

Excerpt from the book, **CONNECT: Intentional Discipler's Playbook**. To preview a copy, [click here](#) or order copies.

THREE QUESTIONS: THE HEART OF A DISCIPLING CONVERSATION

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will. **Romans 12:2***

Have you ever been in a situation where you are talking with someone, and they think you are more spiritually experienced than you think you are? They talk about their faith, life, and experiences and look to you for answers you don't have. Welcome to the real world of situational discipling.

As you begin forming a friendship with your intentional disciple, trust forms, and disclosure feels safer if all is going well. Now, what do you do? How do you keep the ownership for active learning and growth on the other side of the table? You can do it by mastering three helpful yet simple and powerful questions. Who is God? Who are you? Why does knowing that matter?

This is the entire point of discipling and discipleship. Keep these questions in the front of your mind. As your friend describes an aspect or incident in their life, be ready to form one of these three questions into your conversation. Here's how you can use these three simple yet powerful questions.

Who is God? Your friend is unfolding their STORY. You sense a significant moment in the STORY. As you listen to each step in the disciple's journey from STORY to MISSION, be ready to ask, *who do you think God is? What do you think that says about God? How did God reveal himself to you at that moment?* Be ready for any answer from, "I guess he doesn't care..", to, "It was at that moment I realized God loves me just as I am."

Once your friend responds, and if it is anything short of a clear declaration of their IDENTITY in Christ, this is an excellent moment to ground

the statement in Scripture or provide clarification. This is when discipling can appear daunting, thinking you must have a Bible verse at the tip of your tongue. The best approach is to say, *That's a great/interesting/challenging response. How about we both do a concordance or bible app search on that question and let's talk about what we find next time we meet?*

Who am I? The great quest of life—this treasure hunt of living—is to discover and own who we truly are. Ask someone who they think they are, and you'll get a wide range of answers depending on their life experiences and who their human spirit has been listening to. Though we often search high and low, the treasure is always right in front of us. But because we usually have a distorted view of our IDENTITY, we don't/can't call it our own. As we mature in our knowledge and relationship with Christ, our IDENTITY is defined and refined through Christ, God-Emmanuel. Your job is to help get their version of IDENTITY on the table so you can help your friend reform it in the light of God's promises in Scripture.

To lose yourself in Christ, you need to first find yourself. Nothing can be lost if it first has not been found. You may be starting a discipling relationship, and your friend has not yet committed to Jesus as Savior and Lord. To know Jesus, a person has to know they need Jesus. If a person is going to die to self, they must know what they are offering as their sacrifice. (Rom 12)

As your relationship strengthens and your friend feels more comfortable talking about their life experiences, be ready to ask, *What do you think that says about you?* Clarity as to our IDENTITY is the treasure of living. We seek it for most of our days. We find it, lose it, squander it, let others steal it away, and often finally possess a deformed and shrunken version. When we find our IDENTITY, it's not often we think we are worthy of wearing the genuine version. In our insecurities, we hide or build larger or false versions of our IDENTITY to make it appear acceptable—or so we think. And all the while, our insecurities become deformed versions of who we are.

What makes IDENTITY a treasure of living? Discovery defines and determines what we do if we ever understand who we are. When we have clarity in our IDENTITY, others see us as authentic—an accurate representation of self. It's that simple. The problem is, for most of us, our IDENTITY has been formed and deformed by the messages of others. Too often, we listen to toxic voices with deadly messages. As a result, who we think we are from these dangerous sources has formed a false or distorted IDENTITY.

What makes discipling easier is to drill down to IDENTITY by asking the open-ended question, *Who do you think you are? What does that say about you?*

Encourage your disciple to spend time in the Lectio Divina portion of their Disciple's Journal, experiencing the Scriptures of STORY, IDENTITY, MEANING, PURPOSE, CALLING, and MISSION.

Why does it matter? After finding clarity about who God is and who we are, the next follow-up question begins to form a whole picture. *Why does knowing more about who you and God are matter to you?* It matters, of course, because this is why God created us—to influence the lives and living of others with the power of the Holy Spirit within, energizing a uniquely designed set of talents, skills, and personality to be instruments of His righteousness. That is the answer you are waiting for from your discipling friend. But be patient. For most people, it will take time for those answers to form. But when a friend with whom you've spent precious hours clearly states why knowing God and self-matters, you have a well-formed disciple ready to influence their Oikos and the world around them.

Why does it matter? Why are you investing time in another person's life? What do you hope will happen because you meet? Take time to reflect on those two questions and write your answers below.

Why does it matter that I spend time discipling others? Come back periodically and add to your answer.

FOUR SKILLS: LEARNING HOW TO C.L.A.P.

Intentional discipling—whether as the discipler or your friend—is a marvelous opportunity to explore the person God knows better than anyone else.

Despite impressions, discipling isn't hard, but it is work. Good work. If two people determine they want to grow in Christ and one has a little more life and depth, then off you go! All you need is to keep the three questions on the top of mind—*who is God, who are you, and why does it matter?* With a bit of practice, it is easier than you think.

