

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

*To reach satisfaction in all, desire its possession in nothing. To come to the knowledge of all, desire the knowledge of nothing. To come to possess all, desire the possession of nothing. To arrive at being all, desire to be nothing. To come to the pleasure you have not you must go by a way in which you enjoy not. To come to the knowledge you have not you must go by a way in which you know not. To come to the possession you have not, you must go by a way in which you possess not. To come to be what you are not, you must go by a way in which you are not. When you turn toward something, you cease to cast yourself upon the all, For to go from the all to the all you must possess it without wanting anything. In this nakedness, the spirit finds its rest, for when it covets nothing, nothing raises it up and nothing weighs it down, because it stands in the centre of its humility. John of the Cross*

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. It just seems that way. 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? It's quite easy.

To be effective, you need to add only four skills to your tool kit. Really? It seems more complicated. Nope. Just four skills wrapped up into one word. All you need to know is how to **CLAP**—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?” To be curious about another person's life and their stories shows their life does matter. Showing curiosity requires other-ness. You don't show curiosity as bait to get someone to show curiosity to you. Instead, it reflects and confirms 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? 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 receive God's still, small voice.

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 thought or story.

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?”*

## **A** is for Asking Questions

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

But what kind of questions do you ask? Often, and without thinking, we ask closed-end questions. These are safe questions only requiring a safe “yes,” a “no,” or a discrete piece of information. And, for productive conversation, these types of questions limit conversation. Examples are: “Did you read the chapter?” “Did you have a good environment growing up?” “Are you content?” “Is our time together helpful for you?”

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?” “I’m curious, what made that interesting to you?”*

*Or,*

*“Did you have a good environment growing up?”*

*“No, I couldn’t wait to get out of the house.”*

*“I’m sorry, 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. This is an excellent resource to refine your skill.

## **P** is a Promise—To be there for as long as wanted or needed

Too often, our discipling experiences have been short-term. They’ve been fitted to a time frame of an eight-week format to conform to a church calendar. The problem is spiritual growth doesn’t happen in eight weeks. We can take excellent classes for eight or sixteen, or thirty-two weeks, and we 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. What most people miss or haven’t experienced is a discipling friend who has been there through the years.

This doesn’t mean 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. That kind of knowledge and awareness takes time.

Go into this friendship with a realization one of you may bury the other. To have that kind of forever-friend 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.