and sustained pattern of memorizing the word of God.

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, July 30, 2014
Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #3 of 10)

#3 He has a clear vision of the end product and how to achieve it.

There is no doubt that Jesus had a clear vision of what he intended to accomplish with eleven of the twelve disciples as revealed in his prayer to the Father the night before the cross: *"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do"* (Jn. 17:4). John 17 reveals that the work he accomplished was the training of these men to carry on his mission. So it must be with us that we also have a clear vision of the intended goal for our disciples.

The following list is a suggested guideline of what you may want to emphasize in the life of your disciples. Because each person we work with is uniquely called and gifted a great deal of sensitivity and prayer must accompany any effort to mold them. One size does not fit all. Our ultimate goal is that they "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13b).

Faith : He demonstrates that he truly believes God when the chips are down. (Heb. 10:22, 38, 39; 11).

Hope : His *primary* focus and hope is on the eternal, rather than the temporal. (Rom. 8:24, 25; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 11:1, 25-29).

Love : He loves others as he does Jesus. (Jn. 13:34,35; 12, 13; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 5:2 Col. 3:12, 13).

He is a person of the Word of God. That is, he has learned to meditate on the Scriptures, intelligently study them, and possesses a heart to apply it's truths to his life. (Ezra 7:10; Psa. 1:2; 119:47, 48, 92; Job 23:12; Jer. 15:16; Rom. 7:22; 2 Tim. 2:15).

He is a person prayer : (Psa. 119:47, 48, 92; Job. 23:12; Jer. 15:16; Lk. 11:5-8; 21:36; Rom. 7:22; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17).

He has a servant's heart as evidenced by selfless labor for God's kingdom and glory. (Jn. 13:1-17; 2 Cor. 4:5-12; 6L3-10I I Pet. 4:16; 5:2,3; I Jn. 3:16-18).

He understands and applies biblical principles in discharging his responsibilities as a father and husband . (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1 Tim. 3:4, 5; Eph. 5:25-29; Col. 3:19; I Pet. 3:7).

He is surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ . (Lk. 6:46; 9:23, 24, 57-62; 14:26-33; 18:28-30).

He possess a Scriptural understanding of the gifts of the Spirit and their communal importance in building up the body of Christ . (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:11-16; I Pet. 4:9,10).

He lives a disciplined life : (I Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:11-14; I Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:3-6; Tit. 2:11-13; 2 Pet. 1:5-8).

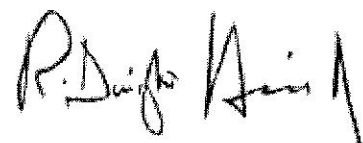
He lives a life of integrity : (Gen. 6:9; I Kin. 9:4; Psa. 7:8; 25:21; 26:1; 102:1; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3; Matt. 5:8; Tit. 2:7).

He is committed to accomplishing the Great Commission : (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46, 47; Jn. 20:21; Act. 1:8).

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, August 6, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #4 of 10)

#4 He will not take the glory to himself.

If you are effectively being used of God to shape people toward spiritual maturity, you are in a wonderful but dangerous position. You are held in high esteem – even revered, thus possessing a leveraged place of power. Talk about heady stuff! It has been my observation that “success” in ministry and deep humility rarely go hand in hand. Unwittingly, we begin to believe our own press reviews. And to this God does not take too kindly: “*I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*” (Isa. 42:8; Jms. 4:6). (See Deu. 8:15-18; Psa. 52:1; Isa. 48:10, 11)

People in the Scriptures who took the glory to themselves paid a severe price. For example:

· King Uzziah presumptuously assumed the role of priest; was struck by God with leprosy and lived out the rest of his days in isolation. (II Chron. 26:16-21)

- King Nebuchadnezzar ended up eating grass like cattle. (Dan. 5:22-31)

· King Herod was consumed by worms and died. (Act. 12:20-23) (See Dan. 5:22-31)

Encouragingly, the Scriptures are replete with examples of those who chose to give God the glory:

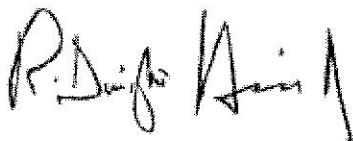
- Solomon : “*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all*” (I Chron. 29:11, 12)
- Jeremiah : “*...Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,*” declares the LORD” (Jer. 9:23, 24).
- Paul : “*...By the grace of God I am what I am...We...glory in Christ Jesus, and... put no confidence in the flesh*” (I Cor. 15:10b; Phil. 3:3 – Selected). (See Dan. 9:24-27; Psa. 115:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:12-15; Jn. 17:1,4)