In addition to the three questions, you need to add only four skills to your tool kit to be effective. Really? It seems more complicated. Nope. Just four skills wrapped up into one word. All you need to know is how to **C.L.A.P.**—a simple acronym for an enjoyable experience.



C is for Curiosity.

There is power in curiosity. For many, a nagging question lies deep in the echoes of mind and heart. *Does anyone care about my life?* Far too many conversations are about neutral small talk, politics, sports, or gushing about self as if talking to a mirror. To be curious about another person's life and their stories shows you think their life does matter. Showing curiosity requires otherness. You don't show curiosity as bait to get someone to show curiosity to you. Instead, it reflects and validates a genuine interest and care in another.

When you start a question with the phrase, *I'm curious*. You can almost hear barriers coming down. *I'm curious, Emma, how did you ... I'm curious, James, what was going through your mind when you said.... I'm curious, Greg, what did you think your options were?* You get the drift.

Curiosity is an antidote to self-centeredness. When you say, *I'm curious*, it says you are interested in someone's life and STORY in addition to your own. It says, *Tell me more*. A great way to get the conversation going is to ask, *I'm*

curious, what's your STORY? Most people are thinking, Really? Do they really want to know?

L is for Listening.

Active listening is being in a state of anticipation for a message. It is waiting for the voice of God through his Holy Spirit to speak through a conversation, to hear a friend's heart, mind, and soul. Be attentive to hear the MEANING behind a message. Be prayerful and prayer-full. In *Spiritual Mentoring*, authors Keith Anderson and Randy Reese speak of wholly listening and holy listening. The same Holy Spirit who speaks to us is speaking to the other in this friendship. Pray for your friend and be filled with thoughts and spoken prayers throughout the day. Listening is being attentive to an already spoken word directed at the ears of the soul. Be attentive. Listening is being receptive to where and when we recognize God's still, small voice speaking to you as a discipler and your discipling friend.

Listening is being open to grasp the MEANING behind their message. Too often in conversation, we hear the other person talking, but we are just waiting for an opening to tell the other person our great thoughts or stories.

Only when we listen can we ask powerful questions in response. *Mark, that's insightful. What do you think that says about who you are? Or, Mark, I think you are hitting on something important. I'm curious: what do you think that says about your PURPOSE in life? Or, Mark, that's deep. What do you think that says about who God is as he is at work in your life?*

On page 106 is a resource article for becoming a more active listener.

A is for Asking Questions

The quickest way to get beyond this friendship being about you is to ask questions. Asking questions demonstrates you genuinely are curious about their life. If the **C** is curiosity and a state of mind, asking questions shows curiosity. However, to ask questions means you had to exercise the **L** to listen for content and MEANING.

If you are curious and you are listening, what kind of questions do you ask? Often, and without thinking, we ask closed-end questions. These questions only require a safe yes, a no, or a discrete piece of information. And these types

of questions limit opportunities for productive conversation. Examples of closed-end questions are: *Did you read the chapter? Did you have a good environment growing up? Are you content? Is our time together helpful for you?*

Closed-end questions are conversation killers. No one knows that better than the parent of a teen or pre-teen. The only way closed-end questions can be productive is if they are lead-in questions—questions breaking the ice for a follow-up. For example,

What did you think of the chapter we read?

Interesting.

Me too. What did you find to be the most interesting part?

Or,

Did you have a good environment growing up?

No, I couldn't wait to get out of the house.

I'm sorry you had to experience that. That must have been hard as a young person. What are some takeaways from that time?

Or,

I'm sorry. What have you learned about yourself as a result?

The follow-up questions lead to the most powerful questions. Open-ended. These questions can't be answered with a yes, no, or discrete information. Open-ended questions ask for disclosure. If you become a practitioner of asking open-ended questions, you will become a powerful communicator as a friend, a spouse, and a parent.

Most of us aren't skilled in asking open-ended questions. Too often, we ask safe questions; all we get are safe answers. To help build your question-asking skill, check out the article, *Asking Powerful Questions*, in your Resources Section on pages 106 and 107. These are excellent resources to help refine your question-asking skill.



is a Promise—To be there for as long as wanted or needed.

Often, our discipling experiences have been short-term. They've been fitted to an eight-week time frame to conform to a church calendar. The problem is spiritual growth doesn't happen in eight weeks. We can take excellent classes for eight, sixteen, or thirty-two weeks and gain significantly

from the content and experience. Those classes are a part of discipleship, but they don't accomplish the need for intimacy found only in a one-with-one friendship.

Relationships may possibly have a season, but for most of us, we need a long-term friend who knows us warts and all and cares about our lives, families, failures, and victories. Relationships built on knowledge, intimacy, friendship, and awareness take time.

Go into this friendship with a realization this friendship and time of meeting could last until one of you buries the other. It could be that long-term. To have that kind of forever-friendship is a treasure to long for and seek out. Not all discipling relationships take on that kind of deep affection, but it is something to hope and pray for.