

Session #6

Climb the Ladder of Integrity

Pre-Reading

Taken from: <https://www.riverdove.org.au/practical/discipleship/>

Layering Over Our True Self

When we accept the saving work of Jesus in our lives and commit to a life lived in him, we become a new creature. It is a metaphorical rebirth to 'newness of life'. We are, as Corinthians explains, like little children, with all the wide-eyed wonder of this new life stretching out before us. This faith and dependence on God to undertake great things for us is commended by Jesus and he goes so far as to say that "...unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:2-4, NIV). This childlike faith is essential to beginning a relationship with God, through Jesus, and this kind of faith needs to remain a constant in our lives.

And yet, many Christians never develop further than this moment. They remain as children, spiritually immature and never attaining to the radical transition of living faithfully to their true selves in Christ. Instead of genuine spiritual growth, beginning from their core and being demonstrated exponentially in their lives, Christians layer over their potential true self with a false reality of who they are.

They are concerned about who other people think they are rather than being concerned about who God thinks they are. They are emotionally disconnected from the reality of what life with Jesus really looks like, in real and practical terms. Christian life becomes theory rather than practice. This process of layering – creating and developing a false self over the top of core emotional truths – ensures that we remain entrapped and enslaved to 'the old man', rather than liberated in Jesus as a new creation.

The Deception Of The False Self

The deeply entrenched false self is actually a refusal to accept God's grace and its transforming effect on our life. Instead of being defined by what God has done for us, we become defined by who we perceive we are. We tell ourselves, I am what I do; I am what I have; I am what others think I am. We are driven by performance, possessions or popularity, rather than by who we are to God.

The broader culture around us certainly substantiates this point of view and it can be very difficult to dismantle the false self and allow our true self in Christ to emerge. Yet, this is our life's work and is the essence of what discipleship really means. To think otherwise is to be deceived.

Following God Into The Unknown

Getting to your core requires following God into the unknown – to being committed to emotional and spiritual reality, not denial or illusion. It means developing a relationship with Him and becoming who God has called you to be. Initially, it requires that childlike faith, but on that faith must be built conviction, through the process of discipleship.

Jesus' life was dominated by his conviction that he was sent to do his Father's will. This conviction produced a deep awareness of his life's purpose and he remained deeply connected and authentic to his true self. When people develop Christlike convictions, they too will develop a sense of purpose in life.

At times, our false self has become such a part of who we are that we don't even realise it. However, the consequences – fear, self-protection, possessiveness, manipulation, self-destructive tendencies, self-promotion, self-indulgence, and a need to distinguish ourselves from others – are harder to hide.

Discipleship: Developing Your Authentic Self

To be a disciple, in the biblical sense, is to be actively imitating both the life and teaching of the master. It isn't the same as being a student, by today's modern understanding, but is rather a deliberate apprenticeship which makes the fully formed disciple a living copy of the master.

This process of discipleship is a principle-centered, character-based "inside out" approach to developing our authentic self in Christ. It means to start first with ourselves; even more fundamentally, to start with the most inside part of self – our core – and to honestly analyse our paradigms, our character and our motives.

"The inside-out approach says that private victories precede public victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping promises to others. It says that it is futile to put personality ahead of character, to try and improve relationships with others before improving ourselves" – Stephen Covey

It is a process that moves us from being a spiritually and emotionally immature child to being a fully mature and developed adult – “a person dedicated to God, and capable and equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:17, NET).

Discipleship Comes From Differentiation

A helpful way to clarify this process of growing in our faithfulness to our true selves is by using the term ‘differentiation’. Differentiation is a person’s capacity to “define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from the pressures of those around them.” The key emphasis of differentiation is on the ability to think clearly and carefully as another means, besides our feelings, of knowing ourselves.

People with a high level of differentiation have their own beliefs, convictions, directions, goals and values apart from the pressures around them. They can choose, before God, how they want to be without being controlled by the approval or disapproval of others.

People with a low level of differentiation are those with little sense of their unique God-given life. They need continual affirmation and validation from others because they don’t have a clear sense of who they are. They depend on what other people think and feel in order to have a sense of their own worth and identity.

As Christian people, one of the greatest gifts we can give our world is to be a community of emotionally healthy adults who love well. This will take the power of God and a commitment to learn, grow and break with unhealthy, destructive patterns that may go back generations in our families and cultures – and in some cases, our Christian culture also.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you should love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among one another.” – John 13:34-35, BLB

Consider that Jesus was 100% true to himself or completely “self-differentiated.”

Where might you place yourself?