John the Baptist epitomized the humble servant of God in stating, “*He must become greater; I must become less...After me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry...*” (Jn. 3:30; Matt. 3:11b). Jesus instructed us, “*... When you have done everything you were told to do, [you] should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'*” (Lk. 17:10b). After all, “*...The LORD... looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar*” (Psa. 138:6b)

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, August 13, 2014
Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #5 of 10)

#5 He has a heart of compassion

When God places a person in our life to disciple, we are probably inheriting someone with all kinds of problems: Bad habits, battles with the flesh, fear, anger, pride, et al. In all probability they have a jaded view of God and are duplicitous in their commitment to him. In all likelihood, their world view is warped and clouded compared to the Scripture's view of reality and truth. Our response can easily be one of shock, disgust, and withdrawal. And Jesus' response to the world's troubled masses? He was "*moved with compassion*" and saw people as "*harassed, distressed, dejected and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*" (Matt. 9:36 – Amp). Isaiah wrote of Jesus' gentleness toward broken humanity: "*A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not quench...*" (Isa. 42:3).

The quintessential example of compassion toward a struggling disciple is the account in John 21 where, in despair, Peter and his cohorts return to a night of unsuccessful fishing. In the early morning Jesus shows up unannounced and calls out from the shore for them to re-cast their nets, thus capturing a huge cache of fish. He then prepares and serves them breakfast. During the meal there were no words of rebuke, no looks of rejection, no demotion for Peter's miserable failures. After breakfast Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, and then proceeds to challenge him to invest the rest of his life feeding his sheep. Talk about compassionate grace!

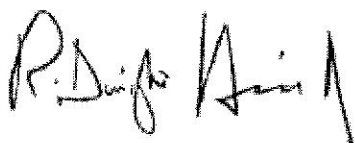
The process of discipling is arduous to be sure. Inevitably, your disciples will disappoint you by proving at times to be unfaithful, experiencing battles royal with sin, forgetting appointments, not completing their assignments, even despairing of the training they are receiving. To anguish over their sluggish progress is understandable. Even Jesus became exasperated with his disciples when he grasped their lack of faith, "*How long shall I put up with you*" (Mk. 9:19)? (See Mk. 6:36; Lk. 9:54)

Surely, if we are to significantly impact our struggling charges, they must know that they are not on trial, sitting under our judgment. Rather, they must sense that they are in the company of someone who truly loves and believes in them unconditionally. I doubt that that such an attitude is possible unless we cultivate Paul's mindset of living "*in the pains of childbirth until Christ [is] formed [in them]*" (Gal. 4:19).

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, August 20, 2013
Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #6 of 10)

#6 He is filled with and led by the Holy Spirit

We can approach the ministry of discipleship God's way or our way. His way is easier.

Sam Jones¹ is an accomplished businessman who knows how to pile drive a business into success. He's 6' 3", commanding in appearance, bright, driven, and a natural leader. When Sam shows up things happen.

Sam left the concrete jungle for a full time ministry of evangelism and discipleship. In short order he burned out his staff, got fired from a Christian organization ("Was not able to blend in"), and by his hard driving, type A approach, proceeded to build and dismantle another ministry with great potential.

By way of contrast, seasoned, Spirit filled and Spirit directed laborers have learned to move with the quiet, mysterious rhythm and timing of the Spirit of God in the ministry to which they have been called. They make it a practice to steal away in quiet waiting and rest in order to listen for the Spirit's gentle but firm prompting as to when and how to proceed. "In quietness and trust is [their] rest" (Isa. 30:13b). Seasoned warriors know from experience that "those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God." Thus, the prayer of their hearts echoes that of Psalm 143:10b: "Teach me to do you will...May your good Spirit lead me..."

