Discipleship 101

Mike Davies 22 August 2022



The mandate of every believer is to make disciples, not just converts. As leaders, we understand the principle that “I am my brother’s keeper”, which in turn means that there has always been a willingness to speak into each other’s lives. This has often been done over a cup of coffee, hence the phrase “doing coffee” when needing to address an issue or area in someone’s life.

That we see the necessity and are committed to it doesn’t make it easy. Many of us dislike conflict, but it is sometimes a necessary consequence of taking discipleship seriously. We must love people enough to risk our friendships and choose to be ‘peacemakers’ not ‘peacekeepers’.

“Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning” (Proverbs 9:7-9, ESV)

“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy” (Proverbs 27:5-6, ESV)

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17, ESV)

Eight Practical Tips to Speaking Into Someone's Life

Practically speaking, if this is something that all leaders need to do, how do we go about it?

1. Ask yourself if what you have seen is a real issue. Often, we can become upset or irritated with another person because of what is actually in us.
2. Ask yourself, "Will it help that person to hear what I have to say?" We should only speak for the other person's benefit, not to make life easier for ourselves.
3. Pray first. We have no right to address a person until we have prayed for them.
4. Go in humility, especially if that person is a leader or is older (1 Timothy 5:1).
5. Find an appropriate time and place for the conversation.
6. Speak first to that person alone (only if they refuse to repent of a sin issue should you ever discuss it with somebody else, as per Matthew 18:15-17).
7. Speak the truth in love. An old friend of mine once said, "Truth without love is brutality, while love without truth is sentimentality".
8. Be specific, be truthful, be encouraging and be redemptive. The aim of such a conversation should be to help the person become more like Christ, not to make them feel guilty or ashamed. However, repentance is only possible once sin has been acknowledged; naming the sin is helpful in this process.

How to Disagree

Of course, this works both ways. We need to be open to people speaking into our lives too. This can be difficult at the best of times, but what do we do if we disagree with the perspective a person gives us?

1. Check what was said against the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, not your own emotions. Do not simply react. We cannot only listen to things we agree with; the most offensive things are probably true.
2. Pray sincerely about it and ask God to show you what you cannot see (Psalm 139:23).
3. Obey those put over you unless their advice is clearly contrary to the Word or clearly sin.
4. If necessary, get an HONEST second opinion (don't keep getting advice until you hear what you want to hear). Sometimes we simply cannot see what a person is saying; however, if several people say the same thing, we need to believe them – even above our judgement. This is a true test of teachability. Submission speaks of "positioning oneself to be persuaded". We need to do this rather than entrench our position and defend ourselves. Many in

leadership have been in this position before and have learned to trust the judgement of the team over their own, even if what they are saying seems to make little sense at the time.

5. Remember, God always rewards obedience.
6. Be especially cautious of reacting if somebody 'attacks' or addresses one of your 'sacred cows' (e.g. your spouse, your children, the way you drive, etc.).
7. Do not rely on 'having peace' about something in judging its truth. We can sometimes 'lose our peace' (temporarily) because God tells us something and we do not want to hear what He has to say.

An Act of Real Love

We have a responsibility to one another to help each other live lives that please the Lord. James 5:19-20 (ESV) tell us, "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins". It can be scary speaking into someone's life, especially if it is a rebuke or correction, but it is an act of real love. If we are to be a people devoted to fellowship and want to be part of a pure and spotless bride, it is essential that we be willing to change and grow in the skills necessary to help each other become more like Christ.

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