0.....25.....50.....75.....100

0-25

- Can't distinguish between fact and feeling
Emotionally needy and highly reactive to others
- Much of life energy spent in winning the approval of others
- Little energy for goal-directed activities
- Can't say, "I think ... believe ..."

- Little emotional separation from their families
- Dependent marital relationships
- Do very poorly in transitions, crises, and life adjustments
- Unable to see where they end and others begin

25-50

- Some ability to distinguish between fact and feeling
- Most of self is a "false self" and reflected from others
- When anxiety is low, they function relatively well
- Quick to imitate others and change themselves to gain acceptance from others · Often talk one set of principles/beliefs, yet do another
- Self-esteem soars with compliments or is crushed by criticism
- Become anxious (i.e., highly reactive and "freaking out") when a relationship system falls apart or becomes unbalanced
- Often make poor decisions due to their inability to think clearly under stress
- Seek power, honor, knowledge, and love from others to clothe their false selves

50-75

- Aware of the thinking and feeling functions that work as a team
- Reasonable level of "true self"
- Can follow life goals that are determined from within
- Can state beliefs calmly without putting others down
- Marriage is a functioning partnership where intimacy can be enjoyed without losing the self
- Can allow children to progress through developmental phases into adult autonomy · Function well-alone or with others
- Able to cope with crises without falling apart
- Stay in relational connection with others without insisting they see the world the same

75-100

(Few people function at this level)

- Are principle oriented and goal directed-secure in who they are, unaffected by criticism or praise
- Are able to leave family of origin and become an inner-directed, separate adult
- Sure of their beliefs but not dogmatic or closed in their thinking
- Can hear and evaluate beliefs of others, discarding old beliefs in favor of new ones
- Can listen without reacting and communicate without antagonizing others
- Can respect others without having to change them
- Aware of dependence on others and responsibility for others
- Free to enjoy life and play
- Able to maintain a non anxious presence in the midst of stress and pressure
- Able to take responsibility for their own destiny and life

Daily Office

Introduction

God has shaped and crafted us internally. Each of us are created in his image but with our own unique “wiring” with our gifts, talents, feelings and desires. The invitation to each of us is to live our authentic true selves in Christ.

Jesus lived secure in who he was in his Father’s love.

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

-(Matthew 3:17, NIV)

Despite external pressure Jesus stayed true to his Father, himself, and the reason he was on the earth. He lived with complete integrity.

We violate our own integrity when we do not live what we believe, think, feel and value. Something dies inside of us when we fail to speak up about our values and preferences. God invites us to ground our identity in an ongoing experience of the love of God in Christ and respectfully assert ourselves.

Growing Connected

Handbook to Renewal Day by Day Debrief: What obstacles, difficulties, or success did you experience in meeting with God this week using the daily resource?

Name a specific fear you carry that keeps you from having a difficult conversation with a friend, boss, coworkers or family member (Remember to use “I” statements).

Bible Study

When the Apostle Peter first visited the city of Antioch from his home base in Jerusalem, he welcomed and ate with non-Jewish (Gentile) Christians. Later, a group of Jewish Christians arrived and convinced Peter to separate himself from the Gentiles. They pressured Peter into following their belief that it was not God’s will to eat with Gentiles.

Read Galatians 2:11-14 and the Apostle Paul’s response to Peter.

“When Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”
(Galatians 2:11-14, NIV)

Why, according to Paul, did Peter separate himself from the Gentiles?

Imagine what could have gone wrong. What did Paul risk in speaking to Peter?

In what areas of your life might you be like Peter, desiring the approval of others and acting in a way that is inconsistent with your values?