Let us ask ourselves if we truly know the Holy Spirit as a divine person who is worthy of equal love and reverence with the Father and Son. Are we in fact experiencing His empowering in our daily lives? Or is He simply a distant, mysterious, ill-defined concept? In fact, the "Holy Spirit is the mysterious third Person of the Trinity through whom God acts, reveals His will empowers individuals, and discloses His presence."²

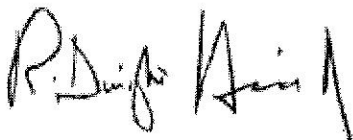
In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul wrote of the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit." The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia* and refers to our partnership with the Spirit in His ministry. I sometimes wonder if there are times, either through ignorance, bad theology, or neglect that we unwittingly relegate the Holy Spirit to a junior partner status. Could it be that many of our failed attempts at ministry have been because we arrogated the Spirit to secondary status? After all, it is only "the Spirit [who] gives life" (Jn. 6:63).

So much of what passes today for ministry is program centered, numbers and ego driven frenetic activity that reflects the bump and grind of the flesh in manipulating and pressuring things to happen on our terms. The end product is hay, wood, and straw. As with Sampson, the Spirit has long since departed without our awareness. (See Judges 16:2) When we approach the ministry led by the Spirit, He does the work through us, and we bear fruit that lasts into eternity. (See I Cor. 3:10-15)

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

¹The name is fictitious – ²Holman Bible Dictionary -
This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, August 27, 2014
Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #7 of 10)

#7 He possesses a servant's heart

True discipline will cost you your life. That is, you cannot have a casual approach toward helping others grow in Christ and produce the true fruit of the vine. Paul said of his relationship with those he evangelized and/or discipled:

- *"I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace"* (Act. 20:24b).
- *"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race"* (Rom. 9:2, 3).
- *"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible... I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."* (I Cor. 9:19, 22b).
- *"I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well ..."* (2 Cor. 12:15b).
- *"My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you..."* (Gal. 4:19a).
- *"... I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God ..."* (Phil. 2:17b – NLT). (See I Thess. 2:8)

Jesus embodied the life of sacrifice to which he calls his laborers: *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends ...I lay down my life for the sheep"* (John 15:13; 10:15b).

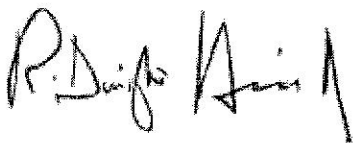
When Jesus challenged Peter to feed his sheep, he gave him this dire warning, *"I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."* Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, *'Follow me!'*" (Jn. 21:18, 19) History records that Peter was crucified upside down at the hands of the Roman emperor, Nero.

He demands nothing less of us. The question is, are you and I up to the challenge?

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, September 3, 2014
Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #8 of 10)

#8 He is willing to suffer and persevere for Christ:

The day you choose to become proactively engaged in winning the lost and discipling the saved, the war with the Enemy heats up. Go ahead, attend church, sing in the choir; attend religious programs. No problem, because you are of little if any threat to the Enemy. He's more than happy to keep you busy with religious activities. As an evangelist and discipler, you are entering a spiritual battle with the arch enemy of your soul. So brace yourself for his vicious attacks.

In studying the life of Paul, as it relates to his efforts to win the lost and disciple the saved, two broad ideas emerge:

#1 Paul understood from experience that suffering was generic to being a laborer for Christ :

- "...*We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death...*" (2 Cor. 1:8b, 9a).
- "*Are they servants of Christ? I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again*" (2 Cor. 11:23a, c.). (Jn. 15:18-20; Matt. 5:12, 13; See 2 Cor. 11:24-30; Phil. 1:28, 29; 2 Tim. 3:12)
- "*Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city...Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. 'We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,' they said"* (Act. 14:19, 20a 21, 22).

#2 Paul persevered through his suffering in bearing fruit, and challenged others to do the same:

No doubt Paul understood Jesus' teaching, "... *The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop*" (Lk. 8:15b). Clearly, Paul modeled and preached perseverance: "*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body ...Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain*" (II Cor. 4:8-10; I Cor. 15:58). (See 2 Cor. 6:3-10; 12:15; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Jms. 1:3, 4).

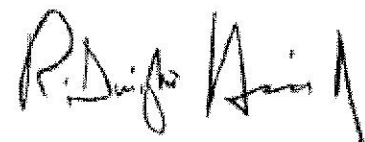
The marketplace is hostile to the values of the Lord Jesus. Little wonder that Jesus reminded us that "*you cannot serve both God and Money*" (Matt. 6:24b). So, when you choose to identify yourself with the Lord Jesus in the Machiavellian world of commerce, and you seek to evoke change in the people in that environment, expect the fulfillment of Jesus' statement, "*All men will hate you because of me...*" (Matt. 10:22). (See 2 Tim. 3:12)

QUESTION : Are you up to the challenge?

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, September 10, 2013
Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #9 of 10)

#9 He manages his life and family well:

First he must manage himself like an Olympic contender who is operating on the world stage. Sloppy thinking, procrastination, half-heartedness, excuse-making, and a mediocre work ethic do not exist for the fruitful spiritual laborer. In a word, he is highly disciplined in mind and body:

"... We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ...I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified" (II Cor. 10:5b; I Cor. 9:28 – NLT).

Most business and professionals work in a culture hyped on a plethora of multiple choices in every direction that are moving at an increasingly accelerated pace. Germane to the market place culture are long hours, shifting market conditions, and incessant personnel problems. With globalization have come intensified worldwide competition, increased complexity and financial instability. Just to stay competitive demands herculean effort.

If he or she is to sustain their walk with God in this spiritually toxic environment, he or she will choose – with intense inner discipline – to heed St. Paul’s admonition to “*make it [our] ambition to lead a quiet life...*” (I Thess. 4:11a). Only in a sustained effort to focus and simplify one’s life will one be able to even *think* about carving out time to (1) cultivate and sustain a vital pattern of prayer and Bible intake, and (2) win the lost and disciple the saved.

Little wonder, is it not that Jesus cautioned us against being seduced by “*the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things [that] come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful*” (Mk. 4:19b).

Second, he (husbands and fathers) must manage his household well. This is the primary proving ground for his qualification for ministry. If he does not know how to manage (lead, preside, have authority over) his home in a biblical fashion, he is unqualified to lead members of Christ’s body. (See Tit. 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:4, 5) The proof of his “success” is in his children: Are they under control “*with all dignity?*” His ability to produce children of this caliber testifies to the fact that his family is ordered, disciplined, and not in rebellion. His success at home prepares and validates him for a broader ministry. After all, his family is the first circle of the Great Commission (See Act. 1:8; Matt. 28:18-20).

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill

Wednesday, September 17, 2014
Dear Colleagues,

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE MAKER (Part #10 of 10)

#10 He is a skilled, disciplined and empathetic listener:

A common pattern in discipling is to run people through established curriculum, get them started in Scripture memory and a daily time alone with God. Before long they help them to systematically study the Bible and share their faith. The assumption is that these disciplines and the strength derived from them will facilitate their spiritual growth.

Well enough. But we need to keep in mind that we are not assembling cars on a conveyor belt, but dealing with wonderfully complex human beings with needs as varied as the all outdoors. We cannot begin to understand and help them at their deepest level of need without clear leading and insight from the Holy Spirit, and without skilled, disciplined, and empathetic listening. Note from the Scriptures:

- “ *He who answers before listening-- that is his folly and his shame*” (Prov. 18:13).
- “ *...Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires*” (Jms. 1:19b, 20).
- “ *Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue*” (Prov. 17:28).

The following three paragraphs encapsulate some of Steven Covey's thoughts on the art and discipline of effective listening, gleaned from his bestseller, “ *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.*”¹

We have a tendency to rush in and want to fix things for people. Thus, we err by not taking the time to really hear what is at the heart of their problem. It is imperative that we seek first to understand and then to be understood. People are slow to divulge their inner issues unless they feel we understand and care for them. This is a prerequisite to their divulging their secrets with us.

Empathetic listening is listening to understand and get inside another person's frame of reference so that you see the world through their lens. The key to good judgment is understanding. By judging first, a person will never fully understand.

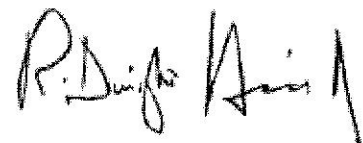
Most people do not listen with the intent to understand but to reply. They are either speaking or preparing to speak. They are filtering everything through their own paradigm, reading their autobiography into other people's lives.

In a nutshell, skilled, disciplined and empathetic listeners Relax. Restrain their talking. Demonstrate their desire to listen with empathy. Ask questions. Analyze what the person is saying (and *not* saying). Pay attention to their body language. **Remain objective. Put themselves in the other person's shoes. Acknowledge the person's feelings . Help them discover what they need to do.**

This week, may you experience His grace, peace, and protection.

R. Dwight Hill

¹“*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.*”- Stephen R. Covey – Free Press, Pgs 235 – 260 -
This week may you experience His grace, peace and protection!



R. Dwight Hill