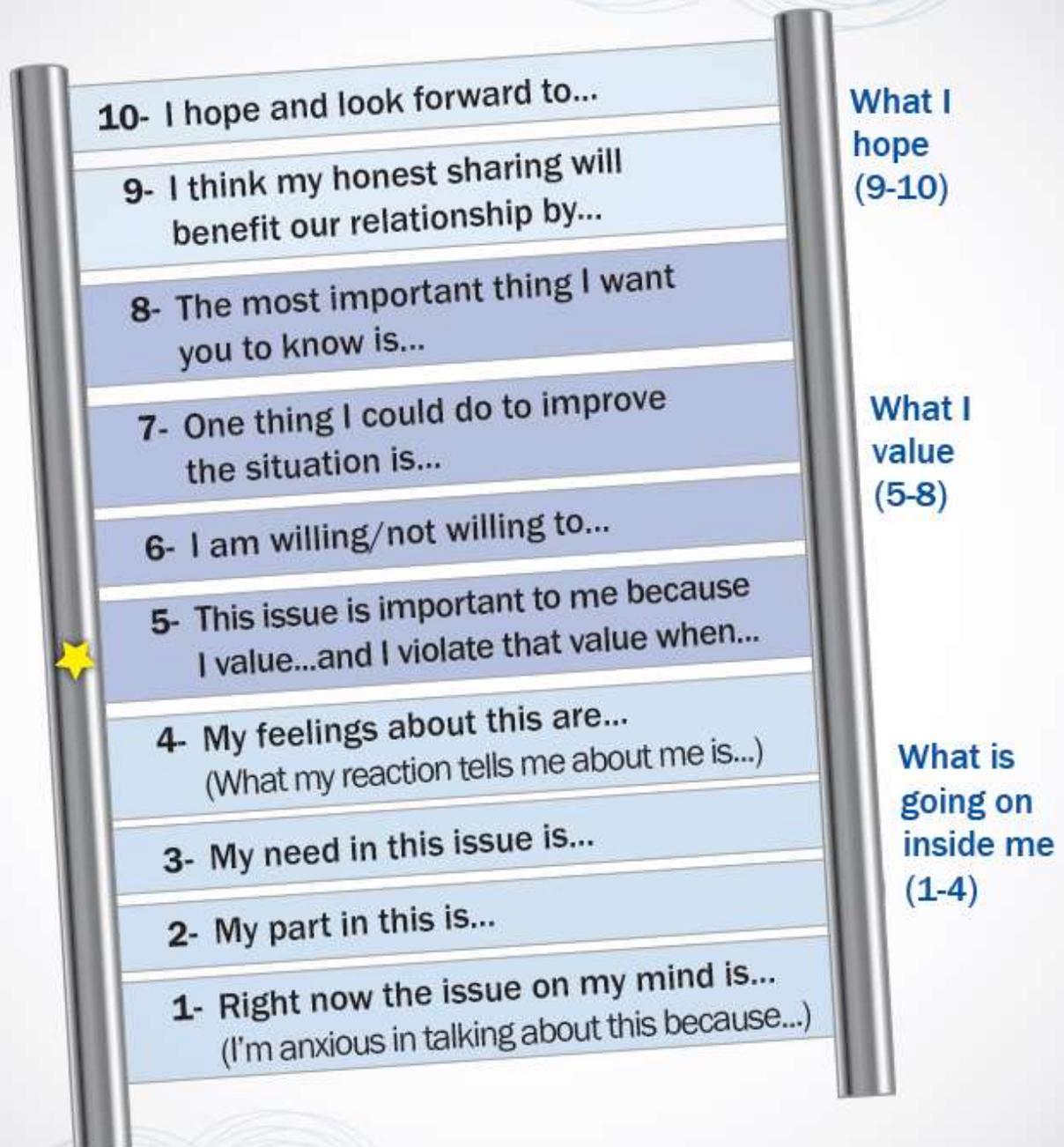
Video

Purpose: To clarify your values by processing your thoughts and feelings (and, if appropriate, to assert yourself respectfully).

The Ladder of Integrity

Important reminder: This is not a conflict resolution tool!

CLIMB THE LADDER OF INTEGRITY



Be sure to stick to one issue.

Individual Activity

Identify a non-volatile issue that is bothering you (someone's lateness, cell phone use, driving, messiness, TV/computer usage, texting during a meal, holiday plans, lack of honesty, missing meetings...).

Note: Before you start, make sure that your issue is not because of faulty assumptions or a failure to clarify expectations.

Write down the following issue by completing the following sentence stem:

Right now the issue on my mind is...

e.g. Disrespectful: "You don't care about beginning meetings late."

e.g. Respectful: Right now, the issue on my mind is that our meetings start later than the agreed upon time."

Group Activity

In your groups practice going up the ladder with someone you don't have the issue with. Let the other person know who they are standing in for.

- As the speaker:
 - Ask for permission to share
 - Start at the bottom and go up the Ladder
 - Skip a sentence stem if it does not help you explore the issue
 - Thank the listener when you are done
- As the Listener
 - Give the speaker your full attention
 - Do not interrupt
 - Thank the speaker for sharing when he/she is done

What was the activity like for you? What did you learn?

What next step might you take to summarize the main points of your Ladder if you intend on sharing your value with the appropriate person?

How do you think this tool might better enable you to listen to God's voice?

Closing

Personal Action Step

Before the next session, write about a difficult issue, using the Ladder of integrity to express your thoughts.

After clarifying your value, decide if it is appropriate to share it with the person with whom you have the tension.

Handbook to Renewal Day by Day: Use days 26-30